

Oliver Cromwell (left) and Charles I (right) were the dominant figures during this turbulent era



YOUR ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO

# THE CIVIL WARS

**T**he Civil Wars of the 17th century tore the British Isles apart, pitting Parliament against the King, and brother against brother. In 1642, disagreements and mistrust between Charles I and his government boiled over into the unthinkable – years of bloodshed and devastation, and the legally sanctioned execution of an anointed monarch, something that had never happened in England before and has not been repeated since.

How did the British Isles reach the brink of war? Over the next 30 pages, with the help of historian Professor Mark Stoye, we'll reveal how the Civil Wars unfurled, meet the key figures – including Charles I and Oliver Cromwell – and explore some of the major battles. We'll also take a look at how the New Model Army changed the course of the Civil Wars and look at how each side used propaganda to its advantage.

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**MARK STOYLE** is professor of early modern history at the University of Southampton. He specialises in the Civil Wars and is one of the co-investigators in a project exploring the human cost of these conflicts

Historian Mark Stoye believes war was likely from the moment Charles I tried to arrest five MPs in Parliament in January 1642

# EVERYTHING YOU WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT THE CIVIL WARS

Professor Mark Stoye answers key questions about the 17th-century conflict that tore the nation apart

INTERVIEW: CHARLOTTE HODGMAN

**Q: How popular was Charles I as monarch before the Civil Wars?**

**A:** He certainly had his critics and I wouldn't say that he was a particularly popular king before the Civil Wars. Charles came to the throne in 1625 and was almost immediately beset with problems – there were the issues with Parliament and MPs' refusals to grant

him money; a whole series of foreign policy disasters, including a new, costly war with France; there was the intense hatred that was felt towards his favourite, the Duke of Buckingham; and there was the suspicion directed against Charles's Catholic wife, Henrietta Maria. So I think in those early years, he certainly wasn't a popular monarch and he faced quite a lot of hostility. During Charles's Personal Rule – from 1629–40 – I think you could argue that things got a little better and that the level of hostility towards him receded to a certain extent. But then, of course, everything went wrong again, starting with his waging war with the Scots in 1639 and 1640.

**Q: How did Charles's style of kingship compare to that of his father, James VI and I?**

**A:** They were very different on the surface, but not so different underneath. James VI and I was very familiar in courtly life and he delighted in drinking, jokes, horseplay and bawdiness – his court was a bit of a free-for-all in a way. Charles was quite shocked by the laxness of his father's court, and when he became king, he deliberately instituted a new regime. Charles I's court was much more formal and dignified – the broad humour and practical jokes of his father's reign went straight out the door. So on the surface, things looked very different. But underneath, Charles's policies weren't all that different from James's and he, too, attempted to pursue a sort of middle-line policy within the church. I actually think a lot of what Charles did as monarch, he learnt at his father's knee.



Charles, as a young man, at a feast in the court of James VI and I – a more relaxed court than his own would be

Charles would eventually enjoy a happy marriage with Henrietta Maria; here they are seen with their children, feeding swans on the Thames



**“Charles was pushed into a role that he hadn’t been expecting, or probably wanted, to inherit”**

**Q: As a second son, Charles was never meant to rule. What impact did the death of his brother, Prince Henry, have on him?**

**A:** I think one of Charles’s problems was that, as a boy, he was very overshadowed by his older brother. Around six years older than Charles, Henry was tall, handsome and glamorous, and he was seen as a sort of Protestant hero. And when Henry died, in 1612, the nearly 12-year-old Charles was suddenly pushed into the position of heir to the throne. He was much smaller and not nearly as physically robust as Henry, and he had a bad stutter – so, on the face of it, there would have seemed a big contrast between the two princes.

I think one of the ways that Charles tried to impose himself in later life was through structures of order, dignity and formality, deliberately adopting a very different personal style to that of his late brother and father. I think the type of controlled environment he favoured at court is probably connected to that. So, yes, I do think the loss of his brother did play a very big part in Charles’s life – he was really pushed into a role that he hadn’t been expecting, or probably wanted, to inherit.

**Q: How successful was Charles’s marriage to Henrietta Maria?**

**A:** This is one of the things that’s very poignant about Charles. Initially the marriage, which took place by proxy just a month after he became king, was a

disaster. I think that was partly because Charles had had no experience, as far as we know, with girls before his marriage. He was quite shy and when he married Henrietta, she was only 15. So, between them, they had no experience at all, really, with the opposite sex.

There was a lot of external pressure on the pair as well; the marriage had been set up for diplomatic reasons and the French alliance then went horribly wrong, which didn’t help their relationship. But what is really interesting, I think, is that when Charles was grieving the execution of his close friend and favourite, the Duke of Buckingham, it was Henrietta Maria who became his main source of comfort. And from that point onwards, they had an incredibly happy marriage. Charles never took mistresses. In the years before the Civil Wars they were amazingly close, and had nine children together.

It always strikes me as sad that Charles’s marriage to Henrietta Maria was probably the best and most successful thing in his life, but, from the point of view of his Protestant countrymen and women, it was this closeness to a Catholic princess that made people very suspicious. It was



Charles’s early life was overshadowed by his elder brother, Henry (above), and the comparison did him few favours as king

widely suspected that it was Henrietta Maria who was actually calling the shots in the relationship and the country.

**Q: How did Charles feel about ruling with Parliament?**

**A:** I think Charles’s views of Parliament changed over the course of his reign. In 1624, Charles, his father, and the Duke of Buckingham were very keen to push for a war with Spain, and Parliament, which was then pretty xenophobic and certainly anti-Spanish, was delighted with this. So, just before Charles came to the throne, there seems to have been a sort of unity of purpose between the monarchy and MPs that they all wanted to push for a war with Spain. But as soon as Charles became king and went to Parliament to ask for money to fight the Spanish, they were suddenly not so keen to give him large sums of money for a war. And I think he felt very betrayed by that.

From Parliament’s perspective, MPs felt very suspicious of Charles because he had married a French Catholic princess, and they also refused to grant him certain monies. So instantly that created a tension between the King and his MPs, which worsened during the 1620s. What started as quite a happy relationship, very rapidly turned sour.

In 1629, there was a famous episode where some MPs held the Speaker down in his chair and passed three resolutions against the King’s government. And I think at that point, Charles became really quite frightened of Parliament and started to believe that Parliament was bent on seizing his power. He certainly thought that it would be a good idea to rule without Parliament for a while, which he did for 11 years.

The difficult question to answer is how long Charles intended to rule alone – after all, James VI and I had also ruled without Parliament, for seven years. It may be that Charles would have called Parliament back eventually, even if he hadn’t needed them to grant him money, or he may have decided to rule alone indefinitely. It’s really hard to judge.

**Q: What sort of man was Oliver Cromwell?**

**A:** Cromwell came from a gentry family in East Anglia, but we don’t know a great deal about his early life. There are hints that he may have had some sort of depression when he was young, possibly because he was worried about whether his soul would be saved or not, and eventually he became a very devout Protestant. Cromwell was actually a pretty obscure MP at first and nothing close to a leader at the beginning of the Civil Wars.

What really brought Cromwell to prominence was military affairs. As soon as war broke out, he threw himself into the parliamentary cause and raised a very strong cavalry unit, known after the 1644 battle of Marston Moor as Cromwell’s Ironsides. He became involved in a whole series of battles, engagements and skirmishes and gradually became more and more successful.

I’d say the crucial turning point for Cromwell’s career was the battle of Marston Moor, where he was very successful and managed to spin his military achievements in letters and pamphlets, presenting himself as a key figure in the battle. But what really catapulted him to fame was Parliament’s New Model Army, which was set up in 1645. Cromwell eventually emerged as the lieutenant general of the army’s cavalry.

**Q: Was Cromwell really the great military leader he’s often made out to be?**

**A:** Some of Cromwell’s enemies have argued that he was just lucky, but I think that’s probably a bit harsh. He was certainly determined and industrious, and utterly convinced that he was doing God’s work.

Cromwell created a great spirit of camaraderie in the military units that he raised, and his men were obviously very attached to him. It has been pointed out that Cromwell was lucky in that the parliamentary forces were so much better supplied than the royalist ones and so his troops were usually quite well paid – certainly much better paid than any of the King’s soldiers – due to the parliamentary hold on London, by far the biggest city in England, seat of trade

Though the wars took place in Britain, some of the fighters came from further afield



Prince Rupert – one of Charles’s half-German nephews – leading the royalist cavalry at Edgehill

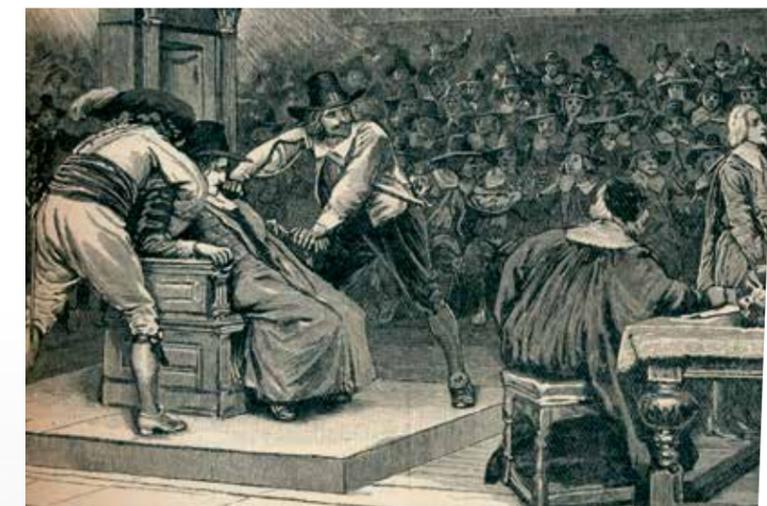


Prince Maurice (above) and his elder brother Prince Rupert were the sons of Charles’s elder sister Elizabeth

Although we tend to see the Civil Wars as a conflict of the British Isles, involving men and women from England, Ireland, Wales and Cornwall (the latter was generally seen as its own distinct territory in the early modern period), several thousand people from across continental Europe and beyond were engaged in the conflict in one way or another.

