

THE
CONNELL GUIDE
TO



THE
TUDORS

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school in the country.”

JULIAN FELLOWES

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW IN
ONE CONCISE VOLUME

by Susan Doran

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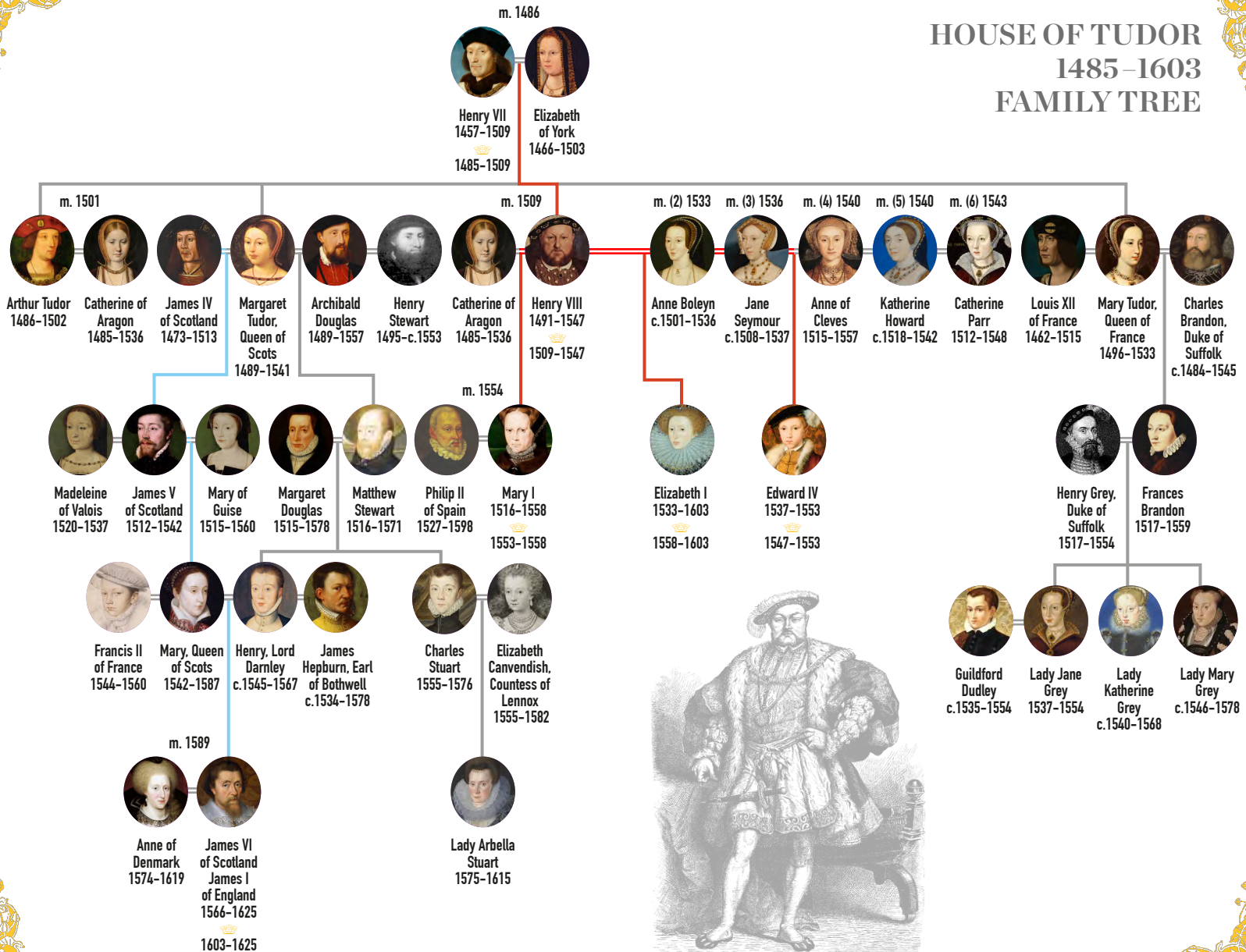
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HOUSE OF TUDOR 1485-1603 FAMILY TREE



Introduction: Who were the Tudors?

