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Book of

KINGS & QUEENS

*Amazing stories of monarchies
from pre-Roman times
to present day*



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Welcome to

ALL ABOUT
HISTORY
Book of
KINGS & QUEENS

Throughout history, monarchs have had a huge impact on the world, whether uniting nations or tearing them apart. Some have inherited great power, while others have fought to take what they saw as rightfully theirs. There have been kings who instigated wars to demonstrate their strength and conquer the world, and queens who helped shape the future of their nations. In this newly revised edition, we take a look at some of the most iconic and influential monarchs the world has ever seen, from Nefertiti and Alexander the Great, to William the Conqueror and Eleanor of Aquitaine. We'll also take a look at the 30 kings and queens who changed the world, the wars waged by Henry VIII, uncover the man behind the myth of the monstrous Emperor Nero and discover the story of Britain's longest-reigning queen, Elizabeth II.

KINGS & QUEENS

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HISTORY**

bookazine series



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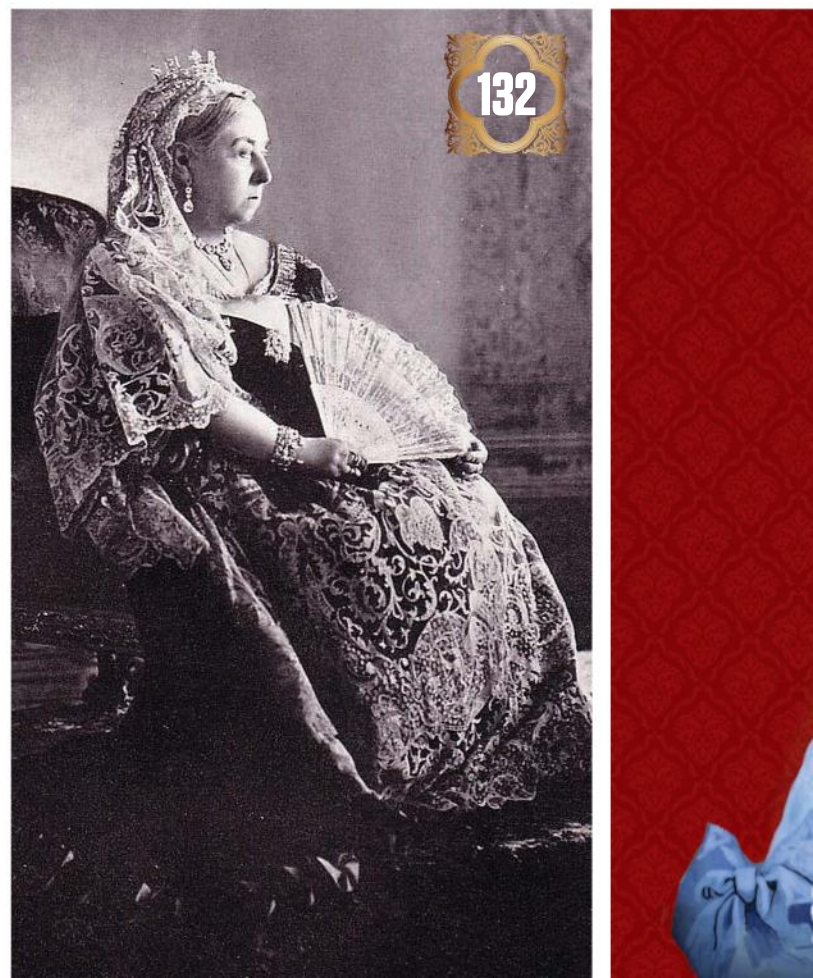
The truth behind an iconic ruler, known for his six wives

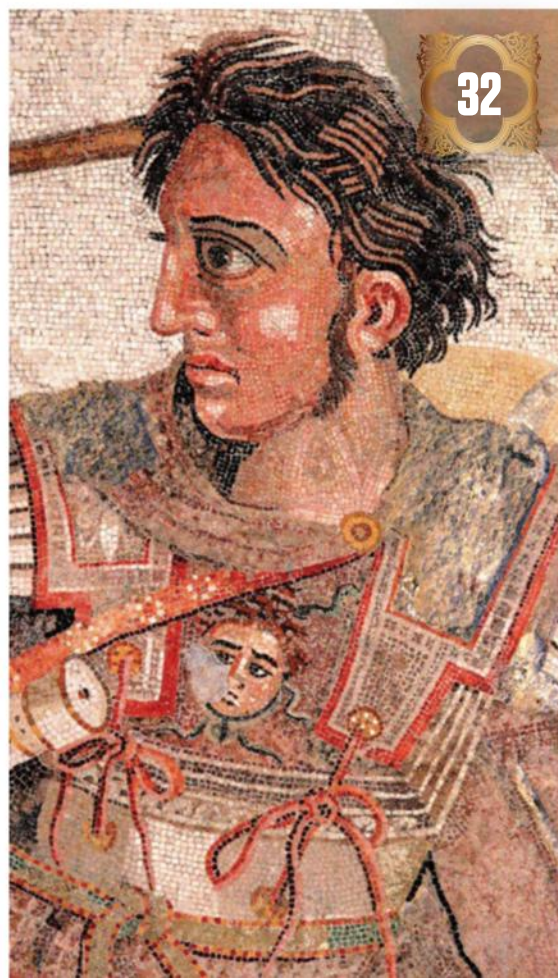
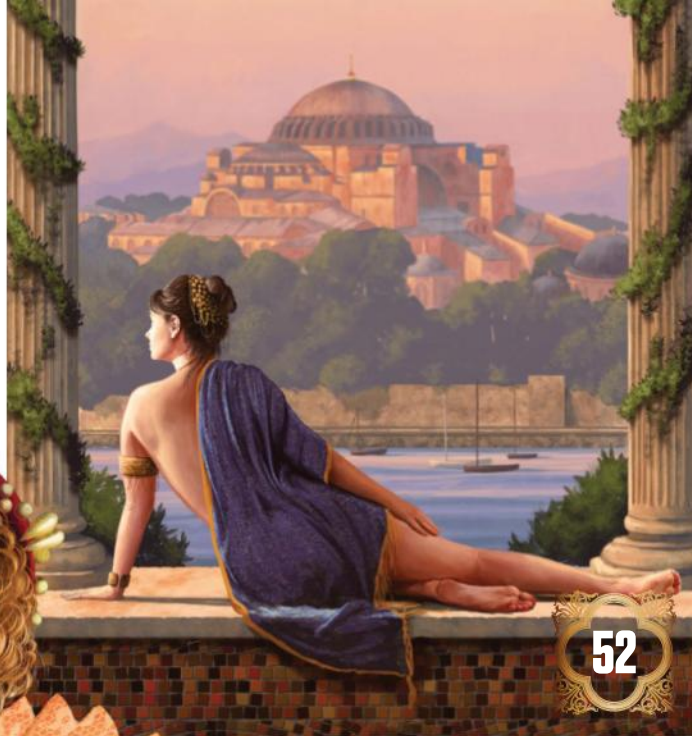
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Kings and Queens who changed history

Monarchs have ruled kingdoms the world over for centuries, but only these few have changed the course of history during their reigns



Elizabeth I

**Defeated the Spanish Armada
- 18 August 1588**

The Virgin Queen who reigned over a golden age, paving the way for the British Empire

She was known by several names - the Virgin Queen, Good Queen Bess, Gloriana - and the legacies of Queen Elizabeth I are many, but of all the ways that she changed the world, there is one episode of her life in particular that stands out. It was the summer of 1588, and having been angered by his 'heretic', 'illegitimate' sister-in-law Elizabeth I, the Protestant ruler who succeeded the English throne at 25 years old after his wife Mary I died, the Catholic King Philip II of Spain invaded England with a great fleet of 22 galleons and over a hundred armed merchant ships.

The attack of the Spanish Armada marked the beginning of an unofficial war between England and Spain that had been brewing for years. Releasing England from the Catholic Church re-imposed on it by Philip II and his late Queen Consort, Elizabeth I had not only resurrected the Protestantism that the Spanish rulers sought to quash, she had gone on the year before to formalise treaties with Protestant rebels in the Netherlands. For a king who wanted to remove all trace of Henry VIII's assault on Catholicism, it was galling to see his daughter Elizabeth solidify Protestant power in Europe.

Meanwhile, pioneers of her realm like Sir Francis Drake were undertaking expeditions of exploration, making enemies of the Spanish as they did so. Philip II was said to have put a price of 20,000 ducats (around £4/\$6.5 million) on Drake's head for his piracy against Spanish vessels. Spanish animosity had built to breaking point while Elizabeth I was building the beginnings of what would later become the British Empire, all while

supporting artists, thinkers and writers like William Shakespeare and Christopher Marlowe at home, and leading a golden age for the arts and sciences.

Highly intelligent and very well educated, Elizabeth I surrounded herself with people she could trust and built strong relations with her people that fostered a sense of solidarity. As the Church was breaking apart in Europe and monarchs wrestled for power, Elizabeth I stood for Protestantism while still honouring English Catholics by preserving some of their practises. She gave a sense of identity to England at the point preceding its global dominance.

And on 18 August 1588, about a week after her navy routed the Spanish Armada at the Battle of Gravelines, chasing it up to the Scottish coast, Elizabeth I gave one of the world's most famous speeches to the troops at Tilbury, a force of 4,000 who were standing by ready to defend the Thames Estuary against any attempt to take London. She promised to take up arms herself against any prince of Europe, and declared: "I know I have the body of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a King."



REIGN 1558-1603
COUNTRY ENGLAND AND IRELAND
LEGACY
DEFEATED THE SPANISH ARMADA, RETURNED ENGLAND TO A PROTESTANT RULE AND LED A GOLDEN AGE OF EXPLORATION, THE ARTS AND SCIENCES

Elizabeth I was both highly intelligent and well loved by her people, nurturing and defending England and its culture while transforming it into a global power

Victoria

Grandmother of Europe becomes Empress of India - 1 May 1876

The queen who led the Industrial Revolution and ruled the largest ever empire

Queen Victoria's reign was a time of transition towards new technologies and infrastructures, and at the Great Exhibition in 1851 she saw new machines like the camera, talking and printing telegraphs, microscopes, locomotives and more. But one of Victoria's many lasting legacies was her expansion of the British Empire on a massive scale. Until the death of her husband Prince Albert, after which she descended into a period of depression and mourning that overshadowed her later years, Queen Victoria was a vibrant presence who represented the spirit of the times.

Her 63-year reign - the longest in British history until Elizabeth II surpassed her in 2015 - saw the British Empire encompass a quarter of the world's land, with Britain's colonies spanning the globe and its navy ruling the seas. In 1857, however, a series of mutinies began in the armies of the East India Company, with sepoys who had been working for the Company beginning to rebel against occupation. One of the turning points in the struggle for independence was the moment when a soldier was asked to bite open one of the cartridges for his rifle, which were usually made using animal fat forbidden to the Sikh and Muslim sepoys. It sparked an uprising that led to the dissolution of the East India Company.

The rule of the East India Company, which had been governing Indian lands with private armies, passed to Victoria, and this began the period of British Raj rule that lasted until India declared independence in 1947. During this period, Victoria oversaw the construction of vast rail networks at home, where she became the first British monarch to travel by train, and saw the first passenger line in North India opened in 1859. In 1876, Victoria was proclaimed Empress of India, and marked the height of British colonialism.

The far and fervent reach of British colonialism had an unmistakable impact on global history, and Victoria was the face of it. Her standards, morality and decisions shaped the face of the world, and tied British culture to that of dozens of other countries. There are few queens who gave their names to an age, but Victoria was one of them. Not only that, she earned the name 'grandmother of Europe' by raising nine children who married into nobility across the continent, tying together its aristocracies just as she knitted together her global empire and brought Britain to the peak of its rule.



REIGN 1837-1901

COUNTRY
GREAT BRITAIN

LEGACY
EXTENDED THE BRITISH EMPIRE
ACROSS THE WORLD AND BECAME
THE EMPRESS OF INDIA, WHILE
PRESIDING OVER A NEW
INDUSTRIAL AGE

After her husband Prince Albert died, Queen Victoria began wearing black mourning clothes on a regular basis, and continued to do so throughout her life

Henry VIII

Created the Church of England - November 1534

The king who brought about the Protestant Reformation and shaped modern Christianity

One of England's lustier Kings, Henry VIII defied Rome and changed the course of Christianity in both Britain and Europe through his desire to divorce his first wife, Catherine of Aragon, and marry Anne Boleyn. By 1526, Catherine, daughter of Isabella of Castile and Ferdinand II, was over 40 years old and had failed to produce a male heir for Henry. After multiple miscarriages she no longer appealed to the King, and he became infatuated with the younger, prettier Anne Boleyn.

When he married Catherine in 1509, he first had to get the Pope to grant a dispensation accepting that her earlier marriage to Henry's brother Arthur had never been consummated. Now, in order to annul his marriage to Catherine, Henry needed the Pope to agree that the opposite was true; that her marriage to Arthur *had* been consummated. This looked unlikely, so Henry took matters

into his own hands. It was around 1527 when he began openly consorting with Anne Boleyn, and 1529 when he began attacking the church through his government, changing legislation and levying new taxes. It culminated in Henry's abrupt disappearance with Anne, and subsequent banishing of Catherine and her daughter from London after they returned a month later. Henry was threatened with excommunication unless he 'cast off the concubine, Anne.' His response was to enact a bill to remove almost all of Rome's subsidies from English churches.

Eventually, in 1534, Henry passed the Act of Supremacy that declared him 'the only supreme head on earth of the Church of England', removing papal authority from Britain and making himself the head of state and religious affairs. By this time, Anne had already given birth to a girl, and was surrounded by rumours of infidelity. Henry beheaded her



A dashing man in his youth who grew morbidly obese in later years, Henry VIII nonetheless took six wives between 1509 and 1547

for these crimes, executing her for treason, adultery and incest, and went on to marry Jane Seymour in May 1536.

Pope Paul III excommunicated Henry, and the Church of England seceded from Roman Catholic rule. Protestant reformers didn't gain much ground in the years immediately following the end of Catholic rule, but it did pave the way for future change. Henry brought the Reformation to England, and his son (with Jane Seymour), was the first English monarch to be raised a Protestant.

<p>REIGN 1509-1547</p> <p>COUNTRY ENGLAND</p> <p>LEGACY DEFIED THE POPE AND CATHOLICISM BY DIVORCING TO REMARRY, AND TURNED ENGLAND PROTESTANT IN THE PROCESS</p>
--



Charlemagne ruled almost all of western Europe and brought in systems of weights, writing and currency

Charlemagne

United western Europe in the Carolingian Empire - 800 CE

Charlemagne ruled the continent for the first time since the Romans and led a Renaissance

King Charles the Great, or Charlemagne, was King of the Franks, Italy and later became the 'Emperor of the Romans' in a move that divided the vestiges of the old Roman empire forever. His coronation by Pope Leo III on Christmas Day 800 CE had circumvented the claim of Empress Irene of Constantinople. What Leo had done was legitimise a second claim to the imperial authority that dated

back to the first Roman emperors, and so started centuries of competing claims of sovereignty.

Long before then, though, young Charlemagne became King of the Franks. Initially, he shared the rule of the kingdom with his brother Carloman, but his death in 771 left Charlemagne the sole ruler of the entire Kingdom. He went on from there to conquer the Lombards and become King of Italy in 774, and the expanded Frankish state he created

eventually went on to become known as the Carolingian Empire, after Charlemagne's family name. Charlemagne's rule saw the Carolingian Renaissance, the first of three that were to sweep medieval Europe between the 8th and 9th Centuries, and during this time there was a marked increase in literature and architecture, the arts, legal and religious studies and more.

Some of Charlemagne's own writings, like the *Admonitio Generalis*, opened up discussions of rational ideas across Europe, and during his reign he introduced administrative reforms throughout the land. He has since been called the 'father of Europe', and both the French and German monarchies consider Charlemagne to be a part of their history. Not only did he oversee this Renaissance, he took part in it. Charlemagne standardised weights, measures and coins, devising systems of pounds, feet, livre, shillings and pence, and he even tried to standardise Christianity throughout his empire. Charlemagne instilled his love of learning in the monastic schools that he developed during his reign. He saw an end to the Dark Ages following the death of Rome.

<p>REIGN 768-814 CE</p> <p>COUNTRY FRANCE AND GERMANY</p> <p>LEGACY CHARLEMAGNE ENDED THE DARK AGES IN EUROPE AND MADE THE FIRST MEDIEVAL RENAISSANCE POSSIBLE</p>

Isabella I of Castile

**Sent Columbus to the New World
- 17 April 1492**

Isabella of Castile united the Spanish Kingdoms and funded the discovery of the century

Remembered as the 'Mother of the Americas' by some, to others, Queen Isabella I of Castile will always be remembered as the architect of the Spanish Inquisition that ravaged Europe during her reign and for decades afterwards. She and her husband Ferdinand II, King of Aragon, Naples, Sicily and Valencia, united the old Spanish Kingdoms under their rule and modernised their collective kingdom, freeing it of debt and restructuring its politics. It was the beginning of Spain as we know it, and Isabella and Ferdinand made a powerful team.

When Christopher Columbus came to them seeking protection and finance for a voyage to discover the New World, they assisted him. On 17 April 1492, Isabella and Ferdinand signed a commission making him admiral of a funded fleet, and with that support planted Spain and its culture firmly in the Americas.



REIGN 1474-1504
COUNTRY SPAIN
LEGACY GAVE PROTECTION AND FINANCE TO CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS, GIVING SPAIN A STRONGHOLD IN THE AMERICAS THAT STILL HAS A POWERFUL LEGACY TODAY

Financed Christopher Columbus' journey to discover the New World and raised the Spanish Inquisition to power with her husband Ferdinand II

Boudica

Lost the last battle for resistance to the Romans - 60/61 CE

Queen Boudica led the southern Celtic tribes in revolt against Roman rule



Despite her ultimate defeat, Boudica became a powerful symbol of rebellion and the leader of the Celtic tribes who attempted to overthrow the occupation

REIGN 60-61 CE
COUNTRY BRITAIN
LEGACY REVOLTED AGAINST THE ROMAN EMPIRE IN BRITAIN AND, ALTHOUGH SHE ALMOST SUCCEEDED, ENDED UP SECURING BRITAIN FOR THE ENEMY

Queen of the Iceni tribe in what is now known as Norfolk, England, Boudica repelled the Romans from Londinium, the capital, before eventually falling to the governor Gaius Suetonius Paulinus. Though ultimately unsuccessful, she almost threw the invaders out of Britain for good, and left an indelible cultural mark that led Queen Victoria to claim her as her spiritual forebear centuries later.

When Boudica's husband, King Prasutagus of the Iceni, died in 60 or 61 AD, the Romans were quick to capitalise on this opportunity. They flogged Boudica, raped her daughters, and called in their debts from the tribesmen. Boudica fought through these terrible trials and went on to lead 100,000 Iceni and other old East Anglian tribes in revolt against the Ninth Spanish Legion and the capital of the Roman lands, Londinium. The later defeat of Boudica, however, ensured Roman rule in the south of Britain for generations to come.

REIGN 336-323

COUNTRY MACEDONIA;
ALSO EGYPT, PERSIA & ASIA

LEGACY

CREATED ONE OF THE GREATEST
ANCIENT EMPIRES IN HIS QUEST TO
DISCOVER THE GREAT OUTER SEA AND
THE END OF THE WORLD



Alexander the Great

Invaded the 'end of the world' - 326 BCE

Alexander the Great's empire comprised most of the known world as his forces turned towards India

Alexander the Great faced tens of thousands of infantry and cavalry men, as well as war elephants, when he invaded India

King Alexander of Macedon came to power after his father, King Phillip II of Macedon, was assassinated in 336 BCE, and he inherited both a strong kingdom and a capable army. He put them both to work quickly, proving himself a ruthless leader who was changing the world with his vision.

Continuing to establish himself as an extremely capable military tactician, his armies defeated the Persian Achaemenid Empire, leaving Alexander to rule Persia and Asia Minor, and then swept on towards India, which was the edge of the known world at the time. Alexander sought to rule over the Aegean as Athens had done before, and as he

marched his left great cities in his wake, naming each one Alexandria. By 326 BCE he had made it deep into India, where his army now struggled against the jungle, harsh climes and ferocious warriors. He was eventually turned back, but he spread Greek culture deep into the east and ushered in the Hellenistic period.

Louis XIV

The Sun King chosen by God

Declared he was chosen by God to rule, and ensured that no one could challenge him

After inheriting the French throne at the age of four, Louis XIV spent a lifetime reaffirming his status as his nation's supreme ruler. By the time he died at the age of 76, he had ruled longer than any monarch in European history.

During the early years of his reign, the country was run by Louis' mother and his minister Cardinal Mazarin, during which time he saw the French people revolt against their rule, and the family was forced to flee Paris more than once. As the King, Louis promoted the idea of divine right and referred to himself as the 'Sun King'. He left Paris to build an enormous palace for himself at Versailles, which he encouraged the nobility to inhabit to avoid dissent. He revolutionised France's infrastructure, making the country more prosperous and easier to control. However, he spent much of his rule at war, and the final 30 years of his 72-year reign were spent in costly and unsuccessful conflict.



Louis build the great Palace at Versailles, a symbol of royal power and opulence

REIGN 1643-1715

COUNTRY FRANCE

LEGACY
PROMOTED THE NOTION OF THE DIVINE RIGHT TO RULE AND THE ABSOLUTE POWER OF THE MONARCHY, PAVING THE WAY FOR THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

The Gunpowder plot put paid to any concerns that James I had Catholic sympathies, whether they were correct or not



James I

First King of Great Britain

United England and Scotland, and believed that he had the Divine Right to do so

By the time James VI of Scotland took the throne of England, he had already been a monarch for 36 years. He was named King of Scotland at the age of one, and believed so firmly in the Divine Right of Kings that he wrote a book on the subject. When he came to England after the death of Elizabeth, I he had himself proclaimed the first king of Great Britain. Believing he knew exactly what he was doing, James would argue endlessly with Parliament over trivial matters, refusing to back down and lose face.

While many worried that James was too lenient on Catholics,

his reaction to the Gunpowder Plot of 1605 proved otherwise. He had authorised work on the King James Bible, the good book translated and altered to conform to the Church of England's beliefs. His extravagant spending angered politicians, while he lacked his predecessor Elizabeth's love for the people. By the time of his death, the seeds of the Civil War had already been sown.

REIGN 1567/1603-1625

COUNTRY GREAT BRITAIN

LEGACY
BROUGHT THE CONCEPT OF DIVINE RIGHT TO ENGLAND, AND WAS THE FIRST KING OF GREAT BRITAIN

Nebuchadnezzar II

Warrior king of the Babylonian Empire

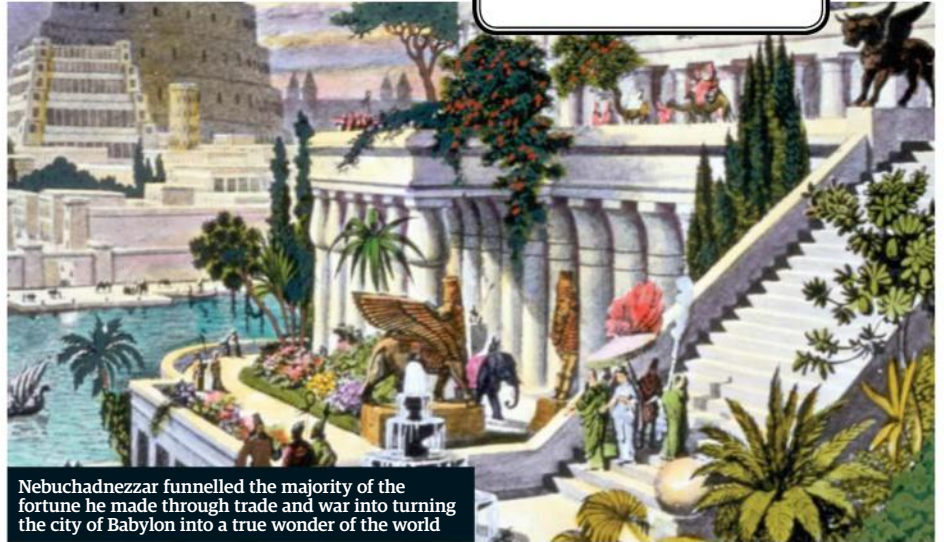
Created the Babylonian Empire, forming a state whose legend survives to this day

Ancient Babylon had at last found stability under the rule of Nabopolassar. With his son Nebuchadnezzar II, it would find glory. When the young man took power, he asked the gods that he be "satiated with splendour," and spent the rest of his reign making sure that this would be the case.

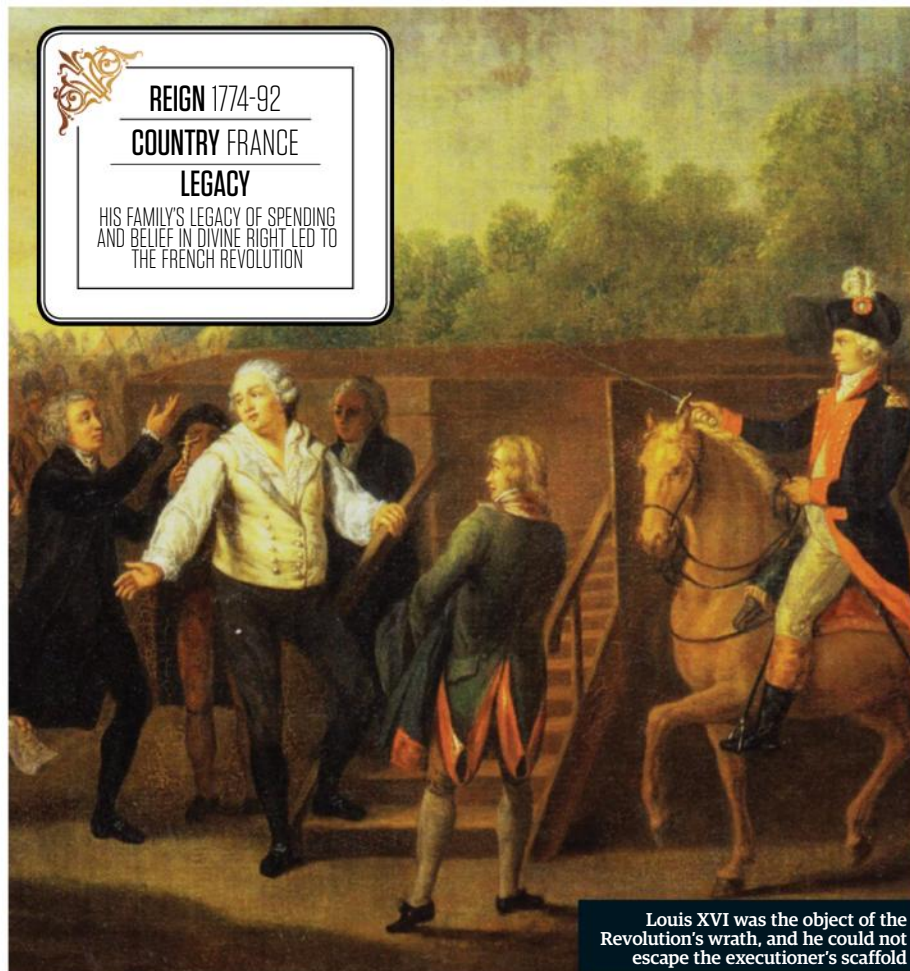
His father had secured independence from Assyria. Nebuchadnezzar fought the Egyptians, Palestinians and Syrians to create a Babylonian Empire. He built the Hanging Gardens of Babylon and took control of the Mesopotamian trade routes to the Mediterranean, using the fortunes gained from his efforts to turn his city into a true wonder of the world. The walls had his name inscribed on them, while chariot races took place along their tops.

To many, Nebuchadnezzar will forever be remembered as the man who destroyed the Temple in Jerusalem and deported many prominent Jews to Babylon. He is remembered in the Bible as an enemy of God.

REIGN 605-562 BCE
COUNTRY BABYLON
LEGACY TURNED BABYLON INTO AN EMPIRE AND WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE EXILE OF THE JEWS



Nebuchadnezzar funnelled the majority of the fortune he made through trade and war into turning the city of Babylon into a true wonder of the world



REIGN 1774-92
COUNTRY FRANCE
LEGACY HIS FAMILY'S LEGACY OF SPENDING AND BELIEF IN DIVINE RIGHT LED TO THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

Louis XVI was the object of the Revolution's wrath, and he could not escape the executioner's scaffold

Louis XVI

The French king who lost his head

The last in a line of profligate monarchs, Louis was executed for treason in the French Revolution

Louis XVI's reign was doomed from the start. After a succession of out-of-touch French kings who believed that they were chosen by God and an ever-worsening financial crisis, his attempts to continue that legacy led to revolution and his death.

His marriage to Marie Antoinette was a political victory, but the (incorrect) image of her as an uncaring, ever-spending snob meant that she was unpopular with the populace. Careless spending and supporting the American War of Independence meant that France was on the verge of bankruptcy. In desperation, Louis called the 'States General' to raise taxes without giving Parliament any power. The political factions united in opposition, and the people supported them, storming the Bastille in 1789 and forcing the royal family to leave Versailles for Paris. When Louis and his family were caught trying to escape, a new constitutional monarchy was established in retaliation, but it wasn't long before France was declared a republic in September 1792. On 21 January 1793, Louis was executed for treason.

Henry V

The Shakespearean hero who put France to the sword

William Shakespeare wrote of a wayward prince who found his way, but Henry was always a committed politician and soldier. He argued with his father about how to rule but, on becoming king, he led two hugely successful military campaigns in France that would never be matched. His finest hour was at the Battle of Agincourt in 1415, but he died after just nine years on the throne.

REIGN 1413-1422
COUNTRY ENGLAND
LEGACY
HIS MILITARY SUCCESSSES IN FRANCE
INSPIRED GENERATIONS OF ENGLISH
KINGS TO TRY AND REPEAT THEM

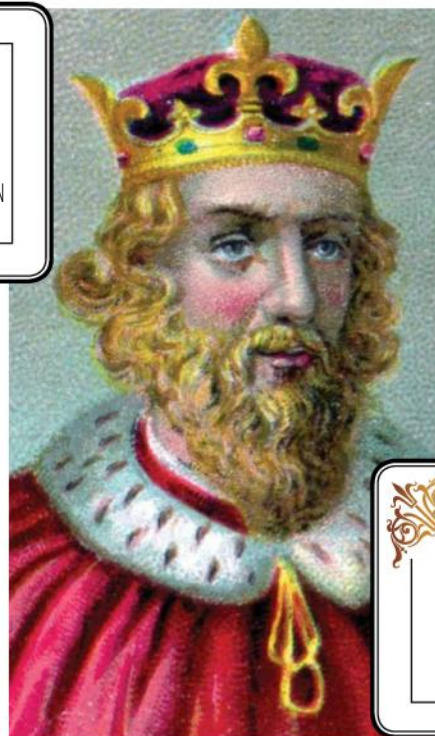


REIGN 1066-87
COUNTRY ENGLAND
LEGACY
TOOK THE ENGLISH CROWN AND BEGAN
THE NORMAN RULE OF ENGLAND

William the Conqueror

The King who invaded England

The Duke of Normandy invaded England in 1066, and waited to face the recently crowned Harold at Hastings, stating that the crown had been promised to him. After a decisive victory, William took the English throne, secured borders and treaties with the Scottish and the Welsh, and ordered the creation of the Domesday Book. He brought England stability and a new royal line.



Alfred the Great

Turned the tide against the Viking invasion

When Alfred became King of Wessex, England was the victim of persistent attack from Danish Vikings, who struck further and further south. He used guerrilla warfare against their troops, in the process forcing them to consider a treaty. By creating

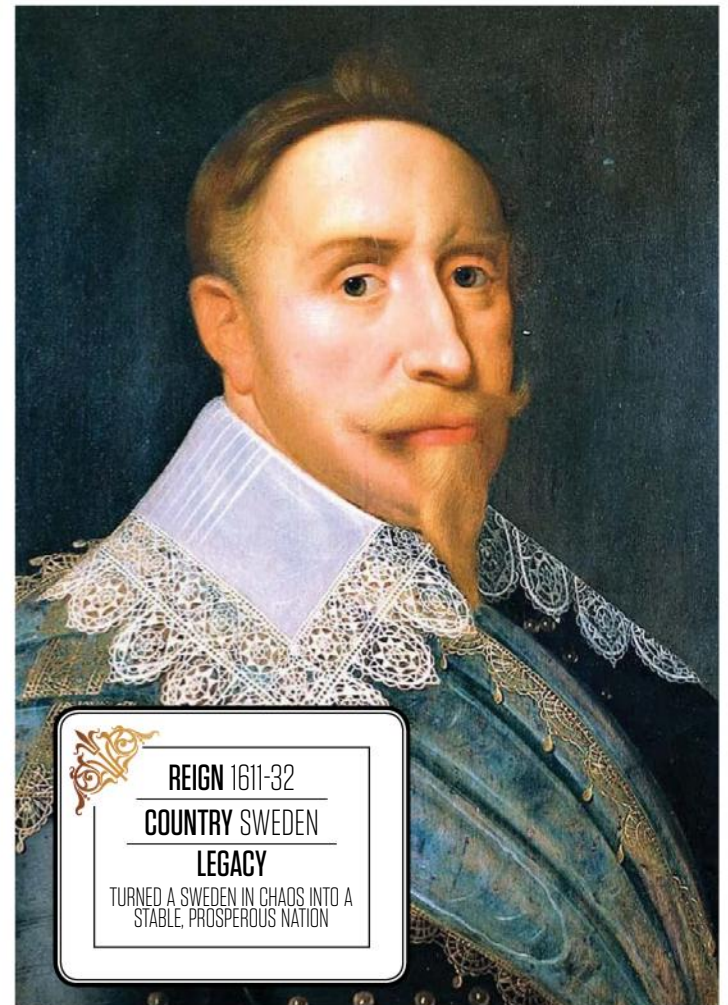
REIGN 871-899 CE
COUNTRY WESSEX
LEGACY
BROUGHT PEACE AND
PROGRESS TO ENGLAND

a strong base and defences, promoting literacy and justice, and creating a partition treaty in 886 CE, Alfred brought peace and prosperity.

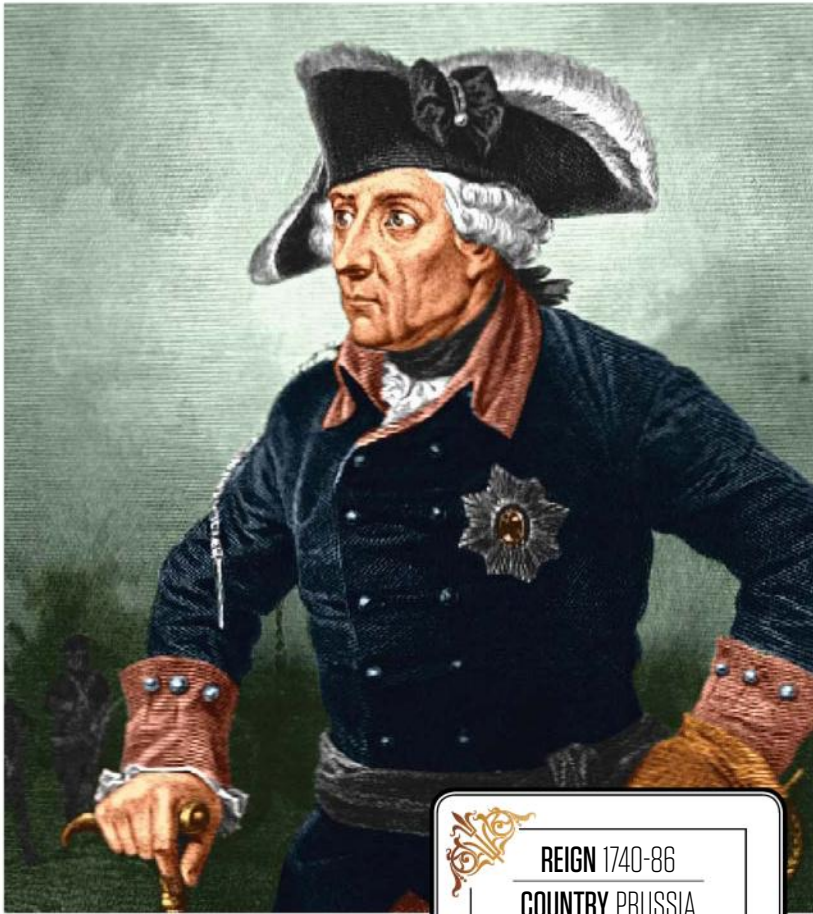
Gustav II Adolf of Sweden

The saviour of Sweden

Gustav had inherited three international wars when he took the throne at the age of 16, but after a series of campaigns he made peace with Denmark, Poland and Russia and found a way to resolve the internal conflicts that beset Sweden. With the country at peace, he developed an infrastructure and bureaucracy that stabilised the nation, before entering the 30 Years War to claim territory in the Baltic.



REIGN 1611-32
COUNTRY SWEDEN
LEGACY
TURNED A SWEDEN IN CHAOS INTO A STABLE, PROSPEROUS NATION



REIGN 1740-86
COUNTRY PRUSSIA
LEGACY
TURNED PRUSSIA INTO THE GREATEST MILITARY POWER IN EUROPE

Frederick II of Prussia

Frederick turned Prussia into a military superpower

After an abusive childhood at the hands of his father, Frederick II went on to unite the disparate territories of the Prussian territories, using his military might and cunning to create one of Europe's great powers, even after defeat in the Seven Years' War. As significant as his military accomplishments were, his commitment to enlightened absolutism is just as important, with a rationalistic approach to religion and justice.



John III Sobieski of Poland-Lithuania

The soldier who became a king

Before he was king, John III was already a hero after leading the Polish military against the Swedes, Tartars and Cossacks. When the Ottomans advanced on Europe, he joined with Pope Leopold and led the glorious campaign to relieve the Holy Roman Empire's forces at the Battle of Vienna in 1683. He would never recapture that glory, but his victory against overwhelming odds was legendary.

REIGN 1674-96
COUNTRY POLAND-LITHUANIA
LEGACY
HELD BACK THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

Edward I

United England by any means necessary

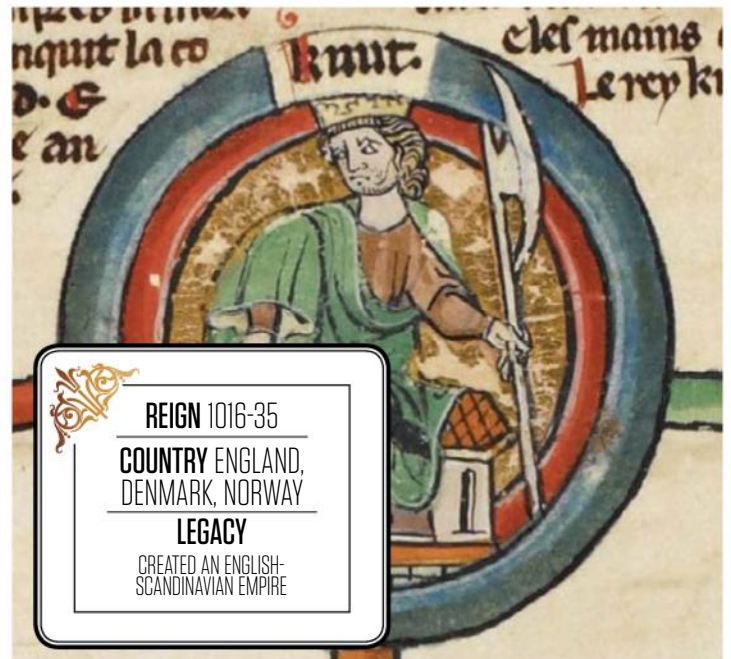
Edward was determined to create a unified England that recognised him as its ruler. When he returned from the Crusades after his father's death, he invaded Wales twice to subdue rebel forces and brought it under English rule, creating new legal and trade systems to ensure funds for his brutal campaigns. His final years were spent fighting the Scottish uprisings with shockingly brutal methods.



Charles V

Faced the end of an empire

Charles became Holy Roman Emperor while the Protestant Reformation was taking place in 1519. For the majority of his reign he allowed religious freedom, provided Protestants fought with him against France and the rising Ottoman threat in the East. Riches found in the Americas weren't enough to keep his campaigns going, however, and much of his empire in Europe was lost. He finally abdicated in favour of his son.



Cnut the Great

The king who made England part of a bigger world

The Viking king who told the tide to turn back understood that the power of a king is fleeting. However, he amassed plenty in his lifetime, having invaded England and taken the crown in 1017. He divided the country into kingdoms to ensure peace, and sent his Danish soldiers back home, finally creating a huge empire by conquering Norway in 1025.

Mbande Nzinga

The African queen who held off the Portuguese

Mbande Nzinga was born into conflict with the Portuguese, who were raiding the Ndongo territory for slaves. When her cruel brother asked for help while negotiating with them, she secured a treaty and had him killed. Having taken power, she cancelled the treaty when it became clear that the Portuguese had broken it. Between 1639 and 1648 she held back her enemies, finally agreeing to a treaty that kept her in power.



REIGN 1623-63
COUNTRY THE NDONGO (ANGOLA)
LEGACY
FOUGHT OFF PORTUGUESE SLAVE TRADERS AGAINST OVERWHELMING ODDS



REIGN 1154-1204
COUNTRY ENGLAND
LEGACY
SURVIVED HER HUSBAND TO BE A CRUCIAL PART OF HER SONS' RULE

Eleanor of Aquitaine

The queen who defied her king to bring stability

The ambitious Eleanor made Henry of Anjou her second husband, who became the King of England. She assisted her children with a rebellion attempt in 1173, and ensured that her favourite son Richard's throne was kept safe during his time in the Crusades. She kept his kingdom running smoothly, negotiating his wedding and release from prison, and assisted her son John when he became king.



REIGN 1560-89
COUNTRY FRANCE
LEGACY
BRUTALLY ATTEMPTED TO CRUSH THE WARS OF RELIGION TO KEEP HER SONS ON THE THRONE

Catherine De' Medici

France's regent during the Wars of Religion

Catherine stepped into power in 1560 when her husband Henry II of France - and her eldest son Francis - died in quick succession. As regent for her ten-year-old son Charles, she kept power grabs at bay from the nobility and used increasingly violent methods to quell the French Wars of Religion, which culminated in her involvement in the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre. Her influence continued throughout the reign of her son Henry.

REIGN 1936-52
COUNTRY ENGLAND
LEGACY
 PROVIDING THE VOICE OF
 LEADERSHIP DURING CONFLICT



George VI

Refused to leave London during World War II

Following his brother's abdication, the shy, awkward George VI took the crown shortly before World War II broke out. He remained in Buckingham Palace during the Blitz and visited bombed homes, as well as meeting the troops at home and abroad after D-Day. Ever conscious of the military's efforts, he created the George Cross and the George Medal.

Charles II

The Restoration King

After Parliament's rule following the Civil War, Charles II was invited to return to power in 1660. He encouraged tolerance (after punishing those who had executed his father) and promoted peace with France and international trade in America and India. He ruled during the Great Fire and the Great Plague, but is better known for his mistresses, his belief in Catholicism and conflicts with Parliament.



REIGN 1660-85
COUNTRY ENGLAND
LEGACY
 RESTORED ENGLAND TO A
 MONARCHY AND RETURNED THE
 MONARCHY TO ITS OLD WAYS



Charles IV

The Holy Roman politician

When Charles was born, the kingdom he stood to inherit was that of Luxembourg and Bohemia. When he died, he was the Holy Roman Emperor, with Italy, Germany and Lombardy owing fealty to him. He preferred to use his skills as a politician to gain power, promoting the arts, sciences, charities and church building, as well as amassing a staggering empire in a (mostly) peaceful manner.

REIGN 1346-78
COUNTRY
 HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE
LEGACY
 USED TREATIES AND NEGOTIATIONS
 TO GAIN POWER OVER THE HOLY
 ROMAN EMPIRE

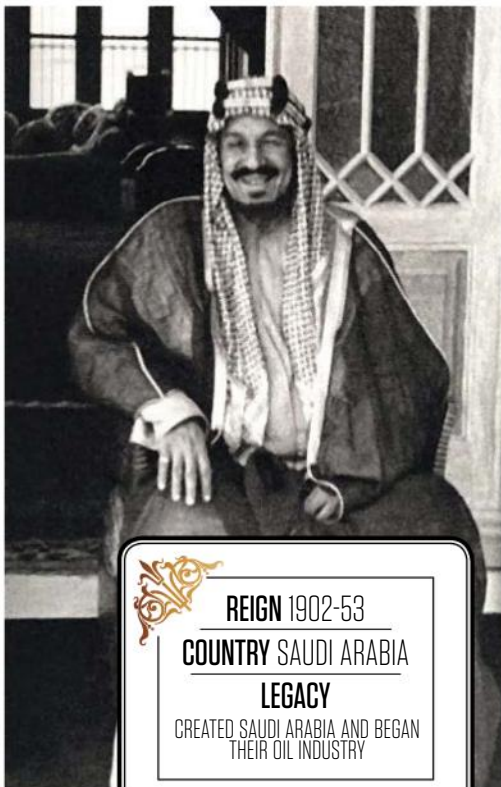


REIGN 1696-1725
COUNTRY RUSSIA
LEGACY
 FORCED RUSSIA TO BECOME A MODERN STATE

Peter I

The Russian reformer

Peter took control of a Russia in tatters and began a period of modernisation. He promoted education and the sciences to improve industry and looked to Western methods to strengthen his navy and bring Russian territories together, as well as bringing the church under his control and modernising the alphabet. He was cruel and unpopular, but dragged Russia into the modern age.

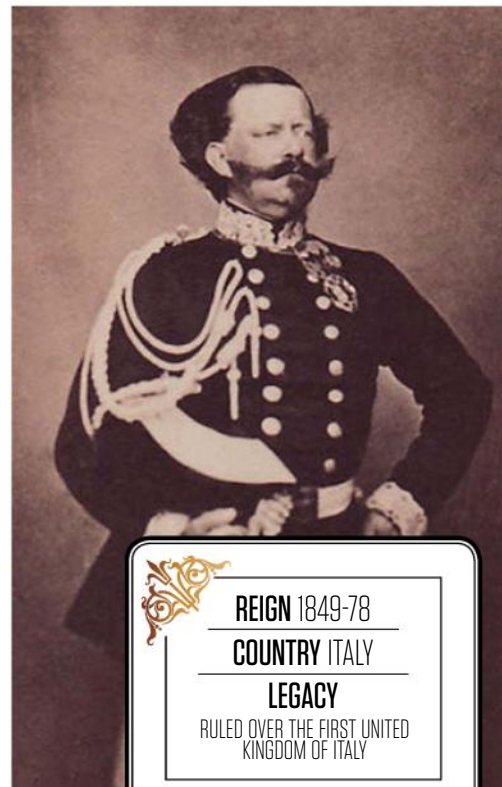


REIGN 1902-53
COUNTRY SAUDI ARABIA
LEGACY
 CREATED SAUDI ARABIA AND BEGAN THEIR OIL INDUSTRY

Ibn Saud

The father of Saudi Arabia

Ibn Saud began his journey to power by reclaiming his father's territory in central Arabia in a bloody coup. He fought off Turkish forces and encouraged religious fanaticism to support his rule as he expanded his territory through conquest of his Arab rivals. He founded the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and brokered the first oil deals of the region, changing its fortunes forever.



REIGN 1849-78
COUNTRY ITALY
LEGACY
 RULED OVER THE FIRST UNITED KINGDOM OF ITALY

Victor Emmanuel II

The Sardinian who united Italy

After inheriting a failed war with Austria, Victor paid his way out of the conflict and turned the kingdom of Sardinia-Piedmont into something much greater. With the help of Count Cavour and Garibaldi, the Piedmontese army took territory from Prussia and France to create the first united Italy.



REIGN 522-486 BCE
COUNTRY PERSIA
LEGACY
 EXPANDED AND CONSOLIDATED THE PERSIAN EMPIRE AND TURNED IT INTO A GREAT, ENLIGHTENED AND PROSPEROUS KINGDOM

King Darius the Great

The Persian architect

Darius took power through violence and cunning. Once on the throne, it was largely through this second attribute that he turned Persia into a true empire. He divided his kingdom into 'satrapies', ordered the construction of roads, promoted trade, ordered a single currency and official language and encouraged religious tolerance. Under his guidance the Persian Empire became a shining beacon of prosperity and enlightenment.

— **1353 – 1336 BCE** —

Nefertiti

Her limestone bust is recognised the world over, and her chiselled features and perfect proportions have come to epitomise our ideas of beauty. But who was the woman behind the masterpiece?

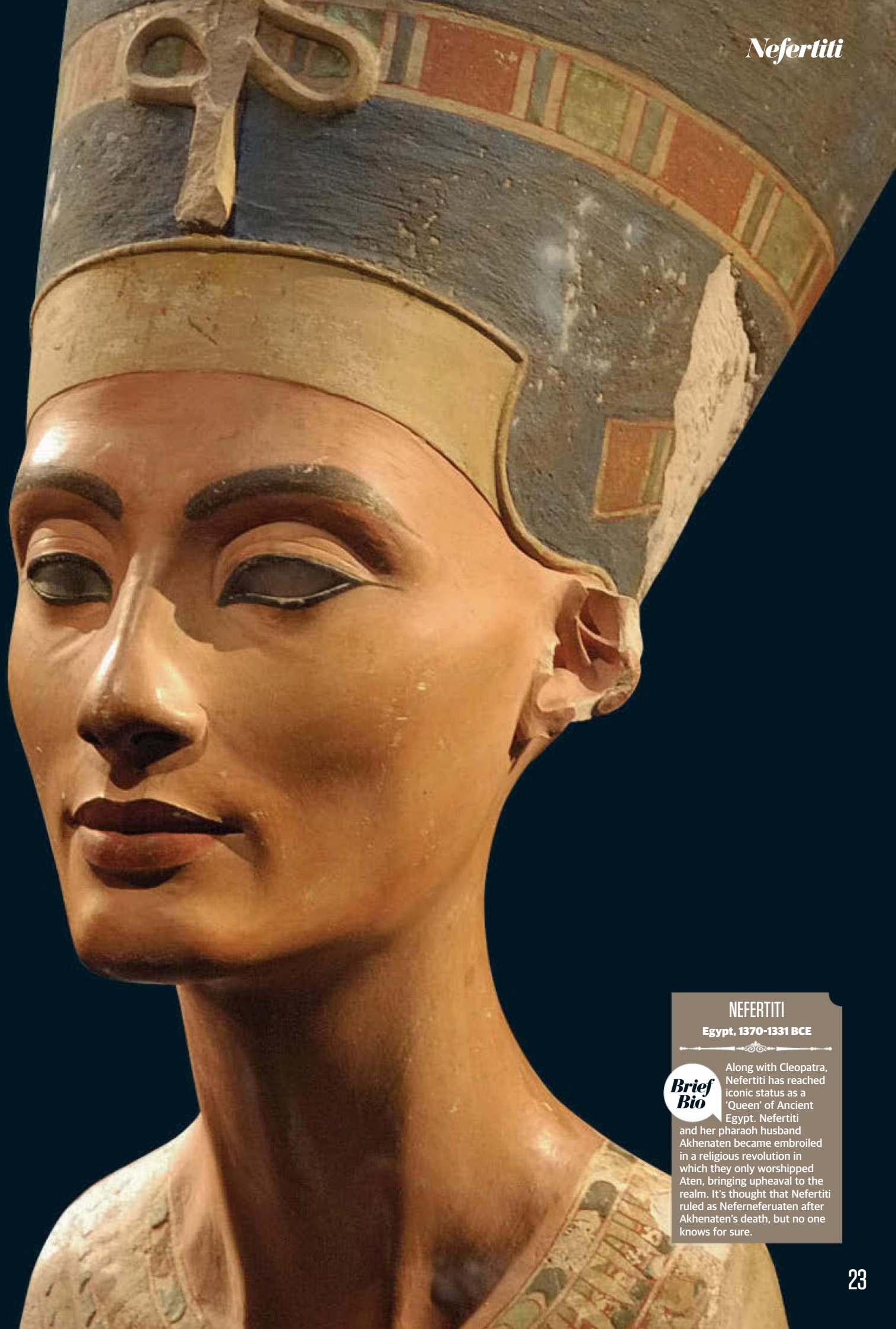
On 6 December 1912, an Egyptian workman digging along the banks of the River Nile unearthed one of the most precious treasures in the history of Egyptology. The man was one of many working on the excavation of an ancient sculptor's workshop, a dig overseen by German archaeologist Ludwig Borchardt. As he felt the knowing jolt of his pick against hard stone, he brushed away the earth to reveal the distinctive colours of ancient paintwork, and immediately called for his superior. Borchardt recalls: "The tools were put aside and the hands were now used," revealing the slender neck of a limestone bust buried upside down in the dirt. Digging deeper, they revealed a pair of full, red lips; a dramatic, sloping nose; almond eyes; and dark, arching eyebrows. Finally, they uncovered a huge cylindrical crown, one that had only been seen before in the few existing depictions of one ancient Egyptian: Queen Nefertiti.

Since its discovery, the bust has become one of the most visited and most iconic artefacts of the ancient kingdom. Yet it remains one of the most elusive. Following their reign, Nefertiti and her husband Pharaoh Akhenaten were virtually wiped

from Egypt's historical records - their faces chiselled away from stone reliefs, their names scratched out from inscriptions. To add to the mystery, all references to Nefertiti vanished completely in about the 12th year of Akhenaten's reign, with no mention of her made thereafter. What had they done to instil such hatred in their people? And why did Nefertiti suddenly disappear? It is only now, more than 3,000 years after their deaths, that the answers are beginning to resurface.

The truth about Nefertiti's parentage is uncertain, but it is likely she was born outside of the royal family: possibly the daughter of a court vizier, or a Mittani princess sent to unite two kingdoms. What we do know is that her face was one of timeless beauty - her name means 'the beautiful one has come' - and she would have been a desirable match for the young Egyptian prince, then known as Amenhotep. The pair were married in their mid teens, had their first child shortly after, and ascended the throne around 1351 BCE. What is known of their early reign is sketchy, but archaeologists have deduced that throughout the 18th Dynasty, a cult of the god Amun had grown incredibly powerful, so much so that by the time Amenhotep was crowned, the cult's priests were almost as powerful as the pharaoh himself.

Following their reign, Nefertiti and her husband were wiped from Egypt's historical records



NEFERTITI

Egypt, 1370-1331 BCE

Brief Bio

Along with Cleopatra, Nefertiti has reached iconic status as a 'Queen' of Ancient Egypt. Nefertiti and her pharaoh husband Akhenaten became embroiled in a religious revolution in which they only worshipped Aten, bringing upheaval to the realm. It's thought that Nefertiti ruled as Neferneferuaten after Akhenaten's death, but no one knows for sure.

Egypt's female pharaohs

Most of the ancient rulers were men, but a few women became the empire's most powerful individuals



Sobekneferu

Sobekneferu was the first female pharaoh. When her brother died without leaving a male heir, Sobekneferu ascended the throne. Very little else is known about her, but some

believe that she is the Egyptian princess who rescued Moses from the reeds.

Nitocris

The Greek historian Herodotus listed Nitocris as the last pharaoh of the Sixth Dynasty. She is believed to have killed her brother's murderers by inviting them to a banquet in an underground chamber and flooding the room with water from the Nile.



Hatshepsut

Hatshepsut is considered to be one of Egypt's most successful pharaohs. She established several important trade routes, which led to a huge

growth in the nation's wealth and also commissioned hundreds of building projects.

Twosret

This woman came to the throne after her young stepson, with whom she was co-regent, died. She ruled during a turbulent time and it is likely that she was overthrown from power during a civil war.



Cleopatra

Perhaps the most famous female pharaoh in Egypt's history, Cleopatra is infamous for her liaisons with several important Roman politicians, and

is believed to have committed suicide after Mark Antony's death.

But in the fifth year of Amenhotep's reign, something extraordinary happened. The pharaoh changed his name to Akhenaten, plundered and closed down the temples and threw the priests out of office. After thousands of years of polytheism, he and Nefertiti declared that there was now only one true god: Aten, the sun-disc. And the only way to reach this god was through the pharaoh himself. Akhenaten then led a mass exodus from the ancient capital of Thebes and set about building a new city in the middle of the desert, which he called 'Amarna'. This was to be the new centre of the Ancient Egyptian empire. The city was surrounded on three sides by inhospitable cliffs - a natural defence against enemies of the crown. The young pharaoh knew that his actions had not been popular, and the rumblings of unrest could be felt across the kingdom.

With this religious revolution also came a cultural one. Egyptian art, which before had been stiff and formal, became much more naturalistic. Depictions of Akhenaten took on a far more feminine shape, with rounded hips and

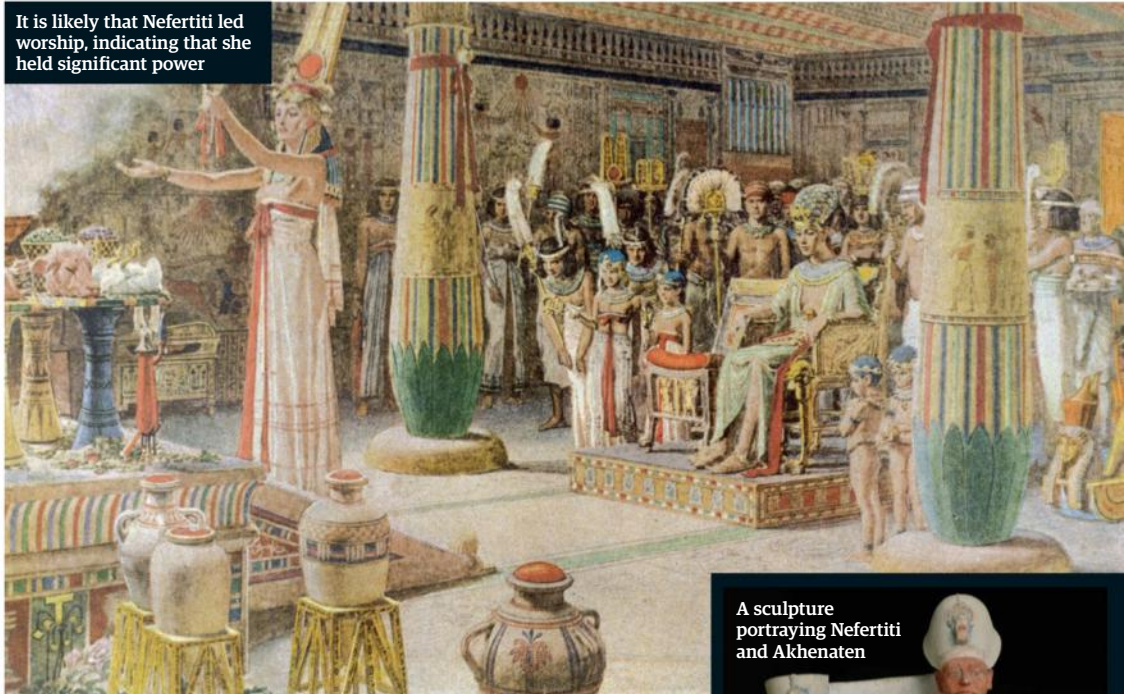
a prominent chest. Scenes depicting the royal family became more intimate, showing the couple kissing and bouncing their children on their knees. But what is perhaps most extraordinary about the art of Amarna is the way Queen Nefertiti was portrayed. Reliefs and statues show Nefertiti chariot racing, smiting enemies and even leading worship - roles that before had always been reserved for the pharaoh. During the first

five years of their reign, she appeared in reliefs almost twice as often as her husband, and is often shown as being of equal size to him, suggesting that Nefertiti was far more powerful than the wives of the pharaohs before her.

However, it wasn't long before this period of rich culture and peace came to an abrupt end. Akhenaten had exhausted nearly all of his resources in building his new city and the nation was on the brink of bankruptcy. Large parts of the Egyptian empire had fallen under the control of the expanding Hittite kingdom, after the pharaoh had refused to listen to the advice of his generals and send military enforcements to the north. Not only was there an economic crisis, but the spiritual crisis that had been bubbling beneath the surface was ready to explode. The pharaoh's new religion

After millennia of polytheism, they declared that there was now only one god, Aten, and the only way to reach Him was through the pharaoh

It is likely that Nefertiti led worship, indicating that she held significant power



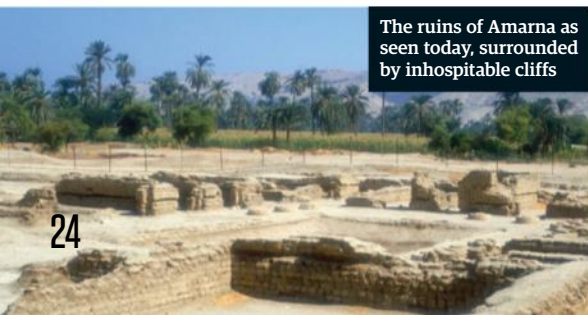
A sculpture portraying Nefertiti and Akhenaten



Amarna art depicts Nefertiti racing chariots and smiting enemies



The ruins of Amarna as seen today, surrounded by inhospitable cliffs





A limestone relief depicting Nefertiti making offerings to the sun god, Aten

had destroyed all the ancient traditions that the Egyptians held so dear, and very few were prepared to let go of their trusted and much-loved gods. Revolts broke out across the nation, spurred on by the bitter priests and military officials who were desperate to take back the powers that had been so ruthlessly stolen from them. By the time of his death around 1334 BCE, Akhenaten's country was a broken one.

It is unlikely that these revolts came as a surprise, but what the Egyptians could never have predicted was the disappearance of Nefertiti in the 12th year of her husband's reign. Whereas before her face had adorned the walls of temples and palaces, from the year 1339 BCE, all records and depictions of her stopped being made. What had happened to the queen - the woman the



Nefertiti: the first woman to be airbrushed?

CT scans of the famous bust have revealed that Nefertiti may not have been as beautiful as was first believed. Scientists have been able to analyse the layers of stucco below the outer one and have discovered that the original model had less

prominent cheekbones, a slight bump on the ridge of the nose and even wrinkles around the mouth and cheeks. Just like modern airbrushing, it is likely that the queen's sculpture was altered to adhere to contemporary ideas of beauty.

pharaoh seemed to worship? Some historians believe that she fell out of favour, perhaps because she was unable to bear Akhenaten the son he so desperately wanted. Others believe she died, a victim, perhaps, of the flu epidemic that was plaguing the country, or even a jealous member of Akhenaten's harem.

But one piece of art, known as the *Coregency Stela*, suggests that Nefertiti didn't disappear at all, rather that she became someone else; someone far more powerful. In the piece, Nefertiti and Akhenaten are depicted with one of their daughters, but Nefertiti's name has been

chiselled out and replaced with a different one - 'Ankhkheperure Neferneferuaten'. This was the name of Akenhaten's co-regent, who was crowned around the same time that Nefertiti's name disappeared from history. Could Nefertiti have taken on a new name and become her husband's co-regent? And if so, could this explain the identity of the mysterious pharaoh who came to power after the death of Akhenaten?

These are questions that we will likely never know the answer to, as in the years following his death, nearly all evidence of Akhenaten's reign was destroyed by the people he had so inherently wounded. Deemed a heretic, his name was scratched from the walls of the temples and depictions of the beautiful Nefertiti mutilated with chisels. But Akhenaten's legacy lived on in the form of a son, the identity of who's mother is still contested. The boy was called Tutankhaten, meaning 'the living image of Aten', and he succeeded to the throne when he was about nine years old. Despite his tender age, he immediately set about reversing the changes made during his father's reign. Amarna was abandoned and fell into ruin, the old gods were brought back from the dead and the priests of Amun were reinstated. But there remained one remnant of the old religion, one that couldn't be destroyed with a hammer or chisel. The remnant was the boy's name. Just like his father and stepmother before him, Tutankhaten gave himself a new name, a name that would honour the glory of Amun and the gods that his people loved so dearly. It was one that thousands of years later would be pasted across newsstands and known to people in every corner of the globe. The name was Tutankhamun.



Images of the royal family were more intimate than ever seen before

The search for Nefertiti

Could the female mummy discovered in tomb KV35 in 1898 be that of the famous Egyptian queen?

Since the discovery of Nefertiti's bust, archaeologists have scoured the Egyptian desert in search of her resting place. Although no formal identification has been made, one Egyptologist believes she has found Nefertiti's mummy in the tomb of Amenhotep II, the great grandfather of Akhenaten.

The mummy, known as 'The Younger Lady', was discovered buried alongside Queen Tiye, Akhenaten's mother, and a young boy, possibly his brother, back in 1898. The discoverer, Victor Loret, originally believed the mummy to be male, but a closer inspection by anatomist Dr Grafton Elliot Smith Tests concluded that it was a woman. The room containing the mummies was then sealed, and had been all but forgotten until 1993, when Egyptologist Joann Fletcher stumbled across one unlikely piece of evidence.

Joann, who at the time was completing a PhD in ancient Egyptian hair, came across a wig in the Cairo Museum that was in the Nubian style - a style favoured by royal women in Akhenaten's

court, and particularly by Nefertiti. The wig had been discovered in tomb KV35 - the resting place of the 18th Dynasty pharaoh Amenhotep II. Intrigued as to the ownership of the wig, Joann requested for the sealed chamber to be re-opened.