“There were many foreign mercenaries who travelled to England to fight for the Crown or Parliament”, comments Mark Stoye, “particularly on the side of the King. We know that Charles I raised several regiments of French soldiers, and there is evidence of Dutch and German fighters in the royalist and parliamentary armies, as well as soldiers from as far away as the American colonies, North Africa, the Turkish lands – as they were then known – and even Mesopotamia.

Then there were Charles’s own nephews. “Prince Rupert and Prince Maurice, who both assumed leading roles in the royalist armies were themselves half-German” says Stoye. “There was a real mix of people involved in the fighting.”



ABOVE: Commons Speaker Sir John Finch is held down while resolutions against the King are read out in 1629; Charles would dissolve Parliament in favour of personal rule immediately afterwards



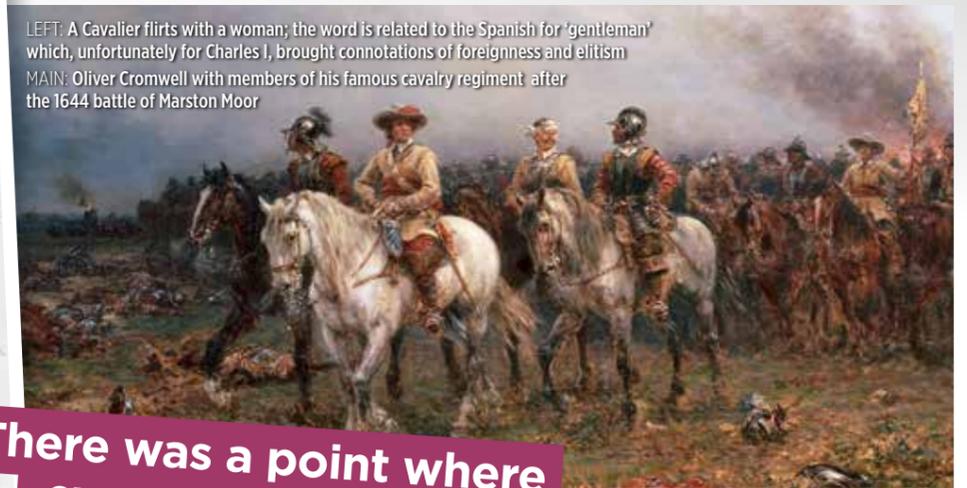
RIGHT: Charles I in Parliament in 1642, where he made an abortive attempt to arrest five MPs



Re-enactors bring the 1644 battle of Nantwich to life



LEFT: A Cavalier flirts with a woman; the word is related to the Spanish for 'gentleman' which, unfortunately for Charles I, brought connotations of foreignness and elitism  
 MAIN: Oliver Cromwell with members of his famous cavalry regiment after the 1644 battle of Marston Moor



**“There was a point where everyone thought the war would be over by Christmas”**

◀ and a huge source of wealth. As a result of that, Cromwell was able to raise a very large cavalry force, which in turn helped him win various encounters.

**Q: At what point do you think war became inevitable?**

**A:** There are two extreme answers to that. The first is that civil war had become pretty much inevitable a century or so earlier, when Henry VIII pushed through his sort of half-cock reform of the Church in the 1530s; he had broken away from Rome, but he hadn't set a full Protestant church in its place. You could say from then onwards, England had been destabilised in religious terms and that there was always likely to be a final reckoning between conservative and radical Protestants.

The second more extreme view is that war wasn't inevitable until literally the morning of the battle of Edgehill, in October 1642. It's sometimes said that if Charles had suddenly died the night before the battle, both sides might still have been able to pull back from the brink of war at that point.

Those are the extreme views. If you're asking when did war become very likely, I would say it's after Charles's attempt to arrest five MPs in January 1642, after which he was forced to abandon London. At that point, you had the two opposing sides physically drawing apart, and from then onwards, I think war was very likely.

**Q: How were the Civil Wars viewed at home and abroad?**

**A:** Like most wars, lots of people were horrified from the start and most didn't want a war at all. There were some people, particularly young men, who

were quite excited by the prospect of a war and at first, there were lots of volunteers for both King and Parliament; the armies both sides raised in 1642 were largely made up of volunteers. I think that was a point where, much like in World War I, everyone thought the war would be over by Christmas. But when it became clear after the first battle that the war was going to drag on, more and more men desperately tried to avoid fighting and both sides eventually had to conscript men to join them.

In terms of how the conflict was viewed abroad, I think there was initially a feeling of amazement and shock at what was going on, because England had mostly seemed a stable polity. For many foreign powers it was obviously very useful that England was engaged in a war within itself and that the English navy, which had been quite powerful in European waters, was suddenly inward looking again. But there was actually very little real foreign intervention in the Civil Wars.

**Q: Where do the nicknames 'Roundhead' and 'Cavalier' come from?**

**A:** The terms aren't modern and actually first spring up – in the context of the Civil Wars – in London, in late 1642/early 1643. Certainly, in the propaganda of the time, you can see images of long-haired, foppish Cavaliers pitted against sober-looking, shorthaired parliamentarians.

The word 'Cavalier' actually comes from the Spanish word 'caballero'

(gentleman) and it had connotations of foreignness, of being a trooper or an armed horseman. And it was also tied up with images of gentility. So it became a very handy propagandist tool for the parliamentarians, because once you start to call people Cavaliers, you invoke the idea of snobbish aristocrats who are looking down on ordinary people.

The word Cavalier also conjures up images of violent foreigners, particularly those associated with Spain, which was a country hated by Protestant men and women at the time and which was viewed as the heartland of European Catholicism. And, of course, there's also the other meaning of the word cavalier: of being reckless, high-handed, swaggering, drinking and so on – the antithesis, if you like, of the stout Protestant English man or woman.

The origin of the word 'Roundhead' is a little harder to trace and doesn't have any obvious roots in other words. The classic explanation is that it reflected the short hair of the London apprentices who were very prominent in their support of Parliament at the beginning of the Civil Wars. Another possible explanation, which I've always been interested in, is that, before the Civil Wars, if you were seditious and opposed the government, particularly in religious terms, you could have your ears lopped off as a form of punishment. There is one rather gruesome example of a man who had already had his ears cut down once to the stumps, but then had the remaining stumps cut off for the same crime!

I do sometimes wonder if the term Roundhead was almost created as a nasty joke – to invoke the image of seditious, Puritanical individuals who had had their ears cropped as a result of their hostility to the established church. ☹

**DID YOU KNOW?**  
**A MOTHER'S LOVE**  
 In 1644, Henrietta Maria gave birth to the royal couple's last child, Henrietta Anne, as her husband's enemies were closing in. Fifteen days later she was forced to leave her baby and flee to France. It would be two years before she saw her again.

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# A NATION DIVIDED

The bloody battles and political struggles that tore families apart – and left a monarch with his head on the block

1640

28 AUGUST

► After Charles I tries to impose a new prayer book on his Scottish subjects, they defeat his army at Newburn Ford and occupy Newcastle. In need of funds to pay them off, Charles recalls parliament.



1640

3 NOVEMBER

The new parliament meets in London. Before voting to give Charles any money, it demands several major constitutional reforms, along with the execution of Strafford – the King's hated first minister.

1641

23 OCTOBER

A Catholic rebellion breaks out in Ireland. However, Parliament is unwilling to let the King exercise his traditional right to raise an army to put down the rebellion, fearing that he might also use it against his English subjects.

1641

22 NOVEMBER

► The House of Commons narrowly passes its 'Grand Remonstrance', listing its numerous grievances with the King and calling for further restrictions on royal power and the authority of bishops.



1642

4 JANUARY

▼ Charles further polarises opinion by marching into the Commons and attempting to arrest five prominent MPs.



1642

22 AUGUST

Charles I raises his standard at Nottingham. Both the royalist and parliamentarian causes begin to assemble forces for battle.

1642

23 SEPTEMBER

Royalist forces emerge victorious after a brief skirmish at Powick Bridge near Worcester. It is the opening engagement of the Civil Wars.

1645

FEBRUARY

◀ The New Model Army is formed, giving the parliamentarians a national and professional army capable of turning the tide of the war.



1644

27 OCTOBER

The second battle of Newbury results in a draw. It is regarded as a disappointing failure by the parliamentarians, who set about reorganising their forces.

1644

2 SEPTEMBER

A disastrous invasion of royalist Cornwall forces the parliamentarians to surrender at the battle of Lostwithiel.



1644

2 JULY

◀ Assisted by the Scots, parliament inflicts defeat upon the royalists at Marston Moor near York. They soon gain control over most of the north of England.

1643

25 SEPTEMBER

Parliament signs the 'Solemn League and Covenant' with the Scots. They agree to adopt the Presbyterian form of religion in exchange for vital Scottish military aid.

1643

20 SEPTEMBER

▼ The royalists lose a key battle at Newbury, Berkshire.



1643

26 JULY

Royalist forces led by Charles's nephew, Prince Rupert, seize the port city of Bristol, which has been held by a parliamentary garrison for several months.

1642

23 OCTOBER

The first major battle is fought at Edgehill in Warwickshire, which results in a draw. Charles heads to London but is unable to take the city. He retires to Oxford, which he makes his new capital.

1645

14 JUNE

► The New Model Army crushes the royalists at Naseby, a few miles north of Northampton.



1645

10 SEPTEMBER

▼ Parliamentarian forces retake Bristol after a brief siege.



1646

5 MAY

Charles I surrenders to the Scots. The First Civil War soon ends.

1647

11 NOVEMBER

The King escapes captivity and manages to flee to the Isle of Wight. However, he is quickly recaptured and imprisoned in Carisbrooke Castle where he makes plans for further royalist uprisings and a deal with the Scots.

1648

8 JULY

A Scottish army crosses the border and launches an invasion of England in support of the King. Meanwhile, several royalist risings elsewhere are quashed.

1648

17-19 AUGUST

Having made it as far south as Lancashire, the Scottish army is defeated at the battle of Preston. The short-lived Second Civil War is brought to a close.

1648

6 DECEMBER

Some 186 MPs sympathetic to the King are refused entry to the House of Commons in what becomes known as 'Pride's Purge' – a further 45 are arrested and 86 others leave in protest.