Henry VII (1485-1509)

August 22nd 1485 is one of the most important dates in the history of the British monarchy. It is the day Henry VII, as he became, won the Battle of Bosworth Field and took the throne. The crown has remained in the line of his heirs ever since.

Tall with striking blue eyes, Henry was the only child of Edmund Tudor, Earl of Richmond, and Margaret Beaufort. His paternal grandparents were Owen Tudor, a Welsh squire, and Queen Katherine, the French-born widow of Henry V. On his mother's side, he was descended from the bastard line of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster. Henry therefore saw himself as a Lancastrian.

In 1571, at the age of 14, he had escaped from England to France during the Wars of the Roses. As the main Lancastrian claimant to the throne, his life was in danger after the Yorkist Edward IV had seized the throne for a second time. Returning to England in 1485, he defeated Richard III at Bosworth. (Richard had himself usurped the throne in 1483 on his brother Edward IV's death.)

Crowned Henry VII at the age of 28, the first Tudor King fought off pretenders for much of his reign. Once king, he married the Yorkist princess, Elizabeth, a union that brought together the warring

houses of Lancaster (the red rose) and York (the white rose). Their children were on both sides descended from Edward III and thought of as Plantagenets. The Tudor surname was never used in official publications, and hardly at all in writings before 1584. Only in later histories has the dynasty become known as the Tudors.

Henry VIII (1509-47)

He was nearly 18 when he inherited the throne. Very tall (6ft 2ins), athletic, a fluent Latin and French speaker and a talented musician, he has been described as “a Renaissance prince to his fingertips”. But he was ruthless and constantly sought scapegoats. His contemporary, the Italian Machiavelli (though he never met Henry), described him as “rich, ferocious and greedy for glory”; others compared him to the Roman emperors Nero and Tiberius. On his deathbed, Henry VII had advised his son to marry his brother Arthur's widow, the graceful and pious 23-year-old **Katherine of Aragon**. Henry was captivated by her when they married but they grew apart as she aged. All but one of the six children Katherine conceived were still-born, miscarried or died shortly after childbirth.

By 1527 Henry had fallen for **Anne Boleyn**. His determination to marry her resulted in the break with Rome, as the Pope refused to annul the King's marriage to Katherine. Henry secretly wed Anne in

1533, but three years later she was executed, after failing to give him a son. Unlike Anne, his third wife, **Jane Seymour**, stayed out of politics, choosing the motto: “Bound to obey and serve.” She died soon after giving birth to a son, Edward.

Then came two short-lived marriages, the first to the German **Anne of Cleves** and the second to **Katherine Howard**, who was hardly more than a teenager when Henry married her, and who was then caught in an adulterous relationship and executed. The King wept and complained of his “ill luck in meeting with such ill-conditioned wives”. Finally, he wed the 30-year-old **Katherine Parr**, twice widowed, lively, attractive and clever. By now, Henry was troubled by an ulcerous leg and very fat. In his last few years, he was pushed around his chambers in special (wheel)chairs called “trams”.

Edward VI (1547-53)

Only nine years old when his reign began, he was arguably England’s best-educated king. Like his father, he was highly intelligent and enjoyed music, jousts and entertainments. He was also a zealous Protestant and his last words were said to be: “Oh my lord God, defend this realm from papistry.” Though short, his reign was notable for introducing Protestantism to England.

Lady Jane Grey (10-19 July, 1553)

Fifteen when proclaimed Queen, she ruled for just nine days. “The crown is not my right... and pleaseth me not. The Lady Mary is the rightful heir,” she said when she became Queen.

After months of imprisonment in the Tower of London, she was executed, aged 16.

Mary (1553-58)

Apart from Lady Jane Grey, she was England’s first female ruler.

As a young princess, she received a sound Classical education and showed herself accomplished in music and other skills. When her father married Anne Boleyn, she was declared a bastard and for a time excluded from court. As a devout Catholic, she refused to stop celebrating Mass in her own household during Edward’s reign.

