

The key figures

The Tudor spy network

John Morton was someone whose political support was fluid, to say the least; originally a Lancastrian supporter, he changed sides to the Yorkists before allying himself with Henry after his victory at the Battle of Bosworth. While Morton's loyalty could be called into question, his skills and talent could not. Henry needed capable men and appointed him to the prestigious position of Archbishop of Canterbury. Morton was then effectively given carte blanche to set up a spy and surveillance network which would report directly to the king and the king alone.

Henry had spies throughout Europe and also at home and these agents of the king were instructed to keep a close eye on those who might pose a threat. This spy network was especially helpful to the first Tudor king in the case of Perkin Warbeck, as it meant that Henry knew of the pretender's whereabouts and who his supporters were, and so could act accordingly. Indeed, it was through this network that he learned that William Stanley - whose army had effectively won him the crown at Bosworth - was plotting with traitors and so he was executed and his vast estates went to the king. Henry's spy network played a key role in enabling him to stay on the throne.

He set up the Star Chamber - a court to prosecute the powerful who might have otherwise gotten away with their crimes



A coin produced during Henry's reign - the king had a well-known love of money

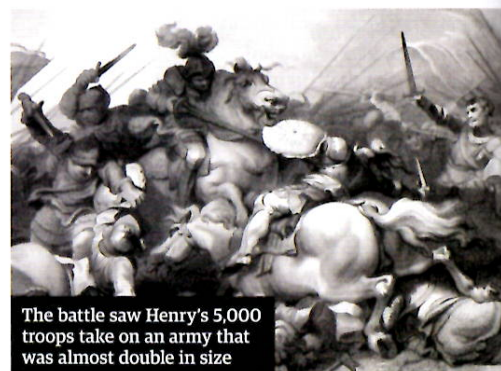
Lord Stanley brings the crown of Richard to Richmond, from Cassell's Illustrated History of England



Defining moment Invasion of England 1485

Henry and a small invasion force, made up mostly of foreign mercenaries and exiled Englishmen, land in Wales and try to muster support. Henry's army eventually numbers around 5,000, but Richard III soon learns of its presence and Henry is forced to fight at Bosworth Field on 22 August.

Richard's army gradually begins to grind down the opposition. However, when nobleman William Stanley instructs his forces to attack Richard, the tide of the battle turns. Henry is crowned king on the bloody battlefield and makes his way from Bosworth to the capital and his new throne.



The battle saw Henry's 5,000 troops take on an army that was almost double in size

Timeline

1457

- **Henry is born**
The future king is born in Pembroke Castle to Edmund Tudor and Margaret Beaufort. The only drops of royal blood in his veins are through his mother's side.
1457

- **Edward IV becomes king**
When the Yorkist Edward regains the throne, Henry flees to Brittany, where he will stay for the best part of 14 years.
1471



- **Princes in the Tower**
When Edward dies, Richard places his two sons in the Tower - they are never seen again. Richard is crowned king but his actions mean that many don't support him.
1483



- **Uniting two houses**
Henry marries Elizabeth of York on 18 January 1486. This action unites the two warring houses of York and Lancaster.
1486



- **Revolt**
A group of Yorkists crown Lambert Simnel Edward VI and I in England. Henry's army defeats them in battle in Stoke and so he keeps his crown.
1487