**Foreign relations with Brittany**

In 1487, Charles VIII of France invaded the independent Duchy of Brittany which acted as a buffer for England and France so Henry was determined to keep its independence.

Henry sent a volunteer army to aid the Duke but he couldn’t prevent the defeat of the Breton army in July 1488. Soon after, the reigning duke died which left his 12 year old daughter, Anne, as Duchess.

Henry had to intervene because he felt a sense of obligation to the Bretons and believed that French control of Brittany could create a potential treat to England. In January 1489, he summoned a Parliament with the view to grant extraordinary revenue. They voted to raise £100,000 for raising an army.

The French wanted to strip Brittany of its independence by marrying off Duchess Anne. Who was the heir to the fiefdom of Brittany. It was a time when women could not rule so she had to be married. The fiefdom of Brittany (land on which feudal overlordship was exercised) had previously been ruled by Duke Francis II but he died, leaving only Anne.

Henry looked for allies: he found Ferdinand of Spain who helped on the condition that Henry promised not to make a separate peace with Brittany. This meant tying English strategy to please Spain but Henry had no choice but to give the required assurance in the Treaty of Medina del Campo in 1489.

He had to do this because of the other clauses of the treaty:

* Ferdinand and Isabella had agreed they wouldn’t allow Yorkist pretenders to take refuge.
* They had agreed to promote a marriage between Arthur and Catherine.

These would increase Henry’s prestige at home so were important to keep.

Henry seemed to feel proud of his achievement, as shown by him issuing a new coin: the golden sovereign. It showed him wearing an imperial crown rather than the traditional open crown of the Kings of England. It showed he was equal to any ruler of Christendom.

In February 1489, England and Brittany agreed to the Treaty of Redon. This entailed that Duchess Anne would pay for a small English army to defend Brittany from the threat against France.

Meanwhile, Henry tried to strengthen his position through an alliance with Maximillian (Holy Roman Emperor. He had married Mary of Burgundy in 1477 and through her had gained control of the Netherlands – England’s main trading partner). Maximillian had contracted a marriage-by-proxy with Anne so had no desire for Brittany to fall into French hands.

The English army went to France but Anne feared the futility of fighting against them and so reluctantly married Charles VIII of France on December 6th 1491. This was a problem for Henry because:

* The English army were marooned in Brittany.
* Maximillian lost interest.

Then, Perkin Warbeck looked for French backing for his claim to the English throne.

After the marriage of Anne to Charles VIII, the days of Breton independence were numbered. Henry’s only alternative was to be more involved as withdrawal would look like defeat.

In October 1492, Henry crossed the Channel with 26,000 men. He had waited until the end of campaigning season so he wouldn’t have to fight for long. Charles VIII had ambitions of his own in Italy and didn’t want to waste time, men and money on relief of Boulogne. Thus, Charles quickly wanted a peace settlement and the Treaty of Etaples put an end to the war between the two countries.

Treaty of Etaples in November 1492 meant that:

* Charles VIII agreed to withdraw support for Perkin Warbeck.
* Charles would pay a pension (like Edward IV received) for Henry in compensation for him having to recruit an army for invasion.

Overall, he:

Lost: Brittany and entered war.

Gained: Spanish alliance and increased his annual income.