YOUR ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO

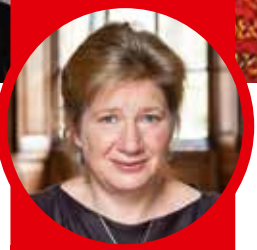
THE RESTORATION

Discover the story behind Charles II's return from exile and his role in forging a colourful new era in England's history

PODCAST

Dr Clare Jackson answers listeners' questions about the Restoration on the HistoryExtra podcast: *historyextra.com/restoration-podcast*

HISTORICAL CONSULTANT FOR THIS MONTH'S ESSENTIAL GUIDE



DR CLARE JACKSON
is a historian and senior tutor at Trinity Hall, University of Cambridge. Her books include *Charles II: The Star King* (Allen Lane, 2016) and the award-winning *Devil-Land: England Under Siege, 1588–1688* (Allen Lane, 2021).

THE RETURN OF THE KING

We chart the most pivotal moments of the Restoration era: from Charles II's triumphant homecoming to the highs and lows that came to define his quarter-century reign

WORDS: CHARLOTTE HODGMAN

30 JAN 1649

▼ Charles I is beheaded outside the Banqueting House in Whitehall.

1 JAN 1651

Charles II is crowned king of Scotland at Scone Abbey having already, in June 1650, reluctantly promised to establish Presbyterianism (a branch of Protestantism originating in Scotland) across all three kingdoms.

3 SEP 1651

Hoping to take back the English crown, Charles II and his mainly Scottish army take on Oliver Cromwell's superior forces at Worcester and lose. The young king narrowly evades capture and is forced to flee to France, disguised as a servant.

3 SEP 1658

▲ Oliver Cromwell dies, aged 59. His eldest son, Richard, succeeds him as lord protector.

MAY 1659

▶ With little political or military experience, Richard Cromwell is unable to command the respect or confidence of the army and parliament. Nine months after his father's death, he resigns, ending the Protectorate.

4 APR 1660

The exiled king issues the Declaration of Breda, outlining his terms for a restoration of the monarchy, including freedom of religious conscience and a "general pardon" for those who swear loyalty to him. It is made public on 1 May.

29 MAY 1660

▲ Charles II triumphantly enters London on his 30th birthday. His huge procession makes its way to Whitehall, where the king meets with peers and MPs, who queue to kiss his hand.

NOV 1660

▼ The Royal Society is founded at Gresham College, London.

30 JAN 1661

The bodies of Oliver Cromwell, Robert Blake, John Bradshaw and Henry Ireton – all instrumental in the trial and execution of Charles I – are exhumed and posthumously hanged, drawn and quartered, after which their heads are placed on spikes above Westminster Hall.

23 APR 1661

Charles II is crowned king of England at Westminster Abbey. The loss or destruction of the Crown Jewels during the Commonwealth era has seen new pieces of royal regalia specially made for the occasion.

APR 1668

▲ Charles begins a relationship with orange seller-turned-actor Nell Gwyn.

SUMMER 1667

Charles forms the Cabal ministry – a private group of high councillors who help him extend his power. The first letters of the names or titles of the five most prominent men – Clifford, Arlington, Buckingham, Ashley and Lauderdale – give the Cabal its name.

2 SEP 1666

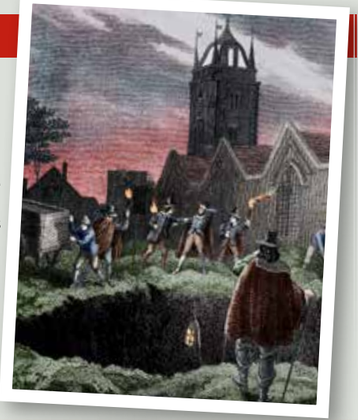
▼ The Great Fire of London begins in a baker's shop off Pudding Lane. Some 13,200 houses, as well as St Paul's Cathedral, are destroyed. The financial costs are estimated at £10m.

FEB 1666

Catherine of Braganza suffers a miscarriage. She will lose two more pregnancies before 1669 and will never bear a living heir for the king.

1665–66

▶ The Great Plague of London kills as many as 100,000 people, roughly 20 per cent of the city's population. It is the worst outbreak of plague in England since the Black Death of 1348.



MAR 1665 – JUL 1667

▼ The Second Anglo-Dutch War, stemming from commercial rivalry between England and the Dutch Republic, ends in victory for the Dutch.

OCT 1662

In need of money, Charles agrees to sell Dunkirk, which has been in English hands since 1658, to Louis XIV for 5 million livres (around £320,000). The price is later brought down by a 12 per cent discount.

21 MAY 1662

▼ Charles II marries the Portuguese princess Catherine of Braganza.

19 MAY 1662

The Act of Uniformity enforces the use of the Anglican *Book of Common Prayer*. More than 2,000 clergymen refuse to comply and are expelled from the Church of England.

JUN 1670

Charles signs a secret treaty with Louis XIV. In it he promises to convert to Catholicism at a future date and provide warships and soldiers to help the French war against the Dutch, in return for French subsidies.

MAR 1672

Charles bypasses parliament and issues the Declaration of Indulgence, which states that penal laws against Roman Catholics and Protestant dissenters will be removed. Parliamentary protests see the proclamation revoked.

1672–74

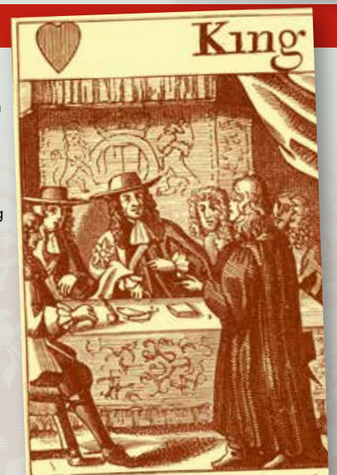
▼ According to the terms of his secret treaty with Louis XIV, Charles sends the English navy to support France in its war with the Dutch Republic.

MAR 1675

▲ John Flamsteed is appointed the first astronomer royal. He is charged with drawing up an accurate map of the night sky, which can be used for navigation.

SEP 1678

▶ A renegade Anglican clergyman named Titus Oates informs parliament of a fictitious plot (known as the Popish Plot) alleging that members of the Jesuit religious order are planning to assassinate Charles II and bring his brother James, Duke of York to the throne.



1679–81

A parliamentary bill is introduced in May 1679, intended to exclude Charles II's brother and heir – the Catholic James, Duke of York – from the succession. The so-called Exclusion Crisis continues until 1681, when Charles dissolves parliament for the last time before his death.

MAY 1679

The Habeas Corpus act is passed, ensuring that no one can be imprisoned unlawfully. The term – Latin for "you may have the body" – has ancient beginnings in the common law of England, dating back before the creation of Magna Carta in 1215.

EARLY 1683

▲ A group of Protestants, including James, Duke of Monmouth (an illegitimate son of Charles II), plan to murder the king and his heir in the Rye House Plot.

6 FEB 1685

▶ Charles II dies at the Palace of Whitehall, having apparently suffered a stroke a few days earlier. In his final moments he converts to Roman Catholicism, taking Communion, and is anointed with holy oil. His younger brother succeeds him as James VII and II.

GETTY IMAGES X10, ALAMY X6

EVERYTHING YOU WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT THE RESTORATION

Dr Clare Jackson answers key questions about the historical period that was shaped by Charles II's return to the throne

Q: What was the Restoration?

A: In short, the Restoration was the re-establishment of Charles II as king of England following more than a decade of different types of constitutional regime. Charles II's father, Charles I, had acceded to the thrones of England, Scotland and Ireland in 1625, but his reign had been tumultuous. In the late 1630s, his authority had started to collapse, and he'd faced increasing challenges to his rule in all three kingdoms, which blew up into what we think of now as the Civil Wars. The conflict lasted through the 1640s until the decision was taken by a purged parliament and army leaders to put Charles I on trial, and he was executed in 1649. At that point, his eldest son, Charles, Prince of Wales, who was 18, was immediately named as his father's successor in Scotland, thereby becoming King Charles II.