1649

30 JANUARY

► After having been found guilty of high treason and "other high crimes against the realm of England", Charles is beheaded at Whitehall. ◉



# WHY DID WAR BREAK OUT IN 1642?

Struggles over power, money and religion paved the way to seismic divisions between Parliament and King

WORDS: JONNY WILKES

## DIVINE RIGHT OF KINGS

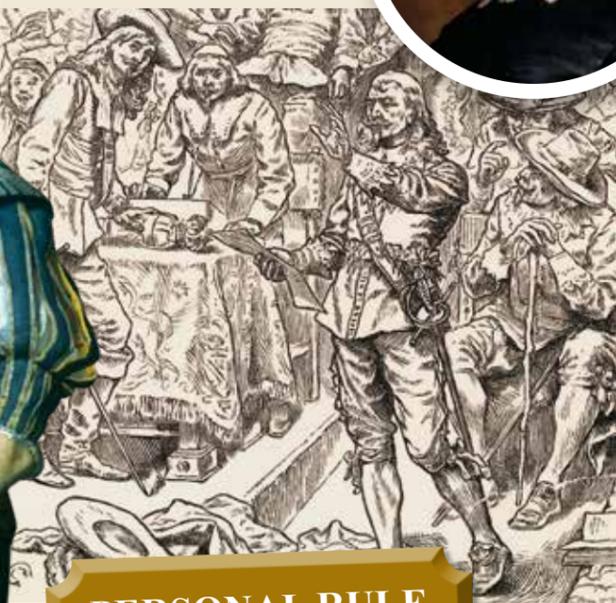
Charles I (right) had a fractious relationship with Parliament from the beginning of his reign, in 1625, not helped by his zealous belief in the 'divine right of kings'. Like his father James VI and I, Charles considered himself answerable only to God and so subject to no earthly authority. Such high ideals of royal power made him appear, at least, intransigent and arrogant and, at worse, autocratic.

Tensions mounted as monarch and MPs argued over foreign policy, finances and Charles's marriage to the Catholic Henrietta Maria. He further angered Parliament when he imposed a tax without their consent to pay for his war with France; then imprisoned without trial those who refused to pay, and implemented martial law and the billeting of troops. In 1628, Parliament issued a Petition of Right, seeking redress to these grievances. The move demonstrates how concerned MPs had grown about the prospect of a king who believed he derived his authority from God holding himself above the rule of law.

Charles I had an unshakeable belief in his own personal authority



MAIN: Charles I dissolves Parliament in favour of ruling on his own  
INSET: MP John Hampden was a notable victim of Charles's unpopular money making schemes



## PERSONAL RULE

In 1629, Charles dissolved his combative parliament and went on to rule for the next 11 years without one, a period known as the Personal Rule. Being without a parliament to raise taxes actually brought about a period of stability in England as Charles needed to end his costly wars with France and Spain, but he also had to exploit questionable means of making money, such as citing outdated laws to fine gentlemen or selling monopolies.

The most unpopular earner was 'ship money', a levy on coastal communities to fund the navy in times of war, which Charles issued multiple times and, from 1635, extended to inland towns. Those who did not pay faced trial, most notably Buckinghamshire landowner and MP John Hampden. The court's verdict in 1638 favoured the King, but only by seven votes to five, which emboldened opposition to ship money and struck a blow to Charles's authority.



## RELIGIOUS DIVISIONS

Of all the policies of Charles's Personal Rule, the religious reforms caused most alarm. Protestantism was the established religion and Catholics had been persecuted or driven underground since Tudor times. Shortly after his accession, Charles had married a French princess, Henrietta Maria. She openly practised her Catholicism, which raised suspicions among the largely Puritan members of parliament. Concerns were exacerbated as the King, while Protestant, favoured High Anglican worship.

Charles enthusiastically supported Archbishop of Canterbury William Laud's moves to establish a greater sense of ceremony and hierarchy in the Church of England, as well as to re-introduce decoration and finery to worship. This meant railed altars rather than communion tables; stained glass windows and candles; ornamental vestments; and the enforcement of ritual, such as kneeling when receiving the Sacrament - all of which smacked of popery to many Protestants.

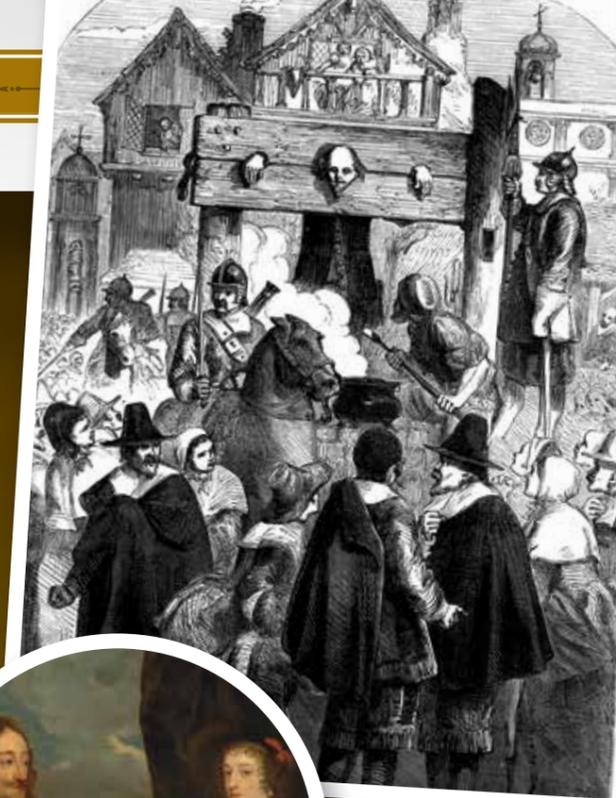
Laud followed up his reforms with persecution of the Puritans, especially those who criticised him. He had the Puritans William Prynne, John Bastwick and Henry Burton imprisoned during the 1630s for writing pamphlets or giving sermons attacking what they saw as a move towards Catholicism, and had their ears cut off. Prynne's cheeks were also branded with "S L", meaning 'seditious libeller' - although he reclaimed it to mean 'Stigmata Laudis', the 'marks of Laud'.

Those who opposed the reforms were tried in the Court of High Commission, convened by the King at will and wielding significant power, or the Star Chamber, an arm of the monarchy able to dish out fines and prison sentences. Both became symbols of royal oppression.



ABOVE: William Prynne in the pillory, prior to his branding and imprisonment.

LEFT: Double portrait of King Charles I and Queen Henrietta Maria



## ENEMIES IN SCOTLAND

Charles wished his religious reforms to bring uniformity to the Church north of the border as well as England. But he was met with even more resistance by the mostly Presbyterian (an extreme form of Protestantism) Scots, who believed in a church government of representative assemblies and presbyteries, rather than the rule of bishops. The catalyst was Charles's attempt to introduce a new Book of Common Prayer for Scotland, in 1637, which caused a riot when it was first used in St Giles' Cathedral in Edinburgh - legendarily started when a market-trader named Jenny Geddes threw her stool at the dean.

In 1638, a large number of Scottish nobles and churchmen signed the National Covenant, an agreement affirming their commitment to Presbyterianism, determination to defend the Church of Scotland, or Kirk, and rejection of English governance. Although the document urged loyalty to the king, Charles regarded the Covenant as an unacceptable challenge.

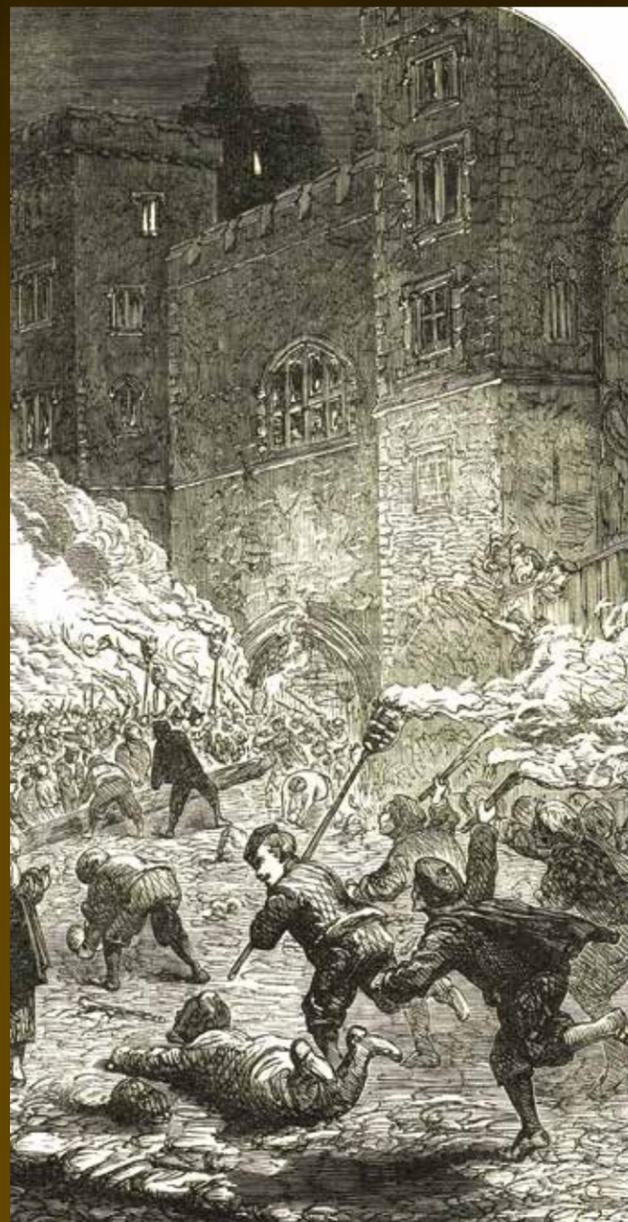
Charles was resolved to crush this national uprising, but his campaign eventually ended in disaster when the Scottish covenanters defeated his army at the battle of Newburn, near Newcastle, on 28 August 1640. The Scots occupied Northumberland and County Durham, forcing Charles to pay £850 a day to stop them advancing further into England.



Edinburgh market-trader Jenny Geddes didn't take the introduction of a new Book of Common Prayer at St Giles' Cathedral sitting down - she allegedly threw her stool at the dean

## THE SHORT PARLIAMENT

**D**uring the Bishops' Wars, Charles found himself in desperate need of funds for his army and so, in early 1640, he summoned his first parliament for 11 years. It assembled on 13 April, but instead of acquiescing to the King's request for money, MPs expressed more concern with addressing grievances with the policies from the past decade of Personal Rule. It soon became clear that they would not support his war, and Charles dissolved the parliament after just three weeks, hence the name 'Short Parliament'. Charles resumed the war anyway, without parliamentary support, but suffered a decisive loss at Newburn, in August 1640.



