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Henry VII, 1485–1509

1 The consolidation of power

Adapted from Wallace MacCaffrey,
The Oxford Illustrated History of Tudor and Stuart Britain, 2000



Fig. 1 *Henry VII*

Henry Tudor, Earl of Richmond, became King Henry VII of England following his victory over Richard III's forces at the Battle of Bosworth on

22 August 1485. This victory terminated Plantagenet rule in England, and saw the establishment of a new dynasty, the Tudors. However, Henry VII's grasp of power was insecure; he had virtually no discernible claim to the throne and he had many enemies who were only too keen to see him experience the same fate as his immediate predecessor. It was therefore essential for him to consolidate his power by establishing his dynasty and ensuring that any rivals to the throne were dealt with firmly.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Henry VII's seizure of the throne and consolidation of power
- Henry's character and aims in government
- the establishment of the Tudor dynasty
- Henry's treatment of claimants and pretenders to the throne.

KEY QUESTION

As you read this chapter, consider the following Key Questions:

- How effective, J did the Tudors restore and develop the powers of the monarchy?
- How important were the roles of key individuals and groups and how were they affected by developments?

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What are the key points made in Extract 1? As you read this chapter, make notes that either confirm, or conflict with, Wallace MacCaffrey's interpretation. At the end of the chapter you will be asked to give your opinion on MacCaffrey's view.

Henry came to the throne was weak in two respects Firstly he was

To understand potential rival claims to the throne, study the family tree of the descendants of Edward III in the Introduction, page xv.

CROSS-REFERENCE

Richard's treatment of the princes in the Tower is covered in the Introduction, page 14.

Margaret Beaufort played a significant role in her son's reign. Her profile features in Chapter 2, page 10.

Thomas, Lord Stanley
(1435-1509)

Slanley, Henry VIII's stepfather, initially stood aside from the battle. His intervention on behalf of Henry proved crucial, and he was rewarded with the title Earl of Derby. Derby was crucial to the exercise of royal power in the northwest of England and north Wales during Henry's reign.

CROSS-REFERENCE - - - - -

Henry's attitudes to money are covered in Chapter 2, pages 15-17.

ACTIVITY

According to Extract 2, what kind of lessons in kingship did Henry learn from his experiences in exile?

CROSS-REFERENCE

Chapters 2 and 3 will discuss how Henry carried out his aim to consolidate power.

Beaufort (as illustrated by Figure 2, in the Introduction). More importantly, the line came from John of Gaunt's third wife: their son John Beaufort had been born before their marriage and was therefore seen as illegitimate. Henry became the Lancastrian claimant only because there was no one else who could fulfil the role. In reality, however, it was victory on the battlefield alone which had brought him to the throne.

Henry, who had lived abroad since he was 14, was proclaimed King of England on the battlefield by Lord Stanley. Following the battle, Henry made the short journey to Leicester, where the mortal remains of his enemy were interred, then to London where on 3 September 1485 Henry was met by the lord mayor of the city. The London public was wooed by pageantry and ceremony into cheering the new monarch. In truth, by this point Richard had become such an object of suspicion because of the disappearance of the princes in the Tower, along with other presumed crimes, that it mattered little who Henry was and how slender was his claim to the throne. Tillat he was not Richard was enough for the public to accept him.

Henry VII's character and aims

Henry VII had not been brought up to rule. In 1471, when Henry was 14, Edward IV regained power for the House of York in the Battle of Tewkesbury, in which many of Henry's relations, the Lancastrians, died or were executed. Henry fled to France, where he lived for most of the time as a fugitive in the Duchy of Brittany. To the historian Thomas Penn, Henry's ability to think like a fugitive proved to be useful political training for his future as a ruler.