GETTY IMAGES X4, ALAMY X3

DID YOU KNOW?

THE VEST IS HISTORY

After his execution, Charles I's clothing was removed from his body and distributed among the people in attendance. The silk vest the king wore on the scaffold is now in the possession of the Museum of London, and still bears several prominent bloodstains.

LEFT: **A Victorian-era painting imagines Oliver Cromwell gazing at the body of King Charles I, whose death warrant he had signed in January 1649**

RIGHT: **Charles I's death paved the way for the creation of the short-lived English Republic**

The Scots very pointedly declared the young Charles to be not only king of Scotland, but also king of England and Ireland, and he spent the next 11 years in exile, trying to support royalist attempts to re-establish the monarchy during the very unstable years of first the English Commonwealth, and then the Cromwellian Protectorate. There was a bewildering succession of short-lived regimes that followed Oliver Cromwell's death in 1658, but in the spring of 1660, parliament made the decision to invite Charles II back as king of England. Today, we tend to date the Restoration from the re-establishment of the monarchy in 1660, but Charles II always dated the start of his reign as the moment of his father's death on 30 January 1649.

Q: How did the Restoration come about?

A: You might think that the Interregnum – the period between Charles I's death and Charles II's restoration – would have been a time of settling down following years of upheaval, but the reality was that there was never any real security about what the next year might look like. Part of the reason for Oliver Cromwell's popularity was that he appeared to bring stability; I think most historians would probably say that the way the Restoration turned out in 1660 was the result of several complex factors that only came together in the 18 months before it actually took place.

Oliver Cromwell died in September 1658, and it was quickly announced that his eldest son, Richard, would succeed him as lord protector, even though he had little in the way of military or political experience. Richard Cromwell's Protectorate was very short-lived, and he was unable to command the confidence of MPs, or indeed the army, on whose power the Protectorate essentially sat. A series of confusing constitutional experiments followed Richard's resignation in May 1659, and there was a lot of affection for what was known as the 'good old cause' (re-establishing a Republic).

"PART OF THE REASON FOR CROMWELL'S POPULARITY WAS THAT HE APPEARED TO BRING STABILITY"

But increasingly, there were also irreconcilable divisions between the army and many civilian politicians, as well as a general feeling of constitutional exhaustion and a desire for normality. And all the time, there was Charles II's court in exile, biding its time and ready to offer everything that the English people thought they needed at that stage – stability, traditional government and so on – but waiting for the right moment to make a serious move.

It was much more desirable for Charles II that his own people restore him to the throne; there were serial offers, especially in the late 1650s, from countries like Spain and France to help with an armed invasion on his behalf. But that wouldn't have done much to help Charles's legitimacy or credibility with the English people.

After this succession of different types of constitutional regime, there was a great deal of instability, to put it mildly, and in 1660, parliament invited Charles II to reclaim his throne. Charles himself was skilful in helping to draft literature confirming that, if restored as king, he would not prioritise vengeance. The Declaration of Breda, drafted by the exiled court in April 1660, made it clear that Charles wanted to offer stability, to respect the rule of law, and work with a free parliament. On the religious front, he famously promised "liberty to tender Consciences, and that no man shall be disquieted... for differences of opinion in matters of Religion". It was certainly a reassuring manifesto and one that seemed to offer stability and legitimacy.

ABOVE LEFT: **Oliver Cromwell's body lies in state following his death in 1658**

TOP RIGHT: **Cromwell's son, Richard, proved to be a spectacularly poor choice of successor**

BOTTOM RIGHT: **An illustration depicts army chiefs forcing Richard to abdicate**

Charles II made a brief stopover in Rotterdam on his return to England, where he was greeted by jubilant crowds not unlike those that awaited him in Dover

Q: How was Charles II received when he returned to England?

A: Once his return had been agreed, things happened very quickly; Charles, who was staying in the Protestant Dutch town of Breda where he worked closely with the English deputations, was less than a day's sailing from England.

After a series of farewell banquets and ceremonies, he sailed to Dover, famously accompanied by a 27-year-old Samuel Pepys, who recorded it all in his diary. Upon landing they moved with a lot of pomp and ceremony to Canterbury and, finally, on 29 May 1660 (Charles's 30th birthday), he made his entry into London where there were crowds of people cheering and welcoming him. Most people, I think, were relieved and surprised that his return had taken place in so bloodless a manner, and that the emphasis was on celebration rather than division. ▶

DID YOU KNOW?

A ROYAL RELIC

Upon his return to London, Charles II attended dinner in the Banqueting House – the same building his father had been executed in front of in 1649. It is now the only surviving part of the Palace of Whitehall, which was hit by a huge fire in 1698.

"KING CHARLES II WAS ALWAYS AWARE THAT HIS SURVIVAL ON THE THRONE DEPENDED ON HIS SUBJECTS WANTING HIM THERE"

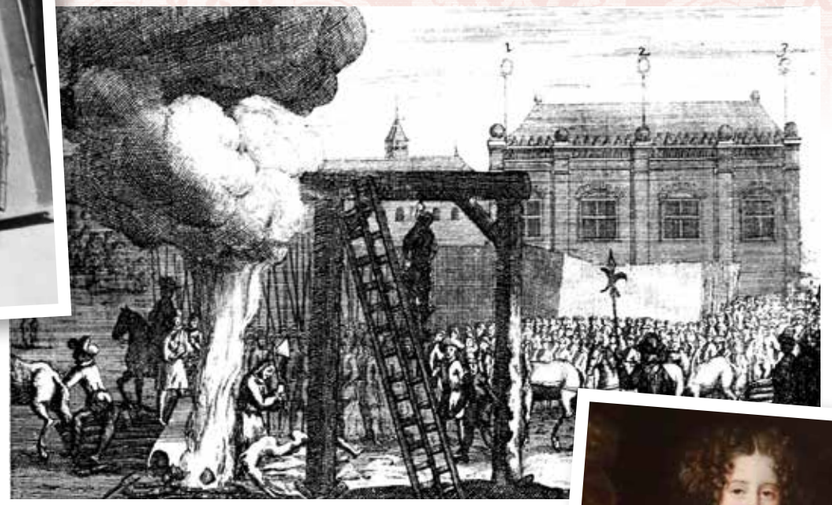
Q: How quickly would news of Charles II's return have spread?

A: Very quickly. When Charles I was beheaded on 30 January 1649, the news had travelled to Edinburgh fast enough for Charles II to be crowned king of Scotland just a few days later, on 6 February. One of the interesting dilemmas of the Restoration for the exiled court was that owning any image of Charles II had been made a crime during the 1650s, so there were very few pictures of the king when he returned in 1660. Consequently, there was much anxiety to distribute images of him; some of these were crudely drawn tavern signs and woodcuts, and many purists were appalled at the character of such images. But the Restoration court needed to disseminate as many likenesses of him as possible.

A state portrait is traditionally commissioned at the accession of a new monarch, but, because of the precariousness of the situation, it was decided not to create a formal portrait of Charles's English coronation in 1661. More than any other monarch, Charles II was always aware that his survival on the throne depended on his subjects wanting him there. Despite this, there was still a great amount of state theatre to the occasion. Charles had decided that his coronation day would be 23 April 1661 – St George's Day – and for the rest of his reign, the great National Saint's Day and his crowning would be celebrated together.

Q: Were there any repercussions for the Cromwell family after Charles II's restoration?

A: One thing I've always found remarkable was the obvious vengeance directed at Oliver Cromwell himself. Despite all the Restoration's rhetoric of forgetting and moving on, vengeance was targeted towards those directly involved in Charles I's execution. Accordingly, Oliver Cromwell's body – like those of other regicides who had died before 1660 – was exhumed, subjected to a ritual hanging, drawing and quartering, with his head placed on a spike. I studied at Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, the college that Oliver Cromwell had attended as an undergraduate, and to which, in 1960, his severed head was entrusted and buried. To this day, the exact location of Cromwell's head within the college is a secret, such is the sensitivity that surrounds it. But apart from that, there was remarkably little vengeance directed towards the living members of the Cromwell family; even Richard Cromwell was left alone and lived until he was 85.