What she discovered within the room was curious to say the least. The only mummy to whom the wig could viably belong was that of the Younger Lady, whose head had been shaved. This lack of hair emphasised a remarkably long neck - one all too familiar to an Egyptologist who had dedicated years to the study of Egypt's Amarna period. Further inspections led to the conclusion that this mummy was indeed a woman, and one who had died in her twenties or thirties - an age that, should she have survived her husband as the evidence has suggested, would fit that of Nefertiti.

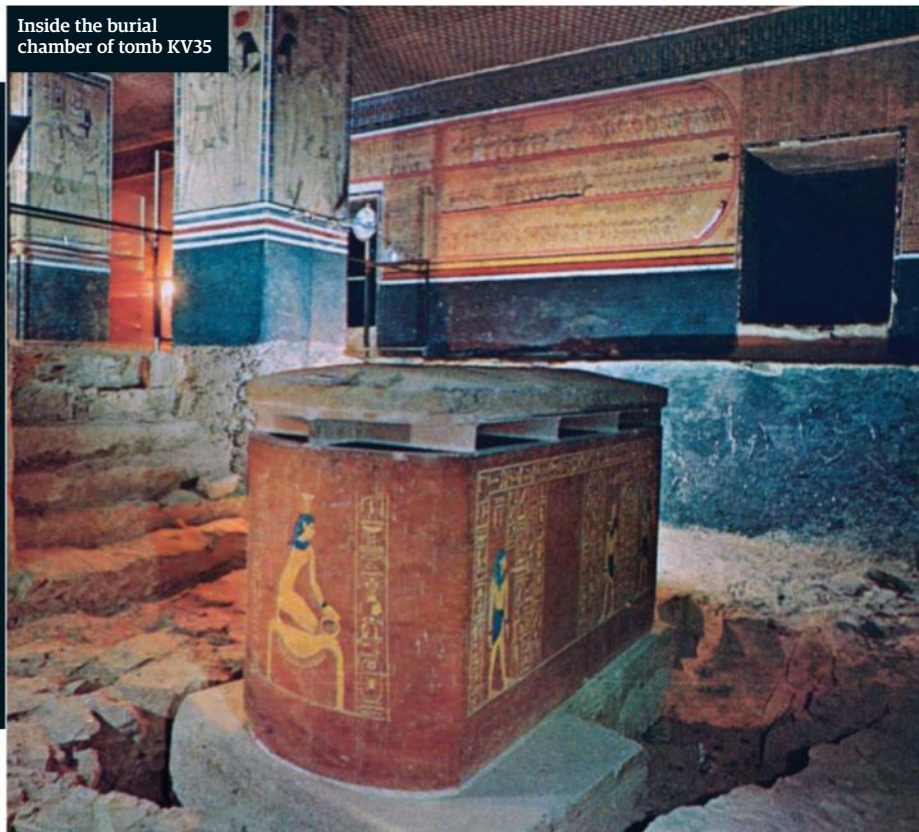
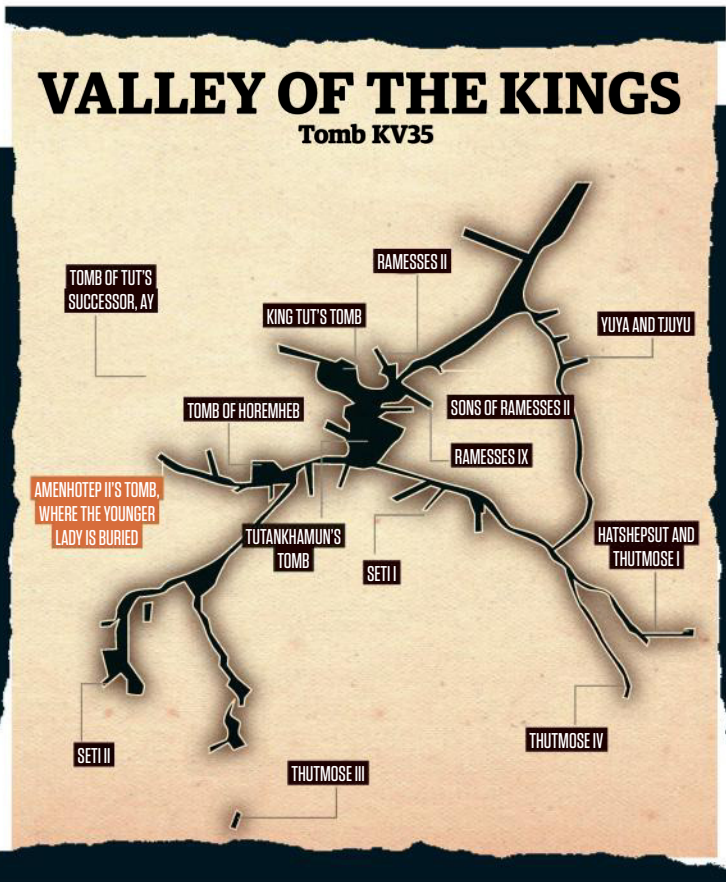
But what was perhaps most intriguing about the Younger Lady was the damage that had been inflicted upon the mummy shortly after its burial. The lower half of the mummy's face was violently and completely smashed

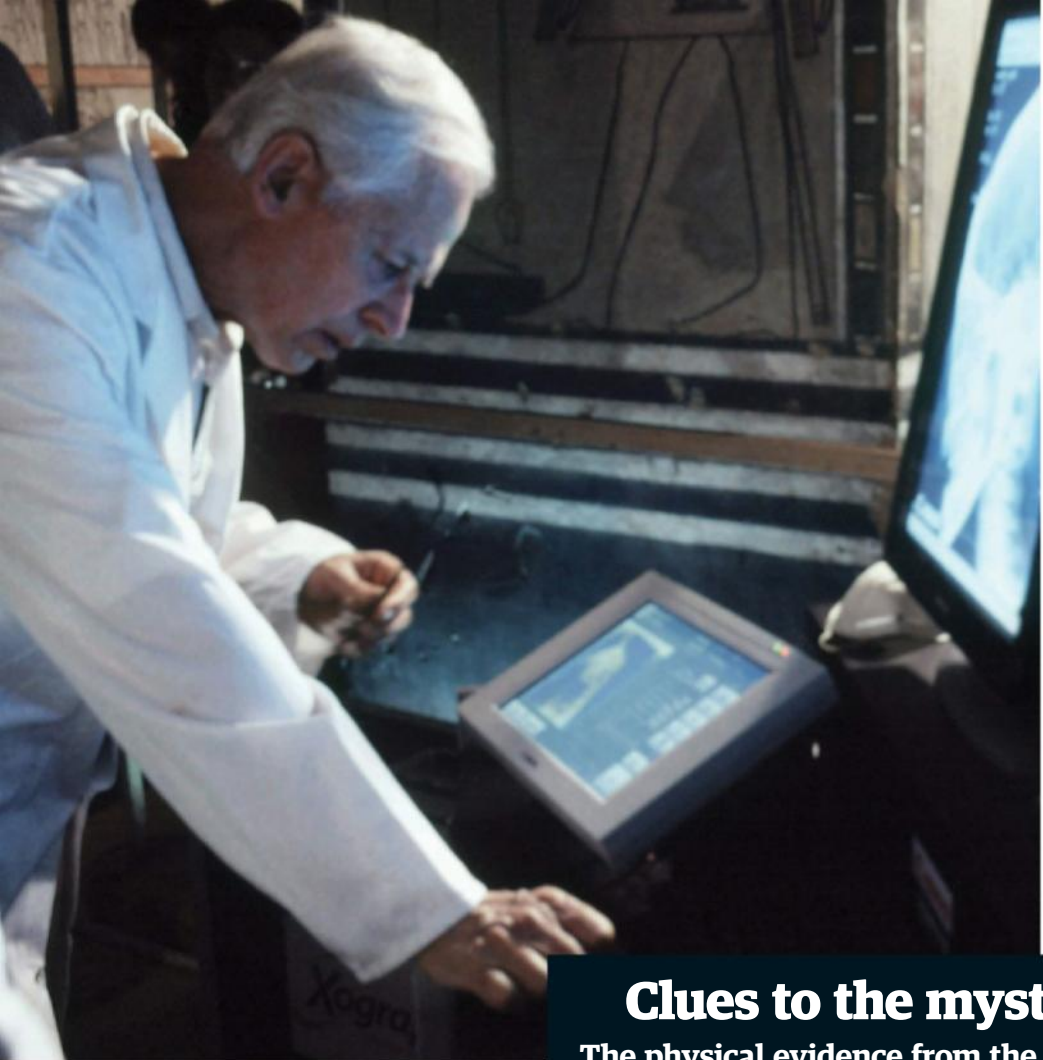
in - a punishment worse than death if ancient traditions were to be believed. By destroying the mummy's mouth, the spirit of the dead would be unable to speak its name at the doors of the afterlife, condemning it to an eternity of damnation. The mummy's right arm had also been broken off, and what appeared to be its detached and outstretched limb was placed beside it. But closer inspection revealed that this bodiless arm belonged to someone else entirely - it had been mummified in a different way, and the measurements did not match those of the Younger Lady. In what was to become an astonishing discovery, another arm was found hidden beneath the wrappings of Queen Tiye's mummy. Unlike the first arm, this arm was bent at the elbow and its hand was clasped, indicating that it had been holding a sceptre - the sign of a pharaoh. And it fit the Younger Lady perfectly. Whoever had broken off this arm had clearly wanted to destroy all evidence of this woman's power, and Nefertiti's heresy would have been an understandable motivation for the desecration of a grave.

The claim that the Younger Lady is indeed Nefertiti is one that has been met with strong contention, and is a claim that may never be resolved. But it's hard to deny that the evidence all points to one very clear conclusion.



A wall painting showing Akhenaten and Nefertiti with their young family





Joann Fletcher examining the mummy of the Younger Lady

Clues to the mystery

The physical evidence from the Younger Lady all point to the same conclusion...

Arm

The right arm has been broken off, but a detached forearm was found in the tomb that is bent at the elbow and clasping a long-vanished sceptre – the sign of a pharaoh.

Head

The mummy's head is shaved, originally leading archaeologists to conclude that it is male. However, a woman's wig was found buried alongside the mummy, in a style that was especially popular in Akhenaten's court.

Brow

There is a clear impression of a tight-fitting brow-band – something that would have been needed to support a heavy crown.

Face

The lower half of the face has been smashed in, most likely by grave robbers shortly after the woman's burial. According to ancient Egyptian religion, this would have prevented her spirit from speaking its name, thus preventing her from entering the afterlife. The woman had clearly done something to anger her ancestors.

Ears

The mummy has two piercings in her left ear, which was unusual in Ancient Egypt. However, depictions of Nefertiti show her with a double piercing.

Beads

Several loose beads have been found on the mummy's chest, left over from the necklace she would have worn before it was stolen. These have been identified as Nefer beads: the same beads on Nefertiti's famous bust.



Darius is said to have ascended the throne by winning a contest that involved nobles sitting on their horses until one of them neighed

— 522 – 486 BCE —

King Darius I

Ruling the vast Persian Achaemenid Empire at its height, Darius I became world-renowned for his unstoppable military might, impressive construction prowess and an astute ability to manage his realm's finances

What would you do if you inherited one of the largest and most powerful empires the world had ever seen? Well, if you were Darius I, the third king of the mighty Persian Empire, you would spend your reign making it even better, transforming its economy and embarking on a series of military campaigns that would lead you to earn the title of Darius the Great.

However, Darius the Great didn't begin his life as a figure destined for greatness, being merely the eldest of five sons of Hystaspes, a member of the Persian royal house that served under King Cyrus and King Cambyses II. According to the account of Herodotus, dubbed the "Father of History" who details the Persian Empire in his *Histories*, Darius was a youth 'of no consequence at the time' and ended up nothing more than spearman in the army of Cambyses II during the Empire's Egyptian conquest. Later Darius would rise to become the personal lancer of Cambyses II and there it would seem his role in history could have ended, a mere footnote in an epic age.

All this would change in a radical series of events that, oddly enough, would begin with a dream. Following Cambyses being made King of Persia by his father Cyrus, and Darius ascending to Cambyses' side as his personal lancer, Cyrus suddenly had a dream while he was away at war in which a vision of Darius equipped with wings

DARIUS I

Persia, 550-486 BCE

Brief Bio

Rising from an unimportant place in the royal dynasty of Persia and an also-ran role as a spearman during the Persian campaign against Egypt, Darius eventually took the throne of Persia after becoming involved in a plot to kill the usurper Bardiya. His loyal army ensured that the rocky early days of his reign rapidly smoothed out as a series of conquests brought Persia wealth and empire.

stood astride Europe and Asia. Upon waking, Cyrus decided that the dream was a warning that he and his son's empire was in danger and that Darius was forming plans to overthrow Cambyses. Fearing for his son's life, Cyrus sent Darius' father Hystaspes back to court to watch over his son strictly until he returned.

Returning to court, Hystaspes could not find any reasonable intentions in Darius during the time Cambyses remained king. Cambyses II's reign was indeed cut short, but rather than by Darius, a man who may or may not have been his brother, Bardiya, seized the throne for himself. According to the accounts of Darius' life, Cambyses attempted to march against Bardiya, but ended up committing suicide. Other accounts state that Cambyses died from a stab wound that turned gangrenous. Either way, Cyrus's fears had become reality, with Cambyses falling from power and the Persian Empire temporarily falling into chaos.

Darius, now freed from his role as lance-bearer to Cambyses, joined with various other noblemen from Persia who were against the usurper's rule and in September 522 BCE succeeded in a plot to kill the new king in the fortress of Sikayauvati. While the death of the usurper king ended months of chaos and uncertainty, the throne of the world's greatest empire was now vacant and with no obvious successor. What happens next is debated greatly among historians, with various different accounts describing the how Darius ascended the throne - some more bizarre than others. However, what all the accounts agree on is that the following morning Darius was King of Persia.

Darius was soon crowned at Pasargadae and afterwards he moved to Ecbatana to begin the rule of his vast empire. Just as soon as he arrived, however, he learned of numerous revolts against his leadership in Elam and Babylonia. He moved and crushed these quickly, but soon more revolts sprung up in Media, Parthia, Assyria and Egypt - now large swathes of his empire were openly at war with him. Just when things looked like they would end poorly for Darius, his substantial and overly loyal army came to his rescue, proceeding

on a brutal campaign across Persia, smashing each revolt and executing its leaders. Within a single year every revolt was quelled and Darius was now unopposed as King of Persia.

From this point on Darius' reign went, in general, from strength to strength. He undertook many military campaigns in central Asia, Aria and Scythia, radically transforming the empire's economy and adding to its infrastructure greatly with new roads, canals and civic structures. The Achaemenid Empire was vast and now under

Darius' astute management and delegation it became the world's most wealthy and powerful realm, expanding rapidly and even gaining the support of some of the powerful Greek city states, which had either been won over through force of arms or by trade. Darius was now effectively untouchable - his will was law and he was without doubt the most powerful man in the entire world.

There was one problem, though. One issue that, as Darius' reign progressed, not only became more apparent but could not be quelled or conquered. It was the fact that much of mainland Greece was - openly or not - hostile to the Persian Empire and kept expressing this by interfering in his captured territory of Ionia and Lydia in Asia Minor. Small skirmishes became larger fights, trade slowed and influence weakened, with tensions between Greeks



and Persians escalating as a result. After almost a decade in which Darius' forces invaded Thrace and many cities of the northern Aegean, these tensions finally boiled over into open war, with the Greeks sending an army to burn Sardis, which is located in modern Turkey.

Darius responded to this by sanctioning not only the recapture of the region, which included many of the Ionian islands, but also a full-scale invasion of the Greek mainland, with Athens and Eretria - both key players in the burning of the city of Sardis - targeted for punishment. Assembling an army of over 20,000 men and placing them at the disposal of his most trusted of commanders, Mardonius,

"Darius was now effectively untouchable, his will was law and he was the most powerful man in the entire world"

Darius began many projects during his reign, including two canals linking the Red Sea to the River Nile

Simple spearman
According to historical reports, prior to seizing power, Darius was a simple spearman in the army of King Cambyses II of Persia, fighting much in the Egyptian campaign of 528-525 BCE



Timeline

550 BCE

The five Hystaspes sons
Darius I is born as the eldest of five sons to Hystaspes and Rhodugune. His father is an officer in King Cyrus II of Persia's army and a noble in his court. **550 BCE**

Power grabbed
After an elevation to King Cambyses II's personal lancer, as well as the leader's death by his own hand - or maybe by assassination - Darius fights off rivals for the throne and quickly takes it for himself. **522 BCE**



Indus Valley
Darius I, now King of Persia, begins a campaign of conquest into the Indus Valley. A year later he wins control of the valley from Gandhara to modern-day Karachi and appoints the Greek Scylax of Caryanda to explore the Indian Ocean. **516 BCE**

Scythian failure
Darius leads a campaign against the Scythian people of eastern Europe. The Scythian army retreats deep into its territory and refuses to engage in combat with the Persians, outmanoeuvring Darius and forcing him to withdraw. **513 BCE**

Asian minor submits
By 510 BCE Darius I expands his empire to include Asia Minor and some of the Greek islands. The rest of Greece resists the Persian expansion, leading to an increase in tensions between the two rival powers. **510 BCE**

Darius proceeded to take Thrace and Macedon. However, before he could advance any further his fleet was wrecked in a storm off the coast of Mount Athos, stopping his conquest of Greece dead. Battered by the storm and harried by the Greek army, Darius' men were forced to withdraw, returning to Persia.

Not used to failure, Darius immediately directed his empire's vast resources to instigate another invasion, assembling a second army of 20,000 men and sending them back to Greece under the command of his nephew Artaphernes and his most trusted admiral Datis. This time Darius' army wasn't hindered in its passing and upon landing in Greece in 490 BCE it besieged, captured and burnt Eretria before quickly advancing towards the city of Marathon.

At this point, victory for Darius seemed all but certain, however outside of Marathon his army was met with a Greek one that, despite being half its number, pulled off one of the most remarkable military victories in history, defeating the Persians in mortal combat and forcing the remnants to retreat for a second time back to Persia.

This defeat at Marathon marked the end of the first Persian invasion of Greece and, despite him proceeding to live a few more years, the end of Darius I too, with the great king's health rapidly deteriorating over the next four years. Darius the Great died in Persia in 486 BCE, where his body was embalmed and then placed in a gigantic tomb. His kingdom was passed on to his son, Xerxes, who would himself go on to famously launch the second Persian invasion of Greece. Unfortunately for him, just like his father, the might of the Persian Empire, by far one of the largest military forces in the world up to that point, would not be enough to deliver victory.

Today, views on Darius the Great's tenure as king are mixed, tending to differ from ancient sources in that they take a wider perspective on his reign, rather than merely a tally of his substantial conquests. The Persian Empire was indeed expanded by Darius and he presided

Darius organised his empire by dividing it into provinces, with each overseen by a satrap, which was a type of governor

Darius was succeeded by his son, Xerxes, who had to contest the succession with his elder half-brother



Darius I the Great, 549-486 BCE, with a parasol bearer in a reconstruction of a relief

over some notable victories, however his inability to defeat the Scythians and Greeks caused his military record to be tarnished. However, if you look at his reign more from a cultural, scientific and financial perspective, it's altogether less ambiguous. Darius

can be credited for transforming the Archaemenid Empire into the ancient world's capital of trade, wealth and technological innovation, with many of his advances still being relevant today.

An economical leadership

How did Darius help make the Persian Empire the wealthiest in the world?

During his time as King of Persia, Darius I conducted an introduction of a universal currency, the daric. This was introduced shortly before 500 BCE and was applied across the empire's constituent countries as a way to regulate trade and commerce. This move was so successful that the daric even became recognised beyond the Persian Empire, into central and eastern Europe.

There were two types of daric, a gold coin and a silver coin. Only Darius himself could order the minting of gold darics, while silver darics could be minted by important generals and satraps (regional governors). The introduction of both of these coins and their widespread adoption created a boom in international trade for the Persian Empire, with textiles, tools, carpets and metal objects sold en masse. To further aid this trade boom, Darius also created a royal highway, a type of postal and commercial shipping system.

Reportedly, the daric also improved the Persian Empire's governmental revenues also, with new daric-specific taxes on land, livestock and markets created. This increased revenue helped maintain and improve the empire's infrastructure and directly funded Darius' numerous construction projects, including roads, canals and temples.



First Persian invasion

Darius I springs an invasion of mainland Greece, with his general Mardonius taking Thrace and Macedon. Unfortunately, Mardonius' fleet is wrecked in a storm off the coast of Mount Athos, stopping the conquest in its tracks.
492 BCE

Round two

Darius I launches a second campaign against the Greeks two years later under the command of military generals Datis and Artaphernes. While they make some progress, the Persian army suffers a massive defeat at the Battle of Marathon.
490 BCE

Furious in defeat

Darius is angered greatly by the failure of the Greek conquest and after the remnants of his force returns to Persia, he immediately starts preparations for another. Internal strife and power struggles in Persia delay it.
488 BCE



Darius dies

After years of preparation for another invasion of Greece, a revolt against Persian rule breaks out in Egypt, with the toll worsening Darius' health markedly. He dies shortly after and is entombed in a rock-cut sepulchre tomb.
486 BCE

486 BCE

— 336 – 323 BCE —

Alexander the Great

The empire builder was as dangerous to his friends as he was to his enemies

From the moment of his birth in 356 BCE, Alexander of Macedonia was destined for great things. He would grow up to conquer and rule one of the largest empires ever built, all through military prowess, shrewd diplomacy and sheer force of personality.

The young Alexander grew up believing his life would lead to greatness, which was partly due to his mother, Olympias, continually telling him that he was divine and that his destiny lay in conquest. Macedonia at the time of Alexander's birth was growing stronger, and this kingdom would act as his springboard to greatness.

Contrary to what was being written by chroniclers at the time, Alexander's father, Philip of Macedonia, did not lead the Macedonian people to civilisation - this had happened in previous generations. But when Philip was assassinated in 336 BCE and the crown passed to the 20-year-old Alexander, his greatest legacy was the extremely well trained and professional army he left, a crucial asset for every young warlord. Fate seemed to favour Alexander, as the political climate of the time made expansion even easier. The Greek cities were in decline and ripe for conquest. Even the mighty

Persian Empire was troubled; having lost control of Egypt, it was engaged in a campaign to reassert control in the Nile delta. At this point, it would have been remarkable if Alexander had not expanded Macedonian territory.

In his early life, Alexander was taught the ways of war from Leonidas of Epirus, a relative of his mother. Alexander learned hand-to-hand combat, riding and also endured forced marches, an experience that would endear him to his men in later life. While Philip of Macedonia needed his son to be tutored in warfare, he also saw the benefits of instructing Alexander in the ways of peace. For this, Philip sent for Alexander's most famous teacher, Aristotle. The Greek philosopher instilled a love of literature and reading in the young prince that would continue throughout his entire life. During this time in history, the lines between myth and history were slightly more blurred. Great heroes like Achilles, who featured in Homeric literature, were seen as avatars of heroic virtues to be emulated by readers. It is said that Alexander carried a copy of the Iliad with him on campaign, as he saw himself as having a competitive rivalry with Achilles while also claiming lineage from him. This

With Darius III defeated and retreating, Alexander had effectively brought the Archimedean Empire to an end

ALEXANDER THE GREAT

Greek, 356-323 BCE

Brief Bio

Becoming king of Macedon after his father's murder, Alexander led the Greeks into war against the powerful Persian Empire. With charisma and cunning, he led from the frontline to create an empire that stretched from Libya to India, creating a new golden age for Hellenic culture.



Elephants would cause huge casualties to the Macedonians during the Battle of Hydaspes River



Alexander entered Babylon as a conqueror following his victory at the Battle of Gaugamela

side of Alexander was softer than that shown on his military exploits, but could never temper his violent thirst and the passion that grew within him over time. Alexander's fondness for alcohol would lead to drunken mood swings, rages and even the burning of the palace and city of Persepolis. This volatile trait was only exacerbated by the death of his most trusted companion and friend, Hephaestion.

As the borders of his empire grew, Alexander became increasingly fixated with the idea that his success was divinely ordained. Constantly fed stories of this divinity from his mother, he saw himself as a descendant of Zeus and Achilles. While the stories told of Alexander's birth include a miraculous conception, the destruction of the Temple of Ephesus and a bright star lighting the night sky, other than his studies, not much is known of his early life. What we are sure of is that he would have taken part in drinking contests, which were common in Macedonian culture. It was here that he cemented friendships that would last his lifetime with his drinking partners Cassander, Ptolemy and

After his decisive victory at the Hydaspes River, the soldiers of Alexander's army had grown tired of conquest

Hephaestion, who became close companions and generals in his army.

During his conquests, Alexander never forcibly attempted to impose Hellenistic culture on those he had bested. This was a trait learned from Aristotle, and his subjects were allowed to practice their own beliefs without fear of reprisal.

However, this was countered by Alexander's fierce stamping out of unrest or treachery. While not imposing his own culture on conquered peoples, Alexander came to adopt Persian culture more and more. This upset his Macedonian men, with two - Aristotle's great-nephew Callisthenes and a man named Cleitus - being the most outspoken.

While Alexander appeared diplomatic and tactful to defeated enemies and subjugated peoples, he could not stand to be contradicted, even by close friends. Drinking exacerbated his temper, and during one drunken argument, Alexander hurled a javelin, skewering Cleitus and killing him instantly. Callisthenes's fate was a little better - he was imprisoned, dying either in captivity or by crucifixion.

Alexander's ruthless nature saw him make many uncompromising decisions during his many campaigns. Perhaps the most famous was during the siege of Tyre, an island city off the coast of Phoenicia, in 332 BCE. After early attacks were repulsed, Alexander ordered the construction of a massive causeway, or mole, to enable his siege engines to reach the walls. This massive undertaking was one of the ancient world's most initiative sieges, and is now the reason that Tyre is connected to the mainland. With the mole complete, his army stormed and captured the city. Showing no mercy, the attackers crucified 2,000 defenders, slaughtered up to another 6,000 males and sold the women and children into slavery. This was the price to pay for defying Alexander.

In Persia, now modern-day Iran, Alexander came face to face with his nemesis, King Darius III. In two great battles, at Issus and Gaugamela, the Macedonian army provided by Philip was triumphant, and Darius was defeated. These battles helped to cement Alexander's military prowess, as both times he faced almost overwhelming numbers and still emerged victorious. After hearing that the Persian king had been betrayed and murdered by one of his generals, Bessus, during his retreat, Alexander flew into yet another furious rage. He

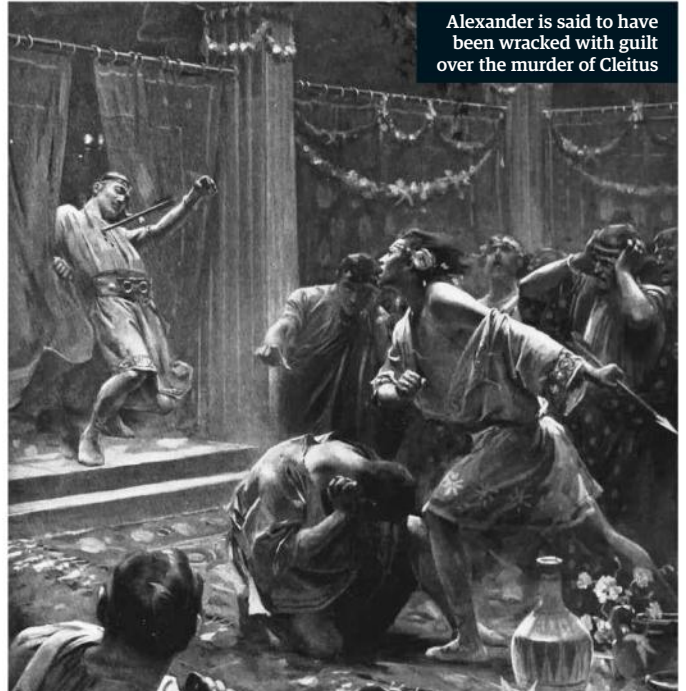


When Hephaestion suddenly fell ill and died, possibly from a fever, Alexander was stricken with overwhelming grief

The Macedonian Empire stretched across 5.2 million square kilometres



Alexander is said to have been wracked with guilt over the murder of Cleitus



“Alexander appeared diplomatic and tactful to defeated enemies and subjugated peoples”

had greatly respected Darius as an opponent. After giving the deceased Persian king a fitting burial at Persepolis, Alexander hunted Bessus down and had him brutally executed.

Alexander's ambitions carried him further east until he reached the northern parts of India. While some rulers, upon hearing of his exploits, submitted without a fight, many other tribes fiercely resisted his intrusion into their land. After his defeat of King Porus of Paurava at the Battle of Hydaspes River in 326 BCE, Alexander again displayed how magnanimous he could be in victory. He installed the king as a ruler of a larger kingdom than he had had before - all because he fought bravely against the Macedonians.

It was in India that Alexander's army refused to go any further. Alexander had planned to cross the River Ganges, but when his troops discovered that tens of thousands of soldiers waited on the far bank, they insisted on returning home. Alexander's strict sense of justice would come to the fore again, as upon returning to his empire, he

discovered that many of the satraps (governors) he had left in charge had become corrupt and abused their power. These men were executed along with the guards who had desecrated Cyrus the Great's tomb, showing Alexander's sympathy for Persian culture, as Cyrus was a great hero to them and a man Alexander admired. With his men exhausted and home sick, Alexander ordered that their debts be settled and the older or wounded men be allowed to return home. Such was their love of Alexander, the men refused, and only when the king threatened to replace their positions with Persians did they relent. A lavish banquet was held in which each senior Macedonian was married to a Persian bride. This turned out to be a failed attempt to bring the two cultures together, as many of the marriages didn't last the year.

Alexander's death at the age of 32 came suddenly in 323 BCE, after a bout of drinking. There are differing accounts of how exactly Alexander became ill and the exact cause of death - whether it was alcohol related, poison or another means - will

never be known. Alexander's empire - which now encompassed a vast swathe of territory including Macedonia, the Greek city states, Anatolia, the Levant, Egypt, former Persian Empire territory and parts of India - would come crashing down after his ignoble death. His closest companions, the Diadochi, divided the land between themselves, and without the commanding presence of Alexander, they soon descended into bitter feuds and conflict. New factions and states emerged with the splintering of the empire, notably the Ptolemaic dynasty in Egypt, named after the general Ptolemy. Although the empire was gone, Hellenistic culture had taken root over a great swathe of territory, ensuring Alexander's legacy would live on through the ages.

His charisma and force of personality inspired fanatical loyalty and he could be magnanimous to conquered subjects. In contrast, Alexander acted as a cruel tyrant ordering systematic slaughters, and was prone to flying into drunken rages, making him dangerous to friend and foe alike.

41 - 44 CE

Herod I, King of Judea

Cruel, paranoid and held in the grips of madness, Herod I ruled the ancient kingdom of Judea with an iron fist, brutally slaying any who opposed him

Herod of Idumea was born into one of the most volatile regions of the ancient world. He quickly learned to fear rivals, suspect betrayal and watch his own back. The Romans had taken over much of his native land, and solidified their grip on the area through unpopular puppet kings. Rebellion was in the air, and from a young age Herod was forced to pick sides - work with the invaders or fight for an independent homeland. His father was a high-ranking official of King Hyrcanus II and had the ear of the Roman senate, so used this prestigious position to grant Herod a governorship in 49 BCE in the province of Galilee. Herod knew this position came from powerful Roman patronage, and he made sure the Romans knew he would continue supporting them if they supported him by instigating a brutal regime in Galilee for the glory of Rome.

Unfortunately for Herod, not everyone shared his astute sense of accommodation when it came to the Romans. In 40 BCE, the puppet king Hyrcanus died and was replaced by Antigonus, who quickly set about ejecting the Roman garrisons from Judea and exterminating any of his subjects who had conspired with them against their own people. For

Herod this meant he lost his power and position. He was forced to flee into the night, and lacking anywhere else to go, he travelled to the heart of the Roman empire to beg Caesar to help him.

Herod's presence in Rome was not an unusual one; many high-ranking foreigners travelled to the sprawling city to seek patronage and aid from the Roman senators who decided the fate of kingdoms. What was unusual was how unpopular Herod was within the city. The Jewish population saw him as a tyrannical traitor, the Romans saw him as an incompetent beggar. The decision by the senate to make Herod King of the Jews was only made through a lack of a better option. As far as Caesar and the senators were concerned, Judea needed a leader who was strong and loyal to the Roman cause.

Herod wasn't strong, nor was he particularly loyal, but he understood power and the protection Rome could offer him if he became their puppet.

With thousands of Roman legionaries behind him and one of Rome's greatest war heroes, Mark Antony, by his side, Herod marched proudly back to his homeland as a conqueror in 37 BCE. He would not be satisfied with a mere governorship this time; he wanted ultimate power. He decided to ignore

Herod was known to suffer hallucinations of his dead wife and slip into psychotic states when he was being threatened

During his reign, Herod commissioned a number of building projects, including a huge temple in Jerusalem

HEROD I

Judea, 10 BCE - 44 CE

Brief Bio

A client king for the Roman Republic (soon to become the Roman Empire), Herod wheedled his way to kingship. In the Bible he is remembered as the tyrant who authorised the Massacre of the Innocents in Bethlehem. He was just as cruel in historical fact, suffering from paranoid and violent delusions of persecution.





“The Jewish population saw him as a tyrannical traitor, the Romans saw him as an incompetent beggar”

Life in the time of Herod

Roman rule

The Middle East, which consisted of the Jewish and pagan kingdoms located around the coastline of the Mediterranean, was influenced and controlled by the Roman rulers through vassals and puppet kings. The Romans needed the kingdoms for their resources, and to guard the eastern flank of the empire from the ever-present threat of the Persians.

Culture shock

Herod's kingdom was made up of a number of different tribes that settled in the area or who were cast out of Persia over the previous three centuries. Contrasting cultures were active in the region, some adopting Judaism while others followed Roman, Greek or other pagan traditions, creating deep social divides.

Fractured

Due to the fractious nature of Judean society, many areas within the kingdom that Herod ruled did not recognise him as a legitimate king. Herod himself had very little in the way of military muscle to keep the different communities in line, and often had to rely on his Roman patrons to subdue the population.

Political games

Herod's position as a Roman vassal was not an easy one. Roman politics was going through a radical transformation during this period, which involved violent civil wars. Herod had to make sure he was backing the right man, or if he wasn't, change sides quickly to avoid being disposed of.

Rebel groups

Due to the brutal repression under Herod through the Roman legions stationed in Judea, a number of rebel groups sprung up, bent on ending his reign of terror for good. These groups were forced to fight a guerrilla war, as they could not raise a standing army that could beat Caesar's legions.

Timeline

74 BCE

● Birth of Herod

Herod is born in Idumea as the second son of Antipater – a high-ranking official in the kingdom of Judea. Antipater quickly manoeuvres his son into a position of authority.
74 BCE

● Appointed governor of Galilee

Through his father's influence, Herod is made governor of Galilee – a Judean satellite state. His father continues to gain influence throughout Judea because of his good relations with the Romans.
49 BCE

● Flight to Rome

After the anti-Roman king Antigonus II takes power in Judea, Herod is forced to flee and persuade the Romans to help him regain his power in the region.
40 BCE

● Elected King of the Jews

During his stay in Rome, Herod convinces the senate that he should be made King of the Jews. The Romans agree with the proviso that he acts as a vassal on his return to Judea.
40 BCE



● Marriage to Mariamne

Herod marries a Hasmonean princess, Mariamne, who is also a member of the Judean ruling class, in an effort to give his new status as King of the Jews legitimacy.
32 BCE

the outlying provinces and concentrate his forces around Jerusalem with the approval of Antony. The siege lasted for 40 days. The defenders were desperate to hold onto their new-found freedom from Roman oppression, but in the end Herod breached the walls and thousands of bloodthirsty Roman warriors stormed the city. The devastation was horrendous; the Romans slaughtered men, women and children, brutally slaying the people who dared defy Caesar's will. Herod was outraged; he wanted to subdue the population, not butcher them, and he knew all of Judea would never forget the Jewish blood spilled that day. His complaints to Antony fell on deaf ears – as far as he was concerned, it was all in a day's work.

Antony left Herod in the smouldering ruins of his new kingdom with enough Roman guards to keep an eye on him. From now on, Herod would be taking his orders directly from Rome. Immediately, Herod self-styled himself as high ruler of what remained of Jerusalem and the rest of Judea. His subjects were less than convinced; his claim to the throne was based on little more than the Roman bodyguards he had surrounding him. As a way of trying to gain some respect after putting his own people to the sword, he married his second wife – a Hasmonean princess called Mariamne – in 32 BCE. Mariamne was from an old Judean family that could trace its origins back to the conquest of

Herod's patrons were the Romans; they gave him his political legitimacy and enough military muscle to keep Judea under his rule



Herod at the Feast of Herod, where John the Baptist was beheaded

Alexander the Great, and Herod hoped the marriage would give his rule an amount of legitimacy.

The marriage failed to gain the love of the people, and as he began to settle down to the task of ruling his unhappy kingdom, he felt more vulnerable. He feared assassination at every turn, particularly from his own family. He had his brother-in-law from his first marriage drowned in his own pleasure pool because he feared the Romans would prefer him as ruler of Judea. Then in 31 BCE, Herod received word that Rome had become engulfed in a power struggle between Octavian Caesar and Herod's old friend Antony. Like all vassals reliant on Rome's good will, Herod was forced to take sides, and in keeping with his preference for backing the strongest player, he chose Antony. The odds were very much stacked in Antony's favour, but he lost the struggle nonetheless, and Herod found himself in a very awkward position; the man in charge of Rome was the man he sided against. He sent a

Defining moment

Fall of Jerusalem 37 BCE

Herod, with the help of a number of Roman legions supplied by Mark Antony, invades Judea and lays siege to Jerusalem. The walls are surrounded and huge siege engines are built to devastate the city's populace hiding within the city. After 40 days of fighting, the townspeople begin to weaken through starvation, and Herod breaches the walls. When the Romans storm the city, they butcher the population. This angers Herod because his reputation would now be tarnished by the Romans' actions. Despite Herod's desire to appease the population after the siege, he still has the popular Antigonus executed because he represents a threat.



number of grovelling letters to Octavian promising his undying loyalty in return for being allowed to keep his job as King of the Jews. Octavian reluctantly allowed him to remain king, again more through a lack of a better option than any reflection on Herod's skill as a leader.

Despite having survived one of the most destructive civil wars in Rome's history, Herod remained uneasy. He became estranged from his wife after he had her placed under guard to prevent her from claiming the throne for the Hasmonians if he died during the fighting. He heard more rumours of threats against his life, he feared Mariamne would try to grab power by killing him in revenge for having her arrested, his behaviour became increasingly erratic and he fell into a strange psychotic state of paranoia. While he was suffering from this break from reality, he became convinced Mariamne was going to kill him, so he acted. He had her beheaded, but as soon as the axe fell, he came around from his delusion and realised he'd made a terrible mistake. He wept uncontrollably for weeks and began hallucinating visions of his dead wife screaming in agony in the corridors of his palace.

In an effort to try and turn his mind away from these terrifying visions, he began to construct a grand temple designed to be the envy of the ancient world. Construction started just after the death of Mariamne, and was only halted briefly after a great famine struck the city. When Caesar's aide Marcus Agrippa visited the city in 15 BCE, he was amazed at the temple's construction and how modern Jerusalem looked since its sacking by Antony. Agrippa held court with Herod, and Herod, knowing

that weakness in front of the Romans could be dangerous, managed to hide his precarious mental state. Underneath this façade, he was a man edging ever closer to madness.

After Agrippa left for the gates of Rome, Herod quickly returned to the depths of paranoia. He brutally slaughtered any who spoke out against his dictatorial regime, and the country lived in fear of his violent mood swings. He burned alive a group of rabbis and their students who had pulled down a Roman imperial eagle in a building in Jerusalem. He then executed two of his eldest sons because he thought they were plotting against him. By 4 BCE, he feared that he had become so unpopular that no one would mourn his passing after he died. In a fit of depraved madness, he ordered the families of the nobility throughout the kingdom to attend him on pain of death. He then had them rounded up and placed under guard in the city's hippodrome. The guards were ordered to murder them when he died so his death would be mourned.

As the families in the hippodrome huddled together, terrified at the prospect of being put to death as a sacrifice to the passing of their own king, Herod laid on his deathbed racked with pain. He was suffering from kidney failure and the paranoid delusions that had finally left him senseless. He saw visions of his beloved Mariamne and was tortured by her mutilated face. When he finally died screaming in agony in 4 BCE, the holy men of Jerusalem proclaimed that his horrific death was, 'the penalty that God was exacting of the king for his great impiety.' Herod's sister countermanded the order to kill the Judean families and the kingdom celebrated; Herod 'the mad and wicked' was dead.

In a fit of psychotic rage, Herod killed his two eldest sons because he thought they were plotting against his kingship

A Biblical connection

Herod has been reviled in the Bible as the monstrous tyrant who threatened the life of the baby that Christians believe was the son of God. Jesus of Nazareth's birth came at the end of Herod's reign, when his psychotic episodes had become increasingly dangerous to the people he suspected were plotting treason against him. According to the Bible, it was during one of these paranoid episodes that he heard word of a child being born proclaimed as the 'King of the Jews'. This was highly threatening as far as Herod was concerned, as he had never been fully accepted by his Jewish subjects as their true king, and any kind of usurpation from another individual claiming to be their ruler had to be destroyed. He went into a fit of rage, ordering all the sons of Bethlehem, the birth place of Jesus, murdered in what became known as the 'Massacre of the Innocents.' While the Bible is not considered historically accurate by scholars, Herod's violent reaction was alluded to by Roman sources writing after the event, and archaeologists have speculated the massacre occurred at some point in 5 BCE, a year before Herod died. His actions have since been immortalised through the story of the Nativity, and his reputation for uncompromising brutality has never been forgotten in Christian traditions.



Herod orders the execution of all first-born males in Bethlehem

Defining moment

Trouble in Rome 31 BCE

A Roman civil war threatens to engulf Judea in factional fighting and Herod must decide which man to support - Octavian Caesar or his old friend Mark Antony. Antony's force, stationed in Egypt, appears to be the strongest, and initially Herod sides with him. After Antony's defeat, Herod endears himself to Octavian, pledging his loyalty to the new Roman leader. While Octavian is unconvinced of Herod's honesty, he recognises that he has served Rome well in the past, so allows Herod to stay on as King of Judea as long as he can control the population.



The Battle of Actium as depicted by Lorenzo A Castro

Defining moment

Death of Herod 4 BCE

Herod dies in March or April 4 BCE after succumbing to 'Herod's evil', thought to be kidney disease and gangrene. He had already executed two of his eldest sons after another bout of paranoid madness, and he leaves Judea in open rebellion against Roman authority. The divided communities that make up the Judean state immediately demand independence, and only the presence of Roman legions under Octavian subdue the population adequately for Herod's three remaining sons to rule a third of the kingdom each under Roman patronage.

● Mariamne arrested

In a fit of paranoia, Herod orders for Mariamne to be arrested after he fears that if he dies she will try and take the throne away from his son. This deeply offends Mariamne, and she becomes extremely hostile towards him.

31 BCE

● Death of a princess

After further rumours about a plot to poison him, Herod condemns Mariamne to death to prevent her from trying to seize power. This action haunts him for the rest of his life.

29 BCE

● Famine

A great famine strikes Judea and its surrounding provinces. Herod is forced to halt some of his grand architectural projects in order to buy grain to feed the population.

25 BCE

● The grand temple

As a way of appeasing the Jewish population, Herod builds a grand temple in Jerusalem. Little remains of the site today, but it was said to be one of the largest buildings in the entire city.

20 BCE

● Visit of Marcus Agrippa

Agrippa visits the city to make sure Herod's loyalty has not abandoned him, and is astonished by the new masonry projects commissioned by the King of the Jews.

15 BCE

● Burning of the teachers

In one of Herod's most brutal acts, he orders the death of a group of rabbis who were found destroying a Roman eagle within Jerusalem. They are thrown in a pit and burnt alive.

4 BCE

4 BCE



NERO

Rome, 37-68 CE

Brief Bio

Nero became heir to the throne after being adopted by his great-uncle Claudius. During his 13-year reign he was viewed as corrupt, compulsive and violent, having had his mother killed and perhaps his stepbrother too. After a successful rebellion, Nero fled Rome and committed suicide, ending the Julio-Claudian dynasty.

54 – 68 CE

Nero

He slaughtered Christians, murdered his loved ones and possibly set Rome ablaze, but who was the real man behind the myth of the monstrous Emperor Nero?

Emperor Nero was going to die. The senate had ordered his death, and the last remnant of control he had was to claim his death himself. Nero paced back and forth muttering the same words over and over again: "What an artist dies in me."

All his friends had abandoned him, and his own dark acts had led him to this spot, to this moment, but still he refused to acknowledge it. He wasn't a ruthless killer, he was just misunderstood - an artist. What a pity for the world to lose such a remarkable artist. In the distance, he heard the rumble of hooves: they were coming for his blood, but he would not give it to them. They had called him greedy, frivolous, self indulgent and now he would be - his blood was his own, not the senate's or the usurpers, and blood was all Emperor Nero had left.

When Nero was born on 15 December 37 CE, the Julio-Claudian dynasty had been ruling the Roman Empire for more than 50 years. This line, through adoption, could be traced back to the celebrated Julius Caesar himself. Since his death, the man had taken on an almost god-like status, and those 'descended' from him were the only ones deemed worthy to rule the kingdom he had forged. Originally born as Lucius Domitius Ahenbarbus, some believe that Nero was doomed to his later barbaric nature due to his parentage. His father, Gnaeus, was known as a violent man, who had been charged with treason, adultery and incest. It is said that when he was congratulated on the birth of his son, he proclaimed that anything born to he and his wife would be a "disaster".

Gnaeus was dead before Nero would even remember him. Instead, it would be his mother who would play the most influential role in his life, and Gnaeus was right to doubt the purity of his wife. Agrippina was a woman forged in fire - she had lived to see her mother, Agrippina the Elder, and two of her brothers arrested, exiled and starved to death; she had been forced to marry a detestable man she loathed and she had been exiled by her own brother, Caligula. It is no wonder that Agrippina had been forced to turn herself into steel to survive, she was done being passed around like a chess piece - she wanted control, and it started with marrying the emperor

Claudius. Agrippina was a sly woman, well versed in the subtleties of the Roman court, and by using her web of political alliances, she was married to Claudius - despite the fact that he was her uncle.

Although Claudius had his own son, Britannicus, he was still young in a society with high mortality rates, so 13-year-old Nero was swiftly made his heir. Agrippina couldn't be emperor herself; she was, after all, a woman. But she could control it so that her own son sat on the throne, and he was just an inexperienced youth who would easily bend to her will. To further solidify her son's position, she had him married to Octavia, Claudius's daughter. However, it wasn't long after this that Claudius began to waver; he seemed to regret marrying Nero to his daughter and started to focus more on his own son, preparing him for the throne. To regain control, Agrippina needed to act quickly. Ancient sources state that she poisoned her husband with a

Nero could claim Mark Antony as an ancestor through his father's bloodline and Caligula through his mother's



THE DYNASTY OF AUGUSTUS

I. Julius Caesar

After fighting a bitter civil war against the Senate that wished to rein in the famous general, Caesar was victorious and claimed a position of unrivalled power.

II. Augustus

Caesar declared Augustus, his great-nephew, as his adopted son and heir in his will. He became the empire's first emperor, but in reality he was also a military dictator.

III. Tiberius

Tiberius was not Augustus's biological son. Augustus took him as his adopted son when Tiberius married his daughter, Julia the Elder, in a trend that would continue for 30 years.

IV. Caligula

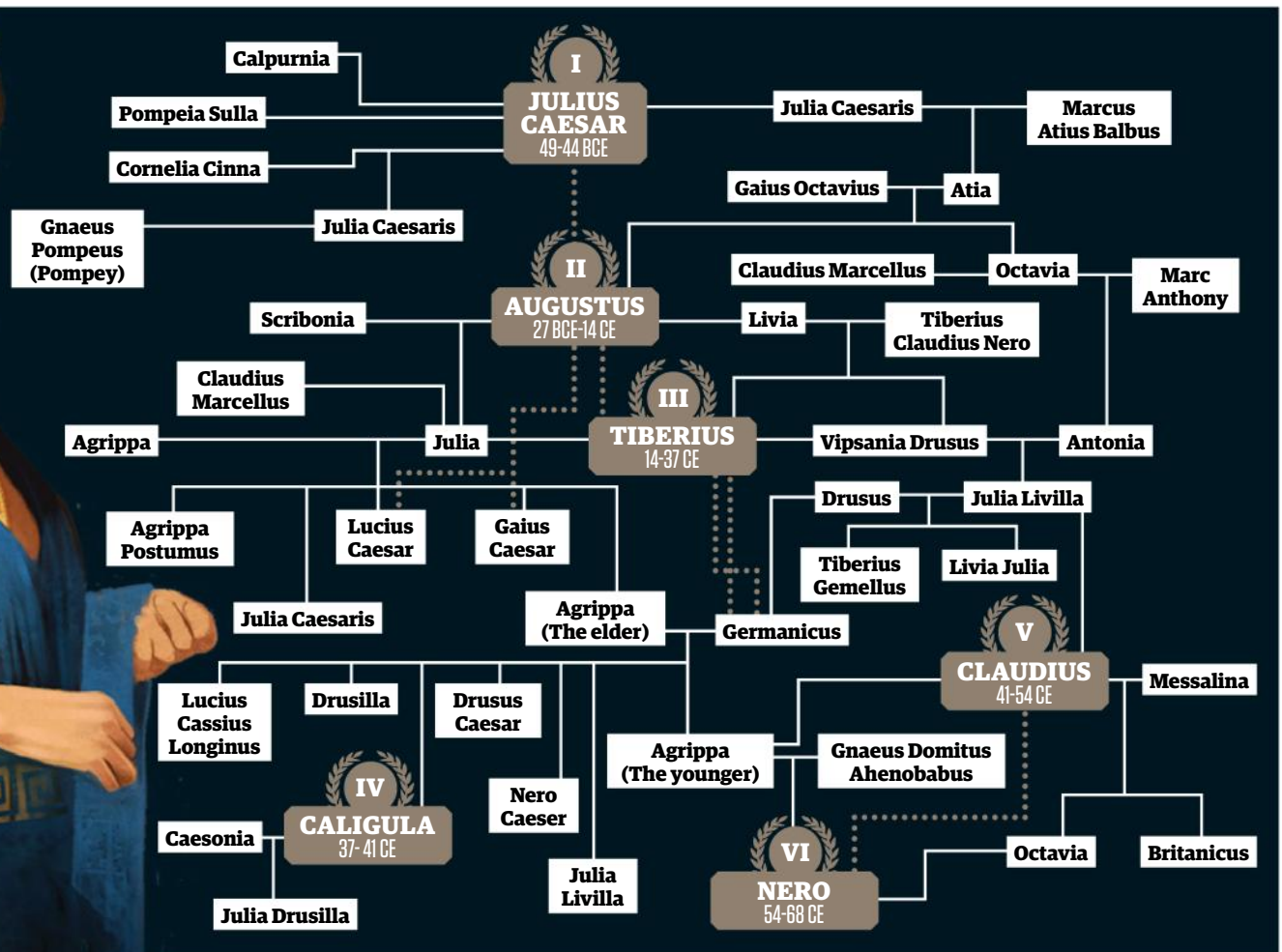
Part of the newly established Julio-Claudian dynasty, Caligula was the nephew of Tiberius, who became his adopted son and, ultimately, his heir.

V. Claudius

Claudius was ostracised from his powerful family due to his deafness and limp. However, at Caligula's assassination, he was the last male in his family and thus crowned emperor.

VI. Nero

The final emperor of the Julio-Claudian dynasty, Nero was adopted by Claudius, his grand-uncle, to become his heir. Nero was implicated in conspiring Claudius's death.



5 most murderous emperors

The men who ruled Rome with fear, blood and death






 <p>5,750</p> <p>NERO</p> <p>B.15 DEC 37 CE – D.9 JUN 68 CE 13 OCT 54 CE – 9 JUN 68 CE</p> <p>Nero's tyrannical reputation is well earned – not only did he direct his murderous intents towards innocent Christians, beginning a tradition of torture and persecution that would last hundreds of years, but he also killed those closest to him.</p> <p>NOTABLE MURDER</p> <p>MOTHER NAME: AGRIPPINA REASON: TO STOP HER INTERFERING IN HIS PERSONAL AFFAIRS. METHOD OF EXECUTION: UNKNOWN BUT IT IS COMMONLY BELIEVED NERO ORDERED ASSASSINS TO DISPOSE OF HER.</p>	 <p>9,500</p> <p>TIBERIUS</p> <p>B.16 NOV 42 BCE – D.16 MAR 37 CE 18 SEP 14 CE – 16 MAR 37 CE</p> <p>Accounts of Tiberius's murderous streak differ – some sources claim only four innocents died under his reign. However, others paint the picture of a ruthless emperor, killing anyone he suspected of plotting against him, leaving heaps of dead bodies in his wake.</p> <p>NOTABLE MURDER</p> <p>STEPSON NAME: AGRIPPA POSTUMUS REASON: FOR POSSESSING A STRONG CLAIM TO THE THRONE. METHOD OF EXECUTION: EXECUTED BY HIS GUARDS. TIBERIUS IS NOT CONFIRMED TO HAVE BEEN BEHIND THE ATTACK.</p>	 <p>9,000</p> <p>CALIGULA</p> <p>B.31 AUG 12 CE – D.24 JAN 41 CE 18 MAR 37 CE – 24 JAN 41 CE</p> <p>Death surrounded Caligula from an early age, with almost his entire family destroyed by Tiberius. Caligula was known to have an insatiable lust for power. Although we cannot verify them, there are many outrageous stories of murder and tyranny.</p> <p>NOTABLE MURDER</p> <p>ADOPTED SON NAME: TIBERIUS GEMELLUS REASON: FOR ALLEGEDLY PLOTTING AGAINST CALIGULA. METHOD OF EXECUTION: EXECUTED BY MILITARY TRIBUNE.</p>	 <p>12,000</p> <p>COMMODUS</p> <p>B.31 AUG 161 – D.31 DEC 192 177 – 31 DEC 192</p> <p>Rather than being a ruthless tyrant, Commodus is often painted as a figure of cowardice, easily influenced by men with dark intentions. It was repeated attempts upon his life that pushed the emperor to kill for almost no reason at all.</p> <p>NOTABLE MURDER</p> <p>SISTER'S LOVER NAME: MARCUS UMMIDIUS QUADRATUS ANNIANUS REASON: FOR PLOTTING AGAINST COMMODUS'S REIGN. METHOD OF EXECUTION: EXECUTED ALONG WITH HIS SON.</p>	 <p>3,000</p> <p>SEVERUS</p> <p>B.11 APR 145 – D.4 FEB 211 14 APR 193 – 4 FEB 211</p> <p>Severus claimed the throne through bloody means, deposing the previous emperor and waging war on his rivals. Soon his cruelty became renowned and he earned himself the nickname 'the Punic Sulla' in reference to the infamous dictator, Sulla.</p> <p>NOTABLE MURDER</p> <p>PREVIOUS EMPEROR NAME: DIDIUS JULIANUS REASON: FOR BUYING THE THRONE, SEVERUS REFUSED TO ACKNOWLEDGE HIS AUTHORITY. METHOD OF EXECUTION: KILLED IN THE PALACE BY A SOLDIER.</p>
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plate of mushrooms, others suspect that Agrippina had nothing to do with Claudius's death. However, considering the timing of the emperor's demise, a natural death seems all-too-convenient.

In 54 CE, before he could officially re-instate his own son as heir, Claudius passed away and the position of emperor fell to Nero. It is unknown if Nero played a part in the poisoning, or even if he was privy to the details, but it is peculiar that from then on, Nero proclaimed mushrooms, "the food of the gods."

To the public, Nero was a welcome change. In fact, the early part of his reign was hailed as a 'golden age'. Nero was obsessed with personal popularity – more than anything he wanted to be liked. In his early years he abolished capital punishment, lowered taxes, gave more rights to slaves and gave aid to other cities. He loved the arts and he put on lavish games, concerts, chariot races and tournaments. To the people, it seemed that he was genuinely interested in being a good ruler, but it is likely he was still worried about the ever-looming threat of Claudius's true son claiming the throne. If the people liked him, then it was less likely they would support his rival. To Nero, popularity meant power.

However, things at home were less than stable. Nero was only 17 when he became emperor,

making him the youngest ever to assume the throne up until that point. Nero's ascension not only transformed him into an emperor, but also into a man. While his mother's scheming and influence had been useful in the struggle for succession, now he was ruler he had his own ambitions, many of which did not involve her. Having a mother figure so strong and



Agrippina's influence can be seen from this coin that features her image alongside her son - a very rare occurrence

domineering was plainly frustrating to the ambitious young man, and, much to his mother's annoyance, he began to rely more on the advice of his advisers. His adviser's opinions were clear - Agrippina wasn't to be trusted. With the relationship souring, Nero purposely began to act out. He had long loathed the political marriage he had been forced into with Octavia and instead began an affair with a former slave. When his outraged mother found out and demanded he rid himself of her, Nero instead began living with her as his wife. It was a very subtle message - Nero wasn't a child anymore, and his mother didn't control him. Nero swiftly moved Agrippina out of the palace, denied her the protection of the Praetorian Guard and banned her from the gladiatorial contests.

Agrippina, however, wasn't one to go down quietly. Finally realising that she had completely lost grip on a son who had inherited her own

ruthless ambition, she turned her attention elsewhere, to the one other person who could claim the throne and reinstate her power - Britannicus. He was still a minor, but suddenly, in 55 CE, the day before he was due to be declared an adult, Claudius's true son died while at a banquet. Agrippina had taught her son two things: how to succeed, and how to kill - and now he was a master of both.

In 58 CE, Nero finally decided he was finished with his loveless marriage and declared his wish to marry another - Poppaea Sabina. However, his mother refused to stay quiet and let her opposition to the divorce be heard clearly among the Roman population, who also did not wish Nero to divorce Octavia. Feeling his support waning and finally pushed to breaking point, Nero made a decision - it was time to rid himself of his interfering mother once and for all.

Nero's decision to kill his mother was not a sudden, rash one. It was thought out and planned down to the last detail. At first he had experts craft a device that could be affixed to her ceiling and would then crush her in her sleep. When that proved too complicated, he opted for a boat made to sink. However, Agrippina escaped by swimming to the shore. Finally, out of options, he returned to tradition and had her stabbed to death.

Shortly after Agrippina's murder, Nero began to change. Perhaps it was something to do with murdering his own mother that haunted his mind.



“The same man who had abolished capital punishment began executing anyone who he suspected of conspiring against him”



Whether it was guilt or something animal within him being unleashed, the kind, fair ruler that the people loved seemed to vanish almost overnight. Nero had always been self-indulgent, but his hedonistic lifestyle became so over the top that it began to sicken the very people who had once loved him.

He spent an outrageous amount of money on himself and his artistic pursuits and began to give public performances, an action criticised as shameful by many ancient historians. He forbade anyone from leaving while he performed, and some likely inflated accounts write of women giving birth in the arena and men flinging themselves off the high walls to escape the boredom. If Nero had simply been a hedonistic ruler, that would not have been so terrible. He had always been lavish and craved the people's attention, but now he was cruel too. This cruelty was directed at the woman he likely viewed as the last thorn in his side - his wife.

With nobody to oppose him, Nero divorced the nation's darling, Octavia, and banished her on grounds of infertility. This left him free to marry Poppaea, by that point heavily pregnant. Eventually Nero bowed to public protests and let

Octavia return, but not for long. Officially her death was deemed a suicide, but the truth was a badly kept secret: Nero had ordered her execution. Her popularity was turning the public against him, therefore she had to be eliminated. As the people wept, the emperor had her head sent to his new wife as a gift.

The people of Rome were not idiots, and the sudden death of Octavia and swift remarriage had made many people suspect Nero's hidden murderous ways. Accusations of treason against the emperor began to emerge, but rather than heed this warning and lay low, he instead became more vicious than ever. The same man who had abolished capital punishment began executing anyone who he suspected of conspiring against him. Eventually this cull extended to people who said any bad word about him; one commander was even executed for making a negative comment at a party. It is said that Nero was haunted by memories of his mother and wife, and the guilt transformed him into a bloodthirsty animal, killing without moderation or consideration. Although his murderous actions could be chalked up to rage and suspicion, it did mean one thing - Nero's rivals were eliminated one by one.

Nero seemed to have decided that if he couldn't have power by popularity, then he would have power by dominance. Over this period, he slowly usurped authority from the Senate. Just ten years after promising them power equivalent to that they had held under the republic, Nero had all but



Seneca, Nero's beloved tutor, was caught up in the Pisonian conspiracy and the emperor was forced to order him to commit suicide

stripped the Senate of their worth. To the emperor, this meant more power for him, but the Senate was also full of dangerous, ambitious men, and ignoring them would later prove his downfall.

In 64 CE, something even more devastating than Nero's rage distracted the Roman public. A great fire consumed the city, destroying three districts, damaging seven and leaving thousands of citizens homeless. Accidental fires were not uncommon at the time, but a rumour soon sprung up that it was Nero himself who had started it in order to clear space for his new luxury complex, the Domus Aurea. Although it is impossible to confirm who ignited the fire, the fact that his subjects all believed Nero capable of starting it to benefit himself is indicative of how far the beloved emperor had fallen. Nero was quick to shift the blame, pointing the fingers at Christians, and in doing so began years of torture and persecution. Across Rome, Christians were arrested, devoured by dogs, crucified and burned. There are even accounts of Nero using oil-soaked Christians as torches in his gardens.

The public had been right about one thing: Nero did want to build his huge villa, and the newly cleared land made the perfect spot. However, after excessively spending on his own artistic pursuits, the emperor was running low on funds. In order to pay for his ambitious building project, he sold senior positions in public office to the highest bidders, raised taxes and took money from temples. Nero's frivolous spending had caused the currency

Did Nero start the Great Fire?



Expert bio:

Miriam Griffin studied at Barnard College, New York, and at St Anne's College, Oxford, where she read

Greats. She served as tutorial fellow in Ancient History at Somerville College for 35 years until 2002. After retirement, she edited *The Classical Quarterly*. In 2008, Griffin was Langford Eminent Scholar at Florida State University. She is the author of books on Seneca and Nero, and has written extensively on Roman philosophy.

Was Nero responsible for the Great Fire?

The rumour of Nero's responsibility for the fire of 64 CE goes back to his reign, for one of those who conspired against him a year later, when interrogated, reproached him with it. In fact, the rumour is contemporary with the event, if the historian Tacitus is right to say that it was in order to abolish that rumour that Nero tried to pin the blame on the Christians. Rome had frequent fires, but this one was clearly exceptional: it lasted six days, plus a resurgence of another three days, and damaged more than two-thirds of the city's districts. The Emperor Domitian was to have altars to Neptune built along the edge of the affected area. Arson is unlikely to be the cause, as the Moon was full on 17 July 64 CE, two days after the fire, making the date a bad choice, since men with



torches would have been easily visible. Arson by Nero is particularly unlikely as the fire did not start or even restart in the area used for the Golden House, and the flames damaged Nero's new apartments on the Palatine and Oppian Hills, which he clearly still liked as he stripped off the marble wall decoration for use in his new palace.

Was Nero truly as monstrous as history has painted him?

Half a century after his death, a Greek writer said, "Even now his subjects wish he was still alive and most men believe that he is." False Nero in fact appeared in 69 CE, 79 CE and 88-89 CE, all young and all playing the lyre. This was in the east where Nero had performed at all the major festivals, showing his approval of Greek artistic appreciation. Rome and Italy did not share the idea that members of the governing elite should be artistic, so

that neither Nero's performances, nor even his patronage of the arts, could reduce the hostility he generated there by his extravagance and cruelty. Yet there endured a tradition that the first part of his reign, the Quinquennium Neronis, was a good period. He had good advisers who tried to steer him in the right direction, as is shown by the dedication to him in 55 CE of a work on clemency by one of them, the philosopher Seneca. But Nero had already murdered his adoptive brother Britannicus and his mother Agrippina by 62 CE when his other adviser, Burrus, died, seriously reducing Seneca's influence over his pupil who proceeded to rid himself of any remaining rivals and their relatives. It has not helped Nero's reputation that his death marked the end of the Julio-Claudian dynasty, enabling the new rulers to justify their seizure of power by claiming to replace an evil tyrant.

to devalue for the first time in the empire's history, and to try to rebuild his funds, he reinstated a policy that allowed him to confiscate property from those suspected of treason.

For many people, this was the final straw. In 65 CE, a plot was hatched to assassinate Nero and place Piso, an aristocrat, in his place. However, the plot was discovered before it could be carried out. Many of the men involved in the plot were Nero's previous advisers and close friends, but Nero showed no restraint in having them all executed. Killing his enemies had worked very well for Nero so far, but that was when he only had a few rivals. Now almost all of Rome hated him, and he couldn't kill everyone.