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Henry was undoubtedly shrewd, calculating and long-headed; he seems never to have been overcome by passion. Yet if he had even a touch of the temper, this exercise of self-restraint must have cost him a great deal. Probably the hard training of a youth spent in wars, danger of execution and long exile tamed him and taught him to hide his feelings and veil his purposes. That he was eager for money is certain. He was not, however, a man who pursued it at all costs. He was not avaricious. He was not greedy. He was not a miser. He was not a hoarder. He was not a spendthrift. He was not a prodigal. He was not a gambler. He was not a risk-taker. He was not a dreamer. He was not a visionary. He was not a philosopher. He was not a scholar. He was not a writer. He was not a speaker. He was not a leader. He was not a follower. He was not a man of letters. He was not a man of science. He was not a man of art. He was not a man of religion. He was not a man of politics. He was not a man of business. He was not a man of law. He was not a man of medicine. He was not a man of agriculture. He was not a man of industry. He was not a man of commerce. He was not a man of war. He was not a man of peace. He was not a man of justice. He was not a man of mercy. He was not a man of kindness. He was not a man of gentleness. He was not a man of meekness. He was not a man of mildness. He was not a man of sweetness. He was not a man of goodness. He was not a man of beauty. He was not a man of grace. He was not a man of glory. He was not a man of honor. He was not a man of respect. He was not a man of esteem. He was not a man of reputation. He was not a man of fame. He was not a man of power. He was not a man of influence. He was not a man of authority. He was not a man of dominion. He was not a man of sovereignty. He was not a man of empire. He was not a man of kingdom. He was not a man of nation. He was not a man of people. He was not a man of world. He was not a man of universe. He was not a man of God. He was not a man of heaven. He was not a man of hell. He was not a man of earth. He was not a man of flesh. He was not a man of blood. He was not a man of bone. He was not a man of marrow. He was not a man of sinew. He was not a man of muscle. He was not a man of strength. He was not a man of courage. He was not a man of valor. He was not a man of bravery. He was not a man of heroism. He was not a man of gallantry. He was not a man of chivalry. He was not a man of knightliness. He was not a man of nobility. He was not a man of royalty. He was not a man of majesty. He was not a man of grandeur. He was not a man of splendor. He was not a man of magnificence. He was not a man of pomp. He was not a man of show. He was not a man of pretense. He was not a man of disguise. He was not a man of deception. He was not a man of fraud. He was not a man of trickery. He was not a man of guile. He was not a man of craft. He was not a man of cunning. He was not a man of slyness. He was not a man of sneakiness. He was not a man of stealth. He was not a man of secrecy. He was not a man of mystery. He was not a man of intrigue. He was not a man of conspiracy. He was not a man of rebellion. He was not a man of sedition. He was not a man of treason. He was not a man of betrayal. He was not a man of treachery. He was not a man of perfidy. He was not a man of duplicity. He was not a man of hypocrisy. He was not a man of dissimulation. He was not a man of dissimulation. He was not a man of dissimulation.

Adapted from Geoffrey Elton,
England Under the Tudors, 3rd edition, 1991

From 1485, Henry's main purpose was to ensure that he kept his throne, mindful as he was that four monarchs from the previous hundred years had met untimely ends themselves. Therefore, his primary aim at the start of his reign was to consolidate his power, which he did by a number of political

actions combined with military success.

ACTIVITY

Research

Find out more about Henry VII as a character and family man. Good places to start your research would be the short biography of Henry VII by Steven Gunn in

KEY PROFILE

Edward, Earl of Warwick (1475-99)

The son of Edward IV's brother, the Duke of Clarence, he was placed in the Tower of London in 1485. There he remained except for occasional public appearances. He was alleged to have plotted with Perkin Warbeck against Henry VII in 1499 and was beheaded for doing so.

Henry immediately consolidated his power in a number of ways:

- He dated his reign from 21 August 1485, the day before the Battle of Bosworth, thereby ensuring that anyone who had fought on the Yorkist side could be designated a traitor.

He publicly rewarded many of his key supporters, for example by conferring 111 knighthoods.

He arranged for supporters to detain Elizabeth of York, daughter of Edward IV, and the Earl of Warwick, Edward IV's nephew, each of whom could be seen as having a much greater claim to the throne than Henry himself. He made key appointments to his Council and household, for example making Sir Reginald Bray Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Sir William Stanley Chamberlain of the Household.

KEY PROFILE

Sir William Stanley (c1435-95)

Stanley, the brother of Thomas Stanley, the Earl of Derby, and Henry VII's step-uncle, was rewarded with the post of Lord Chamberlain following Bosworth. This not only gave him considerable political influence, it also enabled him to develop his landed estate in Cheshire and North Wales. It was therefore a shock when he was accused of treason.

He arranged his coronation to take place on 30 October before the meeting of his first Parliament on 7 November, thereby demonstrating that his right to the throne was based on hereditary right and not only because Gloucester had sanctioned it.

- Parliamentary Acts of Attainder against Yorkists who had fought at Bosworth ensured that their property was forfeit to the Crown, thereby increasing royal income. This was further enhanced when Parliament granted Henry the customs revenues of **tonnage and poundage** for life. Having had her detained the previous year, in January 1486 Henry married Elizabeth of York, the daughter of King Edward IV. By waiting until the other steps towards consolidation of power had been completed, Henry was able to ensure that his assumption of the Crown was not brought about by his wife's own claim to the throne. However, he was able to exploit in royal propaganda the union of the two houses of Lancaster and York. For example, the emblem of

the Tudor rose combined the red rose of Lancaster with the white rose of York

- A vital step in the securing of the dynasty took place in September 1489 with the birth of an heir to the throne, Prince Arthur.

Paīr discussion

KEY TERM

parliamentary sanction: an official confirmation or ratification of a law given by Parliament as the acclaimed body of the State; the laws of the time, King Henry VII's tenuous claims to the throne would normally have had to be fortified by a parliamentary sanction

Act of Attainder: this declared a landowner guilty of rebelling against a monarch; the attainor lost his title, lands and sometimes his head; his heirs were disinherited

tonnage and poundage:the right to raise revenue for the whole realm from imports and exports

CROSS-REFERENCE

Henry's Council, including the role of the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and the Lord Chamberlain, will be discussed in Chapter 2, pages 9-11.

To read more about the king's household, turn to Chapter 2, pages 11-13.