LEFT: **One of several death masks made following Oliver Cromwell's demise** BELOW: **Cromwell, Henry Ireton and John Bradshaw were posthumously 'executed' in 1661; their heads are shown here on pikes, labelled 1, 2 and 3 respectively**

Q: How can we broadly characterise life in Restoration England?

A: There were lots of different strains to it. The image of Charles II as the 'Merry Monarch' has become almost synonymous with the era – the flowing curls, cavalier costumes, the reopening of the theatres.

For the rest of the country, though, on a day-to-day basis, there must have been a lot of apprehension. This was a population that had risen in revolt against their government and then lived through a very bewildering and discombobulating 20-year period. The radicalism of the Civil Wars and the ideas that had been articulated – be it about annual parliaments or universal suffrage – could never be simply 'unthought'.

The historian Jonathan Scott has talked about this being a population that had all the hallmarks of something like PTSD, living through a very traumatic period and instinctively inclined to become alarmed by any moment of instability, fearing a return to civil war and revolution. In the late 1670s and early 1680s, when Charles's reign became very unstable during the so-called Exclusion Crisis [when moves were made to exclude Charles's Catholic brother and heir, James, Duke of York, from the succession, *see page 44*], there were real fears that '1641 is come again' and the chaos of civil war would be repeated.

Q: Did the Restoration have a discernible impact on the status of women in society?

A: For most women, restoring the monarchy was assumed to restore all the patriarchal structures and authority that had been in place before the Civil Wars. There had been something of an explosion of female publishing and petitioning during the conflict and later, too, in the 1650s, but a lot of that would have declined during the Restoration period. But women's agency is evident in other areas of life. A lot of women had been widowed in the Civil Wars, and many continued to occupy very responsible roles into the Restoration or spent years petitioning on behalf of injured or deceased family members. So there were different avenues of female influence.

The idea of state mistresses was something that Charles II's reign really epitomised in a way that the English monarchy hadn't seen before, and many people looked to the king's mistresses, particularly the French-born Louise de Kéroualle, who became duchess of Portsmouth, as alternative avenues to Charles. That's just one sort of woman in a very privileged position, though; the general emphasis was very much on re-establishing traditional, patriarchal norms of social order.

ABOVE: **Fears that Charles's brother and heir, James, Duke of York, would 're-Catholicise' the British Isles brought back unhappy memories of the turbulent 1640s**

RIGHT: **Louise de Kérouaille, the daughter of a Breton noble, was just one of Charles II's many mistresses**

Many of the more radical ideas about gender that had emerged through the Civil Wars couldn't be forgotten, though, and we find that, wrapped up in the fears of a descent back into civil war that were expressed by many men at the time, were concerns about the return of the sorts of articulate women who were publishing in the 1650s.

INTERVIEW: ELINOR EVANS

DR CLARE JACKSON is a historian and senior tutor at Trinity Hall, University of Cambridge. Her books include *Charles II: The Star King* (Allen Lane, 2016) and the award-winning *Devil-Land: England Under Siege, 1588–1688* (Allen Lane, 2021)

GETTY IMAGES X2, ALAMY X4

THE MAKING OF A MONARCH

By the time he came to power in 1660, Charles II had already endured war, exile and the execution of his father

It's the early hours of 15 October 1651, and most of the residents of the West Sussex town of Shoreham-by-Sea are asleep in their beds. But not all of them. Two men walk silently across a beach and board a boat. A couple of hours later, before the Sun has crept above the horizon, the vessel slips out to sea. And barely anyone has even noticed.

As turning points in English history go, the duo's departure from made for a fairly unremarkable scene. Yet a turning point it undoubtedly was. One of the men was, in fact, the future King Charles II. And he was fleeing for his life.

A few months earlier, Charles had launched a bid to win back the kingdoms that Oliver Cromwell's forces had seized from his father, Charles I, in the Civil Wars that raged across the British Isles. That bid had ended in defeat and so the younger Charles was forced to beat a silent retreat back across the Channel – accompanied by his close friend, Lord Wilmot – before Cromwell's forces caught up with him.

A PERILOUS PREDICAMENT

And catch up with him they nearly did. Hours after Charles departed for the continent, his pursuers swept into Shoreham in search of their prey. They would have good reason for rueing this nearest of misses, for Charles wouldn't be down and out forever. Nine years later he would return to English shores – this time not as a hapless fugitive but as the master of all surveyed.

GETTY IMAGES X6, ALAMY X1

BELOW RIGHT: **Oliver Cromwell, who became lord protector in 1653, crushed Charles II's attempts to invade England from Scotland and seize power**

BELOW LEFT: **A 1632 painting depicting an infant Charles II (*far left*) with his parents and younger sister, Mary. Ten years later the British Isles would be torn apart by war**

As his boat pulled away from Shoreham on that October morning, Charles could have been forgiven for wondering how he found himself in this perilous predicament. This was not how it was meant to be. When he was born at St James's Palace in May 1630, his inheritance was the three crowns of England, Scotland and Ireland, and the awesome power that came with being a divinely appointed ruler in the 17th century. On the day on which he was born, a brilliant star shone brightly in the daytime skies over London. Today, this is believed to have been a supernova; back in 1630, it was interpreted as a sign of great things to come.

ON THE CONTINENT

It was not to be. At 12 years old, Charles's pampered childhood – spent chiefly at the courts of St James and Whitehall in London and Richmond Palace in Surrey – was shattered by war. Over the preceding years, tensions between King Charles I and an array of opponents over religious policy, the power of parliament and the question of the king's divine right to rule had reached boiling point. In 1642, those tensions exploded into outright conflict

DID YOU KNOW?

ISLAND RETREAT

The Channel Island of Jersey supported the royalist cause during the Civil Wars, offering sanctuary to Charles II on two separate occasions. Notably, the islanders held a proclamation ceremony for the exiled royal on 17 February 1649.

LEFT: **A portrait of a 12-year-old Charles II, likely painted to commemorate his presence at the battle of Edgehill**
BELOW: **The 1642 clash, fought in southern Warwickshire, was the first pitched battle of the Civil Wars**

– and the consequences for the king and his family would prove catastrophic.

The younger Charles may have only been a boy, but he wasn't sheltered from the conflict. He was present when his father raised the royal standard at the battle of Edgehill, the first pitched battle of the Civil Wars, and was made a commander of royalist forces in the West Country when he was just 14. But soon the tide of the war was turning decisively in favour of the king's parliamentarian enemies and, in March 1646, his eldest son was forced to flee the mainland. It wouldn't, of course, be for the last time.

The then Prince Charles initially made for the royalist strongholds of the Scilly Isles and Jersey before crossing the Channel to mainland Europe. At first, he joined his mother – the French-born Henrietta Maria – near Paris, where he lived under the protection of the French king, Louis XIV. Later, however, he moved to the Hague (in the modern-day Netherlands), where his brother-in-law William II, Prince of Orange, seemed more likely to offer support to the royalist cause.

OFF WITH HIS HEAD

All the while, back in England, things were going from bad to worse for Charles's father. The war was now heading inexorably in parliament's favour, and, in May 1646, the king placed himself in the hands of a Scottish army, who later handed him over to English parliamentarian forces. By the end of 1647, Charles I would find himself in captivity in Carisbrooke Castle on the Isle of Wight.

But what would the parliamentarians do with their royal prisoner? The answer came in dramatic fashion in early 1649, when the leaders of the New Model Army and the more radical parliamentarians put the king on trial for high treason. After being convicted, he was beheaded in Whitehall.

The execution of Charles I was a truly stunning event that sent shockwaves coursing through Europe's courts. The question that was now being asked was, what would the dead king's son do next?

"THE KING'S EXECUTION SENT SHOCKWAVES COURSING THROUGH EUROPE'S COURTS"

The answer arrived in June 1650, when Charles sailed to Scotland with the aim of wresting back his father's kingdoms. There, on 1 January 1651, he became the last monarch to be crowned north of the border, at a coronation ceremony at Scone Palace in Perthshire.

