SOCIAL HISTORY OF ENGLAND

The history of England concerns the study of the human past in one of Europe's oldest and most influential national territories. What is now England, a country within theUnited Kingdom, was inhabited by Neanderthals 230,000 years ago[1]. Continuous human habitation dates to around 12,000 years ago, at the end of the last glacial period. The region has numerous remains from the Mesolithic, Neolithic, and Bronze Age, such as Stonehenge and Avebury. In the Iron Age, England, like all of Britain south of the Firth of Forth, was inhabited by the Celtic people known as the Britons, but also by some Belgae tribes (e.g. the Atrebates, the Catuvellauni, the Trinovantes, etc.) in the south east. In AD 43 the Roman conquest of Britain began; the Romans maintained control of their province of Britannia through to the 5th century.

The end of Roman rule in Britain enabled the Anglo-Saxon settlement of Britain, which is often regarded as the origin of England and the English people. The Anglo-Saxons, a collection of various Germanic peoples, established several kingdoms that became the primary powers in what is now England and parts of southern Scotland.[2] They introduced the Old English language, which displaced the previous British language. The Anglo-Saxons warred with British successor states in Wales, Cornwall, and the Hen Ogledd (Old North; the Brythonic-speaking parts of northern England and southern Scotland), as well as with each other. Raids by the Vikings were frequent after about AD 800, and the Norsemen took control of large parts of what is now England. During this period several rulers attempted to unite the various Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, an effort that led to the emergence of the Kingdom of England by the 10th century.

In 1066, the Normans invaded and conquered England. There was much civil war and battles with other nations throughout the Middle Ages. The Kingdom of England was a sovereign state until the reign of Richard I who made it a vassal of the Holy Roman Empire in 1194. In 1212 during the reign of his brother John Lackland the Kingdom instead became a tribute-paying vassal of the Holy See [3][4] until the 16th century when Henry VIII broke from the Catholic Church. During the Renaissance, England was ruled by theTudors. England had conquered Wales in the 12th century and was then united with Scotland in the early 18th century to form a new sovereign state called Great Britain.[5][6][7]Following the Industrial Revolution, Great Britain ruled a worldwide Empire, the largest in the world. Following a process of decolonization in the 20th century the vast majority of the empire became independent; however, its cultural impact is widespread and deep in many countries of the present day.

Stonehenge, thought to have been erected c.2500-2000BC

Archaeological evidence indicates that what was later southern Britannia was colonised by humans long before the rest of the British Isles because of its more hospitable climate between and during the various glacial periods of the distant past. The Sweet Track in the Somerset Levels is the oldest timber trackway discovered in Northern Europe and among the oldest roads in the world, and was built in 3807 or 3806 BC.[8]

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles, that were originally compiled on the orders of King Alfred the Great, approximately A.D. 890, and subsequently maintained and added to by generations of anonymous

scribes until the middle of the 12th century starts with this sentence: “The island Britain is 800 miles long, and 200 miles broad, and there are in the island five nations; English, Welsh (or British), Scottish, Pictish, and Latin. The first inhabitants were the Britons, who came from Armenia, and first peopled Britain southward.”[9] (The Saxon compiler may have mistakenly written Armenia for Armorica,[9] a geographic region occupied by Gauls during the first century A.D, and now modern day Brittany in France.)

The first historical mention of the region is from the Massaliote Periplus, a sailing manual for merchants thought to date to the 6th century BC, although cultural and trade links with the continent had existed for millennia prior to this. Pytheas of Massilia wrote of his trading journey to the island around 325 BC.

Later writers such as Pliny the Elder (quoting Timaeus) and Diodorus Siculus (probably drawing on Poseidonius) mention the tin trade from southern Britain, but there is little further historical detail of the people who lived there.

Tacitus wrote that there was no great difference in language between the people of southern Britannia and northern Gaul and noted that the various nations of Britons shared physical characteristics with their continental neighbours.

Julius Caesar invaded southern Britain in 55 and 54 BC and wrote in De Bello Gallico that the population of southern Britannia was extremely large and shared much in common with the Belgae of the Low Countries. Coin evidence and the work of later Roman historians have provided the names of some of the rulers of the disparate tribes and their machinations in what was Britannia. Until the Roman Conquest of Britain, Britain's British population was relatively stable, and by the time of Julius Caesar's first invasion, the British population of what was western old Britain was speaking a Celtic language generally thought to be the forerunner of the modern Brythonic languages.[10] After Julius Caesar abandoned Britain, it fell back into the hands of the Britons and the Belgae.

The Romans began their second conquest of Britain in 43 AD, during the reign of Claudius. They annexed the whole of what would become modern England and Wales over the next forty years and periodically extended their control over much of lowland Scotland.

In the wake of the breakdown of Roman rule in Britain around 410, present day England was progressively settled by Germanic groups. Collectively known as the Anglo-Saxons, these included Jutes from Jutland together with larger numbers of Saxons from northwestern Germany and Angles from what is now Schleswig-Holstein.[11]

They first invaded Britain in the mid-5th century, continuing for several decades. The Jutes appear to have been the principal group of settlers in Kent, the Isle of Wight and parts of coastal Hampshire, while the Saxons predominated in all other areas south of the Thames and in Essex and Middlesex, and the Angles in Norfolk, Suffolk, theMidlands and the north.[citation needed]

The population of Britain dramatically decreased after the Roman period. The reduction seems to have been caused mainly by plague and smallpox. It is known that the plague of Justinian entered the Mediterranean world in the 6th century and first arrived in the British Isles in 544 or 545, when it reached Ireland.[12] The Annales Cambriae mention the death of Maelgwn Wledig, king of Gwynedd from that plague in 547.

Kingdoms and tribes in Britain, c.600 AD

In approximately 495, at the Battle of Mount Badon, Britons inflicted a severe defeat on an invading Anglo-Saxon army which halted the westward Anglo-Saxon advance for some decades.[citation needed] Archaeological evidence collected from pagan Anglo-Saxon cemeteries suggests that some of their settlements were abandoned and the frontier between the invaders and the native inhabitants pushed back[clarification needed] some time around 500.

Anglo-Saxon expansion resumed in the 6th century, although the chronology of its progress is unclear. One of the few individual events which emerges with any clarity before the 7th century is the Battle of Deorham, in 577, a West Saxon victory which led to the capture of Cirencester, Gloucester and Bath, bringing the Anglo-Saxon advance to the Bristol Channel and dividing the Britons in the West Country from those in Wales. The Northumbrian victory at the Battle of Chester around 616 may have had a similar effect in dividing Wales from the Britons of Cumbria.

Gradual Saxon expansion through the West Country continued through the 7th, 8th, and 9th centuries. Meanwhile, by the mid-7th century the Angles had pushed the Britons back to the approximate borders of modern Wales in the west, the Tamar in the South west and expanded northward as far as the River Forth.

[edit]Heptarchy and Christianisation

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Britain c. 800

Main articles: Northumbria, Mercia, Offa of Mercia, Heptarchy, and Anglo-Saxon Christianity

Christianisation of Anglo-Saxon England began around 600 AD, influenced by Celtic Christianity from the northwest and by the Roman Catholic Church from the southeast.Augustine, the first Archbishop of Canterbury, took office in 597. In 601, he baptised the first Christian Anglo-Saxon king, Aethelbert of Kent. The last pagan Anglo-Saxon king, Penda of Mercia, died in 655. The last pagan Jutish king, Arwald of the Isle of Wight was killed in 686. The Anglo-Saxon mission on the continent took off in the 8th century, leading to the Christianisation of practically all of the Frankish Empire by 800.

Throughout the 7th and 8th century power fluctuated between the larger kingdoms. Bede records Aethelbert of Kent as being dominant at the close of the 6th century, but power seems to have shifted northwards to the kingdom of Northumbria, which was formed from the amalgamation of Bernicia and Deira. Edwin of Northumbria probably held dominance over much of Britain, though Bede's Northumbrian bias should be kept in mind. Succession crises meant Northumbrian hegemony was not constant, andMercia remained a very powerful kingdom, especially under Penda. Two defeats essentially ended Northumbrian dominance: the Battle of the Trent in 679 against Mercia, and Nechtanesmere in 685 against the Picts.

The so-called "Mercian Supremacy" dominated the 8th century, though it was not constant. Aethelbald and Offa, the two most powerful kings, achieved high status; indeed, Offa was considered the overlord of south Britain by Charlemagne. That Offa could summon the resources to build Offa's Dyke is testament to his power. However, a rising Wessex, and challenges from smaller kingdoms, kept Mercian power in check, and by the early 9th century the "Mercian Supremacy" was over.

This period has been described as the Heptarchy, though this term has now fallen out of academic use. The word arose on the basis that the seven kingdoms ofNorthumbria, Mercia, Kent, East Anglia, Essex, Sussex and Wessex were the main polities of south Britain. More recent scholarship[citation needed] has shown that other kingdoms were also politically important across this period: Hwicce, Magonsaete, Lindsey and Middle Anglia.

[edit]Viking challenge and the rise of Wessex

Main articles: Danelaw, Viking Age, and Alfred the Great

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England in 878

The first recorded Viking attack in Britain was in 793 at Lindisfarne monastery as given by the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. However, by then the Vikings were almost certainly well established in Orkney and Shetland, and it is probable that many other non-recorded raids occurred before this. Records do show the first Viking attack on Iona taking place in 794. The arrival of the Vikings, in particular the Danish Great Heathen Army, upset the political and social geography of Britain and Ireland. Alfred the Great's victory at Edington in 878 stemmed the Danish attack; however, by then Northumbria had devolved into Bernicia and a Viking kingdom, Mercia had been split down the middle, and East Anglia ceased to exist as an Anglo-Saxon polity. The Vikings had similar effects on the various kingdoms of the Scots, Picts and (to a lesser extent) Welsh. Certainly in North Britain the Vikings were one reason behind the formation of the Kingdom of Alba, which eventually evolved into Scotland.

The conquest of Northumbria, north-western Mercia and East Anglia by the Danes led to widespread Danish settlement in these areas. In the early 10th century the Norwegian rulers of Dublin took over the

Danish kingdom of York. Danish and Norwegian settlement made enough of an impact to leave significant traces in the English language; many fundamental words in modern English are derived from Old Norse, though of the 100 most used words in English the vast majority are Old English in origin. Similarly, many place-names in areas of Danish and Norwegian settlement have Scandinavian roots.

By the end of Alfred's reign in 899 he was the only remaining English king, having reduced Mercia to a dependency of Wessex, governed by his son-in-law Ealdorman Aethelred. Cornwall (Kernow) was subject to West Saxon dominance, and the Welsh kingdoms recognised Alfred as their overlord.

[edit]English unification

Main articles: Athelstan and Edgar of England

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Edward the Elder

Alfred of Wessex died in 899 and was succeeded by his son Edward the Elder. Edward, and his brother-in-law Æthelred of (what was left of) Mercia, began a programme of expansion, building forts and towns on an Alfredian model. On Æthelred's death his wife (Edward's sister) Æthelflæd ruled as "Lady of the Mercians" and continued expansion. It seems Edward had his son Æthelstan brought up in the Mercian court, and on Edward's death Athelstan succeeded to the Mercian kingdom, and, after some uncertainty, Wessex.

Æthelstan continued the expansion of his father and aunt and was the first king to achieve direct rulership of what we would now consider England. The titles attributed to him in charters and on coins suggest a still more widespread dominance. His expansion aroused ill-feeling among the other kingdoms of Britain, and he defeated a combined Scottish-Viking army at the Battle of Brunanburh. However, the unification of England was not a certainty. Under Æthelstan's successors Edmund and Eadredthe English kings repeatedly lost and regained control of Northumbria. Nevertheless, Edgar, who ruled the same expanse as Athelstan, consolidated the kingdom, which remained united thereafter.

[edit]England under the Danes and the Norman conquest

Main articles: Ethelred the Unready, Canute the Great, Eiríkr Hákonarson, and Norman conquest of England

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The rune stone U 344 was raised in memory of a Viking who went to England three times.

There were renewed Scandinavian attacks on England at the end of the 10th century. Æthelred ruled a long reign but ultimately lost his kingdom to Sweyn of Denmark, though he recovered it following the latter's death. However, Æthelred's son Edmund II Ironside died shortly afterwards, allowing Canute, Sweyn's son, to become king of England. Under his rule the kingdom became the centre of government for an empire which also included Denmark and Norway.

Canute was succeeded by his sons, but in 1042 the native dynasty was restored with the accession of Edward the Confessor. Edward's failure to produce an heir caused a furious conflict over the succession on his death in 1066. His struggles for power against Godwin, Earl of Wessex, the claims of Canute's Scandinavian successors, and the ambitions of the Normans whom Edward introduced to English politics to bolster his own position caused each to vie for control Edward's reign.

Harold Godwinson became king, in all likelihood appointed by Edward the Confessor on his deathbed and endorsed by the Witan. William of Normandy, Harald III of Norway (aided by Harold Godwin's estranged brother Tostig) and Sweyn II of Denmark all asserted claims to the throne. By far the strongest hereditary claim was that ofEdgar the Atheling, but his youth and apparent lack of powerful supporters caused him to be passed over, and he did not play a major part in the struggles of 1066, though he was made king for a short time by the Witan after the death of Harold Godwinson.

In September 1066, Harald III of Norway landed in Northern England with a force of around 15,000 men and 300 longships (50 men in each boat). With him was Earl Tostig, who had promised him support. Harold Godwinson defeated and killed Harald III of Norway and Tostig and the Norwegian force at the Battle of Stamford Bridge.

On 28 September 1066, William of Normandy invaded England with a force of Normans, in a campaign known as the Norman Conquest. On 14 October, after having marched his exhausted army all the way from Yorkshire, Harold fought the Normans at the Battle of Hastings, where England's army was defeated and Harold was killed. Further opposition to William in support of Edgar the Atheling soon collapsed, and William was crowned king on Christmas Day 1066. For the next five years he faced a series of English rebellions in various parts of the country and a half-hearted Danish invasion, but he was able to subdue all resistance and establish an enduring regime.