For the role of Parliament in Henry VII's reign, see Chapter 2, pages 13–14.



www.oxforddnb.com and *Winter King: the Dawn of Tudor England* by Thomas Penn. For a contemporary view you might use Polydore Vergil (see Chapter 4, page 39, for a Key Profile on Polydore Vergil).

In pairs, consider the main problems which Henry might have faced on coming to the throne and how he might have sought to deal with them. Compare your answers with the information in the next section of this chapter.

Fig. 2 *The Tudor Rose, combining the red rose of Lancaster and white rose of York*

KEY CHRONOLOGY

Henry VII's consolidation of power

- | | |
|------|--|
| 1485 | Henry seizes power at Battle of Bosworth (Aug); crowned king (Oct) |
| 1486 | Lovell rebellion fails |
| 1487 | Lambert Simnel

conspiracy; defeated at Battle of Stoke Field |
| 1489 | Prince Arthur born |
| 1495 | Warbeck lands in Kent but

is quickly defeated; arrives at the court of James IV of Scotland |
| 1496 | A small Scottish force crosses the border in support of Warbeck but soon returns |
| 1497 | Warbeck fails to exploit a Cornish rebellion and is eventually captured |
| 1499 | Warbeck executed |

CROSS-REFERENCE

To familiarise yourself with all the potential claimants to the throne, refer to the York family tree on page xv.

The murder of the two princes is

outlined in the Introduction, page xiv.

KEY PROFILE

Lambert Simnel

Simmel was a boy from Oxford who was tutored in courtly manners by a priest, Richard Symonds, with the

intention initially of impersonating Richard, Duke of York, the younger of the two princes in the Tower, though he soon switched to impersonating

the Earl of Warwick. Captured at the Battle of Stoke, Simnel was spared by

Establishing the Tudor dynasty

Henry's position was extremely insecure. Many Yorkists, not satisfied by his marriage to Elizabeth, still regarded him as a usurper. There were several potential Yorkist claimants to the throne, such as the earls of Warwick and Lincoln, Edward IV's nephews. Moreover, the situation was complicated by the appearance of pretenders to the throne who were allegedly either Edward V or his younger brother Richard, the two murdered 'princes in the Tower': However, what Henry had to fear most was the influence of Margaret of Burgundy, the sister of Edward IV and Richard III. Margaret was never reconciled to the Tudor takeover and, as the dowager duchess of Burgundy).

she had access to funds which enabled her to encourage the ambitions of Yorkist claimants.

Viscount Lovell and the Staffords, 1486

The first (rather minor) rising against Henry occurred at Easter, 1486. It

was led by Francis, Viscount Lovell – who had prospered as a key supporter of Richard III – and Humphrey Stafford. Lovell tried to raise a rebellion in Richard III's heartland of support in the North Riding of Yorkshire. Simultaneously, Stafford tried to raise forces against Henry, drawing upon another area of Yorkist support in the Midlands. Lovell managed to escape from the king's forces, but Humphrey Stafford was captured and executed, though his younger brother and accomplice, Thomas, was pardoned. What seems significant about this rising is how little enthusiasm there was at this stage for a Yorkist rising in their traditional heartlands. It was easily suppressed, but later rebellions, promoted by Margaret of Burgundy, would prove rather more problematic.

Lambert Simnel and the rebellion of the Earl of Lincoln

Following the Lovell rebellion, leading Yorkists realised that a change in strategy was needed if they were to be successful in their attempts to get rid of Henry VII. There were two key aspects to this. Firstly, they needed a figurehead who could claim to be a Yorkist prince and, secondly, they needed the financial support to generate a significant military threat to Henry. Their figurehead was Lambert Simnel. Simnel was being passed off as the Earl of Warwick, "who had been imprisoned by Henry, and was even crowned as King Edward in Ireland in May 1487. The conspiracy was put together by John de la Pole, the Earl of Lincoln, himself a potential

Yorkist claimant. In response to this hoax, Henry now had the real Earl of Warwick exhibited in London for all to see. Lincoln subsequently fled from Henry VII's court and had joined the failed plotter Lord Lovell at the court of Margaret of Burgundy in the Netherlands. They persuaded Margaret to support Simnel's bogus claim and to pay for a force of mercenaries to invade England.

Henry had plenty of notice that a rebellious conspiracy was being planned, and thus he had ample opportunity to plan his response. Given that Richard III's main power base was in the north of England, Henry took the gamble of

reinstating the rather untrustworthy Earl of Northumberland, who led a major portion of Richard III's army at the Battle of Bosworth, to power in the north. This helped to neutralise Richard's old power base and also ensured that the traditionally Yorkist Howard family had no intention of joining the conspiracy.

Henry VII, who gave him a job in the royal kitchens.

themselves wholeheartedly to the cause, presumably waiting to see who was likely to win.