Unfortunately, Charles's return to the mainland hadn't gone unnoticed by Oliver Cromwell, now the most powerful man in the three kingdoms. The parliamentarian leader was determined to crush Charles's campaign before it had begun and sent an army north to stamp out the royalist uprising. That army inflicted a bloody defeat on the Scots at Dunbar, killing 3,000 and taking a further 10,000 prisoner.

Yet Charles hadn't given up all hope of regaining his father's kingdoms quite yet. In fact, soon he had devised a new plan: to march an army into England, join up with his supporters there, and drive towards London. But Charles had failed to read the room. South of the ▶

ABOVE LEFT: **The execution of Charles I was met with horror by onlookers. One witness claimed a "loud groan" rose from the crowd when the axe fell**

ABOVE RIGHT: **Charles II was crowned king of Scotland almost two years after the death of his father**

DID YOU KNOW?

PRIME TARGET

The parliamentary forces apparently put a £1,000 bounty on Charles II's head after his dramatic escape from the battle of Worcester in September 1651. While it is hard to calculate a precise figure, that's the equivalent of around £145,000 today.

ABOVE: **Parliamentarian general George Monck switched allegiances and became a pivotal figure in the restoration of Charles to the throne**

LEFT: **A Victorian-era painting depicts the king riding to Bristol in the aftermath of the battle of Worcester, dressed as the servant of Jane Lane, the sister of a royalist officer**

"CHARLES SPENT EIGHT YEARS FILLING HIS DAYS PARTYING, RIDING, SAILING AND WOMANISING"

A royalist meets an unfortunate end at the battle of Worcester. Charles's men were no match for Oliver Cromwell's army

GETTY IMAGES X7, ALAMY X2

◀ border there simply wasn't the appetite for more death and destruction, especially death and destruction meted out by a marauding Scottish army. When Charles marched south, the anticipated explosion of popular support didn't materialise. Even Charles I's former royalist capital of Oxford refused to open its gates to the Scottish army. The invasion turned into a fiasco.

That fiasco reached a nightmarish crescendo when a parliamentarian army numbering 28,000 men caught up with Charles II's army in Worcester. With the Scottish army less than half the size of its opponents, and absolutely exhausted, the result was a bloodbath.

What would have made Cromwell's victory even more complete was if his forces had captured Charles. Yet somehow the fugitive king slipped through the net: first by hiding in an oak tree (*see box on page 37*), then, assisted by a young woman named Jane Lane, whose brother was an officer in the royalist army, riding to Bristol. From there, the king travelled to the beach at Shoreham where he and his friend Lord Wilmot made their getaway to the European continent.

Following the defeat at Worcester, Charles's hopes of ever regaining what he believed to be his rightful inheritance seemed to be well and truly expunged. And so he spent the next eight years enjoying the hospitality of various royal courts, filling his days partying, riding, sailing and womanising.

THE END OF THE REPUBLIC

But soon his prospects were to take another turn – and, once again, the trigger was a dramatic change of events in England. On 3 September 1658, Oliver Cromwell died. With his passing, the cement that had held together the republican regime that had ruled in the absence of the monarchy, began to crumble. The army didn't trust Oliver's nominated successor, his son Richard, and so in May 1659 they forced him into retirement. In a kingdom increasingly living under the yoke of high taxes and declining trade, what followed was a period marked by disputes between parliament and army.

Enter George Monck. This Scotland-based parliamentarian general sensed that the public was becoming increasingly receptive to the idea of a restoration of the monarchy and so, in February 1660, Monck marched an army south into England with the aim of bringing that about. In March, with a parliament that was now full of newly elected royalist supporters, Monck began to make private overtures to King Charles.

The events of spring 1660 marked an astonishing change of fortunes for the exiled king. The famed diarist and naval administrator Samuel Pepys had recently reported that Charles and his court were virtually living in rags, not a coat among them worth more than 40 shillings. Yet now he was on the cusp of regaining his father's throne.

A critical development in that scenario being realised was the Declaration of Breda (named after the Dutch city in which the king was residing), in which Charles set out the terms for the restoration of the monarchy. In the declaration, he struck a strikingly conciliatory tone, offering a full pardon to all who appealed to him within 40 days, except those who had signed his father's death warrant in 1649; "liberty to tender consciences" (unless religious differences threatened national peace); and payment of arrears of army pay.

In a letter addressed to the speaker of the House of Commons, the king even extended an olive branch to MPs, appealing to them as "wise and dispassionate men and good patriots".

A WARMEST OF WELCOMES

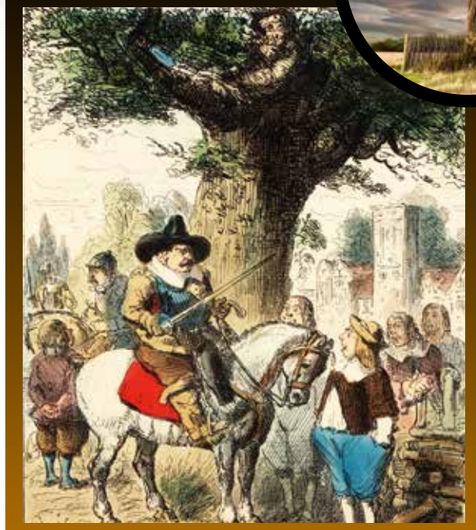
The campaign behind the restoration of the monarchy had now gained an unstoppable momentum. Soon, people were flooding into Breda to wish him well, including Sir John Grenville, who came with a large sum of money from the new Convention Parliament and the City of London. When Charles saw this, Pepys reports, he became "so joyful, that he called the Princess Royal and Duke of York to look upon it as it lay in the Portmanteau before it was taken out".

A few days later, having received deputations from parliamentary commissioners in the Hague, Charles set sail for England. By the time his fleet emerged over the horizon, thousands of people had lined Dover's iconic white cliffs. They were there to welcome the ultimate survivor: their returning king.

WORDS: SPENCER MIZEN

ABOVE: **Charles was met by huge crowds of well-wishers upon his arrival in Dover on 25 May 1660**
TOP: **A large gathering of people had also watched his departure from the Dutch port of Scheveningen**

The Royal Oak (*right*) at Boscobel House, Shropshire, is said to be a descendant of the tree in which Charles hid while trying to evade capture from parliamentarians in 1651 (*below*)



BOUGH FOR THE KING

In 1651, a young Charles narrowly escaped the clutches of the parliamentarian forces thanks to an unlikely hiding place

The search was on. A massive parliamentarian force had just crushed a Scottish army, led by Charles, at Worcester. Now, to put the icing on the cake, all the victors had to do was capture the fugitive king himself. With his army emphatically beaten and the king's supporters deserting him in droves, it would surely be the easiest of tasks.

Yet, as Charles's pursuers would discover over the next few days, the king was resourceful, elusive and not entirely without sympathisers. Among those still willing to support the king were the Penderels. This family of Roman Catholic farmers spirited the exhausted monarch – now disguised as a woodman – to their home, Boscobel House, nearly 40 miles from Worcester. Here, Charles was joined by a fellow royalist fugitive, William Careless. And it was Careless who came up with a quite remarkable plan: for the pair to evade their would-be captors by hiding in a nearby oak tree.

And that's exactly what they did, hurrying to the oak as dawn broke on 6 September 1651. "While we were in the tree we see soldiers going up and down in the thickest of the wood searching for persons escaped, we seeing them now and then peeping out of the woods," Charles II would later recall. The soldiers failed to find their quarry and Charles would, against all odds, escape to France. Nine years later he would be back. And this time there would be no need for hiding.

Charles II leads a procession on the eve of his coronation at Westminster Abbey. The ceremony was a particularly lavish affair, reported to have cost at least £12,000 (around £1.8m today)

IN THE COURT OF THE PLAYBOY KING

With a penchant for partying and a string of mistresses to his name, not for nothing is Charles II remembered as the 'Merry Monarch'

A painting showing the regalia commissioned by Charles II for his coronation. The original Crown Jewels were almost entirely lost or destroyed during the Interregnum

On 27 July 1667, the diarist and naval administrator Samuel Pepys faithfully recorded the gossip he'd heard during a meeting that day with John Fenn, the paymaster to the navy treasurer. After discussing politics, Fenn confided: "The King and the Court were never in the world so bad as they are now for gaming, swearing, whoring, and drinking, and the most abominable vices that ever were in the world."