[edit]Norman England

"Norman England" redirects here. For the American director, see Norman England (director).

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Depiction of the Battle of Hastings (1066) on the Bayeux Tapestry

The Norman Conquest led to a sea-change in the history of the English state. William ordered the compilation of the Domesday Book, a survey of the entire population and their lands and property for

tax purposes, which reveals that within twenty years of the conquest the English ruling class had been almost entirely dispossessed and replaced by Norman landholders, who also monopolised all senior positions in the government and the Church. William and his nobles spoke and conducted court inNorman French, in England as well as in Normandy. The use of the Anglo-Norman language by the aristocracy endured for centuries and left an indelible mark in the development of modern English.

The English Middle Ages were characterised by civil war, international war, occasional insurrection, and widespread political intrigue amongst the aristocratic and monarchic elite. England was more than self-sufficient in cereals, dairy products, beef and mutton. The nation's international economy was based on the wool trade, in which the produce of the sheepwalks of northern England was exported to the textile cities of Flanders, where it was worked into cloth. Medieval foreign policy was as much shaped by relations with the Flemish textile industry as it was by dynastic adventures in western France. An English textile industry was established in the 15th century, providing the basis for rapid English capital accumulation.

Henry I, the fourth son of William I the Conqueror, succeeded his elder brother William II as King of England in 1100. Henry was also known as "Henry Beauclerc" (because of his education—as his older brother William was the heir apparent and thus given the practical training to be king, Henry received the alternate, formal education), worked hard to reform and stabilise the country and smooth the differences between the Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman societies. The loss of his son,William Adelin, in the wreck of the White Ship in November 1120, undermined his reforms. This problem regarding succession cast a long shadow over English history.

During the confused and contested reign of Stephen, there was a major swing in the balance of power towards the feudal barons, as civil war and lawlessness broke out. In trying to appease Scottish and Welsh raiders, he handed over large tracts of land. His conflicts with his cousin The Empress Matilda (also known as Empress Maud), led to a civil war from 1139-1153 known as the Anarchy. Matilda's father, Henry I, had required the leading barons, ecclesiastics and officials in Normandy and England, to take an oath to accept Matilda as his heir. England was far less than enthusiastic to accept an outsider, and a woman, as their ruler.

There is some evidence suggesting Henry was unsure of his own hopes and the oath to make Matilda his heir. In likelihood, Henry probably hoped Matilda would have a son and step aside as Queen Mother, making her son the next heir. Upon Henry's death, the Norman and English barons ignored Matilda's claim to the throne, and thus through a series of decisions, Stephen, Henry's favourite nephew, was welcomed by many in England and Normandy as their new ruler.

On 22 December 1135, Stephen was anointed king with the implicit support of the church and nation. Matilda and her own son stood for direct descent by heredity from Henry I, and she bided her time in France. In the autumn of 1139, she invaded England with her illegitimate half-brother Robert of Gloucester. Her husband, Geoffroy V of Anjou, conquered Normandy but did not cross the channel to help his wife, satisfied with Normandy and Anjou. During this breakdown of central authority, the nobles ran amuck building adulterine castles (i.e. castles erected without government permission).

Stephen was captured, and his government fell. Matilda was proclaimed queen but was soon at odds with her subjects and was expelled from London. The period of insurrection and civil war that followed continued until 1148, when Matilda returned to France. Stephen effectively reigned unopposed until his death in 1154, although his hold on the throne was still uneasy. As soon as he regained power, he began the process of demolishing the adulterine castles, which were hated by the peasants due to their being employed as forced labor to build and maintain them. Stephen kept a few castles standing however, which put him at odds with his heir.

[edit]England under the Plantagenets

Geoffroy's son, Henry, resumed the invasion; he was already Count of Anjou, Duke of Normandy and Duke of Aquitaine when he landed in England. When Stephen's son and heir apparent Eustace died in 1153, the king reached an accommodation with Henry of Anjou (who became Henry II) to succeed Stephen and in which peace between them was guaranteed. England was part of a greater union, retrospectively named theAngevin Empire. Henry destroyed the remaining adulterine castles and expanded his power through various means and to different levels into Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Flanders, Nantes, Brittany, Quercy, Toulouse, Bourges and Auvergne.

The reign of Henry II represents a reversion in power back from the barony to the monarchical state in England; it was also to see a similar redistribution of legislative power from the Church, again to the monarchical state. This period also presaged a properly constituted legislation and a radical shift away from feudalism. In his reign new Anglo-Angevin and Anglo-Aquitanian aristocracies developed, though not to the same point as the Anglo-Norman once did, and the Norman nobles interacted with their French peers.

Henry's successor, Richard I "the Lion Heart" (also known as "The absent king"), was preoccupied with foreign wars, taking part in the Third Crusade and defending his French territories against Philip II of France.

The Kingdom of England was a sovereign state until the reign of Richard I who made it a nominal vassal of the Holy Roman Empire in 1194 as part of a ransom when he was captured after a crusade.

Richard's younger brother John, who succeeded him, was not so fortunate; he suffered the loss of Normandy and numerous other French territories following the disastrous Battle of Bouvines.

Facing internal disorder, in 1212 John made the Kingdom of England a tribute-paying vassal of the Holy See, which it remained until the 14th century when the Kingdom rejected the overlordship of the Holy See and re-established its sovereignty. From 1212 onwards, John had a constant policy of maintaining close relations with the Pope, which partially explains how he persuaded the Pope to reject the legitimacy of the Magna Carta.

The European wars culminated in defeat at the Battle of Bouvines (1214), which forced the king to accept an unfavourable peace with France after having failed to get help from King Mohammed el-Nasir of Morocco.[13]

[edit]Magna Carta

Main article: Magna Carta

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The signing of the Magna Carta (1215)

Over the course of his reign a combination of higher taxes, unsuccessful wars and conflict with the Pope had made King John unpopular with his barons, and in 1215 some of the most important decided to rebel against him. He met their leaders along with their French and Scot allies at Runnymede, near London on 15 June 1215 to seal theGreat Charter (Magna Carta in Latin), which imposed legal limits on the king's personal powers. Because he had sealed under duress, however, John received approval from the Pope to break his word as soon as hostilities had ceased, provoking the First Barons' War and an invited French invasion by Prince Louis of France (whom the majority of the English barons had invited to replace John on the throne and had him proclaimed king in London in May 1216). John travelled around the country to oppose the rebel forces, directing, among other operations, a two-month siege of the rebel-held Rochester Castle.

John's son, Henry III, was only 9 years old when he became king (1216–1272). He spent much of his reign fighting the barons over the Magna Carta[citation needed] and the royal rights, and was eventually forced to call the first "parliament" in 1264. He was also unsuccessful on the Continent, where he endeavoured to re-establish English control over Normandy, Anjou, and Aquitaine.

His reign was punctuated by numerous rebellions and civil wars, often provoked by incompetence and mismanagement in government and Henry's perceived over-reliance on French courtiers (thus restricting the influence of the English nobility). One of these rebellions—led by a disaffected courtier, Simon de Montfort—was notable for its assembly of one of the earliest precursors to Parliament. In addition to fighting the Second Barons' War, Henry III made war against Saint Louis and was defeated during the Saintonge War, yet Louis IX did not capitalise on his victory, respecting his opponent's rights.

[edit]14th century

The reign of Edward I (reigned 1272–1307) was rather more successful. Edward enacted numerous laws strengthening the powers of his government, and he summoned the first officially sanctioned Parliaments of England (such as his Model Parliament). He conquered Wales and attempted to use a succession dispute to gain control of the Kingdom of Scotland, though this developed into a costly and drawn-out military campaign.

His son, Edward II, proved a disaster. A weak man who preferred to engage in activities like thatching and ditch-digging[citation needed] rather than jousting, hunting, or the usual entertainments of kings, he spent most of his reign trying in vain to control the nobility, who in return showed continual hostility

to him. Meanwhile, the Scottish leader Robert Bruce began retaking all the territory conquered by Edward I. In 1314, the English army was disastrously defeated by the Scots at the Battle of Bannockburn. Edward also showered favours on his companion Piers Gaveston, a knight of humble birth. While it has been widely believed that Edward was a homosexual because of his closeness to Gaveston, there is no concrete evidence of this. The king's enemies, including his cousin Thomas of Lancaster, captured and murdered Gaveston in 1312.

Edward's downfall came in 1326 when his queen Isabella travelled to her native France and then, along with her lover Roger Mortimer, invaded England. Despite their tiny force, they quickly rallied support for their cause. The king fled London, and his companion since Piers Gaveston's death, Hugh Despenser, was publicly tried and executed. Edward was eventually captured and charged with breaking his coronation oath. He was deposed and remained imprisoned in Gloucestershire until he was murdered some time in the autumn of 1327, presumably by agents of Isabella and Mortimer.

The Great Famine of 1315–1317 was the first crisis that would strike Europe in the 14th century. Millions in northern Europe would die over an extended number of years, marking a clear end to the earlier period of growth and prosperity during the 11th and 12th centuries.[14] The famine of 1315–1316 may have killed more than 10% of England's population, or at least 500,000 people.[15]

Edward III reigned 1327–1377, restored royal authority and went on to transform the Kingdom of England into the most efficient military power in Europe. His reign saw vital developments in legislature and government—in particular the evolution of the English parliament—as well as the ravages of the Black Death. After defeating, but not subjugating, the Kingdom of Scotland, he declared himself rightful heir to the French throne in 1338, starting what would be known as the Hundred Years' War.

[edit]Black Death

Main article: Black Death in England

The Black Death, an epidemic of bubonic plague that spread over the whole of Europe, arrived in England in 1348 and killed as much as a third to half the population.

International excursions around that time were invariably against domestic neighbours: the Welsh, Irish, Cornish, and the Hundred Years' War against the French and their Scottish allies. Notable English victories in the Hundred Years' War included Crécy and Agincourt. In addition to this, the final defeat of the uprising led by the Welsh prince, Owain Glyndŵr, in 1412 by Prince Henry (who later became Henry V) represents the last major armed attempt by the Welsh to throw off English rule.

Edward III gave land to powerful noble families, including many people of royal lineage. Because land was equivalent to power, these powerful men could try to claim the crown. The autocratic and arrogant methods of Richard II only served to alienate the nobility more, and his forceful dispossession in 1399 by Henry IV increased the turmoil.

[edit]15th century

The reign of Henry V, who succeeded to the throne in 1413, was mostly notable for the great victory over the French at Agincourt. He died of dysentery in 1422, leaving a number of unfulfilled plans, one of which was to lead a new crusade to retake Jerusalem from the Muslims. The turmoil was at its peak in the reign of Henry VI, which began in 1422, because of his personal weaknesses and mental instability.

When the Hundred Years' War was lost in August 1453, Henry fell into a period of mental breakdown that lasted until Christmas 1454. With his inability to control the feuding nobles, civil war began in 1455. The conflicts are known as the Wars of the Roses (1455–1485), and although the fighting was very sporadic and small, there was a general breakdown in the authority and power of the Crown. Henry's cousin, who deposed him in 1461 and became Edward IV, went a little way to restoring this power. Edward defeated the Lancastrians at the Battle of Mortimer's Cross. He was briefly expelled from the throne in 1470-1471 whenRichard Neville, Earl of Warwick, brought Henry back to power. Six months later, Edward defeated and killed Warwick in battle and reclaimed the throne. Henry was imprisoned in the Tower of London and died there.

Edward died in 1483, only 40 years old. His eldest son and heir Edward V, aged 13, would have succeeded him, but the king's brother Richard, Duke of Gloucester declared his marriage to be bigamous and invalid, making all his children illegitimate. Edward V and his 10-year old brother Richard were imprisoned in the Tower of London and their uncle made himself king as Richard III. The two princes were never seen again and presumably died in the Tower. It was widely believed that Richard had them murdered, although their exact fate remains a mystery. Regardless of what really happened, the king was reviled as a treacherous fiend who murdered his own nephews to gain the throne. This hatred of Richard obscured his able governance during his brief reign. In the summer of 1485, Henry Tudor, the last Lancastrian male, landed in England from his exile in France. He defeated and killed Richard in battle at Bosworth Field on 22 August of that year and became king as Henry VII.

See also: Black Death in England, English historians in the Middle Ages, List of English chronicles, and Bayeux Tapestry

[edit]Tudor England

Main article: Tudor period

Further information: Early Modern Britain and English Renaissance

[edit]Henry VII

With Henry VII's accession to the throne in 1485, the Wars of the Roses came to an end, and Tudors would continue to rule England for 118 years. Traditionally, the Battle of Bosworth Field is considered to mark the end of the Middle Ages in England, although Henry did not introduce any new concept of monarchy, and for most of his reign his hold on power was tenuous. He claimed the throne by conquest and God's judgement in battle. Parliament quickly recognized him as king, but the Yorkists were far from defeated. Nonetheless, he married Edward IV's eldest daughter Elizabeth in January 1486, thereby uniting the houses of York and Lancaster.

Most of the European rulers did not believe Henry would survive long, and were thus willing to shelter claimants against him. The first plot against him was the Stafford and Lovell Rebellion of 1486, which presented no serious threat. But Richard III's nephew John de la Pole, Earl of Lincoln, hatched another attempt the following year. Using a peasant boy named Lambert Simnel, who posed as Edward, Earl of Warwick (the real Warwick was locked up in the Tower of London), he led an army of 2,000 German mercenaries paid for by Margaret of Burgundy into England. They were defeated and de la Pole killed at the difficult Battle of Stoke, where the loyalty of some of the royal troops to Henry was questionable. The king, realizing that Simnel was merely a dupe, employed him in the royal kitchen.

A more serious menace was Perkin Warbeck, a Flemish youth who posed as Edward IV's son Richard. Again enjoying the support of Margaret of Burgundy, he invaded England four times from 1495-1497 before he was finally captured and put in the Tower of London. Both Warbeck and the Earl of Warwick were too dangerous to keep around even in captivity, and Henry had to execute them in 1499 before Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain would allow their daughter Catherine to come to England and marry his son Arthur.