Three years later, Gaius Julius Vindex, a governor, publicly rebelled against Nero's harsh tax policies. He was swiftly joined by another governor, Servius Sulpicius Galba. Although Gaius's forces were squashed and Gaius executed, Galba still lived, and as the main living force against Nero,



The Domus Aurea

Nero's self indulgence is no well kept secret, the emperor did not shrink at the idea of spending enormous amounts on himself while his subjects suffered. After the great fire of 64 CE destroyed vast areas of land, Nero saw an opportunity to build the grandest palace the world had ever seen. Nero seized this land, actually owned by several aristocrats, and set about building his dream home – the Domus Aurea or 'Golden House'.

Enlisting the help of the celebrated architect Severus and the engineer Celer, Nero created a pleasure palace unlike any seen before. The vast complex included landscaped gardens, a huge man-made lake and an imperial retreat with 150 beautifully decorated rooms. Glimmering with delicate gold leaf, semi-precious stones and ivory, upon the project's completion Nero proclaimed, "Now I can begin to live like a human being."

After Nero's suicide just four years later, the lake was drained and vast areas of the palace were torn down by Vespasian, who also began constructing the Colosseum where the lake had stood. Baths were also later built on the land. It wasn't until the Renaissance that interest surrounding the remains was renewed – many famous painters explored the ruins, marvelled at the beauty and were inspired in their own work.

Palace entrance

The courtyard that served as the main gateway into the complex was along the via Sacra. The entrance featured a towering 30-metre-high gilt-bronze statue of Nero himself, also known as the Colossus Neronis.

Banquet rooms

Despite there being no evidence of a kitchen on site, there were countless banquet rooms. In the West Wing alone, one rectangular courtyard was surrounded by at least 50 banquet rooms.

Baths

A staple in Roman life, Nero had a luscious bath house built on the grounds. The bath featured running cold and hot water, and water was a main feature throughout the complex – with waterfalls running down the walls, ornamental fountains and pools built into the floors.

East Wing

Our knowledge of the East Wing is limited, as the West Wing is the best preserved part of the building. However, it is likely it matched the splendour of its twin, with sitting-rooms, sun courts, fountains and intricately painted frescoes. The two wings were joined by a large colonnade, which may have extended over two levels.

Gardens

The palace was surrounded by a luscious landscaped garden covering 50 hectares. The gardens included ploughed fields, vineyards, pastures and woodlands. It is also recorded that domestic and wild animals roamed freely in the gardens.

The room of the Golden Vault

The Golden Vault was in the West Wing and featured a huge gilded ceiling and marble panelling. The main attraction, however, was a towering painting of Zeus abducting Ganymede. These beautiful and innovative frescoes were featured throughout the entire Golden House and would go on to inspire artists such as Raphael.



The Colossus of Nero

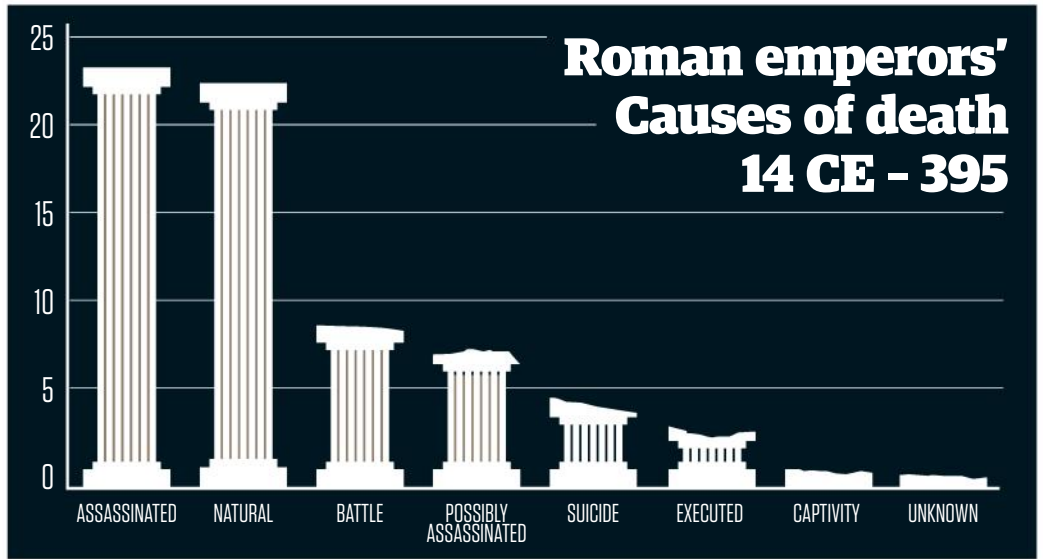
When Nero was building his Domus Aurea, he decided its crowning glory would be a huge, imposing bronze statue of himself. Designed by the Greek architect Zenodorus, this mammoth work of art took four years to construct. Sources differ on the statue's true height, but we can presume it was at least 30 metres tall. After Nero's death, with public opinion of the emperor at an all time low, the statue was moved next to the Colosseum and Nero's face was replaced with that of the sun god. Emperor Commodus later altered it to his own face until, after his death, it was changed back. Today nothing remains of this sculpture except for its foundations.

Entertainment rooms

The palace was not for living, but for entertaining. This can be deduced by the fact that there were no sleeping quarters, kitchens or latrines in a complex comprising more than 300 rooms. Some of the party rooms even showered guests in flower petals and perfume as they entered.

Octagonal room

The Octagonal Room possessed a large concrete dome covered with a glass mosaic. It is said that this revolved incessantly, day and night. Recent excavations have suggested that water or slaves may have been used to power this rotation, which followed the movement of the sun.



he quickly gained support. Nero declared him a public enemy, but this seemed only to increase his follower numbers. Even the prefect of Nero's Praetorian Guard abandoned him and declared his allegiance to Galba. Many men who had likely been too scared to act alone saw this as their chance to finally raise their voices against the emperor and his greedy, ruthless ways, and Galba's support grew and grew.

Nero was self indulgent and tyrannical, but he wasn't stupid. He knew it was time to run. He decided to flee east to the provinces that were still loyal to him. However, even his own officers refused to help him, quoting a line from Vergil's *Aeneid*: "Is it so dreadful a thing then to die?" Escape was too good for Nero. Disgrace was too kind to the man who had slaughtered and destroyed the lives of his people. Death was what the Roman people, and his own men, craved.

Nero had no option but to return home to his palace, his last place of sanctuary. However, he struggled to sleep, and when he awoke, he found that the palace guard had also abandoned him. Anxious and panic stricken, he sent hasty messages to his friends' chambers, but no replies came. Even they had forsaken him. Nero had lost everything - his safety, his kingdom and his cherished popularity. He called for anyone adept with a sword to come and end his life, but nobody appeared, and his cries echoed in his empty palace: "Have I neither friend nor foe?"

The emperor managed to escape to a villa six kilometres outside the city with four loyal freedmen, where he ordered them to dig a grave for him. Before it was finished, a message arrived - Nero had been declared a public enemy and the Senate were to execute him by beating. It is unlikely that this would have occurred; there was, after all, still some devotion to the Julio-Claudian family, of which Nero was the last in line. If there

was no loyalty to Nero, the bloodline at least would give him a chance of survival.

Nero, however, did not see this. He had been abandoned by everyone, he had lost everything, and he was convinced his life was next. First he begged one of his companions to kill him, an act they refused to comply with, and then, upon hearing the horsemen approaching, he had no option but to take his own life. Even here he failed; consumed by fear, he forced his secretary to do

the deed for him. Nero still lived as the

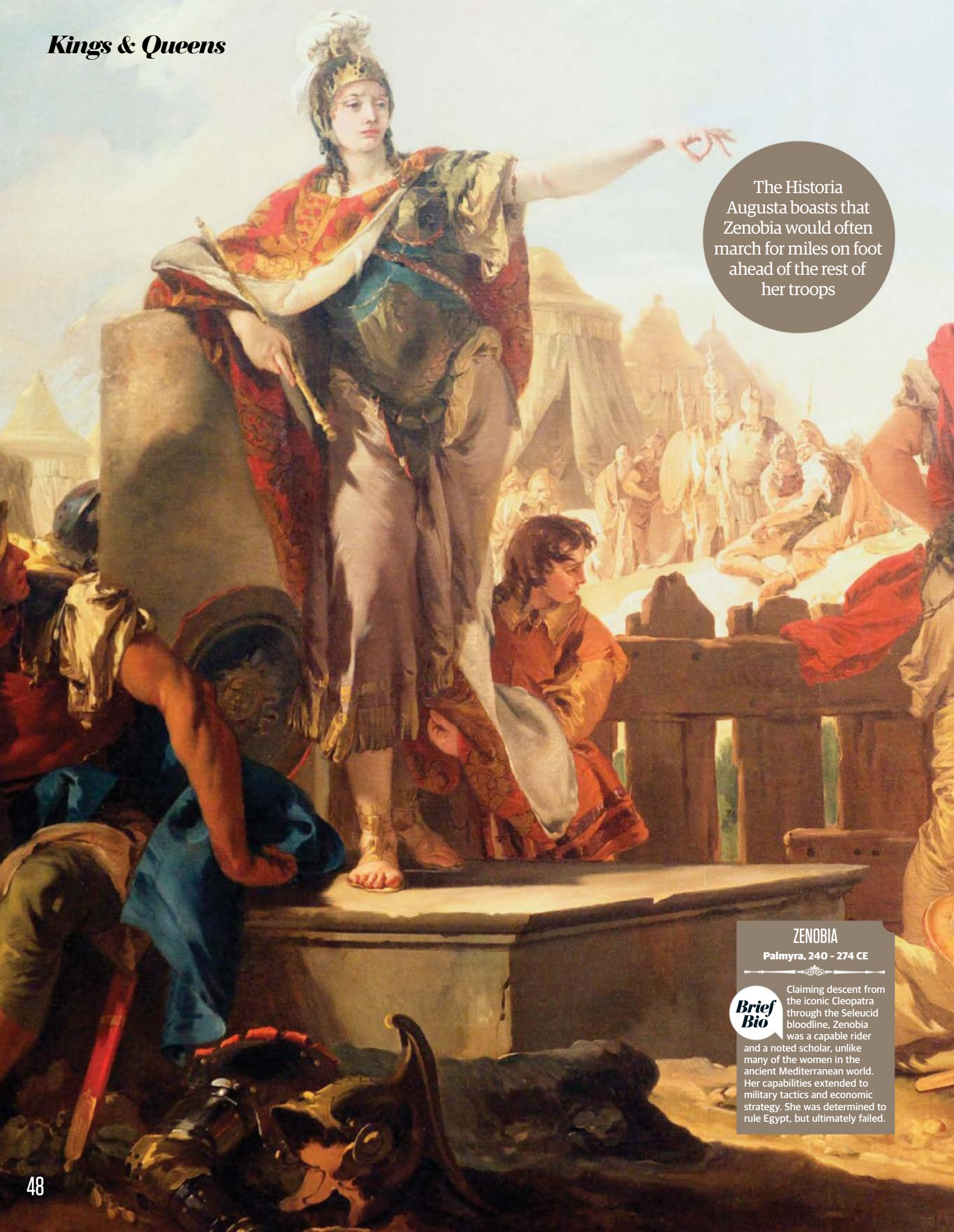
horsemen entered, and he survived long enough to utter his last words

as the men struggled to stop the bleeding: "Too late! This is fidelity!" On 9 June 68 CE, on the anniversary of Octavia's death, the last in the Julio-Claudian line was dead.

By the time he reached Rome, Galba had already been proclaimed emperor. As favoured as he was, Galba's reign would not be a long or peaceful one and he would be

dead within a year. Nero had not been a good emperor, but with his ancient line dried up, chaos claimed the city and war waged. Nero's legacy, however, would live on for millenia. To Christians he became a figure so rooted in pain and anguish that he took on the form of the Antichrist. A rumour began that Nero had not died at all and instead would one day return. This became a legend almost Christ-like in its retelling, surviving hundreds of years after his death, even into the 5th century, and at least three imposters proclaiming to be Nero led unsuccessful rebellions in his name. Because of these things and the influence they had on historians, it is almost impossible to distinguish who Nero really was from rumour and myth. Today he has taken on a super-villain status that increases with every retelling of his life. The real man behind the myth may be dead forever, but the spectre of Emperor Nero, and the pain he brought his people, flourishes to this day.

Nero's name was erased from monuments and many portraits were reworked to represent someone else



The *Historia Augusta* boasts that Zenobia would often march for miles on foot ahead of the rest of her troops

ZENOBIA

Palmyra, 240 - 274 CE

Brief Bio

Claiming descent from the iconic Cleopatra through the Seleucid bloodline, Zenobia was a capable rider and a noted scholar, unlike many of the women in the ancient Mediterranean world. Her capabilities extended to military tactics and economic strategy. She was determined to rule Egypt, but ultimately failed.

c. 267 – 272 CE

Zenobia

Armed with the bravery and beauty of her ancestor Cleopatra, Zenobia defied the Romans to rule her own empire in the Middle East

Blame William Shakespeare – or Elizabeth Taylor – for the fact that Cleopatra has overshadowed all other strong, cunning and comely queens of antiquity. Three centuries after the legendary Cleopatra ruled from the Pharaoh's throne in Egypt, her blood heiress, as well as equal in courage and beauty, rose to power in the eastern oasis of Palmyra, in modern-day Syria. After the assassination of her war-hero husband, Zenobia assumed confident control of this wealthy city state on the fringes of the fading Roman Empire in the 3rd century CE. Claiming independence from Rome, she would drive her loyal armies across Egypt and Palestine, briefly ruling a large and stable empire of her own. But her kingdom, and life, would ultimately be cut short by the sword of the conquering Roman Emperor Aurelian.

The true story of Zenobia is shrouded in centuries of legend. The earliest historical source is the wildly unreliable *Historia Augusta*, a colourful work of fiction posing as fact from the 4th century CE. The 18th century historian Edward Gibbon, in his monumental work *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, relied heavily on descriptions of Zenobia found in the *Historia Augusta* to paint his own romanticised portrait of the Palmyrene queen. "Modern Europe has produced several illustrious women who have sustained with glory the weight of empire," wrote Gibbon. "But... Zenobia is perhaps the only female whose superior genius broke through the servile indolence imposed on her sex by the climate and manners of Asia. She claimed her descent from the Macedonian kings of Egypt, equalled in beauty her ancestor Cleopatra and far surpassed that princess in chastity and valour.

Zenobia was esteemed the most lovely as well as the most heroic of her sex."

Modern historians have pieced together a more reliable biography of Zenobia from early Christian sources, archaeological inscriptions and ancient coins, but much of her life story is still up for debate, starting with her lineage and ethnicity. Much is made of Zenobia's claimed relation to Cleopatra along the famed Seleucid bloodline on her mother's side. Her father also ruled Palmyra and was descended from a long line of Roman citizens, as well as royalty dating back to Julia Domna, the influential empress wife of Roman Emperor Lucius Septimus Severus.

Whether or not either of these genealogies are true, it's clear that Zenobia was born into a wealthy and powerful family in a city state at the height of its own wealth and power. Palmyra is located in the middle of the desert halfway between the Euphrates

River valley and the Mediterranean Sea. Underground springs transformed the land into a fertile oasis and a critical stop on the Silk Road trade route that brought spices and textiles from the exotic East to the bustling markets of Rome. Palmyra's security forces offered protection to passing caravans while the government exacted an import tax – 25 per cent of every camel load – to fill Palmyra's substantial coffers.

Zenobia, as described by Gibbon, was an olive-skinned beauty who spoke Aramaic, Greek, Latin, Arabic and Ancient Egyptian. Unlike the delicate noblewomen of Rome – who wouldn't leave the house without a protective veil and covered carriage – Zenobia was a capable camel and horse rider who enjoyed wild lion and panther hunts as much as her husband.

Tracing her ancestry, historians now believe that Zenobia may have had Aramaean or even Jewish origins



Aurelian the unstoppable

After the Imperial Crisis of the 3rd century, the Roman Empire owed its survival to the hard-nosed military mastermind Aurelian. Born into a family of humble peasant farmers in the Danubian provinces of the Roman Empire near the Balkans, he joined a long line of tough and disciplined military men. Aurelian rose to prominence as a strict and stalwart army officer during one of the messiest periods in Imperial history. In 268, the Emperor Gallienus was under fire from the so-called Thirty Tyrants, Roman military and political leaders who aimed to topple the throne. Aurelian, along with his compatriot Claudius, put down the rebellion, but may have played a role in Gallienus' assassination. Claudius succeeded as Emperor, but died after only 18 months, making room for no-nonsense Aurelian to assume the crown. He whipped the Roman legions into shape and marched them on the barbarian marauders – groups such as the Goths, Vandals, Alemanni and Juthungi – threatening Roman sovereignty in northern Italy. By this point, Zenobia had established herself as the Queen of the East and ruler of the independent Palmyrene Empire. If Aurelian had any hesitation about crushing a woman, he didn't show it, and brought the full force of his best legions against Zenobia, finally offering her a measure of mercy if she would surrender her empire at the gates of Palmyra. When she refused, Aurelian dragged her captive to Rome and had her entire inner circle executed. He returned two years later during a short-lived revolt.

Zenobia was the second wife of Odaenathus, the ruler of Palmyra and a critical ally of Rome in the east. During Odaenathus' rule, Palmyra was an important buffer state between the Romans and the Persian Sasanian Empire. Rome allowed Palmyra to remain independent in exchange for its strategic neutrality in the region. In 260 CE, the Persians captured the Roman Emperor Valerian and conquered the eastern Roman stronghold of Antioch. Fearing a Persian expansion towards Palmyra, Odaenathus struck first, decimating the Persian army as it returned victorious from Antioch. Later Palmyrene campaigns pushed the Persians all the way back to their capital. These victories won Odaenathus praise and titles from Rome and may have triggered visions of his own future rise to be Emperor himself.

Odaenathus would not live long enough to find out. He was murdered by a nephew along with his son Hairan, from his first wife, over a hunting argument. Odaenathus' death left Zenobia's young son Vaballathus as heir to the throne. Since the boy was too young to rule – between five and ten years old – Zenobia assumed the role of regent, a position that quickly evolved into the undisputed political and military leader of Palmyra. On coins recovered from the years after Odaenathus' murder, archaeologists first find them with Vaballathus'

face on the front and Zenobia's on the back. Very quickly these positions are reversed.

As the de facto ruler of Palmyra, Zenobia picked up exactly where her husband left off, with her own dreams of a Palmyrene Empire. Historians argue about Zenobia's specific motivations and political calculations. During the 3rd century, the Roman Empire suffered an extended period of great tribulation known as the Imperial Crisis. The Empire had gone through 19 emperors in 30 years, most of them killed by ambitious generals or their own Praetorian Guard. Britain and Gaul had split from the Empire, the Goths were invading from the north, there was a smallpox epidemic in the provinces and pirates were disrupting trade along the Libyan coast.

In Rome's moment of weakness, Zenobia saw an opportunity, but did she see herself as Rome's partner in empire, or its conqueror?

What happens next is undisputed. In the year 269 CE, with the support of her husband's battle-tested General Zabdas, Zenobia marched the Palmyrene army into Egypt, what she called her ancestral homeland. When the Roman prefect of Egypt objected to Zenobia's occupation, she swiftly had him beheaded. Zenobia bestowed upon herself the title of Queen of Egypt and commissioned a ten-volume history of Cleopatra to commemorate the victory. If the Roman Emperor Claudius had his

Zenobia's chief counsellor, Cassius Longinus, was a noted scholar, Platonic philosopher, as well as a literary critic

“When the Roman prefect of Egypt objected to Zenobia's occupation, she swiftly had him beheaded”

Defining moment

Assassination of Odaenathus 266 CE

Zenobia's husband, Odaenathus, died far from the battlefield. One story sees him going on a hunting trip with a rude nephew, Maeonius, who Odaenathus punished by taking away his horse and locking him up for a few nights. Insulted, young Maeonius killed the Palmyrene king at a party. Other accounts implicate Rome in the murder. Another story puts Zenobia herself at the centre of the plot. Odaenathus was killed along with his eldest son, putting the throne in the hands of Zenobia's son Vaballathus and under her capable control.



Timeline

240 CE

● **A Queen is born**
Cleopatra claimed to be descended from Isis and Zenobia hitched her own star to Cleopatra's. She was born into the ruling family of Palmyra and schooled in language, philosophy, horse riding and hunting.
240 CE

● **Her match in marriage**
Zenobia became the second wife of Odaenathus, whose bravery and cunning on the battlefield were a perfect match for his ambitious young warrior bride.
258 CE



● **An heir in waiting**
Zenobia bore Odaenathus a son, Vaballathus, but the direct heir to the Palmyrene throne was Hairan, a child by Odaenathus' first wife. In Zenobia's day, it was common for competing wives to jostle – or even kill – to get their son on the throne.
259 CE



● **Taking Egypt**
Zenobia and her trusted general marched uncontested into Egypt while Rome's military was busy fighting off Goth invaders and Libyan pirates. The Egyptian people embraced Zenobia as the rightful heir to Cleopatra's greatness.
269 CE

own objections, he was too busy fighting off the Goths to worry about the upstart empress in Egypt.

Without Roman resistance, Zenobia the warrior queen was given free rein to extend her territory into Syria, Lebanon and Palestine. At its greatest extent, Zenobia's empire stretched from the Nile River in the south up through the Sinai Peninsula and Palestine, north to the Black Sea and west to modern-day Ankara, Turkey. Around this time, Zenobia changed her coins yet again to add the title Augustus, or empress, alongside her own portrait.

In 270, a new face appeared on the scene in the form of Aurelian, a lifelong military man who rose to the ranks to become Emperor of Rome and Restitutor Orbis, or restorer of the world. Aurelian brought order and discipline back to the Roman military. He pushed out invading Germanic tribes such as the Vandals from northern Italy and erected the fortress-like Aurelian Walls around Rome. Next he marched against the Goths in the Balkans and crushed them. By 272, Aurelian had dealt with Rome's most pressing problems and was ready to turn his attention east to the so-called Palmyrene Empire and its warrior empress. The *Historia Augusta* relates Zenobia writing a letter to Aurelian proposing that they rule the Mediterranean as co-emperors. If that letter ever actually existed, then Aurelian likely ignored it.

Aurelian and Zenobia first met in battle at Antioch. Zenobia's forces were anchored by heavily armoured cavalry called *clibanarii*, using a style of warfare borrowed from the Persians. Both horses and riders were covered with thick armoured plates to withstand a line of Roman archers known as *sagittariorum*. The *clibanarii* had a weakness, though, and Aurelian exploited it brilliantly. In Latin, *clibanarii* means the camp oven-bearers, because the armoured suits heat up like a furnace in the midday Sun. Aurelian feigned retreat and led the cavalry on lengthy chases, timing his greatest offensive to coincide with the greatest heat of the day. Zenobia's overheated cavalry were no match for Aurelian's well-trained legions and Zenobia retreated to Emissa, modern-day Homs.

Aurelian attacked Zenobia again at Emissa, using Palestinian slingers – armed with rocks and slings, like young David who fought Goliath – to disrupt

and confuse the Palmyrene cavalry. At one point, the 70,000-strong cavalry turned in on itself, trampling its own horsemen in the chaos. Zenobia was right there alongside her troops. "In both [battles] the Queen of Palmyra animated the armies by her presence," Gibbon writes. Facing defeat at Emissa, however, Zenobia decided to flee to the stronghold of Palmyra on her speediest camel.

Back in Palmyra, Zenobia failed to gather enough forces to engage in conventional warfare. Aurelian laid siege to the city for months, which, according to Gibbon, drew criticism from Rome.

In *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Gibbon quotes a letter from Aurelian: "The Roman people speak with contempt of the war that I am waging against a woman. They're ignorant both of the character and of the power of

Zenobia. It's impossible to enumerate her warlike preparations, of stones, of arrows and every species of missile weapons. Every part of the wall is provided with two or three ballistae and artificial fires are thrown from her military engines. The fear of punishment has armed her with courage."

In the end, the gods favoured Rome, Palmyra swiftly fell and Zenobia, along with her son and heir, was captured. The *Historia Augusta* recalls Zenobia being paraded through the streets of Rome in golden chains. Other accounts say she died on the journey from Palmyra, while others still claim she committed suicide – like her tragic heroine Cleopatra – rather than suffer the indignity of submitting to the Emperor or facing the jeering Roman crowds.

Zenobia's rule of Palmyra, including her rebellious campaign against the Roman Empire, lasted less than five years

Defining moment Siege of Palmyra 274 CE

According to exaggerated accounts in the *Historia Augusta*, Aurelian's final offensive against Zenobia at the desert oasis of Palmyra was almost a failure. As the Roman legions marched from Emessa, they were hounded by Syrian robbers and target practise for Persian assassins. His troops exhausted from two massive battles, Aurelian attempted to strike a deal with Zenobia, promising her life and the freedom of her people in return for peaceful surrender. Zenobia said that she, like Cleopatra, preferred death to dishonour. She threatened Aurelian with talk of reinforcements from Persia. Aurelian surrounded and starved out the city, bringing Palmyra to its knees.



Life in the time of Zenobia

Stealing from Rome's own breadbasket

Rome supplied free rations of wheat to its citizens to win their political loyalty, but much of the wheat was imported from Egypt. When Zenobia conquered Egypt, she allegedly cut off the wheat supply, a tactic not unlike kicking a hornet's nest.

By name only

The wealthy city state of Palmyra held a unique position in the Roman Empire. It functioned as an independent colony, free to collect its own taxes, but privy to the protection of the emperor. Palmyra grew fat off the taxes levied on caravans travelling the Silk Road to the west.

Spice security

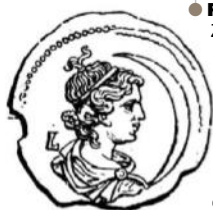
As a critical stop on the Silk Road, Palmyra was responsible for protecting the silk and spice caravans along the stretch of road within its boundaries. The task fell to private armies of swift horsemen that earned a reputation for their prowess at repelling bandits.

Lost in translation

Zenobia's full name in Greek was Septimia Zenobia, but was most likely a Latinisation of the Arabic *al-Zabba*, which was itself a translation of Zenobia's true Aramaic name, *Bat-Zabbai*, or 'daughter of Zabbai'. Zenobia's native language was Aramaic.

Roman triumph

Some sources claim that a captured and chained Zenobia was paraded through Rome as part of Aurelian's massive triumph in 274 CE, featuring 800 gladiators and conquered captives from every barbarian tribe. Some say she rode in a golden chariot he had built for her entrance into Rome.



Face fit for a coin

Zenobia ordered the Alexandria mint to produce new coins featuring her silhouette and the presumptuous inscription, 'S. Zenobia Aug', shorthand for Septimia Zenobia Augusta, Empress of the East.
270 CE

Bread baroness

Zenobia further provoked Rome by cutting off Egyptian wheat exports to the Imperial capital, where politicians assuaged the plebeians with free bread and circuses. If she was picking a fight, she would certainly get one.
271 CE

Eastern empire

At its peak, Zenobia's Palmyrene Empire absorbed the entire eastern shore of the Mediterranean, stretching from the Nile to the Black Sea. Most of her conquered territory submitted to their new empress without resistance.
272 CE

Aurelian strikes back

Emperor Aurelian follows his conquest of the Goths by turning his attention – and his armies – east to the Palmyrene Empire. In a rare move by the severe general, Aurelian spares the citizens of conquered Palmyrene cities, causing even more to surrender peacefully.
273 CE

527 – 548 CE

Theodora of Byzantium

As a courtesan who had risen to the rank of queen, Theodora was both loved and reviled. Just who was the woman behind one of Byzantium's greatest emperors?

Born to a bear trainer and an actress in Constantinople, the woman fated to become the wife of a Byzantine emperor hardly had an auspicious start in life. In Theodora's early years her life took a path that her later detractors would revel in, providing effortless fuel for the gossip that would surround her even after death. For there is little doubt that Theodora had two intertwined and equally suspect occupations before her marriage: she was well known both as an actress and as a courtesan. This line of work was also taken by at least one of her two sisters, and it is said that her mother ushered the girls into their professions after the death of their father, Acacius.

John of Ephesus, a writer sympathetic towards Theodora, refers to her as having come "from the brothel", while the less friendly Procopius, whose writings are our largest single source of information on Theodora, also repeats this detail. From Procopius, we learn that the young Theodora made quite a name for herself: with her provocative dress and a habit of stripping on stage, she titillated her audiences, even allowing buckets of grain to be emptied between her legs for geese to peck out. When the raunchy performances were

over, Theodora went further still and offered herself to all, both high and low, attending banquets to drum up custom.

However true or not the worst exaggerations of Procopius, this was not a life that would do for one such as Theodora. Early on it became apparent that she was intelligent, resourceful and able to think for herself, traits that would serve her well. At 16,

Theodora left Constantinople for North Africa, where she spent four years in the role as mistress to Hecebolius, a Syrian official. The whole matter ended in tears, but this did not bring her down; on her slow return to Constantinople via Alexandria and Antioch, Theodora met patriarchs and others of influence, learning and honing the skills and manners that she displayed to such great effect as empress. It was during this time that she is said to have converted to the controversial Monophysite religion, which held the belief that the human and divine natures of Christ were fused into one.

Setting her former occupations behind her, in 522, in her early 20s, Theodora returned to Constantinople. She set herself up as a wool spinner, making her home close to the palace. Here she caught the eye of Justinian - heir and nephew to Emperor Justin I. The middle-aged Justinian

It is thought that Theodora first made a name for herself with a carnal performance of the Leda and the Swan Greek myth

EMPERESS THEODORA Byzantium, 500-548 CE

Brief Bio

The middle of three sisters, Theodora navigated her way from lowly beginnings to emerge as a

woman perfectly suited to be consort and empress to Justinian I, the Byzantine emperor known as 'The Last Roman'. She was incredibly influential in her role as empress, enacting reforms and even helping to save her husband's throne.



The Byzantine Empire

One of the most powerful forces in Europe for 1,000 years

The Byzantine Empire that was to become so powerful began in the year 330, when the Emperor Constantine founded a new city, Constantinople, on the site of the former Greek colony of Byzantium. The two halves of the empire, the West and the East, diverged further and further over the years, but this proved to be beneficial to the eastern part, which survived after the western half fell in 476 before the Visigoth barbarian Odoacer.

Ruled by Roman law and with Roman-based political institutions, the main languages of the empire were Latin and Greek. A prominent power through most of its existence, the Byzantine Empire reached its greatest peak geographically during the reign of Justinian, during which most of the Western Empire was reclaimed. At the height of its powers, the empire was a seat of culture; theology, art and literature were promoted and preserved within it. There was also a large influence on the West as Byzantine scholars were commissioned to translate Greek and Arabic texts that would otherwise have been lost. Despite many challenges, the empire kept its position due to strength of location, power of wealth and political influence.

Despite this, the Byzantine Empire was in decline from the 13th century, suffering losses both economically and territorial. By the 14th century, the empire was increasingly threatened by the rising Turks. The end finally came on 29 May 1453 when Constantinople was attacked and won by the Ottoman emperor Mehmed II. Emperor Constantine died fighting as the city was taken, sealing the fate of the long-lived empire, with the iconic Hagia Sophia cathedral taken over and turned into a mosque.

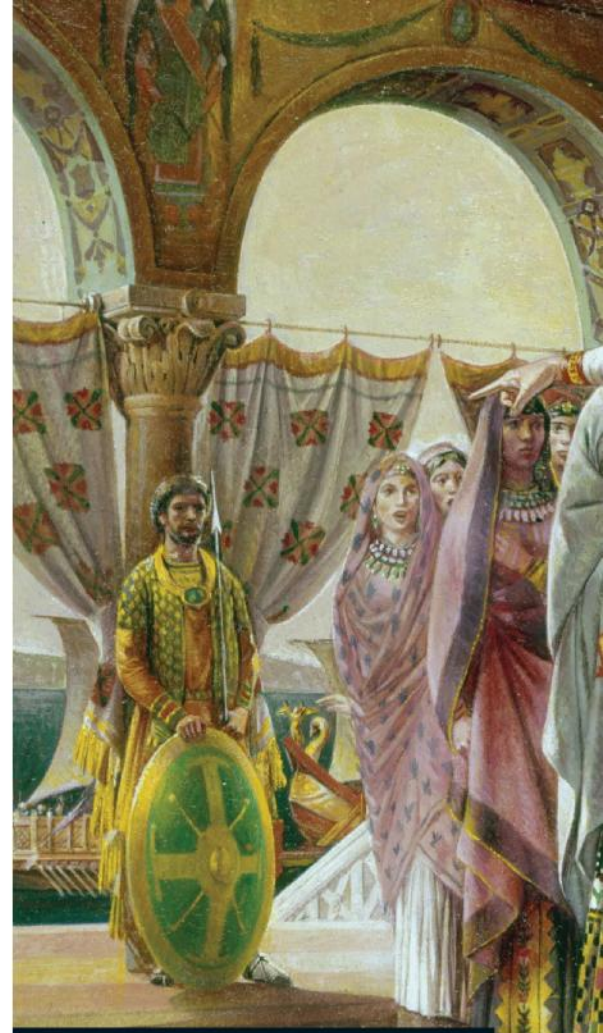


Theodora would prove to be her husband's strongest supporter

was captivated by her, and was determined to marry Theodora: but there was one, apparently insurmountable, obstacle. An old law stated that government officials were prohibited from marrying actresses, and although Theodora had renounced her previous role, her dalliance with the stage now barred her from becoming the wife of the man who was heir to the empire. To further compound the problem, Euphambia, empress to Justin I, was a firm upholder of this law, and, due to religious and personal differences, was further ill-disposed towards Theodora in particular. It seemed as if the couple were to be thwarted, but luck was on their side. Euphambia died c.524, and it became clear then that resistance to the match had been decidedly one-sided. Free now to act without causing himself marital strife and also under pressure from his heir, Justin repealed the law that stood in the way of the happy couple and they married soon after, uncaring of the scandal that followed in its wake.

In 527, Justinian came into his role of emperor, and Theodora found herself empress of Byzantium. If ashamed of her past in any way, Theodora made no effort to hide it; friends from her old life were made welcome at the palace, and her illegitimate daughter - whether Justinian's or from a previous relationship is unclear - was free to join her mother. Justinian likewise does not seem to have been troubled by his wife's past, perhaps in part due to his own less-than-illustrious beginnings. Despite or perhaps because of her humble start in life, Theodora was a stickler for ceremony and show in her role of empress. As on the stage, looks and appearances were everything, and she would not let anyone - high or low - forget for one moment that she was empress. Images of Theodora show a well-dressed woman, resplendent in gold and purple robes and glittering jewellery, the crown that marked her power and high position visible for all to see. Theodora also made sure she was given due honour and acknowledgement by visiting officials and members of the imperial household, often, it was alleged, making important dignitaries wait for hours at a time before receiving them.

Theodora was not content to be a trophy wife, and there are clear indications that she sought to better herself. She was an avid reader, choosing to read herself rather than be read to, and was actively involved in the governance of the empire. She saw that those she favoured were promoted and received positions, while actively working to remove those who did not support her or looked down on her. The empress did not suffer fools, and, according to Theodora's detractors at least, did not hesitate to remove those who displeased her. It was not unusual for a Byzantine empress to have influence both in court and even political matters, bestowing patronage and holding sway with her husband. Likewise, communicating with foreign envoys and visiting dignitaries was well within the remit of the role. With Theodora, however, came the first time that an empress went further; not only did she fill the conventionally accepted place of consort, but, according to some accounts, she



Empress Theodora urges Justinian to fight the mob, reminding him that "purple makes a fine shroud" - better to die fighting as an emperor than to run away



Theodora of Byzantium



was empress regnant in her own right in all but name. It is hardly surprising that there would be hostility towards the upstart empress, and there were those who grumbled, both behind closed doors and publicly, about the brazen woman from such humble beginnings. Indeed, Theodora's seeming flaunting of her past and refusal to disown her background would have been seen as a challenge to the established order.

Unsurprisingly then, when Justinian embarked upon a series of reforms within the city, Theodora was not idle. The rights of women were something that particularly concerned Theodora. In 528, women of all classes were protected by a law that ordered the death penalty for kidnap or rape, whereas before lower class women and slaves were exempt, at the mercy of anyone. In 534-535, laws on prostitution were also tightened, and it became illegal to force or coerce anyone into the profession. Likewise, women were granted more rights in cases of divorce and also where property was concerned through her direct involvement, and killing a wife who had committed adultery was also prohibited.

In all of this, Theodora had the backing of the emperor, who listened to and respected her views. In particular, Theodora was instrumental in attempts to reform the corruption in Constantinople's brothels. Prostitution was a major issue within the city, and exploitation and mistreatment were rife. With her husband's backing, Theodora set out to



Two monks present silkworms smuggled from China to Emperor Justinian



Here, some of Theodora's ladies in waiting flaunt the latest fashion of the Byzantine court

address this, setting up a convent as an escape for the women caught in this abusive life. Sources differ, however, and two distinct versions of events can be read. In one telling, the women were rescued from the horrors of the streets, living in comfort and harmony in their reformed lives behind the convent walls. Procopius, however, paints a more sinister picture: in his version, the women were kidnapped, moved into the convent against their will and forcibly reformed. The empress, far from being their saviour, was in fact jailer and tormentor; the women did not want to be removed from the life they knew, and some even committed suicide by throwing themselves onto the rocks below the convent in utter despair at their 'rescue'.

Theodora and Justinian are saints in the Eastern Orthodox Church and are commemorated on 14 November

Not mentioned by contemporary sources, it is likely that the worst excesses recounted by Procopius were part of the embittered smear campaign later carried out against Theodora and Justinian. Whether truthful or not, however, there are hints at a darker side to Theodora's story, at the lengths the proud and self-righteous empress would go to achieve her aims. There are tales of forced marriages at Theodora's behest, and the vindictive hounding of officials who displeased her from office. Although not proven, there were also rumours Theodora was involved in the murder of Amalasuintha of the Goths, a potential rival for Justinian's hand. It is Theodora's reported influence during the events of the infamous Nika revolt, however, that are

the most cited example of her power and influence both in political matters and with her husband. In January 532, the Hippodrome in Constantinople, the venue of the popular chariot races, was the scene of the biggest challenge to Justinian's reign. The sweeping reforms and expansive building programme instigated by the emperor throughout the city were met with protest at the disruption they caused, and this discontent erupted as the pressures took their toll on an already strained population. Riots broke out, and although they were put down and the ringleaders rounded up, two escaped, with mercy demanded for the fugitives at the next races. When this was denied by Justinian, violence surged afresh, and with the additional involvement of members of the aristocracy, it became not just an occasion of popular unrest, but a political coup with the intention of removing the emperor for good. A rival candidate, a nobleman with imperial blood named Hypatius, was proposed and enthroned, the



Timeline

- 533 CE**
North Africa
 Justinian's troops win a decisive victory, reclaiming the North African territories that had been conquered by the Vandals, marking the beginning of two decades of conquest.
533 CE
- 535 CE**
Sicily
 General Belisarius invades with a force of 7,500 men and, meeting little resistance, conquers Sicily, gaining a gateway through into Italy and beyond.
535 CE
- 536 CE**
Rome
 Rome is captured in December, only to be besieged by Vitigis, the king of the Ostrogoths, from February 537 until March 538. Justinian's troops emerge triumphant.
536 CE
- 538 CE**
Milan
 The city is claimed by Mundilas, but this victory is short lived; despite relief being sent, Milan is recaptured and burned by the vengeful might of the Gothic army.
538 CE



Justinian devoted much of his reign to attempting to restore the glory of Rome

violence in the Hippodrome escalating and forcing Justinian and his advisers back into the palace. The emperor was prepared to flee, when the former actress stepped forward to perform perhaps the most important role of her life. It was not, Theodora told her husband, time to run away - an emperor should never be in the position of fugitive, and it was better to die an emperor in the role allotted to him than to be safe in hiding. Shamed, scolded or given much-needed fight, Justinian stood firm. Sending his troops to the Hippodrome, the revolt was decisively

crushed, with between 30,000 and 35,000 rebels left dead. The pretender Hypatius was executed, as were others closely involved, and Justinian emerged the victor: his position unassailable and his wife vindicated and triumphant.

After Nika, it was clear that Justinian and his empress were there to stay, and never again was there such a serious challenge to his title. Theodora had been instrumental in this display of power, and is generally considered to have saved the day. It was not the only time she was said to have saved Justinian's throne: when in the early 540s Justinian lay seriously ill with plague, it was Theodora who effectively took over the reins of state, holding them until her husband recovered.

Based on mutual respect and affection as it was, the nature of Theodora's relationship with Justinian meant that they were able to present a united front, even when they differed in opinion. One area where this was abundantly clear was in matters of religion. Theodora had converted to the controversial Monophysite brand of Christianity at an early age, while the emperor stood firm in his Chalcedonian beliefs. The fact they were able to maintain their differences while keeping their respect for each other and working together as a united force demonstrated their empathy, maturity and integrity. Here again Theodora's influence can be seen; she not only founded a Monophysite monastery, but she also offered protection in the palace itself for those who were in danger for their beliefs, sheltering Monophysite bishops and leaders. One in particular, Anthimus, the patriarch of Constantinople, she sheltered for 12 years in her own

chambers. Theodora is also said to have outfoxed her own husband when it came to the conversion of the people of Nobatae in southern Egypt; Justinian had earmarked them for the Chalcedonian faith, but through her wiles, Theodora caused his missionaries to be delayed, her own Monophysite men arriving first and winning the common people to the Monophysite cause.

Theodora died in Constantinople on 28 June 548. Her influence continued even after her death, however, through the respect and honour Justinian showed to her name, the emperor's grief at her funeral declared to be most genuine by those who observed it. Not only did he maintain the promise made to his wife to protect the Monophysite community she had established, Justinian also continued to enact legislation that dealt with the rights of women as his wife had done during her life, ensuring that Theodora's legacy to the city that had known most of her life was to live long after her. Charismatic, bold and unforgettable, Theodora remains one of the most fascinating and influential empresses the Byzantine Empire had ever known.

Ceiling of the Basilica of San Vitale

One of the wonders of Ravenna, Italy, the Basilica holds a unique position in the history of art and architecture. Begun in 526 and completed 21 years later, this marvel of Roman and Byzantine styles is the only structure of its kind to survive from Justinian I's reign, and holds the biggest collection of Byzantine mosaics outside of Constantinople (Istanbul).



As it holds so many breathtaking mosaics, the Basilica, along with other structures in Ravenna, has been listed as a UNESCO World Heritage site

Ravenna

The one-time capital of the Western Roman Empire and current capital of the Ostrogoths is reached by Belisarius and taken for the empire in May of this year.
540 CE

Italy

Troubles abound for Justinian's forces during the next decade as he loses ground in Italy due to fighting in the east. Much of what had already been gained is lost.
541 CE

Iberian Peninsula

With an army 2,000 strong, the empire's forces take several south-eastern cities; the new province of Spania will be founded in the aftermath.
552 CE

Italy

Under Narses, the empire's forces finally prove triumphant against an enemy force of 30,000 and, after protracted fighting, Italy is decisively reclaimed for the empire.
554 CE

768 – 814 CE

Charlemagne

The 'father of Europe' and ruler of much of France and Germany, Charlemagne made his name as a king, but left a legacy as the first Roman emperor since the 5th century...

Over 300 years, Europe had fallen into darkness. With the power of the Pope and the once mighty Roman church beset by enemies, the legacy of the western Roman Empire toppled as steadily and as surely as the Caesars had themselves, stability withdrawing like overstretched legionnaires and knowledge fading away like the crumbling Roman roads that cross-hatched the continent.

Europe needed a strong leader to pull it back from the precipice, and it got a brace of them in the form of the Carolingian dynasty, a family of self-made kings who stabilised their lands by force, expanded their frontiers with terrifying aggression and ensured the primacy of the Christian church at the point of the sword. Yet, through this crucible of violence emerged a western Europe reformed to survive another 1,000 years.

By the 6th century, most of what is now France, western Germany, Switzerland, the Netherlands and Belgium was inhabited by the Franks, a Germanic tribe split into several small kingdoms that had rushed into the power vacuum left by the fall of Rome. These petty principalities had been united not by their monarch - rulers in name only, the *rois fainéants*, the 'do-nothing kings' of the Merovingian dynasty, had been increasingly sidelined by their own ministers - but by the

CHARLEMAGNE

Western Europe, 742 - 814 CE

Brief Bio

Taking the throne of the Franks in 768, Charlemagne rose from relatively humble royalty to a position of greatness. Adding King of Italy to his portfolio in 774, he eventually ruled all of continental western Europe by the year 800. A pious man, his relationship with the church increased his political power.





Charles Martel, grandfather of Charlemagne, defeats the Moors at the Battle of Tours in 732 CE

Mayor of the Palace, the executive of the royal administration who was half-prime minister and half-Shogun-esque warlord.

Pepin of Herstal had warred his way to stability between 680 CE and his death in 714 CE, bringing the other Frankish lands to heel and taking Christianity to their furthest and most pagan reaches. His son, Charles Martel, was a stronger hand yet. Though Pepin had nominated his grandson as successor, Charles - born out of wedlock and excluded from the court - was having none of it, and took the not-quite-throne by force. Despite not being Pepin's choice of heir, he more than honoured his father's vision, expanding the centralised control of the Frank lands and expanding his rule further into modern Holland, Denmark and Germany with a standing army and revolutionary use of heavy cavalry, the foundation of Europe's knights. He defeated the pagan Saxons in the east and halted the advance of the Moors - the North African and Spanish Muslims of the powerful Umayyad Caliphate - who attempted to follow up their conquest of Spain by pushing across the Pyrenees mountains into France. 'Charles the Hammer' was even offered high office by the Pope, which he declined, but it was an omen of his grandson's own journey to come.

Succeeding his father Pepin the Short in 768 CE - who had given up the pretence of being anything other than supreme ruler by forcing the last Merovingian king into a monastery and taking the title of 'King of the Franks' for himself - Charlemagne, which means 'Charles the Great', shared the zeal of his predecessors. At war for most of his life, Charlemagne took Charles Martel's fight against the Moors into northern Spain, continued the conquest and conversion of the Saxons and launched new campaigns against the Lombards of northern Italy, the Slavs in Croatia and Avars in Hungary.

Leading his personal guard, the *scara* cavalry, into battle with his sword *Joyeuse*, Charlemagne's exploits have one armoured foot in myth and the other in fact, with separating the two being a difficult task, but his journey from king to the first Roman emperor since the fall of the Roman Empire has little to do with his legend as a warrior king and everything to do with the insecurity of the church.

Pope Leo III succeeded Adrian I on the day of the previous pontiff's burial, so fearful was he that the Frankish king to whom his predecessor owed his lands and safety would feel a right to interfere in the election of the new pope. Yet, despite his

wariness he was quick to bring Rome's most powerful ally on side, along with the letter that announced his succession, Leo included the keys to St Peter's Basilica and the Pope's banner. The not-so subtle message was that he viewed Charlemagne as the defender of the Holy See, and trusted him with Rome's protection. The Frank was equally magnanimous in return, congratulating the pontiff and sending vast riches, the spoils of his war against the Avars, but not without condition, suggesting that as he happened to be the stalwart defender of Christianity, the pope had a duty to pray for the Frankish armies as they continued their conquest.

Charlemagne would honour his side of this implied bargain, and in return Leo elevated him to an office left vacant since the 5th century.

While Leo engaged in his letter-writing campaign with the monarch to the north west and used the Avar loot to become a patron of the arts, the family of the late Adrian I launched a conspiracy to remove him from his post and replace him with his nephew Paschal the Primicerius. On 25 April 799 CE, during the procession of The Greater Litanies through the Eternal City, Leo was attacked by armed thugs who stabbed him in the eyes and attempted to

tear out his tongue at the root. After dragging him to the church of San Silvestro in Capite and trying to gouge out his eyes again, the bloodied pope was left unconscious as a prisoner at the monastery of St Erasmus. Accused of perjury and fornication by his rivals, the wounded - but amazingly not blinded or voiceless - Leo fled Rome to Spoleto, 126 kilometres (78 miles) north of the city, where under the protection of the Duke of Spoleto he



St Giles pardons the Emperor. Although a popular legend, there's no evidence that the two ever met

“Charlemagne's journey from king to emperor has everything to do with the insecurity of the church”

was able to make his way to Charlemagne at Paderborn in Saxony.

That such a loyal servant of the Frankish king could be found so close to Rome, deep within Italy's central Umbria region, neatly underlines the unbalanced relationship of power between the Franks and the Roman Catholic church that had initially caused Leo such anxiety. Though the territory had been given to Rome in 776 after the defeat of the Lombards, the king retained the power to choose the Duke, making papal control as meaningless as that of the last Merovingian kings under Charlemagne's ancestors.

Clearly, the threat of political interference from Charlemagne had been trumped by that of actual bodily harm, and Leo begged for the monarch's aid. He had no authority to do so - neither he nor the conspirators in Rome were subjects of the Franks, and no law yet existed that would make bishops subordinate to secular authority. With conflict left in Saxony to pursue, Charlemagne let the matter stew for a year and kept the recovering pontiff as his guest. Finally heading to Rome in November 800 CE with a sizeable (and no doubt fairly threatening) entourage, Charlemagne summoned a council of the city's religious authorities and patiently listened to the accusations put to Leo, before allowing the deposed pontiff to make an impassioned plea of innocence.

Unsurprisingly, Charlemagne took Leo's side, and ordered the conspirators' executions, but Leo requested that they instead be exiled, with the unpopular pope perhaps seeing an opportunity to impress with capacity for forgiveness.

Crowned 'Emperor of the Romans' on Christmas Day that same year by the grateful pope, the official report insists that Charlemagne was ambushed like some sort of early-medieval surprise party. The king's biographer, the monk Einhard, claimed that his liege had such "aversion [to being crowned Emperor] that he declared he would not have set foot in the church... if he could have foreseen the designs of the pope."



Charlemagne orders the construction of a city to ford the River Main - Frankfurt, or Frank Ford

Birth of the modern Europe

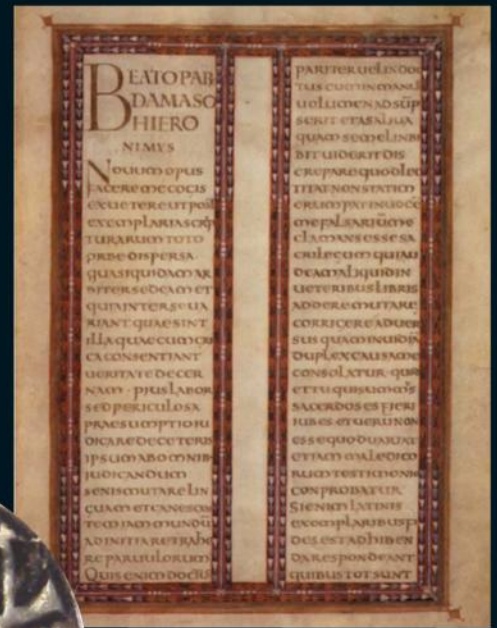
Three big ways in which Charlemagne changed the continent

01 Man of letters

Frustrated by his own difficulty in mastering the written word, Charlemagne rolled out a system of reforms to the very shape of writing, insisting on a double space to separate words, an indent at the start of a paragraph and punctuation marks to indicate where the reader should pause or stop. Question marks and lower case letters also appeared.

02 Silver age

Due to a shortage of gold, Charlemagne and the Anglo-Saxon King Offa standardised their currencies based on a pound of silver - in Latin, libra - which was broken down into 20 sous, each of 12 deniers. This is the origin of many global currencies past and present, from the British pound to the Italian lira.



03 Out of the dark

Charlemagne's interest in the arts led to the Carolingian Renaissance, a flowering of art, literature, poetry and learning. The Dark Ages traditionally cover the 6th to 13th centuries, but for the Franks it was over before it began, and 90 per cent of surviving Roman manuscripts do so because monks copied them.

"The way Charlemagne signed his name changed nothing of the way he conducted his affairs"

It's entirely possible that Charlemagne and Leo came to some agreement during their year together. After all, the idea of grinning priests hiding a bejewelled imperial crown as if it were a birthday cake is too ludicrous to contemplate. Documents from his reign reveal that Charlemagne preferred

using the title 'Charles, the most serene Augustus crowned by God, the great, peaceful Emperor ruling the Roman Empire' rather than the simpler and more often used 'Emperor of the Romans'. These aren't entirely the actions of someone with an aversion to the role, and the king's humility may have been as expertly stage-managed as Leo's mercy.

Nonetheless, with his rule over the Frankish lands uncontested and his empire secured through sheer military prowess, Charlemagne no more needed to declare himself Roman emperor than the fearsome Charles Martel needed to be king, but the vulnerable pope required an

emperor to protect him and a vast Empire with the church at its heart. Only Rome had nostalgia for its lost empire, the Franks held their 4th century resistance to Roman rule, and their role in dismembering the Roman Empire as a point of fierce pride.

Ultimately though, the way Charlemagne signed his name changed nothing of the way he conducted his affairs, and the impact of his ascension - reluctant or willing - to Europe's highest office would take another 150 years to make itself fully known.

The first Holy Roman Emperor, Otto I, took the title in 962 CE and reinvented himself in the Frankish king's image, creating a powerful multi-ethnic state and a crown that would endure for over 1,000 years.

Through the Holy Roman Empire, Charlemagne's rule defined not just the primacy of France as one of Europe's imperial, religious and cultural superpowers, but of numerous Austrian, German and Italian states too.

A career that began for Charlemagne as king of the Franks ended not just as emperor, but also as the father of the Europe that we can still recognise today.

— 1066 – 1087 —

William I

From the illegitimate son of a duke to the holder of the English crown, William I conquered detractors, kings and even the odds to become one of Britain's most memorable rulers

In 1028, William was born into a period rife with violence and disorder. Despite every nobleman owing fealty to the King of France, many duchies and fiefdoms were in constant flux as political alliances chopped and changed at a moment's notice. France itself had been at war with its rival Flanders for years, creating an intense air of conflict across much of Western Europe.

William's social status was also of some contention. His father, Robert I, Duke of Normandy, never married his mother, Herleva of Falaise, so the young Norman was born a bastard. However, William would be Robert's only child, so the presence of his father's blood was strong enough for the duke to name him as his heir. So serious was he about it that he gathered a group of Norman magnates in January 1034 to swear fealty to William as Robert's true successor. Soon after, Robert left on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Over a year later, Robert fell ill on his return from the Holy Land and died in Nicaea, Greece. And so, at the age of eight, William inherited one of the most powerful political positions in France.

The first few years of William's tenure as Duke of Normandy were surprisingly smooth, mostly due

to two considerably powerful supporters - namely his great-uncle Archbishop Robert and the king of France, Henry I. Such influential allies enabled William to retain the fealty over the Norman nobles he'd inherited from his father, but such support was not meant to last. With the king preoccupied with the costly conflict with Flanders, and Archbishop Robert passing away in March 1037, William's duchy soon descended into chaos.

Eventually a group of William's detractors formed an uneasy alliance and led a revolt against him. Led by his cousin, Guy of Burgundy, the revolters attempted to capture the duke at Valognes, a commune in northwestern France - however, the duke escaped and sought refuge with the French king. The duke may have been young, but the title of king was quite the trump card to play.

William returned to Normandy in the early months of 1047 with King Henry at his side and their armies consolidated into one considerable force. The rebel army outnumbered William's, but it lacked the leadership provided by the king's own elite. The Battle of Val-ès-Dunes descended into a number of skirmishes, but the rebel army soon

Blood ties were common in the royalty at the time. Edward the Confessor was William's first cousin, once removed

WILLIAM OF NORMANDY Normandy, 1028-1087

Brief Bio

Whether he's remembered as William the Conqueror, or by the lesser-known moniker William the Bastard, he was one of Britain's most influential monarchs. With Viking blood in his veins, he united his Norman homeland with the feudal fiefdoms of England, but faced a battle to maintain his new crown.

Despite his influential position in the history of the monarchy, no authentic portrait of William is in existence

During his reign, William crossed the Channel about 19 times



The White Tower is the central structure of the Tower of London and was started by William the Conqueror

Life in the time of William I

A nation divided

When William became king, he discovered a government far more complicated than Normandy's own. The country was divided into shires and counties, with these territories further divided into wapentakes (an old Norse word that refers to small meeting places).

Strength in stone

During his early reign, William commissioned a number of castles, keeps and mottes (a wooden or stone structure erected on raised earth). One of the most memorable of these was the White Tower, which remains the central structure of the Tower of London.

The hunting king

According to the medieval chronicler William of Malmesbury, William depopulated large swathes of land in the south of England in 1079 (36 parishes to be precise), to create the royal New Forest for hunting.

Forging ties

With his alliances and political standing in Normandy, William forged long-lasting ties between England and France that lasted for much of the Middle Ages (despite political and military clashes). His Viking roots also created a closer bond with Scandinavia.

The royal family

William had nine legitimate children with his wife, Matilda of Flanders. His sons were Robert, Richard, William and Henry, his daughters were Adeliza, Cecilia, Matilda, Constance, Adela and Agatha.

Timeline

1028

William is born

While the exact date of his birth remains an issue of contention among historians, we do know that he was born in Falaise. He was the only son of Robert I and Herleva of Falaise.

1028



Inheriting the duchy

When he was round the age of seven or eight, William's father Robert passed away. With his death, the title of duke and its political responsibilities fell to the young boy.

1035

William and Godwinson meet

Harold Godwinson, who later became King Harold II of England, was shipwrecked off the coast of Normandy. William and Henry met during this time and Henry endorsed William's claim to the English throne.

1064



The invasion begins

After assuring his affairs were in order in Normandy, William arrived at Pevensey in the South of England with a large invasion force. Once all of his troops had disembarked, William led his force into Hastings. **28 September 1066**

“William’s forces were able to rout Harold’s men like cattle. And after nine or so hours of battle, the fight was over”

broke apart and William finally established his authority over the Duchy of Normandy.

When William finally turned his attention to the kingdom across the Channel, his claim held more merit than most. The English monarch at the time, King Edward I, had named William as his successor (they were, in fact, distant cousins) and a chance meeting with the most powerful earl in England, Harold Godwinson, in 1064/5 also secured his support should the duke move to inherit the throne. According to William of Poitiers, a French priest who served as the official chronicler of William's invasion, the duke had the backing of almost all the lords and earls in Normandy as well as the backing of the Holy Roman Emperor, Henry VI. He even had the support of the pope, if Politer's claims are to be believed. Either way, over a period of around seven months, he gathered a fleet of 600 ships with roughly 7,000 men (2,000-3,000 of these were cavalry). It was an impressive force designed for one thing: to conquer a kingdom.

William finally made landfall on 28 September 1066. They had arrived at Pevensey in the south of England, but William soon sent an envoy to London to speak with the Anglo-Saxon king.

Harold had just returned from repelling another invasion by the King of Norway, Harold Hardrada, and had rushed back to the capital after hearing of the Norman incursion. William told Harold that his claim to the throne was invalid and that he should relinquish the throne immediately or allow the pope to make an absolute decision. Harold, unsurprisingly, declined and the two leaders met in Hastings on 14 October 1066.

The Battle of Hastings was a bloody affair. Reports and speculations from historians differ on the size of Harold's army but a majority agree that it was roughly the same size as William's. The only real differences? Diversity and exhaustion. Despite a brief stop in London, Harold had marched a great deal of the army he used to defeat Harold Hardrada in the north down to the south in just two weeks. Despite their training, the men were fatigued and in no state to face a fresh

Norman contingent. Harold's forces were almost entirely made up of infantryman, which was likely the deciding factor in the battle. With plenty of archers and cavalry, William's forces were able to rout Harold's men like cattle. And after nine or so hours of battle, the fight was over. Harold was dead and William was now the de facto King of England.

Reports state that William was around 5'10", which was incredibly tall for a man of this time

Defining moment

William is double-crossed January 1066

In the years leading to his death, Edward the Confessor named William, the Duke of Normandy, as his future successor. However, although William did visit England a couple of times in Edward's final years, it was difficult for him to leave the delicate political ecosystem back in Normandy. When the king died, Harold Godwinson (sometimes simply referred to as Henry Godwin) took advantage of William's absence and, against the late king's wishes, claimed the crown for himself. The Godwins were one of, if not *the*, most powerful and influential families in England at the time. Henry would be the last Anglo-Saxon king of England.



Following his coronation on 25 December 1066, William discovered that presiding over a duchy was a world away from ruling a kingdom. Defeating Harold at Hastings and taking the capital should have cemented his position, but William's arrival was more than just the ascension of a new king - it was the end of the Anglo-Saxon era.

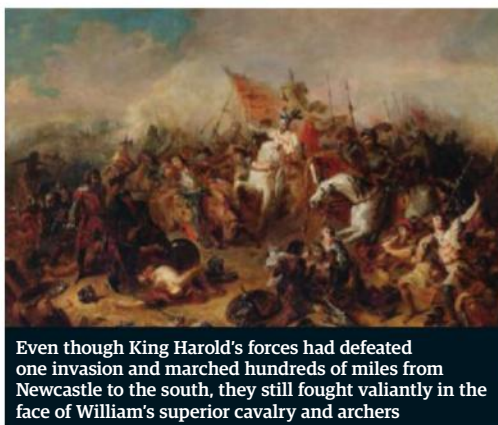
William was careful not to upend the social equilibrium of England's nobility, but a backlash was inevitable. William fought to contain a series of revolts in Dover, Exeter, Hereford, Nottingham, Durham and York, but it was the revolt led by Edgar the Atheling that was the most severe - not only in its potential threat, but also for how aggressively William dealt with it.

The revolt centred on Edgar the Atheling, the only remaining individual with a legitimate claim to William's seat of power. And when Sweyn II, King of Denmark, offered his support in 1070, the Norman grip on the north was broken. The region began to destabilise with revolts and civil unrest, and Edgar and Sweyn's forces soon took the key stronghold of York. William immediately marched from Nottingham with his own forces to settle the rebellion, but by the time he got there the revolt had all but dissolved. Edgar fled to Scotland and Sweyn left suitably paid off by the king. However, William was far from a mood to grant clemency.

He and his troops scoured the land from York to the borders of Scotland in Northumbria. So severe was the devastation that William enacted on the north that the Domesday Book (which was conducted in 1086) revealed that around 100,000 people died from starvation alone following William's 'harrowing'. Considering the census revealed the population to be 2.5 million, such a figure shows just how far the new king would go to burn his legacy into England's history books.

The Harrowing of the North, as it came to be known, was just one of the many conflicts William had to deal with throughout his 21-year reign. He was continually dealing with issues with his neighbours (such as his clashes with the king of Scotland in 1072), rebellions among his own gentry (namely the Revolt of the Earls in 1075) and even quarrels with his own children. Between his native duties as Duke of Normandy, and as King of England, William was forced to solidify his legacy with political marriages, truces and military force.

By the time of his death on 9 September 1087, William had maintained his authority over both Normandy and England for over two decades. He built over 50 castles and fortifications during his reign, determined not only to remind the people of the land who their monarch was, but to protect the nation from the very act he'd taken the throne with. While his acts of domestic growth and merciless violence have been largely overshadowed by his invasion, the man himself remains a defining figure on those storied pages.



Even though King Harold's forces had defeated one invasion and marched hundreds of miles from Newcastle to the south, they still fought valiantly in the face of William's superior cavalry and archers



The Domesday Book

In the years that followed the taking of the English crown, it became clear that official records relating to population and landholding were nearly nonexistent. Almost 19 years after his invasion, while spending Christmas in Gloucester with his advisors, William decided a census was needed. It seems likely it was planned as a way to determine how to restructure taxes across the nation. The Domesday Book (or The Great Survey as it was known then) was split into two documents; the 'Little Domesday' (which covered Suffolk, Essex and Norfolk) and the 'Great Domesday' (a larger document that covered the rest of the country). Interestingly, these documents did not cover the entire nation. This was for many reasons - for example, Westmorland and Cumberland were absent as both formed part of the Kingdom of Strathclyde until they were conquered by his son, William II, in 1092. Elsewhere, London and Winchester were left out because of their special tax status, while the County of Durham was omitted because the Bishop of Durham held ecclesiastical rights to tax that county.

Defining moment

The Battle of Hastings 14 October 1066

Prior to the main battles with the invading Normans, King Harold had already exhausted his military forces defeating *another* invading force led by Norwegian monarch Harold Hardrada at Stamford Bridge. Interestingly, King Harold knew that William was coming before Hardrada's Scandinavian force arrived, however, the Norman forces remained moored off the coast for almost seven months before disembarking. Accounts relating to the size both forces differ greatly, but it's assumed they were leading armies of between 7,000 and 10,000 men. William's forces are ultimately successful, using the considerable number of cavalrymen and archers to wear down the English contingent. King Harold died on the battlefield after taking an arrow to the eye.

Defining moment

Harrowing of the North 1070

William had defeated or outlived most of the legitimate claimants to the English throne, but one still remained. Edgar the Atheling had a great deal of support in the north of England and when Sweyn II of Denmark landed in 1069, Edgar's claim became a real threat. In 1070, he paid the Danes to leave and began to attack the land around Edgar's supporters. Over the next few months he destroyed livestock and farmland, and killed (according to reports) thousands of men, women and children. William's aim was to ensure they would never, ever revolt again.

• The Great Survey

In order to determine the true worth of his English kingdom (and to unravel the holdings and lands of his earls) William commissioned a countrywide consensus. While not every part of the nation was covered, it still serves as the most detailed record from the Middle Ages.