Charles II's court was famous for its debauchery. In fact, since his youth spent travelling around continental Europe in exile, Charles had developed a taste for vice – he fathered his first illegitimate child, James, when he was 18. (He would go on to have 12 more children, all of them illegitimate.)

CORONATION TREATS

When Charles rode into London on his 30th birthday as the nation's king, he didn't leave his appetite for excess behind. The coronation itself was a sumptuous affair, taking place almost a year after his triumphant return from exile – the wait was partly due to the fact that his father's crown had been destroyed in the wake of his execution, so new regalia fit for a newly instated king had to be crafted. ▶

GETTY IMAGES X3

DID YOU KNOW?

PEPYS SHOW

Samuel Pepys was a noted fan of Nell Gwyn's acting talents. Reflecting on her performance as Florimel in John Dryden's 1667 play *Secret Love*, he wrote: "So great performance of a comical part was never, I believe, in the world before as Nell do this."

"THE KING WAS FOCUSED LESS ON THE MINUTIAE OF POLITICS, AND MORE ON THE PURSUIT OF PLEASURE"

◀ Although the crown was new, Charles was determined to uphold tradition. The day before his formal crowning on 23 April 1661, he made the customary procession from the Tower of London to Westminster Abbey – the last monarch in England's history to do so. He spared no expense with the coronation, commanding a fleet of carpenters to construct special tiered seats in the cavernous Westminster Abbey, so the throngs of people attending the ceremony would be able to get a clear view of their monarch. Pepys, who was in the audience, wrote that after the crown was placed on his head, "a great shout begun".

While Charles had looked every inch the powerful young king on coronation day, in practice he was focused less on the minutiae of politics, and more on the pursuit of pleasure. He encouraged his courtiers to reach the heights of hedonism in his court, with the poet John Dryden describing it as a "laughing, quaffing and unthinking time". Gambling was rampant, and the court calendar was packed with balls and feasts, where courtiers would dress up in their grandest attire and seek to outdo each other with their extravagance.

As one might expect, this was in stark contrast to the sombreness of Cromwellian England – but Charles was also more decadent than his father, Charles I. In fact, Charles I had been appalled by the depravity that he'd witnessed during the time of his father, James VI and I, and had been determined to clean up the court. During his 11-year "Personal Rule", it had been a place of elegance that magnified the power of the monarchy, modelled after the respectful Spanish court. He had even insisted that servants bend the knee when they brought platters of food to him – the only monarch in Europe to do so at the time.

ABOVE: **A c1660 work depicts Charles II dancing at a banquet in the Netherlands, held to celebrate his imminent return to England. To his left is his sister, Mary**

LEFT: **It didn't take long for the king's court to become associated with drinking, gambling and debauchery**

GETTY IMAGES X2, ALAMY X6

ABOVE: **Nell Gwyn sold oranges to theatregoers before being scouted as an actor**

RIGHT: **An unplanned pregnancy saw Anne Hyde forced to marry James, Duke of York (the future James VII and II)**

That's not to say there was no place for pageantry, though. Charles I and his wife, Henrietta Maria, adored masques – a blend of opera, theatre, ballet and ball. They were often staged at Whitehall's Banqueting House, with the who's who of the court mingling underneath the glorious painted ceiling.

A NOTORIOUS WOMANISER

Charles I's son, Charles II, was also a fan of the theatre – but perhaps for different reasons. Although he was married to the Portuguese infanta Catherine of Braganza, who had brought with her an impressive dowry of 2 million crowns, plus the ports of Tangier and Bombay, he in no way felt constrained by the bounds of holy matrimony. He took many mistresses (*see box below*), including actors – the entertainers Nell Gwyn and Moll Davis both bore his children.

There was often tension between the mistresses, as Charles regularly romanced multiple women at once. On one occasion, Gwyn added a potent laxative into Davis's dinner, so she wouldn't be able to sleep with the king.

Charles wasn't the only man in his court to take mistresses. His brother, James, Duke of York (the future James VII and II), was also a notorious womaniser. He caused a huge scandal when he began seeing Anne Hyde, the daughter of Charles's chancellor, and she fell pregnant. In 1660 he was obliged to marry her – a situation described by the Earl of Sandwich as being akin to defecating in a hat and then putting it on one's head.

As well as unplanned pregnancies, there was another unfortunate side effect of the explosion of extra-marital affairs: a corresponding surge in venereal disease. Charles himself had "the pox" – allegedly syphilis – with one of his mistresses, Louise de Kéroualle, laying into him in 1674 for infecting her with the disease. In fact, so many people contracted syphilis that a dedicated "pox doctor" helped treat those affected in the court.

It's perhaps unsurprising that, by the end of Charles's reign, people were beginning to tire of the monarch's "merriness". In fact, in the original verse naming him the "merry monarch", John Wilmot, the Earl of Rochester, had gone on to say: "Restless he rolls about from whore to whore / A merry monarch, scandalous and poor". ⊙

WORDS: RHIANNON DAVIES

THE MISTRESSES OF KING CHARLES II

We examine the lives of the Merry Monarch's most famous lovers...

NELL GWYN

Although she became renowned for her work on the stage, Nell Gwyn's life began in London's slums. Her fortunes changed after she got a job at the King's Theatre hawking oranges, and the actors were so impressed by her quick humour that she was soon put up on stage. She seems to have caught Charles's eye when she was in her late teens, with the pair going on to have two sons together. When the king was on his deathbed, he famously implored his brother, James, "let not poor Nellie starve".

BARBARA VILLIERS

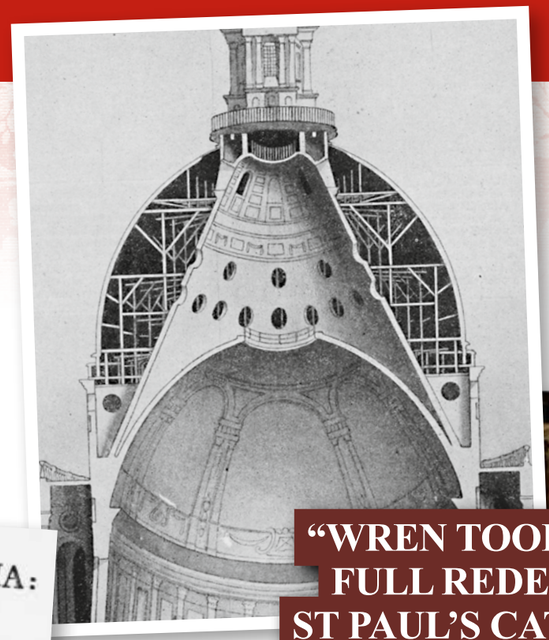
With a mass of auburn curls, Barbara Villiers was renowned for her great beauty. Although she dominated Charles's affections for over a decade, giving him at least five children, she was roundly hated. She demanded huge sums from the monarch: once, he forked out more than £25,000 to settle one of her gambling debts. Villiers also funnelled some of the king's money directly into the pockets of her other lovers – men whom she made no attempt to hide.

LOUISE DE KÉROUALLE

The daughter of a Breton noble, Louise de Kéroualle used her position as the king's mistress to help France – some thought she was even an out-and-out spy. She had first met Charles in 1670, but refused to let him sleep with her for a year; once the long-awaited liaison had taken place, he threw a lavish two-week party to celebrate. Kéroualle lived in luxury in a Whitehall suite, and was showered with more money than even Villiers had managed to extract.