Battle of Stoke Field, 1497

Henry gathered a group of advisors, which included the close relatives of former Yorkists who had been victims of Richard III, in the south and Midlands. The two armies met at East Stoke near Newark in Nottinghamshire. Henry himself was not confident. He could remember only too vividly how Richard had been double-crossed at Bosworth and feared that he himself might suffer the same fate. However, his army, led effectively by the Earl of

Oxford, held firm and the Earl of Lincoln was killed in the battle, having crucially been unable to add sufficient followers to the army of mercenaries with which he had landed in England.

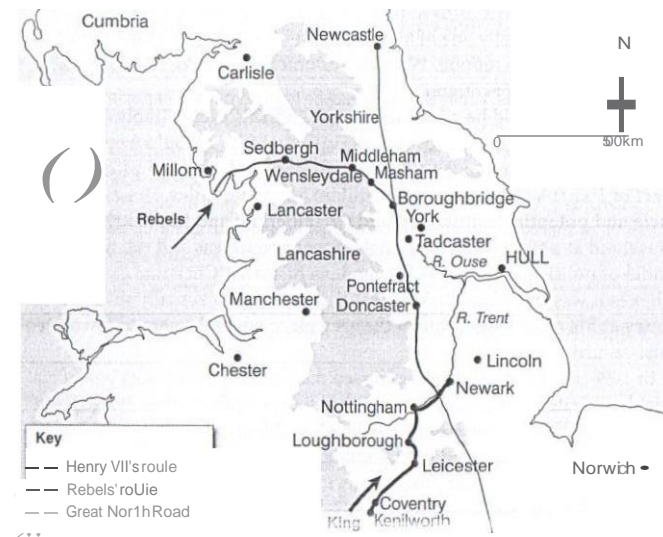


Fig. 3 *The Boule of Stoke Field*

Henry's victory at the Battle of Stoke Field was very significant. It was this battle rather than Bosworth which really brought an end to the Wars of the Roses, and Henry's position became safer though by no means completely secure. Henry had been faced with a crisis which he had overcome by a combination of his own shrewdness and hard work, the organisational skills and military leadership of his key supporters and the willingness of landowners in many parts of the country to support his cause. He was relatively mild in his treatment of many of those who had rebelled, in the process weakening the resolve of many Yorkists to oppose him. He also began

to develop the policy of using bonds of good behaviour to ensure well-behaved landowners who might otherwise face financial ruin.

as Northumberland was one of their descendants. He also reinforced coastal

1. *iiiiRiiii!U*

John de la Pole, Earl of
Lincoln (ci460-87)

Lincoln, a nephew of Edward I and Richard III, was the latter's designated successor. As such, I regarded as the Yorkist leader in the immediate aftermath of Bosworth.

mercenaries: hired soldiers who work simply for pay and have no specific commitment to the cause

for which they are fighting

A CLOSER LOOK

Bonds of good behaviour

When giving bonds to the

landowners, Henry recognised himself as owing the lump sum stated. The sum did not have to be paid back provided the condition (usually good behaviour) was observed. If the condition was broken, the sum had to be paid in penalty. You can read more about bonds in Chapter 2, page 15.

CROSS-REFERENCE

defences in East Anglia.
However, the rebels landed on

the northwest coast of England in Cumberland, and crossed the Pennines in order to drum up support in Richard III's old heartland in the North Riding of Yorkshire. In actual fact the Yorkist gentry of the North Riding were reluctant to commit

Using the information from the Introduction and this chapter, produce a report in the style of a newspaper article to explain why Henry VII's rebellion against Richard III succeeded while the Earl of Lincoln's similar rebellion against Henry VII failed.

Return to the Introduction to familiarise yourself with the War of the Roses.

CROSS-REFERENCE

Henry's weakness in international matters will be discussed in Chapter 3, pages 21-28.



Fig. 4 *There are no surviving contemporary images of Perkin Warbeck admitting to his imposture. This is a later interpretation of the dramatic climax*

CROSS-REFERENCE: : - =. .E

The *role* of Margaret of Burgundy is discussed in Chapter 3, pages 24–25.

For details of Henry's marriage negotiations with James IV of Scotland, look ahead to page 30.

For the implications of Henry's methods of government, see Chapter 2.

The Cornish Rebellion of 1497 is described on pages 27 and 40-41.

household government: medieval system of governance where the head of a household, invariably an adult male, had authority over the property, labour, and mobility of everyone living on his land

The Perkin Warbeck imposture

Perkin Warbeck, a cloth trader from Tournai in Flanders, was a persistent irritant to Henry VI! over a period of eight years, during which he claimed to be Richard, Duke of York. Had his activities been confined to England he might have been dismissed as a deluded pest. However, it was his ability to attract patronage from foreign rulers which transformed him from an irritant to a potentially serious threat. It also demonstrated how fragile Henry's position was considered to be by other rulers.

[In 1491 Warbeck began to impersonate Richard, Duke of York in Ireland. After a brief appearance at the court of Charles VIII of France, the following year, he was forced to flee from France, to the court of Margaret of Burgundy, where he was trained as a potential Yorkist prince and began to draw English courtiers into his conspiracies.]