In 1497, Michael An Gof and the Baron Callum of Perranporth led Cornish rebels in a march on London. In a battle over the River Ravensbourne at Deptford Bridge, An Gof and Callum fought for various issues related to taxation. The English suffered high casualties, but on 17 June 1497 the forces of An Gof and Callum were defeated. The rest of his Henry VII's reign was relatively peaceful, despite worries concerning succession after the death of his wife Elizabeth of York in 1503.

Henry VII's foreign policy was a peaceful one. He had formed an alliance with Spain and the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I, but in 1493, when they went to war with France, England was dragged into the conflict. With his crown impoverished and his hold on power insecure, Henry had no desire to go to war. He quickly reached an understanding with the French and renounced all claims to their territory except the port of Calais, realizing also that nothing could be done to stop them from incorporating the Duchy of Brittany. In return, the French agreed to recognize him as king and stop sheltering pretenders. Shortly afterwards, they became preoccupied with adventures in Italy and turned their attention away from England. Henry also reached an understanding with Scotland, agreeing to marry his daughter Margaret to that country's king James IV.

Upon becoming king, Henry inherited a government severely weakened and degraded by the Wars of the Roses. The treasury was empty, having been drained by Edward IV's Woodville in-laws after his death. Through a tight fiscal policy and sometimes ruthless tax collection and confiscations, Henry managed to refill the treasury by the time of his death. He also effectively rebuilt the machinery of government.

In 1501, the king's son Arthur, having married Catherine of Aragon, died of an illness at the age of 15, leaving his younger son Henry, Duke of York, as his heir. When the king himself died in 1509, the position of the Tudors was secure at last, and his son succeeded him unopposed.

[edit]Henry VIII

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King Henry VIII

Henry VIII began his reign with a high degree of optimism. The handsome, athletic young king stood in sharp contrast to his wary, miserly father. Henry's lavish court quickly drained the treasury of the fortune he had inherited. He married the widowed Catherine of Aragon, and they had several children, but none survived infancy except a daughter, Mary.

In 1512, the young king embarked on a war in France. Although England was an ally of Spain, one of France's principal enemies, the war was mostly about Henry's desire for personal glory, regardless of the fact that his sister Mary was married to the French king Louis XII. The war accomplished little. The English army suffered badly from disease, and Henry was not even present at the one notable victory, the Battle of the Spurs. Meanwhile, James IV of Scotland (despite being Henry's other brother-in-law), activated his alliance with the French and declared war on England. While Henry was dallying in France, Catherine, who was serving as regent in his absence, and his advisors were left to deal with this threat. At the Battle of Flodden on 9 September 1513, the Scots were completely and totally defeated. Most of the Scottish nobility were killed along with James himself. When Henry returned from France, he was given credit for the victory even though he had nothing to do with it.

Eventually, Catherine was no longer able to have any more children. The king became increasingly nervous about the possibility of his daughter Mary inheriting the throne, as England's one experience with a female sovereign, Matilda in the 12th century, had been a catastrophe. He eventually decided that it was necessary to divorce Catherine and find a new queen. The Church would not simply grant this favour, so Henry cited the passage in the Book of Leviticus where it said, "If a man taketh his brother's wife, he hath committed adultery; they shall be childless." However, Catherine insisted that she and Arthur had never consummated their brief marriage and that the prohibition did not apply here. The timing of Henry's case was very unfortunate; it was 1527 and the Pope had been taken prisoner by the emperor Charles V, Catherine's nephew and the most powerful man in Europe, for siding with his archenemy Francis I of France. As there was no possibility of getting a divorce in these circumstances, Henry decided to simply secede from the Church, in what became known as the English Reformation.

The newly established Church of England amounted to little more than the existing Catholic Church, but with the king rather than the Pope as its head. It took a number of years for the separation from Rome to be completed, however, and many were executed for resisting the king's religious policies.

In 1530, Catherine was banished from court and spent the remainder of her life (until her death in 1536) alone in an isolated manor home, barred from any contact with Mary (although her ladies-in-waiting helped the two maintain a secret correspondence). Their marriage was declared invalid, making Mary an illegitimate child. Henry married Anne Boleyn in secret in 1531, just as his divorce from Catherine was finalized. After this, they had a second, public wedding. Anne soon became pregnant and may have

already been when they wed. But on 7 September 1533, she gave birth to a daughter, Elizabeth. The king was devastated at his failure to obtain a son after all the effort it had taken to remarry. Gradually, he came to develop a disliking of his new queen for her strange behaviour. In 1536, when Anne was pregnant again, Henry was badly injured in a jousting accident. Shaken by this, the queen gave birth prematurely to a stillborn boy. By now, the king was convinced that his marriage was hexed, and having already found a new queen, Jane Seymour, he put Anne in the Tower of London on charges of witchcraft. Afterwards, she was beheaded along with five men (her brother included) accused of adultery with her. The marriage was then declared invalid, so that Elizabeth, just like her half sister, became a bastard.

Henry immediately married Jane Seymour, who became pregnant almost as quickly. On 12 October 1537, she gave birth to a healthy boy, Edward, which was greeted with huge celebrations. The king's quest for a son was finally over, so long as Edward could be kept healthy. However, the queen died of puerperal sepsis ten days later. Henry genuinely mourned her death, and at his own passing nine years later, he was buried next to her.

The king married a fourth time in 1540, to the German Anne of Cleves for a political alliance with her Protestant brother, the Duke of Cleves. He also hoped to obtain another son in case something should happen to Edward. Anne proved a dull, unattractive woman and Henry declined to consummate the marriage. He quickly divorced her, and she remained in England as a kind of adopted sister to him. So he married again, to a 19-year old named Catherine Howard. But when it became known that she was neither a virgin at the wedding, nor a faithful wife afterwards, she ended up on the scaffold and the marriage declared invalid. His sixth and last marriage was to Catherine Parr, more a nursemaid to him than anything else, as his health was failing (it had declined ever since the jousting accident in 1536).

In 1542, the king embarked on a new campaign in France, but unlike in 1512, he only managed with great difficulty. The war netted England the city of Boulogne, but nothing else, and the French retook it in 1549. Scotland also declared war and at Solway Moss was once again totally defeated.

Henry's paranoia and suspicion worsened in his last years. The total number of executions during his 38-year reign numbered in the tens of thousands. He died in January 1547 at the age of 55 and was succeeded by his son, Edward VI.

[edit]Edward VI and Mary

Although he showed piety and intelligence, Edward VI was only nine years old when he took the throne in 1547. His uncle, Edward Seymour, 1st Duke of Somerset tampered with Henry VIII's will and obtainedletters patent giving him much of the power of a monarch by March 1547. He took the title of Protector. Whilst some see him as a high-minded idealist, his stay in power culminated in a crisis in 1549 when many counties of the realm were up in protest. Kett's Rebellion in Norfolk and the Prayer Book Rebellion in Devon and Cornwall simultaneously created a crisis during a time when invasion from Scotland and France were feared. Somerset, disliked by the Regency Council for his autocratic methods, was removed from power by John Dudley, who is known as Lord President Northumberland. Northumberland proceeded to adopt the power for himself, but his methods were more conciliatory

and the Council accepted him. It was during Edward's reign that England became a Protestant nation as opposed to a Catholic one in schism from Rome.

Edward was beginning to show great promise when he fell violently ill with tuberculosis in 1553 and died that August two months short of his 16th birthday.

Northumberland made plans to place Lady Jane Grey on the throne and marry her to his son, so that he could remain the power behind the throne. His plot failed in a matter of days, Jane Grey was beheaded, andMary I (1516–1558) took the throne amidst popular demonstration in her favour in London, which contemporaries described as the largest show of affection for a Tudor monarch. Mary had never been expected to hold the throne, at least not since Edward was born. She was a devoted Catholic who believed that she could turn the clock back to 1516, before the Reformation began.[16]

Returning England to Catholicism led to the burnings of 274 Protestants, which are recorded especially in John Foxe's Book of Martyrs. Mary then married her cousin Philip, son of the emperor Charles V, and King of Spain when Charles abdicated in 1556. The union was a difficult one, since Mary was already in her late 30s and Philip was a Catholic and a foreigner, and so not very welcome in England. This wedding also had the effect of provoking the hostility of the French, already at war with Spain and now alarmed at the prospect of being completely encircled by the Hapsburgs. Calais, the last English outpost on the Continent, was then taken by France. King Philip (1527–1598) had very little power, although he did protect Elizabeth. He was not popular in England, and spent little time there.[17] Mary eventually became pregnant, or at least believed herself to be. In reality, she may have had uterine cancer. Her death in November 1558 was greeted with huge celebrations in the streets of London.

[edit]Elizabeth

Main article: Elizabethan era

The reign of Elizabeth restored a sort of order to the realm following the turbulence of the reigns of Edward and Mary when she came to the throne following the death of Mary in 1558. The religious issue which had divided the country since Henry VIII was in a way put to rest by the Elizabethan Religious Settlement, which re-established the Church of England. Much of Elizabeth's success was in balancing the interests of thePuritans and Catholics. She managed to offend neither to a large extent, although she clamped down on Catholics towards the end of her reign as war with Catholic Spain loomed.[18][19]

Despite the need for an heir, Elizabeth declined to marry, despite offers from a number of suitors across Europe, including the Swedish king Erik XIV. This created endless worries over her succession, especially in the 1570s when she nearly died of smallpox. It has been often rumored that she had a number of lovers (including Francis Drake), but there is no hard evidence.

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Queen Elizabeth

Elizabeth maintained relative government stability apart from the Revolt of the Northern Earls in 1569, she was effective in reducing the power of the old nobility and expanding the power of her government. Elizabeth's government did much to consolidate the work begun under Thomas Cromwell in the reign of Henry VIII, that is, expanding the role of the government and effecting common law and administration throughout England. During the reign of Elizabeth and shortly afterward, the population grew significantly: from three million in 1564 to nearly five million in 1616.[20]

The queen ran afoul of her cousin Mary, Queen of Scots, who was a devoted Catholic and had been forced to abdicate her throne as a consequence (Scotland had recently become Protestant). She fled to England, where Elizabeth immediately had her arrested. Mary spent the next 18 years in confinement, but proved too dangerous to keep alive, as the Catholic powers in Europe considered her, not Elizabeth, the legitimate ruler of England. She was eventually tried for treason and sentenced to death, being beheaded in February 1587.

[edit]Foreign affairs

In foreign policy Elizabeth played against each other the major powers of France and Spain, as well as the papacy and Scotland. These were all Catholic and each wanted to end Protestantism in England. Elizabeth was cautious in foreign affairs and only half-heartedly supported a number of ineffective, poorly resourced military campaigns in the Netherlands, France and Ireland. She risked war with Spain by supporting the "Sea Dogs," such as [[John Hawkins and Sir Francis Drake, who preyed on the Spanish merchant ships carrying gold and silver from the New World. The major war came with Spain, 1585-1603. When Spain tried to invade and conquer England it was a fiasco, and the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588 associated Elizabeth's name forever with what is popularly viewed as one of the greatest victories in English history. Her enemies failed to combine and Elizabeth's foreign policy successfully navigated all the dangers.[21]

[edit]End of Tudor era

In all, the Tudor period is seen as a decisive one which set up many important questions which would have to be answered in the next century and during the English Civil War. These were questions of the relative power of the monarch and Parliament and to what extent one should control the other. Some historians think that Thomas Cromwell affected a "Tudor Revolution" in government, and it is certain that Parliament became more important during his chancellorship. Other historians say the "Tudor Revolution" really extended to the end of Elizabeth's reign, when the work was all consolidated. Although the Privy Council declined after the death of Elizabeth, while she was alive it was very effective.

[edit]17th century

Main article: 17th century England

[edit]Union of the Crowns

Elizabeth died in 1603 at the age of 69. Her closest male Protestant relative was the King of Scots, James VI, of the House of Stuart, who became King James I of England in a Union of the Crowns. King James I & VI as he was styled became the first monarch to rule the entire island of Great Britain, although it was merely a union of the English and Scottish crowns, and both countries remained separate political entities until 1707. Several assassination attempts were made on James, notably the Main Plot and Bye Plots of 1603, and most famously, on 5 November 1605, the Gunpowder Plot, by a group of Catholic conspirators, led bySir Robert Catesby, which caused more antipathy in England towards the Catholic faith. Upon taking power, James immediately made peace with Spain, and for the first half of the 17th century, England remained largely inactive in European politics.

[edit]Colonial England

In 1607 England built an establishment at Jamestown This was the beginning of colonialism by England in North America. Many English settled then in North America for religious or economic reasons. About 70% of migrants from England who came between 1630-1660 were indentured servants. By 1700, Chesapeake planters brought in about 100,000 indentured servants,[22] more than 75% of all European immigrants to Virginia and Maryland.[23] The English merchants holding plantations in the warm southern parts of America then resorted rather quickly to the slavery of Native Americans and imported Africans in order to cultivate their plantations and sell raw material (particularly cotton and tobacco) in Europe. The English merchants involved in colonization amassed fortunes equal to those of great aristocratic landowners in England, and their money, which fuelled the rise of the middle class, permanently altered the balance of political power. The American colonies did not prove profitable to the mother country in the end. Pennsylvania and Delaware were home to a large population of self-sufficient farmers from various parts of Europe, especially Germany. New York traded with pirates and smugglers, and the colonies of New England consistently frustrated the government's attempts to utilize the area's forests for shipbuilding. Only Virginia and the Chesapeake Bay area produced a useful cash crop, tobacco, but it quickly wore the soil out. By the end of the 18th century, the tobacco industry in Virginia had been completely ruined by soil exhaustion and low prices. Indeed, the small sugar-growing islands in the Caribbean were worth more than all of the thirteen colonies put together.