INNOVATION AND EXPLORATION

King Charles II may be remembered for his hedonism, but he also supported a wide range of scientific and artistic endeavours that would help shape the modern world



LEFT: **A cross-section drawing showing the dome of the rebuilt St Paul's Cathedral**

RIGHT: **Its architect, Christopher Wren, also served as president of the Royal Society**

"WREN TOOK ON THE FULL REDESIGN OF ST PAUL'S CATHEDRAL, RESULTING IN TODAY'S SPECTACULAR LANDMARK"

Charles II has gone down in history as the 'Merry Monarch' due to his well-known pleasure-seeking proclivities, but that nickname belies his dedicated patronage of science and the arts during his reign. Yet it was a connection to his pursuit of pleasure that spurred him on to one of his most significant commissions.

In the mid-17th century, many minds were concerned with the 'longitude problem'. The challenge of finding a ship's precise longitude at sea had haunted sailors for centuries. While latitude – the measurement of distance north or south of the Equator – was known, when out of sight of land, ships' crews had no method of telling how far east or west they were, meaning terrible consequences for many vessels.

One of Charles II's mistresses, a Frenchwoman named Louise de Kéroualle (*see page 41*), was aware of the puzzle. She heard a rumour through the French court that an astronomer and fellow countryman, Sieur de St Pierre, had devised a means of determining longitude at sea by observing the moon's position in relation to the background stars. Intrigued, she pressed the king to investigate, leading Charles II to set up a Royal Commission to examine the new proposals.

This commission marked the start of the Royal Observatory at Greenwich – the oldest scientific institution in Great Britain, founded by the king in 1675 – and the appointment of John Flamsteed to the role of astronomical observator (later astronomer royal). A new age of scientific investigation had begun.

TITANS OF SCIENCE

In the 16th and 17th centuries, many thinkers began to question received knowledge, turning instead to observation and experimentation, and the Restoration was an era when many titans of science flourished.

Figures such as Robert Boyle, Robert Hooke and Christopher Wren all gained prominence through the Royal Society of London for Improving Natural Knowledge, which was formed on 28 November 1660 and granted a royal charter from Charles soon after. Founded on the principles of scientific experimentation, the early society was made up of leading philosophers, mathematicians and inventors, who elected as their motto *nullius in verba* ('take nobody's word for it').

Robert Hooke's book *Micrographia*, published by the Royal Society in 1665, was described by famed diarist Samuel Pepys as "the most ingenious book that ever I read in my life"

The society's members produced some of the era's most eminent work. Robert Hooke's *Micrographia* was published in 1665, a groundbreaking study of minute objects through a microscope (an invention dating from around a century earlier that had been improved by a Dutchman named Antonie van Leeuwenhoek in the early 1660s). Alongside detailed drawings of gnats, louses and fleas, Hooke took care to record the methods of his experiments, including the tactic of dousing his subjects in alcohol. One ant was so "troublesom to be drawn", noted Hooke, that he used brandy which "knock'd him down dead drunk, so that he became moveless". Hooke's study of objects that had been previously invisible to the naked eye was pivotal in advancing understanding of the natural world.

Polymath Christopher Wren, who served as the Royal Society's president between 1680 and 1682, was also deeply engaged in the challenge of determining longitude, and is another figure inextricable from innovation during the Restoration era. In 1663, Wren designed a 'weather-clock' that would record temperature, humidity, rainfall and barometric pressure. As well as his experiments in anatomy, astronomy and geometry, Wren is today best known for his work as an architect.

Wren was sought by Charles II for the construction of new harbour defences at Tangiers (between 1661 and 1684, the Moroccan port city was occupied by English forces). Wren refused, though was later tasked with the restoration of Old St Paul's Cathedral to a more classical style. Before work could get fully underway, the site was ravaged by the Great Fire of London in 1666. Wren took on the full redesign, resulting in the spectacular landmark that survives to the present day – though true to the society's principles, the project was not without some experimentation. During the build, Wren used new techniques with gunpowder to demolish walls that remained after the fire; however, Wren's chosen method wasn't easy to control, and several workers were killed. By 1669, he had been appointed King's Surveyor of Works, and supervised the building and maintenance of all the royal palaces.

GETTY IMAGES X9

The Royal Observatory was commissioned by Charles II in 1675, with John Flamsteed (*right*) placed in charge. The king was particularly keen to solve the 'longitude problem', which would help ships navigate at sea

BELOW RIGHT: **A 1926 illustration depicts Nell Gwyn backstage at London's Theatre Royal, which received the king's patronage**

BELOW LEFT: **A portrait of Charles II by Dutch artist Peter Lely, who was appointed the king's 'principal painter in ordinary' in 1662**

ART AND THE STAGE

As well as taking a keen interest in architecture and science, Charles II was also patron to a mass of artwork. His investment wasn't merely aesthetic; the king was savvy to the prestige and power that a collection of art could convey. One of Charles's first acts as king was to hunt down the many works that had belonged to his late father, a large number of which had been sold by the government during the Interregnum.

Over the course of his 25-year reign, Charles amassed a significant collection, with art playing a vital role in representing his legitimacy and authority as monarch. He often employed foreign painters, most notably the Dutchman Peter Lely, who often painted the king wearing his robes of the Sovereign of the Order of the Garter (*see example below left*). Charles also recognised the value of art in strengthening diplomatic ties – in 1660 he accepted a gift that included sculpture and furniture from the Netherlands (although the present did not ensure peace; by 1665, the Second Anglo-Dutch War had begun).

Art wasn't all business for the king. Charles's willingness to experiment also meant changes for the lives of women, too. During his years spent abroad in exile, the king had witnessed women performing in public theatres on the continent. Upon his restoration to the throne in 1660, the king overturned the rigid Puritan rules that had banned theatrical performances, and decreed that women should be allowed to act on the stage. Female actors such as the king's mistresses Moll Davis and Nell Gwyn (*see page 41*) were able to make a name for themselves, while other women, such as Aphra Behn, were able to achieve success as writers.

While undoubtedly offering one form of progress, the parts for women were often bawdy and specifically intended to titillate Restoration audiences; so-called 'breeches roles' saw women playing men. These roles offered the chance for theatregoers to see the shape of women's legs – and perhaps also give a glimpse into how social progress continued to be shaped by the king's own indulgent lifestyle.

WORDS: ELINOR EVANS

CASH, CATHOLICS AND CATASTROPHES

We explore the problems that Charles II had to overcome in order to ensure that the monarchy's return wasn't going to be a short-lived failure

Charles II doggedly pursued the men who had signed his father's death warrant – although 21 out of the original 59 signatories had already died by time of the Restoration

A LACK OF FUNDS

The Treaty of Dover resulted in France's Louis XIV (pictured here in 1701) agreeing to give Charles II a generous subsidy

As part of the agreements worked out at the time of the Restoration, there was one vital asset of the monarchy that parliament was inevitably going to control: the royal purse strings. Charles II depended on being granted funding for the business of his government, and although parliament voted to award him an annual income of around £1.2m, that figure (which was rarely ever paid in full) severely underestimated the true amount of funds that the king needed.

To make up the shortfall, a tax on the number of hearths (fireplaces) in people's households was introduced in 1662, which, in theory, taxed the rich more than the poor. But it proved a deeply unpopular move – as it meant houses could be inspected without warning – and failed to raise as much as had been hoped. Royal debts mounted as the 1660s went on, and Charles complaining of not having enough money only fuelled resentment.

In order to fund his military campaigns, especially the Second Anglo-Dutch War of 1665–67, Charles had to petition parliament time and time again for more money. He did gain an extra source of revenue in 1670 thanks the secret Treaty of Dover (as opposed to the public treaty signed at the same time), in which he secured a six-figure subsidy every year from Louis XIV. But while the payments were likely helpful, their true impact on royal finances has often been overstated.

A warship is sunk during the Second Anglo-Dutch War. The two-year conflict drained the royal coffers and ended in defeat for Charles II

DID YOU KNOW?

NAVAL NIGHTMARE

In June 1667, the Dutch launched a raid on a fleet of English ships anchored in the River Medway. Thirteen vessels were sunk and two were seized, including the flagship *Royal Charles*, which was displayed in the port of Hellevoetsluis as a trophy.