A mob attacked Lambeth Palace, residence of Archbishop of Canterbury William Laud, shortly after Charles I dissolved the Short Parliament in May 1640

An emboldened Parliament ensured the execution of Charles's reviled chief minister Thomas Wentworth (inset)



## THE LONG PARLIAMENT

**A**humiliated and reluctant Charles had no choice but to call another parliament in 1640 to ensure he had the money to pay off the Scottish Covenanters who were refusing to leave northern England. This so-called 'Long Parliament' assembled in November and immediately went on the offensive.

Led by the MP for Tavistock, John Pym, one of Parliament's first acts was to accuse Charles's much-hated chief minister Thomas Wentworth (the former lord deputy of Ireland and now Earl of Strafford), of high treason and ensure his execution. The emboldened MPs passed an act ensuring Parliament would meet every three years, even if not summoned by the King, and could not be dissolved without its own consent. They simultaneously abolished the Court of High Commission and Star Chamber, and declared the forms of taxation Charles had been exploiting, such as ship money, illegal.

In November 1641, Parliament passed its 'Grand Remonstrance', a list of grievances totalling 204 points detailing their opposition to Charles's policies during his entire reign. Not all MPs, however, agreed with Pym and his allies, especially as they pushed for yet more radical changes, including the abolition of bishops and further curbs on royal power. Parliament had become divided – indeed, the Grand Remonstrance had only narrowly passed. Charles gained support from some 148 MPs, who believed the Puritans were going too far or felt they could not go against their divinely anointed monarch.

Relations continued to worsen into 1642, when Parliament sent Charles the Nineteen Propositions, a list of demands, among them the need for Parliament to approve the King's ministers, supervise foreign policy and command the militia; and a reform to church government. When Charles rejected them all, there seemed to be no hope for reconciliation.

## THE FAILED ARREST OF THE 'FIVE MEMBERS'

**O**n 4 January 1642, Charles launched a drastic, if imprudent, strike against Parliament. Accompanied by around a hundred soldiers, he entered the House of Commons – an unprecedented move, seeing as a monarch had to be invited before going inside – and attempted to arrest five firebrand MPs.

The parliamentary leader John Pym and John Hampden, whose trial for not paying ship money had rallied opposition to the King's taxes, were among them. The others were: Denzil Holles, a vociferous voice for the bill to abolish bishops; Arthur Haselrig, a major figure in the impeachment of Charles's chief minister; and William Strode, who had been imprisoned for 11 years for his condemnations of the King's policies.

Charles asked to use the chair belonging to the Speaker, William Lenthall, before calling out the five names with no response. The Five Members, as they became known, had been warned of the King's arrival and had just escaped in time. Lenthall knelt before the King, but refused to give them up. "May it please your majesty, I have neither eyes to see nor tongue to speak in this place but as this House is pleased to direct me whose servant I am here," he said, declaring his allegiance to Parliament. Charles responded with, "I see the birds have flown," and retreated from the Commons empty handed. Days later, having failed to force the surrender of the Five Members, the King left London with his family.

Charles I entered Parliament to demand the surrender of five troublesome MPs – only for the Speaker to tell him that he hadn't seen them



## IRISH REBELLION

**S**ince October 1641, a rebellion had been raging in Ireland – native Irish Catholics against English and Scottish Protestant settlers, many of whom were killed on both sides. Beginning in Ulster, the rebellion was partly born out of Irish fears that, with the Scottish Presbyterians and English Puritans riding high, they would soon force the King to adopt much more intolerantly anti-Catholic policies in Ireland. The rebels even claimed they were acting with Charles's blessing, which served to fuel the rumours of the King being a secret Catholic.

In fact, Charles was in rare agreement with Parliament that an army had to be sent to suppress the rebellion, but they disagreed over who should command it. John Pym and his allies in Parliament believed that if the King put himself at the head of the army, he might turn it against them. In the end, some troops were sent across the Irish Channel, both from England and Scotland. With no cooperation of synchronised tactics, though, the conflict continued for 11 years causing a massive loss of life and devastation in Ireland. Meanwhile, in England itself, both King and Parliament were by now raising armies of their own, and both sides refused to back down. ☉

### The Irish Rebellion.



Protestant settlers are massacred by local Catholics at Portadown in Northern Ireland in this image from 1641; atrocities were committed on both sides of the religious divide

# CHARLES I

19 NOVEMBER 1600 – 30 JANUARY 1649

The second son of James VI and I of Scotland, England and Ireland, Charles I was never supposed to become king. His reign would split the nation apart and give him the unwanted distinction of becoming the only English monarch to be executed

WORDS: EMMA SLATTERY WILLIAMS



King Charles I greets three of his children shortly before his execution in January 1649

## CHARLES'S RISE

A shy, sickly child, Charles lived in the shadow of his accomplished older brother, Henry Frederick. Henry was extremely popular, even eclipsing his father, James VI and I, on occasion, but at 18 he died, probably from typhoid fever, and Charles became heir apparent shortly before his twelfth birthday.

In 1625, after James's death, Charles ascended the throne and clashed with Parliament immediately. Charles had an unshakeable belief in his divine right to rule – a right, he believed, had been granted by God. He also aroused suspicion in reformed religious groups, who thought Charles leaned towards Catholicism – a fear only

confirmed by his marriage to the French Catholic princess Henrietta Maria.

Between 1625 and 1629, the King dismissed Parliament three times and eventually chose to rule alone – an 11-year period known as the Personal Rule. Charles I's opponents believed that he showed all the signs of being a tyrannical and absolute monarch.

## CHARLES'S FALL

Following several attempts by Charles I to assert his power over the Church of Scotland – most notably the imposition of a new Book of Common Prayer, in 1637 – the Bishops' Wars began. These were the first of several connected

civil wars, which would involve all three of Charles's kingdoms – England, Scotland and Ireland – and eventually culminate in his own downfall.

The unrest in Scotland forced Charles to recall Parliament in order to raise funds to send the Scots back north. However, in November 1641, a Grand Remonstrance was passed by the Commons and presented to the King – laying out all of Parliament's grievances against him.

With Charles also under pressure to surrender control of his army, tensions between the two sides reached boiling point in January 1642 when the King attempted to arrest five prominent MPs. By August, with relations now having completely broken down, Charles raised his royal standard in Nottingham and declared war on Parliament.

After four years of bitter fighting, the King surrendered to the Scots in 1646, who, in turn, came to an agreement with Parliament and handed him over for a large sum of money. Held in captivity for several months and still refusing to accept Parliament's authority, Charles managed to escape to the Isle of Wight, but was again arrested and imprisoned. He now resorted to allying himself with the Scots – his former enemies – and in March/April 1648, a second civil war began. Yet this conflict was to prove short-lived, with the Scots and royalist forces facing a final, decisive defeat later that year.

The commanders of Parliament's New Model Army and their supporters among the MPs now believed that peace could not be achieved while the King was still alive, so he was put on trial for high treason and found guilty. On 30 January 1649, after being given just three days to say goodbye to his children, Charles was led through the Banqueting House in Whitehall and on to a wooden scaffold. After a short prayer and speech he was beheaded. ☉

## 3 KEY ROYALISTS



### QUEEN HENRIETTA MARIA 1609–69

The daughter of Henri IV of France, Henrietta married Charles I in 1625 when she was just 15. Her Catholic faith saw her refuse to be crowned by a Protestant prelate, which caused tension within the royal court and with the public. During the Civil Wars, Henrietta Maria spent much time on the Continent raising much-needed funds and military support for her husband's cause.



### PRINCE RUPERT 1619–82

Prince Rupert of the Rhine was the son of Frederick V of the Palatinate and Elizabeth Stuart, sister of Charles I. A talented cavalry commander, Rupert oversaw many victories during the early years of the Civil Wars. The young prince was banished from England after surrendering at Bristol in 1645, but he eventually returned and was made a naval commander by his cousin Charles II.



### THOMAS WENTWORTH, EARL OF STRAFFORD 1593–1641

One of the King's key advisors, Strafford was unpopular with Parliament. He was put on trial, accused of advising the King to use an Irish army against his opponents in England; a bill was passed so that no evidence was needed to find him guilty. Against his conscience but in fear of unrest, Charles signed the bill and Strafford was beheaded.

Charles I was a passionate art collector. He became a patron of several prominent artists, including Anthony van Dyck, who painted this portrait of him

## DID YOU KNOW?

### THE HOUSE OF STUART

Though he may not have completed his reign, two of Charles's children and three of his grandchildren would eventually rule England – Charles II, James II, William III, Mary II and Anne.

“Charles showed all the signs of being a tyrannical and absolute monarch”

**DID YOU KNOW?**

**IT DIDN'T END WELL**  
Cromwell's head was displayed on a spike above Westminster Hall for at least 20 years. After allegedly being blown down in a storm, it remained in a private collection until 1960, when it was buried at Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge.

