

Off with Her Head

The Tudors

The Tudor period began when Henry Tudor defeated King Richard III at the Battle of Bosworth in 1485. This ended the Wars of the Roses. Henry Tudor became King Henry VII after the battle and married Elizabeth of York in 1486. Their youngest son, Henry, went on to become King Henry VIII. After King Henry VIII died his nine-year-old son, Edward, became king for six years. Henry's daughter, Queen Mary I, then took the throne and ruled until her death in 1558. Henry's youngest daughter then became Queen Elizabeth I. The reign of the Tudors ended with the death of Queen Elizabeth I in 1603.



Henry VIII

Henry VIII was King of England from 1509 until he died in 1547. He is mostly remembered for having six wives and for breaking away from the Roman Catholic Church and the Pope. He was only 18 when he became king and was an attractive and educated man. He was also an excellent sportsman, author and composer. Later in his life, he became overweight and had various health problems. He was known as a cruel and selfish man. During his reign, Henry founded the Church of England and expanded the Royal Navy from five ships to 60.



Henry's six wives



Catherine of Aragon (1485–1536)

Henry and Catherine were married for 24 years and had one daughter, Mary. Their marriage was annulled in 1533 after Henry broke away from the Roman Catholic Church.



Anne Boleyn (c1501–1536)

Henry married Anne in 1533 and their daughter, Elizabeth, was born later that year. Anne was accused of treason and beheaded at the Tower of London in 1536.



Jane Seymour (1508–1537)

Henry married Jane Seymour three weeks after Anne was beheaded. Jane died 12 days after giving birth to their son, Edward.



Anne of Cleves (1515–1557)

Henry was persuaded to marry Anne after seeing her portrait. They married in 1540 but divorced after six months.



Catherine Howard (1521–1542)

Catherine Howard was a teenager when she married the 49-year-old king. Within two years, she was beheaded for treason.



Catherine Parr (1512–1548)

Henry married his last wife, Catherine Parr, in 1543. She looked after Henry until he died.

Henry's 'Great Matter'

In 1527, Henry decided he needed a divorce from Catherine of Aragon so that he could marry her young lady-in-waiting, Anne Boleyn. The only way to divorce Catherine was to break away from the Roman Catholic Church. This became known as the 'Great Matter'. Thomas Cromwell, the king's chief advisor, helped Henry to break away from the Roman Catholic Church and persuaded parliament to make Henry the Head of the Church of England. This led to a period called the Reformation, where the Roman Catholic abbeys, monasteries and convents were closed, with all the money going to the king.



Anne Boleyn

Anne Boleyn was one of Catherine of Aragon's ladies-in-waiting. Henry married Anne in January 1533 after his divorce. Anne gave birth to a daughter, Elizabeth, in September 1533. Henry was disappointed not to have a son and blamed Anne. He decided to marry Jane Seymour and looked for ways to end his marriage to Anne. She was accused of being unfaithful to him, convicted and imprisoned in the Tower of London. On 19th May 1536, Anne was executed. Even though Henry VIII had sentenced her to death, she used her final moments to praise him:

'...a gentler nor a more merciful prince was there never: and to me he was ever a good, a gentle and sovereign lord.'



Henry VIII timeline

- 1491 28th June** Henry Tudor, later King Henry VIII, is born to King Henry VII and Elizabeth of York.
- 1502 2nd April** Arthur, Henry's brother, dies aged 15.
- 1509 21st April** Henry VII, dies. Henry VIII becomes king.
11th June Henry marries Catherine of Aragon, his brother's widow.
- 1516 18th February** Princess Mary is born to Catherine of Aragon.
- 1533** After seven years, Henry breaks away from the Pope and the Roman Catholic Church so that his marriage to Catherine of Aragon can be annulled.
25th January Henry marries Anne Boleyn.
7th September Princess Elizabeth is born to Anne Boleyn.
- 1534 3rd November** Henry becomes Head of the Church of England.
- 1536** Roman Catholic monasteries, abbeys and convents are closed during the Dissolution of the Monasteries.
19th May Anne Boleyn is executed for treason.
30th May Henry marries Jane Seymour.
- 1537 12th October** Prince Edward is born to Jane Seymour. Jane dies 12 days later.
- 1540 6th January** Henry marries Anne of Cleves. The marriage lasts six months.
28th July Henry marries Catherine Howard.
- 1542 13th February** Catherine Howard is executed.
- 1543 12th July** Henry marries Catherine Parr.
- 1547 28th January** King Henry VIII dies, aged 55.

Life at court

Henry VIII had over 60 homes and his favourite was Hampton Court Palace. Henry enjoyed showing off his wealth at court. It became a centre for his favourite things, including art, music, dance, poetry and tournaments. The richest and most important people in the country also lived at court. To show their wealth and impress the king, the courtiers wore expensive clothes made of silk, velvet and lace. They had to please the king, give him expensive gifts and flatter him. If they displeased him, they would be severely punished or even executed.



Hampton Court Palace

Hans Holbein

Holbein was a German artist and portrait painter. He travelled to England in 1532 with the backing of Anne Boleyn and Thomas Cromwell. In 1535, he became the King's Painter. Holbein painted many portraits of the royal family and the nobles. He was also asked to paint a picture of Anne of Cleves so Henry could decide if he wanted to marry her. Henry liked the portrait but the marriage only lasted six months because Anne didn't look as beautiful in real life as she did in her portrait.



Anne of Cleves by Hans Holbein

Glossary

- annulment** A legal procedure in which something is no longer legally binding.
- Christianity** A religion based on the Bible, the belief in God and the person and teachings of Jesus Christ.
- Church of England** A Protestant branch of Christianity created by Henry VIII.
- divorce** A legal or official process to end a marriage.
- English Reformation** The breaking away of the Church of England from the authority of the Pope and the Roman Catholic Church during the 16th century.
- Protestantism** The beliefs and activities of the Christian Church that separated from the Roman Catholic Church in the 16th century.
- reign** The period that a monarch rules.
- Roman Catholicism** The beliefs and activities of the Roman Catholic Church, a branch of Christianity headed by the Pope.
- Tower of London** A fortress in London used for many purposes, including a prison and execution ground.
- treason** The crime of betraying your country and going against the ruler or government.
- Tudor** Relating to the Tudor line of rulers who held the throne from 1485 until 1603.
- Wars of the Roses** A series of wars between the House of Lancaster and the House of York for control of the throne of England.