GETTY IMAGES X3, ALAMY X2

WHAT TO DO WITH THE REGICIDES

Rather than commit his early reign to revenge, Charles promised to pardon all those who committed crimes during the Civil Wars and Commonwealth periods as a demonstration of unifying his kingdom and to "bury all seeds of future discords". He delivered with the Act of Indemnity and Oblivion, passed in 1660. Excluded from the pardons, however, were the 59 men who had signed the death warrant of his father, Charles I – the regicides.

In the intervening years, 21 of the regicides had already died – although that did not prevent the bodies of Oliver Cromwell, his son-in-law Henry Ireton and president of the court John Bradshaw from being exhumed and posthumously decapitated.

Initially, 10 men were hanged, drawn and quartered, with three more following in 1662, while 19 were sentenced to life imprisonment. Others fled, either to various countries in Europe or even to New England in the Americas. That did not mean they were ever safe: an agent of the Crown caught up with and assassinated John Lisle, in hiding in Switzerland, in 1664.

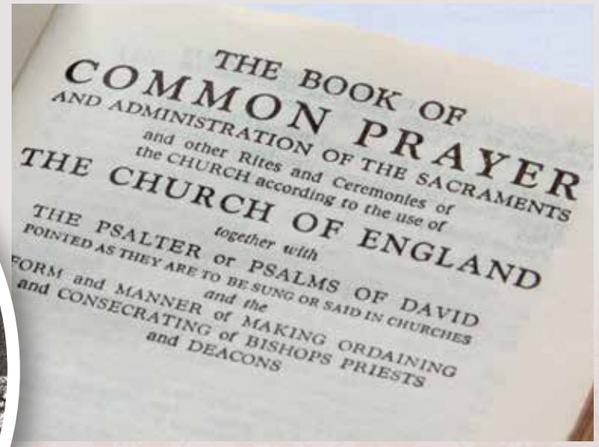
RELIGIOUS DIVISION

From the start of his reign, the most contentious issues Charles had to face were invariably about religion. The divide between him and parliament began before his reign, in fact, since he declared in the months leading up to the Restoration that, under his rule, there would be "a liberty to tender consciences", suggesting a certain freedom of religious worship without fear of persecution.

A pragmatist longing to be seen as a unifier, Charles certainly favoured toleration towards both Protestant nonconformists and Roman Catholics; members of parliament, however, wanted only to establish the Protestant settlement and enforce compliance to the Church of England. To that end, a series of acts, known as the Clarendon Code, imposed strict rules and punishments on those to whom Charles wished to show tolerance.

The Corporation Act of 1661 decreed that all municipal officials had to take Anglican communion; the 1662 Act of Uniformity made use of the *Book of Common Prayer* compulsory – resulting in thousands of Puritan-inclined ministers being forced out of the Church, in what was called the 'Great Ejection'; the Conventicle Act of 1664 clamped down on meetings of nonconformists; and the Five Mile Act of 1665 forbade nonconformist ministers from living or even visiting within five miles of a place where they had previously preached.

In 1672, Charles issued the Declaration of Indulgence to suspend the use of such penal laws, only for parliament to demand it be withdrawn. MPs and peers then passed the Test Act to limit public office to those who received communion in the Church of England. Religion would dictate Charles's relationship with parliament throughout his reign, and influence his foreign policymaking. As part of his alliance with France, he promised to announce his conversion to Roman Catholicism – although he made sure that bit of the treaty was secret and, in the end, he was received into the Catholic Church only on his deathbed.



Use of the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer* became compulsory in religious services as a result of the Act of Uniformity – one of four acts that made up the so-called Clarendon Code

PLAGUE AND FIRE

Just a few years into his reign, Charles II had to contend with not one but two back-to-back catastrophes that ravaged London and led many to claim God was punishing the country for the sins of its rulers and people.

The first was an outbreak of bubonic plague in 1665, which killed as many as 100,000 people (around 20 per cent of the city's population). While the disease spread at a terrifying rate, the king and his court abandoned London for Salisbury, and then Oxford, and he did not return until the following year.

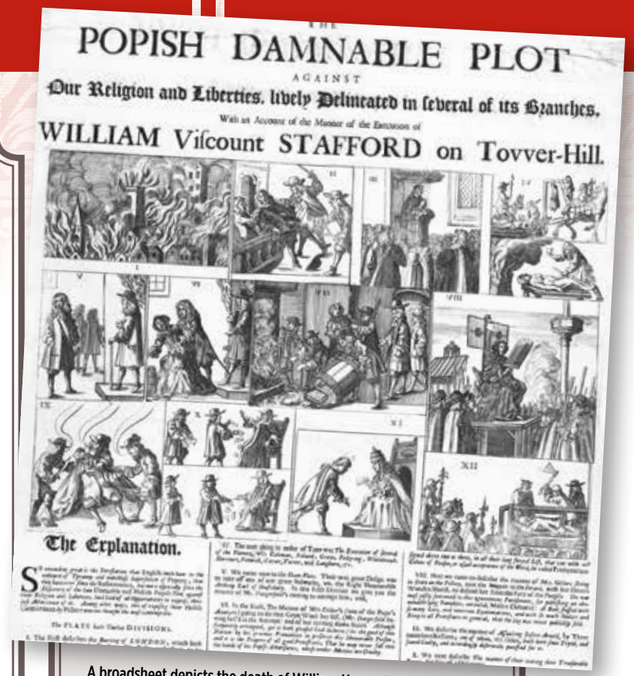
Not long afterwards, the second disaster struck: the Great Fire of London. In just under five days in September 1666, the blaze destroyed more than 13,000 buildings, as well as 87 churches and St Paul's Cathedral, leaving tens of thousands of people homeless.

While the fire blazed, Charles and his brother James were a constant presence as they supervised firefighting efforts and ordered buildings to be pulled down to form firebreaks; or dispatched food and rewarded workers with a purse of 100 guineas. It was a display of authority and compassion that was sorely needed. And, after the fire was finally out, the king enthusiastically supported the colossal task of rebuilding London.

MAIN: The Great Fire of London destroyed more than 13,000 homes, as well as major landmarks such as St Paul's Cathedral

BELOW: The blaze came soon after a devastating outbreak of plague that may have killed up to 20 per cent of London's population

GETTY IMAGES X3, ALAMY X3



A broadsheet depicts the death of William Howard – one of the 35 people wrongly convicted of treason due to the lies of Titus Oates

ASSASSINATION PLOTS (REAL AND FAKE)

Given the turmoil that had engulfed the country for so long, it could be expected that Charles would have faced countless plots and conspiracies against his reign. In fact, the threat that caused the biggest uproar was completely fictitious. In 1678, news emerged of the so-called Popish Plot, a plan to kill Charles and replace him with his brother James, and so return England to Catholicism.

At the head of the allegations was a former Protestant cleric, and pathological liar, called Titus Oates; and while Charles and his advisors remained highly sceptical of the legitimacy of the plot, anti-Catholic hysteria spread across the country. Out of the fear surrounding Oates's accusations (which even pointed a finger at Charles's queen), 35 innocent people, mainly Jesuits, were executed. Oates would eventually be discredited.

Five years later, in 1683, the Rye House Plot intended to assassinate both Charles and James in order to place the king's illegitimate (and Protestant) son, the Duke of Monmouth, on the throne. The idea was to ambush them on the road as they travelled from the horse races at Newmarket. By chance, however, a fire had forced Charles to leave the races earlier than expected so the attack never took place. Dozens of leading Protestant politicians were implicated, with several high-profile figures ultimately executed.

THE SUCCESSION

By the 1670s, Charles's queen Catherine of Braganza had suffered several miscarriages or stillbirths, and concerns grew as to whether she would bear the king any offspring. While Charles had around a dozen children, they were all from his mistresses, so it looked like his Catholic brother, James, Duke of York, was going to succeed the throne.

To offset fears, Charles agreed for James's Protestant daughter Mary (who had been born before her father's conversion to Catholicism) to marry the Protestant William of Orange, although that did not assuage the fiercest opponents to the idea of a Catholic monarch – chief among them the Earl of Shaftesbury.