# OLIVER CROMWELL

25 APRIL 1599 – 3 SEPTEMBER 1658

A talented commander in the parliamentary forces, Oliver Cromwell would climb the ranks to become the de facto ruler of the Commonwealth of England, Scotland and Ireland – a king in all but name

WORDS: EMMA SLATTERY WILLIAMS

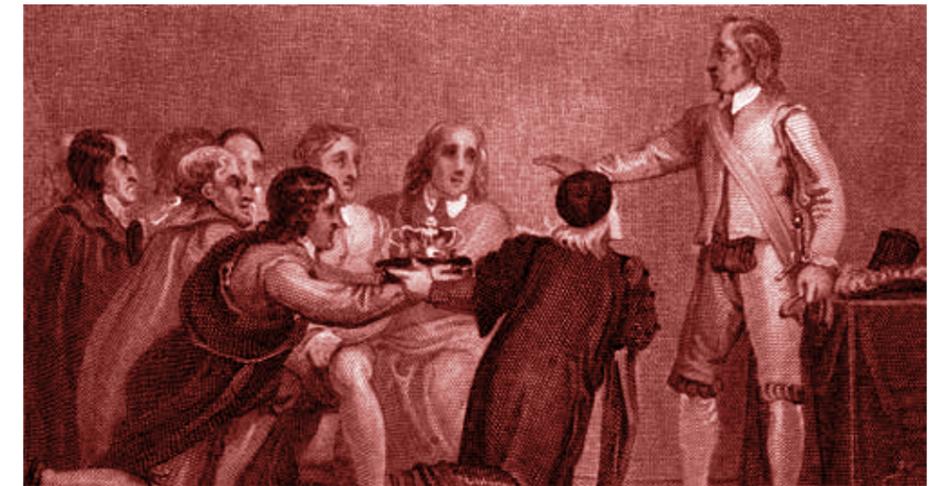
**CROMWELL'S RISE**

Born in Huntingdon, in what is now Cambridgeshire, Oliver Cromwell's family had modest wealth and were part of the landed gentry – his father, Robert, had been an MP in Elizabeth I's parliament of 1593. Through his father, Oliver was also distantly related to Henry VIII's doomed adviser Thomas Cromwell.

When he married Elizabeth Bourchier, whose family were active Puritans, Cromwell was inspired to become one himself, and became very devout. Like many Puritans, he was convinced that the Church of England was too influenced by Catholicism. He is believed by some to have studied law at Lincoln's Inn – although there is no evidence of this – before becoming the MP for Huntingdon in 1628 and again in 1640.

It wasn't until Cromwell reached his 40s that he began his military career. He initially led a cavalry troop when Charles I declared war on Parliament in 1642, but within a year he had been promoted to colonel and taken command of an entire regiment. Despite lacking formal military training, Cromwell was a skilled leader and won many vital victories. At the battle of Preston in 1648, the Second Civil War was won when he crushed the Scots and removed all hope for the royalist cause. Similar to Charles I's faith in his divine right to rule, Cromwell believed in his own providence – that God supported his cause and that he had been personally 'chosen' for this fight against the King.

In January 1649, Cromwell was one of 59 men who signed Charles I's death warrant, and he quickly emerged as an important member of the so-called 'Rump' parliament, made up of a small group of MPs. England



Despite rejecting the official offer of the crown, in 1657, Cromwell was a king in all but name

was now a commonwealth, with a Council of State in place of the monarchy.

**CROMWELL'S FALL**

Between 1649 and 1650, Cromwell undertook a campaign in Ireland to obliterate any royalist support for the exiled Charles II – son of Charles I. Thousands were killed at massacres in Wexford and Drogheda, and many Protestants were settled on confiscated land. Cromwell's last action on the field came at the battle of Worcester in 1651. Here, the Civil Wars finally came to an end with a clear parliamentary victory over Charles II's troops, the majority of whom were Scottish.

In 1653, Cromwell disbanded the Rump parliament and he became lord protector – the head of state. After quarrelling with Parliament, he ruled through his major generals, turning

England into a quasi-military dictatorship.

Under Cromwell, greater freedoms were given to Puritans and laws brought in to improve morality. This included closing theatres and imposing stricter alcohol legislation. The rise of Puritanism also saw the celebration of Christmas virtually banned, along with the introduction of monthly fast days, ensuring that religion was always at the forefront of people's minds.

In 1657, the Second Protectorate Parliament suggested naming Cromwell as king, but he refused and died of natural causes the following year. Cromwell was succeeded by his son, Richard, but the Protectorate swiftly collapsed, and the monarchy was restored in 1660.

Charles II ordered that Cromwell be exumed and 'punished'. His body endured an 'execution' for treason and his head displayed above Westminster Hall. ◉

**“Cromwell believed that God supported his cause and that he had been chosen”**

Oliver Cromwell – who had fought so hard to bring down the monarchy – nearly became king himself

**3 KEY PARLIAMENTARIANS**

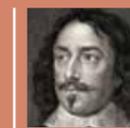
**JOHN PYM**  
1584–1643

MP for Tavistock, John Pym was leader of the King's opponents in the House of Commons until his death. Pym was one of the MPs that the King attempted to have arrested, leading to the declaration of war in 1642. Pym was buried in Westminster Abbey, but after the Restoration his body – along with other parliamentary leaders – was thrown into a pit at a nearby church.



**SIR THOMAS FAIRFAX**  
1612–71

Captain general of the New Model Army, Thomas Fairfax was a valued commander who led the parliamentarians to crucial victories at Marston Moor and Naseby, before becoming overshadowed by the up-and-coming Cromwell. Fairfax opposed the execution of the King but resigned in 1650 as he couldn't support Cromwell's war against Scotland. In 1660, he assisted with the restoration of Charles II.



**ROBERT DEVEREUX, 3RD EARL OF ESSEX**  
1591–1646

Son of the 2nd Earl of Essex – a favourite of Elizabeth I who was executed for treason – Robert Devereux was the first leader of the parliamentary army. He was a successful leader but suffered a humiliating defeat at Lostwithiel and resigned his command in 1645. He continued to sit in parliament, supporting the Presbyterian faction.

# 10 KEY BATTLES OF THE CIVIL WARS

We explore some of the most significant battles of the Civil Wars – pitting the King against Parliament, and splitting the nation apart

WORDS: EMMA SLATTERY WILLIAMS

## NEWBURN FORD AUGUST 1640

Between 1637 and 1640, Charles I had tried to enforce Anglican religious observances on the (Presbyterian) Church of Scotland, including a new prayer book. National Scottish resistance and defiance of the King's orders resulted in the so-called Bishops' Wars of 1639–40 – a precursor to the Civil Wars. Parliament refused to support the King, financially or militarily, in his war with Scotland, so Charles was forced to send commander Edward Conway, 2nd Viscount Conway, to the Scottish border with only the relatively small English force he had managed to gather.

On 28 August 1640, just outside Newcastle at Newburn Ford, the King's troops faced a 20,000-strong Scottish covenanter army –

Scottish Presbyterians who, in 1638, had signed a covenant opposing attempts to impose English liturgical practice and church governance on Scotland. Charles's English forces were unprepared, outnumbered, and easily defeated. A few days after the battle, the Scottish occupied Newcastle; Charles was forced to call a parliament – eventually to become known as the Long Parliament – in order to raise money to pay his own army and to buy off the Scots. The Scots finally marched out of Newcastle in August 1641.



Powick Bridge was the scene of the first clash of the Civil Wars



The Scots cross the Tyne during the battle of Newburn Ford; Charles's small army faced a 20,000-strong Scottish force

## POWICK BRIDGE SEPTEMBER 1642

The first military action between Crown and Parliament took place in Worcestershire, on 23 September 1642, following Charles I's official declaration of war the previous month.

Royalist Sir John Byron, who was escorting a convoy of valuables between Oxford and Shrewsbury, sought refuge in Worcester to avoid the parliamentary advance guard that had been dispatched to seize the wealth. Alerted to the danger, Prince Rupert, the King's nephew, was sent with a force of around 1,000 cavalry to support Byron, as parliamentary forces sought to block Byron's route out of the city. The resulting skirmish took place on and around Powick Bridge, about two miles outside Worcester. Prince Rupert's experienced troops routed the parliamentary forces, and Powick became a major propaganda victory for the royalist cause.



LEFT: Members of the Sealed Knot re-enact the battle of Edgehill

MAIN: The royalist war council on the eve of the battle of Edgehill, as imagined by Charles Landseer in this 1845 painting. Presaging his ultimate defeat, Charles is depicted gazing at the maid serving bacon rather than the map

## EDGEHILL OCTOBER 1642

MAJOR BATTLE

The first major pitched battle of the Civil Wars battle took place four weeks after Powick Hill, when parliamentary Captain-General, Robert Devereux, 3rd Earl of Essex, seized an opportunity to halt the King's forces as they marched to London from Shrewsbury, in October 1642. Both armies had around 15,000 men, but the parliamentary cavalry was no match for the royalist horsemen, commanded by Charles's nephew Prince Rupert. A royalist win seemed inevitable.

Rupert, believing victory was close at hand, led a cavalry charge on the parliamentary baggage train, leaving the royalist troops vulnerable; what was left of the parliamentary cavalry made light work of the royal infantry. By the next day neither side seemed keen to continue the fighting, so the battle ended in an indecisive draw. The road was now clear for the King to head to the capital, but he decided to take Banbury on his way, allowing Essex to reach London first. Charles settled in Oxford for the winter, which would become his base for the rest of the war. Some historians suggest that if Rupert had remained on the battlefield and aided the infantry, a royalist victory at Edgehill could have ended the war.



"If Rupert had remained on the battlefield, a royalist victory could have ended the war"

MAJOR BATTLE

## ADWALTON MOOR JUNE 1643

On 30 June 1643, parliamentary commander Ferdinando, 2nd Baron Fairfax, and 3,500 men battled 10,000 royalist troops under the Earl of Newcastle. After Newcastle advanced on the parliamentary stronghold of Bradford, Fairfax marched out in its defence; the two armies met on Adwalton Moor in Yorkshire. Newcastle's pikemen and cavalry carried the day for the royalists, even after it seemed the parliamentarians had gained the upper hand. It was a decisive encounter, granting Charles control of northern England, which the royalists held for the remainder of 1643.

As the parliamentarians suffered ever more defeats, they looked north for aid and made a deal with the Scottish covenanters – the covenanters would provide military aid in exchange for the adoption of a Presbyterian form of worship in England, as was in Scotland. The tide of war was turning.

## NEWBURY SEPTEMBER 1643

After successfully lifting a royalist siege on Gloucester, (which had lasted from 10 August–5 September) parliamentary commander Robert Devereux, 3rd Earl of Essex, attempted a retreat to London, hotly pursued by royalist forces. Essex's troops were some of the only parliamentary forces in the field at the time and they desperately needed supplies. But the royalists had blocked the road to London, and so the two armies, each around 15,000 strong, clashed at Newbury on 20 September 1643.

After a day of heavy fighting – one the royalists had spent on the back foot, following a surprise dawn assault by the parliamentarians – there was no clear victor and more than 1,000 dead on each side. That night, keenly aware that they were running low on gunpowder, the royalists decided to allow Essex his path east. He continued his

march to London, unmolested, the next day and entered the capital to cheering crowds – while the royalists were left to tend to their wounds with a crushing sense of what could have been. Many historians see this battle as a missed opportunity for Charles to have finished the parliamentarians for good.