The English colonies did not have an independent foreign policy, but otherwise were mostly left to manage their own affairs. This was very different from the authoritarian control France and Spain held over their colonies. It was the gradual infringement on the rights of the colonies starting in the 1760s that would lead to the American War of Independence. Nothing of the sort would have been possible in the French and Spanish colonies.

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Maps of territory held by Royalists (red) and Parliamentarians (green) during theEnglish Civil War (1642–1645)

[edit]English Civil War

Further information: English Civil War

The First English Civil War broke out in 1642, largely as a result of an ongoing series of conflicts between James' son, Charles I, and Parliament. The defeat of the Royalist army by the New Model Army of Parliament at the Battle of Naseby in June 1645 effectively destroyed the king's forces. Charles surrendered to the Scottish army at Newark. He was eventually handed over to the English Parliament in early 1647. He escaped, and the Second English Civil War began, although it was a short conflict, with the New Model Army quickly securing the country. The capture and subsequent trial of Charles led to his beheading in January 1649 at Whitehall Gate in London, making England a republic. The trial and execution of Charles by his own subjects shocked the rest of Europe (the king argued to the end that only God could judge him) and was a precursor of sorts to the beheading of Louis XVI 145 years later.

The New Model Army, under the command of Oliver Cromwell, then scored decisive victories against Royalist armies in Ireland and Scotland. Cromwell was given the titleLord Protector in 1653, making him 'king in all but name' to his critics. After he died in 1658, his son Richard Cromwell succeeded him in the office but he was forced to abdicate within a year. For a while it looked as if a new civil war would begin as the New Model Army split into factions. Troops stationed in Scotland under the command of George Monck eventually marched on London to restore order.

[edit]Restoration of the monarchy

The monarchy was restored in 1660, with King Charles II returning to London.

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King Charles I, who was beheaded in 1649

In 1665, London was swept by a visitation of the plague, and then, in 1666, the capital was swept by the Great Fire, which raged for 5 days, destroying approximately 15,000 buildings. After the Restoration, there was an overall reduction in the power of the crown, and by the 18th century England rivaled the Netherlands for being one of the freest countries in Europe.

[edit]Glorious Revolution

In 1680, the Exclusion crisis occurred due to widespread objections to a Catholic serving as the King of England, since James was the heir presumptive to Charles, who was the king at that time. After the death of Charles II in 1685, his Catholic brother King James II & VII was crowned. From that point, there were various factions pressing for his Protestant daughter Mary and her husband, Prince William III of Orange, to replace him in what became known as the Glorious Revolution.

In November 1688, William landed in England with an invading force, and succeeding in being crowned king. After this, James attempted to retake the throne by force in the Williamite War, and was finally defeated by William at the Battle of the Boyne in 1690.

In December 1689, one of the most important constitutional documents in English history, the Bill of Rights, was passed.[24] The Act, which restated and confirmed many provisions of the earlier Declaration of Right, established restrictions on the royal prerogative. It provided, amongst other things, that the Sovereign could not suspend laws passed by Parliament, levy taxes without parliamentary consent, infringe the right to petition, raise a standing army during peacetime without parliamentary consent, deny the right to bear arms to Protestant subjects, unduly interfere with parliamentary elections, punish members of either House of Parliament for anything said during debates, require excessive bail or inflict cruel and unusual punishments.[25] William was opposed to the imposition of such constraints, but he chose not to engage in a conflict with Parliament and agreed to abide by the statute.[26]

In parts of Scotland and Ireland, Catholics loyal to James remained determined to see him restored to the throne, and there followed a series of bloody though unsuccessful uprisings. As a result of these, any failure to pledge loyalty to the victorious King William was severely dealt with. The most infamous example of this policy was the Massacre of Glencoe in 1692. Jacobite rebellions continued on into the mid-18th century until the son of the last Catholic claimant to the throne, (James III & VIII), mounted a final campaign in 1745. The Jacobite forces of Prince Charles Edward Stuart, the "Bonnie Prince Charlie" of legend, were defeated at the Battle of Culloden in 1746.

[edit]Formation of the United Kingdom

The Acts of Union between the Kingdom of England and the Kingdom of Scotland were a pair of Parliamentary Acts passed by both parliaments in 1707, which dissolved them in order to form a Kingdom of Great Britain governed by a unified Parliament of Great Britain according to the Treaty of Union. The Acts joined the Kingdom of England and the Kingdom of Scotland (previously separate states, with separate legislatures but with the same monarch) into a single Kingdom of Great Britain.[27]

The two countries had shared a monarch since the Union of the Crowns in 1603, when King James VI of Scotland inherited the English throne from his double first cousin twice removed, Queen Elizabeth I. Although described as a Union of Crowns, until 1707 there were in fact two separate Crowns resting on the same head. There had been three attempts in 1606, 1667, and 1689 to unite the two countries by Acts of Parliament, but it was not until the early 18th century that the idea had the will of both political establishments behind them, albeit for rather different reasons.

The Acts took effect on 1 May 1707. On this date, the Scots Parliament and the English Parliament united to form the Parliament of Great Britain, based in the Palace of Westminster in London, the home of the English Parliament.[28] Hence, the Acts are referred to as the Union of the Parliaments. On the Union, historian Simon Schama said "What began as a hostile merger, would end in a full partnership in the most powerful going concern in the world ... it was one of the most astonishing transformations in European history."[29]

In 1714, the reign of Queen Anne ended. Anne was the last monarch of the House of Stuart. She was succeeded by her second cousin, George I, of the House of Hanover, who was a descendant of the Stuarts through his maternal grandmother, Elizabeth, daughter of James VI & I.[30] A series of Jacobite rebellions broke out in an attempt to restore the Stuart monarchy, but all ultimately failed. Several Planned French Invasions were attempted, also with the intention of placing the Stuarts on the throne.

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The first general laws against child labour, the Factory Acts, were passed in Britain in the first half of the 19th century. Children younger than nine were not allowed to work and the work day of youth under the age of 18 was limited to twelve hours.[31]

The Act of Union of 1800 formally assimilated Ireland within the British political process and from 1 January 1801 created a new state called the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, which united the Kingdom of Great Britain with the Kingdom of Ireland to form a single political entity. The English capital of London was adopted as the capital of the Union.

[edit]Modern England, 18th-19th centuries

Main article: History of the United Kingdom

Further information: Social history of England and History of local government in England#The evolution of modern local government (1832-1974)

Following the formation of the United Kingdom, the history of England is no longer the history of a sovereign nation, but rather the history of a country that is a part of the United Kingdom.

[edit]Industrial Revolution

Main article: Economic history of Britain

During the late 18th century and early 19th century, there was considerable social upheaval as a largely agrarian society was transformed by technological advances and increasing mechanization, which was the Industrial Revolution. Much of the agricultural workforce was uprooted from the countryside and moved into large urban centres of production, as the steam-based production factories could undercut the traditional cottage industries, because of economies of scale and the increased output per worker made possible by the new technologies. The consequent overcrowding into areas with little supporting infrastructure saw dramatic increases in the rate of infant mortality (to the extent that many Sunday schools for pre-working age children (5 or 6) had funeral clubs to pay for each others funeral arrangements), crime, and social deprivation.

The transition to industrialization was not wholly seamless for workers, many of whom saw their livelihoods threatened by the process. Of these, some frequently sabotaged or attempted to sabotage factories. These saboteurs were known as "Luddites".

[edit]Local governance

Further information: History of local government in England

The Local Government Act of 1888 was the first systematic attempt to impose a standardised system of local government in England. The counties of England at the time (today known as the historic counties, since the major boundary changes of 1974) were used as the basis of the system. A second Act in 1894 (Local Government Act 1894) also created a second tier of local government. Henceforth, all administrative counties and county boroughs would be divided into either rural or urban districts, allowing more localised administration.

By 1888, it was clear that the piecemeal system that had developed over the previous century in response to the vastly increased need for local administration could no longer cope. The sanitary districts and parish councils had legal status, but were not part of the mechanism of government. They were run by volunteers; often there was no-one who could be held responsible for the failure to undertake the required duties. Furthermore, the increased "county business" could not be handled by the Quarter Sessions, nor was it appropriate to do so. Finally, there was a desire to see local administration performed by elected officials, as in the reformed municipal boroughs. The Local Government Act was therefore the first systematic attempt to impose a standardised system of local government in England

The counties of England at the time (now known as the historic counties, since the major boundary changes of 1974) were used as the basis of the system. The counties themselves had undergone some boundary changes in the preceding 50 years, mainly to remove enclaves and exclaves. The act called for the creation of statutory counties, based on the ancient/historic counties, but completely corrected for enclaves and exclaves, and adjusted so that all settlements were completely within a single county. These statutory counties were to be used for non-administrative functions: "sheriff, lieutenant, custos rotulorum, justices, militia, coroner, or other". With the advent of elected councils, the offices of lord lieutenant and sheriff became largely ceremonial.

The statutory counties formed the basis for the so-called 'administrative counties'. However, it was felt that large cities and primarily rural areas in the same county could not be well administered by the same body. Thus 59 "counties in themselves", or 'county boroughs', were created to administer the urban centres of England. These were part of the statutory counties, but not part of the administrative counties.

A second Act in 1894 (Local Government Act 1894) also created a second tier of local government. Henceforth, all administrative counties and county boroughs would be divided into either rural or urban districts, allowing more localised administration. The municipal boroughs reformed after 1835 were brought into this system as special cases of urban districts. The urban and rural districts were based

upon, and incorporated the sanitary districts which had been created in 1875 (with adjustments, so that districts did not overlap two counties).

The Act also provided for the establishment of civil parishes. The 1894 Act formed an official system of civil parishes, separated from the ecclesiastical parishes, to carry on some of these responsibilities (others being transferred to the district/county councils). However, the civil parishes were not a complete third-tier of local government. Instead, they were 'community councils' for smaller, rural settlements, which did not have a local government district to themselves. Where urban parish councils had previously existed, they were absorbed into the new urban districts.

[edit]20th and 21st centuries

[edit]Political issues

Following years of political and military agitation for 'Home Rule' for Ireland, the Anglo-Irish treaty of 1921 established the Irish Free State (now the Republic of Ireland) as a separate state, leaving Northern Ireland as part of the United Kingdom. The official name of the UK thus became "The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland".

England, as part of the UK, joined the European Economic Community in 1973, which became the European Union in 1993.

There is a movement in England to create a devolved English Parliament. This would give England a local Parliament like those already functioning for Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales. This issue is referred to as the West Lothian question.

[edit]General history and local government

A Local Government Commission was wound up in 1966, and replaced with a Royal Commission (known as the Redcliffe-Maud commission). In 1969 it recommended a system of single-tier unitary authorities for the whole of England, apart from three metropolitan areas of Merseyside, Selnec (Greater Manchester) and West Midlands (Birmingham and the Black Country), which were to have both a metropolitan council and district councils. This report was accepted by the Labour Party government of the time despite considerable opposition, but the Conservative Party won the June 1970 general election, and on a manifesto that committed them to a two-tier structure.

The reforms arising from the Local Government Act of 1972 resulted in the most uniform and simplified system of local government which has been used in England. They effectively wiped away everything that had gone before, and built an administrative system from scratch. All previous administrative districts - statutory counties, administrative counties, county boroughs, municipal boroughs, counties corporate, civil parishes - were abolished.

The aim of the act was to establish a uniform two tier system across the country. Onto the blank canvas, new counties were created to cover the entire country; many of these were obviously based on the historic counties, but there were some major changes, especially in the north.

This uniform two-tier system lasted only 12 years. In 1986, the metropolitan county councils and Greater London were abolished. This restored autonomy (in effect the old county borough status) to the metropolitan and London boroughs. The Local Government Act (1992) established a commission (Local Government Commission for England) to examine the issues, and make recommendations on where unitary authorities should be established. It was considered too expensive to make the system entirely unitary, and also there would doubtlessly be cases where the two-tier system functioned well. The commission recommended that many counties be moved to completely unitary systems; that some cities become unitary authorities, but that the remainder of their parent counties remain two-tier; and that in some counties the status quoshould remain.

The rate-capping rebellion was a campaign within English local councils in 1985 which aimed to force the Conservative government of Margaret Thatcher to withdraw powers to restrict the spending of councils. The affected councils were almost all run by left-wing Labour Party leaderships. The campaign's tactic was that councils whose budgets were restricted would refuse to set any budget at all for the financial year 1985-86, requiring the Government to intervene directly in providing local services, or to concede. However, all 15 councils which initially refused to set a rate eventually did so, and the campaign failed to change Government policy. Powers to restrict council budgets have remained in place ever since.

In 1997, the Lieutenancies Act was passed. This firmly separated all local authority areas (whether unitary or two-tier), from the geographical concept of a county as high level spatial unit. The lieutenancies it established became known as ceremonial counties, since they were no longer administrative divisions. The counties represent a compromise between the historic counties and the counties established in 1974.

While the 1997 Labour government devolved power to Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, it refused to created a devolved Assembly or parliament for England, planning instead to introduce eight regional assemblies around England to devolve power to the regions. In the event, only a London Assembly (and directly elected Mayor) was established. Rejection in a referendum of a proposed North-East Assembly in 2004 effectively scrapped those plans. A pre-condition of having a regional assembly was for the whole area to move to unitary authority status. Since the 2005 general election the government has floated the idea of voluntary mergers of local councils, avoiding a costly reorganisation but achieving desired reform. For instance, the guiding principles of the government's "New Localism" demand levels of efficiency not present in the current over-duplicated two-tier structure.

In 2009, new changes to local government were made whereby a number of new unitary authorities were created in areas which previously had a 'two-tier' system of counties and districts. In five shire counties the functions of the county and district councils were combined into a single authority; and in two counties the powers of the county council were absorbed into a significantly reduced number of districts.