Several years after the Battle of Stoke in 1487, Warbeck's first attempt to land in England in 1495 proved to be a fiasco. Henry had been informed of 'Warbeck's intentions by one of his royal agents, Sir Robert Clifford, who had infiltrated Warbeck's retinue. Warbeck was quickly defeated, and fled to the court of James IV of Scotland.

However, it would be a mistake to write off this event simply as a farce which had no chance of success. In actual fact, it could have proved very costly for Henry because the conspirators had an accomplice in the heart of Henry's government, Sir William Stanley. Stanley, Henry's step-uncle and potential traitor, was Lord Chamberlain and headed the royal household at a time when household government was still the normal model of political operation. The modern historian Christine Carpenter believes it was therefore striking that this conspiracy actually revealed Henry at his most vulnerable in the very place where he should have been most secure.

In 1496, a small Scottish force crossed the border on Warbeck's behalf but quickly retreated. Warbeck's interests were soon sacrificed when James gave in to Henry's offer of marriage to his daughter, Margaret. Having failed to successfully invade England from Scotland in 1496, Warbeck made a final attempt to seek the English throne by trying to exploit the uncertainties created by the Cornish Rebellion in 1497, but his forces were crushed and Warbeck eventually surrendered to the king. Henry, remarkably Jement at first, allowed Warbeck to stay at court, but confined him to the Tower after he tried to abscond. This time there was to be no mercy. Having allegedly tried to escape with the Earl of Warwick, he was accused of treason, and they were both tried and executed.

The Earl of Warwick

It was highly convenient for Henry that Warbeck's final attempts at conspiracy enabled him to get rid of the Earl of Warwick, potentially the most obvious Yorkist claimant to the throne. Warwick was in many respects an innocent victim of the political manoeuvrings of the period. Aged only ten at the time of the Battle of Bosworth, he spent most of his life in confinement before he met his fate in 1499; having been accused of plotting with Perkin Warbeck against Henry VII, he was beheaded.

ACTIVITY

Ttinking point

How successful was Henry VII in dealing with the challenges he faced from Perkin Warbeck and why?

Edmund de la Pole, Earl of Suffolk and Richard de la Pole, 'The White Rose'

The final piece of dynastic security concerned Edmund de la Pole, Earl of Suffolk, and Richard de la Pole, younger brothers of the Earl of Lincoln. Suffolk had fled to Flanders in 1498. He was persuaded to return after a short exile, but once again fled in 1501; this time seeking refuge at the court of the Emperor Maximilian. For as long as Margaret of Burgundy was politically opposed to Henry VII, Suffolk was safe. However, with the Treaty of Windsor in 1506, more friendly relations were restored. One feature of this improvement in relations was that Maximilian agreed to give up Suffolk, who was duly imprisoned in the Tower of London. Henry VII took no further action against him. However, Henry VIII had him executed for treason in 1513. This still left Richard de la Pole, nicknamed the 'White Rose', at large during his time in exile, but he was killed fighting for the French forces at the Battle of Pavia in 1525.

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Henry's attempts to override local powers by means of his own servants, his use of spies, his institution of a personal bodyguard as soon as he became king, all point to a misguided policy, which was what he knew best. It would be surprising if local instability and Henry's deep mistrust of the nobles that bred mistrust towards the king had not raised some questions about his suitability to rule, and it is a fact that Henry was troubled by plots and rebellions for much longer than he should have been after the Battle of Stoke.

Adapted from Christine Carpenter, *The Wars of the Roses: Politics and the Constitution in England, c1437-1509*, 1997

Summary

Having consolidated his power in the short term, Henry was also concerned with ensuring long-term dynastic stability: he wanted English men and women to believe that the Tudors had a legitimate claim to the throne. He aimed to ensure the success of his line through the order *by* keeping control over the nobility who had engaged in bitter power struggles, improve the Crown's financial position and stabilise the dynasty by securing the recognition of foreign powers.

It is clear that Henry enjoyed some success in consolidating his power and establishing his dynasty. How much of this was due to his own actions and qualities and how much was the consequence of the way in which the Yorkists had become demoralised even before the death of Richard III is open to debate. It should not be assumed that his victory at the Battle of Stoke left Henry in an unchallengeable position; Henry himself certainly did not think so. The immediate threat from the House of York might have been vanquished and many Yorkists had made their peace, albeit reluctantly in some cases, with the regime. The immediate threat from his own relative Sir William Stanley had not, however, been vanquished, as the crisis with Warbeck of 1497 made only too clear. There had certainly been royal leadership, though whether it was as 'unquestioned' as Wallace MacCaffrey and John Guy have suggested, is open to some doubt.

18 PRACTICE QUESTION

Using your understanding of the historical context, assess how convincing the arguments in Extracts 1, 2 and 3 are in relation to Henry VII's consolidation of power.

CROSS-REFERENCE

For detail on the Treaty of Wind:
1506, see page 26.

ACTIVITY ■ Y ;;; . || / - : !

As a class, create your own pict gallery of all the rebellions and impostors from Henry VII's reign

-CROSS-REFERENCE...