1086



• William takes London

Despite defeating the king and the remainder of his standing army, England was far from won. Earls and lords loyal to the English king barred William's entry into Winchester and London but the Norman usurper soon overwhelmed them and took control of the royal treasury.

October-November 1066

• Crowning a new king

With most of Harold's supporters either dead or in flight, William was crowned King William I of England. One of his first actions was to reaffirm the titles and lands of many earls but strip those of Harold's supporters.

25 December 1066

• Returning to Normandy

After his coronation, William returned to Normandy to ensure his lands were intact. While there, he had a number of new monasteries built. He also met with most of his nobles and earls, all of whom were eager to learn of possible new wealth and holdings.

1067

• Hereward the Wake

Despite promising to leave England for good, Sweyn II of Denmark returned a few months later and joined the growing uprising led by northern thegn Hereward the Wake. William forced Sweyn to leave yet again and soon brought this, the last of the northern revolts, to an end.

1070

• Death of a king

Despite the relative military success of his reign, his final days were remarkably uneventful. While on a military expedition against France, William either fell from his horse or became ill and died soon after.

9 September 1087

1087



ELEANOR OF AQUITAINE

France; England, 1122 - 1204

Brief Bio

As Queen Consort of France from 1137 to 1152 and then Queen Consort of England from 1154 to 1189, Eleanor co-ruled some of the most powerful territories in medieval Europe. The beautiful and charismatic queen was a strong leader, but above all she protected the interests of herself and her children.

1137 – 1204

Eleanor of Aquitaine

Loathed, adored, celebrated and damned, she defied her gender, waged war and became the most powerful woman in Europe

When Pope Eugene III requested that Louis VII, king of France, lead a Crusade to help rescue the Crusader states in the Middle East, he took up the sword with enthusiasm. However, Louis would not travel to the Holy Land alone. His wife, adored by him, despised by others, did not plan to sit back and wait at home for her husband to return.

Eleanor of Aquitaine's launch and involvement in the Second Crusade is an event steeped in myth and legend. It is said that the queen rode through the streets of Vézelay dressed in the costume of an Amazon. Upon a white steed she brandished her sword and urged the people to join her. Whether it truly occurred or not, this image of the warrior queen has survived through the centuries, and her enduring connection with the Second Crusade would see Eleanor damned for its failure.

Eleanor was born to rule. The first child of William X, Duke of Aquitaine, her doting father bestowed upon his eldest daughter an education befitting of not a submissive queen but one who would rule. Alongside general household skills and 'womanly' pursuits of embroidery and needlework, she also learned history and arithmetic, she could speak Latin, ride a horse proficiently and hunt. She grew up in her grandfather William IX's court, surrounded by music, poetry and, most notably,

courtly love. All this bred a girl who was lively, intelligent, confident and headstrong. These were not traits prized in ladies at the time, but they were essential for Eleanor, as she would soon become one of the most powerful heiresses in Europe.

Her only brother died in the spring of 1130, along with her mother. This left Eleanor as the heir presumptive of one of the largest domains in France, larger than those held even by the king.

It would not take long for these kingdoms to fall into Eleanor's hands. In 1137,

when Eleanor was around 15, her father went on pilgrimage and left his daughters in the care of the Archbishop of Bordeaux.

However, on the journey home, he fell ill and died. Poitou and Aquitaine were now clasped in the hands of a 15-year-old female heir.

All this control was a very dangerous thing for the young teenager to bear. Power-hungry men of the period

were not above kidnapping eligible heiresses to seize their lands and claim a title. Eleanor's father knew this and placed his daughter under the guardianship of King Louis VI of France, also known as Louis the Fat. William's will stipulated that Louis take care of his daughter and her lands until a suitable husband was found. Mortally ill and so obese he was confined to his bed, Louis was very aware of his own impending mortality and did not intend to waste the opportunity. Within hours, Louis arranged for Eleanor to be married

When Eleanor fled to marry Henry, she had to avoid being kidnapped and forcibly married by his brother Geoffrey

Guide to the Crusades

From 1096 to 1291, Jerusalem was at the epicentre of a war that killed millions



1st
1096-99
LEVANT, ANATOLIA
 As Turkish forces gained control of the Holy Land, Pope Urban II called for a Crusade to eliminate the threat. Gradually the Christian forces reclaimed Jerusalem. They also began to set up Latin Christian states in the region.
Victors: Crusaders



2nd
1147-49
IBERIA, HOLY LAND, EGYPT
 When Edessa fell, Pope Eugene III encouraged the monarchies of France and Germany to wage war. However, both armies were defeated by the Turks amid claims the Byzantine emperor plotted against the Crusaders.
Victors: Muslims



3rd
1189-92
LEVANT, ANATOLIA
 After Jerusalem was conquered by Saladin, Richard I of England and King Philip II of France united to claim it back. They enjoyed a string of successes, notably in the cities of Acre and Jaffa, but failed to capture Jerusalem.
Victors: Mostly Crusaders



4th
1202-04
BALKANS
 With Jerusalem still under Muslim control, the Fourth Crusade was launched. Although the aim had been to claim Jerusalem, the Crusaders instead sacked Constantinople, beginning the decline of the Byzantine Empire.
Victors: Crusaders



5th
1213-21
LEVANT, EGYPT
 With Hungarian and Austrian armies failing to conquer Jerusalem, Flemish and Frisian forces attempt to claim Ayyubid and prevent the Crusaders having to fight on two fronts. The attack was repelled with huge Crusader losses.
Victors: Muslims



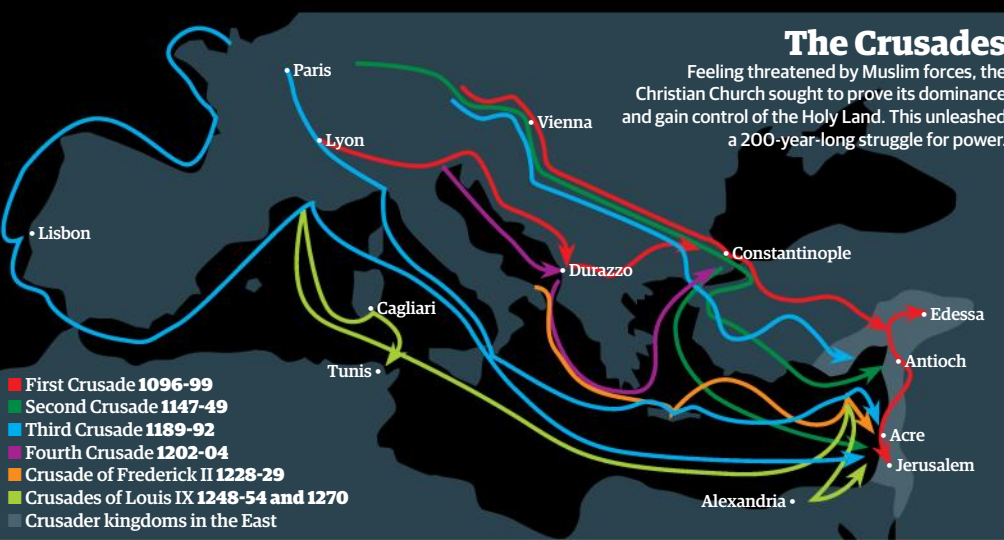
6th
1228-29
CYPRUS, NEAR EAST
 With the aim to reclaim Jerusalem, Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II used diplomacy and lies to obtain Jerusalem in exchange for a ten-year truce with the Sultan of Egypt. Jerusalem was in Crusader hands.
Victors: Crusaders



7th
1248-54
AL-MANSOURAH, EGYPT
 In 1244, Jerusalem returned to Muslim control, so Louis IX of France led a Crusade to get it back. Although they enjoyed initial success, the Crusader forces were defeated and Louis himself captured and ransomed.
Victors: Muslims



**8th/
9th**
1270-72
TUNISIA, NEAR EAST
 Louis IX launched a final attempt to reclaim the Holy Land, but became ill on the journey and died. This prompted Edward I to sail to Acre, where he enjoyed victories, but he was forced home to solve conflicts there.
Victors: Muslims



to his son, Prince Louis, bringing her ample lands under the control of the French crown.

Louis the Fat married Eleanor to his son confident in her suitability as a wife. Not only did she come with lands that greatly strengthened the French crown, she was also stunningly beautiful, young, fertile and a lady of court. But Eleanor was anything but a quiet, submissive wife.

Prince Louis was a very pious, meek man, a younger son intended originally for a monastic life, but Eleanor had been trained to rule. She had knowledge beyond her husband's, she was strong where he was weak, forceful where he was relenting, and he was completely and utterly besotted with her. As expected, Louis the Fat shortly died, the prince became King Louis VII and Eleanor became queen of the Franks. Her colourful and high-spirited nature was not well liked in the royal court, and Louis's own mother loathed her daughter-in-law, believing her to be a bad influence on her son. However, as much as Eleanor's unusual behaviour confused and infuriated the king, he could not resist bending to her every desire.

Sensitive and pious he may have been, but Louis was a king, and a king in the Medieval era could not avoid war. An illicit affair involving Eleanor's younger sister, Petronella, with Raoul I of Vermandois - then married to the daughter of the powerful Stephen of Blois - sparked war. With Eleanor's encouragement, Louis supported Petronella and Raoul, and in the resulting conflict, the king was responsible for the burning of the town of Vitry. The terrified townspeople sought refuge in a church, but when it burned to the ground more than 1,000 people were lost in the flames. The event would have a profound effect on the sensitive Louis, who was plagued by a guilty conscience and the eternal screams of the dying.



“She had knowledge beyond her husband’s, she was strong where he was weak”

What Louis needed was a pilgrimage to clear his conscience, and luckily for him, a trip to the Holy Land was just on the horizon, although it would not be quite as peaceful as he hoped. In the autumn of 1145, Pope Eugene III called upon Louis to lead a Crusade to protect the Crusader-owned kingdom of Jerusalem. The king obliged, but he would not be waging war alone.

Eleanor not only decided to join her husband on Crusade, but took up the Crusader cross with, likely, more enthusiasm than he himself. Aged 19, she offered the church the aid of her fighting vassals, which they were very happy to accept. However, they were less than pleased when she proclaimed that she, accompanied by 300 of her ladies-in-waiting, would join the Crusaders. Eleanor said that she and her ladies would help tend the wounded, but it is also likely that the headstrong queen was not so keen on her meek husband fighting a war without her. She appointed herself leader of her soldiers and departed with her husband.

The women were dressed in armour and carried lances, but did not fight. Nevertheless, the prospect of 300 women riding off with warriors was looked upon suspiciously by her contemporaries. However, Eleanor was not one to be swayed by criticism. Although the church may not have approved of her,



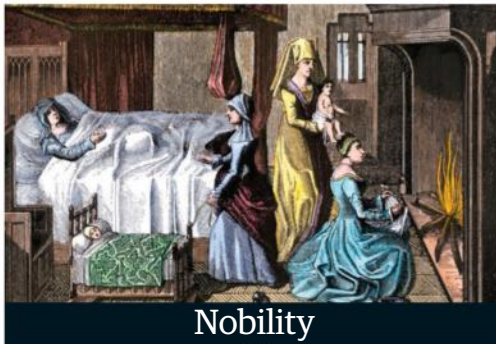
Louis and Eleanor set out on crusade from the Basilica of St Denis, 1147



The Second Crusade council: Conrad III, Louis VII & Baldwin III

Growing up in Medieval Europe

Being born in the Middle Ages meant life was fated to follow a certain path



Nobility

Boys: Sons were sought after to continue the family name, and royal boys were especially prized. Noble boys began training to be a knight aged just seven, and those unsuitable were sent to monasteries. Popular boys' toys were wooden soldiers, toy horses and whips.

Girls: Daughters were seen as expensive, as a dowry had to be paid to the groom at marriage, which could occur as young as seven. Generally noble girls were sent to train as ladies at a young age, learning how to weave, sing, play instruments and how to care for children.



Peasants

Boys: In poorer households, boys helped tend the fields and care for animals. Work was so consuming that children as young as two could be left alone. Poor children did not receive education apart from in the church, and few peasant boys knew how to read.

Girls: Female peasant children were expected to help their mothers with household chores. As they were working hand to mouth, toys were scarce and often handmade. Like their noble counterparts, peasant girls were married off as soon as they reached maturity.

when the army reached Constantinople, the warrior queen quickly impressed, and was compared to the mythical queen of the Amazons.

Unfortunately, the Crusade wasn't going quite so smoothly. The French had been informed by the Byzantine Emperor that their ally, the German King Conrad, had enjoyed victory against a Turkish army. However, as the French army continued their journey onwards, a dazed and ailing Conrad was found near their camp and revealed the truth. The Europeans hadn't won, in fact they had been massacred. It was with haste and some unease that the French and what remained of the German army headed to Antioch, where Eleanor's uncle ruled.

Little did the Crusaders know they were already being stalked by Turks. The French monarchs decided to split, with Louis at the rear of the column with the baggage trains and Eleanor at the front with her vassal, Geoffrey de Rancon. Although the vanguard was able to reach the summit where they planned to make camp, Rancon decided to continue onwards. The rear of the column, laden with baggage, struggled to keep up and the Turks leapt on this opportunity. The French, including many unarmed pilgrims, were trapped and unprepared. Any who tried to escape were killed, and the king, disguised in simple pilgrim clothes, barely escaped the attack by scaling a rock.

The blame for the massacre was placed at de Rancon's feet, and, as he was Eleanor's vassal, so it was at her's. The fact that her own soldiers had marched in front and weren't involved did little to help her popularity, and it was even argued that the majority of the baggage was hers. Thus, despite having no involvement in the fight, the queen was blamed for the disaster. Tensions between the royal couple were reaching a fever pitch.

When the Crusaders reached the city of Antioch, it gave Eleanor an opportunity to renew her friendship with the lord of the city and her uncle, Raymond. Not only was Raymond close in age to Eleanor, but he was also tall, handsome and charming. In fact, she spent so much time with her uncle that rumours quickly spread about an illicit affair between the two. Raymond suggested they first capture Edessa, a strategic stronghold in the Holy Land, but Louis was determined to focus

solely on Jerusalem. When Eleanor supported her uncle, it was the final straw - the meek, adoring and abiding king had reached his limit.

Louis, likely for the first time in his marriage, demanded that Eleanor follow him. His queen, outraged, called into question the entire marriage, claiming that they were too closely related, and this was grounds for divorce. This didn't go down well with Louis, and in an effort to establish his authority, he took Eleanor away from her uncle and Antioch against her will and headed to Jerusalem. For the woman who was born to rule, to command and to control, this was humiliating beyond all measure. The remainder of the Crusade achieved little, Louis's subsequent assault on Damascus was a failure, and the royal couple returned to France in different ships.

A marriage where Eleanor was expected to be meek and obliging was not going to work. She could deal with her sensitive and generous husband, but the one that returned from the Crusade was as humiliated as her and increasingly suspicious of the growing relationship between niece and uncle.

Although they had children, no male heirs were born, and Louis faced increasing opposition to Eleanor from his barons. The king was left with no option, and in 1152, the marriage was annulled. The lands that Louis's father had so slyly secured for his son were torn away from him, and aged about 30, Eleanor once again found herself to be one of the most eligible and desirable heiresses in Europe.

However, Eleanor was no longer a naive 15-year-old, she was a worldly and knowledgeable woman. She knew she would have to remarry, and she intended to do so on her own terms. Amid several

attempts of kidnap and forced marriage, she manufactured her own union with Henry, Duke of Normandy and future king of England. Henry wasn't stupid either; he travelled immediately to visit Eleanor, and within eight weeks of her annulment to Louis, she was married to a man even more closely related to her than Louis.

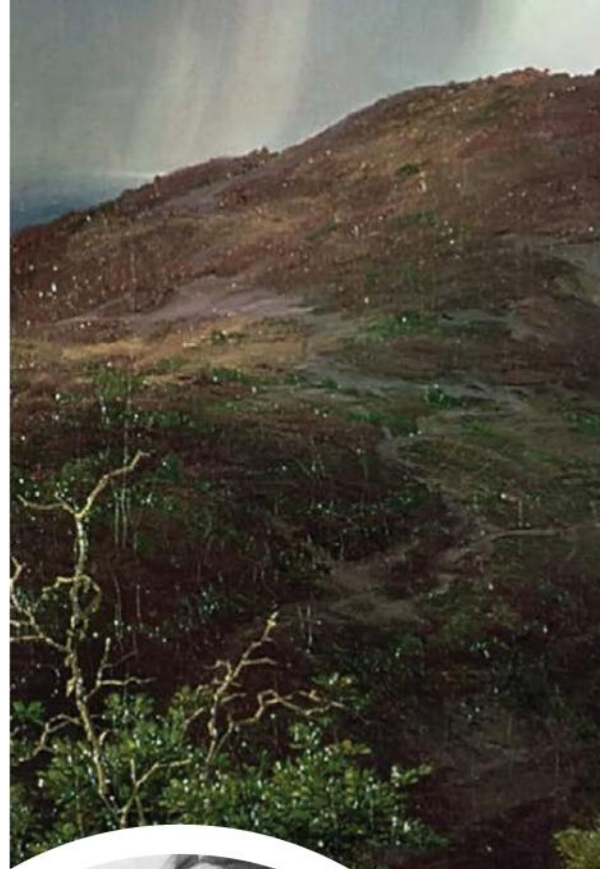
On paper the union was a powerful one. In 1154, Henry became Henry II, king of England, and his lands combined with Eleanor's. This united England, Normandy and the West of France into a hugely powerful and influential kingdom.



The Court of Love

As well as a Crusader queen, Eleanor was an expert in the art of courtly love

In 1168, Henry II escorted Eleanor to the court of Poitiers, where she remained until 1173. Her time there would profoundly affect the culture of the period. Historians today still debate what exactly unfurled in this 'Court of Love', with some believing that Eleanor, her daughter Marie and other prominent women of the time presided over it as jury. They would listen to lovers' quarrels, resolve them, and seek answers to questions concerning love. 21 different cases have been recorded, debating issues such as whether true love can actually exist within a marriage, with the women concluding it was unlikely. The legend of this courtly love has evolved into the notion that Eleanor was responsible for bringing the ideas of chivalry and courtly love together. However, this is unlikely, as courtly love as a concept was already blossoming before Eleanor's court. It is more likely that the court at Poitiers popularised the idea of courtly love.



Eleanor was said to be "gracious, lovely, the embodiment of charm"



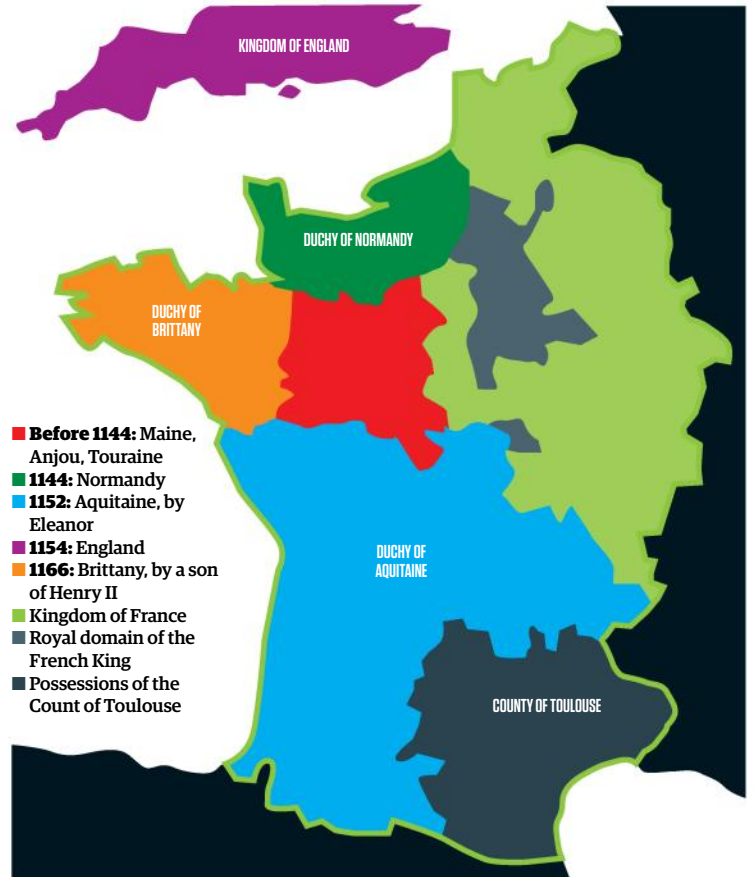
The marriage of Louis VII and Eleanor of Aquitaine ended in annulment in 1152

A painting of the 'Last Crusader' returning home after the failure of the Ninth Crusade

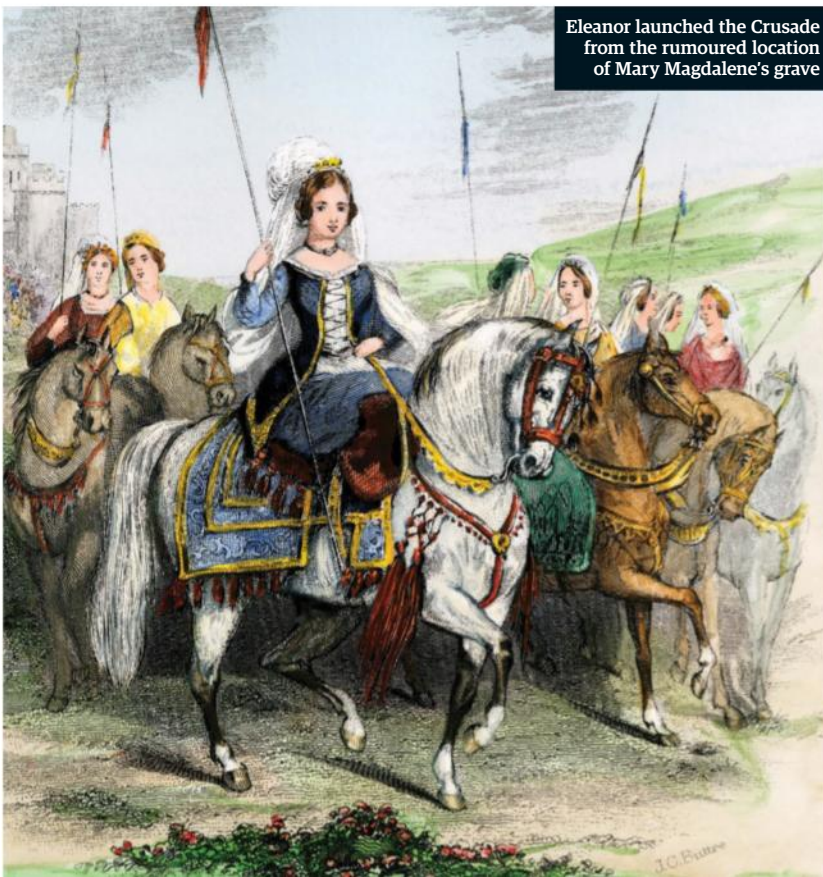


Expansion of the Angevin Empire

When Henry, Count of Anjou and Duke of Normandy, married Eleanor in 1152, the regions of Normandy, Anjou, Maine, Touraine, Aquitaine, Gascony, Poitou and Auvergne were brought together. When their son, Geoffrey, brought Brittany into the mix, the concentration of fiefs held by one man became a very real threat to the French monarchy.



Eleanor launched the Crusade from the rumoured location of Mary Magdalene's grave



— 1199 – 1216 —

King John

Revolt, treachery, excommunication: how the last Angevin king, born to inherit nothing, won and lost an empire

Standing upon the banks of the Thames in the water-meadow at Runnymede on 15 June 1215, it would have been difficult for King John, brother of Richard I and inheritor of the Angevin Empire, to not reflect upon the events that had led him there. With lands lost in France, civil war dividing the kingdom, London fallen to rebel barons and a damaged relationship with the church, John was forced to sign a treaty that would reduce the crown's power and grant new rights to church and state.

The fifth and youngest son of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine, John was nicknamed "Lackland" by his father as the chances of him inheriting significant lands seemed slim. This was a nickname that would gain an ironic twist towards the end of his reign. John's fortunes changed in 1173, however, when three of his brothers, "Young" Henry, Richard and Geoffrey, revolted against their father in protest at Henry's proposed distribution of lands among his sons. The rebellion failed and John became the favoured son, a status that led to his appointment as Lord of Ireland in 1177 and opened up the possibility of becoming heir to his father's throne.

But it was not to be; attempts to alter the plans for succession in the wake of Young Henry's death in 1183 angered brother Richard, who refused his father's request to pass the Duchy of Aquitaine to John. Though forced to reconcile at the time, the

hostility between Richard and his father remained, and Richard ultimately went on to seize the throne six years later.

Richard left England to join the Third Crusade, buying John's loyalty in his absence with lands and titles. John used this time to develop his own power and influence, taking advantage of growing tensions between Richard's appointed officials by brokering promises of support with England's nobles and proposing an alliance with King Philip II of France. A failed attempt to seize the crown for himself in 1193 resulted in John losing many of his titles upon Richard's return. Fortunately for John, Richard forgave him, seeing the attempted rebellion as little more than a youthful indiscretion. The final years of Richard's reign saw an outwardly loyal John work hard to reclaim favour in his brother's court and win back much of the power he'd lost.

Following Richard's death in 1199, John was favoured over Arthur, John's nephew and Richard's stated heir, and crowned king. Arthur withdrew to France, swearing fealty to Philip II, while John settled into his new role as king.

The Angevin Empire, established by his father and maintained by Richard, now comprised the Kingdom of England, parts of Ireland and around half of France, including the duchies of Normandy, Gascony and Aquitaine; this was territory that Philip intended to bring back under French rule.

Often portrayed as a tyrant, modern opinion suggests John was actually a capable ruler brought low by the treachery of others

KING JOHN

England, 1166-1216

Brief Bio

Portrayed in modern culture as a weak and greedy ruler thanks to his merciless taxation of his subjects, King John's character can, in fact, be seen in a different light. He was a skilled military leader whose rule of England and its continental lands was defined and disrupted by internal disputes and rebellion.

John's second marriage produced five children, though he is believed to have fathered as many as a dozen illegitimate children





The Magna Carta, written in medieval Latin and agreed to and sealed by King John in 1215

The Magna Carta

The Magna Carta was a document written to satisfy the grievances of England's barons and the church by clearly defining their rights and responsibilities, as well as those of the king. The agreement covered such topics as the giving of heirs in marriage and a widow's right to choose not to re-marry, the handling of debts following a debtor's death, and the introduction of standard weights and measures for wine, ale, corn and cloth.

Of particular note though were the promises that no free man would be imprisoned except by lawful justice, nor would they be denied the right to justice. There were also restrictions placed on the use of taxation by the king and his barons, including the formation of a council that could approve or reject proposed taxes and monitor the king's compliance with the terms of the charter. Although the charter was ultimately rejected by both John and the rebel barons, it would later be revised and reinstated after the king's death. Many of its edicts still remain intact in English law to this day.

"With England and Aquitaine secured against possible French attack, John focused on building his forces"

In 1200, John's 11-year marriage to Isabella, Countess of Gloucester, was annulled so that he could marry Isabella of Angoulême, sparking a dispute that would define the rest of his reign. Conflict erupted along Normandy's eastern border between John and Hugh de Lusignan, Isabella's then-fiancé. de Lusignan's subsequent appeals to Philip II over John's actions, and John's refusal to answer Philip's summons left the French king with little choice but to punish John. He seized Normandy and reassigned John's lands in France (of which Philip was recognised as feudal overlord) to Arthur. The loss of Normandy, and with it the majority of England's continental territory, was unacceptable, and John was determined to take it back, whatever the cost.

With England and Aquitaine secured against possible French attack, John focused on building his forces ready to recapture the lost lands in France. This required money, and John put more and more pressure on the English barons to provide the finances he needed, breeding increased discontent among the barons, particularly those in the north who felt far removed from John's campaigns in France. Baronial unrest delayed John's attempt to mount an expedition to Normandy in 1205, forcing him to depart for France with a much smaller military

presence than he had hoped for. Further funds were needed to forge alliances with Renaud of Boulogne, Count Ferdinand of Flanders and Otto IV, John's nephew and aspirant to the crown of the Holy Roman Empire in Germany. With these allies, John hoped to push forward with his attempt to retake Normandy from Philip, but in 1212 once again his progress was halted by unrest in England.

Seeing an opportunity, Philip sent his son Louis to invade Flanders, with the aim to push on to England's shores.

Redeploying his forces to meet this new threat, John destroyed Louis' fleet, but again his plans had been disrupted and further taxes were levied to keep John's campaign in France viable. The whole series of events pushed tensions back home closer and closer to breaking point.

John's final French campaign began in 1214, though it was with significantly diminished support from many English barons, who refused to supply soldiers for John's war effort. In their place, mercenary regiments were hired to strengthen John's armies. The initial stages of the campaign progressed well - John pressed Louis' forces and retook Anjou, but was forced to retreat when the local Angevin nobles, whose loyalty lay with their feudal lord Philip II, refused to advance with him. The final blow to John's hopes of retaking Normandy came

Signing the treaty of Le Goulet in 1200 earned John the nickname "Softsword" for his willingness to bow to Philip II

Defining moment

Rebellion against Richard I 1193-1194

John takes advantage of Richard's capture and imprisonment by Emperor Henry VI while returning from the Third Crusade by allying with Philip II of France and attempting to take Richard's crown for himself. Opposed by the forces who were loyal to Richard, John's rebellion is unsuccessful and he is forced to surrender upon Richard's eventual return.



Richard forgave John's attempted rebellion, but stripped him of much of his power as punishment

Timeline

1166

Birth of a king
John, fifth and youngest of Henry II's sons, is born on Christmas Eve at Beaumont Palace in the city of Oxford.
24 December 1166

First Lord of Ireland
Henry II grants lands captured in Ireland to John, naming him Lord of Ireland at just 10 years old, and temporarily alleviating the problems Henry faced in providing suitable lands and titles to all his sons.
1177

An unhappy union
John marries his betrothed, Isabella, Countess of Gloucester. However, as cousins, the laws of consanguinity lead the Pope to forbid them from having children together.
1189



A king against the odds
John is crowned at Westminster, supported by English nobles and denying his nephew Arthur's claim to the throne.
1199

Treaty of Le Goulet
John and Philip II sign a treaty recognising Philip II as suzerain of John's lands in France. This is in return for Philip's recognition of John as Richard's heir and King of England.
1200

Wedding bells and death-knells
Conflict erupts in Normandy with the Lusignans over John's decision to marry the already-engaged Isabella of Angoulême. The Le Goulet peace treaty, which lasts just two years, ends in open war.
1200

at the Battle of Bouvines in July, in which Philip defeated John's allies under the leadership of Otto IV. Otto was deposed, Renaud and Ferdinand were captured, and Philip took control of Brittany and Normandy. John was forced to concede defeat, sign a peace treaty and return to England.

News of the failed campaign did little to settle the growing tensions in England, and soon barons in the North and East were organising resistance to John's rule. John arranged discussions with the rebels, though whether this was born from a genuine wish to reconcile, or an attempt to stall any potential conflict until he had received official support from Pope Innocent III, was unclear. By the time Innocent's letters arrived, the rebels were ready to act, marching on London. The capital fell, as did Lincoln and Exeter, and the rebels' successes prompted more barons to throw their lot in against the crown. John's position was desperate, and with his only option being to agree to peace talks, a meeting was arranged. The date was 15 June 1215. The place, Runnymede.

The peace agreement created by Stephen Langton, Archbishop of Canterbury, would later be known as the Magna Carta, and it would shape English law for years to come. In addition to resolving baronial complaints, the charter defined the rights and freedoms of the barons, the citizens, the church and the king. The king's ability to impose taxation was restricted, the church would be allowed to appoint its own officials without interference and a council of barons would be formed to monitor the king's adherence to the charter. In return, the rebels were to surrender London to John and withdraw their forces.

John rarely took communion and was said to have made blasphemous remarks and jokes about the church

The charter failed. The rebels, believing John would not abide by the agreement, refused to stand down. In turn, John, claiming to have signed the charter under duress, sought help from Pope Innocent III, who declared the charter to be "shameful, demeaning, illegal and unjust" and excommunicated the rebel barons. The stage was set for the First Baron's War.

Faced with the strength of John's armies, the English barons sought assistance from another quarter - Prince Louis of France. The rebels had early successes, taking the castles at Rochester and Canterbury and gaining control of much of Kent. John enjoyed similar success against the northern barons and Alexander II of Scotland and won control of many of the disputed northern territories. With the north contained and rumours of Louis' imminent arrival in the south, John turned back to meet the coming threat. Louis landed in Kent in May 1216

and marched on London unopposed, though his attempts to take Dover and Windsor by siege proved unsuccessful. John withdrew to Winchester before pushing towards Cambridge and north in an attempt to divide the rebels of Lincolnshire and East Anglia. With Alexander II marching south to pledge his support to Louis, John turned west once more, enduring a disastrous crossing of the Wash's estuaries, which saw much of his baggage train, including the crown jewels disappear.

By the time John reached Newark Castle, he was suffering from dysentery and could go no further. He died there on 18 October 1216. His kingdom, a pale reflection of the empire it had been 16 years earlier, passed into the hands of his heir.



A 14th century depiction of King John in battle with Prince Louis of France

Life in the time of King John

Soldiers of fortune

John made extensive use of foreign mercenaries. Though more expensive to employ, mercenary contingents could fight year-round. By comparison, feudal troops were restricted by fixed-term service, providing greater tactical flexibility.

Scutage

Scutage was a form of taxation that allowed a knight to buy his way out of military service. John's use of scutage as a legitimate form of taxation at times when the threat of military conflict was not apparent was one of many sources of discontent among his barons.

Dysentery

Dysentery thrived in the Middle Ages, aided by a lack of proper sewage control, poor understanding of hygiene and an abundance of spoiled food. Doctor-approved treatments for dysentery at the time included consuming barley water, eggs and even lead.

The Feudal System

Feudalism was a tiered order of governance, from the king down. Instigated by William I in 1066, when he divided the freshly-conquered Saxon lands among his barons, the system would last until the 17th century.

Persecution of the Jews

Many Jews of the Middle Ages held significant wealth and acted as money lenders. They were widely disliked by the nobility and their protection under the king left them vulnerable to heavy taxation whenever the crown needed to raise emergency funds.

Defining moment

Excommunication November 1209

Following a dispute with Pope Innocent III over the church's appointment of the new Archbishop of Canterbury, John is excommunicated. Although John reacts by seizing English lands and money held by the church in England, he ultimately reconciles with the Pope in 1213, fearing the possibility of a Papacy-backed French invasion. Innocent becomes one of John's greatest supporters, discouraging the French from attacking and providing official support during the Barons' Revolt in 1215.

Defining moment

Laying down the law 15 June 1215

Forced into conciliatory action by both the church and England's rebel barons, John signs the Magna Carta at Runnymede, agreeing to abide by its restrictions on royal power and the freedoms it grants to the church and the citizens. These covenants would shape England's laws for centuries to come. John would go on to claim the charter was unlawful and signed under duress, prompting the barons to revolt in protest and leading to the First Barons' War.

● **A broken empire**
War with King Philip II and Arthur in France results in the loss of the majority of the ancestral Angevin territories John had inherited from his brother and father.
1202

● **A son and heir**
John's wife Isabella gives birth to their first son, Henry III, who would inherit his father's kingdom nine years later.
1207

● **Battle of Bouvines**
John's final attempt to reclaim Normandy ends with the destruction of his allies at Bouvines in Flanders. John and King Philip II agree to peace and he returns home defeated.
1214



● **The First Barons' War**
Civil war erupts in England as Pope Innocent declares the Magna Carta unlawful, releasing John from its rules. The barons revolt.
1215

● **Death of a king**
Suffering from dysentery, John dies at Newark Castle. Rumours at the time attribute his death to many things, such as poisoned ale, plums and an indulgent "surfeit of peaches".
1216

1216

© Alamy
1216



ISABELLA OF CASTILE

Castile, 1451-1504

Brief Bio

Isabella I was the Queen of Castile and married to Ferdinand II of Aragon. During her reign, she reorganized the governmental system, helped reduce the crime rate, eradicated the kingdom's debt and financed Christopher Columbus's 1492 voyage that led to the discovery of the New World, establishing Spain as the first global superpower in the process.

1479 – 1504

Isabella of Castile

After succession squabbles marred her path to the throne, Isabella secured her legacy by setting sights on purifying her Catholic Spain

Isabella had been born for this moment. If the 23-year-old princess felt anything other than serenity and conviction, it did not show on her face, her expression betraying nothing as she processed into the church of San Miguel, Segovia, Spain. At last the day had come, and she was to take her place as the queen of Castile and Leon, the largest of the Iberian Peninsula's fragmented kingdoms.

The whole city had come forth to witness her triumph. Only hours before, they had buried the old king and now, his successor, bestride a white horse and adorned with jewels and riches to display her power, came to deliver them from the chaos and disorder that had plagued the people for so long.

Surrounded by her new subjects, Isabella proclaimed her intentions towards the beleaguered kingdom with grace and authority. There would be peace and stability, she promised, and, above all, she would uphold the church that was the cornerstone of her world. Religious unity and peace would reign once again in the Iberian Peninsula. God had decreed it through her, and she would not fail in her duty.

Isabella, to be known in her own time and in centuries to come as one of the greatest rulers Spain had ever seen, was born to John II of Castile and Isabella of Portugal on 22 April 1451. Or so the sources imply, for, at the time, she was considered so inconsequential that the date of her birth and baptism were not even recorded.

She was born into a Spain that was not yet united: Castile and the rest of the Iberian Peninsula was a hotbed of political, religious and social unrest, and the princess - who stood third in line to the throne after

the birth of her younger brother, Alfonso - did not have a secure childhood. When her father died in 1454, her elder stepbrother became king as Henry IV. Living away from court but under the constant eye of her older brother's men, Isabella, her grief-stricken mother and younger brother were kept out of the public eye, ostensibly for their own good but in reality to keep them away from the intrigue that surrounded the court and the thorny issue of the succession.

In greatly reduced living conditions, it was here that Isabella's life-long piety was first carefully cultivated at the hands of her mother and friends, the

religious conviction that would see her through many a hardship taking root in fertile soil. It was also during these years of hardship that Isabella's already apparent self control and iron will were carefully honed, standing her in good stead for what was to follow.

Castile under Henry's rule was dangerously unstable; weak, inept and in thrall to his favourites, the king was dethroned in effigy by his nobles in 1465 and Isabella's younger brother declared king.

Civil war broke out, and as the kingdom descended further into terror and brutality, Isabella switched allegiance, proclaiming her support for her younger brother. All expectations were that Alfonso would return Castile to its former glory, but hopes were dashed when the young pretender died suddenly in 1468. Amid the official story of plague, rumours of poisoning abounded, and Isabella, named as Alfonso's successor, became the perfect focus for the hopes of the kingdom.

Over the years that followed, she steered a careful course; instead of succumbing to pressure to lead the revolt, she instead remained outwardly agreeable

The Inquisition was not a new idea: the Medieval Inquisition had been used in the 13th century

Isabella's Ring Collection

An attractive prospect on the marriage market, Isabella was not lacking in potential suitors

1457

Ferdinand of Aragon

Reason: A negotiation between Henry of Castile and John II of Navarre to show their united front.
Outcome: The arrangement was as fickle as the friendship, and was broken off four years later.

1461

Charles of Viana

Reason: The Castilian king turned to Ferdinand's 40-year-old brother to cement an alliance.
Outcome: John II had his son imprisoned, and the betrothal became moot as Charles died that year.

1464

Edward IV of England

Reason: Another alliance attempt; with the added benefit of removing Isabella from Castile.
Outcome: Edward IV had already fallen in love with, and secretly married, Elizabeth Woodville.

1465

Afonso V of Portugal

Reason: Another strategic attempt to remove Isabella from the line of succession.
Outcome: Diplomatic relations broke down, much to the relief of the less than impressed Isabella.

1466

Pedro Giron Pachero

Reason: Master of the Order of Calatrava - he held her brother hostage until the betrothal was agreed.
Outcome: The horrified princess prayed to be delivered; Pedro died on his way to claim her.

1468

Richard of York

Reason: The second most powerful man in England, he was a worthy husband for a princess.
Outcome: An alliance with England was no longer on the cards as relations broke down.

1468

Charles Duke of Berry

Reason: A move towards setting aside the historic bad feeling between Spain and France.
Outcome: The habitual conflict between the two countries soon meant the alliance was set aside.

1469

Afonso V of Portugal

Reason: A final attempt to prevent Isabella from inheriting the throne in Castile.
Outcome: The match was thwarted by Isabella's own actions.

1469

Ferdinand of Aragon

Reason: Isabella never forgot her first betrothal, and entered negotiations on her own behalf.
Outcome: After finally meeting, the smitten Isabella declared she would have no one but Ferdinand.

towards her older brother, negotiating expertly to achieve what she wanted. Honing the control and determination that had been instilled in her during her early years, Isabella bided her time, waiting for the moment she would be called to bring her kingdom back to order.

Isabella attracted several suitors over the years, but the one who held her lasting attention was Ferdinand, the second son of John, king of the neighbouring kingdom of Aragon. Similar in age to her, fit, athletic, handsome and witty, the match had first been mooted when Isabella was only six years old. Now, some 12 years later, she negotiated her own marriage under the very nose of her brother, and in flagrant defiance of the king, married Ferdinand in 1469.

With his kingdom in tatters, Henry died in 1474. Finally Isabella got what she had fought for. She took the throne as queen of Castile and Leon on 11 December 1474. Although heralded by many as the saviour of the kingdom, the early years of her reign were far from smooth, rife with rebellions and plots to overthrow her. Although she had not been trained to rule, and was lacking in Latin and other accomplishments deemed necessary for the task, Isabella did not falter; she had been appointed by God, and by God she would rule. Only she could bring religious unity to the divided kingdom. Her entire life she had been waiting for this moment. She would not fail.

There had been Jews in Spain for more than 1,500 years, and in Isabella's time the population held a ratio of about 80,000 Jews to 6 million Christians. The question of the Jewish faith had long been a delicate issue throughout Europe. Expelled from England in 1290 and France just under a century later, the kingdoms of Castile and Aragon had not followed suit, although there had been forced conversions to Christianity twice in quite recent history. Those who converted became known as 'conversos'.

There were those, however, who did not think that the conversos were entirely sincere. They had taken advantage of their new position, it was argued, and indeed many reached positions of power and wealth within the kingdom, further fuelling rumours and jealousies. These false converts, guilty of judaising - practising their old religion while professing the new - were a threat to the security of the realm and the very souls of those who lived there.

Although clever in their deception, there were ways to tell if a convert was still secretly holding to Jewish ways. Food, for one, played a big part in determining if someone's conversion was sincere. Not eating pork, rabbit, and birds that had been strangled was a giveaway, as was frying meat in olive oil instead of lard. Cleansing of meat in general, the cutting off of fat and cooking meat in advance so as not to cook on a Saturday was also used as evidence against supposedly converted 'new' Christians. Avoiding baptising their children and denying that Jesus had been the Messiah were among other ways of identifying a secret Jew.




The matter was further complicated as there were varying degrees of non-adherence. Some conversos were deeply against the tenets of the Catholic Church, maintaining as many elements of their old faith as they could get away with. Others adopted a mixed approach, mingling Jewish practice with Christian in a hybrid religion that differed from family to family.

One thing was certain, it would no longer be tolerated. Heresy was not something the new queen could afford to ignore; not only the souls of her people but also her own would be in peril, and must be saved at all costs.

It is often said that a visit to Seville in 1477 first stirred Isabella's interest in adopting an inquisition - or investigation - into the religious state of her kingdom. Receiving first-hand reports of false converts within the city would have alarmed the

The Unification of Spain

Until the 15th century, the rulers of Castile and Aragon governed a series of separate distinct kingdoms within the Iberian Peninsula. The marriage of Isabella of Castile to Ferdinand of Aragon in 1469, however, began the gradual process of unification that would lead to the eventual creation of the Spain we know today.

	United by Ferdinand and Isabella - 1479
	Conquered by Spain - 1492
	Acquired by Spain - 1524



Although initially approved by the pope, the Inquisition was later condemned by the papacy

Reforming a kingdom

After inheriting a kingdom in turmoil, Isabella initiated highly effective reform



Law: La Santa Hermandad, or The Holy Brotherhood, was revived, an old system of armed local militias that acted as a citizen police force. Accountable to the queen, they tracked and captured criminals, as well as helping to establish and maintain order. The Hermandad were highly efficient, with a close to 100 per cent success rate. Isabella also personally oversaw the appointment of judges, and the entire judicial system grew more efficient due to regular checks and officials being held to account.



Finance: Currency throughout the kingdom was in a poor state, with coinage debased and inflation driving the population to financial ruin. Isabella reduced the number of royal mints to combat this problem and took control of currency production, restoring the value of Castilian coin. The previous reigns had left the royal coffers devastatingly depleted, especially due to the injudicious selling off of Crown lands. This was halted and reversed under Isabella, with lands either given or sold back to the Crown.



Government: The reform of the royal council was high on Isabella's list of priorities, and she eradicated the dominance of the nobility by restructuring the composition of the council to consist of nine lawyers and only three nobles. She also recognised the importance of personal contact with her subjects, and ensured that there was ample opportunity for people to air their grievances in her presence. The council of state found itself reformed, new councils were established and the entirety of the governmental machine was streamlined to maximise efficiency.

The influence of the reforms made by Isabella and her husband Ferdinand stretched far beyond the borders of their united kingdoms



devout queen greatly. The threat they posed to the religious unity and wellbeing of her kingdom would have been a very real concern.

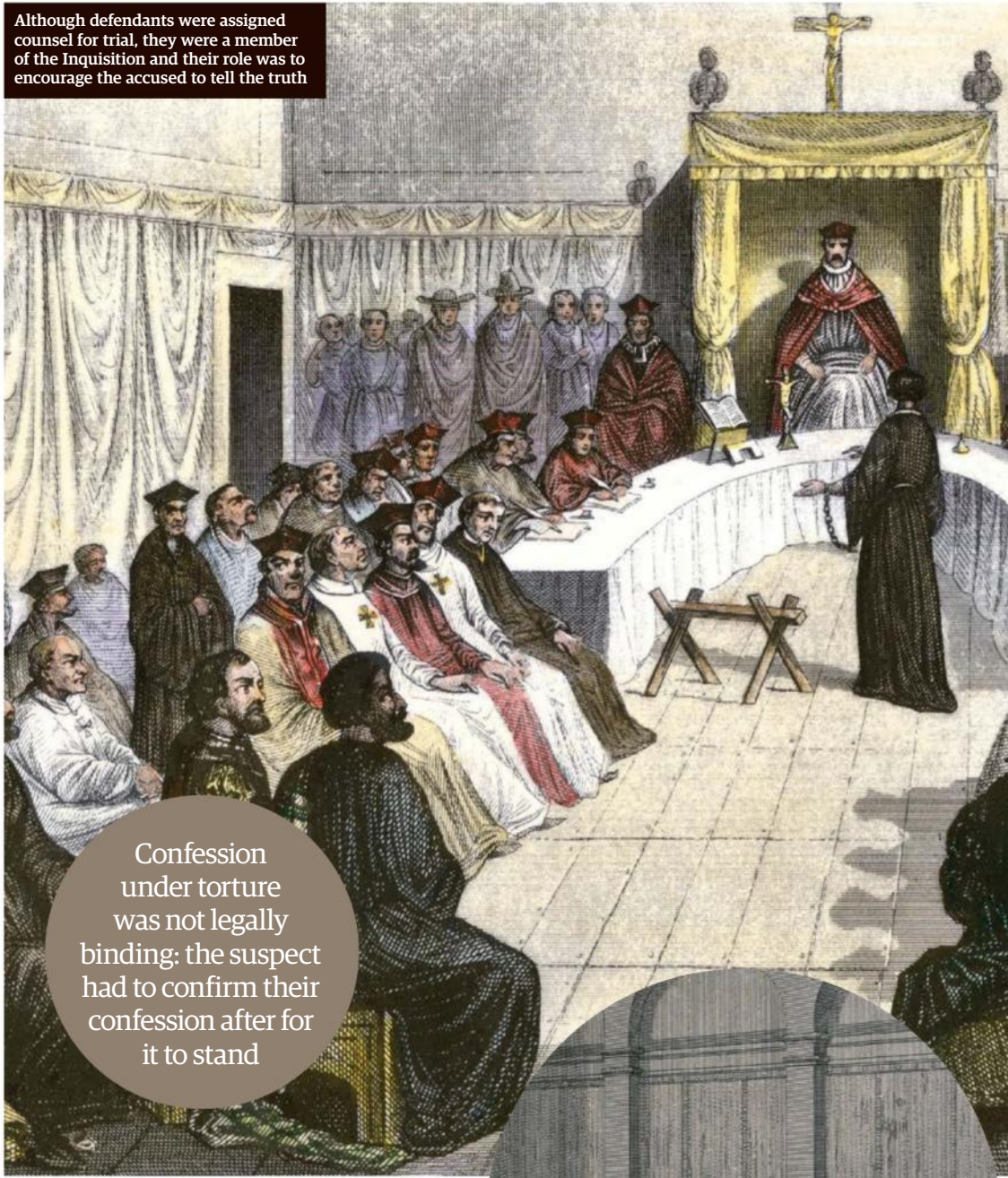
There were those who advocated an aggressive approach from the start, but it seems Isabella was not initially inclined to follow such a course. Despite a Papal Bull granted in 1478 by Pope Sixtus IV giving permission to establish the Inquisition within Castile, Isabella was in no hurry to put it into practice. Ignoring the advocates of a high-handed approach, Isabella instead focused her attention on religious education - or rather the lack of it. Certain that poor training was the reason conversos were failing to follow their new faith, she embarked upon a programme of education to establish the religious conformity essential for the security of her reign.

Two men greatly trusted by Isabella - Cardinal Mendoza and her confessor, the eventual Archbishop of Granada, Hernando de Talavera - were entrusted with this vital task. Arriving in Seville, they set to work, organising priests into enlightening the misguided conversos. They did not make much headway, however, and it soon became clear that they could do little to penetrate the religious ignorance that plagued the town.

For two years attempts were continued, with little success. Despite her own reservations, there were those close to Isabella who continued to advocate the introduction of an inquisition. Even her husband Ferdinand, ever the pragmatist, was all for it; if nothing else, it would prove a good way of inflating the royal coffers through the confiscation of converso property. With a heavy heart and steely resolve, Isabella had to concede that her attempts to bring religious conformity and peace to her realm had failed. And so, by a royal decree of 27 September 1480, the Spanish Inquisition - or The Tribunal of the Holy Office of the Inquisition - was unleashed upon Castile.

Isabella's initial aim was simple: root out the false converts among the converso population and get rid of the heretics jeopardising her beloved kingdom. Although popularised in Spain, it was not an entirely novel idea, and the new inquisition was modelled closely on the older Medieval Inquisition. Under Isabella and Ferdinand, however, the inquisitorial method was given new life, fuelled by Isabella's conviction that religious unity must be achieved whatever the cost.

Although defendants were assigned counsel for trial, they were a member of the Inquisition and their role was to encourage the accused to tell the truth



Confession under torture was not legally binding: the suspect had to confirm their confession after for it to stand



How it worked

What happened in the time between a suspect being accused and convicted, and what outcome could they hope for?

Denouncement

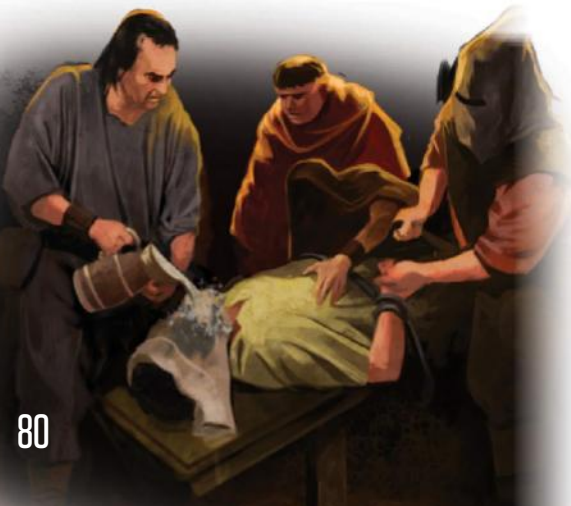
With the offer of grace if confession was made within a certain amount of time, people were encouraged to come forward to confess their sins and to name others in the process.

Detention

The suspect was relieved of their property and imprisoned, their family left in financial ruin. The process was secret, the accused not informed of the nature of the accusations against them.

Trial

The defendant testified, and those who denounced them did likewise. Finding witnesses to absolve them or to prove that their accusers were untrustworthy were a suspect's only means of defence.



THE SPANISH INQUISITION IS HIRING!

Looking for a career change? Want to be part of the most ruthless organisation known to Christian Europe? Look no further for exciting new opportunities

Employment opportunities

Grand Inquisitor

Description: Overseeing the Inquisition and rooting out insincere converts to Catholicism, you will aid and encourage the expansion of the Inquisition throughout Spain and beyond. In this vital role, you will also preside over the Council of the Supreme and General Inquisition.

Skills required: Good leadership, dedication to returning Spain to Christianity, willing to stay in post for several years. Thick skin.

Inquisitor

Description: Answerable to the Grand Inquisitor. Pay: 60,000 maravedies, to rise as the century progresses. A frontline position, you will spend a good deal of time deliberating verdicts and collecting evidence in the quest to eradicate heresy from Spain.

Skills required: No theological training necessary, but must be well versed in the law: university law degree or current position as a tax collector considered a distinct advantage.

Calificador

Description: In this role you will weigh the merits of cases brought before the tribunal. Listening to evidence and deciding if heresy has been committed and arrest warranted will also be within your remit.

Skills required: A theological background is customary for this role, along with good listening and decision-making skills.

Alguacil (Bailiff)

Description: You will be responsible for the arrest and jailing of suspects, along with taking possession of their goods. In this role you will also be expected to implement creative ways of extracting a confession, and be prepared to do whatever it takes.

Skills required: Perseverance and determination are essential to success in this post. A strong stomach and lack of emotion also a bonus.

Fiscal (Prosecutor)

Description: A job right at the heart of the Inquisition: presenting accusations, investigating rumours and getting the truth out of witnesses, there is never a boring moment in this role. Excellent promotion prospects to Inquisitor.

Skills required: Ability to drive the prosecution process. You will also be expected to perform mental and physical torture when required.

Notary of Property

Description: You will be responsible for registering the goods of the accused upon their detention, noting in detail both what they have with them and what other property they have to their name.

Skills required: Good record-keeping skills, the ability to tell if property is of worth, neat handwriting preferable.

Notary of the Secret

Description: Required to record the testimony of accused and witnesses, you will be present during interrogations to make a detailed record of all that occurs. A permanent position, it comes with the rare benefits of access to the Inquisitorial archives and security of tenure.

Skills required: Attention to detail, ability to write fast and clearly, good memory and organisational skills are all essential to succeed in this post.

Familiar

Description: A lay position, the successful candidate will become an honoured servant of the Inquisition. Particularly suited to members of the nobility or those after a title, benefits include being permitted to carry arms in order to protect Inquisitors and, of course, yourself.

Skills required: Must be ready to do your duty at all times. Inclination towards informing not essential but advantageous.



Voluntary confession

This was the safest bet; confessing freely could mean staying alive, and with a reduced punishment than keeping quiet, although by no means guaranteed.

Acquittal

Unusual, but not unheard of, the suspect could be acquitted of the charges made against them, leading to their release.

Suspended

In this instance, the trial was suspended, with the suspect either being released or held in prison until such time that the proceedings recommenced.

Torture

This was to force a confession and not to cause pain per se, but that was little comfort to the accused, especially as no exception was made for age, sex or infirmity.

Reconciled

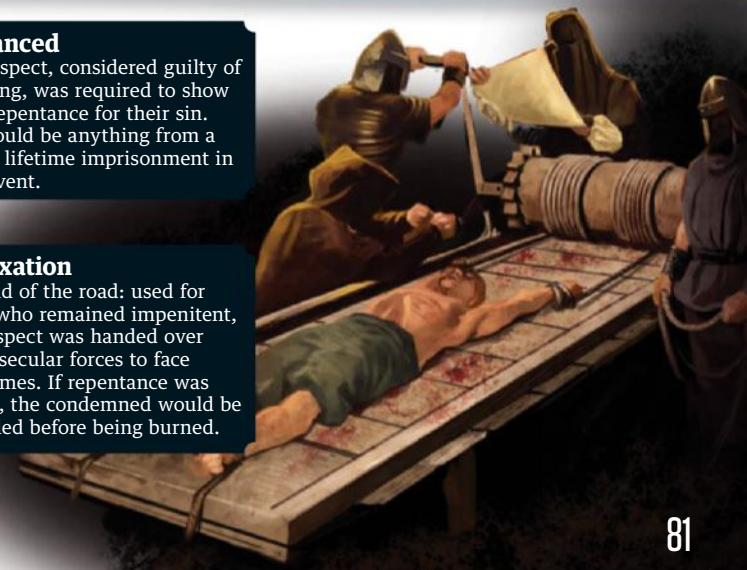
A public ceremony took place where the accused received letters patent to allow them back into the life of the church. Punishment was severe, including confiscation of property and whipping.

Penanced

The suspect, considered guilty of judaising, was required to show their repentance for their sin. This could be anything from a fine to lifetime imprisonment in a convent.

Relaxation

The end of the road: used for those who remained impenitent, the suspect was handed over to the secular forces to face the flames. If repentance was shown, the condemned would be strangled before being burned.



Spanish Inquisition Executions 1540-1700



As the Inquisition spread throughout Spanish-held territory, the number of victims rose steadily. Although it's estimated that 3,000 people were executed in total, these are the figures that exist

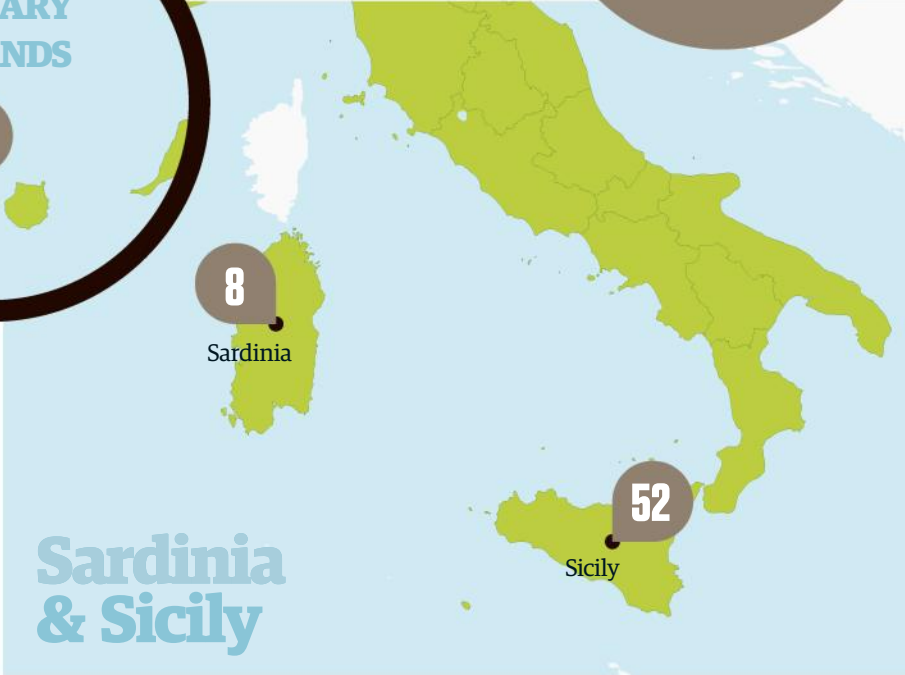


Spain

The Inquisition was not finally abolished in Spain until 1834, during the reign of Isabella II



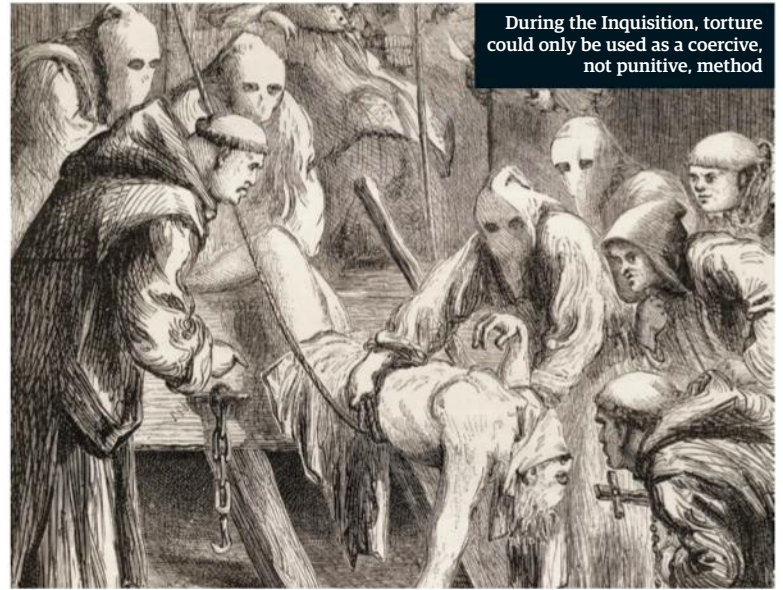
Mexico & Peru



Sardinia & Sicily



Convicted heretics were forced to wear a pointed hat called a sanbenito as part of their punishment



During the Inquisition, torture could only be used as a coercive, not punitive, method

Despite the reputation the Spanish Inquisition would later gain, initially it was not entirely unpopular. On the contrary, at a time when the kingdom had been almost torn apart by the instability of civil war, to some it was a relief to see the proof of firm control being established by the new reign of Isabella. This relief, however, proved premature: the people of the kingdom of Castile would live to regret the day the Inquisition was established within their cities.

The Inquisitors, with their distinctive white robes and black hoods, struck first at that well-known hotbed of converso laxity: Seville. At their arrival, mass panic ensued among the converso community, with about 4,000 people fleeing the city. They were right to be afraid. Retribution was swift. Moves were taken to track down those who had fled, while the nobility, under threat of excommunication, informed against those whose whereabouts were known to them.

The first public execution took place in Seville on 6 February 1481. During the spectacle of the auto de fe, six people were burned, a terrifying declaration of the might of the Inquisition and the intention of the monarchy behind it.

With that, the Inquisition spread steadily through Spain, with tribunals set up in Cordoba, Jaen and the religious capital of Toledo by 1485. A set pattern to proceedings was quickly established. Firstly, the people of a town were prepared; the fear of God - and by extension the Inquisition - preached from the pulpit for all to hear. Matters officially began with the arrival of the Inquisitors, when the Edict of Grace - a call to come forward and confess - would be read out, and a span of time given to the people of the town to respond. If they confessed their sins and admitted their Judaism, they could hope for redemption. If not, they should expect the full wrath of the Inquisition to fall upon them.

Once a suspect was in custody, the primary aim was to extract a confession. If a person spoke freely, then all to the good. If not, there were ways

of gaining the information required. Torture and the Spanish Inquisition have become virtually synonymous in the popular imagination, and for good reason. A standard 15th-century approach, it was used by the Inquisition in order to gain the all-important admission of guilt. Although technically a suspect could only undergo torture once, there were ways around this restriction; talk of a session being paused or suspended meant that it could be continued the following day without strictly breaking the rules.

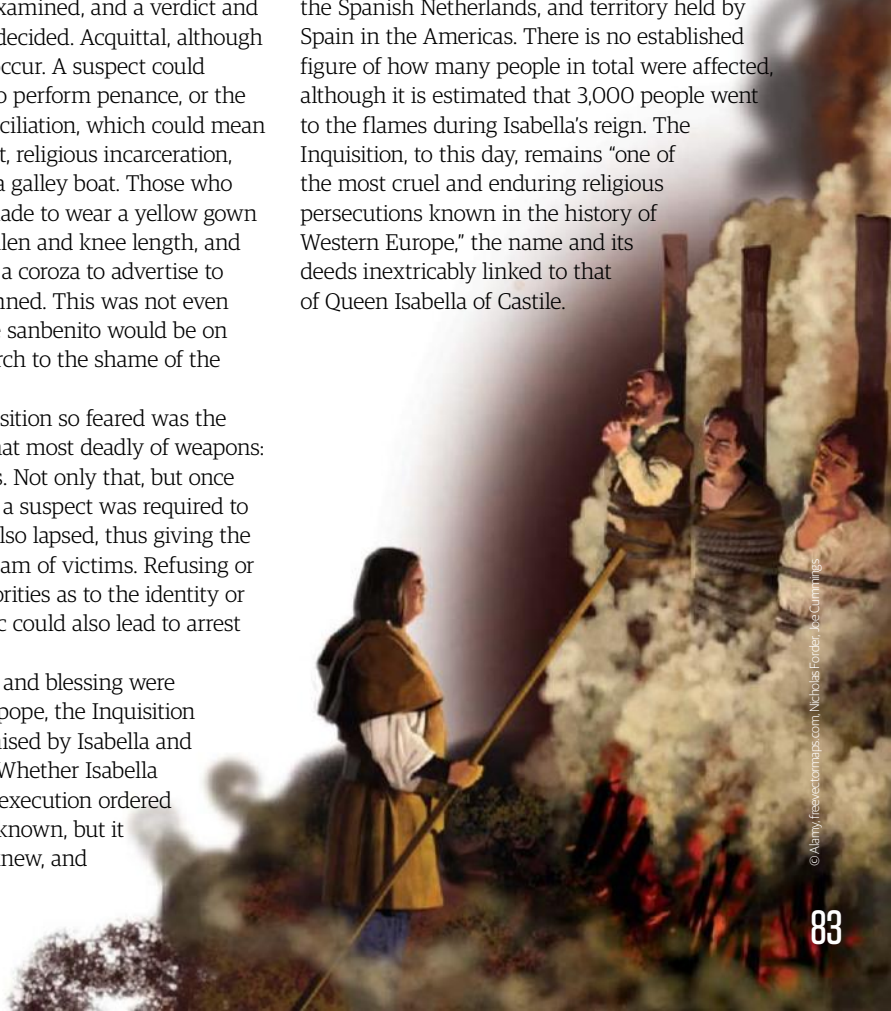
Once confession had been obtained, the details of the case were then examined, and a verdict and sentence (if necessary) decided. Acquittal, although rare, could sometimes occur. A suspect could likewise be sentenced to perform penance, or the harsher verdict of reconciliation, which could mean indefinite imprisonment, religious incarceration, flogging, or serving on a galley boat. Those who were reconciled were made to wear a yellow gown called a sanbenito, woollen and knee length, and a tall, conical hat called a corozza to advertise to people that they had sinned. This was not even forgotten on death - the sanbenito would be on display in the local church to the shame of the family left behind.