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LITERATURE: SOCIAL HISTORY OF ENGLAND

SOCIAL HISTORY OF ENGLAND

The history of England concerns the study of the human past in one of Europe's oldest and most influential national territories. What is now England, a country within theUnited Kingdom, was inhabited by Neanderthals 230,000 years ago[1]. Continuous human habitation dates to around 12,000 years ago, at the end of the last glacial period. The region has numerous remains from the Mesolithic, Neolithic, and Bronze Age, such as Stonehenge and Avebury. In the Iron Age, England, like all of Britain south of the Firth of Forth, was inhabited by the Celtic people known as the Britons, but also by some Belgae tribes (e.g. the Atrebates, the Catuvellauni, the Trinovantes, etc.) in the south east. In AD 43 the Roman conquest of Britain began; the Romans maintained control of their province of Britannia through to the 5th century.

The end of Roman rule in Britain enabled the Anglo-Saxon settlement of Britain, which is often regarded as the origin of England and the English people. The Anglo-Saxons, a collection of various Germanic peoples, established several kingdoms that became the primary powers in what is now England and parts of southern Scotland.[2] They introduced the Old English language, which displaced the previous British language. The Anglo-Saxons warred with British successor states in Wales, Cornwall, and the Hen Ogledd (Old North; the Brythonic-speaking parts of northern England and southern Scotland), as well as with each other. Raids by the Vikings were frequent after about AD 800, and the Norsemen took control of large parts of what is now England. During this period several rulers attempted to unite the various Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, an effort that led to the emergence of the Kingdom of England by the 10th century.

In 1066, the Normans invaded and conquered England. There was much civil war and battles with other nations throughout the Middle Ages. The Kingdom of England was a sovereign state until the reign of Richard I who made it a vassal of the Holy Roman Empire in 1194. In 1212 during the reign of his brother John Lackland the Kingdom instead became a tribute-paying vassal of the Holy See [3][4] until the 16th century when Henry VIII broke from the Catholic Church. During the Renaissance, England was ruled by theTudors. England had conquered Wales in the 12th century and was then united with Scotland in the early 18th century to form a new sovereign state called Great Britain.[5][6][7]Following the Industrial Revolution, Great Britain ruled a worldwide Empire, the largest in the world. Following a process of decolonization in the 20th century the vast majority of the empire became independent; however, its cultural impact is widespread and deep in many countries of the present day.

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[edit]Prehistory

Main article: Prehistoric Britain

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Stonehenge, thought to have been erected c.2500-2000BC

Archaeological evidence indicates that what was later southern Britannia was colonised by humans long before the rest of the British Isles because of its more hospitable climate between and during the various glacial periods of the distant past. The Sweet Track in the Somerset Levels is the oldest timber trackway discovered in Northern Europe and among the oldest roads in the world, and was built in 3807 or 3806 BC.[8]

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles, that were originally compiled on the orders of King Alfred the Great, approximately A.D. 890, and subsequently maintained and added to by generations of anonymous scribes until the middle of the 12th century starts with this sentence: “The island Britain is 800 miles long, and 200 miles broad, and there are in the island five nations; English, Welsh (or British), Scottish, Pictish, and Latin. The first inhabitants were the Britons, who came from Armenia, and first peopled Britain southward.”[9] (The Saxon compiler may have mistakenly written Armenia for Armorica,[9] a geographic region occupied by Gauls during the first century A.D, and now modern day Brittany in France.)

The first historical mention of the region is from the Massaliote Periplus, a sailing manual for merchants thought to date to the 6th century BC, although cultural and trade links with the continent had existed for millennia prior to this. Pytheas of Massilia wrote of his trading journey to the island around 325 BC.

Later writers such as Pliny the Elder (quoting Timaeus) and Diodorus Siculus (probably drawing on Poseidonius) mention the tin trade from southern Britain, but there is little further historical detail of the people who lived there.

Tacitus wrote that there was no great difference in language between the people of southern Britannia and northern Gaul and noted that the various nations of Britons shared physical characteristics with their continental neighbours.

http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/6/60/Hadrians_Wall_from_Housesteads1.jpg/220px-Hadrians_Wall_from_Housesteads1.jpg

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Hadrian's Wall viewed from Vercovicium

[edit]Roman Britain (Britannia)

Main article: Roman Britain

Julius Caesar invaded southern Britain in 55 and 54 BC and wrote in De Bello Gallico that the population of southern Britannia was extremely large and shared much in common with the Belgae of the Low Countries. Coin evidence and the work of later Roman historians have provided the names of some of the rulers of the disparate tribes and their machinations in what was Britannia. Until the Roman Conquest of Britain, Britain's British population was relatively stable, and by the time of Julius Caesar's first invasion, the British population of what was western old Britain was speaking a Celtic language

generally thought to be the forerunner of the modern Brythonic languages.[10] After Julius Caesar abandoned Britain, it fell back into the hands of the Britons and the Belgae.

The Romans began their second conquest of Britain in 43 AD, during the reign of Claudius. They annexed the whole of what would become modern England and Wales over the next forty years and periodically extended their control over much of lowland Scotland.

[edit]Post-Roman Britain

Main article: Sub-Roman Britain

In the wake of the breakdown of Roman rule in Britain around 410, present day England was progressively settled by Germanic groups. Collectively known as the Anglo-Saxons, these included Jutes from Jutland together with larger numbers of Saxons from northwestern Germany and Angles from what is now Schleswig-Holstein.[11]

They first invaded Britain in the mid-5th century, continuing for several decades. The Jutes appear to have been the principal group of settlers in Kent, the Isle of Wight and parts of coastal Hampshire, while the Saxons predominated in all other areas south of the Thames and in Essex and Middlesex, and the Angles in Norfolk, Suffolk, theMidlands and the north.[citation needed]

The population of Britain dramatically decreased after the Roman period. The reduction seems to have been caused mainly by plague and smallpox. It is known that the plague of Justinian entered the Mediterranean world in the 6th century and first arrived in the British Isles in 544 or 545, when it reached Ireland.[12] The Annales Cambriae mention the death of Maelgwn Wledig, king of Gwynedd from that plague in 547.

[edit]Anglo-Saxon conquests and the founding of England

Main article: History of Anglo-Saxon England

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Kingdoms and tribes in Britain, c.600 AD

In approximately 495, at the Battle of Mount Badon, Britons inflicted a severe defeat on an invading Anglo-Saxon army which halted the westward Anglo-Saxon advance for some decades.[citation needed] Archaeological evidence collected from pagan Anglo-Saxon cemeteries suggests that some of their settlements were abandoned and the frontier between the invaders and the native inhabitants pushed back[clarification needed] some time around 500.

Anglo-Saxon expansion resumed in the 6th century, although the chronology of its progress is unclear. One of the few individual events which emerges with any clarity before the 7th century is the Battle of Deorham, in 577, a West Saxon victory which led to the capture of Cirencester, Gloucester and Bath, bringing the Anglo-Saxon advance to the Bristol Channel and dividing the Britons in the West Country from those in Wales. The Northumbrian victory at the Battle of Chester around 616 may have had a similar effect in dividing Wales from the Britons of Cumbria.

Gradual Saxon expansion through the West Country continued through the 7th, 8th, and 9th centuries. Meanwhile, by the mid-7th century the Angles had pushed the Britons back to the approximate borders of modern Wales in the west, the Tamar in the South west and expanded northward as far as the River Forth.

[edit]Heptarchy and Christianisation

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Britain c. 800

Main articles: Northumbria, Mercia, Offa of Mercia, Heptarchy, and Anglo-Saxon Christianity

Christianisation of Anglo-Saxon England began around 600 AD, influenced by Celtic Christianity from the northwest and by the Roman Catholic Church from the southeast.Augustine, the first Archbishop of Canterbury, took office in 597. In 601, he baptised the first Christian Anglo-Saxon king, Aethelbert of Kent. The last pagan Anglo-Saxon king, Penda of Mercia, died in 655. The last pagan Jutish king, Arwald of the Isle of Wight was killed in 686. The Anglo-Saxon mission on the continent took off in the 8th century, leading to the Christianisation of practically all of the Frankish Empire by 800.

Throughout the 7th and 8th century power fluctuated between the larger kingdoms. Bede records Aethelbert of Kent as being dominant at the close of the 6th century, but power seems to have shifted northwards to the kingdom of Northumbria, which was formed from the amalgamation of Bernicia and Deira. Edwin of Northumbria probably held dominance over much of Britain, though Bede's Northumbrian bias should be kept in mind. Succession crises meant Northumbrian hegemony was not constant, andMercia remained a very powerful kingdom, especially under Penda. Two defeats essentially ended Northumbrian dominance: the Battle of the Trent in 679 against Mercia, and Nechtanesmere in 685 against the Picts.

The so-called "Mercian Supremacy" dominated the 8th century, though it was not constant. Aethelbald and Offa, the two most powerful kings, achieved high status; indeed, Offa was considered the overlord of south Britain by Charlemagne. That Offa could summon the resources to build Offa's Dyke is testament to his power. However, a rising Wessex, and challenges from smaller kingdoms, kept Mercian power in check, and by the early 9th century the "Mercian Supremacy" was over.

This period has been described as the Heptarchy, though this term has now fallen out of academic use. The word arose on the basis that the seven kingdoms ofNorthumbria, Mercia, Kent, East Anglia, Essex, Sussex and Wessex were the main polities of south Britain. More recent scholarship[citation needed] has shown that other kingdoms were also politically important across this period: Hwicce, Magonsaete, Lindsey and Middle Anglia.

[edit]Viking challenge and the rise of Wessex

Main articles: Danelaw, Viking Age, and Alfred the Great

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England in 878

The first recorded Viking attack in Britain was in 793 at Lindisfarne monastery as given by the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. However, by then the Vikings were almost certainly well established in Orkney and Shetland, and it is probable that many other non-recorded raids occurred before this. Records do show the first Viking attack on Iona taking place in 794. The arrival of the Vikings, in particular the Danish Great Heathen Army, upset the political and social geography of Britain and Ireland. Alfred the Great's victory at Edington in 878 stemmed the Danish attack; however, by then Northumbria had devolved into Bernicia and a Viking kingdom, Mercia had been split down the middle, and East Anglia ceased to exist as an Anglo-Saxon polity. The Vikings had similar effects on the various kingdoms of the Scots, Picts and (to a lesser extent) Welsh. Certainly in North Britain the Vikings were one reason behind the formation of the Kingdom of Alba, which eventually evolved into Scotland.

The conquest of Northumbria, north-western Mercia and East Anglia by the Danes led to widespread Danish settlement in these areas. In the early 10th century the Norwegian rulers of Dublin took over the Danish kingdom of York. Danish and Norwegian settlement made enough of an impact to leave significant traces in the English language; many fundamental words in modern English are derived from Old Norse, though of the 100 most used words in English the vast majority are Old English in origin. Similarly, many place-names in areas of Danish and Norwegian settlement have Scandinavian roots.

By the end of Alfred's reign in 899 he was the only remaining English king, having reduced Mercia to a dependency of Wessex, governed by his son-in-law Ealdorman Aethelred. Cornwall (Kernow) was subject to West Saxon dominance, and the Welsh kingdoms recognised Alfred as their overlord.

[edit]English unification

Main articles: Athelstan and Edgar of England

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Edward the Elder

Alfred of Wessex died in 899 and was succeeded by his son Edward the Elder. Edward, and his brother-in-law Æthelred of (what was left of) Mercia, began a programme of expansion, building forts and towns on an Alfredian model. On Æthelred's death his wife (Edward's sister) Æthelflæd ruled as "Lady of the Mercians" and continued expansion. It seems Edward had his son Æthelstan brought up in the Mercian court, and on Edward's death Athelstan succeeded to the Mercian kingdom, and, after some uncertainty, Wessex.

Æthelstan continued the expansion of his father and aunt and was the first king to achieve direct rulership of what we would now consider England. The titles attributed to him in charters and on coins suggest a still more widespread dominance. His expansion aroused ill-feeling among the other kingdoms of Britain, and he defeated a combined Scottish-Viking army at the Battle of Brunanburh. However, the unification of England was not a certainty. Under Æthelstan's successors Edmund and Eadredthe English kings repeatedly lost and regained control of Northumbria. Nevertheless, Edgar, who ruled the same expanse as Athelstan, consolidated the kingdom, which remained united thereafter.

[edit]England under the Danes and the Norman conquest

Main articles: Ethelred the Unready, Canute the Great, Eiríkr Hákonarson, and Norman conquest of England

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The rune stone U 344 was raised in memory of a Viking who went to England three times.

There were renewed Scandinavian attacks on England at the end of the 10th century. Æthelred ruled a long reign but ultimately lost his kingdom to Sweyn of Denmark, though he recovered it following the latter's death. However, Æthelred's son Edmund II Ironside died shortly afterwards, allowing Canute, Sweyn's son, to become king of England. Under his rule the kingdom became the centre of government for an empire which also included Denmark and Norway.

Canute was succeeded by his sons, but in 1042 the native dynasty was restored with the accession of Edward the Confessor. Edward's failure to produce an heir caused a furious conflict over the succession on his death in 1066. His struggles for power against Godwin, Earl of Wessex, the claims of Canute's Scandinavian successors, and the ambitions of the Normans whom Edward introduced to English politics to bolster his own position caused each to vie for control Edward's reign.

Harold Godwinson became king, in all likelihood appointed by Edward the Confessor on his deathbed and endorsed by the Witan. William of Normandy, Harald III of Norway (aided by Harold Godwin's estranged brother Tostig) and Sweyn II of Denmark all asserted claims to the throne. By far the strongest hereditary claim was that ofEdgar the Atheling, but his youth and apparent lack of powerful supporters

caused him to be passed over, and he did not play a major part in the struggles of 1066, though he was made king for a short time by the Witan after the death of Harold Godwinson.

In September 1066, Harald III of Norway landed in Northern England with a force of around 15,000 men and 300 longships (50 men in each boat). With him was Earl Tostig, who had promised him support. Harold Godwinson defeated and killed Harald III of Norway and Tostig and the Norwegian force at the Battle of Stamford Bridge.