More about Henry's use of spies mentioned in Chapter 2, page 1'

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You should consider the ways in which each extract is both convincing and unconvincing by applying your own knowledge to support or challenge the points made by each author. Try to provide an overall conclusion in which you justify your decision as to which is the most convincing.

Using the information from this chapter, give your assessment on the different threats to Henry's throne during this period.

Copy and complete the table below, giving evidence for your answers.

	How great was the threat to Henry VII?			Why was Henry able to overcome the threat?
	Foreign support	Support within England	Quality of leadership	
Lord Lovell and the Staffords				
Lambert Simnel and the Earl of Lincoln				
Perkin Warbeck				
Sir William Stanley				

ACTIVITY

Evaluating historical extracts

Look back at Wallace MacCaffrey's interpretation given at the beginning of the chapter (page 1). In small groups, consider whether you find his interpretation convincing. You will need to find specific evidence to support or refute his views.

AS PRACTICE QUESTION

‘Prin The Il 'rs 1485 to 1499 was the re-ill of his own personal strengths.’ Explain why you agree or disagree with this view.

VII's personal strengths. You should weigh these against other reasons for the consolidation of power.

tJ Henry VII's government

Henry VII's government

(Henry's) success as a ruler was achieved by a highly unusual style of rule which bypassed the elites and relied heavily on the exercise of royal power through official channels, backed by the intervention of the monarch. To the governing classes it was baffling. Henry was a king who held them, his natural councillors and servants, at a distance. Nor did they understand a king who was obsessed with accumulating income, not for the traditional purposes of war or to reward his servants, but to ensure his freedom from dependence on their goodwill. It is not surprising they greeted his death with relief.

Adapted from Wallace MacCaffrey, *The Oxford Illustrated History of Tudor and Stuart Britain*, 2000



Evaluating historical extracts

What view of Henry VII's style of rule is given in Extract 1? Can you summarise this view in one sentence?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- royal government and the councils under Henry VII
- Henry's use of Parliament
- Henry's domestic policies, including justice and royal finance

KEY QUESTION

As you read this chapter, consider:

- In what ways and how effective was England governed during this period?
- How important was the role of individuals and groups?

KEY TERM

elites: select groups that are considered to be superior to the rest of a group or society

1 Councils and the court

The king ruled with a 'council' of advisers who supported him in making key decisions. Around 227 men are recorded as having attended the Council during his reign. In practice, however, Henry VII's actual working Council was a much smaller affair with around six or seven members.

The Council

The Council under Henry VII had three main functions:

- to advise the king
- to administer the realm on the king's behalf
- to make legal judgements.

A CLOSER LOOK

There were three main types of councillor:

- Members of the nobility, such as Lords Daubeney and Dynham, though the working Council only rarely included the great magnates of the realm.
- Churchmen such as John Morton and Richard Fox, who often had legal training and were excellent administrators.
- Laymen, either gentry or lawyers, who were skilled administrators, such as Sir Reginald Bray and Edmund Dudley. This dependence on lawyers did not begin with Henry VII; they had also played a significant role in the 'second reign' of Edward IV from 1471, so Henry was continuing a trend which had become increasingly evident.

KEY PROFILE

John Morton (d. 1500)

A highly able administrator and lawyer, Morton began his public career as a

passionate Lancastrian, but made his peace with the Yorkists to serve Edward IV, under whom he became the Bishop of Ely. However, he worked against Richard III and was promoted for his services by Henry to Archbishop of Canterbury in 1486. He also became a cardinal in 1493.

magnate: in this context a member of the higher ranks of the nobility

CROSS-REFERENCE

For more detail on the role of Richard Fox as a churchman during Henry's reign, see his Key Profile in Chapter page 36.

KEY TERM

KEY TERM

Duchy of Lancaster: a significant body of property, mostly but not exclusively situated in Lancashire, which personally belonged to the king but was formally the territory of the duke; Henry VII's habit was to grant positions of authority within the duchy to his most trusted servants.

Fig. 1 Sir Reginald Bray

Margaret Beaufort (1443–1509)

married Edmund Tudor in 1455 and gave birth to the future Henry VII when aged only 14. Her third husband was Thomas, Lord Stanley. She, in her turn, remained an important unofficial adviser to the king. Margaret was granted a large landed estate by Henry at Collyweston in Northamptonshire. She retained her political influence throughout her son's reign. However, her ability to intervene directly in political affairs was limited because she spent much of

her time keeping her own lavish household.

CROSS-REFERENCE

The House of Commons and House of Lords are discussed later in this

chapter.

KEY TERM

prerogative rights: describes those rights or powers which

the monarch could exercise without requiring the consent of Parliament

CROSS-REFERENCE

Bonds and recognizances are described later in this chapter, page 15.