Another battle was fought near here in October 1644 – though that encounter gave neither side a decisive advantage.

The 1643 battle of Newbury is considered a high point of Essex's command – he was later eclipsed by Fairfax and Oliver Cromwell



## MARSTON MOOR JULY 1644

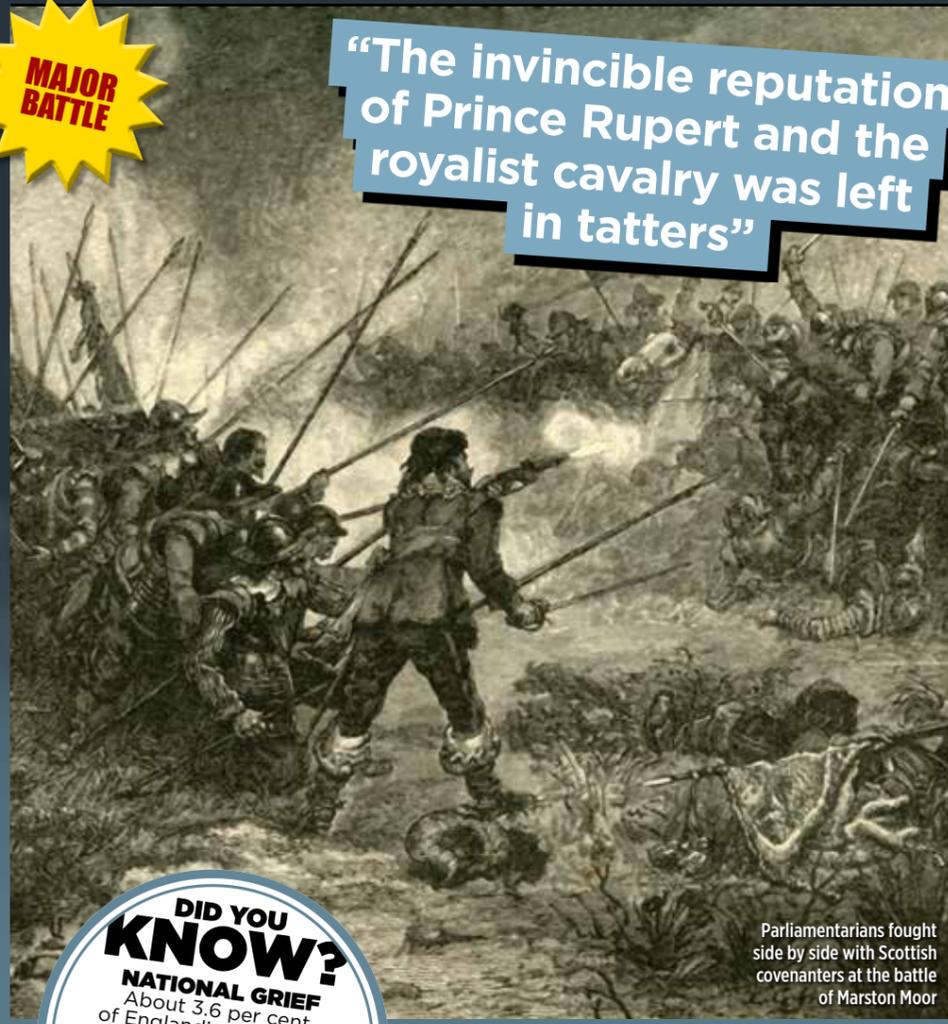
Marston Moor is considered one of the largest battles of the Civil Wars. Prince Rupert's advance had caused the parliamentary army to break its siege of York and head out to meet the advancing royalist army. The royalists had approximately 17,000 men, while the army made up of parliamentarians and Scottish covenanters was much larger – the combined number on both sides is believed to have been around 46,000.

A surprise parliamentary attack during a thunderstorm destroyed the royal infantry, with fighting lasting just two hours. The commander of the parliamentary cavalry, which rivalled the royalists, was an up-and-coming military commander who was to make his name on this battlefield: Oliver Cromwell. Initially, the royalists seemed to have the upper hand, with their cavalry inflicting heavy damage, but as they were vastly outnumbered they were soon overrun. While the parliamentarians reported around 300 casualties, royalist losses were closer to 4,000, with many men taken prisoner.

This defeat not only put an end to royal control of the north – it left the invincible reputation of Prince Rupert and the royalist cavalry in tatters. Cromwell had proven himself an effective military leader and would soon be promoted to second-in-command. After the battle, Rupert gave Cromwell the nickname 'Ironside' – a name later bestowed on Cromwell's cavalry troopers.

**MAJOR BATTLE**

**"The invincible reputation of Prince Rupert and the royalist cavalry was left in tatters"**



Parliamentarians fought side by side with Scottish covenanters at the battle of Marston Moor

**DID YOU KNOW?**  
**NATIONAL GRIEF**  
 About 3.6 per cent of England's population died as a result of the Civil Wars (including fighting, disease and accidents) – a higher percentage than WWI, which saw 2.6 per cent of the population die.

GETTY IMAGES X2, ALAMY X4

## LOSTWITHIEL AUGUST 1644

When the Earl of Essex ventured into Cornwall, hoping to gain support for the parliamentary cause, things didn't go entirely to plan. In August 1644, he was surrounded in Lostwithiel when Charles I joined forces with his nephew, Prince Maurice. There were two stages to the ensuing battle, with the first action taking place on enclosed hills and heath land around Lostwithiel on 21 August 1644, followed by many days of exchanging fire. On 31 August, the parliamentarians ransacked the town and began to retreat. Essex eventually escaped by sea to Plymouth, and his abandoned subordinates decided the best course of action was to agree terms with the King.

Thousands of parliamentary troops were taken prisoner with many dying during the march to Southampton. This was the parliamentarians worst defeat and saw the royalists maintain their hold over the south west for the rest of the war.



A sign at the Iron Age fort of Castle Dore commemorates the battle of Lostwithiel



LEFT: Cromwell reads Charles I's explosive correspondence, captured at Naseby – it revealed the King was conspiring to gain Catholic support for his cause

MAIN: As demonstrated by these re-enactors, the battle of Naseby was a brutal slog



**MAJOR BATTLE**

## NASEBY JUNE 1645

In retaliation for the royalist sacking of Leicester on 31 May 1645, parliamentary commander Sir Thomas Fairfax was ordered to lift his own siege of royalist Oxford and ride out to meet the King. The armies fought on 14 June, near the Northamptonshire village of Naseby. When the armies could eventually find each other through the fog, the battle quickly descended into fierce hand-to-hand combat. Prince Rupert and his horsemen chased away part of the parliamentary cavalry; on the other side of the battlefield Cromwell defeated the royalist cavalry, and then attacked the flank of the royalist infantry, which had been defeating its parliamentary counterparts.

The nascent New Model Army had shown off its discipline to great effect (see p48). The

royalists' chances of winning the battle were few: with most of their best officers killed, they never managed to form an army of such comparable quality again. The royalists suffered nearly 1,000 losses, while the parliamentarians claimed just around 150.

Most concerning for Charles I was the capture of evidence that proved he was attempting to get help from Catholics in Ireland and across Europe, fuelling anger among England's Protestants and seeming to justify the morality of the war. This would have serious consequences for him later.

Within a few months, royalist resistance across England had been defeated. The King would eventually flee his Oxford base (disguised as a servant) after it was besieged, and ultimately surrender to the Scots at Newark, in 1646.

## KILSYTH AUGUST 1645

On 15 August 1645, Kilsyth in North Lanarkshire would play host to the largest battle in Scotland during the Civil Wars. An alliance of parliamentarians and Scottish covenanters faced royalist Scottish troops commanded by the Marquis of Montrose. Before either commander had given an order, fighting broke out and more and more soldiers joined in. The parliamentary and covenanter army made a run for it when it was clear they could not win, and almost two-thirds of their men were killed. Montrose celebrated his victory, but quickly realised it had all been in vain after hearing of the royalist defeat at Naseby. He attempted to call a parliament in Glasgow in the name of the King but failed. This was to be Montrose's last great battle, and he was hanged in 1650 by the Scottish parliament as a traitor after fighting on the side of Charles II.

The battle at Preston would see the second stage of the Civil Wars draw to a close



## PRESTON AUGUST 1648

In 1647, some of the Scottish nobility had agreed to fight for Charles I in what was known as the Engagement. In exchange, they demanded that Presbyterianism be introduced in England – Charles agreed to a trial period of three years. A second civil war had been ignited.

In what is considered to be one of the bloodiest battles of the Civil Wars, the parliamentarians took on their former allies between 17-19 August 1648. Although they were greater in number, the Scots were poorly equipped and fled the boggy battlefield; they surrendered to Cromwell at Warrington on 19 August.

The New Model Army had won another decisive victory, a resounding final blow for the royalist cause that put an end to the second civil war. In the aftermath, thousands of royalist prisoners were sent for servile labour in the New World. 📍



LEFT: The New Model Army was the first English army to wear a standardised uniform

RIGHT: Charles I during the battle of Naseby



**“The soldiers of the New Model Army had proven themselves to be a highly skilled and dangerous force”**

The parliamentarians' New Model Army soon demonstrated the benefits of having a full-time professional force on the field

# THE NEW MODEL ARMY

As Parliament continued to suffer losses, a new strategy was needed – and with it, a brand new national army

WORDS: EMMA SLATTERY WILLIAMS

**B**efore the Civil Wars, England had no permanent standing army. Each county had its own local militia that could be called upon during times of conflict, but these weren't professional soldiers.

In 1644, the parliamentarians suffered one of their biggest losses at Lostwithiel in Cornwall, where their main field army was destroyed. In the wake of the defeat, Oliver Cromwell argued that Parliament could never win the war without better military strength; there were even concerns that some politicians in command of armies might try to prolong the war to keep hold of their power.