In the ensuing Exclusion Crisis, parliament put forward three bills to try and exclude James from the royal line of succession. Each time, Charles refused to accept the bills and dissolved parliament to ensure they never became law. The tensions over the succession led to deep divisions in parliament and the formation of new parties: the pro-exclusion Whigs on one side and the anti-exclusion Tories on the other.

The Whigs tried – and failed – to prevent James, Duke of York from inheriting the throne following Charles II's death

PARLIAMENTARY DISPUTES

Before the Restoration, in the Declaration of Breda, Charles made it clear that he would honour the authority of England's parliament – in striking contrast to his father. The so-called Cavalier Parliament of the first two decades of his reign, however, gradually turned against the king over differences relating to religious toleration, the perceived threat of popery in England, and costly wars.

Charles's alliance with France concerned parliament, too: he sold Dunkirk to Louis XIV in 1662, and his sister Henrietta Anne was married to the French king's brother. In 1668, Charles formed the Triple Alliance with Sweden and the Netherlands, but then two years later signed a treaty with France in which he pledged English support in future conflicts with the Dutch.

It was a culmination of concerns – the growing anti-Catholicism after the Popish Plot, the Exclusion Crisis and the humiliating defeat in the Second Anglo-Dutch War – that made parliament increasingly hostile to Charles. In 1681, he dissolved the Oxford Parliament after a few days amidst yet another attempt to push through an exclusion bill, and he went the rest of his reign without another one: independent, secure and arguably at the height of his power.

WORDS: JONNY WILKES

Charles II depicted arriving in Oxford in March 1681. The king hoped that summoning parliament to meet in the royalist stronghold would hamper the Whigs' efforts to pass an exclusion bill – but he dissolved parliament after a week anyway

DR CLARE JACKSON ON THE RESTORATION'S LASTING LEGACY

Radical ideas that had been preached and published could not be unthought

DR CLARE JACKSON is a historian and senior tutor at Trinity Hall, University of Cambridge. Her books include *Charles II: The Star King* (Allen Lane, 2016) and the award-winning *Devil-Land: England Under Siege, 1588–1688* (Allen Lane, 2021). To hear Dr Jackson discuss the Restoration on the *HistoryExtra* podcast, scan the QR code shown here

The Restoration of King Charles II in 1660 was a monumental turning point in England's history. It followed 20 years of bloody civil wars and constitutional crisis during which a larger proportion of the British and Irish populations died than in both World War I and World War II combined. Between 1649 and 1660, England had also been a republic for the only time in its history.

Charles II's restoration as monarch therefore offers a fascinating case study in post-conflict resolution. Accompanied by official injunctions to forgive and forget, the 'Act of Free and General Pardon, Indemnity and Oblivion' (1660) conferred a general pardon on everyone except a small number of named individuals directly involved in King Charles I's execution in 1649.

But trying to put back the political clock and imagine away two decades in which worlds had been turned upside down was not straightforward. Radical ideas that had been preached and published could not be unthought, and the popular mood was febrile. As the rector of Bath Abbey, Joseph Glanvill, warned in 1667, a "people that rebelled once, and successfully, will be ready to do so often", just "as water that has been boiled, will boil again the sooner".

The restored government faced natural disasters, too, such as the Great Fire of London in 1666 – still a popular feature of the Key Stage 1 national curriculum today. Through Samuel Pepys's eyewitness accounts, primary schoolchildren encounter one of history's most brilliantly evocative diarists who buried his prized Parmesan cheese in his garden to save it from the flames. Significantly, the Fire fanned erroneous suspicions that foreign Catholics had set fire to London, just four years after Charles II's original hopes of offering "a liberty to tender consciences" had been frustrated by the Act of Uniformity (1662), which imposed harsh penalties on Protestant nonconformists. Indeed, the Restoration remained a persecuting society: the last era in English history when the state coercively sought to secure religious uniformity before the Toleration Act was passed in 1689.

The Restoration also saw the emergence of England's first political parties, as 'Tory' defenders of Charles II's monarchy defeated attempts by a 'Whig' opposition in the late 1670s to prevent his brother, James, from inheriting the throne. Succeeding as England's last Catholic monarch in 1685, James II (who was also James VII of Scotland) then embarked on a disastrous attempt to re-Catholicise the British Isles, which led to the armed intervention of his Dutch son-in-law and nephew, William of Orange, three years later.

Haunted by fears of a renewed descent into the bloodbath of civil war, England's political leaders achieved, instead, what generations of historians have acclaimed as the 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688–89, which secured the system of Protestant, parliamentary monarchy that still governs England today.

The Act of Uniformity (1662) resulted in thousands of Puritan ministers being forced out of their jobs

GETTY IMAGES X1, ALAMY X1, CAROLINE MARDON X1

GET HOOKED

If we've whetted your appetite for the Restoration era, why not explore the topic further with our pick of books, podcasts and TV programmes?

BOOKS

Devil-Land: England Under Siege, 1588–1688

By Dr Clare Jackson (Allen Lane, 2021)

Starting on the eve of the Spanish Armada and ending with the 'Glorious Revolution', Jackson's prize-winning work tells the story of a country riven by political faction, religious difference, financial ruin and royal collapse.

To Catch A King: Charles II's Great Escape

By Charles Spencer (William Collins, 2017)

Using extensive archive material, historian Charles Spencer explores the dramatic tale of Charles II's escape from England, in disguise, following his devastating defeat at the battle of Worcester in 1651.

Mistresses: Sex and Scandal at the Court of Charles II

By Dr Linda Porter (Picador, 2020)

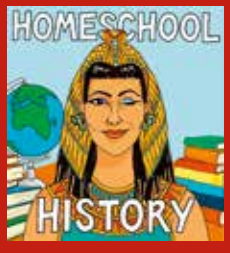
Drawing on a wide variety of original sources, Porter paints a vivid picture of the women who shared Charles II's bed, each of whom wielded influence on both the politics and cultural life of the country.

A Journal of the Plague Year

By Daniel Defoe (Penguin Classics, 2003; originally published 1722)

First published in 1722, *A Journal of the Plague Year* is an account of one man's experiences of the year 1665, when bubonic plague struck the city of London and killed tens of thousands of people.

ON THE BBC



BBC SOUNDS

▶ **Homeschool History: the Restoration**
bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m000hh0b
Join host Greg Jenner for a rambunctious romp through 17th-century Britain to learn all about Charles II and the restoration of the monarchy.

BBC SOUNDS

▶ **In Our Time: The Royal Society and British Science**
bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/b00pk7j0
Melvyn Bragg travels to Wadham College, Oxford (*pictured*), and looks at the origins of the oldest scientific society of them all: the Royal Society.

BBC SOUNDS

▶ **In Our Time: the Restoration**
bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/p00547bx
Melvyn Bragg and guests, including Dr Clare Jackson, discuss the impact of Charles II's return to the throne in 1660.

ONLINE AND AUDIO

▶ **For podcasts, features, quizzes, interviews and more on Charles II and the Restoration era, scan the QR code shown here, or visit *historyextra.com/charles-ii***

▶ **The Restoration: everything you wanted to know**
Dr Clare Jackson tackles listener questions on the re-establishment of the monarchy in 1660, after 11 years of Republican rule. Listen at *bit.ly/3gK5Iaa*

▶ **The manhunt for Charles I's killers**
Historical novelist Robert Harris discusses Charles II's hunt for the men who killed his father. Listen at *bit.ly/3gLHCfd*

▶ **The Great Fire of London: everything you wanted to know**
Rebecca Rideal responds to popular questions about the devastating blaze that swept through the capital in 1666. Listen at *bit.ly/3SBZ6bs*

WATCH

Charles II: The Power and the Passion

(now streaming on various platforms)

Rufus Sewell stars as Charles II in this BAFTA-winning, four-part tale of lust, love and loyalty, originally broadcast on BBC One in 2003.

The Stuarts & The Stuarts in Exile

(available on DVD)

These two series, presented by Dr Clare Jackson, examine the rise and fall of the house of Stuart, and the subsequent Jacobite rebellions.

BBC X3, GETTY IMAGES X3