What made the Inquisition so feared was the fact that it thrived on that most deadly of weapons: anonymous accusations. Not only that, but once a confession was made, a suspect was required to name others who had also lapsed, thus giving the Inquisition a steady stream of victims. Refusing or failing to alert the authorities as to the identity or whereabouts of a heretic could also lead to arrest and execution.

Although permission and blessing were initially granted by the pope, the Inquisition was financed and organised by Isabella and Ferdinand themselves. Whether Isabella personally attended an execution ordered by the Inquisition is unknown, but it is undeniable that she knew, and

approved of, the methods used by the Inquisitorial machine. Despite this, many of her closest and most trusted advisers had converted from the Jewish faith, with three secretaries who served the monarchs being from converso families. It was even said that Ferdinand himself had Jewish blood in his veins from converso ancestors.

Despite Isabella's hopes, it became apparent that merely targeting conversos was not enough, and in 1492, all Jews were expelled from Spain. In the decades that followed, the Inquisition spread throughout Spanish-held territory, including Naples, the Spanish Netherlands, and territory held by Spain in the Americas. There is no established figure of how many people in total were affected, although it is estimated that 3,000 people went to the flames during Isabella's reign. The Inquisition, to this day, remains "one of the most cruel and enduring religious persecutions known in the history of Western Europe," the name and its deeds inextricably linked to that of Queen Isabella of Castile.



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— 1509 – 1547 —

Henry VIII the Warlord

In pursuing dreams of victory in France, Henry threw England into decades of war and the chaos of a Europe in conflict

Henry VIII was born dreaming of war. When he took the throne in April 1509, with his bride Catherine of Aragon at his side, Henry knew exactly what kind of king he wanted to be. His would be a glorious reign that would restore England to the magnificence it deserved. His father, Henry VII, had become unpopular by levying punishing taxes to restore the country's finances, but the new king had no intention of focusing on matters as petty as the treasury. He would be a conqueror.

By the end of his life, Henry was a bloated and frustrated mockery of the athletic youth that he had once been. He had grown up jousting, riding and hunting, and would often participate in chivalry tournaments in disguise. He had grown up hearing the stories of the great Henry V - the hero of Agincourt - and had dreamed of the battles that years of peace had deprived him of. He was determined that he would repeat his ancestor's triumphs in France and expand England's territory beyond Calais - perhaps even as far as Paris. He wholly believed that France belonged to him and

“By the end of his life, Henry was a bloated and frustrated mockery of the athletic youth that he had once been”

HENRY VIII

English, 1491-1547

Brief Bio

As king, Henry spent lavishly, courted conflict and pursued his own leisurely interests. His most enduring legacy is that, to annul his marriage to Catherine of Aragon, Henry separated England from the Catholic church. However, he is still better known for his six wives and how he rid himself of five.





- fortunately for the English monarch - he did not have to wait long to stake his claim.

Henry had grown up in years of stultifying peace thanks to his father's treaties with France and Aragon in Spain. Meanwhile, just across the Channel, the continent was in the throes of war. The powers of Europe clashed over the possession of Naples, essentially turning Italy into one big battleground. A quarrel over the region of Romagna had set Venice against the Vatican, and so Pope Julius II rallied France, the Holy Roman Empire and Spain (under Ferdinand II) in the final weeks of 1508, planning to split the Venetian territories among them.

Venice fell, but Julius feared French occupation of Italy. He mounted an impulsive attack on his allies which backfired as French forces stormed south in retaliation. A terrified Julius formed the Holy League, and Spain and the Holy Roman Empire sided with the papacy in 1511.

Henry VIII had now been on the throne for two years with his queen Catherine of Aragon (Ferdinand's daughter) at his side. A strong royal family was vital to his dream of a glorious England and he announced that he would marry her shortly after his father died. Catherine was fiercely loyal and determined to meet her king's expectations. She became pregnant almost immediately but their child was stillborn. It was a matter of weeks until Catherine was with child again, and she gave birth to a son, Henry, on New Year's Day, 1511. Sadly, Henry would survive for just seven weeks.

At this point, Henry was a young king just beginning his reign. He was the head of a proud royal family and he had shown his subjects that he

"Wolsey was the perfect right-hand man, able to counterbalance the king's violent rages with his own skilled diplomacy"

was not the penny-pinching tyrant that his father was. The Holy League would enable him to serve his God and show France the power of England's might. The full force of that might would be delivered by Henry's expanding Royal Navy, which would boast the world's largest and most advanced warships. It is important not to underestimate the importance of the pope's blessing. He was still a devout Catholic and would go on to condemn the Protestant Martin Luther so harshly that the pope would give him the title 'Defender of the Faith'. His religion also included the concept of Divine Right; France was his God-given property. The Holy League should have been undefeatable.

However, the first attack ended in disaster. An English force sailed to Gascony in June 1512, due to meet up with Ferdinand's army and claim the region of Aquitaine for Henry. Unfortunately, Ferdinand decided that he was more interested in claiming Navarre for

himself and directed his troops in that direction. Ill-equipped and ravaged by dysentery, the English troops were forced to retreat. Henry was furious

but resolute.

Less than a year later, a second invasion plan was underway, with much of the organisation left in the hands of the invaluable Cardinal Thomas Wolsey. Wolsey was the perfect right-hand man for a king like Henry, able to counterbalance the king's violent rages with his own skilled diplomacy while sharing a similarly rabid ambition. Wolsey was a fixer; he made sure that whatever Henry wanted, Henry got. What Henry wanted was France, and so, in April 1513, an army was raised and an attack was made on Brest.

This incursion proved even more disastrous than the attempt on Aquitaine, but Henry would not be dissuaded and personally accompanied the English landing at Calais in June. With his feet on French soil and standing at the

THOMAS WOLSEY

English, circa 1475-1530



Cardinal Wolsey rose to power due to his ability to ensure that Henry got what he wanted. He was deeply ambitious and a skilled political operator. He became archbishop of York, and was made a cardinal and lord chancellor in 1515. He was instrumental in the peace process following Henry's first war in France, and often took public blame for Henry's mistakes. Wolsey's ambitions of becoming pope would be scuppered when Henry's determination to split from Catherine of Aragon destroyed England's relationship with Rome. Scrabbling to reconcile his position in Rome with his duty to his king, Wolsey's failure to deliver papal approval would prove to be his downfall.

Brief Bio

Debacle at Gascony

June 1512

Henry's only concern prior to the expedition to Gascony was that he couldn't be there. It was the first attack on France during his reign and it should have been the first step in a glorious campaign. Henry was all too eager to ally himself with his father-in-law, Ferdinand II, who had similar ambitions to claim French territory. Both kings had joined the Holy League, which had been created in response to France's military activity in Italy. The League had decided that Ferdinand and Henry should attack together and it should have been an impressive display of force.

The Marquis of Dorset was given control of the English forces and the invaders were due to march with Ferdinand on Aquitaine. However, once the Marquis set foot on dry land, he discovered that the Spanish king had not kept his word. Instead, Ferdinand was occupied with his own attack on Navarre, which better served

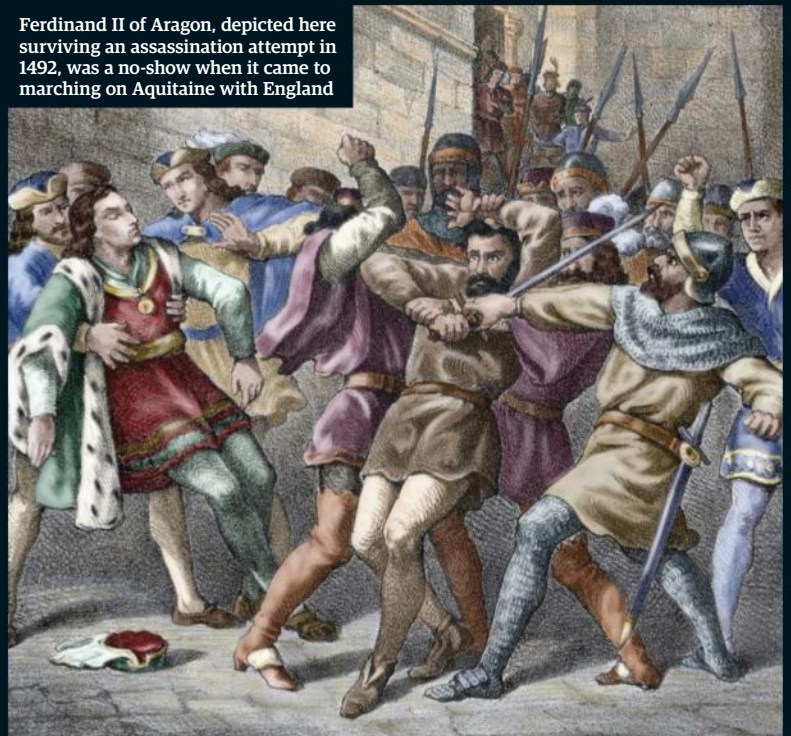
the Spanish king's own interests. The Marquis's troops quarrelled with the few Spanish forces that they had been given and many of his men succumbed to dysentery. As a result of all this, he had no choice but to retreat.

Although Henry can't be blamed for the failure of this attack, it shows the Holy League for what it really was. The kings were fighting with the pope's blessing and the glory of God, but they were all out for themselves. Once the fighting started, each monarch was really only interested in what land they could claim - their allies only functioned as a bank and backup.

Verdict

The forced retreat enraged Henry, pushing him towards leading his own attack, and also sowed the seeds of distrust that would come more prominently to the fore throughout his further campaigns

Ferdinand II of Aragon, depicted here surviving an assassination attempt in 1492, was a no-show when it came to marching on Aquitaine with England



Victory at Flodden Field

9 September 1513

With the king's attention focused on France, the timing was ripe for an attack from the north. King Louis XII reached out to his ally in Scotland and James IV was very agreeable. He wrote to Henry instructing him to abandon his war on the French – an instruction that Henry roundly ignored. The Scottish troops rallied and marched south to the border, sending word that they intended to invade. Having appeased their sense of honour, they waited for the English troops at Flodden.

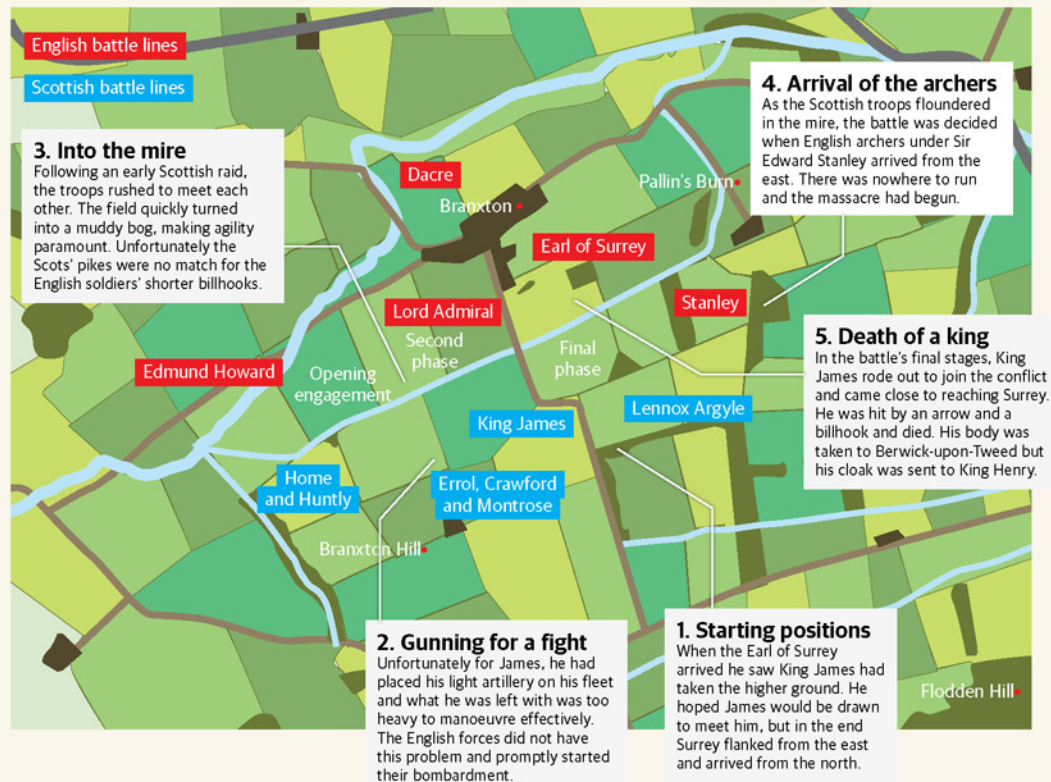
Catherine of Aragon was acting as regent while her husband was at war in France. Catherine was a woman who believed fiercely in duty, honour and loyalty, and the prospect of losing a battle in her husband's absence was too awful to even consider.

Together with the Earl of Surrey, Catherine raised an army from the Midlands to meet the Scottish invaders. Surrey met the Scottish army at Flodden Field and subjected them to a crushing defeat. The number of Scottish dead numbered in the thousands, and King James IV himself was among the fatalities.

While Henry's refusal to leave France may have been the final straw that prompted the attack, he had very little to do with the result of the battle – it was the Earl of Surrey who won the day. The Scottish king fell on the battlefield, and his cloak was sent to France as a trophy for Henry. A decisive victory, but not one which can be attributed to any military excellence on Henry's part.

Verdict

While the victory would assure Henry of England's military might, it was the start of a long and costly struggle with the Scots that would distract him from his goals in France.



"The Scottish king fell on the battlefield, and his cloak was sent to France as a trophy for Henry"



The Scottish army outnumbered the English by about 15,000 at Flodden, but some clever tactics won out

Father of the Royal Navy

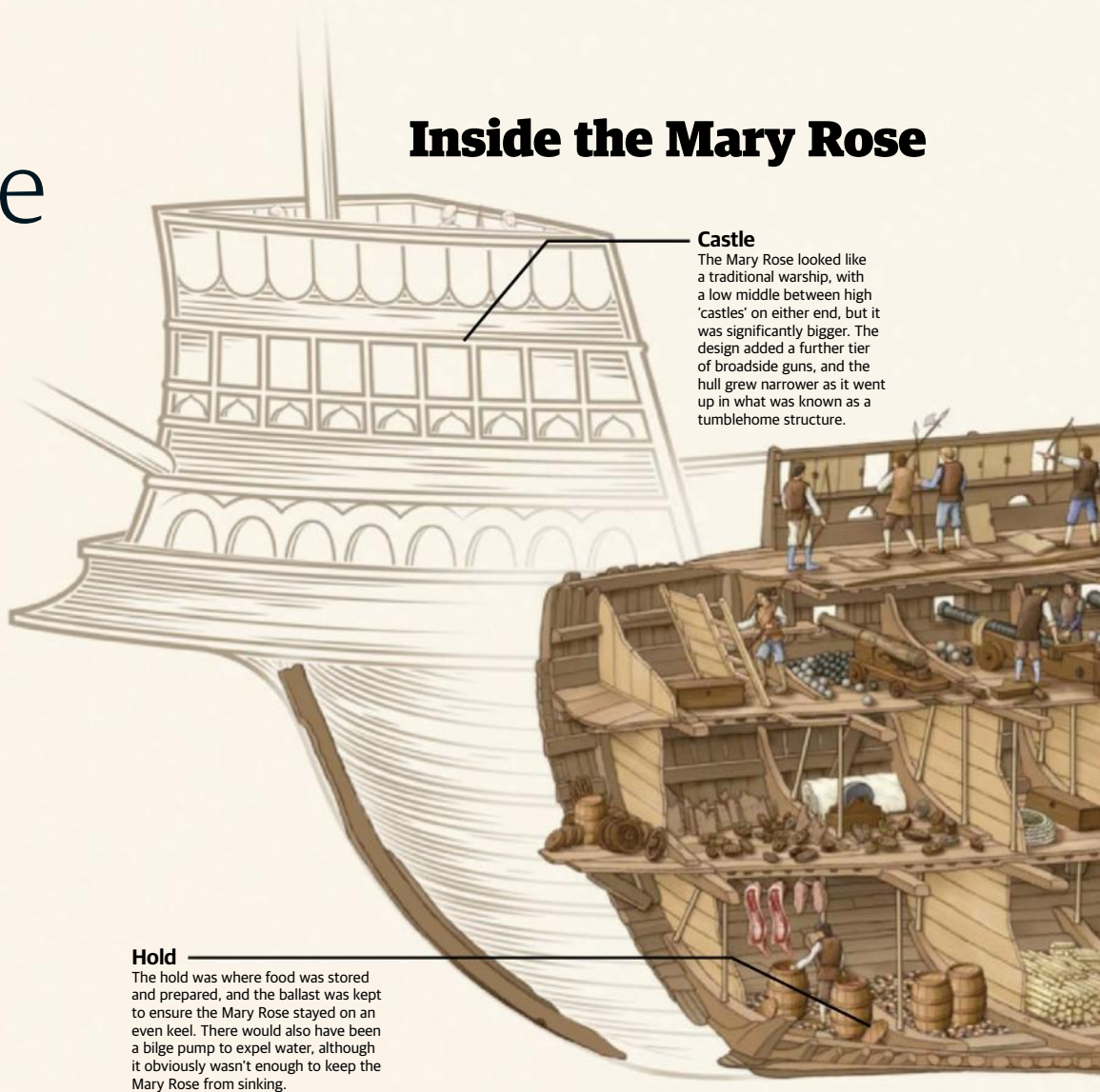
Henry might be known as the founder of the Royal Navy but its creation had begun during the reign of Henry VII. Five royal warships had been built by the time Henry VIII took the throne, but the young king wanted more from his military might.

Henry knew that Scotland had invested in their own navy and that he was potentially facing a two-pronged attack by sea. Henry ordered the construction of two great warships: the infamous Mary Rose (which embarrassingly and mysteriously sank while leading the defence against the French at the Solent) and the Peter Pomegranate. Henry's ambition knew no limits and the English Navy would be the biggest, the most advanced and the most fearsome. He equipped his ships with the latest guns and the heaviest cannons, while employing new innovations like hinged gun ports. By the end of Henry's reign, his fleet numbered 58.

Enormous gunships aside, perhaps the most important innovations Henry made to the navy were on land. He created the first naval dock in Portsmouth, he gave the Grant of the Royal Charter to Trinity House (which developed beacons, buoys and lighthouses), and he created the Navy Board and the Office of Admiralty. Henry is known as the father of the Royal Navy because he didn't just bulk up its muscle, he created its backbone.

head of an English army, Henry was exhilarated. He made straight for the town of Thérouanne and promptly laid siege to it. The Holy Roman Emperor and fellow Holy League leader, Maximilian, joined him soon afterwards, helping to assure Henry that he was on the side of the angels. Finally, Henry tasted glory on 16 August 1513 when the French attacked in the Battle of the Spurs. The light French cavalry were unable to withstand the combined forces of the invaders and fled. Henry claimed the day as a great victory, which was consolidated when Thérouanne surrendered on 22 August. The subsequent capture of Tournai was just as important to Henry, and he kept that town as an English stronghold while giving Thérouanne to Maximilian as a gesture of their allegiance.

What had Henry actually achieved? He'd taken two towns from the French, but Paris was a long way away. Nothing he'd done would tip the scales in either direction, but this was just the beginning. Henry was in his element. He was re-enacting the glories of Henry V and who knew how far he could go? Even as Henry celebrated his victories in France, trouble at home soon threatened to bring everything to a halt. All too aware of the English forces currently on their soil, the French reached out to King James IV of Scotland and suggested



Inside the Mary Rose

Castle

The Mary Rose looked like a traditional warship, with a low middle between high 'castles' on either end, but it was significantly bigger. The design added a further tier of broadside guns, and the hull grew narrower as it went up in what was known as a tumblehome structure.

Hold

The hold was where food was stored and prepared, and the ballast was kept to ensure the Mary Rose stayed on an even keel. There would also have been a bilge pump to expel water, although it obviously wasn't enough to keep the Mary Rose from sinking.

that this might be the perfect opportunity to mount an attack of their own. James marched south to Flodden Ridge with his armies to await the English.

While England may have seemed weak, Queen Catherine, acting as regent, had no intention of allowing such a challenge to go unanswered. An army was raised and met the Scots on 9 September. The English victory was brutally decisive and King James was killed. The gleeful queen sent the fallen monarch's bloody cloak to her husband in France, with the message: "In this your Grace shall see how I keep my promise, sending you for your banners a king's coat." Henry was conquering his enemies abroad, while his queen was seeing off attackers at home.

Sadly for the warrior king, peace was just around the corner, whether Henry wanted it or not. He had been acting as a war chest to his allies and England's

coffers were so depleted that there was simply no way that he could carry on alone. He would have to make peace. The next few years presented Henry with a new potential ally, and a new enemy.

The ambitious Francis I took the French crown, while the Austrian King Charles V was elected Holy Roman Emperor (adding Spain and a huge portion of Italy to his kingdom). Wolsey, aware of the financial sinkhole that the wars had been, worked hard to keep the peace. He managed to put quills to paper with the Treaty of London in 1518, while friendship would be forged at the Field of the Cloth of Gold on 7 June 1520. The plan was that Henry and Francis would spend a week enjoying the festivities and settling their differences, while Wolsey met with Charles V. It did not go according to plan.

For all Wolsey's good intentions, this attempt at friendship was doomed from the start. Henry had never wanted peace to start with,

THOMAS MORE

English, 1478-1535



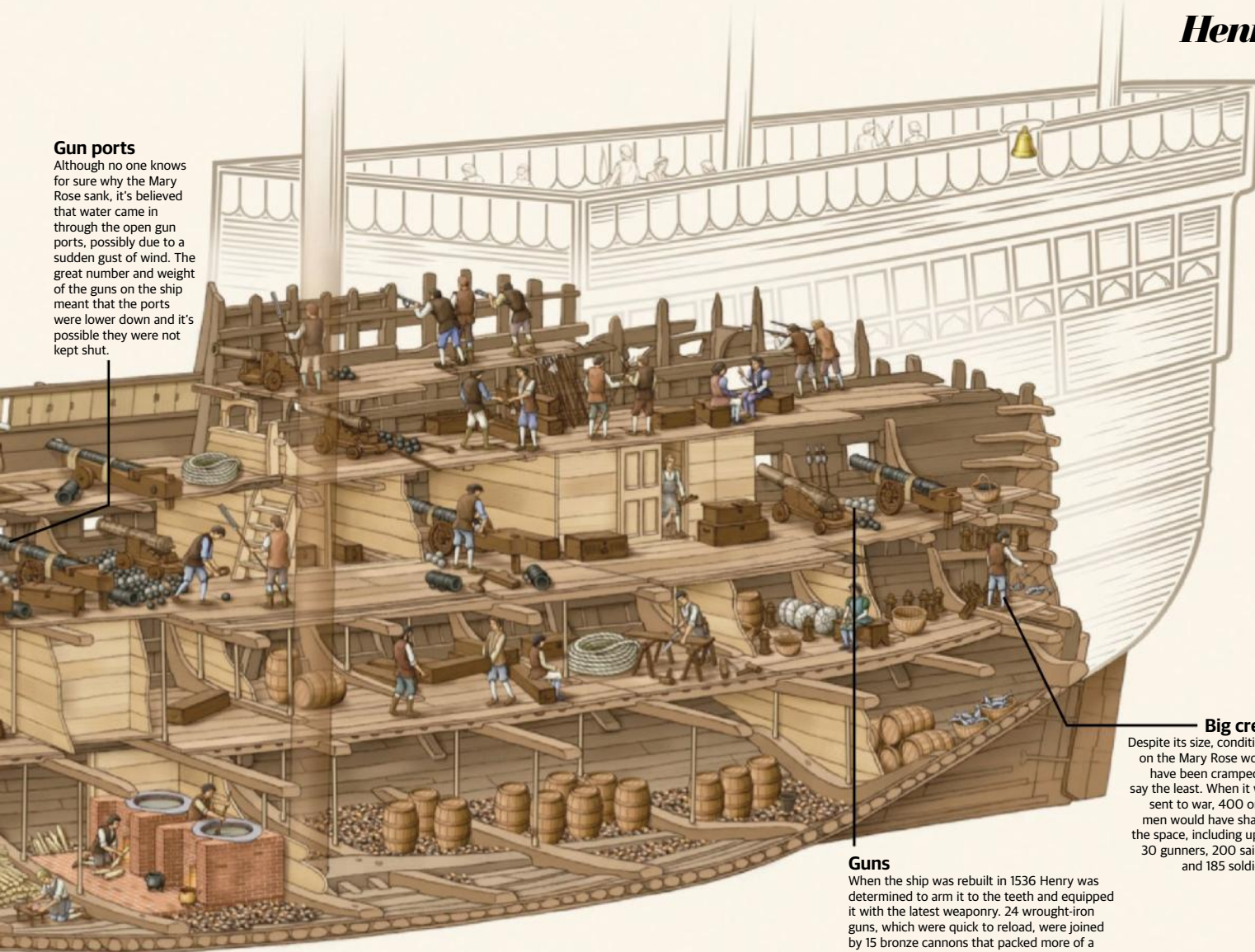
Brief Bio

Thomas More trained as a lawyer and nearly became a monk before entering Henry's employ in 1517,

taking on a variety of roles from interpreter to writer and chief diplomat. The two quickly became close confidants and More was knighted four years later, before becoming the speaker of the House of Commons in 1523. It was his strong Catholic faith that would prove his downfall. Although he was made lord chancellor in 1529, he rejected the formation of the Church of England with Henry at its head, so resigned soon after. His refusal to accept the new denomination would lead to his arrest and eventual execution on 6 July 1535.

Gun ports

Although no one knows for sure why the Mary Rose sank, it's believed that water came in through the open gun ports, possibly due to a sudden gust of wind. The great number and weight of the guns on the ship meant that the ports were lower down and it's possible they were not kept shut.



Big crew

Despite its size, conditions on the Mary Rose would have been cramped to say the least. When it was sent to war, 400 or so men would have shared the space, including up to 30 gunners, 200 sailors and 185 soldiers.

Guns

When the ship was rebuilt in 1536 Henry was determined to arm it to the teeth and equipped it with the latest weaponry. 24 wrought-iron guns, which were quick to reload, were joined by 15 bronze cannons that packed more of a punch. With 52 additional smaller guns, the Mary Rose was a serious threat.

© Courtesy of the Mary Rose Trust

and Francis had no intention of bowing down to his English counterpart. Ambitious, stubborn and proud, the two men were too similar for any attempts at friendship to work. After the first meeting was concluded, the two kings engaged in a week of oneupmanship and competition. It was a week dedicated to flaunting power and status; the 'cloth of gold' referred to the ludicrously lavish tents. Henry was determined to prove his athleticism and joined the competitions, but Francis had a similar idea. Henry had to suffer the humiliation of losing to the French king in a wrestling match, and it is hardly surprising that the only result of the meeting was a greater sense of hatred. Instead, Henry turned his diplomatic attentions to Charles V.

Henry's alliance with the Habsburgs had continued throughout the years of peace, despite one or two hiccups involving marriage arrangements. Crucially, Charles and Henry shared a mutual loathing of Martin Luther and King Francis. His hatred of the French king meant that war was inevitable and Henry eagerly awaited the perfect opportunity to mount another attack. When hostilities resumed in 1521, Henry declared that England was now allied with the Holy Roman Emperor and signed the Treaty of Windsor in 1522 to make 'The Great Enterprise' official. At

"Henry's ambition to conquer France was hamstrung by the fact that he couldn't afford it"

this point in his plans, Henry could not afford a full-scale invasion and an attack on Picardy failed due to a lack of communication and, perhaps more importantly, trust.

Henry's ambition to conquer France and claim the throne for himself was hamstrung by the fact that he couldn't afford it. He had previously helped to bankroll Ferdinand and Maximilian and he had seen them make peace without him. Henry was scared that Charles might repeat his father's trick and, for his part, Charles had no particular interest in seeing Henry on the French throne. Their mutual distrust would only grow.

Trust wasn't the only problem. In an echo of 1513, Henry was distracted by the constant threat from the north. Whenever he began a campaign in France, the Scottish forces would threaten attack, forcing him to wage a war on two fronts. Henry was enraged and infuriated but he would not give up. He mounted another attack in 1523 to support

the rebelling Duke of Bourbon, but Charles sent no help and the English troops were forced to retreat.

The line was finally crossed when Charles captured Francis at the Battle of Pavia in 1525 and showed no interest in sharing his spoils with the English king. Henry decided that the time had come for a full-scale invasion. With nowhere near enough money, Henry and Cardinal Wolsey tried to create the 'Amicable Grant' tax to pay for the attack, but opposition proved so fierce that Henry was forced to scrap his plans and publicly blame Wolsey. The humiliation of backpedalling helped Henry to realise that he was not going to get what he wanted. He signed the Treaty of the More with Francis's mother, Louise of Savoy, and turned his attention towards his family.

Not surprisingly, Charles's rejection rankled Henry. The Holy Roman Emperor's increased presence in Italy once again caused the panicking Pope Clement VII to create the League of Cognac,

Battle of the Spurs

16 August 1513



The Battle of the Spurs was so named for the speed with which the French cavalry fled

Henry and his English forces had been laying siege to the town of Théroouanne since July 1513. Following the embarrassment at Gascony, he had finally arrived in France to lead his army to great conquest. He camped close, but not too close to the city, and laid siege. A stalemate ensued until French action on 16 August tipped the scales.

The French forces had seen Maximilian's Holy Roman Army join Henry's and decided that the time had come to attempt a counterattack. On the morning of 16 August, French light cavalry, a few thousand strong,

attacked the invaders' positions. However, word had reached the Holy League's camp of the planned attack and a trap had been prepared, leading to a brutal skirmish. It was an attack that was ultimately doomed to fail, with Henry and Maximilian's combined forces coming to roughly 30,000 men. The speed with which the surviving French rode away led to the name of the battle.

It was not a significant military victory in any other term than morale. Henry had been looking for a victory to claim in France, and this encounter was the first real

battle of his campaign. He celebrated it but the actual gains from the Battle of the Spurs and the subsequent fall of Théroouanne would impress nothing but his ego. At great financial expense, Henry's dreams of Agincourt came a little closer.

Verdict

The victory at the Battle of the Spurs did more for Henry's ego than it did for the outcome of his campaign, essentially proving to be an incredibly expensive display.

which united Venice, Florence and France against Charles. Henry was not a member, but offered to help bankroll the group. His treaty with Francis in the Treaty of Westminster on 30 April 1527 was a sign that his mind was elsewhere.

Henry was desperate to be separated from Catherine and marry Anne Boleyn. He had no interest in a divorce and instead wanted to prove that it had been illegal to marry his brother's widow. This would soothe the good Catholic in him, but it set him against Charles V, who was appalled by what the accusation said about his aunt, Catherine. However, circumstances were not in Henry's favour; Charles had attacked Rome in retaliation for the League's advances. Pope Clement VII was now his prisoner and Catherine's nephew made his influence felt. Clement gained his freedom in December, but the emperor had no interest in peace talks with the League. Once again, Charles had frustrated Henry's plans and he declared war with the Holy Roman Emperor in January. However, England lacked the finances to do any more than declare itself at war; it's unlikely that this worried Charles too much. The situation

“Overjoyed at having the queen he lusted after, Henry realised that a Europe united against him was dangerous”

in Europe finally resolved itself in 1529 with the Treaty of Cambrai. However, Henry's determination to end his marriage had made enemies out of his old allies. Francis offered to plead his case to the new Pope Clement, but he was more concerned with cementing his own alliance with the Holy See. Anne Boleyn's pregnancy pushed Henry into taking decisive action and his marriage to Catherine was annulled by Thomas Cranmer in 1533. In the eyes of the English court, his secret marriage to Anne was now completely legal. Finally, Henry was recognised as Head of the Church and abolished the right of Appeal to Rome. England was no longer Catholic and the pope had no more influence over the king.

Although he was overjoyed at finally having the queen he lusted after, Henry realised that a Europe

united against him was a dangerous prospect indeed. He tried to take advantage of the frequent arguments between Charles and Francis, but in 1538 the excommunication order for Henry was finally delivered and the pope declared that the Vatican would support anyone who deposed the English king; his death was something God would turn a blind eye to. Luckily for Henry, Charles was busy with the Ottoman Empire and, if Francis planned to attack England, he had no intention of doing so alone. Henry knew that the differences between Francis and Charles would prevent them from ever remaining allies for long. He just had to be patient. Finally, in 1542, they declared war and Henry could return to the battlefield.

By this point Henry was obese, sickly and prone to violent rages. The war gave him a sense of

The Siege of Boulogne

19 July - 18 September 1544

The Siege of Boulogne would be the closest thing to an unqualified victory that Henry would get in all his years of war with France. However, the conquest of a single city at tremendous expense tells us that unqualified is not really the most accurate adjective to use.

Henry had been waiting for an excuse to resume hostilities with France and he eagerly joined his old ally (and old enemy) Charles V when war broke out in 1544. He raised a huge invasion force to set sail across the Channel.

The English force was split into two, attacking Montreuil and Boulogne, with Henry himself joining the latter. While the attack on Montreuil failed, the Siege of Boulogne, though lengthy, would result in success. The siege began on 19 July and the English forces quickly took the lower part of the city. However, they were unable to breach the castle walls and the siege stretched from weeks

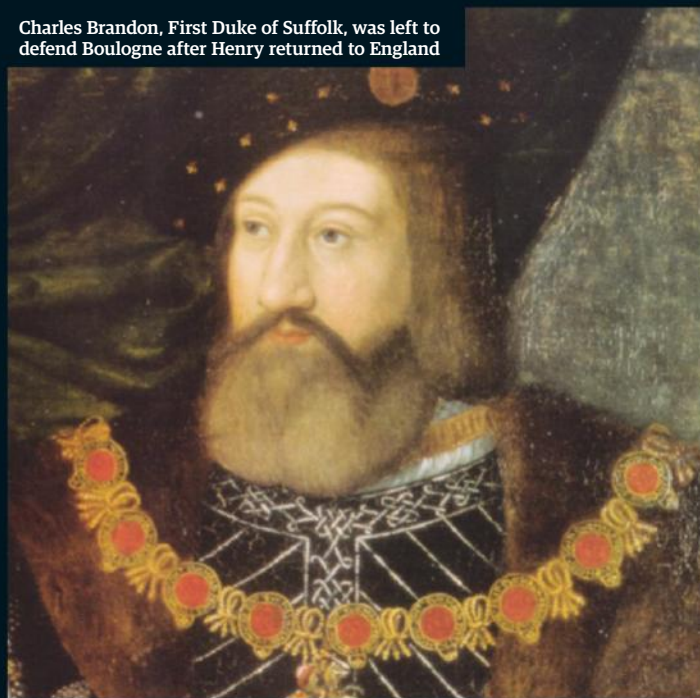
into months. Henry wrote to his wife (number six, Catherine Parr) praising the strength of his opponents, but it was only a matter of time before the French were forced to surrender, which they did after Henry's forces tunneled beneath the walls.

However, Henry's triumph would be short-lived. He learned that Charles, fearful of the Ottoman threat and caring little about Henry's personal ambition, had made his own peace treaty with France without England. Henry returned home to attend to Scotland, leaving Boulogne occupied, and Francis began preparations for a counterattack.

Verdict

Henry may have taken the city, but the financial cost was enormous. Although Charles's treaty led to threats of a French invasion, Francis's attempts ultimately failed.

Charles Brandon, First Duke of Suffolk, was left to defend Boulogne after Henry returned to England



purpose and Charles was finally back on his side. For all their past differences, now there were no personal reasons why Henry and Charles could not resume their alliance. Catherine of Aragon had passed away and, by executing Anne Boleyn, Henry had removed the insult to Charles' honour. Across the Channel, Francis wasn't sitting idly by and he knew how to keep Henry distracted.

Scotland had proved to be a continual thorn in Henry's paw during his attempts to invade France, attacking every time his attention was focused across the Channel. Having hoped that James V would be a more amenable ally than his predecessor, Henry was livid when Scotland refused to follow him in separating from Rome. When James did not appear at the diplomatic talks at York in 1541, outright conflict followed. Following a minor Scottish victory at the Battle of Haddon Rig in 1542, the two armies met at Solway Moss. In a brutal echo of Flodden Field, the Scottish army suffered a humiliating defeat. James V died of fever about two weeks later and Henry, once again buoyed by such a decisive victory, turned his attention to France.

Henry was taking no half measures and invaded France on two fronts. Stretching his finances as far as they would go, he sent troops to Montreuil under the Duke of Norfolk, while another force attacked Boulogne under the Duke of Suffolk. While Norfolk failed, Suffolk succeeded. Henry himself arrived to take charge of the siege which lasted from July until September when the city fell. He basked in the glory of a French city claimed, but his elation was short-lived. Henry was forced to turn his attention back to Scotland, where a rebellion had sprung up. His retaliation was so brutal that it became known as the 'Rough Wooing'.

The Rough Wooing

December 1543 - March 1550

The Rough Wooing was the result of Henry's failed attempt to subdue Scotland while he turned his attention to France. Although he might have won a huge victory at the Battle of Solway Moss, Henry's hopes that the Scottish would be amenable to peace proved to be ill-founded. He had given them his terms, but Henry may as well have given them a blank piece of paper, as Scotland declared its renewed allegiance to France.

At the time, Henry was planning his invasion with Charles V and could not afford to be distracted by yet another full-blown conflict with his neighbours in the north. Deciding against open battle, Henry commanded that a force should sail north and show the Scots how furious he was. It was led by Edward Seymour, Earl of Hertford, who was told to "Burn Edinburgh town, so razed and defaced when you have sacked and gotten what you can of it, as there may remain forever a perpetual memory of the vengeance of God."

The invasion of France fell apart when Charles signed another continental peace treaty that excluded England. Francis had no intention of making peace with Henry and mounted an invasion in the summer of 1545. It was a very real threat but, fortunately for Henry, the attack was a dismal failure and Francis was forced to retreat. The Treaty of Camp brought an end to the years of war in Henry's reign, as England, France, Scotland and the Holy Roman Empire agreed to peace in 1546.

He died a year later, sickly, angry and defeated. So what does Henry VIII's history as a military

Towns and villages were to be burned down and destroyed, and the king's strict instructions as to what to do with anyone who opposed Hertford were clear; he was commanded to continue "putting man, woman and child to fire and sword, without exception, where any resistance shall be made against you." Hertford obeyed his liege's orders with relish, sending frequent reports of his conquests back to his king, and capturing Edinburgh and the nearby port at Leith. However, France did not sit idly by, but instead sent forces to help Scottish counterattacks. This dual campaign of aggression between England and Scotland would only be (temporarily) halted by the Treaty of Camp in 1546.

Verdict

Although it had the immediate effect that Henry wanted, which was to give a show of force and wrath, the Rough Wooing only served to deepen entrenched hatred and distrust of the English.

commander show us? It shows him to be a man unable or unwilling to grow out of the romantic, heroic dreams of his youth. He was constantly fighting for the glory that he saw for himself and for England. In his mind, France was English property that no one before him had been able to claim. He saw himself as the king who would bring it under English rule, and it was a childhood dream that became an adult delusion. By joining with allies who had no interest in his dream, and reacting rashly to insults, real and imagined, Henry spent many years at war with little to show for it.

— 1516 – 1556 —

King Charles I of Spain

The heir of three of Europe's leading dynasties and future Holy Roman Emperor, Charles I of Spain was arguably the most powerful man in the world, with a reign typified by military success and territorial expansion

The closest thing to an Emperor of Europe that ever existed during the 16th century, Charles I of Spain - who was also more importantly Holy Roman Emperor (see 'Charles I or Charles V?' boxout for more information) - was not only heir to three of Europe's leading dynasties but also ruler of extensive territories that stretched throughout Europe and the Americas. Indeed, as well as controlling the Netherlands, Germany, Spain, parts of Italy and France, Charles also benefitted much territorially by the conquests of the Spanish conquistadores, with men like Hernan Cortes granting him control of large parts of modern day South America.

Charles was, however, born as the eldest son of Philip I of Castile in the Flemish city of Ghent in 1500, where he both received his education and cultural mindset. At the age of six Charles inherited his father's Burgundian Low Countries' territories and by the time he was 15, he could famously speak multiple languages including German, French and Flemish. At 15

Charles, especially in his later life, became famous for his deformed lower jaw, the product of centuries of royal inbreeding

During his reign Charles oversaw much of Spain's colonisation of the Americas

the first test for Charles as a ruler occurred, with a rebellion of Frisian peasants scoring a series of military victories over Charles' forces. Charles didn't panic, however, and after consulting with his advisers, managed to push the rebels back and, eventually, capture their leaders and decapitate them. It was Charles' first taste of war.

While Charles was being blooded in the Netherlands, his mother Joanna Queen of Castile was ensuring his succession in Spain. This came to a head in 1516 when Charles' grandfather King Ferdinand II of Aragon died, with Joanna then also inheriting the Crown of Aragon, a rule that included the lands of Aragon, Catalonia, Valencia, Naples, Sicily and Sardinia.

Joanna used this opportunity to finalise Charles' succession, with it being arranged that he was named King of Castile and Aragon, and that he would rule jointly with his mother till her death. One year later Charles arrived in Spain to survey and control his new territories.

Due to Queen Joanna still being alive and the perception of Charles as

Charles spent much of his reign fighting the forces of Suleiman the Magnificent's Ottoman Empire

CHARLES I OF SPAIN
Spain, 1500-1558

Brief Bio

A member of the woefully inbred Habsburg family line, Charles suffered from genetic defects including an incredibly painful jaw disorder, a family trait that unfortunately makes a Habsburg stand out a mile in any portrait. Ruling a large European territory as Holy Roman Emperor, he brought Spain into the mix of Dutch, German, Italian and French domains that he ruled.



Kings of Spain: Philip II (1527-1598) and Charles I (1500-1558)

Despite spending the majority of his reign fighting a series of enemies, Charles would eventually die not from battle but malaria

divert his attentions to repelling Suleiman and, after bringing his considerable military might down upon the Ottomans, finally managed to check them at the Siege of Vienna in 1529. Despite Charles' victory, Suleiman continued to haunt Charles and Europe in general, continuously breaking trade routes and devastating the Spanish and Italian coasts.

For a while, the threat of Suleiman - while not removed - was muted enough for Charles to consider his newfound lands in the Americas. Spanish conquistadores like the famous Hernan Cortes had been claiming much land in South America and dedicating it to Charles as King of Spain. These territories were rich in precious metals and as such Charles realised that they could prove invaluable in funding his empire. However, Charles was also seemingly concerned about the methods in which the resources and territories were being attained, with Cortes and company frequently slaughtering local populations to ensure domination. This concern would eventually come to a head when Charles personally convened the famous Valladolid Conference to specifically decide how the lands and people of the New World should be treated.

Charles' American diversion could not last long though, as in 1536 and then 1542, Charles' french enemy King Francis I allied himself with Suleiman against the Holy Roman Emperor in order to check his power and control over, not just the lands of Europe, but also its religion. This agreement led to the Franco-Ottoman alliance and caused Charles no end of trouble, with a series of wars between the three powers ensuing

a foreigner, his arrival was not met with widespread acclaim by the local population and the Spanish officials treated him with great suspicion. Indeed, Charles was only finally confirmed as monarch after signing an agreement that mandated that he learn to speak Castilian, not to promote foreigners to court, respect the rights of his mother and not to take Spain's precious metals out of the region. Charles agreed to this and was begrudgingly accepted as ruler and for the following two years everything was going to plan, with Charles laying down his own style of rule and policies.

However, in 1520, due to Charles placing a high taxation rate on all his Spanish territories, a revolt sprung up. Challenged for the first time in Spain, Charles brought the full military might of his forces down upon the rebellion and, after learning how to deal with such uprisings in the Netherlands, brutally put it down quickly. With his Spanish territories now pacified, the young and powerful king then looked to expand his already impressive lands. He had much success too, capturing Milan in 1522 off a Franco-Swiss army at Bicocca and then

Lombardy in 1525. In 1527 Charles even managed to sack the grand city of Rome, virtually imprisoning the pope - his power was seemingly uncheckable.

However, Charles was soon to be tested like never before in battle, with the mighty forces of the Ottoman Empire's Suleiman the Magnificent invading Europe and making a beeline for Charles' central territories. A wave of terror spread throughout Europe, with Suleiman not only scoring numerous naval victories in the Mediterranean but also sacking and ravaging all European lands his men touched. Charles was forced to immediately



A portrait of a young Charles I from 1515. Charles was crowned king a year later



Charles depicted enthroned above his defeated rivals - note Suleiman the Magnificent on the far left

Timeline

1500

Charles born

Charles was born as the eldest son of King Philip I of Castile and Joanna the Mad - a name most likely granted due to probable schizophrenia - in the Flemish city of Ghent. He would go on to be tutored by William de Croy.
24 February 1500

Comuneros revolt

Following Charles taking the kingship of Castile and then proceeding to tax the region heavily to fight his many wars, the citizens revolted and Charles suppressed them brutally. Castile was then absorbed into the larger Habsburg empire officially.
1520

Isabella of Portugal

Charles marries his cousin Isabella of Portugal on March 10th in Seville. Isabella would proceed to take over administrative duties of Spain, with Charles frequently away in his foreign territories. Their son Philip would eventually succeed Charles as King of Spain.
1526

Suleiman stopped

Suleiman the Magnificent's Ottoman Empire invades central Europe, with the forces taking much territory. However, Charles checks them at Vienna and the advance is fatally halted. Suleiman however wins control of the Eastern Mediterranean.
1529

Crowned by pope

Despite being elected as Holy Roman Emperor in June 1519, Charles is only eventually crowned thus 11 years later, with Pope Clement VII conducting the ceremony in Bologna. Charles would be the last Holy Roman Emperor to receive a papal coronation.
1530

“In many respects Charles reigned very well, inheriting and then controlling a simply massive empire”

throughout the 1530s and 1540s. In fact, the on-off fighting was only finally brought to a partial close with Charles' acceptance of the Truce of Adrianople in 1547. Charles did not want to sign the treaty, however the cost of continuous warfare was bankrupting his lands.

Indeed, with Charles frequently away fighting wars and leaving his lands in the administrative control of others, soon he found his power curtailed, specifically in Germany, the heartland of his Holy Roman Empire. As the year of 1550 rolled around, this unrest and usurpation of power spread into the Netherlands and Charles, realising that a full-blown rebellion was likely on the cards, introduced the death penalty there for any cases of heresy and political dissent.

At this point, whether it was obvious to Charles or not, he was now attempting to put out fires that had been kindled by decades of hard rule, high taxation and a nomadic lifestyle. Charles was now 50 and he increasingly found he had neither the will nor the energy to prop up his massive empire. Further, as he entered his fifties a deformity that he had lived with all his life, an enlarged lower jaw, got significantly worse, leaving him with chronic jaw pain and an inability to chew foods properly. Thanks to a life of consuming little but red meat,

During his later life Charles also became famous for his chronic gout, which caused him much pain

he also began suffering seriously from gout, which became incredibly painful. Realising his time was almost up, Charles then decided to end his king- and emperorship on his own terms, abdicating his rule of the Netherlands in 1555, then his rule of the Spanish and Holy Roman Empires in 1556, with his son Philip appointed to succeed him. Following the abdications, Charles self-confined himself to the monastery of St. Yuste in Extremadura, where he was cared for in the last years of his life. Two years later, in 1558, Charles died after contracting malaria, with his body then buried at the monastery.

So what of Charles' reign? In many respects Charles reigned very well, inheriting and then controlling a simply massive empire where he, not only protected it, but expanded it considerably. Further, he frequently succeeded on the battlefield and was politically savvy enough to hold the other rulers in and around Europe from himself and his interests at arm's length. In addition, unlike many other kings of the age, despite his constant warring, Charles was not reported to be bloodthirsty, with him reportedly having strong distaste for combat. On the other hand however, Charles left the Habsburg Empire financially destitute, with Spain near-bankrupt, and this lands of Germany and the Netherlands bitterly divided over religion.



Charles in the armour of the Holy Roman Emperor

Charles I or Charles V?

As well as being Charles I of Spain, Charles was also Holy Roman Emperor Charles V. How did it happen?

Today, Charles I of Spain is not remembered thus but instead as the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V. The Holy Roman Emperor was the leader of the Holy Roman Empire, which was formed out of the remnants of the collapse of the Western Roman Empire in 408 and then the Carolingian Empire in the late 880s. The Empire consisted of a series of multi-ethnic territories in central Europe - with Germany being the largest - that over period of 600 years dominated the politics and religion of the region, with its leader - the titular Emperor - crowned by the Catholic pope in Rome.

Charles I's grandfather was Maximilian I, who was King of Germany not Spain, as well as being Holy Roman Emperor. However, upon Maximilian's death, the complex laws of hereditary meant that he was the frontrunner as the new Emperor, with a council of electors eventually choosing him to succeed to the crown of the Holy Roman Empire - note, not the Spanish crown (King of Castile), which he had already accepted in 1516, or the rulership of the Netherlands and Burgundy, which he had inherited in 1506 - in 1519. Charles, however, was not officially the Holy Roman Emperor until he was crowned thus by Pope Clement VII in Rome 11 years later in 1530.

Further, despite officially abdicating as Holy Roman Emperor in 1556 in favour of his brother Ferdinand, the Holy Roman Empire's Imperial Diet did not accept the succession technically, so while Ferdinand was in fact the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire from 1556 onwards, it was not until the year of Charles' death two years later that he was officially recognised thus.

Due to the size and importance of the Holy Roman Empire in its day, its titular leader trumps that of Spain's monarch, leading to the history books favouring Charles V over Charles I.



A famous portrait of Charles from 1548 painted by the old master, Titian



Revolt of Ghent

Along with help from the Duke of Alba, Charles personally suppresses a revolt in Ghent, where political dissent had been firmly controlled for decades. The revolt was instigated by high taxation. After the revolt, Charles stripped the city of all its legal and political freedoms. **1539**

Valladolid debate

Charles convenes a conference at Valladolid in order to consider the morality of using force against the indigenous populations of the New World, which Spain was taking a lead in colonising and exploiting. Unfortunately, little consequence comes of the debate. **1550**

Protestant rebellion

Protestant princes, in alliance with King Henry II of France, rebel against Charles' Roman Catholic rule in central Europe, forcing him to retreat into the Netherlands. Charles abdicated his rule of the Netherlands three years later. **1552**

Abdication nation

After previously abdicating his rule of the Netherlands and the county of Charolais the previous year, Charles finally abdicated his Spanish Empire in January. It is passed on to his son Philip, who already controlled Naples and Sicily. **1556**

Charles dies

After living in self-imposed exile at the monastery of Yuste in Extremadura for two years, Charles eventually dies from an attack of malaria. His remains were buried at the monastery, however, 26 years later they were transferred to the Monastery of San Lorenzo de El Escorial. **21 September 1558**

1558

1542-1567

Mary, Queen of Scots

Was Elizabeth's enemy number one a murderer or a martyr?

Adultery, murder, treason: Mary Stuart had been accused of many things in her life, but these were the crimes for which it would be ended. As her beloved butler led her up the steps of the execution scaffold, her hand remained steady in his and she held her head high, as if she were the guest of honour ascending the staircase to a ball. On the scaffold, her captor asked if she would like the comfort of a Protestant minister, and she angrily refused. Kneeling before the block, she prayed for her ladies in waiting to be spared, and for England and Scotland to return to Catholicism. Then, removing her veil and doublet, she revealed a velvet petticoat in crimson-brown - the colour of martyrdom. One of her ladies, weeping silent tears, stepped forward with a handkerchief and tied it over her mistress's eyes. With the courage of a lion, Mary placed her neck upon the execution block, and the deed was done.

Just as in death, the one-time queen of Scotland had lived her life with grace and majesty, despite being a pawn in both the hands of her male relatives

When her husband King François II of France died just a year into their joint reign, Mary returned to Scotland

and later her female cousin, Elizabeth I. Her father King James V died on 14 December 1542, when Mary was only six days old. All of a sudden this baby girl was the most powerful person in Scotland - at least, on paper. Scotland was a Catholic country, but the Protestant Reformation was sweeping Europe, and members of both sides grappled for the regency. In the end, it was a Protestant who ruled Scotland in Mary's place - the Earl of Arran, who was the great-grandson of James II and next in line to the throne. Meanwhile in England, Henry VIII took advantage of the regency to propose a marriage between Mary and his son, Edward, in the hope that the two rival countries would be united. On 1 July 1543, the Treaty of Greenwich was signed, which promised that Mary would be married to Edward when she turned ten. However, when Henry VIII intercepted Scottish merchants on their way to trade with their Catholic ally France, the Earl of Arran was outraged, and immediately converted to Catholicism. That same year, the Treaty of Greenwich was overturned.



MARY, QUEEN OF SCOTS

Scotland, 1542-1587

Brief Bio

Mary was the only surviving child of King James V of Scotland, who died when she was just six days old.

In 1559 Mary was briefly queen consort of France until her husband's untimely death a year later. Widowed, Mary returned to a Scotland in the midst of religious turmoil and made her case as heir presumptive to the English throne.



Mary stayed in this residence when she visited Jedburgh, on the Scottish border



Mary's estranged husband the Earl of Darnley may have been murdered and an explosion set off in the building to cover it up



Henry was not a man who could be told 'no' easily. Determined that the union would go ahead, the king of England initiated a campaign of 'Rough Wooing', and took military action against the Scottish. Though he died just a few years later, his son Edward continued the campaign, and when the Scots suffered a heavy defeat at the Battle of Pinkie Cleugh in 1547, they turned to the French for help. King Henry II proposed a marriage between Mary and his three-year-old son François. Arran agreed, and five-year-old Mary was sent to live at the French court.

While Mary was perfecting her Latin and needlework, the boy to whom she had previously been betrothed became ill with tuberculosis and died. With no heir, the next in line to the throne was his elder half-sister Mary Tudor. Her reign lasted five years, until her death in 1558, when her Protestant half-sister Elizabeth took the throne. Yet in the eyes of many Catholics, Elizabeth was illegitimate, and Mary Stuart was the rightful heir as the senior descendent of Henry VIII's sister. In France, she and François were declared king and queen of England, and in 1559 king and queen consort of France when Henry II died from a jousting injury.

But their glory days were to be shortlived. In Scotland, the power of the Protestant Lords of the Congregation was rising, and they invited English

"In France, Mary was no longer queen nor was she considered queen of England, but she was still queen of Scots"

troops into the country to help secure Protestantism. The French support withdrew, and in 1560 they accepted Elizabeth's right to rule. That same year, François died following an ear infection, which led to an abscess in the brain. In France, Mary was no longer queen nor was she considered queen of England, but she was still queen of Scots. She returned to her homeland, where as a Catholic she was regarded with suspicion, but she tolerated her Protestant privy council well - an indicator, perhaps, of her commitment to pursuing the English throne. She sent an ambassador to the English court to put her case forward, but Elizabeth - although admitting that she knew no one with a better claim - refused to acknowledge Mary as the heir presumptive.

Instead, Mary turned her attention to finding a new husband. Her choice would prove disastrous. When her cousin Henry Stuart, Lord Darnley, presented himself at the Scottish court, Mary immediately fell for him. He was young, handsome,

and shared the queen's passion for hunting and music. Like Mary, he was also a grandchild of Margaret Tudor, and a union between the two would help to strengthen their joint claim to the throne. They were married on 29 July 1565, much to the despair of Elizabeth, who knew that any child born to them would have an even stronger claim. But it wasn't long before Darnley grew arrogant. Not content with just being king consort, he demanded the Crown Matrimonial, which would make him co-sovereign of Scotland and give him the right to rule in the case of Mary's death. The queen refused, and in 1566, the marriage broke down. Darnley, fearing for his life, fled to his father's estate, but was struck down with a fever. Mary insisted that he return to Edinburgh to recover, and she visited him daily, leading to rumours of reconciliation. But on the night of 9 February 1567, an explosion destroyed the house where Darnley was staying. The king consort was found dead in the garden, with 'not a hurt nor



Mary arrived in Holyrood Palace with a grand procession and was met with adulation, 1561

Mary often faced criticism from the radical protestant preacher John Knox



a mark' on the body. Suffocation was the suspected cause of death.

Suspect number one was James Hepburn, the Earl of Bothwell. He and Mary were close friends, and the previous summer, after he was wounded in a skirmish with border reivers, the queen had ridden to be with him despite having only just given birth to a son. A trial was arranged, but with a lack of evidence, he was acquitted. Just a week later, he managed to convince more than two dozen lords and bishops to support him in his wish to marry the queen. On 27 April, Mary was abducted by Bothwell - either willingly or not - and was apparently raped before being forced to agree to marriage. They were married on 15 May, just 12 days after Bothwell had divorced his wife. Few considered the marriage lawful, and both Catholics and Protestants were shocked that Mary had married the man accused of her husband's murder. The confederate lords raised an army against them, and the troops met at Carberry Hill. But there was to be no battle, as Mary's outnumbered army quickly deserted. Bothwell was

While in custody, Mary replies to a letter from Anthony Babington, supposedly authorising his plot to assassinate Queen Elizabeth

given safe passage from the field, while Mary was imprisoned in Loch Levan Castle, accused of both adultery and the murder of Lord Darnley. On 24 July, she was forced to abdicate in favour of her one-year-old son, James.

The following year, Mary escaped, and fled across the border to England. She expected Elizabeth to help her win back her throne, but first, she had to prove her innocence. That was hard to do when the Earl of Moray, Mary's illegitimate half-brother who was ruling Scotland as regent, presented eight love letters supposedly written by Mary to Bothwell between January and April 1567. The incriminating documents exposed her part in the murder of Darnley, but Elizabeth, not wishing to acquit nor convict Mary, ruled the trial inconclusive. The Catholic queen remained in custody in England, while a Protestant government continued to rule in Scotland.

For 18 years, Mary was a prisoner of the English crown, but hers was not a painful captivity. She was given staff, her rooms were luxuriously decorated, and she was even allowed to summer in the spa

town of Buxton. Meanwhile in Scotland, the Catholic earls were rebelling, and several plots to overthrow Elizabeth and replace her with Mary were uncovered. Security became tighter, and Elizabeth requested that her spymaster Sir Francis Walsingham place one of his agents in the castle where Mary was being held. In 1586, a letter from Mary to Anthony Babington, a Catholic conspirator, was intercepted and deciphered. It revealed a plot to assassinate Elizabeth, which Mary had sanctioned, and she was arrested and placed on trial for treason. She denied all charges and argued that as she was not an English subject, she could never be convicted of treason, but without legal counsel she was helpless. Mary was sentenced to death, and on 8 February 1587, she was beheaded.

It's still not known whether the love letters from Mary to Bothwell were authentic. Mary denied writing them, arguing that her handwriting was not hard to imitate, and many of her biographers have concluded that they were either completely or partly forged. As for the Babington Plot, the letter that Mary had written agreed with the plans, but many say that she never authorised the queen's assassination; this was added after the letter had been deciphered. So was Mary guilty of adultery, murder and treason? Or was she the victim of a Protestant conspiracy? Sadly, we may never know.

ELIZABETH I

Britain, 1533 - 1603

Brief Bio

Elizabeth assumed the throne after the death of her Catholic sister Mary, upon which she faced an unstable nation torn apart by religious conflict. Over the course of her reign she fought enemies at home and abroad, uniting England under one church and oversaw the exploration of new lands.



— 1558 – 1603 —

The turbulent reign of Elizabeth I

She fought off foreign invasions and domestic rebellions
but did she really preside over a golden age?

In 1588, against the advice of her most trusted aides, Elizabeth I rode out on her grey gelding to address her troops gathered at Tilbury in Essex in preparation of repelling the expected invasion force of the Spanish Armada. Looking out at the assembled faces before her, she delivered a speech that would go down in history and for many would forever define her: "I know I have the body of a weak, feeble woman; but I have the heart and stomach of a king - and of a king of England too."

The speech would have to be transcribed and redistributed for the soldiers who were unable to hear the queen but they had all seen their monarch, armoured and on her steed, ready to stand by them to repel the Catholic invasion. This image of Elizabeth has been the key to our popular perception of her for centuries, but there's much more to her. Elizabeth was cunning and capricious, but she could be blinded by affection, if only temporarily. She was tremendously clever, with an almost unflinching sense of what her people wanted



or needed from her, but had to see off foreign invasion attempts and homegrown rebellions. While she was sitting on the throne of England the country became acquainted with some of its greatest triumphs and darkest hours.

When Elizabeth came to the throne in November 1558, the whole of Europe was on tenterhooks. How would the new Protestant queen follow the reign of her Catholic sister Mary? With an unstable nation and conspiracies at home and abroad, the situation required diplomacy, intelligence and bravery; three qualities which Elizabeth had always had in ample supply. In fact, the unstable situation was nothing new to her; Elizabeth's position had been precarious from the moment she was born. The daughter of Henry VIII's second wife, Anne Boleyn, she was immediately deemed as illegitimate by any Catholic nations, who regarded the king's divorce of Catherine of Aragon as illegal. In their eyes, Catherine's daughter Mary was the only rightful heir to the throne.

Although both parents had been desperate for a boy, Anne would be a doting mother to her infant child, but she was sent to the executioner's block

in 1536 after failing to produce a male heir for her king. Although Henry's third wife Jane Seymour was kind to Elizabeth and Mary, she had her own child to attend to with the birth of her son and Henry's heir, Edward. Henry himself would not see much of Elizabeth until 1542, when he decided the time had come to reacquire himself with his young daughter. He found her to be intelligent and charming, and decided that he would reinstate both Mary and Elizabeth back into his lineage.

In 1543, Henry married Catherine Parr, his last wife, and relations within the royal family warmed, as Mary took a maternal interest in young Edward, while Elizabeth enjoyed a sisterly relationship with both. However, when Edward took the throne upon their father's death, cracks started to form. First, Elizabeth had to contend with the amorous attentions of Catherine's new husband Thomas Seymour, which caused a scandal at court in 1548. Seymour's intentions were seen as treasonous, and Elizabeth was reported to be pregnant. The young princess denied these rumours, confounding her interrogator. "She hath a very good wit and nothing is gotten of her but by great policy," he wrote. This

"She was tremendously clever, with an almost unfailing sense of what her people wanted, or needed from her"



How good was Elizabeth at balancing the books?

While the popular image is that Mary left England in a sorry state, Leanda de Lisle explains that Elizabeth's fiscal behaviour was far from immaculate. Mary left England £227,000 in debt, while her sister produced debts of £350,000. "Mary's reign was not a 'disaster'. The popular image of Mary - always 'Bloody Mary', rarely Mary I - has been greatly influenced by a combination of sexual and religious prejudice," explains De Lisle. "Mary I had named Elizabeth as her heir, despite her personal feelings towards her sister, and so allowed the crown to be inherited peacefully. Elizabeth continued to refuse to name anyone. In 1562, believing she was dying, she asked for Robert Dudley to be made Lord Protector with an income of £20,000." Elizabeth was notoriously reluctant to engage in warfare because of its costs and risk, but the Spanish conflict dragged on for years, while she awarded monopolies to her favourites at court and crops failed. "While we remember Elizabeth's success in repelling the Armada in 1588," says De Lisle, "We forget that the war continued and impoverished the country and the crown, a situation made worse by the corruption of court officials including notorious high-ranking figures such as Robert Cecil. People starved in the 1590s and the elite even began to fear possible revolution."

Verdict

Elizabeth was forced to deal with circumstances beyond her control, such as poor harvests and an ongoing conflict with Spain, but the fact is that she was not the financial marvel many believe her to be.