KEY PROFILE

Sir Reginald Bray (d. 1503)

Bray had been a faithful servant of Henry Tudor for a long time. He had helped Henry to raise funds before the Battle of Bosworth. Under Henry's reign his influence was exercised through his role as Chancellor of the **Duchy of Lancaster**. He also led the Council Learned in Law. Thomas Penn described him as the 'king's chief executive. As such he was 'more powerful than most nobles:

During Henry VII's reign the Council had no established rules and procedures, though it was a permanent body with a core membership. Sometimes members also met separately, however, to deal with key administrative concerns when the king was not present, so it was possible for different members of the Council to meet in two places simultaneously. Those 'professional' councillors such as Bray and Dudley, who did not see themselves as courtiers, often met to deal with legal and administrative matters in London when other councillors were with the king elsewhere. The importance of the Council depended on its key members (particularly Bray) and its offshoot, the Council Learned.

It was not, however, essential for a man or woman to hold office as a councillor in order to advise the king. Indeed, the historian David Loades has argued that Henry's most influential adviser was someone who held no office, his formidable mother, Lady Margaret Beaufort.

A CLOSER LOOK

The Great Council

The Council should not be confused with the Great Council. The Great Council was a gathering of the **House of Lords**, meeting without the **House of Commons**. It had no clearly defined functions and was an occasional rather than a permanent body. It met only in the monarch's

throughout Henry VII's reign. It usually concerned itself with issues relating to war or rebellion and was a means of binding the nobility to key decisions relating to national security.

The Council Learned

The Council's main offshoot was the Council Learned (or Council Learned in Law). This body developed during the second half of the reign, at first under Bray's leadership. It often met in the office of the Duchy of Lancaster, where it formed what the modern historian John Guy describes as a 'specialist board'. Its function was to maintain the king's revenue and to exploit his **prerogative rights**. It was the Council Learned which made the system of bonds and recognizances work so

CROSS-REFERENCE

The financial control of Empson and Dudley in the final years of Henry VII's reign is covered on page 16.

increasingly to define the behaviour of the Council Learned. Following Bray's death in 1503, Empson was joined by Edmund Dudley. Together they formed a feared combination of able and conscientious bureaucrats who raised the extraction of money from the king's subjects to a fine art. Unsurprisingly, in the process they created enemies amongst some of the king's other key advisers, such as Bishop Fox and Sir Thomas Lovell, who removed them after Henry VII's death. The downfall of Empson and Dudley brought rejoicing on the streets. This is an indication of just how feared and unpopular their financial control became in the last years of Henry VII's reign.

KEY PROFILE

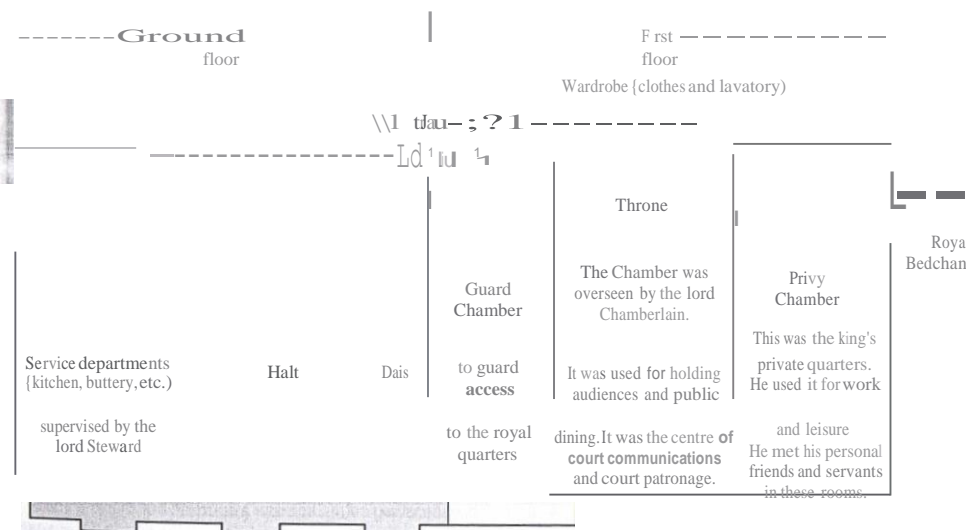
Sir Richard Empson [c1450-1510]

Empson was a member of the king's Council from 1494. He eventually chaired the Council Learned. Closely identified with the increasing ruthlessness of Henry VII's regime, Empson was arrested shortly after the death of the king, charged with treason and executed in the following year.

Edmund Oudley (c1462-1510)

Dudley came to prominence following the death of Bray. Steven Gunn argues that his role was to exploit financial opportunities, which gave him ample opportunity to make influential enemies. He therefore became vulnerable to counter-attack as soon as he lost the king's protection. Upon Henry Tudor's death he became accountable for what had been the king's demands.

Court and household



effectively and thus able to entrap many of the king's subjects. The workings of the Council Learned have often been seen as a rather 'shady' operation by historians. It was not a recognised court of law and those summoned before it had no chance to appeal. The modern historian Thomas Penn has argued that the Council

KEY TERM

bureaucrat: an official in a government department, in particular one perceived as being concerned with procedural correctness at the expense of people's needs



Fig. 2 Sir Richard Empson (left), Henry VII (centre) and Ed. Dudley (right)

Learned caused fear, frustration and anger, as it bypassed the normal legal system. It was, however, the expression of the

king's will and was thus as important for the maintenance of his authority as it was for the raising of finances.