On 28 September 1066, William of Normandy invaded England with a force of Normans, in a campaign known as the Norman Conquest. On 14 October, after having marched his exhausted army all the way from Yorkshire, Harold fought the Normans at the Battle of Hastings, where England's army was defeated and Harold was killed. Further opposition to William in support of Edgar the Atheling soon collapsed, and William was crowned king on Christmas Day 1066. For the next five years he faced a series of English rebellions in various parts of the country and a half-hearted Danish invasion, but he was able to subdue all resistance and establish an enduring regime.

[edit]Norman England

"Norman England" redirects here. For the American director, see Norman England (director).

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Depiction of the Battle of Hastings (1066) on the Bayeux Tapestry

The Norman Conquest led to a sea-change in the history of the English state. William ordered the compilation of the Domesday Book, a survey of the entire population and their lands and property for tax purposes, which reveals that within twenty years of the conquest the English ruling class had been almost entirely dispossessed and replaced by Norman landholders, who also monopolised all senior positions in the government and the Church. William and his nobles spoke and conducted court inNorman French, in England as well as in Normandy. The use of the Anglo-Norman language by the aristocracy endured for centuries and left an indelible mark in the development of modern English.

The English Middle Ages were characterised by civil war, international war, occasional insurrection, and widespread political intrigue amongst the aristocratic and monarchic elite. England was more than self-sufficient in cereals, dairy products, beef and mutton. The nation's international economy was based on the wool trade, in which the produce of the sheepwalks of northern England was exported to the textile cities of Flanders, where it was worked into cloth. Medieval foreign policy was as much shaped by relations with the Flemish textile industry as it was by dynastic adventures in western France. An English textile industry was established in the 15th century, providing the basis for rapid English capital accumulation.

Henry I, the fourth son of William I the Conqueror, succeeded his elder brother William II as King of England in 1100. Henry was also known as "Henry Beauclerc" (because of his education—as his older brother William was the heir apparent and thus given the practical training to be king, Henry received the alternate, formal education), worked hard to reform and stabilise the country and smooth the differences between the Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman societies. The loss of his son,William Adelin, in the wreck of the White Ship in November 1120, undermined his reforms. This problem regarding succession cast a long shadow over English history.

During the confused and contested reign of Stephen, there was a major swing in the balance of power towards the feudal barons, as civil war and lawlessness broke out. In trying to appease Scottish and Welsh raiders, he handed over large tracts of land. His conflicts with his cousin The Empress Matilda (also known as Empress Maud), led to a civil war from 1139-1153 known as the Anarchy. Matilda's father, Henry I, had required the leading barons, ecclesiastics and officials in Normandy and England, to take an oath to accept Matilda as his heir. England was far less than enthusiastic to accept an outsider, and a woman, as their ruler.

There is some evidence suggesting Henry was unsure of his own hopes and the oath to make Matilda his heir. In likelihood, Henry probably hoped Matilda would have a son and step aside as Queen Mother, making her son the next heir. Upon Henry's death, the Norman and English barons ignored Matilda's claim to the throne, and thus through a series of decisions, Stephen, Henry's favourite nephew, was welcomed by many in England and Normandy as their new ruler.

On 22 December 1135, Stephen was anointed king with the implicit support of the church and nation. Matilda and her own son stood for direct descent by heredity from Henry I, and she bided her time in France. In the autumn of 1139, she invaded England with her illegitimate half-brother Robert of Gloucester. Her husband, Geoffroy V of Anjou, conquered Normandy but did not cross the channel to help his wife, satisfied with Normandy and Anjou. During this breakdown of central authority, the nobles ran amuck building adulterine castles (i.e. castles erected without government permission).

Stephen was captured, and his government fell. Matilda was proclaimed queen but was soon at odds with her subjects and was expelled from London. The period of insurrection and civil war that followed continued until 1148, when Matilda returned to France. Stephen effectively reigned unopposed until his death in 1154, although his hold on the throne was still uneasy. As soon as he regained power, he began the process of demolishing the adulterine castles, which were hated by the peasants due to their being employed as forced labor to build and maintain them. Stephen kept a few castles standing however, which put him at odds with his heir.

[edit]England under the Plantagenets

Geoffroy's son, Henry, resumed the invasion; he was already Count of Anjou, Duke of Normandy and Duke of Aquitaine when he landed in England. When Stephen's son and heir apparent Eustace died in 1153, the king reached an accommodation with Henry of Anjou (who became Henry II) to succeed Stephen and in which peace between them was guaranteed. England was part of a greater union, retrospectively named theAngevin Empire. Henry destroyed the remaining adulterine castles and

expanded his power through various means and to different levels into Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Flanders, Nantes, Brittany, Quercy, Toulouse, Bourges and Auvergne.

The reign of Henry II represents a reversion in power back from the barony to the monarchical state in England; it was also to see a similar redistribution of legislative power from the Church, again to the monarchical state. This period also presaged a properly constituted legislation and a radical shift away from feudalism. In his reign new Anglo-Angevin and Anglo-Aquitanian aristocracies developed, though not to the same point as the Anglo-Norman once did, and the Norman nobles interacted with their French peers.

Henry's successor, Richard I "the Lion Heart" (also known as "The absent king"), was preoccupied with foreign wars, taking part in the Third Crusade and defending his French territories against Philip II of France.

The Kingdom of England was a sovereign state until the reign of Richard I who made it a nominal vassal of the Holy Roman Empire in 1194 as part of a ransom when he was captured after a crusade.

Richard's younger brother John, who succeeded him, was not so fortunate; he suffered the loss of Normandy and numerous other French territories following the disastrous Battle of Bouvines.

Facing internal disorder, in 1212 John made the Kingdom of England a tribute-paying vassal of the Holy See, which it remained until the 14th century when the Kingdom rejected the overlordship of the Holy See and re-established its sovereignty. From 1212 onwards, John had a constant policy of maintaining close relations with the Pope, which partially explains how he persuaded the Pope to reject the legitimacy of the Magna Carta.

The European wars culminated in defeat at the Battle of Bouvines (1214), which forced the king to accept an unfavourable peace with France after having failed to get help from King Mohammed el-Nasir of Morocco.[13]

[edit]Magna Carta

Main article: Magna Carta

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The signing of the Magna Carta (1215)

Over the course of his reign a combination of higher taxes, unsuccessful wars and conflict with the Pope had made King John unpopular with his barons, and in 1215 some of the most important decided to rebel against him. He met their leaders along with their French and Scot allies at Runnymede, near London on 15 June 1215 to seal theGreat Charter (Magna Carta in Latin), which imposed legal limits on the king's personal powers. Because he had sealed under duress, however, John received approval from

the Pope to break his word as soon as hostilities had ceased, provoking the First Barons' War and an invited French invasion by Prince Louis of France (whom the majority of the English barons had invited to replace John on the throne and had him proclaimed king in London in May 1216). John travelled around the country to oppose the rebel forces, directing, among other operations, a two-month siege of the rebel-held Rochester Castle.

John's son, Henry III, was only 9 years old when he became king (1216–1272). He spent much of his reign fighting the barons over the Magna Carta[citation needed] and the royal rights, and was eventually forced to call the first "parliament" in 1264. He was also unsuccessful on the Continent, where he endeavoured to re-establish English control over Normandy, Anjou, and Aquitaine.

His reign was punctuated by numerous rebellions and civil wars, often provoked by incompetence and mismanagement in government and Henry's perceived over-reliance on French courtiers (thus restricting the influence of the English nobility). One of these rebellions—led by a disaffected courtier, Simon de Montfort—was notable for its assembly of one of the earliest precursors to Parliament. In addition to fighting the Second Barons' War, Henry III made war against Saint Louis and was defeated during the Saintonge War, yet Louis IX did not capitalise on his victory, respecting his opponent's rights.

[edit]14th century

The reign of Edward I (reigned 1272–1307) was rather more successful. Edward enacted numerous laws strengthening the powers of his government, and he summoned the first officially sanctioned Parliaments of England (such as his Model Parliament). He conquered Wales and attempted to use a succession dispute to gain control of the Kingdom of Scotland, though this developed into a costly and drawn-out military campaign.

His son, Edward II, proved a disaster. A weak man who preferred to engage in activities like thatching and ditch-digging[citation needed] rather than jousting, hunting, or the usual entertainments of kings, he spent most of his reign trying in vain to control the nobility, who in return showed continual hostility to him. Meanwhile, the Scottish leader Robert Bruce began retaking all the territory conquered by Edward I. In 1314, the English army was disastrously defeated by the Scots at the Battle of Bannockburn. Edward also showered favours on his companion Piers Gaveston, a knight of humble birth. While it has been widely believed that Edward was a homosexual because of his closeness to Gaveston, there is no concrete evidence of this. The king's enemies, including his cousin Thomas of Lancaster, captured and murdered Gaveston in 1312.

Edward's downfall came in 1326 when his queen Isabella travelled to her native France and then, along with her lover Roger Mortimer, invaded England. Despite their tiny force, they quickly rallied support for their cause. The king fled London, and his companion since Piers Gaveston's death, Hugh Despenser, was publicly tried and executed. Edward was eventually captured and charged with breaking his coronation oath. He was deposed and remained imprisoned in Gloucestershire until he was murdered some time in the autumn of 1327, presumably by agents of Isabella and Mortimer.

The Great Famine of 1315–1317 was the first crisis that would strike Europe in the 14th century. Millions in northern Europe would die over an extended number of years, marking a clear end to the earlier period of growth and prosperity during the 11th and 12th centuries.[14] The famine of 1315–1316 may have killed more than 10% of England's population, or at least 500,000 people.[15]

Edward III reigned 1327–1377, restored royal authority and went on to transform the Kingdom of England into the most efficient military power in Europe. His reign saw vital developments in legislature and government—in particular the evolution of the English parliament—as well as the ravages of the Black Death. After defeating, but not subjugating, the Kingdom of Scotland, he declared himself rightful heir to the French throne in 1338, starting what would be known as the Hundred Years' War.

[edit]Black Death

Main article: Black Death in England

The Black Death, an epidemic of bubonic plague that spread over the whole of Europe, arrived in England in 1348 and killed as much as a third to half the population.

International excursions around that time were invariably against domestic neighbours: the Welsh, Irish, Cornish, and the Hundred Years' War against the French and their Scottish allies. Notable English victories in the Hundred Years' War included Crécy and Agincourt. In addition to this, the final defeat of the uprising led by the Welsh prince, Owain Glyndŵr, in 1412 by Prince Henry (who later became Henry V) represents the last major armed attempt by the Welsh to throw off English rule.

Edward III gave land to powerful noble families, including many people of royal lineage. Because land was equivalent to power, these powerful men could try to claim the crown. The autocratic and arrogant methods of Richard II only served to alienate the nobility more, and his forceful dispossession in 1399 by Henry IV increased the turmoil.

[edit]15th century

The reign of Henry V, who succeeded to the throne in 1413, was mostly notable for the great victory over the French at Agincourt. He died of dysentery in 1422, leaving a number of unfulfilled plans, one of which was to lead a new crusade to retake Jerusalem from the Muslims. The turmoil was at its peak in the reign of Henry VI, which began in 1422, because of his personal weaknesses and mental instability.

When the Hundred Years' War was lost in August 1453, Henry fell into a period of mental breakdown that lasted until Christmas 1454. With his inability to control the feuding nobles, civil war began in 1455. The conflicts are known as the Wars of the Roses (1455–1485), and although the fighting was very sporadic and small, there was a general breakdown in the authority and power of the Crown. Henry's cousin, who deposed him in 1461 and became Edward IV, went a little way to restoring this power. Edward defeated the Lancastrians at the Battle of Mortimer's Cross. He was briefly expelled from the throne in 1470-1471 whenRichard Neville, Earl of Warwick, brought Henry back to power. Six months later, Edward defeated and killed Warwick in battle and reclaimed the throne. Henry was imprisoned in the Tower of London and died there.

Edward died in 1483, only 40 years old. His eldest son and heir Edward V, aged 13, would have succeeded him, but the king's brother Richard, Duke of Gloucester declared his marriage to be bigamous and invalid, making all his children illegitimate. Edward V and his 10-year old brother Richard were imprisoned in the Tower of London and their uncle made himself king as Richard III. The two princes were never seen again and presumably died in the Tower. It was widely believed that Richard had them murdered, although their exact fate remains a mystery. Regardless of what really happened, the king was reviled as a treacherous fiend who murdered his own nephews to gain the throne. This hatred of Richard obscured his able governance during his brief reign. In the summer of 1485, Henry Tudor, the last Lancastrian male, landed in England from his exile in France. He defeated and killed Richard in battle at Bosworth Field on 22 August of that year and became king as Henry VII.

See also: Black Death in England, English historians in the Middle Ages, List of English chronicles, and Bayeux Tapestry

[edit]Tudor England

Main article: Tudor period

Further information: Early Modern Britain and English Renaissance

[edit]Henry VII

With Henry VII's accession to the throne in 1485, the Wars of the Roses came to an end, and Tudors would continue to rule England for 118 years. Traditionally, the Battle of Bosworth Field is considered to mark the end of the Middle Ages in England, although Henry did not introduce any new concept of monarchy, and for most of his reign his hold on power was tenuous. He claimed the throne by conquest and God's judgement in battle. Parliament quickly recognized him as king, but the Yorkists were far from defeated. Nonetheless, he married Edward IV's eldest daughter Elizabeth in January 1486, thereby uniting the houses of York and Lancaster.

Most of the European rulers did not believe Henry would survive long, and were thus willing to shelter claimants against him. The first plot against him was the Stafford and Lovell Rebellion of 1486, which presented no serious threat. But Richard III's nephew John de la Pole, Earl of Lincoln, hatched another attempt the following year. Using a peasant boy named Lambert Simnel, who posed as Edward, Earl of Warwick (the real Warwick was locked up in the Tower of London), he led an army of 2,000 German mercenaries paid for by Margaret of Burgundy into England. They were defeated and de la Pole killed at the difficult Battle of Stoke, where the loyalty of some of the royal troops to Henry was questionable. The king, realizing that Simnel was merely a dupe, employed him in the royal kitchen.