Borrowing money in the 16th century

Before the English merchant Thomas Gresham came to prominence, the Tudors had borrowed money from the great European banks such as the Antwerp Exchange. However, these banks charged a high interest rate and it was generally acknowledged that going around Europe borrowing money did nothing to improve England's image as a serious power. Money could also be borrowed from independent merchants, such as Horatio Palavicino, from whom Elizabeth was forced to borrow money late in her reign. Gresham had previously helped Edward VI rid himself of most of his debts and founded the Royal Exchange in 1571 to challenge the power of Antwerp.

Now that Elizabeth could seek loans from within her realm, she was able to exert greater pressure to get what she wanted, while Parliament could grant her more funds if they chose. Royal revenues were supposed to cover the basic expenses of governance, while Parliament could add to the war chest. Later in her reign, she began to use increasingly severe taxation, which contributed to her decreasing popularity.



Queen Elizabeth I opening the Royal Exchange



Picture depicting the coronation of Elizabeth I in 1558

Portrait of Mary, Queen of Scots, who was executed after being found guilty of plotting against Elizabeth I



practice would serve her well once Mary took the throne but not all players were as skilled in the game of thrones; Seymour was executed the following year.

When the staunchly Catholic Mary refused to convert, Edward began proceedings to remove both his sisters from the line to the throne, fixing his hopes on his cousin, Lady Jane Grey, instead. However, the prince was seldom in good health during his short life, so it was no surprise that he died before the contract could be finalised and Mary became the new Queen of England. Just as Edward had asked Mary to change her faith, the new queen was determined that her sister should convert. She acquiesced without enthusiasm, but it was clear to both Protestants and Catholics that her true allegiance still lay with her father's Church of England rather than the Pope's Catholic Church. Over the course of Mary's reign, many conspiracy plots were designed to get Elizabeth onto the throne. None of them succeeded, but they did almost manage to get her killed.

In 1554, Thomas Wyatt attempted a rebellion following the announcement that Mary would marry the Spanish king Philip. The queen's reprisal was brutal and swift, executing not only the ringleaders, but Jane Grey as well. Elizabeth claimed ignorance, a trick she managed to successfully repeat a year later after another attempted rebellion in 1555, but her sister's patience was wearing thin and Elizabeth was placed in the Tower of London, with some Catholic supporters clamouring for her execution.

Was a religious compromise met?

The Church of England was one of compromise and middle ground. While Elizabeth was a Protestant, she didn't hold the puritanical beliefs of some of her council members. She introduced the Act of Supremacy in 1558, which reaffirmed England's separation from Rome and established her as the head of the Church. Elizabeth understood the dangers of trying to impose religion and allowed Catholicism to continue, provided it took place in secret.

However, Leanda de Lisle reminds us that we should not forget Elizabeth's willingness to crack down when necessary. "Elizabeth's conservatism and pragmatism has seen her described as a religious moderate, in contrast to the 'fanatical' Mary," she explains. "But as the new Protestant Queen of a largely Catholic country Elizabeth was necessarily moderate, and as her reign grew longer, she proved that, like Mary, she could be utterly ruthless when faced by a threat. The hundreds of executions of villagers following the Northern Rebellion far exceeded anything her predecessors had done in similar circumstances; her later persecution of Catholics was also relentless and cruel. It is a little-known fact that she also burned heretics - namely Anabaptists - these were far fewer in number than Mary's victims, but then there weren't that many Anabaptists!" She executed both Protestants and Catholics for publicly disobeying the laws of the Church of England. However, events in Europe show the English Queen in a much more favourable light. Comparatively, Elizabeth was extremely tolerant. The St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre in Paris showed the fervour with which Catholic Europeans detested Protestants. She was also much more tolerant than many of her advisors.

Verdict

Elizabeth successfully found a moderate middle ground in a very turbulent time during her reign, but would crack down mercilessly if the rules she had laid down were broken.



VS



Catholic

1 The services were held in Latin, countermanding the reformation's ideal that everyone should be able to understand. The English prayer book was banned.

2 Church furnishings were restored to their former lavish state and the buildings were now decorated completely with Catholic artwork.

3 Catholic Mass was reintroduced, and Holy Communion was now banned by law.

4 The clergy were not allowed to marry. Priests who had married before the new law came into effect were given a choice of two options: leave their families or lose their job.

C of E

1 The image of the minister became much simpler. They were not allowed to wear Roman Catholic vestments, such as the surplice.

2 All rood lofts, a screen portraying the crucifixion, a common feature in Catholic churches, were removed. The Pope was not the head of the church.

3 The Bishop's Bible, which was in English rather than Latin, was restored, opening it up to a wider readership.

4 There was a general removal of 'superstition', such as making the sign of the cross during communion. Simplicity was what the Puritans strived for.

"The queen's reprisal was brutal and swift, executing not only the ringleaders, but also Jane Grey"

Elizabeth's future prospects were looking anything but golden, and the next few months saw her walking a political tightrope. Mary, desperate to provide her husband and her country with a Catholic heir to end the uncertainty surrounding the throne, announced that she was pregnant, but by 1558, it became clear that Mary's condition was not pregnancy, but a devastating illness. Her health broke quickly, and she died on 17 November of that year after begging Elizabeth to keep England Catholic once she took the throne. Her wishes would not be fulfilled.

Elizabeth's coronation was a stunning balancing act. With countless eyes waiting for any hint of an overtly Protestant or Catholic gestures, Elizabeth managed to confound them all. Instead, the emphasis was elsewhere: Elizabeth's intention to restore England to a state of

prosperity. The new queen knew that if she was to have any chance of surviving her early years she would need trusted and astute advisors, and chose William Cecil and Robert Dudley. Cecil had worked for Edward, survived the reign of Mary and was fiercely loyal to Elizabeth. In contrast, Dudley's appointment and favour with the queen had nothing to do with his abilities as a politician. He had known Elizabeth since childhood and her affection for him had only grown stronger, and rumours abounded that she spent the nights as well as the days with him.

Cecil disapproved of Dudley and agreed with the majority of Parliament that Elizabeth should marry as soon as possible. The eyes of France and Spain were fixed on England and it made sense for the queen to create a marriage alliance with one of these major powers for her and the country's



Did Elizabeth have a genuine thirst for new worlds?

Although the expansion of trade into India occurred during Elizabeth's reign, in terms of exploration she is best remembered for England's attempt to colonise North America. The Spanish and Portuguese had already laid claim to much of South America, establishing lucrative trade routes, but North America was relatively unexplored. Elizabeth was reluctant to fund exploratory voyages for much the same reasons that she was reluctant to fund wars: they were expensive and risky. However, she could be won around with the promise of riches from one of her favourites and, when sailor Davy Ingram returned to England with alluring tales of riches and simple inhabitants, geographer Richard Hakluyt began plotting a serious expedition to be led by Walter Raleigh.

With the promise of fortune and the flattery of Raleigh, she agreed to a trip to form a colony

named after her: Virginia. The first party launched, and Raleigh would follow. When the nobleman arrived, he saw the settlement had failed. The English were desperate to leave. Raleigh's second attempt was intended for Chesapeake Bay, but the first group, led by John White, returned to Roanoke. Raleigh arrived with his second group and found no trace of survivors. Elizabeth was disappointed that these costly ventures yielded no results. There was one purpose to these expeditions, as de Lisle explains very simply: "Making money."

Verdict

The Elizabethan era's reputation for exploration is largely due to the fact that there was money to be made from it. Piratical ventures were profitable; colonisation was not.

2. 1585

Following a positive report, Raleigh dispatches colonists to settle at Roanoke in Virginia. By the time he arrives on a later ship, the crops have failed and the English are desperate to leave.

3. 1587

Raleigh tries again to establish a colony at Chesapeake Bay, but instead the settlers travel to Roanoke. When Raleigh arrives, all 150 colonists have disappeared, with only a single skeleton remaining.

1. 1584

Walter Raleigh and Richard Hakluyt convince Elizabeth to fund an expedition to explore the possibility that a colony could be founded on America's east coast.

safety. King Philip II made no secret of his desire to marry Elizabeth, but she had no interest in marrying Mary's former husband. Henry of Anjou was suggested as a match, but he was still a child. Elizabeth spoke instead of being married to her nation, but scandal struck when Dudley's wife Amy died suddenly after apparently falling down the stairs in 1560. It was rumoured that Dudley had committed the deed for his queen, and Elizabeth was forced to expel him from her court.

In 1561, Elizabeth's cousin, Mary, Queen of Scots, returned to Scotland from France. For many Catholics, Mary was the true successor and she did little to downplay those clamouring for a Catholic monarch. Her arrival was perfectly timed, as Elizabeth was on the verge of death due to smallpox. However, she recovered and, with the scandal over Dudley dissipating, Elizabeth chose him to be Lord Protector, bringing him back into her court, before shocking everyone by suggesting a marriage between him and Mary. This was Elizabeth showing her political astuteness; she knew well that Scotland with a Catholic heir would

"The Queen rallied troops by declaring that she would fight by their side to repel anyone who dare set foot on their land"



have too much power, but an heir produced by her favourite and Mary, Queen of Scots could potentially unite the two countries. However, Dudley refused and Mary had no interest in marrying her cousin's paramour.

Instead, Mary married for love, choosing Lord Henry Darnley. Seeing this may have prompted Elizabeth to renew her interest in Dudley, which greatly upset the council, in particular the ambitious Lord Norfolk. When the tension between Norfolk and Dudley grew too great, Elizabeth understood that she needed to assert her authority. "I will have here but one mistress and no master," she told Dudley. It was both a political statement and a personal one. The lack of a husband and heir was only made worse in 1566 when Mary gave birth to a son, James, but she was desperately unhappy. Darnley was a violent, drunken husband: many believed he brutally murdered her secret lover, David Rizzio. Darnley would meet his own nasty end a year later, when he was found strangled in the garden of a house. Mary quickly married the Earl of Bothwell, the man who had allegedly murdered Darnley, and Scottish forces rose against her. Imprisoned and forced to abdicate, she eventually fled to England. Elizabeth agreed to give Mary shelter, but her arrival in the north had given Catholics a figurehead and rebellion brewed.

The northern Earls suggested that Norfolk should marry Mary: soon, the Northern Rebellion had begun. As the rebel forces marched south, Elizabeth moved Mary to Coventry and mustered troops of her own. The southern Earls rallied to her cause, which stunned the rebel forces, who

began to retreat. Elizabeth's victory was quick and decisive, with 700 men being executed in a brutal display of power. Norfolk was placed under arrest, but a lack of concrete evidence postponed his execution, until he was implicated in the Ridolfi plot, which aimed to make Spain's Philip II king. Elizabeth ordered and rescinded Norfolk's execution three times - a prime example of how indecisive she could be at times - before finally deciding that he simply had to die.

If Elizabeth's position at home appeared shaky it was positively stable compared to how she was viewed abroad. The Pope decreed that anyone who murdered the heretical English queen would

be forgiven, a statement King Philip took to heart. Not wanting to risk open war, Elizabeth found other ways to aggravate her enemies. She quietly patronised the piratical exploits of John Hawkins and later his cousin Francis Drake. In 1577, when he planned to travel to South America to raid Spanish gold, Elizabeth met Drake with Francis Walsingham, one of her ambassadors to France.

The cautious Cecil had to be kept in the dark, but she told Drake explicitly that she supported him: "I would gladly be revenged on the King of Spain for diverse injuries I have received." Having sailed through the Straits of Magellan and captured a Spanish ship carrying up to £200,000 in gold,



The return of Mary, Queen of Scots to Edinburgh



Queen Elizabeth I knighting Francis Drake in 1581

Drake decided to sail across the Pacific, becoming the first Englishman to circumnavigate the globe. Elizabeth gloried in his achievement, and when she met the Spanish ambassador in 1581, she pointedly wore a crucifix Drake had given to her from the loot. She dined with Drake on the Golden Hind and knighted him. He had done her proud.

These piratical exploits stood in sharp contrast to the events of 1572. The St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre in Paris - the assassination of a number of French Calvinist Protestants - shocked England and the ambassador Sir Francis Walsingham was forced to take refuge. Elizabeth brought him back to London to become her spymaster, where he advised that Mary, Queen of Scots was a real danger. The uprising was not only a shocking scene for English Protestants; it was also a sign that the Protestant Netherlands and their booming wool trade would soon be in danger.

When William the Silent asked Elizabeth for military assistance, she did not want to be seen to intervene and give Philip of Spain an excuse to attack. Walsingham counseled war, while Cecil continued to preach marriage. So Elizabeth entertained the idea of marrying the Duke of Anjou, roughly ten years after it had first been suggested. Then, he had been an ugly youth and she had been a beautiful queen. Now, she was visibly older and the flattery of the French ambassador and Anjou's letters began to win her over. When they finally met, it appeared that Elizabeth really was in love, but there were genuine concerns over how the English people would react.

"The anxieties Elizabeth expressed to the emissary of Mary, Queen of Scots in 1561, that she too could not marry anyone without triggering unrest in one group or another, only deepened following Mary, Queen of Scots's disastrous marriages to Darnley and then Bothwell - which ended in her overthrow," explains Leanda de Lisle, author of *Tudor: The Family Story*. "Elizabeth continued to look publicly for a husband to fulfil national expectations that she would provide them with an undisputed heir, and surely she hoped it was not impossible. She was married to her kingdom - a phrase she had learned from Mary Tudor. But while Mary had married, Elizabeth did not because she feared revolt by those who disapproved of her choice."

Although she clearly wanted to marry the man that she had nicknamed her "frog," the English people found the idea of their Virgin Queen marrying a French Catholic absolutely repulsive. When a pamphlet appeared that condemned the union, Elizabeth decreed that both the author and his printer should have their right hands cut off. Her Privy Council was split in half, with the jealous Robert Dudley vehemently opposed. Elizabeth was heartbroken, but she agreed to abstain. She gave Anjou £10,000 to continue his war against Philip in the Netherlands, but did not see him again. He tried to take power for himself but failed and died a year later. When William the Silent was assassinated in his own house in 1584

Main players of

Council and Government



William Cecil

1520-98

A canny political operator who understood the difficulties that were ahead, Cecil was Elizabeth's first appointment and was fiercely loyal, dedicating his life to helping her. Although he believed she should marry, Elizabeth knew Cecil was invaluable and pressured him into staying on, even when he was sickly and deaf.



Robert Dudley

1532-88

Dudley had known Elizabeth since childhood, and was her first love. His appointment to court had more to do with her affection for him than any outstanding abilities as a politician, however, and his presence at court proved to be a continual source of rumour and scandal. Their relationship was rocky and driven by passion.



Francis Walsingham

1532-90

The Protestant Walsingham was allowed to return to England after Mary's death, and quickly became one of Elizabeth's most invaluable assets. A brilliant spymaster and politician, he understood the threat that Mary, Queen of Scots posed, and engineered her downfall. He also supported Drake and Raleigh's explorations.

Family



Henry VIII

1491-1547

Henry was desperate for a boy to carry on his family name, and was disappointed when Anne Boleyn gave him Elizabeth. He was absent for much of her childhood, but was kept informed of her progress nonetheless. When he finally met his daughter he was very impressed, so much so that he reinstated her and Mary into his legacy.



Mary Tudor

1516-58

Despite their differences, Mary, Elizabeth and their brother Edward had a relatively close relationship as children. When she became Queen, Mary was desperate for Elizabeth to convert and unable to understand why she wouldn't. She came close to executing her sister, but abstained, finally requesting that she keep England Catholic.



Catherine Parr

1512-48

Catherine and Elizabeth became close during her marriage to Henry, and Elizabeth lived with Catherine for some time after his death. However, Catherine's husband Thomas Seymour was more interested in their young charge than his wife, and she assisted in his attempts at seduction, dying soon after they failed.

the golden age

Explorers



John Hawkins

1532-95

Hawkins may have possessed a coat of arms, but he first managed to find favour with the Queen as a pirate. With Elizabeth's implicit permission, he planned and executed a series of daring raids on Spanish ports in the West Indies, but after a disastrous third voyage he returned to England, where he began working for the Queen in a more direct capacity.



Francis Drake

1540-96

Having sailed on his cousin John Hawkins' expeditions, Francis Drake had no love for the Spanish. He was willing to circumnavigate the globe in order to rob them of their riches and deliver them to Elizabeth, who was delighted with his exploits, and continued to commission him to undertake raids on Spanish ports.



Walter Raleigh

1554-1618

Raleigh gained Elizabeth's favour at court and quickly set his sights on expanding her empire. He decided he would establish Britain's first colony in North America, and told the Queen it would be named after her: Virginia. To his great dismay, the colony at Roanoke failed. He is often falsely credited with bringing potatoes and tobacco to England.

Enemies



King Philip II

1527-1598

The main religious threat to Elizabeth for the majority of her realm came from the King of Spain. The Pope might have given the bull that deposed Elizabeth but the fiercely Catholic Philip was the man with the army that could enforce it. He had attempted to woo the princess while still married to her sister but, once rebuffed, relentlessly opposed her.



John Whitgift

1530-1604

As the issue of religious tolerance became increasingly difficult to manage, Elizabeth hand-picked her old chaplain for the role of Archbishop of Canterbury. He was a stubborn man, as evidenced by his refusal to leave England during Queen Mary's reign. Like Elizabeth, he was a Conformist and ruthlessly punished those who publicly strayed from the 'right' path.



Pope Pius V

1504-72

As the head of the Roman Catholic Church, Pope Pius V saw Elizabeth's status of Queen of England and head of its church not only as an affront to his religion, but as an act of heresy. He went as far as to issue a Papal Bull on 27 April 1570, which declared that her subjects no longer owed her any kind of allegiance.

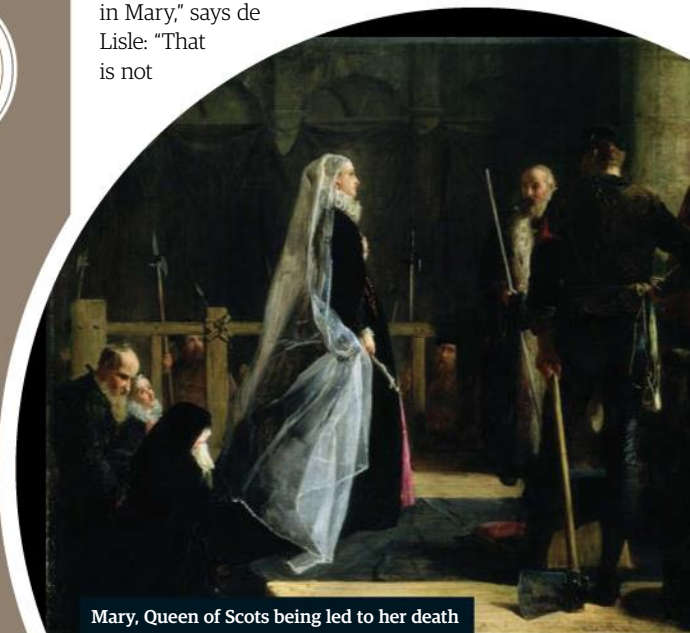
"She bitterly resented the circumstances of Mary's execution"

by a Catholic fanatic, it was clear that military intervention could not be put off any longer and so in 1585, to the relief of her impatient councillors, she agreed to send a small force of men. Dudley took command in the Netherlands but proved to be incompetent, losing territory to Philip's general, the Duke of Parma. Mary was now more dangerous than ever. Elizabeth ordered her imprisonment at the urging of Francis Walsingham, who had no intention of allowing her to live much longer. He arranged for a servant, one of his own spies, to suggest that Mary smuggle letters in beer barrels, allowing Walsingham to read everything. When Thomas Babington wrote to Mary with a plan to assassinate Elizabeth and give her the crown Mary wrote back with her approval; the spymaster's trap had worked perfectly, and he had ensnared his unwitting prey.

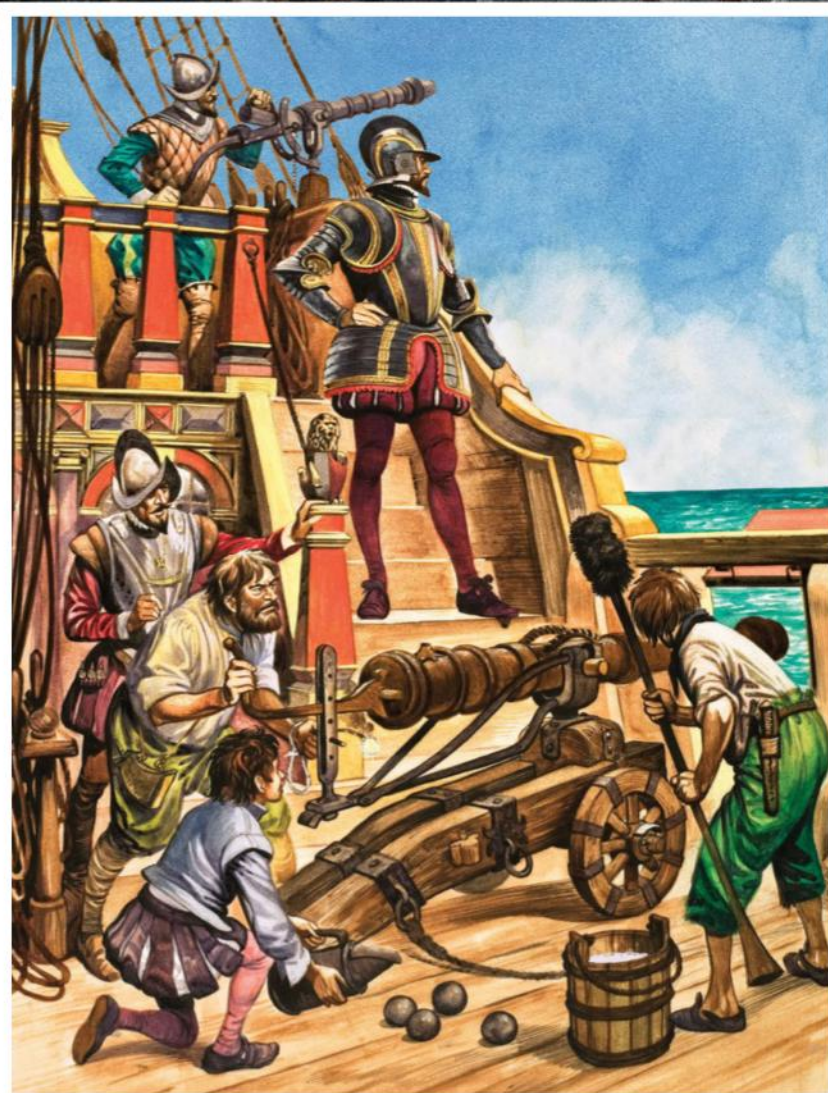
Walsingham leapt into action and ordered the conspirators' execution. Elizabeth had always been reluctant to execute her cousin, but she agreed she would have to stand trial. It was no surprise when the court decided that Mary should be put to death. Elizabeth grieved for Mary, or at least lamented her death. The man who had delivered the warrant was imprisoned and stripped of his title.

Elizabeth was always reluctant to sign a death warrant - or at least she was reluctant to be seen to sign it. We can't know how much of Elizabeth's grief was genuine, but she bitterly resented the circumstances of Mary's execution.

"Elizabeth was reluctant to be seen to execute first the senior nobleman in England, in Norfolk, and then a fellow queen, in Mary," says de Lisle: "That is not



Mary, Queen of Scots being led to her death



The Spanish Armada is put into disarray by English fireships on 8 August 1588

The gun-crew on an Elizabethan ship - she funded the journeys of numerous privateers

to say she regretted their deaths. She would have preferred to have Mary murdered, for example, as she made very clear.

It is also notable that she was quite ruthless in ordering the deaths of traitors of humble birth - the 900 or so executed after the Northern Rebellion testifies to that. This was three times the numbers Henry VIII had executed after the far more serious Pilgrimage of Grace, and ten times the numbers Mary executed after Wyatt's revolt."

Mary's execution provided Philip II with the reason he needed to declare war and his Spanish Armada co-ordinated with the Duke of Parma's forces in the Netherlands, with the two forces meeting before sailing on England.

They launched on 12 July 1588, their forces possessing more than twice the number of English ships, but the English ships did have some advantages; they were smaller, faster, and designed to carry guns rather than men. The English ships could outmanoeuvre the Spanish fleet in open water and began to engage them in small skirmishes. It was at this point that Elizabeth rode out to meet her troops. With the threat of a Catholic force at their doorstep, the queen rallied the spirit

"The queen rallied the spirit of the English troops by declaring that she would fight by their side"



of the English troops by declaring that she would fight by their side to repel anyone who dared to set foot on their land.

This grandstanding was impressive and may have gone down in history's annals but was ultimately unnecessary. The Spanish Armada failed and Elizabeth's victory was the seal on her status. 'The Golden Age' had begun, where art and literature flowered. With England a visibly powerful state, the aristocracy began to patronise the arts with great abandon.

The famous playwrights of the age enjoyed patronage, albeit with some caveats. When Shakespeare wrote Richard II he was encouraged to remove a scene suggesting the ageing monarch should step aside. "Elizabeth did not care for plays," confirms de Lisle: "All too often they were used to lecture her on this or that."

Her crown may have been safe for now, but she received devastating blows with the deaths of two of her most trusted advisors, Dudley and Walsingham. Dudley was replaced at court by his handsome stepson, the Earl of Essex, and the young flatterer quickly became her favourite.

"Robert Dudley's death in 1588 signalled the passing of the old order, but Elizabeth still hoped she could continue ruling according to her motto, 'Semper Eadem' ('Always the same')" explains de Lisle. "As the years began to pass and her servants died she either did not replace them or find a near-equivalent to the servant she had lost." It's a sign of how much she leaned on her old guard that she continued to place her trust in William

Did England become a nation to be feared?

Elizabeth's foreign policy was decidedly more cautious than expansive. She was desperate to avoid conflict because it was expensive and the outcome always uncertain. However, she had a spirit that could easily be won over by the idea of adventure. She delighted in the expeditions of John Hawkins and Francis Drake, which could be seen to be aggravating the King of Spain without actually declaring open conflict. In 1562, she agreed to a military expedition in Calais, which was crushed by Catherine de' Medici's forces, and this failure would influence her military decisions for the rest of her reign.

"There was no glory in it for Elizabeth as there was for a male monarch," Leanda de Lisle reveals. "She understood the truth of the adage of Mary of Hungary: that war made it impossible for a woman to rule effectively, 'all she can do is shoulder responsibility for mistakes committed by others.'"

Her ally and enemy lines were drawn by religion. France and Spain were clearly opposed to England on

these grounds, which is why her courtiers were so anxious that Elizabeth marry an eligible man from either country. Even after the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre in 1572, Elizabeth was reluctant to be drawn into open war. The piecemeal way in which she gave the Dutch her assistance shows her reluctance to engage in open conflict of any kind, first offering financial support to the Dutch troops, then the Duke of Anjou, before finally agreeing to send an English force when there was no other option. Her cautious attitude towards foreign policy doubtless saved the kingdom a lot of money. However, it was taken out of her hands when the Spanish Armada sailed on England."

Verdict

The victory against the Armada was a shining moment but for the most part Elizabeth kept out of foreign conflict. When she didn't, she regularly suffered defeats.

Why did the Armada fail?

King Philip amassed his Armada and sent them to the Netherlands to join up with his ground troops, led by the Duke of Parma. The English outposts saw the ships coming and alerted the admiralty. The weather was against the Spanish, as they were blown off course. While they outnumbered the British fleet by two to one, the Spanish ships were enormous, built to carry troops that could board enemy vessels. Their crescent formation was famous, but it did little against the smaller English ships. When the English sent fireships into the Spanish fleet, the enemy panicked and scattered. They managed to regroup for one confrontation, and lost. The Spanish retreated, with many ships crashing on the rocks of the English and Irish coastline.

6. Bad weather

Bad weather prevents the Spanish fleet from organising and the English pursue them. Their ships are faster and much more effective.

3. Early warning

The Armada is sighted west of the English Channel. The English fleet is put to sea as the south coast warning beacons are lit. Legend says that Sir Francis Drake finishes his game of bowls first.

7. Ships wrecked

The weather blows the Spanish fleet into the North Sea and they are forced to retreat up England's east coast, beyond Scotland and down past Ireland. Many ships are wrecked.

2. Delays

Severe weather forces Philip to dock in Coruna to make repairs to his fleet. He is delayed by more than a month.

4. Rendezvous

The Armada sails to Calais to meet Philip's most revered general, the Duke of Parma. However, he is delayed and they are forced to wait.

5. Fireships

Spanish commanders panic when the English navy sends fireships in among their vessels. They scatter into the English line of fire but the losses are not too heavy.

1. Armada sets sail

On 28 May 1588, Philip is ready to begin his invasion of England. He gathers his Armada and they sail from Lisbon.

Cecil, even though he was almost entirely deaf and increasingly ill. It was only when he died in 1598 that Elizabeth finally agreed to appoint Robert Cecil to his father's old post. When it became known that the Spanish were attempting to rebuild their fleet, Essex led a fleet on Cadiz and decimated their forces in port. The success gave Essex fame, something Elizabeth was taken aback by. She tried to curb him, aware that her standing among the

people was her greatest asset, but Essex continued to promote his own celebrity. She became more and more frustrated with his outrageous behaviour at court, which came to a dramatic head when he half-drew his sword on her in a fit of pique.

The arts and literature may have been flourishing, but those who subscribe to this being a golden age in England's history often forget that even after the defeat of the Spanish Armada, other

uprisings, such as the 1598 Irish rebellion, occurred. The country had long been a problem for Tudor England, which had attempted to impose English values and had seen the Irish as tenants on English territory. Now, with a Spanish-backed uprising, Elizabeth needed to take decisive action.

She sent her army at the start of 1599, led by Essex, who was looking to prove himself once more. He was a disaster. Rather than confronting Tyrone on the battlefield, he met him in secret and returned to England having made a treaty without the queen's authority.

When Essex thought Cecil was plotting against him, he rushed to plead his case. Assuming he was still the queen's favourite, he burst into her bedchamber while she was preparing for the day. He had seen Elizabeth without her make-up and regal dressing; not as a queen but as an old woman. She could not afford to be seen like this. The queen dismissed him before summoning him later to confront him with his failures and strip him of power. Rather than accepting his fate, Essex attempted rebellion. He assumed Londoners would back the popular war hero, but Elizabeth proclaimed him a traitor and sent her troops to meet him. The rebellion was a failure and Essex was executed as a traitor.

Although the later years of Elizabeth's reign were far from golden, she could still rally her people when needed. The war in Ireland was expensive and unsuccessful, while overcrowding and failed harvests caused agitation. When Parliament publicly condemned her for granting monopolies to her favourite courtiers, which had led to price-fixing, Elizabeth was forced to address them in 1601. She agreed to put a stop to the monopolies and she reaffirmed her love for England. She won over Parliament, there was a good harvest, and a truce was reached in Ireland and Spain. "Elizabeth, old and ill, did lose some of her former grip, but never entirely," states de Lisle. "She had followed Mary I's example in wooing the common people from the beginning of her reign, and they continued to support her."

Having seen off another uprising, the 50-year-old monarch's health was failing and after an all-too-rare period of good health, Elizabeth grew sickly. She was desperately frustrated by Cecil's growing

"She wooed her people with smiles, words of love and great showmanship, and so won their hearts"

Did peace reign in England?

The early years of Elizabeth's reign were extremely unstable. The Catholics regarded her as a heretical bastard without a just claim to the throne, and she had to prove to her people that she was capable of ruling alone. Conspiracies at home and abroad plotted to remove her from the throne, and when Mary, Queen of Scots took refuge in England, her Catholic enemies finally had someone to rally around. 1569 saw her face the first real uprising with the Northern Rebellion. The Earls of Westmorland and Northumberland rallied the rebel aristocracy around them, but they were not prepared for the force of her reprisal.

In her later years she saw rebellion rear its head again as Essex overstepped his bounds. With famine and overcrowded cities, Elizabeth's position became unstable once again. "Imagine if Elizabeth had died in October 1562 when she had smallpox," asks de Lisle: "Elizabeth had been on the throne almost four years: only a year short of her sister's reign. If she died, as many feared she would, how would her reign have been remembered? Elizabeth's religious settlement was not viewed as settled by anyone save the Queen. One of her own bishops called it 'a leaden mediocrity'. In military matters, while Mary I's loss of Calais is still remembered, Elizabeth's failed efforts to recover Calais by taking Le Havre and using it as a bargaining tool are completely forgotten. The campaign had ended that August 1562, with the huge loss of 2,000 men."

Verdict

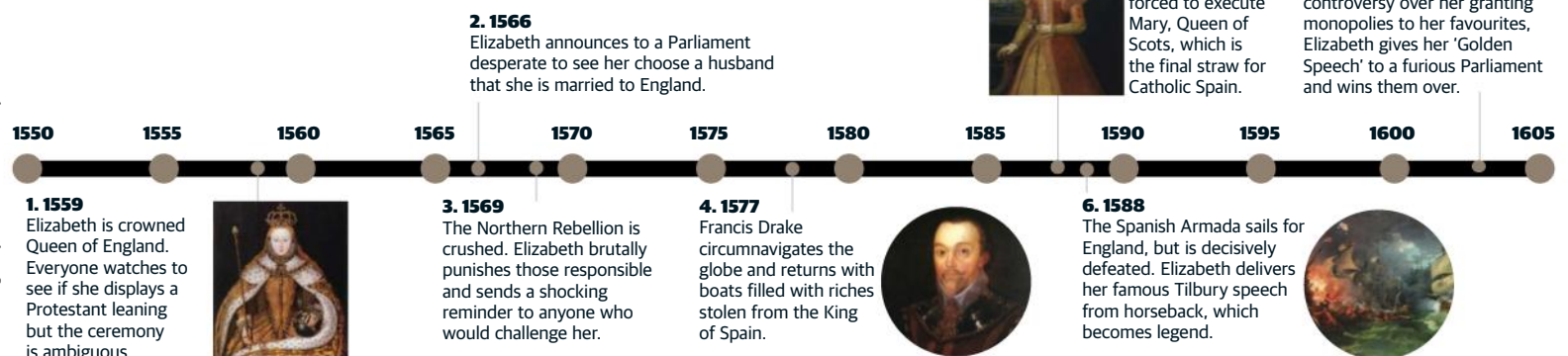
Elizabeth's reign featured numerous rebellions and uprisings, but this was not unusual for a Tudor monarch, and given the religious uncertainty in the country at the time, she handled the uprisings quickly and decisively.

Rebellions against Elizabeth

When Elizabeth ascended to the throne she immediately faced the threat of rebellion from the Catholic nobility, who resented the fact that she was turning away from the changes made by her sister Mary. The first great uprising came in 1569, when the northern noblemen took advantage of the return of Mary, Queen of Scots to England, and attempted to overthrow her. The Duke of Norfolk, unhappy with being sidelined by the Earl of Dudley, entertained a marriage plot with Mary, while the northern Earls mounted rebellion. It was summarily crushed and hundreds were executed.

The Earl of Essex, Elizabeth's great favourite, attempted a rebellion in 1601 after he was stripped of his powers in an attempt to gain power. In line with his apparently oversized ego, he overestimated his personal popularity, the people's dissatisfaction with their monarch and his Queen's capacity for forgiveness for one of her former favourites. When Elizabeth was confronted with open defiance she rarely hesitated to crush it. She understood when to be brutal and when to charm. With the rebellions against her she was unforgiving and generally unsparing, meting out punishments swiftly and unsparingly to rebels and traitors.

Elizabeth's golden moments





The deathbed of Queen Elizabeth in 1603

power over her and refused to go to bed as she realised that the end was coming soon. Elizabeth finally died on 23 March 1603. Although she had struggled to change with the times in the face of younger, ambitious advisors, she had been a formidable political operator. She had still shown the cunning and cleverness to understand her situation, and had never lost the image of a queen loved by her people.

"That image was not created for her," explains de Lisle. "Elizabeth never forgot the events of 1553 when the ordinary people had backed the Tudor sisters, while the political elite had supported Jane Grey. Nor did she forget how in 1554, Mary had made a speech at the Guildhall that roused London in her defence against the Wyatt rebellion. Mary had spoken of her marriage to her kingdom, describing her coronation ring as a wedding band, and her love of her subjects as that of a mother for her children. These were the phrases and motifs Elizabeth would use repeatedly and would become absolutely central to her reign.

In addition, Elizabeth also had an instinct for the crowd's demands. Even her enemies would admit she had 'the power of enchantment'. She wooed her people with smiles, words of love and great showmanship, and so won their hearts. Elizabeth's people would never forget her. When she died and James I became king, people hugely missed the Tudor theatre of reciprocal love, of which Elizabeth had been the last and brightest star."

Elizabeth's reign was not the golden age that legend so often depicts; she faced serious uprisings, both internal and external, during her reign. She was capable of heartlessness and ruthlessness, and could be indecisive and impetuous. During the course of her rule, England saw famine, rebellion and war. However, there's no mistaking her dedication to her country and her determination to listen to what the people wanted from her - and then give it to them. She walked a political tightrope for most of her life, and the fact that she died peacefully in her bed as queen was a major triumph in itself. The English people loved her, and she, in turn, loved them. In the hearts and minds of many of her subjects, she was - and will always be - Britain's golden monarch.



Elizabeth I

— 1590 – 1605 —

Naresuan the Great

A national hero in his native Thailand, Naresuan the Great defied Burma and conquered much of Southeast Asia in the 16th century

It says something that the 2007 film *The Legend Of King Naresuan* is the most expensive film in the history of Thailand. The action-packed, five-part historical epic, which celebrates the larger-than-life conquests of Somdet Phra Naresuan Maharat – otherwise known as Naresuan the Great – cost £13.2 million (\$21.7 million) to produce. With financial backing from the Thai royal family, the film chronicled how Naresuan, a 16th century warrior king, threw off the shackles of Burmese rule and established the Thai kingdom of Ayutthaya as political and military force in Southeast Asia. Imagine George Washington if the American general ditched his horse for a battle elephant.

To understand the importance of Naresuan to Thai history, you first need to understand the political dynamics of 16th century Southeast Asia. First of all, the country we know as Thailand didn't exist until the 20th century. For hundreds of years, the region was ruled by a series of Thai kingdoms known in the West as Siam. In 1555, Naresuan was born to King Maha Thammarachathirat, ruler of Ayutthaya, the dominant Thai kingdom of the age.

Naresuan's father ruled a kingdom literally surrounded by enemies: Burma to the north-east, Cambodia and the Khmer to the south-east, and disparate tribal states (Shan, Mon and others) to the west and north. Burma was by far the most potent threat. In 1548, Naresuan's father repelled a

formidable Burmese attack, but the Burmese King Bayinnaung returned with an even larger force – including hundreds of Portuguese mercenaries – and Ayutthaya surrendered.

The Thai kingdom was now under Burmese control. King Bayinnaung allowed Naresuan's father to remain on the throne as a puppet vassal to Burma. As a pledge of his allegiance, the Thai leader was forced to send his two sons – Naresuan, age nine, and his younger brother, Ekathotsarot – to be raised in the Burmese capital of Pegu.

For seven years, Naresuan and his brother lived in the Burmese court while his father reigned over a neutered state.

Because the Burmese restricted the Thai kingdom to a small military force, Ayutthaya fell victim to a string of crippling attacks from the Khmer in Cambodia. Meanwhile, Naresuan became a student of Buddhist philosophy and ethics, as well as an avid pupil of Burmese and

Portuguese military tactics and hand-to-hand combat. One of his childhood

sparring partners was Minchit Sra, grandson to the Burmese king, who would grow up to face Naresuan in the most famous duel in Thai history.

When Naresuan turned 16, King Bayinnaung of Burma allowed the Thai prince to return home in exchange for his sister's hand in marriage. Young Naresuan was put in charge of the northern Thai city of Phitsanulok as the Uparat, or presumptive heir to the Thai throne. As you can imagine,

Much like the vast majority of ancient and modern Thai people, Naresuan was a practising Theravada Buddhist



NARESUAN

Siam, 1555 - 1605

Brief Bio

This action-hero king rose from the position of a hostage at a rival court to reclaiming the throne that was rightfully his, in the process becoming a national hero. Siam, now Thailand, is still gripped by his powerful legacy. He returned home-rule to the nation as well as being the warrior-king that storytellers dream of.

“When Naresuan turned 16, King Bayinnaung of Burma allowed the Thai prince to return home in exchange for his sister’s hand in marriage”



The Elephant Duel of Nong Sarai

An hour-and-a-half's drive outside of Bangkok is the province of Suphan Buri, home to one of the most popular tourist attractions in Thailand, a towering statue of a battle elephant bearing King Naresuan. The monument is believed to have been built over the exact site of the battlefield of Nong Sarai, where Naresuan fought the most famous duel in Thai history.

The year was 1593 and the Burmese army, under the direction of King Nanda Bayin's son, crown prince Minchit Sra, was marching toward the Thai capital of Ayutthaya. Naresuan and his troops marched west from Ayutthaya and met Minchit Sra's forces outside the small village of Nong Sarai. As the armies of thousands clashed, Naresuan's battle elephant panicked and ran into the middle of the fray. Naresuan spotted Minchit Sra on his own elephant and famously challenged the crown prince to a duel. "Let us fight the elephant battle for the honour of our kingdoms!" Legend has it that the two armies paused their fighting and circled around the two elephants and their royal riders. The duel lasted only a few minutes, but is recorded in dozens of paintings and even re-enacted in Thai action movies. As the two elephants converged, Minchit Sra slashed at Naresuan with his long-handled war scythe, but only nicked the king's hat. When Minchit Sra extended his scythe, he left his body exposed, giving Naresuan just enough room to deliver the fatal blow. Their prince killed, the Burmese army scattered.

Naresuan was in an unusual political position. Raised in Burma as a prisoner-prince, he both resented and respected the Thai people's feudal overlords. If he had early dreams of rebellion he hid them well, biding his time and pledging his continued loyalty to the Burmese throne.

Ironically, it was during a show of this loyalty that Naresuan aroused the deadly jealousy of Burma's new king, Nanda Bayin, who succeeded his father in 1581. Naresuan was sent by his father to pay homage to Nanda Bayin and express the Thai kingdom's unwavering allegiance to Burma. To test this allegiance, Nanda Bayin recruited Naresuan and his Thai army to help quash a rebellion in the Shan states to the north. When Nanda Bayin and his Burmese troops failed to take a key city, Naresuan swept in to conquer it. Instead of encouraging Nanda Bayin, the act embarrassed and enraged him. The ensuing decades of war between Burma and the Thai kingdom were as much personal as political – the anger of a native Burmese king against an adoptive and rebellious prince.

Naresuan returned to his home base of Phitsanulok, but he was quickly summoned by Nanda Bayin to help to help put down yet another rebellion. Dutifully, Naresuan assembled his troops, but not without his suspicions. Word had reached him that the Burmese were constructing a road to the Thai capital city of Ayutthaya, a sign that the foreign king was looking to further tighten his grip on the Thai kingdom. As Naresuan marched toward the Burmese capital of Pegu, he was

intercepted by two Mon princes, childhood friends from his days in the Burmese court. They warned him of Nanda Bayin's secret plan to ambush and kill Naresuan.

Naresuan had played the loyal puppet for long enough; the time had come to become the leader that his people needed. Naresuan publicly renounced his allegiance to Burma in 1584, and with his army at his back – plus the respective armies of the two Mon princes – he marched on the Burmese stronghold of Pegu, determined to win his people's independence. The Thai offensive was repelled by Minchit Sra, Naresuan's childhood sparring partner and son of King Nanda Bayin. As Naresuan and his army fled over the Sitang River, Naresuan turned his battle elephant to face the

attacking army. Legend has it that Naresuan asked for a Portuguese musket, a weapon useful for raining a volley of musket balls on an enemy, not sharpshooting an individual target. Nevertheless, Naresuan raised the musket, took aim at the Burmese general leading the charge, and shot a single ball across the Sitang River, striking the general dead. The fabled 'Royal Shot Across the Sitang River' gave the Thai army a chance to retreat back to the capital city of Ayutthaya and prepare for all-out war.

In the late 16th century, Ayutthaya was one of the biggest and most culturally and technologically advanced cities in the world. It was the Venice of the East, a walled city of intersecting canals that floated as a fortified 'island' in between three converging rivers. Its walls and rivers defended Ayutthaya against attack while its interior culture flourished, producing remarkable Buddhist-themed architecture borrowed from the ancient temples of Angkor in Cambodia, as well as art and music influenced by both East and West. Fertile rice fields surrounded the city and Ayutthaya grew rich exporting rice to European traders and to China, the reigning superpower of the region.

When Naresuan arrived in Ayutthaya, his father the king entrusted him with the city's protection and with building an army ready to answer the full strength and anger of the Burmese. Naresuan capitalised on widespread disaffection with

In 1990, a college in Phitsanulok was renamed Naresuan University to celebrate his ascension to the throne

Defining moment

Exile in Burma 1564-1571

After the Burmese conquered the Thai kingdom, they placed Naresuan's father as a vassal over Ayutthaya and took Naresuan and his brother as hostages. Many legends surround the seven years Naresuan lived among the Burmese royal court in Pegu. There's much talk of martial arts training and a budding rivalry between Naresuan and the king's grandson Minchit Sra, but that might be nothing more than a convenient backstory for their fateful duel decades later. Some accounts say that young Naresuan grew to love King Bayinnaung like a second father, adding to the sting of the betrayal by Bayinnaung's successor Nanda Bayin.

Timeline

1555

● Noble Birth

Naresuan was born Prince Naret. Royalty came through his mother, the queen, although his father was a high-ranking nobleman of Sukhothai heritage. Expectations were high for their first-born son.

1555

● Declaration of Independence

When the Burmese plot to assassinate Naresuan was exposed, the Thai prince had no further reason to feign loyalty to Nanda Bayin. He performed a ceremony formally declaring an end to the Burmese tributary and, informally, declaring war on Burma.

1584

● Naresuan the King

Although Naresuan's father was king of Ayutthaya, he was viewed by many as a traitor, nothing more than a puppet for the Burmese. Naresuan, on the other hand, assumed the throne as a proven military leader and political revolutionary.

1590



“Naresuan had played the puppet for long enough; the time had come to become the leader that his people needed”

Burmese bullying in the region, recruiting troops from the Shan and Mon states to reinforce the Thai ranks. King Nanda Bayin of Burma wasted no time answering Naresuan's rebellion. He sent his army against Ayutthaya less than a year after Naresuan's failed invasion of Pegu. Naresuan repelled the first attack easily, as with a second and third Burmese attempt in the years that followed. Even the Khmer tried their luck, hoping to capitalise on Thai entanglements with Burma. Incredibly, Naresuan not only held off the Cambodian offensive, but pursued his attackers all the way back to the walls of Lovek, the Khmer capital.

In 1590, King Maha Thammarachathirat died, making Naresuan the sovereign ruler of Ayutthaya. Naresuan devoted some of his energy to centralising political power and reforming the traditional patronage system enjoyed by princes. He also sidelined as a diplomat and ambassador, signing trade agreements with the Portuguese and Spanish. But Naresuan's greatest talents were as a savvy military strategist and cunning warrior.

Naresuan's greatest moment came during the fifth attempt by the

Burmese army to crush the rebellious Ayutthaya state. Thai spies sent word that Nanda Bayin's army was one the move yet again, lead by Naresuan's old foe Minchit Sra. Rather than hunker down behind the city walls, Naresuan marched his army westward to intercept Minchit Sra as his forces descended from Three Pagodas Pass. The two armies met near the small village of Nong Sarai and engaged in a bloody and drawn out battle that initially favoured the Burmese. The tide turned when Naresuan, mounted on his battle elephant, personally challenged Minchit Sra to a duel for the honour of their kingdoms. The two men faced off atop their elephants, armed with razor-sharp war scythes and surrounded by

their battle-weary armies. Dodging an errant joust by Minchit Sra, Naresuan quickly dispatched his childhood rival with a mortal slash. In the ensuing chaos, the Burmese fled in retreat, but the Thai army pursued them, inflicting massive casualties.

The battle proved a critical turning point in the Burmese-Thai conflict. After his victory at Nong Sarai, Naresuan sent generals to take port cities in the coastal

Burmese region of Tenasserim, winning unrestricted military and trade access to the Indian Ocean. Emboldened, Naresuan invaded Cambodia, toppling the Khmer king and returning to Ayutthaya with thousands of prisoners of war to repopulate Northern Thailand. Before his death in 1605 from a skin infection, Naresuan led military campaigns deep into a greatly weakened Burma, through the now-ruined capital of Pegu and north to Toungoo.

Naresuan was only 49 when he died, but his heroics on the battlefield cemented the Thai kingdom as the undisputed power in Southeast Asia for the next century. The legend of Naresuan the Great is more than a great action-movie plot; it's the story of a people's first taste of freedom and power in the modern age.

Naresuan was close with his brother Ekathotsarot. Naresuan, the first-born, was known as the Black Prince

Defining moment

Chinese Chess 1592

The Ming Dynasty was the superpower of 16th century Asia, and Naresuan courted a favourable relationship with the Chinese. The island kingdom of Japan, however, had its sights set on greatness. In 1592, Japanese naval forces sailed to the Korean peninsula and conquered it. But Korea was just a stepping stone on the way to toppling the Ming Dynasty. Naresuan received word of clashes between Japanese and Chinese forces and sent an emissary to the Forbidden City in Beijing offering Thai military support. He likely knew that the offer would be refused – which it was – but it was a strategic show of loyalty, one that would assure China's protection of lucrative Thai trade routes.

Birth of a Nation

After his victory in the epic elephant duel at Nong Sarai, Naresuan ordered that a pagoda be built over the very spot on which the battle took place, a version of which exists today. 25 January is also celebrated as Thailand's National Armed Forces Day.
25 January 1593



Collapse of Burma

Naresuan's highest goal was to march triumphantly into Pegu and personally drag Nanda Bayin to his execution. Ultimately, he failed to take the city while the king was alive, but witnessed the dissolution of the Burmese empire after Nanda Bayin's death.
1599

Death

For a decorated war hero, Naresuan eventually died a commoner's death, a victim of a deeply infected carbuncle on his face, or what might have actually been smallpox.
1605

Life in the time of Naresuan

East Meets West

Portuguese explorer Vasco de Gama, one of the most successful explorers of the Age of Discovery, became the first European to sail a sea route to India in 1498, landing in Calicut. Successions of Portuguese armadas established a lucrative spice route and a colony in India. Naresuan wisely nurtured healthy trade relations with Portugal as well as the Spanish Philippines to the benefit of his own nation and its peoples.

Crown of Thai Civilisation

The city of Ayutthaya flourished from the 14th-18th century and at its height was one of the world's largest and most technologically advanced cities with a population far greater than any other metropolis of its age. The island city was protected by three rivers and saved from floods with a remarkably innovative hydraulic system.

Ayutthaya Architecture

When the Burmese sacked and burned Ayutthaya in 1767 during the Burmese-Siamese War which started in 1765, they left only the ruins of a few Buddhist monasteries. These otherworldly stone towers and intricately carved bas relief sculptures have been designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The Ayutthaya historical park is the ruins of the former capital of the Kingdom of Siam.

Gun Power

The Chinese invented gunpowder in the 9th century and crafted the first crude firearms or 'hand cannons' shortly after, but it was the Portuguese musket that was widely adopted by Japanese, Korean and Southeast Asian armies in the 16th century. They became a cornerstone of the Ming army only after the Ming conquest of China, giving Ming armies a distinct advantage over their neighbours'.

Ming Superpower

The Ming Dynasty, also the Empire of the Great Ming, ruled China from 1368 to 1644 and extended its borders from Outer Mongolia to the north down to Vietnam in the south. China exuded tremendous political and military influence in the region during Naresuan's rule. At its zenith the empire's standing army exceeded one million troops.

1605

— 1648 – 1668 —

John II Casimir Vasa

How the reign of the last of the Vasas signalled the beginning of the fall of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, one of most powerful countries of the 16th and 17th centuries

The year is 1648, and against all odds, John Casimir Vasa is about to be elected to succeed his recently deceased half-brother Władysław IV Waza to the Polish throne. After living in his brother's shadow for most of his life, John Casimir will soon become ruler of one of the largest and most populous countries of the 16th and 17th centuries, an area covering a huge 390,000 square miles: The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. At the age of 39, his chance to be king had come. Ironically, one of the main reasons John Casimir is said to have been regarded as an unpleasant man among the Polish nobility throughout his life was his blatant disregard and contempt for Polish culture - not the ideal attitude for a noble, nevermind a future Polish king. Unlike his older half-brother Władysław IV Waza, who has historically been remembered as outgoing, friendly, humorous and optimistic; John Casimir was known for being unfriendly and secretive, dividing his time between the lavish partying that could be afforded by his rank and quieter moments of religious contemplation, something that would become increasingly important to him at several points throughout his life. Most crucially, John Casimir had a dislike for politics, which resulted in him having a weak

John Casimir lived in his brother's shadow for much of his life, even marrying his brother's widow in 1648

He was obsessed with reclaiming the throne of Sweden for the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth

power base and very little influence at the Polish court.

Meanwhile, Władysław IV Waza became increasingly well known for his ability to charm whoever he met. He had had his own princely court from the age of ten, spoke and wrote in German, Italian and Latin, and had gained an international reputation for being a 'defender of the Christian faith' from his bravery in the many battles and campaigns he had fought seeking personal glory. When it came to being crowned king during the elections of 1632, John Casimir's much beloved brother had no serious contenders.

However, there was a darker side to the newly appointed king. Władysław was addicted to an extravagant lifestyle and known for spending more money than his royal court treasury could afford, as well as having several mistresses - even while he was married. Władysław was also a man with a very short temper, and he was obsessed with the idea of reclaiming the Swedish throne: a title his and John Casimir's father, Sigismund III Vasa, had for seven years before being deposed by their uncle in 1599.

This had resulted in a long-standing feud, with the Polish kings of the House of Vasa demanding the rights to the Swedish throne ever since - a claim which led to decades of war.



JOHN II CASIMIR VASA
Poland-Lithuania, 1609-1672

Brief Bio

As a younger sibling constantly overshadowed by his brother, John did not expect to take the throne. A distinguished soldier, he proved his worth in the Smolensk and Thirty Years' Wars. Captured and imprisoned by the French, he became a monk on his release and after a relatively brief kingship, abdicated and retired once more to a life of spiritual contemplation as an abbot.



The Queen Regent of Poland

Marie Louise Gonzaga was a unique woman in history, having been queen consort to two Polish kings throughout her life. Marie was born in France in 1611 and spent her childhood with her mother. From a young age, it was planned for her to marry Gaston d'Orléans, the third son of King Henry IV of France and his wife Marie de Medici, but Henry IV's successor, his other son Louis XIII, strongly opposed the marriage and when Marie was only 16-years-old, imprisoned her in the Vincennes fortress then later in a convent.

The first proposal that she marry the King of Poland, Władysław IV Vasa, was made in 1634, but Władysław eventually married Cecilia Renata of Austria. Then, after Cecilia Renata died in 1644, Marie Louise Gonzaga married Władysław IV by proxy only a year later, with John Casimir himself representing his brother. She was now Queen of Poland.

However, it was only three years after her first marriage that Marie Louise Gonzaga was left alone once again, this time a widow after the death of Władysław in 1648 before marrying John Casimir the following year. Amongst the Polish nobility, she was hardly more popular than her new husband. They were scandalised by her active interest in politics, even though she later played an instrumental role leading the Polish troops to repulse the Swedish army during the Deluge.

Timeline

1599

The Loss of the Swedish Throne

John II Casimir's father, Sigismund III Vasa, had succeeded his own father to the Swedish throne only to be deposed by his uncle in 1599. Ever since, he had claimed the Swedish throne as rightfully his. **1599**

John Casimir is born

John II Casimir Vasa is born on 22 March 1609 to Sigismund III Vasa (1566-1632) and Constance of Austria (1588-1631). His older brother, Władysław IV Vasa, is predecessor to the throne. **1609**



Joining the Jesuits

Now in his early 30s, John Casimir decides to become a Jesuit and leaves the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth again, despite vocal opposition from King Władysław. **1642**

Becoming a cardinal

During the 1640s John Casimir lived in Italy where he was made a cardinal, but reportedly returned to Poland a few years later after finding himself unsuited to ecclesiastical life. **1646**



It was in war, though, that John Casimir distinguished himself. Much like his brother Władysław, who successfully defended Poland against foreign invasions during his reign, Casimir was a very talented military commander. At only 15 years old, he had taken part in the Smolensk War against Muscovy in 1633 and later even unexpectedly joined the army of the Holy Roman Empire to fight against the French during the Thirty Years War in 1635, one of the longest and most destructive conflicts in European history; all when he was initially supposed to be going on a diplomatic mission to prepare for another war in Vienna. During Casimir's years at war, the new King Władysław unsuccessfully tried to enhance his brother's influence by negotiating a marriage for Casimir to Swedish and Italian nobility, though upon John Casimir's return to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth it was clear that Casimir had other plans. He had fallen in love with Baroness Guldentern, but his hope to marry her was thwarted by his regnant brother.

The repentant Władysław then tried to reconcile with his brother by attempting to make him the sovereign of Courland instead, but this was also vetoed, this time by the Commonwealth parliament, and an angry and offended John Casimir abruptly left his hated home country once again in 1638. His voyage was to Spain, set on becoming Viceroy of Portugal. Little did he know that he would never reach his destination.

On his way to Spain, John Casimir was captured by French agents and imprisoned by order of

Cardinal Richelieu until 1640, when he was freed by a diplomatic mission. His two long years as a prisoner changed his life, and Casimir, who had spent many years living lavishly at various European courts as well as leading a successful military life on the battlefield, was now set on dedicating his life to religion as a Jesuit novice.

Once again, he left the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth for Italy to join the Jesuits in 1643.

Though King Władysław was famously tolerant of religious differences throughout his reign despite his being a Catholic, John Casimir's decision was one Władysław was very vocally opposed to - causing a diplomatic rift between the Commonwealth and the pope.

Regardless of the opposition from the

King, John Casimir continued to live his

life as a Jesuit and had even become a Cardinal. Yet, only a few years after he had first started, Casimir found himself unsuited to ecclesiastical life and returned to Poland.

For King Władysław, the next few years marked the last of his life. On the 9 August 1647, his young son and only legitimate heir, then only seven years old, fell ill and died, a major blow to the king. Only a year later, while hunting in early 1648, Władysław suffered from a gallstone or kidney stone, a condition that worsened due to incorrect medication. At 2am on 20 May, the King was dead.

John II Casimir Vasa had since resigned as cardinal to stand in elections for the Polish throne, and that same year was elected to succeed his half brother. His reign would be monopolised by almost

After imprisonment in France, he (temporarily) turned his back on royal life and became a monk

Defining moment

Attempted betrothals 1632

Though generally disliked amongst the Polish nobility due to his open dislike of Polish culture and politics, John Casimir had proven himself to be very talented as a military commander and had seen battlefields since he was a teenager.

With John Casimir now in his 20s, his regnant brother Władysław IV Vasa attempts to arrange marriages for John Casimir to Christina, Queen of Sweden, who was Queen regnant from 1633 to 1654. When this failed, Władysław then tried to negotiate a marriage between John Casimir and an Italian princess, which was also unsuccessful.

Defining moment

Life as a prisoner 1638

In 1636, after his brother Władysław had thwarted John Casimir's plans to marry Baroness Guldentern after falling in love with her, an angry and offended John Casimir abruptly left his hated home country once again. His voyage was to Spain, set on becoming Viceroy of Portugal. On his way to Spain, however, John Casimir was captured by French agents and imprisoned by order of Cardinal Richelieu until 1640, when he was freed by a diplomatic mission. Casimir had previously joined the army of the Holy Roman Empire to fight against the French during the Thirty Years War in 1637.

Life in the time of John Casimir

The Power of Poland-Lithuania

The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was a joint state of Poland and Lithuania that was ruled by a common monarch. It was one of the largest and most populous countries of 16th- and 17th century Europe and had a multi-ethnic population of 11 million at its peak.

The start of the decline

The reign of John Casimir was a watershed in Polish-Lithuanian history, representing the separation of a time of greatness and an era of slow decline and eventual collapse. Decades of unresolved problems, overly ambitious territorial expansion and economic decline finally caught up with the Commonwealth in the form of the Deluge.

The Great War

The Deluge saw Cossack, Russian and Swedish forces alike take swarms across the borders of Poland-Lithuania to conquer almost all the land with strikingly little resistance. King Casimir and the nobles had failed to avert these catastrophic forces, with the King's personality and policies making it difficult for many to work with him in parliament.

The Swedish throne

What became known as the Vasa King's traditional insistence on regaining the Swedish throne was one of the elements that first started the disaster. After John Casimir's father Sigismund III Vasa, was deposed from the Swedish throne by his uncle in 1599, Sigismund spent much of the rest of his life trying to reclaim it.

Defeating armies

Despite the devastation of The Deluge, it was the strength of the Polish-Lithuanian state that allowed it to survive, defeating the Swedes and fighting both the Cossack and Russian armies to a standstill. The period of invasions and civil wars that plagued the Cossack state after it seceded from Poland-Lithuania is still known to Ukrainians as the Ruin.

constant war, and he would be the last of the Vasas in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

John Casimir soon even married his brother's widow queen Marie Louise Gonzaga, a woman he had met years before when he acted as a proxy in the place of Władysław during their wedding itself, for his brother could not be present. Casimir's reign was one filled with war, from the Russo-Polish War between 1654 and 1667 to The Swedish Deluge from 1655 to 1660, representing the climax of a series of wars that had taken place in Poland-Lithuania in the mid-17th century, which ultimately resulted in the Commonwealth losing an estimated 40 per cent of its population and arguably its status as a great power within Europe. Perhaps unsurprisingly, it was also because of the once-lost Swedish throne so desperately desired by Casimir's father that the foundations of such a devastating war were ever even built. The Swedish Empire had become one of the strongest nations in the world and boasted a huge army. King John Casimir continued to be regarded as a weak, 'Jesuit' king, lacking support from the Commonwealth nobility because of his disdain for their culture; The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was already weakened, preoccupied with sustaining its other wars such as the Russo-Polish War to the east. The time was ripe to invade from the west.

Most of Poland was overrun by the Swedish army without much resistance, and the damages to Casimir's homeland were more extensive than even the destruction it later sustained during

World War II. In Warsaw, the capital of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, only 2,000 people remained from a pre-war population of 20,000. In 1660, after five long years of war, John Casimir was forced to renounce his claim to the Swedish throne and acknowledge Swedish sovereignty over Livonia and the city of Riga. Then, in 1667, Casimir was dealt a final blow. His queen Marie Louise Gonzaga, who had always been an important source of support to King Casimir and a crucial individual when it had come to driving out Swedish forces during the Deluge, had just died. They left no surviving children.

Tired of external warfare and still mourning the death of his wife, John Casimir abdicated the Polish-Lithuanian throne on 16 September 1668, and returned to a society he had been a part of before he had ever become the ruler of so much: the Jesuits. After 20 years as king, he returned to France, where he took on the role of titular abbot of the Saint-Germain-des-Prés in

Paris. Though his time as a monarch had been cursed by war, like King Władysław before him John Casimir had been a great patron of the arts. When he retired to France, most of his paintings went with him, and we have him to thank for the careful early conservation of works by Rembrandt, Rubens and Brueghel among many others that are still admired today. It was here, living the quiet existence of an abbot in the country that he had once been imprisoned in, that the man who was once a king spent the last years of his life in peace.

After an unhappy kingship, he abdicated and retreated into the church once more, becoming a Jesuit abbot

Defining moment

Resigning 1647

In October 1647, John Casimir resigns as cardinal to be able to stand in elections for the Polish throne, even attempting to gain the support of the Habsburgs and marry an Austrian princess.

His brother, King Władysław, had lost his son and only legitimate heir at only seven years old, due to illness. Only a year later, while hunting in early 1648, Władysław suffered from a gallstone or kidney stone, a condition that worsened due to incorrect medication. At 2am on 20 May, the king was dead.



Forced to abdicate

The Swedes were forced to retreat. The Peace of Andrusovo in 1667 ended the war with Muscovy, but the King faced stiff internal opposition and even armed uprisings.

1667

King John

John Casimir is elected to succeed his half brother on the Polish throne, and eventually marries Władysław's widow, Marie Louise Gonzaga, a year later.

1648



Russo-Polish War

John Casimir's reign was marked by disastrous wars, first with the Cossack rebel Bohdan Khmelnytsky and then against the Cossack and Muscovite forces.

1654

The deluge

The Swedes invade, facing very little opposition. John Casimir lacks support among the Commonwealth nobility, and the ensuing invasion adds to the Commonwealth losing an estimated 40 per cent of its power.

1655

Death of Marie

The Queen, who was always a great supporter of John Casimir, dies, and the dispirited John Casimir abdicates the throne and leaves for France.

1667



Joining the Jesuits again

John Casimir dies at the age of 63, after having lived as a Jesuit and become abbot of Abbey of Sain-Germain-des-Prés in Paris since his abdication of the Polish throne.

1672

1672

1774 – 1793

Marie Antoinette

How one woman's passion for fashion, stubbornness and extravagant spending drove her country to chaos and revolution

A single cart drawn by two huge white horses travels through the streets of Paris as a ravenous crowd fights to catch a glimpse of the woman within. Her hands are bound but her back is straight and her expression is hard and proud. Her famous blonde hair has turned a premature grey, and the figure that was once dainty and slender has grown large with rich palace meals. She sits frozen in place while the crowd spit and yell insults at her. Her name is Marie Antoinette, formerly the queen of France, and the people are screaming for her blood.