Once Queen, she married Philip, then Prince and later King of Spain, but they had no children. Her reign is best remembered for the burning of Protestants and the loss of Calais, England’s last territory in France.

Elizabeth (1558-1603)

When Elizabeth was born on 7 September, 1533, it

was a great disappointment to her father, Henry VIII, and a catastrophe for her mother, Anne Boleyn. Astrologers, doctors and midwives had all assured them that their first child would be a boy.

After her mother's execution, Elizabeth – like her half-sister – was declared a bastard. Brought up a Protestant, she was treated as an object of suspicion under Mary. Aged 20, she was taken as a prisoner to the Tower of London for two months, and then transferred to Woodstock, with 60 soldiers standing guard. She etched on her window pane with a diamond: “Much suspected of me, nothing proved can be. Quoth Elizabeth, prisoner.”

In the first 18 months of her reign, Elizabeth's intimacy with Robert Dudley was a source of salacious gossip: Dudley was already married and in 1560 his wife was found dead at the foot of a small stone staircase. It has never been established whether or not this was an accident. Elizabeth decided marrying him was too dangerous but remained very close to him even after his second marriage in 1578. Despite the gossip, there is no evidence Elizabeth had a sexual relationship with him or anyone else.

She never met her Scottish cousin, Mary Stewart (Queen of Scots), yet their relationship dominated English politics from 1558 to Mary's execution in early 1587. Robert Cecil, Elizabeth's adviser throughout her reign, worried constantly about the “SQ”, as he referred to her. It is said he couldn't bear to speak her name. While the defeat of the Spanish

Armada in 1588 was Elizabeth's greatest triumph, the execution of Mary (which she never meant to authorise) affected her far more deeply.

Elizabeth presided over a golden age of English letters, with Shakespeare writing many of his greatest plays during her reign.

Dynastic Right and Royal Succession

How serious were dynastic challenges to the early Tudors?

All the Tudor monarchs were beset by two problems: did they have a right to the throne? And who should succeed them? The question of legitimacy was there from the start – with Henry VII's dubious claim to the throne.

Henry was the last man standing as a potential Lancastrian king, but males from the Yorkist line – especially the four nephews of Edward IV – had a far stronger hereditary right. Consequently, Henry claimed the throne not just by bloodline but (as he saw it) by God's judgment on the field of battle, even though he dated his reign from the day *before* Bosworth. He also ensured that his title was buttressed by a 1485 parliamentary statute and a 1486 papal bull. His marriage to the 19-year-old Elizabeth of York, the eldest daughter of Edward IV,

won over many doubters among the nobility and was praised for uniting the houses of Lancaster and York. Nonetheless, Henry had to face dangerous dynastic challenges.

The first of these came from Lambert Simnel. Simnel was a ten-year-old commoner groomed by a priest with Yorkist sympathies to impersonate Edward IV's nephew, Edward, Earl of Warwick, then a prisoner in the Tower of London. In need of a figurehead, Yorkist loyalists took Lambert over to Ireland, where he was crowned King Edward VI. The loyalists then landed in England with mercenary troops and an Irish army, hoping to raise the North against Henry. But the support they attracted was disappointing. Henry's strategy of treating Richard III's followers leniently after Bosworth served him well: most nobles stayed loyal. Besides, doubts existed about Simnel's legitimacy, especially once Henry had paraded the real Warwick through the streets of London.

As it marched south, the rebel force of about 8,000 met Henry's larger army and was decisively defeated at Stoke on 16 June 1487. This battle was effectively the final military engagement of the Wars of the Roses. Most men in the Yorkist army were slaughtered, but Simnel was captured and sent to work in the royal kitchens.

Nearly five years later, Henry faced another imposter. A Flemish youth, Perkin Warbeck, professed to be Richard, Duke of York, the younger

of the two missing "**Princes in the Tower**", the sons of Edward IV. Until Warbeck's capture and confession in September 1497, virtually no one could be certain that he was *not* the Yorkist King's heir. So he garnered support, at different times, from continental courts, the King of Scotland, powerful lords in Ireland, members of Henry's own household, and even Cornish rebels who were protesting about royal taxes in 1497.