A more serious menace was Perkin Warbeck, a Flemish youth who posed as Edward IV's son Richard. Again enjoying the support of Margaret of Burgundy, he invaded England four times from 1495-1497 before he was finally captured and put in the Tower of London. Both Warbeck and the Earl of Warwick were too dangerous to keep around even in captivity, and Henry had to execute them in 1499 before

Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain would allow their daughter Catherine to come to England and marry his son Arthur.

In 1497, Michael An Gof and the Baron Callum of Perranporth led Cornish rebels in a march on London. In a battle over the River Ravensbourne at Deptford Bridge, An Gof and Callum fought for various issues related to taxation. The English suffered high casualties, but on 17 June 1497 the forces of An Gof and Callum were defeated. The rest of his Henry VII's reign was relatively peaceful, despite worries concerning succession after the death of his wife Elizabeth of York in 1503.

Henry VII's foreign policy was a peaceful one. He had formed an alliance with Spain and the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I, but in 1493, when they went to war with France, England was dragged into the conflict. With his crown impoverished and his hold on power insecure, Henry had no desire to go to war. He quickly reached an understanding with the French and renounced all claims to their territory except the port of Calais, realizing also that nothing could be done to stop them from incorporating the Duchy of Brittany. In return, the French agreed to recognize him as king and stop sheltering pretenders. Shortly afterwards, they became preoccupied with adventures in Italy and turned their attention away from England. Henry also reached an understanding with Scotland, agreeing to marry his daughter Margaret to that country's king James IV.

Upon becoming king, Henry inherited a government severely weakened and degraded by the Wars of the Roses. The treasury was empty, having been drained by Edward IV's Woodville in-laws after his death. Through a tight fiscal policy and sometimes ruthless tax collection and confiscations, Henry managed to refill the treasury by the time of his death. He also effectively rebuilt the machinery of government.

In 1501, the king's son Arthur, having married Catherine of Aragon, died of an illness at the age of 15, leaving his younger son Henry, Duke of York, as his heir. When the king himself died in 1509, the position of the Tudors was secure at last, and his son succeeded him unopposed.

[edit]Henry VIII

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King Henry VIII

Henry VIII began his reign with a high degree of optimism. The handsome, athletic young king stood in sharp contrast to his wary, miserly father. Henry's lavish court quickly drained the treasury of the fortune he had inherited. He married the widowed Catherine of Aragon, and they had several children, but none survived infancy except a daughter, Mary.

In 1512, the young king embarked on a war in France. Although England was an ally of Spain, one of France's principal enemies, the war was mostly about Henry's desire for personal glory, regardless of the

fact that his sister Mary was married to the French king Louis XII. The war accomplished little. The English army suffered badly from disease, and Henry was not even present at the one notable victory, the Battle of the Spurs. Meanwhile, James IV of Scotland (despite being Henry's other brother-in-law), activated his alliance with the French and declared war on England. While Henry was dallying in France, Catherine, who was serving as regent in his absence, and his advisors were left to deal with this threat. At the Battle of Flodden on 9 September 1513, the Scots were completely and totally defeated. Most of the Scottish nobility were killed along with James himself. When Henry returned from France, he was given credit for the victory even though he had nothing to do with it.

Eventually, Catherine was no longer able to have any more children. The king became increasingly nervous about the possibility of his daughter Mary inheriting the throne, as England's one experience with a female sovereign, Matilda in the 12th century, had been a catastrophe. He eventually decided that it was necessary to divorce Catherine and find a new queen. The Church would not simply grant this favour, so Henry cited the passage in the Book of Leviticus where it said, "If a man taketh his brother's wife, he hath committed adultery; they shall be childless." However, Catherine insisted that she and Arthur had never consummated their brief marriage and that the prohibition did not apply here. The timing of Henry's case was very unfortunate; it was 1527 and the Pope had been taken prisoner by the emperor Charles V, Catherine's nephew and the most powerful man in Europe, for siding with his archenemy Francis I of France. As there was no possibility of getting a divorce in these circumstances, Henry decided to simply secede from the Church, in what became known as the English Reformation.

The newly established Church of England amounted to little more than the existing Catholic Church, but with the king rather than the Pope as its head. It took a number of years for the separation from Rome to be completed, however, and many were executed for resisting the king's religious policies.

In 1530, Catherine was banished from court and spent the remainder of her life (until her death in 1536) alone in an isolated manor home, barred from any contact with Mary (although her ladies-in-waiting helped the two maintain a secret correspondence). Their marriage was declared invalid, making Mary an illegitimate child. Henry married Anne Boleyn in secret in 1531, just as his divorce from Catherine was finalized. After this, they had a second, public wedding. Anne soon became pregnant and may have already been when they wed. But on 7 September 1533, she gave birth to a daughter, Elizabeth. The king was devastated at his failure to obtain a son after all the effort it had taken to remarry. Gradually, he came to develop a disliking of his new queen for her strange behaviour. In 1536, when Anne was pregnant again, Henry was badly injured in a jousting accident. Shaken by this, the queen gave birth prematurely to a stillborn boy. By now, the king was convinced that his marriage was hexed, and having already found a new queen, Jane Seymour, he put Anne in the Tower of London on charges of witchcraft. Afterwards, she was beheaded along with five men (her brother included) accused of adultery with her. The marriage was then declared invalid, so that Elizabeth, just like her half sister, became a bastard.

Henry immediately married Jane Seymour, who became pregnant almost as quickly. On 12 October 1537, she gave birth to a healthy boy, Edward, which was greeted with huge celebrations. The king's quest for a son was finally over, so long as Edward could be kept healthy. However, the queen died of

puerperal sepsis ten days later. Henry genuinely mourned her death, and at his own passing nine years later, he was buried next to her.

The king married a fourth time in 1540, to the German Anne of Cleves for a political alliance with her Protestant brother, the Duke of Cleves. He also hoped to obtain another son in case something should happen to Edward. Anne proved a dull, unattractive woman and Henry declined to consummate the marriage. He quickly divorced her, and she remained in England as a kind of adopted sister to him. So he married again, to a 19-year old named Catherine Howard. But when it became known that she was neither a virgin at the wedding, nor a faithful wife afterwards, she ended up on the scaffold and the marriage declared invalid. His sixth and last marriage was to Catherine Parr, more a nursemaid to him than anything else, as his health was failing (it had declined ever since the jousting accident in 1536).

In 1542, the king embarked on a new campaign in France, but unlike in 1512, he only managed with great difficulty. The war netted England the city of Boulogne, but nothing else, and the French retook it in 1549. Scotland also declared war and at Solway Moss was once again totally defeated.

Henry's paranoia and suspicion worsened in his last years. The total number of executions during his 38-year reign numbered in the tens of thousands. He died in January 1547 at the age of 55 and was succeeded by his son, Edward VI.

[edit]Edward VI and Mary

Although he showed piety and intelligence, Edward VI was only nine years old when he took the throne in 1547. His uncle, Edward Seymour, 1st Duke of Somerset tampered with Henry VIII's will and obtainedletters patent giving him much of the power of a monarch by March 1547. He took the title of Protector. Whilst some see him as a high-minded idealist, his stay in power culminated in a crisis in 1549 when many counties of the realm were up in protest. Kett's Rebellion in Norfolk and the Prayer Book Rebellion in Devon and Cornwall simultaneously created a crisis during a time when invasion from Scotland and France were feared. Somerset, disliked by the Regency Council for his autocratic methods, was removed from power by John Dudley, who is known as Lord President Northumberland. Northumberland proceeded to adopt the power for himself, but his methods were more conciliatory and the Council accepted him. It was during Edward's reign that England became a Protestant nation as opposed to a Catholic one in schism from Rome.

Edward was beginning to show great promise when he fell violently ill with tuberculosis in 1553 and died that August two months short of his 16th birthday.

Northumberland made plans to place Lady Jane Grey on the throne and marry her to his son, so that he could remain the power behind the throne. His plot failed in a matter of days, Jane Grey was beheaded, andMary I (1516–1558) took the throne amidst popular demonstration in her favour in London, which contemporaries described as the largest show of affection for a Tudor monarch. Mary had never been expected to hold the throne, at least not since Edward was born. She was a devoted Catholic who believed that she could turn the clock back to 1516, before the Reformation began.[16]

Returning England to Catholicism led to the burnings of 274 Protestants, which are recorded especially in John Foxe's Book of Martyrs. Mary then married her cousin Philip, son of the emperor Charles V, and King of Spain when Charles abdicated in 1556. The union was a difficult one, since Mary was already in her late 30s and Philip was a Catholic and a foreigner, and so not very welcome in England. This wedding also had the effect of provoking the hostility of the French, already at war with Spain and now alarmed at the prospect of being completely encircled by the Hapsburgs. Calais, the last English outpost on the Continent, was then taken by France. King Philip (1527–1598) had very little power, although he did protect Elizabeth. He was not popular in England, and spent little time there.[17] Mary eventually became pregnant, or at least believed herself to be. In reality, she may have had uterine cancer. Her death in November 1558 was greeted with huge celebrations in the streets of London.

[edit]Elizabeth

Main article: Elizabethan era

The reign of Elizabeth restored a sort of order to the realm following the turbulence of the reigns of Edward and Mary when she came to the throne following the death of Mary in 1558. The religious issue which had divided the country since Henry VIII was in a way put to rest by the Elizabethan Religious Settlement, which re-established the Church of England. Much of Elizabeth's success was in balancing the interests of thePuritans and Catholics. She managed to offend neither to a large extent, although she clamped down on Catholics towards the end of her reign as war with Catholic Spain loomed.[18][19]

Despite the need for an heir, Elizabeth declined to marry, despite offers from a number of suitors across Europe, including the Swedish king Erik XIV. This created endless worries over her succession, especially in the 1570s when she nearly died of smallpox. It has been often rumored that she had a number of lovers (including Francis Drake), but there is no hard evidence.

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Queen Elizabeth

Elizabeth maintained relative government stability apart from the Revolt of the Northern Earls in 1569, she was effective in reducing the power of the old nobility and expanding the power of her government. Elizabeth's government did much to consolidate the work begun under Thomas Cromwell in the reign of Henry VIII, that is, expanding the role of the government and effecting common law and administration throughout England. During the reign of Elizabeth and shortly afterward, the population grew significantly: from three million in 1564 to nearly five million in 1616.[20]

The queen ran afoul of her cousin Mary, Queen of Scots, who was a devoted Catholic and had been forced to abdicate her throne as a consequence (Scotland had recently become Protestant). She fled to England, where Elizabeth immediately had her arrested. Mary spent the next 18 years in confinement, but proved too dangerous to keep alive, as the Catholic powers in Europe considered her, not Elizabeth,

the legitimate ruler of England. She was eventually tried for treason and sentenced to death, being beheaded in February 1587.

[edit]Foreign affairs

In foreign policy Elizabeth played against each other the major powers of France and Spain, as well as the papacy and Scotland. These were all Catholic and each wanted to end Protestantism in England. Elizabeth was cautious in foreign affairs and only half-heartedly supported a number of ineffective, poorly resourced military campaigns in the Netherlands, France and Ireland. She risked war with Spain by supporting the "Sea Dogs," such as [[John Hawkins and Sir Francis Drake, who preyed on the Spanish merchant ships carrying gold and silver from the New World. The major war came with Spain, 1585-1603. When Spain tried to invade and conquer England it was a fiasco, and the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588 associated Elizabeth's name forever with what is popularly viewed as one of the greatest victories in English history. Her enemies failed to combine and Elizabeth's foreign policy successfully navigated all the dangers.[21]

[edit]End of Tudor era

In all, the Tudor period is seen as a decisive one which set up many important questions which would have to be answered in the next century and during the English Civil War. These were questions of the relative power of the monarch and Parliament and to what extent one should control the other. Some historians think that Thomas Cromwell affected a "Tudor Revolution" in government, and it is certain that Parliament became more important during his chancellorship. Other historians say the "Tudor Revolution" really extended to the end of Elizabeth's reign, when the work was all consolidated. Although the Privy Council declined after the death of Elizabeth, while she was alive it was very effective.

[edit]17th century

Main article: 17th century England

[edit]Union of the Crowns

Elizabeth died in 1603 at the age of 69. Her closest male Protestant relative was the King of Scots, James VI, of the House of Stuart, who became King James I of England in a Union of the Crowns. King James I & VI as he was styled became the first monarch to rule the entire island of Great Britain, although it was merely a union of the English and Scottish crowns, and both countries remained separate political entities until 1707. Several assassination attempts were made on James, notably the Main Plot and Bye Plots of 1603, and most famously, on 5 November 1605, the Gunpowder Plot, by a group of Catholic conspirators, led bySir Robert Catesby, which caused more antipathy in England towards the Catholic faith. Upon taking power, James immediately made peace with Spain, and for the first half of the 17th century, England remained largely inactive in European politics.

[edit]Colonial England

In 1607 England built an establishment at Jamestown This was the beginning of colonialism by England in North America. Many English settled then in North America for religious or economic reasons. About 70% of migrants from England who came between 1630-1660 were indentured servants. By 1700, Chesapeake planters brought in about 100,000 indentured servants,[22] more than 75% of all European immigrants to Virginia and Maryland.[23] The English merchants holding plantations in the warm southern parts of America then resorted rather quickly to the slavery of Native Americans and imported Africans in order to cultivate their plantations and sell raw material (particularly cotton and tobacco) in Europe. The English merchants involved in colonization amassed fortunes equal to those of great aristocratic landowners in England, and their money, which fuelled the rise of the middle class, permanently altered the balance of political power. The American colonies did not prove profitable to the mother country in the end. Pennsylvania and Delaware were home to a large population of self-sufficient farmers from various parts of Europe, especially Germany. New York traded with pirates and smugglers, and the colonies of New England consistently frustrated the government's attempts to utilize the area's forests for shipbuilding. Only Virginia and the Chesapeake Bay area produced a useful cash crop, tobacco, but it quickly wore the soil out. By the end of the 18th century, the tobacco industry in Virginia had been completely ruined by soil exhaustion and low prices. Indeed, the small sugar-growing islands in the Caribbean were worth more than all of the thirteen colonies put together.