As the cart reaches Place de la Révolution, Marie catches a glimpse of her one-time home, the grand Tuileries Palace, and her face crumbles. Sudden hot tears stream from her eyes and her body trembles. But in a moment she has recovered. She forces the tears back, veils her emotion and steps from the cart with purpose. Draped in a white cotton gown and white cap, she has been stripped of all the finery she was once renowned for, but Marie knows, even without a crown, she is still a queen; that is all she ever was. With her head held high, she moves with majesty towards the guillotine. The time is 12:15pm when she rests her neck upon the block. The blade is released, and in a moment the

illustrious and terrible life of the most hated woman in France is ended.

Since her birth, Marie Antoinette had been primed and prepped to become a queen. Born the 15th child of the formidable Holy Roman Empress Maria Theresa, the only woman to serve in the role, her mother was strict and distant with her youngest daughter, determined she should serve as a bridge between the two great warring dynasties of Habsburg and Bourbon. Maria was a clever woman, and she ensured that her beautiful young daughter became the talk of the French capital. The French king Louis XV was convinced, and arranged the marriage of the young archduchess to his grandson and heir, Louis XVI.

The two great leaders, concerned with cementing their individual power, had not taken into consideration the compatibility or the happiness of the children involved. The young archduchess was undoubtedly beautiful, with her slender figure and gleaming blonde hair, but she was also incredibly vivacious. Caring little for books and education, she was a thrill-seeker, and although she didn't know languages or mathematics, she knew people, and was an expert at getting them to do exactly what she wanted. The young dauphin, meanwhile, was a quiet and timid boy. Strictly religious, he read often and engaged in quiet pursuits. He loved deeply, but he feared even more so, and most

Louis had no qualms about dining in public, but Marie loathed it, and often waited until she was in private to eat



MARIE ANTOINETTE

Vienna, Austria, 1755-1793

Brief Bio

After marrying Louis-Auguste in 1770 at the age of 14, she became Queen of France and Navarre when he husband ascended to the throne as Louis XVI. However, accusations of promiscuity and sympathising with France's enemies caused a sharp wane in her popularity. When the monarchy was abolished during the French Revolution, she was convicted of high treason and executed by guillotine.

The aristocrat menu

Four soups

Rice soup, Scheiber, croutons with lettuce, croutons unis pour Madame.

Two main entrées

Rump of beef with cabbage, loin of veal on the spit.

Sixteen entrées

Spanish pâtés, grilled mutton cutlets, rabbits on the skewer, fowl wings à la Maréchale, turkey giblets in consommé, larded breasts of mutton with chicory, fried turkey à la ravigote, sweetbreads en papillot, calves' heads sauce pointue, chickens à la tartare, spitted suckling pig, Caux fowl with consommé, Rouen duckling with orange, fowl fillets en casserole with rice, cold chicken, chicken blanquette with cucumber.

Four Hors D'Oeuvres

Fillets of rabbit, breast of veal on the spit, shin of veal in consommé, cold turkey.

Six dishes of roasts

Chickens, capon fried with eggs and breadcrumbs, leveret, young turkey, partridges, rabbit.

Desserts

Apple strudel, orange-flower, rosewater and lemon meringues, macarons, jellied fruits, candied violets.

The pauper menu

Coarse stale brown bread & vegetable soup.



“Since her birth, Marie Antoinette had been primed and prepped to become a queen”

“Louis was unable to consummate the marriage for seven long years”

crucially, he was a man who could be easily convinced by loud, persuasive people - his new wife was one such person.

The moment Marie stepped through the doors of Versailles she was surrounded by courtiers far older and more experienced than her, who opposed everything she represented - an alliance between France and Austria. Marie was denied the common method any young queen would employ to solidify her position - producing an heir - as Louis was unable to consummate the marriage for seven long years. Her awkward and humiliated husband shrank smaller and smaller under the knowing smirks of the members of court, but shrinking was the last thing Marie had on her mind.

Marie dressed for success. She robed herself in a huge array of luxurious silk dresses, placed her dainty hands into scented gloves, stood strong in high heels and literally made herself taller with her towering pouf hairstyle. She broke court traditions, abandoning heavy make-up and replacing wide-hooped panniers with simple feminine dresses that complemented her full figure. Her costume was strategy for survival; it sent a loud and clear message - “I can do exactly what I please” - and this message filtered into her lifestyle. As her husband slept, she partied into the early hours, gossiping with friends and attending masked balls. She commissioned a painting of herself riding in the style of a man and she even dared to own a property independently of her husband. The young Austrian was making waves; if tradition wouldn't accept her, then she would smash it to pieces.

The older generation at court didn't like this one bit - a frivolous, air-headed girl they could handle, but an ambitious and stubborn foreign woman who didn't know her place? That was far more dangerous. Before she had even finished her teens Marie was making enemies. What was originally the gossip of court filtered outside the

palace walls and filled the pages of the libelles, the slanderous pamphlets published across France. To the writers and readers of these, the lack of an heir obviously meant that the queen was courting other men, and her excessive wardrobe came across as grandiose at a time when her people were starving. The revolutionary propaganda that was already bubbling leapt upon this image of an idiotic, shameless queen and refused to let it go. Little did Marie know, while she focused on cementing her place as queen, the destruction of the royal authority had already begun, and she was to serve as the centrepiece.

The queen, eternally modest and had a special bath robe made for her so that she could bathe fully clothed

After the royal couple were finally able to produce an heir, the queen transformed from a party girl to a stern, self-controlled woman.

But this change came too late; the revolution gaining speed outside the palace walls had already decided exactly what sort of person she was. The country was in debt, huge debt, and it was the common people who

were feeling the sting. Marie, deemed responsible thanks to her trivial expenditures, was dubbed 'Madame Déficit'. This was not without truth - Marie spent more than any other person in France, bestowing her favourites with gifts and reluctant to tax her aristocrat chums. The expenses of court were huge, and outside of Versailles the people were starving.

But Marie was fighting her own battles. Her husband, after suffering from bouts of depression, had withdrawn his power in government and she was the only one able to cement the authority of monarchy in his place. Despite her own mother's advice to avoid meddling in politics, the queen emerged as a powerful political force, and without the support of her husband was forced to grapple for the power of the monarchy against an assembly growing less and less faithful.

On the surface she was iron, but underneath Marie was shaken by the uprising outside the palace walls. She had made hasty efforts to

A queen's favourite things

The extravagant purchases that drove a nation to loathing



Wardrobe

Cost: 258,000 livres a year
Officially, Marie had a fixed allowance of 120,000 livres for clothes and accessories. However, she often exceeded this quite considerably. Although she was supposed to restrict her orders to 36 dresses for summer and another 36 for winter, for the fashionable queen this simply wasn't enough. Combined with the 18 pairs of gloves and four pairs of shoes ordered for her on a weekly basis, Marie's wardrobe filled three separate rooms at Versailles.



Hameau de la Reine

Cost: 500,000 livres
Marie, constantly surrounded by the rigid structure and responsibility of court life, ordered the construction of this hamlet as a place of escape. Hameau de la Reine was a working farm designed in rustic, pastoral style. There, Marie, her children and friends would dress up as simple peasants, milk the cows and sheep and enjoy the simplicity of the fantasy retreat, while outside the starving and struggles of real French peasants continued.



Château de Saint-Cloud

Cost: 6-10 million livres
After falling pregnant again in 1784, Marie convinced the king to purchase this extravagant palace for her on the premise that the air of the commune would be beneficial to her children. As well as the substantial 6 million livres price tag, Marie poured money into redecorating and rebuilding parts of the building and gardens. The French people were shocked, not only at the irresponsible spending but also at the prospect of a queen independently owning her own residence.

As revolution washed over France, the people called for Marie's blood



Good deeds

The kind acts that the libelles tried to hide

Housing the homeless

Although the construction of Hameau de la Reine was criticised as the queen playing at being a peasant while her people suffered, she allowed several peasant families to live at the site, building cottages specifically for them. Peasants also maintained the farm and its output.

The beloved couple

When Marie and Louis were married in 1774, many people were killed in a stampede during the celebratory firework display. The newlyweds donated all their private spending money for a year to the suffering victims and families. Marie was well liked at this time.

A sympathetic queen

It is very unlikely that Marie uttered the infamous phrase "let them eat cake," in reference to the bread shortages. Her actual recorded words when hearing about the famine were far more sympathetic: "It is quite certain that in seeing the people who treat us so well despite their own misfortune, we are more obliged than ever to work hard for their happiness."

Charitable monarch

The queen and her husband both supported a number of charitable causes. Louis XVI founded the Maison Philanthropique and Marie became a patron of a society that helped the elderly, blind and widowed. She also started a home for unwed mothers.

Sacrifice for the nation

Marie did more than simply pity the suffering peasants. During the famine of 1787-88, her family sold a lot of their flatware to buy grain for the poor. Every Sunday Marie would take a collection for them from the rich of Versailles, and when her people were starving she ate cheap barley bread so more money could be donated.



When Louis XVI ascended the throne aged just 19, the country was already in huge debt

reduce her expenditure, stripping her room of her fineries, but these efforts went largely ignored. When she emerged in her box at the theatre, she was hissed at so horrifically by the crowd that she began to completely withdraw from the woman she once was. She stayed away from parties, from balls, even from the king's council chamber, and devoted her attention to her children, terrified that if she involved herself further, she would be held responsible for tearing France in two.

On 4 June 1789, tragedy struck. The dauphin, Marie's eldest son and all-important heir to the throne, died. The royal couple were overcome with grief for the child they had anticipated for so long, but the people were not. The death, usually cause for national mourning, was ignored by the people desperate to end the famine that was killing their own children. Marie was outraged, and when demand after demand poured through for reform, she urged the king to remain strong against them. For a woman who believed in the absolute power of monarchy, who had spent all her childhood and adult life in palaces, the revolution opposed and offended everything she believed in and had worked

for. Now she was ready to use force to get the rebellious masses to understand.

The queen did not understand for one moment the justifications or hopes that underpinned the revolution. All that she witnessed was the brutality and murderous tactics of its leaders, and she wanted to blast every trace of it from existence. What the queen saw was not liberty, but rebellion and chaos.

The queen decided that the revolution must be crushed with mercenary Germanic troops. She believed, deep down, that the people were good natured and would respect the authority of the monarchy when faced with force. But she was wrong. As news of an armed attack swept through Paris, the revolutionaries took their cause a step further, stormed the Bastille and turned the streets red with blood.

As royalists fled Paris for their lives, the woman most at risk remained with her husband and was forced to stand by as his power was signed away to the National Assembly that was

now ruling Paris. But this was not enough for the outraged population. The king had hoped that

by agreeing to demands and staying at the palace in Versailles he could keep a low profile until the revolution died down, but on 5 October a mob of outraged women marched from Paris to Versailles. They had one aim in mind, and navigated their way through the palace to Marie's private suite. Fuelled by revolutionary passion, they cut down their foes and sacrificed their own lives to confront Madame D ficit directly.

Marie had fled, barefoot and half naked, to the king's bedchamber, barely escaping with her life. The mob reformed beneath a balcony and their voices rose in unison as they demanded to see the queen. Marie, who had never bowed to anyone she deemed inferior, was humiliated, but had no choice. Taking her young son and daughter with her, she emerged, straight backed and strong against the rabble of revolution. She was not humble, not apologetic, nor begging for mercy, but had the iron will of

Marie's extravagant and luxurious dresses had fitting names, such as 'Heart's Agitation' and 'Stifled Sighs'



Marie commissioned paintings of herself and her family in simple but stately dress, in the hope it would improve her reputation

"The expenses of court were huge, and outside the people were starving"

a soldier facing a firing line. Faced with this defiant, unyielding, prideful woman, the crowd bellowed a cry she had not heard for many years: "Long live the queen!"

However, the cries of support did not continue as the royal family was transported from Versailles to their essential captivity in the Tuileries Palace in Paris. Marie sunk down as she sat in the carriage, hoping to avoid the glare and insults of the uncontrollable mob. She loathed the palace. Though it had housed royalty, she had been forced there against her will and in complete humiliation. She was furious that the entire world would now know that the divine right of kings had been challenged and, like a petulant child, refused to do anything that might improve her popularity.

For Marie, the truth was clear - the mob had won, and she refused to remain a prisoner of a force of chaos. After two painful years of her powers being sapped, Marie had had enough and focused on escaping Paris. In 1791, the royal family, disguised as common travellers, were smuggled away in a carriage. The coach travelled some 200 miles, though it was anything but subtle. The queen had refused to travel without

all her comforts, and the heavy, slow carriage with its extra horses attracted attention. Their faces were among the most recognisable in the land, and the escapees were inevitably discovered. Disgraced and humiliated, they were forced to make the long journey back to Paris. Dusty, weary and aged beyond her 35 years, as Marie travelled through the crowds to her prison she was spat on, beaten and pushed by the crowds. The monarchs had chosen to abandon their people, so the people made a decision in kind - the monarchy had to go.

The queen knew it was useless to try to find sympathetic ears in France. With the revolution out of control and the hatred against her reaching fever pitch, she appealed to her powerful relations. She pushed her brother, Holy Roman Emperor Leopold II, and his son Francis II to threaten France on her behalf. But this led to France declaring war on Austria on 20 April 1792. Not only was the 'Austrian woman' hated, but now she was also an enemy. Foreign armies poured into France, threatening the people that if any harm was to come to the royal family, they would pay with their lives. But this was a crowd as unrelenting as their queen.

Scandalous headlines

The lies in the libelles were eaten up by the royalty-hating revolutionaries

The affairs of a royal tart

It has been discovered that the queen was visited by her long-time lover Count Axel von Fersen nine months before the birth of the young prince Louis Charles. Knowing of the king's past problems in the bedroom, it's highly likely that the child is a product of the licentious Antoinette's extra-marital affairs.

Filthy queen's lesbian affairs exposed

Not only has that Austrian woman been cheating with other men, but now palace sources have revealed that Antoinette also receives many female callers. The infamous English lesbian Baroness Lady Sophie Farrell of Bournemouth and Princesse de Lambelle are just two of her female lovers.

Wanton Marie's shocking tales of incest and debauchery revealed

Deplorable accusations have been put against the ex-queen, Widow Capet, at her trial. As well as the various orgies she organised in Versailles, the disgraced woman's sexual deviance apparently knows no bounds, and she is said to have sexually abused her own son, Louis Charles. She refused to respond to this charge.



The dark destinies of the children of France

After the execution of their parents, the fate of the royal children was in the hands of their captors

Louis XVII 1785-95



After the execution of his father, the royalists regarded Louis as the true king of France and hatched many plots to free him from the Temple in Paris. To prevent this, he was separated from his mother and placed under the supervision of Antoine Simon, a cobbler. Although his wife, Marie-Jeanne, treated the child with kindness, he was not raised as a prince and had his court manners drilled out of him and replaced with the language of the gutter. When the Simons

left the Temple, Louis is reported to have been caged alone in a dark room, his food passed through the bars. Suffering from extreme neglect, the young boy was often abused by his jailers and refused to talk to anyone. By May 1795, he had fallen seriously ill, and he died alone on 8 June, aged ten. It was determined that the cause of death was a lymphadenitis - but this is not without controversy, as it is not usually fatal and was declared to be a long-time illness, but in fact developed very quickly. He was buried in an unmarked grave and when rumours surfaced that the body was not that of the dauphin, hundreds came forward proclaiming to be the lost prince. However, DNA testing in 2000 determined it was indeed Louis.

Marie Thérèse 1778-1851



Marie Thérèse was the only royal prisoner in the Temple to survive the Reign of Terror. She lived a life of solitude and boredom in her cell, she was denied any news of her family and was forced to listen to the cries of her young brother as he was abused. Only aware that her father was dead, she scratched the words 'Marie Thérèse Charlotte is the most unhappy person in the world' into the wall of her room. When the terror was over, she was allowed to leave the country. Aged just 16, she was taken to Vienna. She later married her cousin, Louis-Antoine, and

lived in exile in Britain. She finally went back to France with the Bourbon restoration in 1814. When Napoleon returned to France in 1815, Marie attempted to rally the troops against him and refused to leave Bordeaux despite Napoleon's demands, leading him to dub her the 'only man in her family'. After the death of Louis XVIII, Marie's husband became heir to the throne, however, the July Revolution forced his abdication and Marie was exiled once again to Britain, where she died of pneumonia aged 72.



After the execution of the king, Marie became known as 'Widow Capet'

Marie refused to attempt any escape that did not also include her husband





Marie had expected life imprisonment, so her death sentence was received with much personal shock

The executioner chopped off Marie's hair to allow for a clean cut of the guillotine



Marie's actions had brought war to France, and the people brought war to her. On 10 August, an armed mob stormed into the palace, forcing the king and queen into a tiny reporter's box. Under heckles and the glare of the crowd, they stood helplessly as the 900 Swiss guards charged with defending them were massacred. All their precious objects were gathered and piled on desks as they were forced to listen to the debates that declared a republic and ended the monarchy.

If Marie loathed her imprisonment in the Tuileries, the Temple fortress she and her family were escorted to was another hell entirely. Stripped of all the finery that had for so long defined her, Marie was treated horrifically by her jailers. As well as the constant abuse and insults, they blew smoke in her face and allowed her no privacy. Under such extreme and terrible conditions, her health deteriorated and she developed tuberculosis. But worse than illness, worse than rags, and worse than jeers, her royal name, her pride and identity had been stripped from her. Royalty no longer, the family was given the name Capet, ending the long line of monarchs that had ruled the country for more than 1,000 years.

In December, Louis, Marie's ever indecisive and conservative husband, was found guilty of high treason and sentenced to death. A month later he was executed. Although the royal couple had always been a mismatched pair, and rumours of Marie seeking comfort elsewhere may not have been entirely untrue, he had been the father of her children, her companion for more than 20 years and her only security in a time of terror, upheaval and uncertainty. There is no doubt that the execution of Louis shocked and saddened the queen to her core.

She had always found comfort in her children, but in July, despite her pleas, her beloved son was taken from her, and in September she was taken from the only family she had left - her daughter and sister in law. She was condemned to a month of horrific solitary confinement in a dank underground cell in the Conciergerie. Under constant surveillance, Marie had no chance of escape, but she would not have to wait long to discover her fate.

On 14 October, Marie was taken to face her enemies at the Revolutionary Tribunal.

The charges against her were more an attack on her person than her politics; the headlines that had filled the libelles were presented as fact. They accused her of organising orgies in Versailles, orchestrating the massacre of the Swiss guards, sending France's money to Austria and, most appalling of all, sexually abusing her own son. At this she refused to respond, simply uttering: "If I

make no reply, it is because I cannot. I appeal to all mothers in this audience." Her unbelievable defiance and strength despite the horrors she had endured was remarkable, but the verdict had been decided before she even entered the room. Guilty.

In her execution, Marie displayed the courage of a true queen until the end. But that was the problem exactly: she was a queen in every sense of the word. She was born to be a queen, trained to be a queen, had performed her duties as queen throughout her entire life - but France didn't want a queen. Her lifeless body was dragged from the guillotine and tossed in a cart, with her head thrown between her legs. Her remains were dumped in an unmarked grave, but the memory of Marie Antoinette would live on as France's hated, but eternal, queen.

Versailles smelled awful during the era, so Marie's rooms were scented with flowers, potpourri and perfumes

Expert opinion



Melanie Clegg is the author of five historical novels and is also a regular contributor to *Majesty* magazine and her own women's history blog *Madame Guillotine*. Her first biography, *Marie Antoinette: An Intimate History* is out now and her second biography, *A Life Of Marie De Guise*, is due to be published by Pen and Sword Books in 2016.

Was Marie really to blame for the French Revolution, or was she simply a scapegoat?

Although the image of the flaunting, extravagant queen causing the French Revolution with her careless profligacy is a potent one, the fact is that the revolution was ultimately the result of centuries of fiscal and social inequality. A series of poor harvests and the ruinously expensive involvement in the American Revolution acted as the catalyst in 1789. Marie Antoinette, the unpopular foreign queen who was commonly believed to be the power behind the throne, while at the same time in league with the Austrians, was a convenient scapegoat for all - for the aristocracy, who had no wish to lose their privileges; the middle classes, who resented the power and privilege of the upper classes; and the lower orders, who believed the scurrilous lies and exaggerations being spread by disaffected members of the aristocracy and even the royal family about the queen's personal life and spending habits.

— 1816 – 1828 —

Shaka, King of the Zulus

Through wisdom, courage and warrior strength Shaka, King of the Zulus, united the greatest African kingdom the world has ever seen

Shaka flexed his muscles and adopted a hunting posture as he looked down at the venomous snake in the long grass. The black mamba had just killed one of the prized bulls his chief and patron, Dingiswayo, had charged him to protect and now it had turned on Shaka. By allowing the snake to kill Dingiswayo's property Shaka had failed him, the man who had taken him in after he and his mother were cast out of his father's tribe; he had also brought shame on the dignity of his warriors. The snake hissed and made a warning gesture, Shaka had to best it in order to keep his place within the tribe. He was tall, fast and agile, but he knew the bite from the venomous pest would be fatal if he lost. The snake struck, Shaka side-stepped the lightning-fast strike and lunged with his spear, driving it into the snake's body. Dingiswayo had always lauded Shaka for his royal blood, it was one of the reasons he took him and his mother in when they were alone on the plains. As Shaka stood triumphant having revenged the death of the bull, he was now more than a political tool -

he was a fully fledged Zulu warrior with his first kill.

The victory over the snake was the first of many conquests won by Shaka as he rose through the ranks of Zulu society. His next success came when he joined the warrior fraternity of his tribe, the Impi regiment, in 1809. He found the kinship and acceptance of the soldier group a welcome relief from the constant taunting over his status as an outcast

from the other boys in Dingiswayo's tribe. The children would shout, call him names and insult his beloved mother. Now he was a man who commanded respect from the other warriors and he quickly became a popular and able leader.

His physical size and hunting ability stood him head and shoulders above the rest, but he was also known to be a man of original ideas.

He found traditional forms of African combat, which often involved little more than small skirmishes with throwing spears, to be no test of a warrior's mettle. He introduced a short stabbing spear, the *iklwa*, and ordered them to be used in close combat with large shields in

Shaka was noted for his strength and agility, however he was a poor public speaker and was often tripping over his own words

Shaka's given name was actually Tshaka. Shaka literally means bastard and was used to taunt him as a child, but it stuck

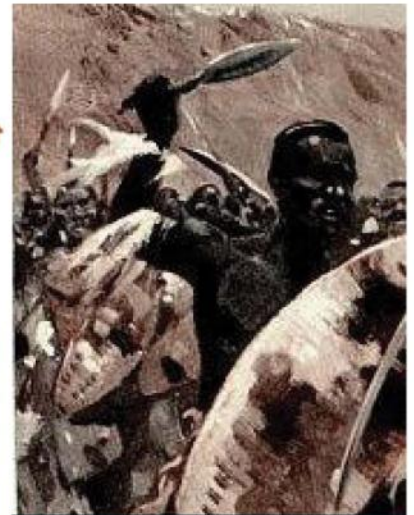
Shaka, King of the Zulus

SHAKA

Zulu Kingdom, 1787 - 1828

Brief Bio

This powerful warrior rose through tribal ranks from decidedly humble beginnings. Proving himself in combat, he began unifying the tribes of the Natal region through brutal conquests. Power rapidly went to his head, however, and the king became increasingly power-crazed as his dominance in the region grew.



Zulu warrior charging with the iconic short stabbing spear, the *ikwa*

Life in the time of Shaka

The white settlers

During the time of Shaka white settlers began encroaching on the lands of the Africans in increasing numbers. The African tribes were forced to flee, fight or otherwise accommodate the settlers as best they could. Some tribes, like the Zulus, initially became allies and trade partners with the invaders.

The Mfecane

The Mfecane or 'crushing' came at the end of Shaka's reign and was a direct result of his constant warfare within the Natal region. Refugees and scattered tribes were forced out of the area and into the surrounding landscape, creating widespread famine and the scramble for crop-producing land formed a crush of thousands of people.

Climate change

It is widely thought that changes in the climate in south-eastern Africa caused the largely peaceful farming tribes that lived in the region, like the Nguni who became the Zulus, to become more volatile and militaristic as available farm land shrunk due to the weather becoming much drier.

Zulu rites

Zulu society was highly ritualised and based around codes of kinship. One of these kinships came in the tribe's military system, where males as a rite of passage would become a warrior with other males the same age. When Shaka took over as king he used this custom to expand his kingdom.

An oral tradition

Much of what we know about Shaka and his early years comes from the rich Zulu oral tradition, where history was repeated in stories passed down from generation to generation through word of mouth. It was only after explorers came into contact with the Zulus that their history was written down.

Shaka's tactics

Shaka completely revolutionised the way Zulus waged war during his reign as king. Tribal conflicts would never again amount to little more than small raids for cattle or posturing to display strength. Unlike the African armies of old, Shaka's military was designed to do one thing: crush opposition and grind rival tribes into the dust. He devised a new Impi system where all males would serve him for a fixed term in his army, which by 1820 numbered nearly 40,000 men.

He introduced the *iklwa*, or short stabbing spear, which suited Shaka's preference for leading his warriors into hand-to-hand combat with the enemy. Close combat required a heavier shield, so he introduced the cowhide-covered Impi shield, which was used with the stabbing spear to keep the warrior alive long enough for him to deal out death on the plains. The greatest innovation brought to the Zulu military doctrine was Shaka's bull-and-horns tactic. He would order his men to close in on the enemy, which was the bull charging in, and at the last moment order troops to sweep around onto the enemy flanks, creating the horns, crushing them in a pincer. With these developments, Shaka's kingdom swept through the South African plains like wild fire, carving out the Zulu kingdom.



order to devastate the enemy's position quickly and with deadly efficiency.

Dingiswayo was impressed by these reforms and the victories Shaka stacked up during his early years as a warrior. He had found a powerful ally and had been proven correct to welcome him into his village when no one else would accept him. As a way of showing his gratitude for his service, Dingiswayo helped Shaka return to his father's tribe as chief in 1816. The men who had insisted on his banishment shortly after his birth were quickly brought to heel by Shaka's fearsome Zulu warriors. Dingiswayo restored his honour and the honour of his mother and in return Shaka offered his undying loyalty. It was this loyalty that inspired Shaka to take action when Dingiswayo was killed by tribesmen of the Ndwandwe. Shaka was compelled to take revenge on his patron's killers and he quickly combined his tribe with Dingiswayo's to create a fledgling Zulu kingdom. He then launched a campaign of conquest against the Ndwandwe and their chief, Zwide. They met in battle near the Mhlatus River, Shaka led the

charge and used his new bull-and-horns formation to completely destroy Zwide's forces. The survivors and their womenfolk were incorporated into the Zulu kingdom. In the space of three years Shaka had expanded a small village group into a nation to be feared across the continent.

With his new army behind him and the destruction of his immediate enemies complete, Shaka set about subjugating all the peoples within the Natal region, whether they were hostile or not. He organised his new kingdom along military lines - he had no intention of being cast out again or killed through weakness, so he built up his military prowess. All men within his domain were now eligible for military service. They were organised in their Impis according to age,

with the rest of the kingdom providing the war machine with food and weapons. Conscripted could last years and soldiers were housed within purpose-built barracks so their king could call on them whenever he needed military muscle to satisfy his whims. The Zulu nation had become a country completely dedicated to warfare and conquest under the leadership of Shaka.

Shaka was born during a period of extreme famine in the south-eastern region of South Africa

"In three years Shaka had expanded a small village group into a nation to be feared"

Defining moment

Shaka crowned King of the Zulus 1818

After Dingiswayo is captured and killed by a neighbouring tribe, the Ndwandwe under the ferocious Zwide, Shaka makes a courageous bid to unite all of the Zulus under his rule. After a number of ritual displays of courage and with the presence of his loyal warriors behind him, Shaka manages to convince Dingiswayo's tribe that a united Zulu nation would conquer all of Africa and bring Dingiswayo's killers to justice. He is crowned King of the Zulus and quickly sets about reforming the military system in preparation to confront Zwide and the Ndwandwe across the Mhlatus River.



Timeline

1787

● Birth of a warrior

Shaka is born to the Zulu chief Senzangakhona kaJama and his lover Nandi. Despite his noble birth he is rejected by his father and he and his mother flee his father's court.

1787

● First kill

Shaka is charged with guarding a prized bull by Dingiswayo, his new chief. A black mamba kills the bull so Shaka attacks the poisonous snake, dodges its venomous blows and kills it.

1800

● Shaka joins his Impi

Shaka approaches manhood, joins his Impi or age regiment and becomes a warrior for Dingiswayo. His large size and reputation as an uncompromising and brave warrior quickly impresses his chief.

1809

● Retakes his birthright

After 26 years of exile Shaka retakes the tribe he was born into by successfully beating his illegitimate half-brothers. He uses the military muscle of Dingiswayo to do this.

1816

● Victory against Zwide

Shaka uses his superior fighting ability, as well as the new skills he has taught his Zulu warriors, to completely destroy the Ndwandwe war host assembled at the Mhlatus River and bring the killers of his great patron to justice. The battle is unlike anything fought by warriors living in the region before. Rather than a small skirmish or a non-violent gesture to prove superior fighting ability, Shaka orders an all-out attack and his Zulu warriors quickly move into close combat using the bull-and-horns tactic to slaughter Zwide's men.

1819

As a champion fighter and king to his warriors, Shaka realised he had to expand his kingdom in order to keep his prestige high among the men that he led into battle. He needed more fertile land, more cattle, more everything to satisfy his people. What's more his warriors would soon become restless if they weren't fighting anything. He decided to launch raids into the regions north of Natal, killing off rival warriors, murdering or enslaving the women and children that were left undefended. This created a mass migration of refugees out of the area and into the tribal lands in what is today central South Africa, causing famine and starvation in the wake of Shaka's conquests. He had no idea he was causing such a huge humanitarian disaster, but the consequences of his relentless pursuit of warfare is remembered as the Mfecane or 'crushing' of the African people.

Shaka's temper was legendary and one of the reasons he had a reputation as a blood-thirsty tyrant by the end of the 1820s



The mass migration of refugees and the tales of destruction they brought with them into the lands north and west of Natal did not go unnoticed by the other great power that was beginning to show dominance in the area: the British Empire. Word had spread to London of an African king with a fearsome reputation for conquest in the eastern reaches of the cape - it was said he was unbeatable in combat. The British were too weak in the area to challenge Shaka openly, so instead they sent a delegation to negotiate with him. Shaka was impressed by the men who saw him and offered generous trade agreements and peace with the British. He cared little for their firearms

and technology, which he dismissed as useless against the agility and speed of the bull-and-horns formation of his Zulu warriors. He negotiated with the British on equal terms, his kingdom would need the trade and the British needed their eastern flank secured. Despite this seemingly amicable arrangement, Shaka could tell a predator when he saw one and knew the British would be back in greater numbers.

By 1827, Shaka had turned the Zulu Kingdom into one of the most powerful African dynasties in history. Yet his warriors had become weary of the constant demands for war. He had broken from tradition in making them fight hundreds of miles away from their homes and insisting that they remained celibate throughout their service in his army. He had also become ruthless in dealing with his adversaries - often a death sentence would be bestowed with a simple nod of his head while he sat on his throne. When his beloved mother died in 1827 he realised that he was now alone, he had never married and so the only thing that could hold any meaning in his life was his skill as a warrior and the kingdom he had built. He ordered his warriors to mourn his mother but when his

demoralised horde became less than enthusiastic about spending night after night performing ritual burial dances to someone who meant little or nothing to them, Shaka descended into a fit of rage. He ordered all the men not seen to be putting enough effort into the mourning executed. He then marched into selected Zulu villages and told his warriors to force every man, woman and child to grieve for his mother on pain of death.

After the brutal events of 1827, Shaka had become dangerously unpopular among the Zulus. He was no longer seen as a great warrior and noble leader, but a tyrant soaked in the blood of his own people. As he continued to insist on plunging his kingdom into war after war, his half-brother, Dingane, plotted to assassinate him. On 22 September 1828, Shaka's glorious rule came to an abrupt end when an ikhwa was plunged into his back by Dingane and his bodyguard Mbopha. As Shaka lay dying outside of his barracks his last words were: "Are you stabbing me, kings of the Earth? You will come to an end through killing one another." He had fought as a warrior his whole life and could see nothing but warfare as he took his last breath on the African plains.

Since his death, Shaka has become a symbol of great pride for the people of the Zulu tribe who still live in South Africa today

Defining moment

Death of his mother 1827

Shaka's mother dies in 1827, which causes the warrior king to descend into a deep depression. As his only source of protection and strength during his early years, his mother was a strong influence on him and Shaka insists on elaborate mourning ceremonies that his entire kingdom, including his demoralised warriors, is forced to take part in. As the ceremonies get under way he goes into a psychotic rage when he thinks his people are not mourning hard enough and orders hundreds of his own men killed in front of their families to inspire more effort in honouring his mother's passing.

Annual raids

Beginning in the mid-1820s, Shaka begins to use his standing army to raid the population surrounding his kingdom inspiring fear and ensuring the overwhelming dominance of the Zulus.
1820

The British delegation

A British army officer, Lieutenant James King, visits Shaka and successfully negotiates trade agreements, including permission for the British to build a fort in Zulu territory.
1825

Attack on Delagoa Bay

After the events of the previous year, his soldiers become increasingly demoralised but Shaka presses ahead with building his kingdom, launching raids on the European slave hub at Delagoa Bay in the north of his lands.
1827

Starvation

Shaka's unrelenting quest for power devastates the surrounding region. The continuous warfare causes mass migration into already overpopulated lands and starvation. This becomes known as the Mfecane or 'crushing'.
1828



Betrayal and death

Shaka becomes increasingly unpopular because of the devastation he has brought on the region and is murdered by his half-brother and bodyguard. He leaves behind a Zulu Kingdom that is feared by friend and foe alike.
22 September 1828

1828

— 1837 – 1901 —

Queen Victoria

How a tiny island and its queen came to own an empire so large that the sun never set on it

The date was 22 January 1901 and the British Empire was the largest of any in human history, but the monarch who reigned over it would not live another day. As Queen Victoria lay dying in Osborne House on the Isle of Wight she looked back on a reign that spanned over 63 years. She had seen her empire grow from a collection of scattered isles, separated by vast plains of lands and insurmountable oceans, to the greatest the world had known. It had reached over India, plucked its riches and mounted it as the glimmering jewel in her crown. It had butchered its way mercilessly across Africa at the cost of thousands of British corpses and countless natives who had tried in vain to stand in its way. It was powered forward both by Christian values and colonial greed, so as Victoria drew her last breath, she left a world forever transformed by the empire she had built.

When a young Princess Victoria ascended the steps of Westminster Abbey on her coronation day, few would have foreseen the mighty empire

she would eventually rule over. The British public were increasingly disenchanted with the monarchy and her grandfather, the mad king George III, had failed to protect British interest in the Americas, and her uncle George IV's terrible relations with his wife and reckless spending had tarnished the monarchy's prestige. At a mere 18 years and barely 150 centimetres (five feet) tall, Victoria hardly seemed a fitting patron for the vast ambitions of British expansion from the 17th century. But this blue-eyed, silvery-voiced lady possessed a stubborn will of iron and her reign would become the longest in British history until Elizabeth II surpassed her in 2015. Her ascension marked not the death of the British Empire, but the new dawn of a kingdom so massive that none could ever hope to challenge it.

The world was changing as Victoria took her place on the throne. The tiny, scattered rural villages of England were being abandoned en masse and the cities were transforming into sprawling metropolises. Great towering concrete chimneys rose from the ground and the whirr of



“The British Empire had the might, ingenuity and limitless ambition to conquer the world”



QUEEN VICTORIA

Britain, 1819-1901

Brief Bio

Victoria served as monarch of the United Kingdom from 20 June 1837 until her death on 22 January 1901. At 63 years her reign is currently the longest in British history, and is associated with the Industrial Revolution, economic progress and most notably, the expansion of the British Empire to the largest domain of all time.

The World's Greatest Empire

How much of the world Britannia ruled by 1901



5 things you probably didn't know about Benjamin Disraeli

1 Born to Italian-Jewish parents, Disraeli was the first British prime minister with a Jewish heritage, though he was baptised as a Christian.

2 Disraeli pursued many early business ventures that failed, leaving him in crippling debt, leading to a nervous breakdown from which it took him years to recover.

3 He was mocked in Parliament when he made his maiden speech. Later he proclaimed that "the time will come when you will hear me."

4 Disraeli was a notorious flatterer and when asked by a colleague how to deal with Queen Victoria, he replied: "First of all, remember she is a woman."

5 He introduced much legislation that benefited the poor, such as the 1877 Artisans Dwelling Act that provided housing, as well as the Public Health Act the same year.



Egypt
Finding itself in economic rot, Egypt sold half its stake in the Suez Canal to Britain. This prompted an eventual revolt and launched the 1882 Anglo-Egyptian War. Britain won and took the country under its control. Egypt provided a vital trade route between Britain and India, cutting out the long and dangerous journey around Africa.

Canada
England captured Canada from France after the Seven Years' War in 1763, also known as the French and Indian War. As well as adding a massive landmass to the British Empire's bragging rights, Canada was a resource-rich country with a small population. Canada provided ample trade of timber, ores and furs.



South Africa
The British gained control of the Cape of Good Hope in the early-19th century and set up a colony. When South African Dutch settlers felt their territory was at risk, the two powers engaged in a series of military clashes known as the Boer Wars, leading the Boers to submit to British rule. Serving as a stopping station on the way to India, Southern Africa was also rich in gold and diamonds.

"The loss of the love of her life changed not only herself as a person, but the fate of her empire"

machines sounded across the country - the age of steam had arrived. The Industrial Revolution changed Britain from a quaint maritime nation on the edge of Europe into a manufacturing colossus. Railways and steamships brought the British overseas territory closer to the mother country, opening up opportunities for trade and commerce that were previously unfathomable.

It was Albert, Victoria's beloved husband, who opened her and Britain's eyes to the ideas that went on to shape her empire. Fascinated by mechanisms and inventions, Albert organised The Great Exhibition at the Crystal Palace - a temple to the ingenuity of the rapidly developing modern world. Inventions from around the world were displayed, but this was Britain's show, first and foremost. The

Timeline of Conquest

How Victoria's British Empire became the world's biggest

- 1838 PITCAIRN ISLANDS
- 1842 HONG KONG
- 1848 INDIA
- 1853 TRUCIAL OMAN (TRINIDAD & TOBAGO)
- 1857 ADEN (YEMEN)
- 1862 BRITISH HONDURAS (BELIZE)
- 1868 BECHUANANLAND (BOTSWANA)
- 1874 FIJI
- 1878 CYPRUS
- 1878 SOUTH WEST AFRICA (NAMIBIA)
- 1881 NORTH BORNEO (SABAH)
- 1884 BASUTOLAND (LESOTHO)
- 1884 BRITISH SOMALILAND (SOMALILAND)
- 1884 PAPUA NEW GUINEA
- 1885 NIGERIA
- 1885 KENYA
- 1887 MALDIVE ISLANDS
- 1888 BRITISH EAST AFRICA (KENYA)
- 1888 BRUNEI
- 1888 COOK ISLANDS (NZ ASSOC)
- 1888 GAMBIA
- 1888 SARAWAK (MALAYSIA)
- 1889 RHODESIA (ZIMBABWE)
- 1889 TRINIDAD (TRINIDAD & TOBAGO)
- 1890 TANGANYIKA (TANZANIA)
- 1891 MALAWI
- 1894 UGANDA
- 1898 SUDAN
- 1899 KUWAIT

Australia
British involvement in Australia began when Captain James Cook landed on the continent in the late-18th Century. The number of Indigenous Australians living there quickly plummeted because of European diseases and loss of land. Australia became a penal colony and thousands of British convicts were transported there as punishment. When gold was discovered in 1851, immigrants - many of them British - raced to these sandy shores in search of their fortune.



India
After largely being controlled by the East India Company, India became part of the British Empire after the Government of India Act in 1858. Known as the 'Jewel in the crown', India was the most valuable piece of Britain's empire, with lucrative trade from spices, jewels and textiles. The most important provision of India, though, was its manpower, which contributed massively to Britain's military might.

symbols of British might, which occupied half of the entire display space, served as clear examples of what the British Empire was capable of and fostered the ideas of national supremacy in the eyes of Victoria, the government and the majority of the British population. The Great Exhibition proved that far from the crumbling remains of a once-powerful nation, the British Empire had the might, ingenuity and limitless ambition to conquer the world.

The opportunity to pave the road for this empire arose in 1857 with the Indian Mutiny. India had been ruled by a private entity - the East India Company - from 1757. The rebellion manifested the discontent felt by the Indian people for the blatant disrespect of their beliefs and customs. The

company showed disregard for the Indian caste system and issued new cartridges greased with cow and pig fat that had to be opened with the mouth, highly offensive to Muslim and Hindu soldiers. These actions opened the eyes of the Indian people to the daily injustice they were being subjected to, and unrest snowballed into mass riots and an uprising. Although the mutiny was eventually quelled, the rebellion led to the dissolution of the company, the passing of power to the British state and the creation of what Victoria would call the jewel in her crown - the British Indian Empire.

Queen Victoria welcomed the country to her empire in a lavish ceremony, promising that Indian native customs and religions would be

respected and that she would "draw a veil over the sad and bloody past." She presented herself as a maternal figure and a crusader for peace, justice and honest government - ideals largely inspired by her husband. Albert had instilled in her mind the vision of King Arthur's Camelot, an empire ruled not by tyranny but by justice, where the strong serve the weak, where good triumphs over evil, bringing not oppression and bloodshed, but trade, education and welfare. His influence on Victoria was immense and when on 14 December 1861 he died of suspected typhoid fever, the empire veered into an entirely new direction.

When Albert drew his last breath in the blue room at Windsor Castle the queen was

What was the East India Company?

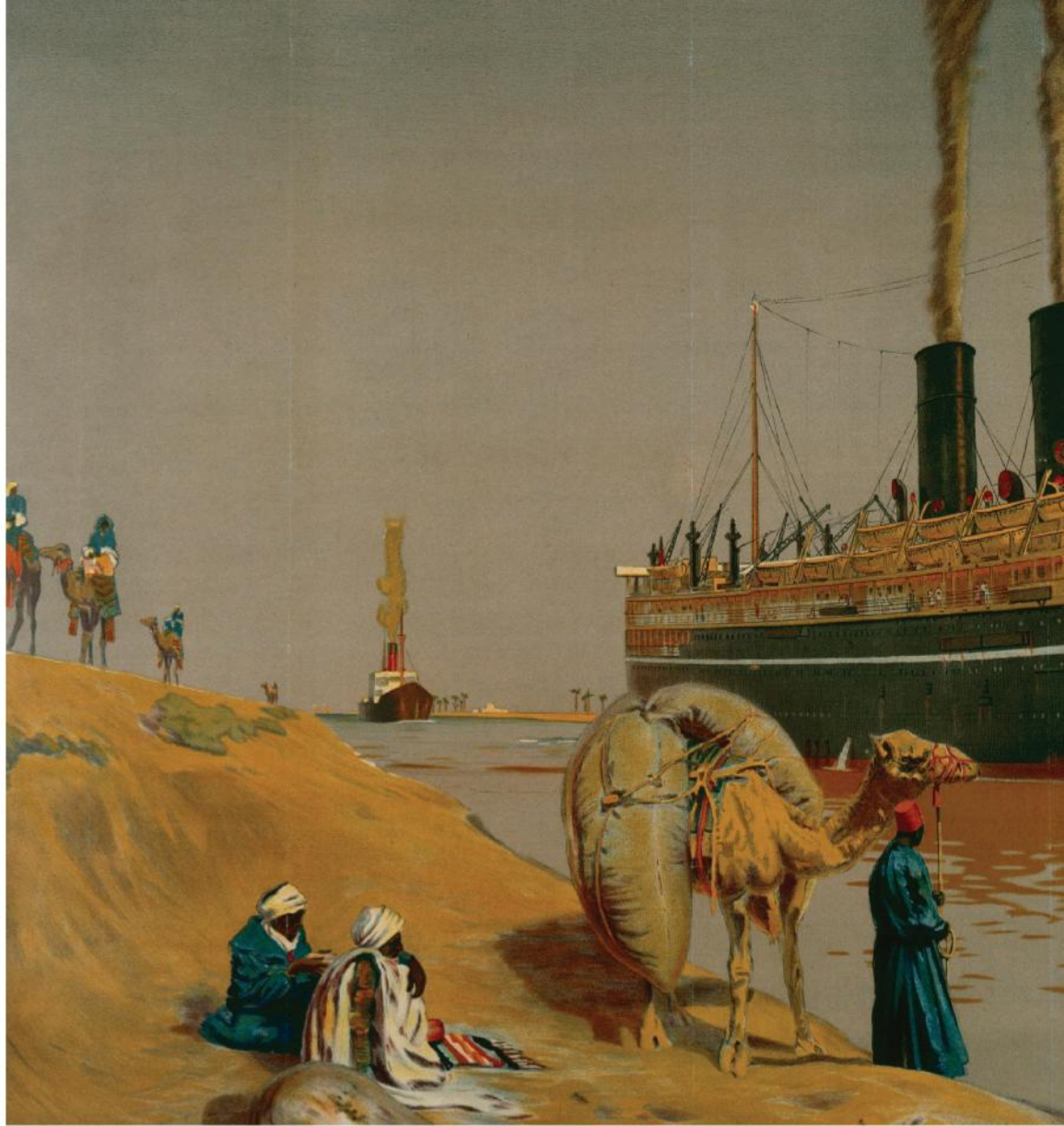


Emerging from humble beginnings, the East India Company began as a simple enterprise of London businessmen who wanted to make money from importing spices. The company was granted a royal charter by Queen Elizabeth I in 1600, and in 1601 James Lancaster led its first voyage. The company set up trade outposts in Indian settlements that slowly developed into commercial towns. Steadily increasing its territory, the company claimed vital trading ports from Aden to Penang. As its control extended, the company became the most powerful private company in history, with its own army established by Robert Clive, the first British governor of Bengal.

With its great military power behind it, the company controlled India with a combination of direct rule and alliances with Indian princes. The East India Company eventually accounted for half the world's trade and specialised in cotton, silk, tea and opium.



Lancaster was an Elizabethan trader and privateer



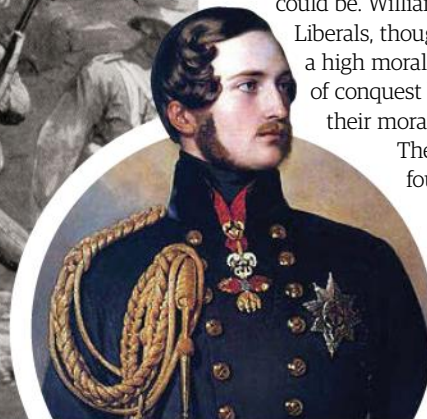
The Argyle and Sutherland Highlanders before the 1899 Battle of Modder River during the Second Boer War



inconsolable; the loss of the love of her life changed not only herself as a person, but the fate of her empire. As she donned the mourning clothes she would wear until her own death, she drew a veil over Albert's vision and pursued a different path for her kingdom - one of world domination.

An emerging figure in Parliament would come to foster her views - Benjamin Disraeli. The ambitious and rebellious leader of the Conservatives was led by a passion for imperial power and glory. Inspired by tales of imperial adventures, Disraeli believed Britain should pursue an empire of power and prestige. His most direct political opponent represented everything Albert dreamed the empire could be. William Gladstone, the leader of the Liberals, thought the empire should serve a high moral purpose, to follow not a path of conquest but one of commerce, sharing their moral vision with the world.

These two fiery and driven men fought over these opposing visions in Parliament as Victoria continued to mourn. Without Albert she felt incompetent and unable to face the immense duty that her role dictated. With her strong conservative views she found Gladstone and





A British marketing poster promoting the Suez Canal - the waterway was an important factor in the growth of the empire

“The Industrial Revolution changed Britain from a quaint maritime nation into a manufacturing giant”

his liberal reforms dangerous and unpredictable. Disraeli, suave, coy and dripping with forthright confidence, enchanted the lonely queen. With his constant flattery and sharp wit, Disraeli reignited her interest in politics and captivated her, as Albert had done so previously, with his vision of just how mighty the empire could be. However, Gladstone's liberal vision and Albert's quest for Camelot had not completely faded. The British people, led by strong Protestant beliefs Victoria herself had instilled in them, felt it was Britain's role - their duty even - to civilise people around the world. They believed the British cause was to export not only trade, but also gospel values of morality and justice.

It was in pursuit of this lofty goal that many missionaries turned their attention to Africa. Little was known of the 'Dark Continent', but the common perception was that it was a place of pagan worship ravaged by tribal wars. One missionary in particular would capture the attention of the British nation. Tall, handsome and heroic, David Livingstone embodied everything the British believed their nation to represent. A medical

missionary, Livingstone's daring adventures around the continent were followed by a captivated British public. Fighting vicious beasts, battling through dense jungles and suffering a multitude of illnesses, Livingstone was the heroic face of the empire's Christian ideals.

Livingstone's horrific confrontation with African chain gangs was to drive the British cause of expansion. The slavery rife in Africa was abhorrent to Livingstone and the British public, as the practice had been abolished across the empire in 1833. The queen and government united behind Livingstone's quest to find a suitable trade route, hoping that by doing so, the African people would find ways to make a living that wasn't built on the backs of slaves. Livingstone's journey was a failure and he returned to scathing criticism - something the imperialist Disraeli leapt on with glee. His flattery of Victoria had completely won her over and the monarchy and government became united in pursuit of one goal - the expansion of the empire.

The perfect opportunity to begin this new empire emerged as another nation struggled to

How Queen Victoria came to rule the world



Dominance of the seas

Britain employed a 'two-power standard' in 1889 which called for the Royal Navy to maintain a force at least equal to the combined strength of the next two largest navies in the world. This policy ensured British dominance of the seas with a string of naval bases encompassing the whole world. The pure size and strength of the navy served its purpose - deterring any would be competitors and confirming its position as ruler of the waves.



The Industrial Revolution

Britain was the first nation to harness the power of steam and the first to undergo an industrial revolution. This resulted in mass production of low-cost goods to trade around the world. It also gave Britain's military an array of resources like rifles, steamships and trains, equipping it to defeat any possible enemies. Medical advances also allowed British explorers to penetrate remote areas without fear of tropical diseases.



The quest to spread democracy

Land grabbing aside, the British Empire was led by a strong Protestant desire to improve the world. Britain saw itself as an agent of civilisation - one they wanted to spread worldwide, bringing peace, order and stability. This belief that they were doing genuine good led men like David Livingstone to travel to Africa to spread the word of God, and with it, the British Empire.



Taking advantage of the competition

As major powers of the world such as Spain, France, the Netherlands and the Ottomans were losing power, the British began to peak in strength. Britain was able to take advantage of the European wars that had weakened other nations as it enjoyed a period of relative peace, allowing uninterrupted expansion of its empire. Any threats that did emerge, such as Russia, just gave Britain new zeal to cement its powerful hold on the world.



Strong leadership

Britain was ruled by a single monarch throughout most of the 19th century - Queen Victoria. The record-breaking length of her reign brought a sense of stability and contributed to the unconquerable notion of the British Empire. Although Victoria did involve herself in government, her role was symbolic rather than one of direct power, which ensured stability of British politics. While other nations were dealing with socialist movements, Britain enjoyed a long period of relative domestic peace.

How Britannia ruled the waves

The anatomy of the HMS Prince George

Sturdy frame

The skeleton of the ship, a strong frame was of paramount importance. The ironclad battleships of the 1870s and '80s were replaced by pre-dreadnought ships, which were built from tough steel and reinforced with hardened steel armour.

A willing crew

The HMS Prince George carried a crew of 672 officers and enlisted men. This was less than previous ships of the line, which required between 800 and 900 men to operate effectively.

Propulsion

Powered by two triple expansion steam engines, the HMS Prince George was capable of a top speed of 16 knots (30km/h / 18mph). The engines were powered by eight coal-fired cylindrical boilers, which produced an impressive speed, but at the cost of high fuel consumption.

Steaming ahead

Steam power emerged in the 1830s as an auxiliary propulsion system. The first purpose-built steam battleship was Le Napoléon of France with a speed of 12 knots (23km/h / 14mph) regardless of wind direction. Soon the United Kingdom was rapidly producing steam battleships to challenge France's strength, building 18 new ships and converting 41 to steam power.

Firepower

Pre-dreadnoughts carried a variety of guns for different purposes. There were four heavy slow-firing guns, which were difficult to operate but capable of penetrating the armour of enemy ships. The HMS Prince George also carried a secondary battery of 12 quick-firing .40-calibre guns.

Steel armour

The ship was reinforced with 22.9cm (9in) of Harvey armour, which provided it with equal protection for less weight. As a result, the pre-dreadnought ships benefited from a lighter belt than any previous battleships, without any loss in protection. The battery, conning tower and deck were also protected by thick steel.

survive. The Egyptian ruler, Isma'il Pasha, was confronted with crippling debts after reckless spending on lavish ceremonies and a costly war with Ethiopia. In an act of desperation he made an offer to sell to the British Egypt's shares in the Suez Canal. The canal was more than a mere trading port; it opened up a short route to India across Egypt and down the Red Sea, cutting out the lengthy journey around Africa. The Egyptian ruler's offer would give the British controlling influence over the jugular of the empire, so Disraeli urged Victoria to accept. She immediately did and the Suez Canal fell into British hands.

With control of India, Britain was already the most powerful nation on Earth and three-quarters of the world's trade was transported in British ships, but this control was being threatened. The Russian Empire had been steadily expanding east and south and was getting uncomfortably close to Victoria's prized jewel - India. The Middle East was largely controlled by the Turks, but they were

busy dealing with violent rebellions. The Turkish treatment of their Christian subjects was shocking and atrocious, but as Russia backed the rebels the British had no option but to support the Turks. The British public, to whom Russia stood for everything Britain opposed - ignorance, slavery and subjugation - largely supported this choice. Facing the prospect of imminent war with the strongest nation on the planet, Russia agreed to peace talks and thanks in part to the charisma and negotiation skills of Disraeli, agreed to stop their advance on the Middle East.

Imperial spirit rushed through the public as the might of British muscle flexed and proved itself again. As the empire continued its steady expansion across the continent it came face to face with the most powerful African nation - the Zulus. The British, with a bloated ego, underestimated the strength of their spear-wielding enemies and suffered a crushing initial defeat. In the end it took 16,000 British reinforcements to prise the Zulus'

independence from their grip. Expecting to return to a wave of praise for their daring exploits, the victorious army were surprised to discover that British opinions were changing once again.

Gladstone, the "half-mad firebrand", as Victoria dubbed him, preached his outraged opinions about the mass slaughter of Zulus and rampant destruction of their homes. Victoria was outraged but the public sided with Gladstone and, much to the queen's dismay, the power of the government switched hands once more. Liberal leader or not, all of Europe's attention was firmly fixed on Africa as nations began a scramble to establish colonies there. In amongst this mad rush to establish new territory by European powers, it was arguably one man's actions that would determine the ultimate fate of Victoria's empire.

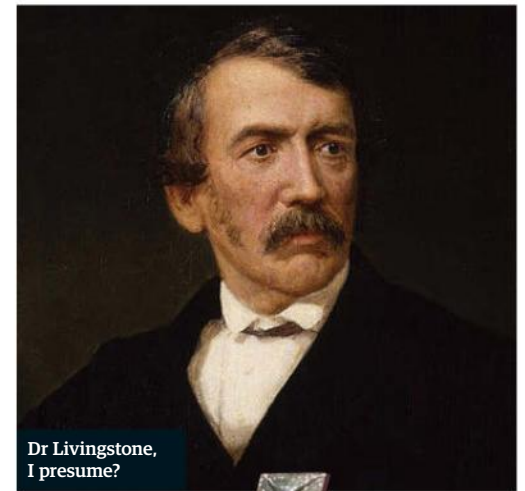
Led by Muhammad Ahmed, revolution was tearing through the Sudan as tribes rose against their corrupt rulers. As this holy war drew uncomfortably close to the Suez Canal, Victoria

“They believed the British cause was to export not only trade, but also gospel values of morality and justice”

urged Gladstone to utilise the British troops stationed there to defend it. The liberal leader refused. In order to buy time he sent one man, General Charles Gordon, to secure the evacuation of loyal civilians and soldiers.

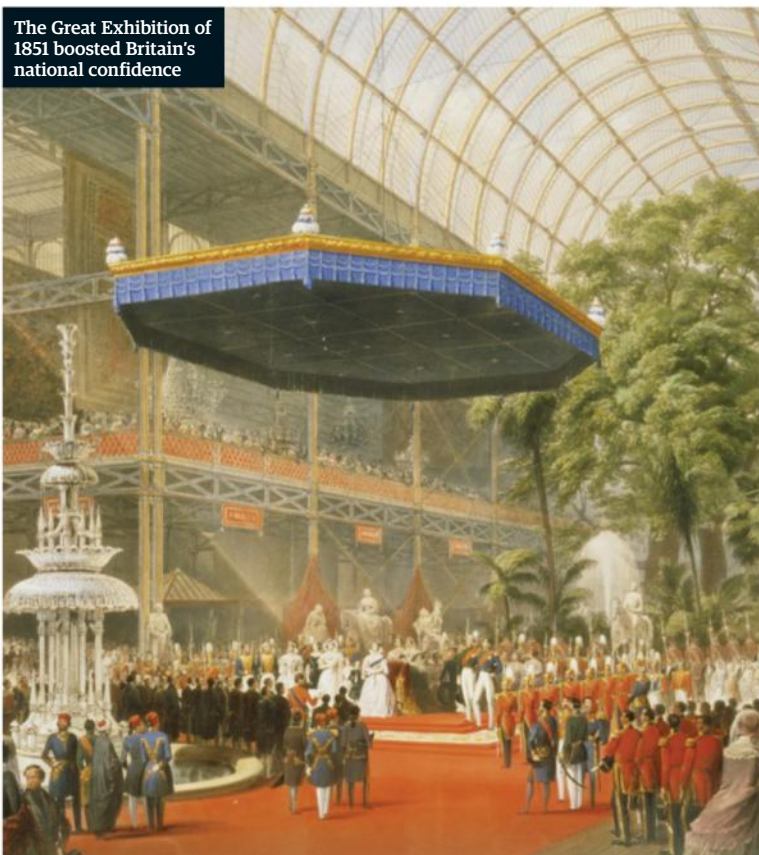
Like Livingstone, Gordon was a national hero. He was brave, dashing, popular and his decorated military career had painted him in the British public's eyes as a gleaming knight of old. Despite these qualities Gordon was also wild and

unpredictable. When he reached the Sudan he was horrified by the slavery rife in the region and decided to face the Mahdi in battle. With limited forces, Gordon soon found himself besieged in the city of Khartoum. His appeals for aid, to the adoring public's outrage, fell on deaf ears in the government. It took more than eight months of public fury to finally force Gladstone's hand, but it was too late - Gordon, the nation's hero of Christianity, was dead.

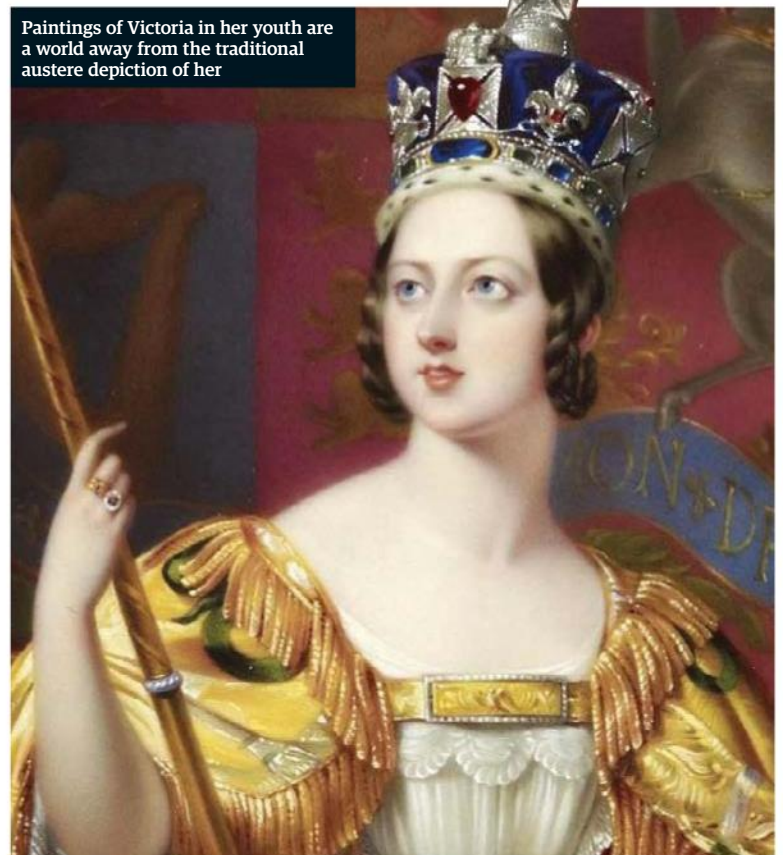


Dr Livingstone, I presume?

The Great Exhibition of 1851 boosted Britain's national confidence



Paintings of Victoria in her youth are a world away from the traditional austere depiction of her



Main competitors

Three countries that were battling with Britain for territory



Russia

As England expanded its territory, so did Russia. For a hundred years Russia expanded east and south, narrowing the gap between the British and Russian Empires in Central Asia. Britain soon became obsessed with protecting India which was a rich source of goods and manpower. The competition for dominance of the states that separated them - Iran, Afghanistan and Tibet - became commonly known as The Great Game. The looming, but unlikely, threat of Russia's attack led Britain into largely unnecessary military involvement in Afghanistan and Tibet.



Germany

From 1850 onward, Germany began to industrialise at an astonishing rate, transforming from a rural nation to a heavily urban one. In the space of a decade Germany's navy grew massively and became the only one able to challenge the British. Although the German Empire of the late-19th century consisted of only a few small colonies, the newly unified state slowly moved toward colonial expansion in Asia and the Pacific. As Wilhelm II rose to power, his aggressive policies in achieving a 'place in the sun' similar to Britain was one of the factors that would lead to WWI.



France

Britain's age-old rival France was still licking its wounds after the loss of most of its imperial colonies in the early part of the 19th century. However, French leaders began a mission to restore its prestige in 1850, seeking to claim land in North and West Africa as well as in Southeast Asia. After the defeat of France in the Franco-Prussian War, it still continued with zeal to expand its empire, acquiring land in China and all over Africa. Unlike most of its rivals, France would continue expanding after WWI, well into the 1930s.

Eye-watering empire facts

458 million
people ruled over

23%
of the world's surface was ruled by Britain

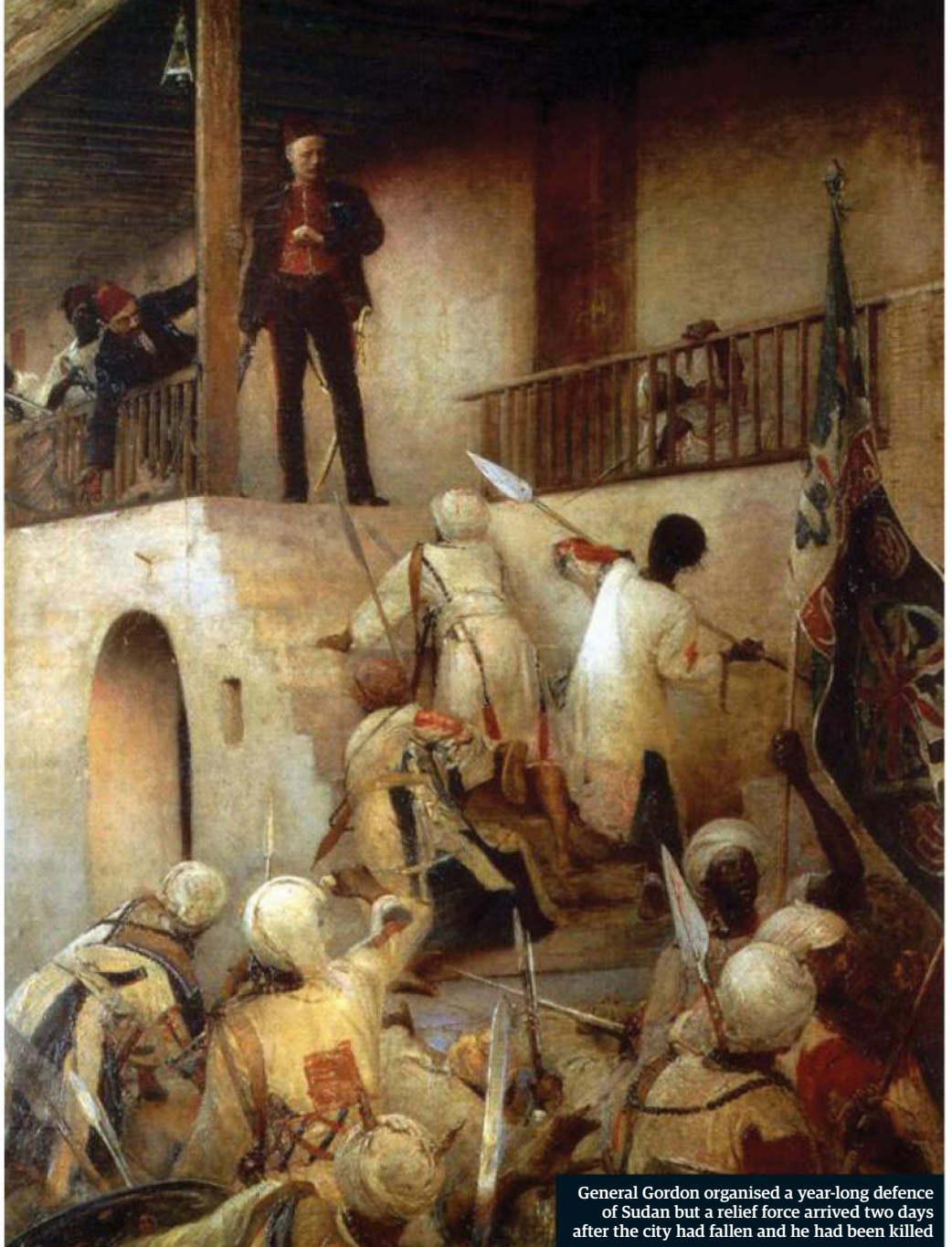
13.01 million
square miles of land belonged to the empire

113
ships in the Royal Navy

63 years & 21 days
the length of Victoria's reign

165,000
convicts sent to Australia

7,010,000
total goods shipped by Britain in one year (1881)



General Gordon organised a year-long defence of Sudan but a relief force arrived two days after the city had fallen and he had been killed

“The monarchy and government became united in pursuit of one goal - the expansion of the empire”

In an instance the liberal vision was shattered, Gladstone was voted out and his moral influence departed with him. The renewed crusading spirit of British imperialism found its poster boy in a man who would lead the empire down a dark and dangerous path. Moving from England to Africa to work on a cotton farm, Cecil John Rhodes had become outrageously wealthy from the diamond rush, but he wanted more - the whole of Africa. Driven by greed and lust for power, Rhodes wished to create a British colony across Africa, not for the betterment of its people or to spread Christian values, but for profit and business.