Henry responded to the Warbeck crises in a

* See glossary on page 114 for phrases and names coloured in the text.



CHRONOLOGY OF THE TUDOR DYNASTY

1485 The Battle of Bosworth;
Henry VII's coronation (30
Oct).

1586 Henry's marriage to
Elizabeth of York (18 Jan);
Prince Arthur's birth (Sep).

1491 Prince Henry's birth (28
Jun).

1501 Arthur's marriage to
Katherine of Aragon (14 Nov).

1502 Arthur's death (Apr).

1503 Elizabeth of York's death
(Feb).

1509 Henry VII dies (21 Apr);
Henry VIII marries Katherine
of Aragon (Jun).

1516 Princess Mary born (Feb).

1533 Henry VIII marries Anne
Boleyn. Princess Elizabeth
born (Sep).

1536 Anne executed (May).

1537 Prince Edward born (Oct).

1544 Henry VIII's third
Succession Act, restoring Mary
and Elizabeth to the royal
succession.

1547 Edward VI comes to the
throne (28 Jan).

1553 Edward dies (6 Jul).
Succession crisis. Mary
crowned.

1558 Elizabeth comes to the
throne (17 Nov).

1603 Elizabeth dies (Mar). ■

range of ways. To counter foreign aid for the pretender, he threatened punitive expeditions and afterwards reached agreements with rulers abroad. At home, he used bonds and recognizances to keep the loyalty of his nobility and important gentry; when men looked disloyal, they suffered arrests, executions and attainders. To foster support for his dynasty, Henry arranged magnificent celebrations around royal events: Arthur's elevation as Prince of Wales in November 1489; his brother Henry's installation as Knight of the Bath and Duke of York



BONDS, RECOGNIZANCES AND ATTAINDERS

The bond was a contractual agreement of good behaviour between an individual and the monarch.

The recognizance, created as part of the legal process, was used to enforce a bond. It usually included agreements to abide by certain conditions, such as payments of a fine, appearance before the council or court at a future date, or restrictions on movements.

Attainders were statutory

acts of parliament that imposed penalties for high treason without the need for judicial proceedings. The king could pardon the capital sentence and restore the forfeiture of lands if he chose.

Henry VII used bonds, recognizances and attainders to tie his great men into a set of obligations which had penalty clauses. This was not a new device but he used it more widely, intensively and systematically than had earlier monarchs to keep nobles loyal.

Between 1437 and 1458, 22 peers had been under bonds and recognizances at one time or another but under Henry VII 36 out of 62 senior noble families were under bonds and recognizances, while 23 other

in October 1494; and Arthur's proxy betrothal ceremony to the Spanish princess Katherine of Aragon in August 1497.

Eventually, in 1498, Warbeck was imprisoned in the Tower. A year later, he was implicated in a plot to set free Warwick, his fellow-prisoner, and place him on the throne. Both men were beheaded in November 1499. Before his execution, Warbeck was forced to make another public declaration that he was no Plantagenet.

Even after this, Henry did not feel secure. Three

leading families were under bonds more than once during the reign. The number of bonds Henry imposed accelerated after 1502, when he became worried about the succession.

Another seven noblemen, as well as numerous gentlemen, were tied to him by attainder. Henry revoked the capital sentence in these cases and allowed a probationary period during which the nobleman's forfeited lands might be restored if the penitent "traitor" proved loyal.

Historians have long debated whether Henry's methods were overly harsh. Among the strongest critics are Christine Carpenter and John Guy, who say he massively

alienated the nobility. Steven Gunn, however, offers a more nuanced assessment. He accepts that a "slide towards tyranny" was a characteristic of Henry's rule but maintains that the King's rigour was in the interests of "good governance". Henry's fiscal initiatives and procedures to ensure that the most powerful men in the localities were loyal "made his government of England and that of his successors more ambitious and more powerful than any that had gone before". ■

* Henry VII: Founder of Stability or Incompetent Monarch? The Tudors www.tudors.org > AS/A2 Level (Accessed 2016); Steven Gunn, *Henry VII's New Men and the Making of Tudor England* (Oxford, 2016).