The English colonies did not have an independent foreign policy, but otherwise were mostly left to manage their own affairs. This was very different from the authoritarian control France and Spain held over their colonies. It was the gradual infringement on the rights of the colonies starting in the 1760s that would lead to the American War of Independence. Nothing of the sort would have been possible in the French and Spanish colonies.

http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/3/3e/English_civil_war_map_1642_to_1645.JPG/220px-English_civil_war_map_1642_to_1645.JPG

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Maps of territory held by Royalists (red) and Parliamentarians (green) during theEnglish Civil War (1642–1645)

[edit]English Civil War

Further information: English Civil War

The First English Civil War broke out in 1642, largely as a result of an ongoing series of conflicts between James' son, Charles I, and Parliament. The defeat of the Royalist army by the New Model Army of Parliament at the Battle of Naseby in June 1645 effectively destroyed the king's forces. Charles surrendered to the Scottish army at Newark. He was eventually handed over to the English Parliament in early 1647. He escaped, and the Second English Civil War began, although it was a short conflict, with the New Model Army quickly securing the country. The capture and subsequent trial of Charles led to his beheading in January 1649 at Whitehall Gate in London, making England a republic. The trial and

execution of Charles by his own subjects shocked the rest of Europe (the king argued to the end that only God could judge him) and was a precursor of sorts to the beheading of Louis XVI 145 years later.

The New Model Army, under the command of Oliver Cromwell, then scored decisive victories against Royalist armies in Ireland and Scotland. Cromwell was given the titleLord Protector in 1653, making him 'king in all but name' to his critics. After he died in 1658, his son Richard Cromwell succeeded him in the office but he was forced to abdicate within a year. For a while it looked as if a new civil war would begin as the New Model Army split into factions. Troops stationed in Scotland under the command of George Monck eventually marched on London to restore order.

[edit]Restoration of the monarchy

The monarchy was restored in 1660, with King Charles II returning to London.

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King Charles I, who was beheaded in 1649

In 1665, London was swept by a visitation of the plague, and then, in 1666, the capital was swept by the Great Fire, which raged for 5 days, destroying approximately 15,000 buildings. After the Restoration, there was an overall reduction in the power of the crown, and by the 18th century England rivaled the Netherlands for being one of the freest countries in Europe.

[edit]Glorious Revolution

In 1680, the Exclusion crisis occurred due to widespread objections to a Catholic serving as the King of England, since James was the heir presumptive to Charles, who was the king at that time. After the death of Charles II in 1685, his Catholic brother King James II & VII was crowned. From that point, there were various factions pressing for his Protestant daughter Mary and her husband, Prince William III of Orange, to replace him in what became known as the Glorious Revolution.

In November 1688, William landed in England with an invading force, and succeeding in being crowned king. After this, James attempted to retake the throne by force in the Williamite War, and was finally defeated by William at the Battle of the Boyne in 1690.

In December 1689, one of the most important constitutional documents in English history, the Bill of Rights, was passed.[24] The Act, which restated and confirmed many provisions of the earlier Declaration of Right, established restrictions on the royal prerogative. It provided, amongst other things, that the Sovereign could not suspend laws passed by Parliament, levy taxes without parliamentary consent, infringe the right to petition, raise a standing army during peacetime without parliamentary consent, deny the right to bear arms to Protestant subjects, unduly interfere with parliamentary elections, punish members of either House of Parliament for anything said during debates, require excessive bail or inflict cruel and unusual punishments.[25] William was opposed to the imposition of

such constraints, but he chose not to engage in a conflict with Parliament and agreed to abide by the statute.[26]

In parts of Scotland and Ireland, Catholics loyal to James remained determined to see him restored to the throne, and there followed a series of bloody though unsuccessful uprisings. As a result of these, any failure to pledge loyalty to the victorious King William was severely dealt with. The most infamous example of this policy was the Massacre of Glencoe in 1692. Jacobite rebellions continued on into the mid-18th century until the son of the last Catholic claimant to the throne, (James III & VIII), mounted a final campaign in 1745. The Jacobite forces of Prince Charles Edward Stuart, the "Bonnie Prince Charlie" of legend, were defeated at the Battle of Culloden in 1746.

[edit]Formation of the United Kingdom

The Acts of Union between the Kingdom of England and the Kingdom of Scotland were a pair of Parliamentary Acts passed by both parliaments in 1707, which dissolved them in order to form a Kingdom of Great Britain governed by a unified Parliament of Great Britain according to the Treaty of Union. The Acts joined the Kingdom of England and the Kingdom of Scotland (previously separate states, with separate legislatures but with the same monarch) into a single Kingdom of Great Britain.[27]

The two countries had shared a monarch since the Union of the Crowns in 1603, when King James VI of Scotland inherited the English throne from his double first cousin twice removed, Queen Elizabeth I. Although described as a Union of Crowns, until 1707 there were in fact two separate Crowns resting on the same head. There had been three attempts in 1606, 1667, and 1689 to unite the two countries by Acts of Parliament, but it was not until the early 18th century that the idea had the will of both political establishments behind them, albeit for rather different reasons.

The Acts took effect on 1 May 1707. On this date, the Scots Parliament and the English Parliament united to form the Parliament of Great Britain, based in the Palace of Westminster in London, the home of the English Parliament.[28] Hence, the Acts are referred to as the Union of the Parliaments. On the Union, historian Simon Schama said "What began as a hostile merger, would end in a full partnership in the most powerful going concern in the world ... it was one of the most astonishing transformations in European history."[29]

In 1714, the reign of Queen Anne ended. Anne was the last monarch of the House of Stuart. She was succeeded by her second cousin, George I, of the House of Hanover, who was a descendant of the Stuarts through his maternal grandmother, Elizabeth, daughter of James VI & I.[30] A series of Jacobite rebellions broke out in an attempt to restore the Stuart monarchy, but all ultimately failed. Several Planned French Invasions were attempted, also with the intention of placing the Stuarts on the throne.

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The first general laws against child labour, the Factory Acts, were passed in Britain in the first half of the 19th century. Children younger than nine were not allowed to work and the work day of youth under

the age of 18 was limited to twelve hours.[31]

The Act of Union of 1800 formally assimilated Ireland within the British political process and from 1 January 1801 created a new state called the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, which united the Kingdom of Great Britain with the Kingdom of Ireland to form a single political entity. The English capital of London was adopted as the capital of the Union.

[edit]Modern England, 18th-19th centuries

Main article: History of the United Kingdom

Further information: Social history of England and History of local government in England#The evolution of modern local government (1832-1974)

Following the formation of the United Kingdom, the history of England is no longer the history of a sovereign nation, but rather the history of a country that is a part of the United Kingdom.

[edit]Industrial Revolution

Main article: Economic history of Britain

During the late 18th century and early 19th century, there was considerable social upheaval as a largely agrarian society was transformed by technological advances and increasing mechanization, which was the Industrial Revolution. Much of the agricultural workforce was uprooted from the countryside and moved into large urban centres of production, as the steam-based production factories could undercut the traditional cottage industries, because of economies of scale and the increased output per worker made possible by the new technologies. The consequent overcrowding into areas with little supporting infrastructure saw dramatic increases in the rate of infant mortality (to the extent that many Sunday schools for pre-working age children (5 or 6) had funeral clubs to pay for each others funeral arrangements), crime, and social deprivation.

The transition to industrialization was not wholly seamless for workers, many of whom saw their livelihoods threatened by the process. Of these, some frequently sabotaged or attempted to sabotage factories. These saboteurs were known as "Luddites".

[edit]Local governance

Further information: History of local government in England

The Local Government Act of 1888 was the first systematic attempt to impose a standardised system of local government in England. The counties of England at the time (today known as the historic counties, since the major boundary changes of 1974) were used as the basis of the system. A second Act in 1894 (Local Government Act 1894) also created a second tier of local government. Henceforth, all administrative counties and county boroughs would be divided into either rural or urban districts, allowing more localised administration.

By 1888, it was clear that the piecemeal system that had developed over the previous century in response to the vastly increased need for local administration could no longer cope. The sanitary districts and parish councils had legal status, but were not part of the mechanism of government. They were run by volunteers; often there was no-one who could be held responsible for the failure to undertake the required duties. Furthermore, the increased "county business" could not be handled by the Quarter Sessions, nor was it appropriate to do so. Finally, there was a desire to see local administration performed by elected officials, as in the reformed municipal boroughs. The Local Government Act was therefore the first systematic attempt to impose a standardised system of local government in England

The counties of England at the time (now known as the historic counties, since the major boundary changes of 1974) were used as the basis of the system. The counties themselves had undergone some boundary changes in the preceding 50 years, mainly to remove enclaves and exclaves. The act called for the creation of statutory counties, based on the ancient/historic counties, but completely corrected for enclaves and exclaves, and adjusted so that all settlements were completely within a single county. These statutory counties were to be used for non-administrative functions: "sheriff, lieutenant, custos rotulorum, justices, militia, coroner, or other". With the advent of elected councils, the offices of lord lieutenant and sheriff became largely ceremonial.

The statutory counties formed the basis for the so-called 'administrative counties'. However, it was felt that large cities and primarily rural areas in the same county could not be well administered by the same body. Thus 59 "counties in themselves", or 'county boroughs', were created to administer the urban centres of England. These were part of the statutory counties, but not part of the administrative counties.

A second Act in 1894 (Local Government Act 1894) also created a second tier of local government. Henceforth, all administrative counties and county boroughs would be divided into either rural or urban districts, allowing more localised administration. The municipal boroughs reformed after 1835 were brought into this system as special cases of urban districts. The urban and rural districts were based upon, and incorporated the sanitary districts which had been created in 1875 (with adjustments, so that districts did not overlap two counties).

The Act also provided for the establishment of civil parishes. The 1894 Act formed an official system of civil parishes, separated from the ecclesiastical parishes, to carry on some of these responsibilities (others being transferred to the district/county councils). However, the civil parishes were not a complete third-tier of local government. Instead, they were 'community councils' for smaller, rural settlements, which did not have a local government district to themselves. Where urban parish councils had previously existed, they were absorbed into the new urban districts.

[edit]20th and 21st centuries

[edit]Political issues

Following years of political and military agitation for 'Home Rule' for Ireland, the Anglo-Irish treaty of 1921 established the Irish Free State (now the Republic of Ireland) as a separate state, leaving Northern Ireland as part of the United Kingdom. The official name of the UK thus became "The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland".

England, as part of the UK, joined the European Economic Community in 1973, which became the European Union in 1993.

There is a movement in England to create a devolved English Parliament. This would give England a local Parliament like those already functioning for Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales. This issue is referred to as the West Lothian question.

[edit]General history and local government

A Local Government Commission was wound up in 1966, and replaced with a Royal Commission (known as the Redcliffe-Maud commission). In 1969 it recommended a system of single-tier unitary authorities for the whole of England, apart from three metropolitan areas of Merseyside, Selnec (Greater Manchester) and West Midlands (Birmingham and the Black Country), which were to have both a metropolitan council and district councils. This report was accepted by the Labour Party government of the time despite considerable opposition, but the Conservative Party won the June 1970 general election, and on a manifesto that committed them to a two-tier structure.

The reforms arising from the Local Government Act of 1972 resulted in the most uniform and simplified system of local government which has been used in England. They effectively wiped away everything that had gone before, and built an administrative system from scratch. All previous administrative districts - statutory counties, administrative counties, county boroughs, municipal boroughs, counties corporate, civil parishes - were abolished.

The aim of the act was to establish a uniform two tier system across the country. Onto the blank canvas, new counties were created to cover the entire country; many of these were obviously based on the historic counties, but there were some major changes, especially in the north.

This uniform two-tier system lasted only 12 years. In 1986, the metropolitan county councils and Greater London were abolished. This restored autonomy (in effect the old county borough status) to the metropolitan and London boroughs. The Local Government Act (1992) established a commission (Local Government Commission for England) to examine the issues, and make recommendations on where unitary authorities should be established. It was considered too expensive to make the system entirely unitary, and also there would doubtlessly be cases where the two-tier system functioned well. The commission recommended that many counties be moved to completely unitary systems; that some cities become unitary authorities, but that the remainder of their parent counties remain two-tier; and that in some counties the status quoshould remain.

The rate-capping rebellion was a campaign within English local councils in 1985 which aimed to force the Conservative government of Margaret Thatcher to withdraw powers to restrict the spending of councils.

The affected councils were almost all run by left-wing Labour Party leaderships. The campaign's tactic was that councils whose budgets were restricted would refuse to set any budget at all for the financial year 1985-86, requiring the Government to intervene directly in providing local services, or to concede. However, all 15 councils which initially refused to set a rate eventually did so, and the campaign failed to change Government policy. Powers to restrict council budgets have remained in place ever since.

In 1997, the Lieutenancies Act was passed. This firmly separated all local authority areas (whether unitary or two-tier), from the geographical concept of a county as high level spatial unit. The lieutenancies it established became known as ceremonial counties, since they were no longer administrative divisions. The counties represent a compromise between the historic counties and the counties established in 1974.

While the 1997 Labour government devolved power to Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, it refused to created a devolved Assembly or parliament for England, planning instead to introduce eight regional assemblies around England to devolve power to the regions. In the event, only a London Assembly (and directly elected Mayor) was established. Rejection in a referendum of a proposed North-East Assembly in 2004 effectively scrapped those plans. A pre-condition of having a regional assembly was for the whole area to move to unitary authority status. Since the 2005 general election the government has floated the idea of voluntary mergers of local councils, avoiding a costly reorganisation but achieving desired reform. For instance, the guiding principles of the government's "New Localism" demand levels of efficiency not present in the current over-duplicated two-tier structure.

In 2009, new changes to local government were made whereby a number of new unitary authorities were created in areas which previously had a 'two-tier' system of counties and districts. In five shire counties the functions of the county and district councils were combined into a single authority; and in two counties the powers of the county council were absorbed into a significantly reduced number of districts.

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