On 3 April 1645, the Self-Denying

Ordinance was passed by Parliament: no member of the House of Commons or the House of Lords was henceforth permitted to hold office in the army or navy – although this was modified to allow re-appointments. The parliamentarian army, too, was reorganised and a New Model Army was formed – a national army of professional and well-trained soldiers, equipped to fight anywhere it was required. Unlike the armies of the past, the highest-ranking officers were chosen based on their talent, rather than on social status or wealth. As well as weeding out any unsuitable candidates, many Scottish and foreign mercenary officers were removed, too, making the new army an almost-entirely

English force, some 20,000 men strong.

The New Model Army, as well as being better organised and equipped, was also quite radical in religious terms, as historian Professor Mark Stoye explains: “A lot of the most radical Protestants – really zealous Puritans – flocked to the army. These were people after Cromwell's own heart: radically religious, English and patriotic.”

Recruits were also taught the divine quality of their mission using *The Soldier's Catechism*, which detailed the parliamentarians' stance in the war and encouraged all of the soldiers to be godly.

There was a lot of competition for good positions in the new army and many men volunteered to fight, but this still didn't

make up the required numbers. Professor Stoye suggests that conscription was needed – especially in London and the south-east – meaning there were a number of soldiers who didn't necessarily want to be there, at least at first.

A standardised uniform was introduced for this new national army, with red coats chosen as it was the cheapest option – it was the first time in English history that an army had all worn the same uniform. Financial discipline was kept, too, and soldiers were provided with regular and generous pay.

## TURNING THE TIDE

Following their 1644 defeat in Cornwall, a few of the men who had been dismissed from the earlier parliamentarian armies now joined forces with Charles I. Replete with experienced soldiers, the King was flushed with confidence and sure of victory, while the New Model Army had not yet been tested on the battlefield. Charles would soon discover, however, that the war was far from won.

Sir Thomas Fairfax was made captain general of the New Model Army, and on 14 June, it faced its first great battle, at Naseby in Northamptonshire. The army successfully destroyed the King's forces, and within a year, had won the first of the Civil Wars for Parliament. Whether this victory was purely down to the New Model Army is not clear, but as Stoye says, they certainly helped: “Parliament could have won without the New Model Army, but probably wouldn't have done so as swiftly. With their access to London and its trade routes, parliamentary resources were much better and could be channelled to the army, which contained

very fervent, committed officers and men. It was also much bigger than the King's forces, especially at Naseby. The historian Ronald Hutton once remarked that the King committed suicide at Naseby by tackling a much bigger army with a much smaller one.”

The soldiers of the New Model Army had proven themselves to be a highly skilled and dangerous force to be reckoned with. They continued to win victories on the battlefield, and in 1648 they crushed the royalists and Scots at Preston and brought the Second Civil War to its conclusion.

The New Model Army also went with Cromwell during his campaigns in Ireland, and – with Cromwell taking the place of Fairfax – they beat the Scots and royalists at Dunbar and Worcester, resulting in the end of the Civil Wars altogether in 1651.

During the days of the Protectorate, after Charles's execution, Cromwell relied heavily on the New Model Army to rule, rather than looking to his parliament, and it eventually eclipsed the institution in power. However, Cromwell's son and successor, Richard, commanded no allegiance with the military, and the New Model Army was disbanded upon the restoration of the monarchy in 1660.

Despite this, it was clear that a permanent army was still in the nation's best interests, and a new English army was established by Charles II in January 1661 – the basis for the modern British army forces today. ◉

## THE LEVELLERS

The turmoil of the Civil Wars was an ideal breeding ground for political dissent

Out of the chaos of the Civil Wars came a new political movement known as the Levellers, who believed in religious tolerance, equality, suffrage and popular sovereignty. The name itself was derived from a derogatory term for rural rebels.

One important figure of the movement was John Lilburne, who was arrested in 1645 for suggesting that MPs enjoyed a life of luxury while letting others fight for their cause. Many discontented members of the New Model Army began listening to these new ideas, which appealed to those who felt ignored.

At first, the Levellers campaigned alongside Oliver Cromwell, but they eventually turned against him, demanding a settlement to the Civil Wars that would ensure political freedom.

In 1647, the movement began to create a plan to modernise the democratic process across England and question the authority of parliament. They asked for the vote to be extended to a wider group of people, while the army also presented its own set of grievances. The Levellers eventually began to lose support within the army, and the 1649 Banbury Mutiny – when Cromwell launched a surprise attack on dissenting soldiers – saw the Levellers' power base in the New Model Army destroyed.

Although they didn't achieve success in England, their ideas would go on to inspire many revolutionaries in France and America.



LEFT: Leveller John Lilburne supported 'freeborn rights'

BELOW: Cromwell launches an attack on soldiers supporting the Levellers



# READY FOR BATTLE

## How did royalist and parliamentary armies fight?

WORDS: EMMA SLATTERY WILLIAMS

**W**hen it came to choosing sides during the Civil Wars, it usually depended on who controlled your local area. There were three main types of soldiers within both armies: cavalry (horsemen), infantry (foot soldiers) and dragoons (mounted infantry who would ride into battle and dismount to fight). Infantrymen were organised into regiments, usually of 400-600 men, and commanded by a colonel. Within these infantry regiments were pikemen (armed with short swords for hand-to-hand fighting and a long pike measuring 16-18ft) and musketeers, who were armed with muskets that fired lead musket balls at the enemy.

Cavalrymen were also organised into regiments and went into battle with a pair of pistols, a broadsword and often a carbine (a type of musket). Field artillery such as cannon, mortars and heavy guns were also common and could cause significant damage. 

### HELP FROM THE NORTH

At the start of the Civil Wars, Scotland was sympathetic to Parliament's cause. This modern re-enactor wears a grey doublet and Scots bonnet.

### HEAD FIRST

The distinctive headgear worn by pikemen was known as the Morion helmet. Originating in Spain during the 16th century, it could protect troops during the 'push of pike' manoeuvre.

### COLOUR CLASH

Until the creation of the New Model Army in 1645, uniform colour merely depended on your regiment. This meant that opposing armies risked looking similar, causing confusion during battle.

### HEAVY DUTY

Infantry armour often consisted of a breastplate, together with 'tassets' to protect the thighs. A toughened-leather coat would be worn underneath.

### ONE SHOT

Musketeers were trained to shoot in volleys and in lines up to six-men deep. However, their weapons took time to load and could be highly inaccurate over long distances.

### BROTHERS IN ARMS

About a third of the infantry on both sides carried long pikes. Though not particularly useful at close quarters, they could protect musketeer comrades as they reloaded.

# WARRIOR WOMEN

The Civil Wars were not an exclusively male domain – women from all social spheres had a role to play

WORDS: EMMA SLATTERY WILLIAMS

## SWAPPING DRESSES FOR BREECHES

Some women took desperate measures to be near their loved ones or simply get a slice of the action...

For those women for whom becoming a camp follower wasn't enough to feel like they were contributing to the war effort, the only option was to pull on a pair of breeches and join the army.

While some women donned men's clothes so they could accompany their husbands, others actually wanted to get on the battlefield itself. Both the Bible and the King took a dim view of this practice, and those who were discovered could face public whipping. The actual number of women who cross-dressed is unknown, but the problem was significant enough that a draft proclamation of 1643, which set out required standards of behaviour in the army, contained a hand-written memo from Charles I forbidding women from wearing men's clothes.

This 19th-century painting shows Queen Henrietta Maria fleeing England as the Civil Wars turn against Charles I



**A**rguably the most important woman of the Civil Wars was the wife of Charles I, Henrietta Maria. Although the French-born queen has sometimes been overlooked, Professor Mark Stoye argues that she was a far more pivotal figure in the conflict than is usually recognised. He even suggests that the King's declaration of war may have been partly prompted out of concern for her: "Charles's attempt to arrest five MPs in January 1642 was, I think, partly prompted by rumours beginning to circulate that MPs were about to impeach Henrietta Maria and even, perhaps, to execute her." Sent to the Continent for her safety, the Queen continued to support the royalists from across the Channel, sending supplies and money, and later gathering an army to join her husband.

Aside from Henrietta Maria, women from all classes of society played a role during the Civil Wars. "There were some great noble women who defended their houses against the other side," says Stoye. "The most famous of these were Lady Brilliana Harley, who defended her castle on the Welsh Marches, and Lady Banks, who defended her castle in Dorset, but women all over Britain

fought to protect their homes against the rampaging armies. During the eight-week siege of Lyme Regis in 1644, women helped to dig fortifications and bring out supplies to the men in the trenches. Some even fired muskets and cannons".

When we think of women taking on the jobs of men who went off to fight, we picture more recent conflicts like the world wars. But it was also the case during the Civil Wars, too, with some women fulfilling important civic duties – such as parish constables – while the men of the local community joined the royalist or parliamentary causes.

Once the monarchy was restored in 1660, women returned to their normal household roles – but there were important shifts. Radical religious sects began to pop up allowing female preachers, and some women also became published authors for the first time.

Overall, Stoye claims that the conflicts that dominated the mid-17th century had a significant impact on the dynamics of society: "I would argue that women's lives during the Civil Wars changed just as much as men's did." ◉



Female re-enactors (above and inset) don't have to resort to elaborate disguises to join in with battles – unlike women of the time

# WAR OF WORDS

The Civil Wars were a propagandist's dream, made all the easier by a breakdown in print censorship

WORDS: CHARLOTTE HODGMAN

The Civil Wars saw a veritable explosion in printed material, as King and Parliament did all they could to win the three kingdoms over to their respective causes, and malign the reputation of their opponents. Printing presses churned out thousands upon thousands of pamphlets and publications, some of which were sold for as little as a penny, making them easily accessible to ordinary people. It was religious and political propaganda on a scale that had not been seen in England before – between 1640 and 1660, more than 30,000 publications are believed to have been printed in London alone.

“When Charles I abandoned London in 1642, and even before then, the censorship that he and his predecessors – Elizabeth I and James VI and I – had so carefully protected completely collapsed, and we see a massive efflorescence of publishing,” says Professor Mark Stoye. “Parliament controlled London, which meant it had unlimited access to the capital's printing presses, typesetters, writers, publishers – the whole literary world, really. The King established royalist printing presses at his headquarters in Oxford, but he was never able to achieve the same level of print production as the parliamentarians.”

## THE GLOVES ARE OFF

With, according to Stoye, as many as 30–40 per cent of Londoners able to read at this time, print was an ideal way of sharing religious and political views, and spreading rumours about your enemy.