Using the tenacity and cunning that had elevated him to success, Rhodes tricked and butchered his way across the continent with the British government backing him every bloody step of the way. Rhodes made it his purpose to make the

world English and famously said: “If there be a God, I think that what he would like me to do is paint as much of the map of Africa British Red as possible.” His path of colonial greed led Britain head-first into a conflict now known as the Boer Wars.

Gold had been found in Transvaal in northern South Africa and Rhodes worried that this would prompt an alliance with the Germans, thus cutting off his route to the north of the continent. Rhodes planned an uprising to overthrow the Boer leaders, but it did not go as planned - far from the naked, spear-wielding foes he had previously conquered, the Boers had guns, and they fought back hard with skill and courage.

Outrage tore across Europe against what was seen as an unprovoked attack on an independent state, but not in Britain. Fully convinced of their noble mission, the British people believed the Boers

“As more British bodies piled up, British confidence in their own unconquerable might began to wane in Africa”

to be vicious and uncompromising. More soldiers poured into the region into a war they believed would be short and glorious, but as more British bodies piled up - Victoria's own grandson among them - British confidence began to wane.

As British reinforcements continued to flood into the territory the tide slowly began to turn. Rhodes had managed to squeeze a win from the jaws of defeat and the Boer territories became British colonies. The empire had grown, but at a cost. Rhodes' controversial actions during the war - including forming what would come to be known as the first concentration camps - had been a step too far for the British public. What had begun as a noble quest of Christianity had transformed into a greedy and brutal scramble for power. When Rhodes died his merciless version of imperialism was buried with him in the dry African dirt.

When Victoria passed away she was finally rid of the black mourning clothes she had worn for 40 years and was dressed entirely in white. Spring flowers were scattered around her body and her wedding veil was placed on her head as she prepared to reunite with the dearest love of her life. She was, however, leaving another behind; the Empire she had mothered now stretched across the globe with large swathes still coloured in the pink of British rule. As the sun set on the quiet room in which she lay in Osborne House, it was rising on the bustling spice markets of India, and soon the vast plains of British land in Africa would be bathed in warm golden light. Victoria had died, but the legacy she left behind continued to expand over the face of the planet. Even without their driver, the cogs of the British Empire whirred steadily on for another half century at least.



1892 caricature of Cecil Rhodes, after he announced plans for a telegraph line and railroad from Cape Town to Cairo



A satirical cartoon from 1876 poking fun at the relationship between Queen Victoria and Benjamin Disraeli



An official photograph of Victoria, taken in 1893

1850 – 1875

Empress Dowager Cixi

From concubine to conqueror, was China's last empress a shrewd moderniser or a pivotal player in imperial collapse?

From the rumour mills of Medieval courts to modern-day gossip magazines, humanity has throughout its history been fixated with rumour and hearsay, and many historians would argue there are few leaders in Chinese history who have fallen prey to such intense speculation as Empress Dowager Cixi.

Born in the winter of 1835 when the Chinese empire was still strong, Cixi was the daughter of an ordinary official from the Manchu Yehenara clan. She was well educated and able to read and write - an unusual skill for Manchu women of the time - and in 1851, she participated in the selection of consorts for the Xianfeng Emperor alongside 60 other candidates.

Cixi was chosen by the then-Empress Dowager to enter the Forbidden City as a fourth-rank concubine for her son

Contrary to modern-day interpretations of the Chinese concubine tradition, being chosen as a royal consort was a huge honour, and Cixi, one of the few candidates chosen, was placed in the sixth rank of the emperor's nocturnal companions, rising to fifth rank in just a few years.

Thanks to her ability to read and write Chinese, Cixi had many opportunities to help the emperor with daily government business. As the emperor aged, he'd ask Cixi to read palace memorials and write down his wishes. This meant Cixi quickly became well informed about state affairs and benefited from a valuable lesson in the art of governance under the ailing emperor's tutelage. This already put her in an advantageous position, but her starring role in Chinese history was cemented when she gave birth to Zaichun, the Xianfeng





EMPRESS DOWAGER CIXI

China, 1835-1908

Brief Bio

Highly influential in Chinese history, Empress Dowager Cixi was not born to rule - she was the daughter of a provincial official. However, she became one of Emperor Xianfeng's many concubines and was only elevated to national importance when she gave him an heir. After her husband's death she seized power and brought a medieval empire in the modern age.

The Boxer Rebellion was arguably the beginning of the end for Imperial China



Prince Gong was a pivotal player in Cixi's rise to rule



The issue of succession sparked widespread global interest, as demonstrated by this German caricature

Emperor's only surviving son, in 1856. By Zaichun's first birthday, Cixi was elevated to the third rank of consorts, putting her second only to the Empress Ci'an within the Xianfeng Emperor's household.

In September 1860, tension erupted between Britain, France and China, and troops attacked Beijing, destroying the Imperial Summer Palace. It's said that on hearing this news, the Xianfeng Emperor - who had fled the city with his royal household - fell into a deep depression and, turning to alcohol and drugs, never recovered. He died in 1861 having named eight regents for his five-year-old son, the new emperor, and expressing his hope that Ci'an and Cixi would continue to play a pivotal role in the boy's royal career. While historians largely agree that Xianfeng never intended Cixi to wield direct political power, his passing marked the beginning of the end for Chinese Imperialism, and Cixi, as the new emperor's politically shrewd mother, was at the helm.

However, as the emperor's mother, Cixi's position had no power attached to it, so it was necessary for her to ally herself with other strong figures. Cixi had formed a close friendship with the late emperor's wife Ci'an, and suggested to her that the pair become co-reigning empresses with powers surpassing the eight regents. The two women enjoyed a harmonious partnership; Ci'an had little interest in politics and

"In a move that further demonstrated her apparent grace and benevolence, Cixi refused to have the regents' family members killed"

preferred to take care of household matters, leaving Cixi free to rule as she saw fit. But the eight regents did not take kindly to Cixi's interference in politics, and constant confrontation with the empress dowagers meant Ci'an frequently refused to attend court audiences, leaving Cixi to fend for herself - no small feat as, because she was a woman, she was forced to govern from behind a screen, battling to make herself heard amid a sea of male voices.

Ever the shrewd political player, Cixi began to assemble support from talented ministers and soldiers who had great ambitions but had been ostracised by the regents for political or personal reasons. Two individuals, Prince Gong and Prince Chun, the late emperor's sixth and seventh brothers, would go on to play a pivotal role in Cixi's story.

With Prince Gong's help, Cixi brought about a number of charges against the regents, deeming

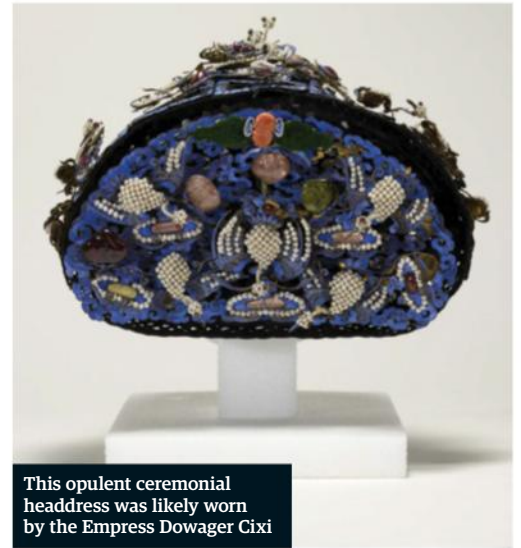
them 'incompetent' for the way they handled the invasion of Beijing that ultimately led to the Xianfeng Emperor's death. Three of the regents were executed, and in a move that further demonstrated her apparent grace and benevolence, Cixi refused to have the regents' family members killed, as would have been tradition. In a single stroke - known as the Xinyou Coup - Cixi had removed her challengers and emerged as a merciful yet powerful ruler.

In the following years, Cixi turned her attention to cleaning up national bureaucracies, which had become infested with corruption, and even had two prominent officials executed to serve as an example to others. Worryingly for Cixi, a number of reports accused her trusted confidant Prince Gong of corruption and so, fearing his growing influence, the prince was dismissed from his offices and appointments, but allowed to keep his status

Empress Dowager Cixi



Empress Dowager Cixi's final resting place is one of the most impressive imperial tombs of China



This opulent ceremonial headdress was likely worn by the Empress Dowager Cixi



The Xianfeng Emperor never recovered from the destruction of the Old Summer Palace in 1860

as nobility. The move once again highlighted Cixi's refusal to give up absolute power to anyone, even one of her most important friends - and, as it would soon emerge, even her son, the rightful emperor of China.

In 1872, the Tongzhi Emperor turned 17, and under the guidance of Ci'an, married the Jiashun Empress. Both her ancestry and zodiac symbol of tiger were cause for concern for the superstitious Cixi. Unhappy with the union, Cixi ordered the couple to separate. The Tongzhi Emperor, who proved to be an incompetent ruler anyway, fell into a deep despair and turned to a life of debauchery and hedonism outside the Forbidden City. His escapades led him to smallpox and ultimately death. By 1875, Cixi was back at the helm of total power.

The Tongzhi Emperor died without a male heir, leaving China in an unprecedented succession crisis: members of the generation above were ruled out as they could not succeed their nephew. After disagreement between Cixi and Ci'an, the four-year-old son of Prince Chun and Cixi's sister, Zaitain, was chosen to be the new Guangxu Emperor.

Cixi lived the life of luxury. It is estimated that the cost of running her court was about \$6.5 million (£9 million) per year

Soon after, Ci'an died and Cixi fell seriously ill. For some years the empress dowager had only written contact with her ministers, but she continued to wield ultimate power. When the Guangxu Emperor gained the right to rule in 1887, court officials encouraged Cixi to maintain her position until a later date. Court officials would put more effort into impressing Cixi than the emperor, and the young man was often overlooked entirely when it came to official government business. This decision, which Cixi had no issue accepting, arguably marks the start of Imperial China's unravelling, as behind the scenes, the Guangxu Emperor paid increasing attention to liberal ideas of reformation, and when he acceded to the throne, he implemented a series of political, legal and social changes.

These changes proved too sudden for China, and displeased the conservatively minded Cixi, who brought allegations of treason against the emperor, and subsequently resumed the role of regent.

By this time, China was increasingly facing pressure from foreign influences. Cixi, frustrated with foreign interference, allied with an anti-Christian,

anti-foreign cult known as The Boxers. This was to be her most disastrous failure. The Boxers launched widespread attacks on missionaries and diplomats, ultimately resulting in another foreign occupancy of Beijing. Court officials encouraged her to continue the fight against allied forces, but she knew she'd been bested. Cixi was able to negotiate a treaty that meant China would not have to give up any further territories, and - crucially - she would be permitted to continue her reign when the war was concluded.

She uncharacteristically accepted responsibility for the Boxer Rebellion, issuing a decree of 'self-reproach', and upon her return to Beijing, set about implementing sweeping political reforms that drew upon foreign policies in a bid to rectify internal issues within China. She even sponsored the implementation of a reform programme more radical than the one suggested by the reformers she'd previously had beheaded.

This was a marked step-change for the conservative Cixi, who had historically distrusted foreigners, and historians debate whether she truly envisioned a bold new China, or if, after a lifetime of fighting for power, she'd simply grown tired of resistance. She died on 15 November 1908, and on her death bed said she'd "never had a moment in life without anxiety."

1930 – 1975

Haile Selassie I

Controversial for some, but an inspiration and even God for many others, the Lion of Judah is one of Africa's most important figures

The year is 1966, and a crowd of thousands is gathered at Palisadoes Airport in Kingston, Jamaica, anxiously awaiting the arrival of the one they call the King of Kings, the Lion of Judah, the Almighty One. Scores of devoted Rastafarians have travelled from across the country to catch a glimpse of the man they believe to be God on Earth, an African Emperor travelling thousands of miles across the ocean to visit this small Caribbean nation. A hum of drums and joyous singing rings through the air and as the long-awaited plane finally lands and crawls to a halt, a symbol of a lion blazoned on its side, the crowd surges to meet it. Officials appeal for calm from the crowd for some minutes before eventually a figure is spotted at the top of the plane's landing steps. An elderly man of small stature, wearing a military uniform that almost engulfs him, steps out to greet the ecstatic crowd - Haile Selassie has arrived.

Although in later life he would brush shoulders with world leaders and even be worshipped as God among men, Haile Selassie's surroundings at his birth, at least, were humble. He was born Tafari Makonnen in a simple mud hut, in Ejersa Gora, Ethiopia. His father, Ras Makonnen, was the governor of Harrar, an Ethiopian province, as well as a close advisor of Emperor Menelik II. After his father's death, Tafari became close with the Emperor, who saw great potential in the young

man who was made the governor of Harrar when he was just 17.

He was the last emperor of Ethiopia, which fell into turmoil after his deposition

He was and still is revered by Rastafarians as a prophet from God and even a reincarnation of Jesus Christ

The young Tafari's rise to power was quick and in 1913, at the age of just 21, he became regent and heir apparent to the late Emperor's daughter, Zauditu. During this period he struggled against the Empress' relative conservatism and resistance to modernisation, but he did successfully bring Ethiopia into the League of Nations, the international body set up in the aftermath of World War I, in 1923. His reforms of the country signalled further centralisation of power, removing many of the powers held by regional rulers. In 1930, Empress Zauditu died, and Tafari was able to assume the throne. He took the name Haile Selassie, meaning Power of the Trinity, as his official title, a name that would very shortly be known throughout the world.

Over his first few years as Emperor, Selassie sought to continue his education reforms, modernising education and placing his country further on the world stage. However, he couldn't have predicted the horrific crisis looming on the horizon that would devastate Ethiopia. The menace of Fascism had been gradually sprouting in Italy since the 1920s, and by the 1930s Benito Mussolini was in complete control of the country as dictator. Known as Il Duce or The Leader, Mussolini was seeking to build a new Roman Empire for himself, to restore Italian

HAILE SELASSIE I Ethiopia, 1892-1975

Brief Bio

Born Tafari Makonnen, his title, 'Ras' (roughly equivalent to duke), gives him the name that we associate with the movement that bears it, Rastafarianism. Those who follow this faith believe that this Ethiopian Emperor was a god on Earth, even a representative of Jesus Christ himself. To add to the symbolism, his regnal name means 'Power of the Trinity'.

Haile Selassie I

Like many of Ethiopia's traditional leaders, he drew his authority as a direct descendent of King Solomon



The Second Italo-Ethiopian War

On 3 October 1935 Italy invaded Ethiopia on the presupposition of retaliating against a cross-border attack. In reality, Mussolini was seeking to gain greater control over East Africa, as well as regain Italian pride after its defeat to the African nation in the 19th Century. Il Duce was also looking to exploit the rich mineral wealth that he believed lay in Ethiopia's earth. Selassie reacted to the aggression initially by withdrawing his troops away from the advancing Italian force, in a bid to display an unaggressive front and perhaps negotiate a peace. As the war continued and it became more likely that the invaders would win, Selassie chose to flee the country and began travelling to England. In his later speech to the League of Nations, Selassie spoke of how the Italians used chemical weapons on civilians, in order to terrorise the population into surrender, or even to wipe them out altogether. After five years of occupation, the Italian occupation came to an end when British forces, along with Ethiopian resistance fighters and their allies, expelled Mussolini's army. This came shortly after the outbreak of World War II, with Fascist Italy allied to Nazi Germany. Selassie finally returned to his home country in 1941.

"Haile Selassie chose to flee Ethiopia as the inevitable conclusion to the war became apparent"

pride and exploit the mineral wealth of Africa. Years earlier, at the end of the 19th century, Italy had tried and failed to take Ethiopia in an embarrassing series of defeats by the army of Emperor Menelik II. By 1934 the European power was poised to strike once again, but this time with deadly efficiency. On 3 October 1935 the Italian army invaded and within a year the country had been conquered.

In a move that attracted much criticism from his opponents in later life, Selassie chose to flee Ethiopia as the inevitable conclusion to the war became apparent. He escaped through neighbouring French-held territories on his way to England. The full horrors of the war he left behind would not be fully revealed to the world until June of the same year when he addressed the 52 state members of the League of Nations. In his famous speech, he decried the inaction of the League, which he had expected to protect his vulnerable country, as was its mandate. He also spoke of the great atrocities that were committed by the Italian army as it pressed forward. "It is not only upon warriors that the Italian Government has made war," he said. "It has above all attacked populations far removed from hostilities, in order to terrorise and exterminate them." His accounts that Italy had been using chemical weapons - including noxious gases that had been

banned since the end of the First World War - were shocking. His ominous warning to the League is perhaps one of the most famous forewarnings of the impending world war: "I decided to come

myself to bear witness against the crime perpetrated against my people and give Europe a warning of the doom that awaits it, if it should bow before the accomplished fact."

Selassie spent the remainder of the 1930s in exile, in a small house near Bath, England and became a symbol of the resistance against the Italian invaders. Soon enough Europe slipped into war once again in 1939, and in 1940 Mussolini declared war on

Britain and France, joining with Hitler. The Italian adventure in Africa came to a decisive close as British colonial forces and their allies drove the Italians out of most of Africa in what became known as the East African Campaign. A combined force of African, Ethiopian and British Commonwealth troops helped to free Ethiopia and in 1941 Selassie re-entered Addis Ababa to retake his throne.

After his return, Selassie was if anything more determined to centralise the country's power around himself, as well as further modernise its infrastructure, though this contradiction would later cost him dearly. In 1950 he founded the University of Addis Ababa and in 1955 released a

In his speech to the League of Nations in 1936, he warned of a horror awaiting Europe, foreshadowing World War II



Defining moment

Appeal to the League of Nations June 1936

Speaking in Geneva, Haile's famous speech to the League of Nations, denouncing the Italian invasion of his country, catapults him even further onto the world stage. As a member of the League, Ethiopia expected the support of the other countries and Haile even explained how this presupposed protection deterred him from preparing for the Italian threat. He decries the use of chemical weapons, including mustard gas and other noxious substances sprayed down by the Italian air force. These weapons had been prohibited since the First World War, where their use had been devastating. Haile calls upon the League to act in defence of his small nation and warns that a similar fate is awaiting the countries of Europe.

Timeline

1892

● **Born in Ejersa Goro**
Haile is born Tafari Makonnen in a province of Ethiopia, in a mud hut. He is the only surviving legitimate heir of Ras Makonnen, the governor or Harrar and advisor to Emperor Menelik II.
23 July 1892

● **Becomes regent**
Emperor Menelik II dies with no male heir and Tafari becomes regent, with the late Emperor's daughter Zauditu inheriting the position of Empress.
1913

● **Crowned Emperor**
After Zauditu dies on 2 April, Tafari inherits the crown. He adopts the new title Haile Selassie, or 'power of the trinity', as his official name as Emperor.
2 November 1930

● **Mussolini invades**
In a bid to expand its Imperial ambitions and extend its control over Africa, Italy invades Ethiopia. This brief war lasts until May 1936, when the Italian army enters Addis Ababa.
3 October 1935

● **Exile in England**
After the Italian occupation, Haile flees to England, where he remains in exile. He buys Fairfield House near Bath, Somerset, where he spends the next five years.
2 May 1936



● **The East Africa Campaign**
With the help of British and other forces, the Italian army is defeated in Ethiopia and the occupation comes to an end. Haile returns and reforms a government.
January 1941

new constitution for the country, extending voting rights further. However, he still maintained close control over the main facets of government, with all the key figures of authority, including the prime minister, acting almost as his royal court. These policies struck a peculiar balance - on the one side stretching out the hand of modernity and progress, while with the other maintaining a vice grip over all the executive power.

By the turn of the Sixties, Selassie was becoming an elderly man, but some of his most turbulent years still lay ahead of him. While the Emperor was on a state visit abroad, a group of disgruntled students, along with members of Selassie's own bodyguard, attempted to form a coup and take over the government. Though the plotters failed due to hopeless planning, it rocked the royal boat and gave the country a taste of mayhem to come. The very intelligentsia he had created through his reforms had turned against him.

Undeterred, Selassie continued to build his legacy, founding the Organisation of African Unity in 1963, a body designed to bring together the continent's nations and end colonisation, as well as making numerous state visits all over the world. He visited America several times, a country he greatly admired and relied on as an ally, but perhaps his defining and for many people most memorable visit was to Jamaica in 1966.

From the moment of his crowning as Emperor, from 1930 onwards, a sect of dedicated followers had formed in Jamaica, known as Rastafari. The religious sub-culture was and still is entirely based around Selassie himself, taking his name before

his coronation, Ras Tafari, as its identity. The Rastafari worshipped Selassie as the living God on Earth, the promised descendant of Solomon, the African King. As the land ruled, Ethiopia was also considered sacred, and many Rastafari believed and still believe it to be their Zion, the holy land where they should return. His brief visit to Jamaica in 1966 was a poignant occasion for the movement, which swelled in numbers in later years after the emergence of and popularity of Bob Marley and reggae music.

If the Emperor's popularity abroad was on a high, it couldn't have been more different on his own soil. The seeds he had planted with his educational and structural reforms had by now taken root in the form of a progressive and leftist youth, impelled by the liberal Sixties and hungry for faster progression and greater freedoms than the old regime was willing to provide.

By 1974, the revolutionary aspects of the military, buoyed by new ideology and ambition, were ready to make their move on the government and forced the Emperor to step down in September of that year. Not long after, in August the following year, Selassie was declared dead while in the custody of the revolutionary government. Though

his reign cannot be characterised as perfect, the Lion of Judah embodied the great changes that happened to his country and Africa as a whole throughout the 20th Century. Certainly, he occupies the unique position of being revered as a god, and it is for this, as well as remaining the enduring symbol of his nation and his people, that he is remembered.

The word Rastafari actually derives from Selassie's former title and given name, Ras Tafari



Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Haile Selassie, Emperor of Ethiopia, in his study

Life in the time of Haile Selassie

The League of Nations

Formed in the aftermath of the First World War, the League of Nations consisted of 52 member states. The League's aims included protecting its members from aggressive nations, as well as preventing illegal trafficking, though the outbreak of World War II is testament to its overall ineffectiveness.

Italian Colonialism

After his gradual rise to becoming the Fascist dictator of Italy in the 1920s, Mussolini sought to create his new Roman Empire, with himself at its head. As well as restoring hurt Italian pride, Il Duce also believed that by taking parts of mineral-rich Africa he could solve his country's economic woes.

The Rastafari Movement

Emerging around the 1930s, largely in Jamaica, the Rastafari movement mixes Zionist Christian theology with ritualistic cannabis use. Rastafarians consider Haile Selassie to be God on Earth, as they believe is prophesied in the Bible.

The Organisation of African Unity

The OAU was founded in Addis Abba, the capital of Ethiopia, by Haile Selassie. Its chief aim was to strengthen the bonds between the nations of the continent and to form a united front against external aggressors and colonialism in general. It was eventually disbanded in 2002.

Spread of Marxism

Communism and Marxism were the most influential political ideologies to emerge during the 20th century and reshaped the political landscapes of the world forever. Though they were slower to become popular in Ethiopia, left-wing, socialist and progressive ideals became more and more popular as the century wore on.

Defining moment

Visit to the Caribbean 21 April 1966

On landing in Kingston, Jamaica on a state visit, Haile is greeted by a frenzied crowd of thousands, many of whom are members of the Rastafari movement. Emerging during the 1930s, this religious and spiritual movement claimed that the Ethiopian Emperor was divine and even a reincarnation of Jesus Christ. During his brief visit, Haile addressed both houses of the Jamaican parliament and laid a wreath of remembrance at Kingston's war memorial. His presence causes utter chaos wherever he travels around the island, such is the devotion of those people who consider him to be God on Earth. It's debated whether Haile actually denied or supported the claims of his divinity.



1975

Silver jubilee

Haile celebrates 25 years as Emperor and in the same year grants a new constitution giving greater freedoms to his subjects, without diminishing his own powers.
2 November 1955

A failed coup

While on a visit abroad, groups of discontent students, in collaboration with members of the royal bodyguard and army, attempt to organise a coup to depose the Emperor.
14 December 1960



Deposed as Emperor

By now advanced in age, the Emperor is no longer able to maintain the authority he once held and he is deposed by a socialist coup led by the military, beginning the Ethiopian Revolution.
13 September 1974

Death

Haile Selassie dies while in the custody of the revolutionary military government at the age of 83. The circumstances of his death are still shrouded in suspicion.
27 August 1975

1936

Edward VIII

Edward VIII shocked the world in 1936 when he announced to Britain and her empire that he was abdicating his throne for an American socialite named Wallis Simpson

In the late Thirties, Britain was facing its darkest hour. Hitler and his fascist thugs were rattling the sabre across Europe, quashing the rights of free men and women everywhere. Italy and Spain had fallen to the oppression of right-wing dictatorships and it wouldn't be long before war would sweep through the last free countries of the European continent. This was a time for stout hearts and stiff upper lips, for every British soul to look to the defence of the country and face these evil forces valiantly. Meanwhile Edward, Duke of Windsor, who until very recently had been King of Great Britain, sat in his villa in Antibes, France.

Edward's childhood and teenage years were a preparatory education to groom him for the day he would become King of Great Britain. He had one-to-one tuition with the best tutors in the land and attended renowned military schools - yet he was deeply unhappy. His father George, later to be crowned King George V, stood as a domineering and at times terrifying figure to Edward and his two siblings. George ran his household like a military operation, the children were forced to always be on time, to dress correctly and behave properly. Punishments included frightening confrontations with George in his study; a harsh prospect for Edward who was small and shy.

At just 12 years old, Edward's father felt he needed a military education in order to prepare him for public life. He was sent to the naval college at Osborne on the Isle of Wight. Edward's

According to his biographers Edward had an unhappy childhood; his nanny would deliberately hurt him

shy nature meant that he struggled to fit in with the other boys and bullying was an almost inevitable consequence. He did eventually find his feet and settled into this regimented life, passing the naval examination board for Dartmouth officer school in 1909. Edward continued to be a shy young man. During his cadet training, his parents threw a party for him at Buckingham Palace about which he recorded in his diary, 'I

had to dance, a thing I hate, the whole thing was a great strain.' The 19-year-old Edward was still struggling to find his place in the world outside of the ritual of royal protocol.

It was clear that Edward lacked direction but World War I would see to it that all men of his age would be given a chance to prove themselves. Edward wanted to serve with the men of his army regiment on the frontline, he yearned to make a difference and war afforded him the opportunity. Unfortunately, the Secretary for War Lord Kitchener refused his request stating that it would be too dangerous for the young man. Edward continued to insist on being allowed to go and in the end toured the front regardless.

His admiration for the troops was shown in a correspondence he sent back to England, 'I'm very keen on the fighting troops being made as comfortable as possible always... the poor devils have a bloody enough time in the trenches... they are absolutely marvellous.' The war years had given Edward a sense of freedom he wouldn't normally have been permitted, he could meet other

“He continued to make horrendous errors in judgement, conducting a tour of Nazi Germany in 1937 and allowing himself to be photographed with Hitler”



Wallis Simpson was the love of Edward's life, though it was known that he had other mistresses previously

EDWARD VIII

Britain, 1894 - 1972

Brief Bio

Playboy prince Edward never really wanted to be king, but the death of his father forced it on him. The rigours of an unhappy childhood resulted in a man who pursued pleasure and he struggled to combine this with his royal duties as Prince of Wales. His affair with Wallis Simpson sounded the death knell for his kingship.



A dark connection

The dark connection between Hitler and the British royal family in the Thirties began in 1935 when the Fuhrer used Charles Edward, the Duke of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha as an informal ambassador of goodwill to the royal family. Charles seemed to have succeeded in persuading Edward that Hitler was the only defence against communism. The connection grew stronger when Edward decided to visit Germany in 1937. A clandestine meeting between Edward and committed Nazis Rudolf Hess and Martin Bormann took place in Edward's hotel in Paris before the visit. An impression of the meeting written by Hess informed Hitler that, 'the Duke was proud of his German blood' and there was 'no need to lose a single German life in invading Britain. The Duke and his clever wife will deliver the goods.' Hess fully expected Edward to regain power in Britain and persuade the populace to seek peace. The visit to Germany then went ahead, Hitler was charming and Edward enjoyed his tour. As the war progressed, a secret memorandum to American president Roosevelt from J Edgar Hoover claimed, 'that the Duke of Windsor entered into an agreement. If Germany was victorious [Herman Goering] would install the Duke of Windsor as King of England.' While it seems unlikely Edward did agree to this, he must have maintained links with the Nazis for this type of rumour to circulate.

men his own age under the guise of these tours and drop the cold protocol normally required of official visits.

After the armistice it was as if this new-found freedom had disappeared with the rifles and bayonets. He commented in 1919, 'I mixed with men... I found my manhood.' His father was quick to clip his new found self-confidence sternly informing him, 'don't think you act like other people.' He longed for the freedom given to him during the war and found his new life of state openings and formal banquets smothering. He drifted through his university career failing to make an impact academically and then went on an extended tour of the empire. While this should have offered him the adventure he yearned for, he quickly saw that he was just as much a prisoner abroad as he was at home. Every step he took was closely monitored, and he became frustrated and depressed. His frustration made him angry and he began to display the bigotry and dismissive nature inherited by many English aristocracy of the time. He was appalled by the Australian aborigines describing them as, 'the most revolting form of living creatures I've ever seen.' He also began to hate communism with unrelenting zeal.

It was during this unhappy time that in 1931 he met the woman that would change his life forever - Wallis Simpson. Edward had already had a number of affairs but they were fleeting. In Wallis he found something that he hadn't seen in other women, a strong independent character that knew

her own mind and refused to stand on ceremony. He quickly became infatuated by her, it was said by observers that he lost 'all sense of reason' when he was around her. He lavished her with jewellery, gold or whatever she wanted, it seemed as if Edward had finally found someone to give his life meaning. There was however a complication as far as Edward's position as the Prince of Wales was concerned; Wallis was a married woman. When she became Edward's mistress she promised to give up her second husband for him but this wouldn't soothe the sensibilities of his family. To compound the issue she wasn't from a royal household, she was an American socialite from Baltimore. When it became obvious to Edward's father in 1934 that this wasn't another casual relationship he was furious; he angrily told him to get rid of her.

On 20 January 1936, George V died and the question of Wallis's status was immediately brought into question. Would she become queen? The short answer was absolutely not - she was twice divorced and unpopular with the British establishment. Absurd rumours circulated about the spell she had placed Edward under, her devious manipulation, her dark hold over the new king. The issue was becoming even more serious, especially considering that the country was edging ever closer to another world war. The nation needed leadership, not uncertainty, but Edward did not see the two issues as related. He wanted to marry Wallis, and everything else was of secondary importance. Besides, Adolf Hitler would defeat the

Edward gained his pilot's licence and founded the 32 Royal squadron, used for royal flights to official engagements

Defining moment

Tour of the empire 5 August 1919

After the war, Edward spends the next five years touring the empire and representing his father abroad. He does a number of public relation events including presenting the Prince of Wales cup to the Canadian hockey league and visiting the politically sensitive city of Quebec where he receives a warm welcome. His charm and good looks serve him well and he becomes a popular figure. Not all of his visits went so smoothly however; in a high-profile visit to Australia he wrote of the Aborigines, 'they are the most revolting form of living creatures I've ever seen'.

Defining moment

Royal family meet Wallis November 1934

Edward's less than discreet affair with Wallis Simpson comes to a head in 1934 when Edward invites Simpson to an evening party at Buckingham Palace. Edward's father had originally struck her name out of the list of invitations but Edward invited her, regardless. When George finds out, he becomes outraged and shouts his disapproval. Simpson is subsequently frozen out of all royal family functions. This puts enormous strain on the relationship between Edward and his father, lending more fuel to the suspicion that Edward will abdicate when George dies.

Timeline

1894

A prince is born
Edward Windsor is born at White Lodge, Richmond Park London to George and Mary, the Duke and Duchess of York. He is given the title His Highness Prince Edward of York.
23 June 1894

The Prince at Dartmouth
On the wishes of his family, Edward joins the navy as an officer cadet at Dartmouth Navy College. He spends two years there before becoming a Midshipman.
September 1909

Prince of Wales and heir apparent
On the death of Edward VII, Edward's father becomes the King of Britain and her empire. Edward is immediately invested as the Prince of Wales and is now next in line to the throne.
23 June 1910



War
At the outbreak of World War I, Edward joins the Grenadier guards and asks to serve at the front. This request is refused by the Secretary of State for War Lord Kitchener.
28 July 1914



Time magazine story
Time magazine publishes a story in which Edward is reported to have said that he would abdicate the throne. This is officially denied, but the story serves as an insight into his thoughts.
29 April 1929

communists and the world would be at peace - there was really nothing to worry about as far as he was concerned.

The fact that Edward was for the appeasement of Hitler was not unusual; many members of the British establishment were in the late Thirties. What was compounding the issue was the Nazi party was seen to be influencing the king through Wallis. Whether this was true or not is debatable but many influential people saw it so; the American ambassador commented, 'many people here suspect that Mrs Simpson is actually in German pay.' The situation was looking bad and as an illustration of the tense atmosphere, Edward suffered an assassination attempt when a lone gunman apparently working for an undisclosed foreign power tried to pull a gun on him. When Edward returned to Buckingham Palace the first sympathy call was from Hitler.

Then in November 1936 Edward told Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin that he was going to marry Wallis. Baldwin rejected the proposal, stating that it would be unacceptable to the British cabinet if the head of state married a twice-divorcee. Wallis herself expected full marriage, and Edward refused to give her up. He saw no option; on the 11 December he announced to Britain and the empire, "I have found it impossible to carry the heavy burden of responsibility and to discharge my duties as King... without the help and support of the woman I love." He abdicated the throne, passing the duty to his brother Albert, the father of Queen Elizabeth II.

Edward and Wallis were now in limbo. They were granted official titles, the Duke and Duchess

Edward was staunchly anti-communist and feared the communist takeover of Europe during the Thirties

of Windsor, but were frozen out of much of the public salary they should have received for the role. Once again Edward fell into a deep depression, he relied on the hospitality of friends abroad and used the Château de Candé in France to marry Wallis. He became an embittered and ungrateful guest, running up huge phone bills and refusing to pay for anything. He also continued to make horrendous errors in judgement, conducting a tour of Nazi Germany in 1937 and allowing himself to be photographed with Hitler.

In 1940, as a way of preventing any more embarrassment to the royal family, Winston Churchill gave the Duke a governorship in the Bahamas. Edward saw it for what it was - a way to get him out of the way. He conducted his duties, made inroads into improving the situations of the workers on the islands but hated his current position none the less. He had become increasingly estranged from his family.

By the time the war was over and the dust had settled over his relationship with Wallis, the Duke was content to live quietly. He established himself in France at the 4 Route du Champ d'Entraînement Paris, later to be known as Villa Windsor, where he spent the rest of his days in retirement. He had lived a privileged life but it was a life he did not want, in the end he gave up the power he inherited at birth for the woman he loved.



Edward preparing to inform the nation that he is abdicating the throne in 1936

Life in the time of Edward VIII

The British Empire

Dominions like Canada, Australia and New Zealand governed their own affairs but still held political ties with Britain through the British monarchy. Other countries like Burma and India were governed directly as colonies.

An age of extremes

The huge social upheaval caused by the Great Depression created a credibility gap between liberal governments and their citizens in Europe. This gave rise to extremist governments from the left and right.

Role of the monarchy

The role of the monarchy in Britain and throughout the Commonwealth was changing in the wake of the mass media. It was no longer enough for the monarch to simply open Parliament once a year, the Royal family was expected to set an example.

Colonial unrest

The Thirties gave rise to independence movements in many imperial colonies. The most vocal of these movements came from India and Mahatma Gandhi's freedom group. While the British government doggedly hung on to its empire in India, the British people started to wonder if it was worth it

Britain, a waning power?

No-one could dispute that British influence throughout the globe remained strong during the Thirties, but the government's reluctance to rearm and prepare for war in the face of fascist and communist threats was said to be indicative of a waning power that no longer had the stomach for military commitments.

Governor of the Bahamas

In an effort to prevent Edward and Wallis, now Duke and Duchess of Windsor, from embarrassing the British government even more, Edward is given the governorship of the Bahamas.
18 August 1940

Retirement

With the war won and the new world order establishing itself in Europe, France becomes safe again for British citizens. Edward and Wallis retire there comfortably.
November 1952

Defining moment

Abdication 10 December 1936

Edward makes it clear to Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin that he will not change his mind about marrying Wallis as soon as her second divorce is finalised. Baldwin informs Edward that the cabinet and the imperial parliaments will not accept his marriage to Wallis if he still wishes to be king. With Edward finding it impossible to reconcile his personal life with his duty as a future monarch, he finally decides to abdicate and signs the act at Fort Belvedere in the presence of his younger brother Albert the Duke of York who is next in line to the throne.

Succession to the throne

George V dies and Edward is immediately put forward for the succession. It also becomes known within the government that he intends to soon marry Wallis.
20 January 1936



Assassination attempt

A man called George McMahon pulls a gun on Edward and is quickly set upon by police. He testifies that he was working for a foreign power although this is never proved.
16 July 1936

Marriage to Wallis

Edward and Wallis marry at the Château de Candé in France. While the service is attended by a number of high-profile socialites, none of the royal family attends.
3 June 1937

Visit to Germany

Against the advice of the British Government, Edward and Wallis visit Nazi Germany and are warmly welcomed by Adolf Hitler. It is reported that he almost gives a Nazi salute.
October 1937



Death of a Duke

Edward dies peacefully in his sleep aged 77. His body is flown back to England and a funeral service is attended by Queen Elizabeth II. His body is buried at the royal burial ground at Frogmore.
28 May 1972

1972

© Alamy

— 1952 – present —

Elizabeth II

After more than 60 years on the throne, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II remains one of history's most popular monarchs

Her Majesty the Queen may not have led armies into glorious battle or faced down bloodthirsty rebellions in far-flung corners of her realm, yet she remains one of the most popular and beloved rulers to have ever worn the crown. Her reign as queen is also the longest the nation has ever known. Such a lengthy tenure may seem less noteworthy in an age removed from murderous plots and usurping royal relatives, but Elizabeth has nonetheless sat resolute in her duties through the latter half of the 20th century and the burgeoning years of the 21st - a time when the Western world metamorphosed in the wake of two world wars. Britain and her many territories have undergone quite the transformation, and the role of monarch and the royal family has changed drastically along with it.

After more than six decades as the head of state, Elizabeth has faced the perils, challenges and benefits of being a monarch in the modern age. Gone are the threats of invasion, intrigue and insurrections, replaced instead by satire, media scandals and the weight of public opinion. She remains the most well-travelled of any British monarch and her tireless work with hundreds of charities around the world set a precedent that has typified the role of a modern-day royal.

It seems bizarre then, when you consider the extent of her future reign, that the young Princess Elizabeth was barely a consideration for the throne as a child. Born on 21 April 1926, the daughter of Prince Albert, Duke of York, Elizabeth was at the time third in the line of succession behind her uncle, the Prince of Wales, and her father. However, as was royal protocol, it was assumed that her uncle would almost certainly father children of his

own, pushing Elizabeth further down the line. She was never expected to become queen.

But to the young princess, such trivialities were of little concern. Nicknamed 'Lilibet' by her family, she enjoyed a close relationship with her father, her mother Lady Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon (later the Queen Mother) and her grandfather, George V. The king's health was already deteriorating by the time Elizabeth was born, but her regular visits and playful relationship with the ailing monarch were said to have buoyed his spirits far more than any medicine. Her positive effect was even covered by newspapers - a taste of just how obsessed the media could, and would, become with its own monarchy. Still,

Elizabeth got to enjoy the pomp and privilege of being a royal without the pressures of being an heir apparent or an heir presumptive. However, no one could see the turn of events that came next.

The king was dead. George V had finally passed away from a worsening bout of septicaemia on 20 January 1936, with the throne then

passing to his eldest son, the Prince of Wales. Crowned King Edward VIII, it was apparent from the very start that Edward wasn't going to be a conventional king. Known for his vocal dislike of court protocols and politicians, the new monarch even broke convention by watching the proclamation of his own ascendancy from a window in St James's Palace. By his side stood Wallis Simpson, an American socialite whom the 41-year-old king had been courting for some time. Edward's association with the once divorced and still married (to her second husband) Simpson was already causing outrage in royal and political circles alike, but it would take his decision to propose to her a few months later to tip the balance.

After WWII, the young Elizabeth saved up her ration coupons to afford the material for her wedding dress

ELIZABETH II

Britain, 1926-present

Brief Bio

Queen Elizabeth II of Great Britain may not have faced the religious upheaval and Spanish Armadas of her Tudor namesake, but her six-decades-long reign has been just as memorable. Crowned in the aftermath of WWII, Elizabeth has had to deal with a fluctuating relationship with British politics, an evolving Commonwealth and even the very purpose of a monarch in the modern age.

The Queen sent her first email in 1976. She sent the message over ARPANET, a small-scale precursor to the internet



The annus horribilis

1992 was an eventful and difficult year for Queen Elizabeth II

There have been a number of challenging years in Elizabeth's considerable reign, but 1992 proved to be one her worst. Despite it marking the 40th anniversary of her ascension to the throne, those 12 months were littered with political issues and startling catastrophes that likely pushed the normally resolute monarch to her limits. Elizabeth named the period her 'annus horribilis' (likely a reference to John Dryden's poem of the same name that describes London in the grip of the Great Plague and Great Fire of London in 1666).

It all started in March when her second son, Prince Andrew Duke of York, separated from his wife Sarah Ferguson duchess of York. The couple made an official announcement stating the separation was amicable, but speculation was rife that all was not so rosy behind the scenes. These rumours seemingly sprung to life a few months later when photos of the duchess topless with her lover appeared all over the tabloid newspapers. It was an incredibly embarrassing episode for the royal household and it didn't bode well for the rest of the year.

The incidents continued a month after the duke and duchess' split in March with another member of the royal family. Her daughter Anne, the Princess Royal, had married Mark Phillips, a lieutenant in the 1st Queen's Dragoon Guards, in 1973 and it seemed another fairy-tale royal union to captivate the public. However, the couple decided to separate in 1989, citing years of strain stemming from Phillips' military commitments. In April 1992 the couple officially divorced, further adding to a media-fuelled story that the royal family was splintering under the strain of being in the public eye.

In June, things got even worse. The journalist Andrew Morton had just released his biography of the princess of Wales, *Diana: Her True Story*, and it was filled with sensational stories regarding Diana and her deteriorating relationship with Prince Charles. The couple's fairy-tale relationship had been falling apart as early as the mid-1980s and the two were openly seeing other people despite still being married. Diana's affair with Major James Hewitt, Charles's liaison with Camilla Parker-Bowles and Diana's supposed suicidal thoughts were sensationalised in gruesome detail and it caused the Queen, and her whole royal family, a great deal of embarrassment for years to come.

To top it all off, one of the Queen's favourite residences was badly damaged by a raging inferno in the same year. On the 20 November - a mere four days before the Queen would give her Guildhall speech in which she referred to her year as her annus horribilis - Windsor Castle caught fire, causing severe damage to the whole structure. So bad was the damage that it cost an estimated £36.5 million to repair over the following five years. The blaze started when a spotlight caused a curtain to catch alight and it soon spread through the entire castle in a matter of minutes. There were no serious injuries and no deaths as a result of the blaze, but the royal administration was forced to open Buckingham Palace soon after in order to help fund the castle's restoration program.



As the first female monarch in 51 years, Elizabeth knew many challenges faced her in a rapidly changing world

Mounting pressure from the rest of the royal family and Parliament forced the king to choose between his duties as a monarch and his love for a woman judged too politically troublesome to be his queen. Edward, forever the rebel, chose his heart over his crown and abdicated on 10 December 1936 after 326 days as king (among the shorter reigns of British monarchs). This unforeseen decision threw Edward's younger brother, Elizabeth's father, onto the throne. With her father crowned George VI on 12 May 1937, the 11-year-old princess was no longer a carefree child, but an heir presumptive to the British throne. (An heir presumptive is someone who is first in line to the throne, but whose position can be superseded by a stronger claim - conversely, an heir apparent is someone in the same position, minus the chance of a challenge.)

It was during her early teens that Elizabeth met Prince Philip of Greece and Denmark. The two began a slow courtship, with Philip travelling regularly as part of his service in the Royal Navy - eventually the young couple announced their engagement on 9 July 1947. Her choice of fiancé caused friction with some members of the royal court. Philip had very little financial standing and his family had marital ties to the Nazi party in Germany, but his conversion from Greek Orthodoxy to Anglicanism and the taking of his mother's family name, Mountbatten, helped ease the union in the eyes of his detractors. The two married later that year on 20 November at Westminster Abbey. Despite the hundreds of presents the couple received from around the world, Elizabeth refused to allow the wedding to be a lavish affair.



Despite his royal responsibilities as both a duke and then a king, George VI enjoyed a close and positive relationship with his two daughters



With her reign spanning over six decades, Elizabeth has become an intrinsic part of Britain's cultural identity

Life in the time of Elizabeth II

Empire to Commonwealth

During her reign, the realm has evolved from the British empire into the Commonwealth of Nations. This transition is the result of the decolonisation of the empire into an intergovernmental organisation that consists of 53 nations (mostly former British colonies) that are recognised as equal member states.

A shift in power

The actual power the king or queen of England can enact upon the realm is a shadow of its former self. The time of absolute royal authority is a thing of the past and Elizabeth II is bound by a constitutional agreement with Parliament that limits her influence over policies and legislation.

Travelling the globe

Elizabeth II remains one of the most well-travelled monarchs in British history. As the head of the Commonwealth, she flew to Canada in 1958 and opened the 23rd Parliament there, which served as just one of the ways that the crown has recognised the semi-autonomy of its member states.

Silver jubilee

In 1977, Elizabeth II celebrated the 25th anniversary of her accession to the throne. To mark the occasion, she and Prince Philip visited 36 counties - no monarch had visited so many parts of the UK within such a small amount of time.

Media frenzy

Public interest in the royal family had always been high, but the media's focus on royals took an alarmingly sensational turn in the 1980s. The media ran endless stories about how the Queen disapproved of prime minister Margaret Thatcher's often unpopular policies, fuelling rumours of a division between crown and government.

As the health of King George VI began to deteriorate, Elizabeth and Philip's first two children were born - Prince Charles, born on 14 November 1948 and Princess Anne born on 15 August 1950. Elizabeth was enjoying her new role as mother, yet her responsibilities on behalf of the king were becoming more time-consuming as she travelled Europe on his behalf to visit those countries still recovering from the scars of World War II. On 6 February 1952, the king eventually succumbed to the melting pot of cancers and tumours that were robbing him of life. And, just like that, the 25-year-old princess became the new monarch of the realm.

Elizabeth was crowned at Westminster Abbey on 2 June 1953, following over a year's worth of national mourning for the late king. Elizabeth chose to retain her given name as her regnal title and, under the advisement of prime minister Winston Churchill and her mother, the surname of Windsor (instead of her husband's family name). Upon her ascension she was officially crowned Queen Elizabeth II of the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Union of South Africa, Pakistan and Ceylon (modern-day Sri Lanka).

The Commonwealth Of Nations, as it would come to be known, was an idea that began to form before Elizabeth was even born, yet it was under her reign that the Commonwealth swelled in size and became more than a gathering of former British territories. Many of these overseas nations were beginning to crave autonomy from Britain and the

new queen embraced the idea fully. She and Philip, now the Duke of Edinburgh, began a six-month tour of the Commonwealth almost immediately following her coronation. With Europe still in a state of physical, economical and political recovery from World War II, Elizabeth's arrival had an almost talismanic effect. She even travelled further afield, becoming the first British reigning monarch to visit both Australia and New Zealand.

In 1956, Elizabeth experienced her first political misstep. Following the rise of nationalism in Egypt, Britain made a joint attempt with France to take control of the Suez Canal in Egypt. It was a short-lived effort and Britain was forced to withdraw as the USA attempted to appease the situation diplomatically. It was an embarrassing episode for the Conservative administration at the time, made worse by rumours

that Elizabeth had been against invasion from the start. The prime minister, Anthony Eden, denied such a claim, but it was enough to undermine his position and he soon resigned. At this time, the Conservative government had no formal process to appoint a new prime minister in the middle of a parliamentary term.

The decision fell to Elizabeth who, under advisement, appointed Harold Macmillan as Eden's replacement. The decision, along with the Suez Canal fiasco, led to considerable criticism of the Queen from MPs, lords and the media. It was a stark reminder that the days of the monarch as a ruler were firmly resigned to the history books.

The Queen has two birthdays: an official one celebrated in June by the Trooping the Colour ceremony, and her real one on 21 April



Once Elizabeth became queen, she travelled tirelessly across the world, including this trip to West Germany in 1965

Despite all her travels, the Queen doesn't have a passport. Since the crown issues them, Her Majesty is exempt from needing to have one

So what were Elizabeth's political powers? Well, while Parliament holds autonomy from the crown in terms of its infrastructure, the king or queen still holds some administrative (be they mostly ceremonial) authorities. Elizabeth has the power to open and dissolve Parliament prior to a general election, as well the right to consult the prime minister on issues of state at any time. That's not to say that Elizabeth's position as queen is simply a figurehead - as monarch, Elizabeth must ratify all bills passed through Parliament. This is known as Royal Assent, and it's a political procedure that's not been refused since its creation in 1707. Even the Queen's speech (not to be confused with the Queen's Christmas message), delivered in Parliament every year, forms an important role, signifying royal approval of a new year in legislation.

While the 1960s and 1970s were a transformative period for Britain and the Commonwealth, with over 20 countries gaining independence, the 1980s were a mixed affair. Despite issues with rising unemployment, the nation was united in celebrating the union of Elizabeth's eldest son, Prince Charles with Lady Diana Spencer in 1981. It was a lavish affair and the presence of the bright, young princess-to-be was a breath of fresh air for the royal family's public image. Sadly, the jovial public mood was curtailed when the Falklands War broke out the following year. Even the Queen's middle child, Prince Andrew, took part in the Royal Navy's conflict with Argentinean forces in the South Atlantic. Despite her concerns, Elizabeth wanted Andrew to remain

The abdication 20 January-1 December 1936

1936 is a very tumultuous year for the royal family. In January, King George V (Elizabeth's grandfather) dies. The throne then passes to his eldest son Albert, who becomes Edward VIII. However, the uncrowned Edward chooses to abdicate less than 12 months later and his brother (and Elizabeth's father) the Duke of York becomes King George VI. With her father now presiding on the throne, Elizabeth becomes first in line to the throne at the age of ten. During this period, Princess Elizabeth is also referred to by the official title of 'heir presumptive'.



Elizabeth is crowned 2 June 1953

Following the death of her father, George VI, towards the end of 1952, the 26-year-old heir presumptive is finally crowned Queen Elizabeth II. Despite the tradition that the husband's surname is taken, it is decreed that Elizabeth will retain her family name of Windsor instead of Philip's name Mountbatten. At the time, Philip complains that, "I am the only man in the country not allowed to give his name to his own children." To appease the situation, the name Mountbatten-Windsor is adopted in 1960 for any male-line descendants who do not carry royal titles.

Timeline

1926

Elizabeth is born

Born Elizabeth Alexandra Mary Windsor, the young princess is the daughter of George, Duke of York (later George VI) and Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon (later Queen and then Queen Mother).
21 April 1926



Young love

In 1934 and 1937, the young princess meets with Prince Philip of Greece and Denmark. In 1939 they meet for a third time at the Royal Navy College in Dartmouth, with the 13-year-old Elizabeth remarking that she has fallen in love with the 18-year-old prince.
22 July 1939

Marriage to Philip

Princess Elizabeth marries Philip at Westminster Abbey after almost 15 years of slow courtship. Since tensions are still running high from the global catastrophe that was World War II, Philip's German relatives are not permitted to attend.
20 November 1947

Prince Charles is born

A month prior to the arrival of Elizabeth's first son, Charles, her father George VI decrees that any of her children will retain the title of prince or princess. This overturns the rules set out by George V that restricted such titles to children of the monarch or the monarch's son.
14 November 1948



For over 70 years the Queen Mother remained a source of guidance and inspiration, up to her death in 2001

in his original posting - a public decision that showed her pride as a mother as much as her commitment as queen. (A fact made all the more chilling when you consider Argentina planned to assassinate the prince during the conflict.)

Despite the high points of the previous decade, the 1990s were a challenging time for Elizabeth and the rest of the royal family. A fire at Windsor Castle at the tail end of 1992 caused catastrophic damage and destroyed priceless royal heirlooms, while the script for the Queen's speech was leaked and published by *The Sun* newspaper a year later. To make things even

Elizabeth II is the longest-reigning British monarch. Queen Victoria holds second place at 63 years and 216 days

worse, the very public disintegration of Charles and Diana's marriage had become regular fodder for the British and international media. The publication of the Diana biography *Diana: Her True Story*, with its claims of an ongoing affair between the princess of Wales and Major James Hewitt, brought further strain on the royal family. Charles and Diana's eventual separation in 1993 would lead to years of criticism of the royal family's conduct as Diana rose to prominence as a charity worker. This scrutiny would fail to abate, even when Diana was tragically killed in a car crash in Paris in 1997.

The last decade and a half has seen the royal family enjoy a far more positive reception in the public eye. The death of the Queen Mother and Elizabeth's younger sister, Princess Margaret, in the space of two months in 2002 saw an outpouring of public support for the Queen, which flowed seamlessly into celebrations for the golden jubilee later that summer. Not one to let personal feelings affect her royal duties, Elizabeth set out on an

extensive tour of the Commonwealth and returned to mass celebrations that surprised many, most notably the media. Her diamond jubilee a decade later further cemented the nation's more positive relationship with the crown, with celebrations across the land merging with excitement for London's hosting of the Olympics in 2012.

And now, aged 90 and recently becoming the longest-reigning monarch in our country's history, the Queen still exudes the same principles of character she learned in those early years of her

rule. She's a monarch who understands her place in the anatomy of a modern nation, less concerned with how history remembers her, but how she can serve the realm. As generations of younger royals continue to attract most media attention away from her, Elizabeth still remains an iconic figure in the identity of Britain and the Commonwealth.

The Falklands War

In comparison to the World War she lived through as a princess, the confrontation over the Falklands, South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands was a relatively low-key affair. Nonetheless, Great Britain's involvement in the ten-day crisis was covered in meticulous detail by the media, including the deployment of her second son, Prince Andrew, into the conflict.

The war itself was fought over the sovereignty of a number of islands in the South Atlantic, most notably the Falkland Islands (an archipelago consisting of two large islands and 776 smaller ones) with a population of just under 3,000 people. The Falklands had been a crown colony since 1841, but nearby Argentina refused to recognise Great Britain's claim, believing the islands to be Argentinian soil. On 2 April 1982, Argentina landed on the islands with a contingent of 600 troops and proceeded to take control of the whole area. Considering, though never officially stating, the invasion an act of war, the British government responded by sending the Royal Navy to engage the Argentinian navy and air force, as well as landing an amphibious assault on the island. The conflict lasted for two months, one week and five days and ended with Argentina's surrender. While 258 British sea and airmen were killed during the conflict, almost 650 soldiers died on the Argentinian side.

"She understands her place in the anatomy of a modern nation"



The diamond jubilee 2-5 June 2012

In the summer of 2012, Elizabeth celebrates a whole 60 years as Queen of the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth. In a speech on Accession Day, Elizabeth says: "In this special year, as I dedicate myself anew to your service, I hope we will all be reminded of the power of togetherness and the convening strength of family, friendship and good neighbourliness." She and Philip tour the country extensively as part of the celebrations, with their children and grandchildren travelling across the Commonwealth on her behalf. A month later, Elizabeth officially opens the 2012 Olympic Games on 27 July and the Paralympic Games on 29 August.

Prince Edward is born

Four years after the birth of Andrew, Elizabeth gives birth to third son Edward. The young prince is third in line to the throne at his time of birth, but in 2015 is now eighth in the order of succession; he's now known as the Earl of Wessex.
10 March 1964

Prince Andrew is born

At the beginning of 1960 - almost seven years into her reign as queen - Elizabeth gives birth to her second son, Prince Andrew, in the Belgian Suite of Buckingham Palace. He is baptised three months later.
19 February 1960

The silver jubilee

In 1977, Elizabeth celebrates the first major anniversary of her accession. A monarch's jubilee is based on the date they were proclaimed king or queen rather than that of their coronation. To celebrate, festivities and parties are held all across the Commonwealth during the year.
1977

Charles weds Diana

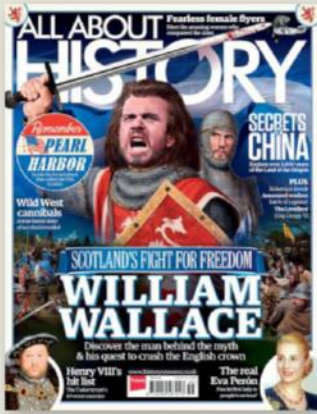
After a widely publicised courtship, Prince Charles marries Lady Diana Spencer at St Paul's Cathedral in a ceremony that captivates Great Britain and the wider world. The marriage will produce two sons, Prince William and Prince Harry.
29 July 1981

Diana passes away

Just as her wedding had captured the hearts and minds of the nation, the death of Diana, Princess of Wales is just as publicly scrutinised. Despite Elizabeth II requesting the divorce of Diana and Charles in 1995, Diana still remained a hugely popular figure.
31 Aug 1997

The Golden Jubilee

In 2002, Elizabeth marks the 50th anniversary of her accession to the throne. Despite the celebrations across the Commonwealth, the event is bittersweet, as the Queen Mother and Elizabeth's sister Princess Margaret have died a few months previously.
2002



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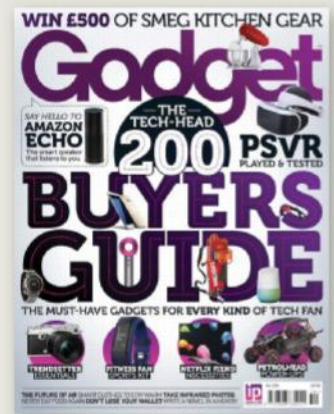
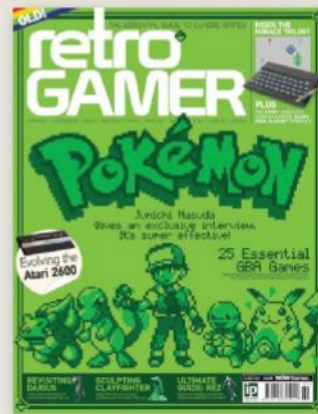


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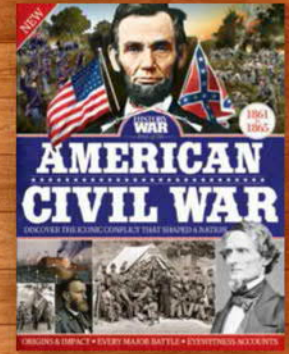
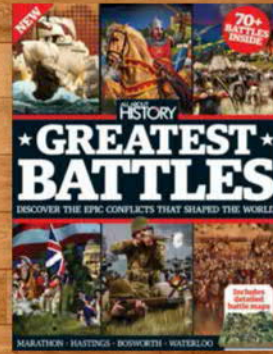
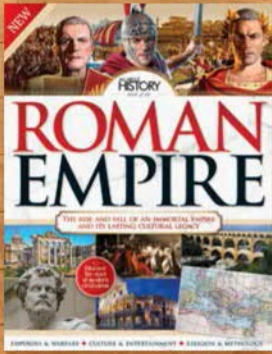


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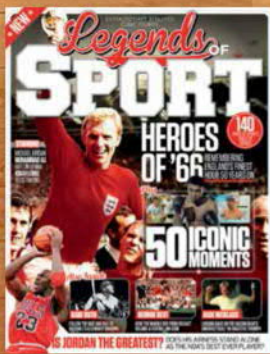
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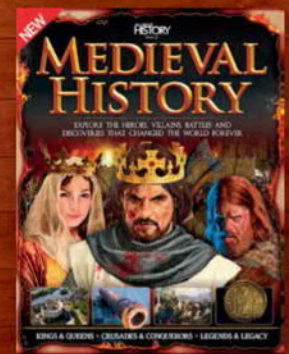
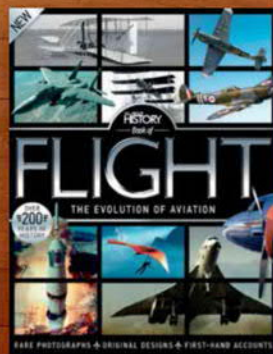
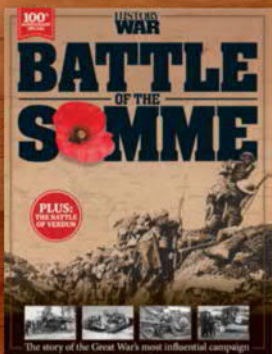
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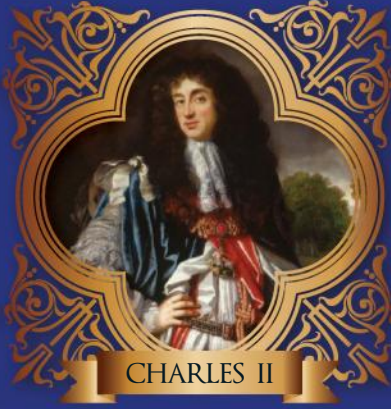
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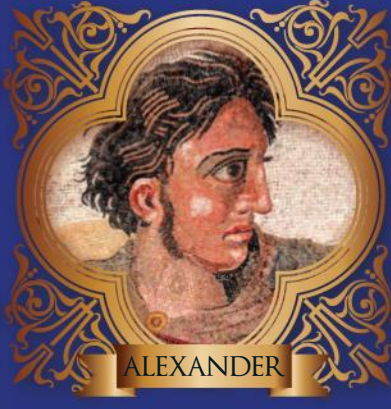
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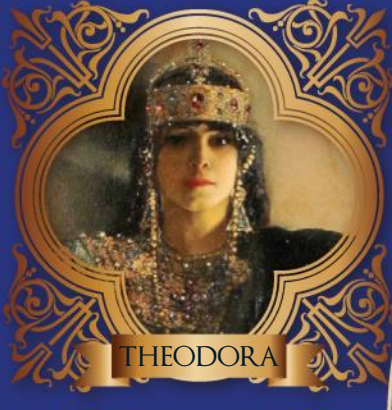
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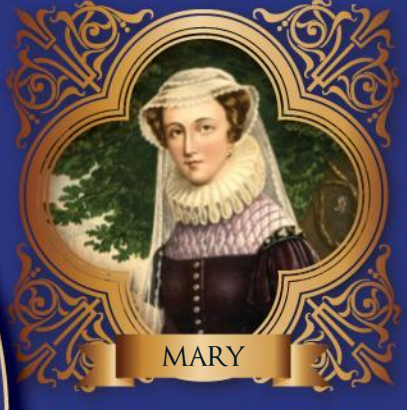
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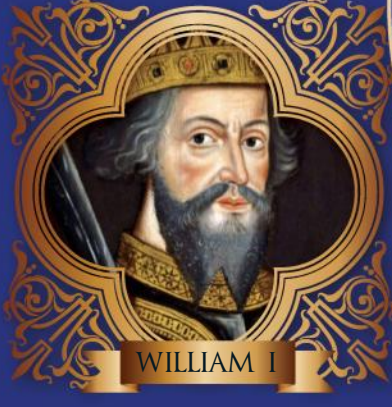
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