In 1643, the royalist faction launched a weekly newsbook, *Mercurius Aulicus* – a forerunner to the modern-day newspaper – to promote their views in Parliament-held London. Printed in Oxford where it sold for a penny a copy, it was then

smuggled into London for distribution there. Although the *Aulicus* stopped publishing in 1645, it is still considered one of England's most important early newspapers. Not to be outdone, Parliament also launched its own newsbook, in August 1643 – *Mercurius Britannicus*. A young journalist named Marchamont Nedham was made chief writer for the *Britannicus*, and he became known for his damning character assassinations of Charles I, seeking to highlight his weaknesses and personality flaws – even mocking the King's stammer.

Both sides sought to minimise the damage caused by their own troops and draw attention to the antics of their enemies – in one edition of *Mercurius Aulicus*, editor John Birkenhead claimed it was “a common Parliament practice, to set a House on fire, and then to runne away by the light of it”. Elsewhere, Charles's Catholic queen Henrietta Maria was a common target for mud-sliding in parliamentary publications. ◉



## ▲ WITCH HUNTING, 1647

As censorship broke down, pamphlets on a variety of topics could be printed freely – including texts suggesting that witches were at large. This gave Witch-finder General Matthew Hopkins his chance and, with people becoming increasingly radicalised by such propaganda, he was able to launch a bloody campaign to hunt down ‘witches’ in Essex and East Anglia between 1645–47.

## ◀ THE MAKING OF A MARTYR, 1649

First published on the day of Charles I's execution, as the frontispiece of *Eikon Basilike: The pourtraicture of His Sacred Majestie in his solitudes and sufferings*, this image depicts Charles with a ray extending from his eye to the crown of martyrdom, as well as other religious iconography, including a crown of thorns. The pathos of the image made it an instant royalist propaganda win.



## ◀ DEATH AND DESTRUCTION, 1644

Much of the propaganda of the time sought to incite its readers by highlighting, or embellishing, atrocities committed by both sides during the Civil Wars. In this parliamentarian illustration, royalist soldiers are depicted killing innocent women and children, while in the background a city burns.

## ▼ THE ROYALIST DOG-WITCH, 1643

Charles I's nephew Prince Rupert was a popular literary target for Parliament, not least because of the rumours surrounding his dog, Boy, who was said to be a witch's familiar, or even the Devil in disguise, and in possession of magical powers. Royalist writers played upon these rumours with delight, until Boy was killed at the battle of Marston Moor, in July 1644.



**DID YOU KNOW?**  
A DISLOYAL SUBJECT  
Parliamentary propagandist Marchamont Nedham ended up switching sides – twice! In 1647, after reportedly gaining a royal pardon from Charles I, Nedham began writing for the royalists. But after his imprisonment in 1649, he switched back again.

## ▲ DEVIL ARMIES, 1642

Accusations of witchcraft were commonplace in the propaganda of both Parliament and the King, as both tapped into the witch fears that were resurging following the breakdown in print censorship. Royalists and parliamentarians were both accused of being in league with the Devil, as seen here in this tract, which depicts a devil excreting a Roundhead.

## ► ENGLAND UPROOTED, 1649

As the three kingdoms reeled from the shock of Charles's execution, royalist propaganda focused on Oliver Cromwell and the nation's move to commonwealth status. This satirical illustration depicts Cromwell supervising the destruction of the royal oak of England. Falling with the tree are the ‘fruits’ of Magna Carta, various statutes and the Bible.



# KILLING THE KING

To bring peace to the realm, Parliament made the once unthinkable decision to send Charles I to the block

WORDS: EMMA SLATTERY WILLIAMS

After years of bloodshed, leading parliamentarian army officers and some MPs came to the decision that the only way to restore peace across the nation was to remove Charles I – permanently. The decision was momentous: legally-sanctioned regicide in England had never been committed before, nor has it since.

In 1646, Charles surrendered to the

Scots, who in turn gave him up to Parliament for a large sum of money. The King was held in various places for 18 months, including Hampton Court Palace, before escaping to the Isle of Wight. He believed the governor of the island would be sympathetic but was

**DID YOU KNOW?**  
**HUNTED DOWN**  
Many who had signed the King's death warrant fled England after the Restoration. Those who remained or were pursued abroad were executed or imprisoned, with the exception of Cromwell's cousin, Richard Ingoldsby, who was pardoned after claiming he had been forced to sign. Some of the ringleaders, including Cromwell, underwent a posthumous execution.

instead taken captive and held in Carisbrooke Castle.

While imprisoned, Charles managed to smuggle out messages to his supporters and made a deal with the Scots. If they helped him reclaim his throne, Presbyterianism would be established in England – for a trial period of three years. This started the rather brief Second Civil War, which saw the King's hopes dashed in August 1648 as royalist and Scottish uprisings were crushed by the New Model Army.

This second round of conflict was the last straw for radical parliamentarians, says Professor Mark Stoye: "They felt that their victory in the First Civil War meant that God favoured the parliamentary cause. By 'steeping the kingdom in blood' once more, the King had gone too far."

In December 1648, a military coup known as Pride's Purge saw a host of MPs who wanted to negotiate with the King excluded entry to the House of Commons by the army, under Colonel Thomas Pride. Those remaining formed the so-called Rump Parliament and the King was charged with high treason.

On 20 January 1649, Charles's trial began without the backing of the House

of Lords. During the four occasions that the King appeared, he refused to enter a plea and continually questioned the authority of the court – to no avail. On 27 January he was found guilty and was ultimately sentenced to death by 59 signatures.

On 30 January 1649, Charles I was led through Whitehall Palace's Banqueting House, passing beneath the Rubens ceiling depicting his father, James VI and I, as a divine ruler. Stepping out of a window on the first floor onto a scaffold, he was greeted by a large assembled crowd.

Wearing two shirts – so people would not mistake his shivering for fear – Charles I knelt at the block and his head was removed with a single blow, to groaning dismay from the crowd. Some

spectators rushed forward to dip their handkerchiefs in the King's blood.

But Charles may have seen his execution as his dynasty's only hope, suggests Stoye: "Some of the King's admirers claimed that Charles was determined to be a martyr. Charles may have believed that dying as a martyr to his cause was the best way of ensuring that his son would eventually inherit the throne."

Charles's execution created shockwaves across Europe. "It's hard to overexaggerate what a shock this was," says Stoye. "Probably less than ten per cent of the English people would have wanted the King's death. A lot of people thought God would strike England down for this; to have actually executed an anointed King was incomprehensible." ◉



A painting, thought to be based on eye-witness accounts, of the execution of Charles I



Charles I on his final walk towards Whitehall Palace and his execution

## WHAT CAME NEXT...

England was now a republic, but the bloodshed continued

With the King dead, England was declared a Commonwealth and Free-State, Cromwell became the first de facto leader of the Council of State – a period known as the Interregnum.

The execution of Charles I was not the death of the royalist cause – supporters threw their allegiance behind his son. Charles II was crowned king at Scone on 1 January 1651 after making a deal with the Scottish Covenanters. A brief Third

Civil War ensued, as Scottish forces headed south into England. Charles II was forced to flee to France as Cromwell's forces emerged victorious once more, at the battle of Worcester.

Since Charles's death, the new Commonwealth had been ruled by a small group of MPs known as the 'Rump', but after failing to call a parliament, this was dissolved in April 1653. The Barebones Parliament followed, but, in December 1653, this too was closed down and Cromwell was declared Lord Protector.

In 1657, Parliament asked Cromwell to accept the 'Humble Petition and Advice' – a new constitution that would, among other things, make Cromwell king. Cromwell eventually refused the crown, perhaps because he believed accepting it would show pride and ambition, and provoke God's disapproval. Cromwell died in 1658 and was succeeded by his son, Richard, but before long the Protectorate collapsed. In 1660, Charles II was invited back to London and restored to the throne – he would reign for nearly 25 years. ◉



The body of Oliver Cromwell lying in state at Somerset House

## GET HOOKED

If we've whetted your appetite for the Stuart dynasty, why not explore the topic further with our pick of books, films and podcasts

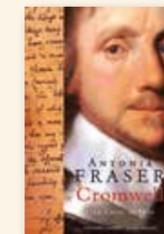
### BOOKS



**The Black Legend of Prince Rupert's Dog: Witchcraft and Propaganda during the English Civil War**

By Professor Mark Stoye (Liverpool University Press, 2011)

This compelling book from Mark Stoye sheds new light on the story of a 'dog-witch' named Boy, the loyal companion of Charles I's nephew, Prince Rupert of the Rhine, who was held to possess supernatural powers.



**Cromwell, Our Chief of Men**

By Antonia Fraser (Orion, 1999)

Antonia Fraser explores the life and character of Oliver Cromwell, and discovers a man of contradictions and surprising charm; a decisive and ruthless commander who was also a country gentleman and a passionate connoisseur of music.



**The English Civil War at First Hand**

By Tristram Hunt (Penguin, 2011)

Tristram Hunt offers a narrative of the English Civil War based on the first-hand accounts of those who witnessed these traumatic events. From Cromwell's letters to the memoirs of a Roundhead wife the civil war era is brought to life in all its terrible and fascinating glory.

### ONLINE AND AUDIO

► **The Trial of Charles I** (BBC Radio 4): Melvyn Bragg and guests discuss the Stuart king's trial in an episode of *In Our Time*. Listen at [bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00kpdz6](http://bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00kpdz6)



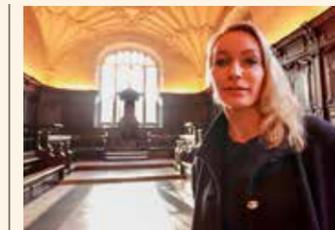
► For podcasts, features, quizzes, interviews and more on the Stuarts, visit the Stuarts hub on our website: [historyextra.com/period/stuart](http://historyextra.com/period/stuart)

### WATCH



**The Devil's Whore** (Now streaming on All4)

Set between the years 1642 and 1660, *The Devil's Whore* charts the progress of the Civil Wars through the eyes of the fictional Angelica Fanshawe.



**Charles I: Downfall of a King** (BBC, now streaming on Amazon Prime)

Across three one-hour episodes, historian Lisa Hilton reveals how this cataclysmic moment in Britain's past was sparked by the events of just 50 days.