Bray's associate in the Council Learned was Richard Empson, a fiercely ambitious lawyer and bureaucrat, whose ruthless approach seemed

Ag.3 *Henry VII's court after the creation of the Privy Chamber in 1495*

The Tudors, like their predecessors, relied heavily on the royal court. This was the centre of government. Since wealth was power, the royal court had to be magnificent and generous. In this, Henry VII was influenced by continental examples of royal courts, especially those in Burgundy and France. The royal court was always to be found wherever the king was at any given time. It was the focus of a personal monarchy and a place for royal ceremony, about which Henry VII was very enthusiastic. It was where the power of the monarch was

courtier: a person who attends a royal court as a companion or adviser to the monarch

KEY TERM

demonstrated to all the courtiers in attendance. It was through the court that rewards and status were distributed to those who were deserving or, more likely, well connected.

Courtiers enjoyed paid positions or the right to receive free food. Not only was the court where advancement could be attained, it was also where the support of the king or other influential persons could be obtained, which might be useful in the event of legal problems.

A CLOSER LOOK

Personal monarchy

Medieval monarchy was personal. In any personal monarchy the political power and influence of an individual depended more on the relationship that person had with the monarch than on any specific office which they might have held. Access to the king, therefore, was the main determinant of power and it was through the royal court that access was controlled. This remained the case whatever a particular monarch's style of kingship was.

There were different levels to the court:

- 1. The household proper was responsible for looking after the king, the courtiers, guests and other 'hangers-on' who were being entertained. These personal and catering requirements were supervised by the Lord Steward.
- 2. The politically important part of the system was the Chamber, presided over by the Lord Chamberlain. The Lord Chamberlain

position of Lord Chamberlain was both powerful and a matter of considerable trust. It was therefore a considerable blow to Henry VII

had been involved in a treasonable plot with the pretender Perkin Warbeck. Henry's response to this challenge was to remodel the Chamber by creating a new Privy (i.e. private) Chamber, to which the king could retreat, protected by his most intimate servants. This changed the character of the court, thus

support. Henry cut himself off from much of the king's traditional contacts at court.

Mini

A number of the king's councillors were also courtiers, men whose power rested as much on their physical and emotional proximity to the ruler as on their professional skills and administrative positions. Despite his legal training, Thomas Lovell began his career helping the king to dress and undress. In one sense, perhaps, every councillor was a courtier, but there does seem to have been a real distinction between Lovell and others such as Empson and the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, whose careers rested almost entirely on their legal skills, who showed little interest in the chivalrous culture of the court, and whose work may have tied them to London and Westminster while others were freer to travel with the king. There was no hard and fast division of roles.

Adapted from Steven J. Gunn, 'The courtiers of Henry VII' in *The Tudor Monarchy*, edited by John Guy, 1997

Activity

- 1. Working in groups, what conclusions can you draw from Extract 2 about courtiers and councillors during the reign of Henry VII?
- 2. Based on your historical knowledge and the information in this section, produce a diagram, with Henry VII at the top, indicating the relationships between king, court and council. Include the names of key figures in your diagram.

Parliament

Parliament, comprising the House of Commons and the House of Lords, had existed since the thirteenth century, but it only met occasionally and was not, therefore, central to the system of government. It had two main functions: to pass laws and to grant taxation to the Crown. It had a further subsidiary function as a means by which local issues and grievances could be passed on to the king's officials by local Members of Parliament (MPs).

A CLOSER LOOK

At this time the House of Lords, comprising the Lords Spiritual (bishops and abbots of major religious houses) and the Lords Temporal (the nobility), was the more important of the two houses. The House of Commons comprised two MPs for each county, two MPs for each borough, and representatives of the two universities (Oxford and Cambridge). The right to vote was largely restricted to men of property, 'forty shilling freeholders' in the counties, though the precise voting qualification varied in boroughs.

Table 1 Henry VII's parliaments

First parliament	Nov 1485 – Mar 1486
Second parliament	Nov 1487 – Dec 1487
Third parliament	Jan 1489 – Feb 1490
Fourth parliament	Oct 1491 – Mar 1492
Fifth parliament	Oct 1495 – Dec 1495
Sixth parliament	Jan 1497 – Mar 1497
Seventh parliament	Jan 1504 – Apr 1504

Only the king could call Parliament, and Henry demonstrated his right to rule by calling his first parliament early in his reign. Henry called a total of seven parliaments in his reign, though five of these met in the first ten years of the reign leaving only two to meet in the remaining fourteen years. Henry's early parliaments were largely concerned with issues of national security and the raising of revenue. For example, his first two parliaments passed numerous Acts of Attainder. These declared individuals guilty without having to go through the inconvenience of a trial if they were alive; if they were dead, their property would be forfeit to the Crown. His first parliament granted tonnage and poundage (customs revenues) for life; other parliaments granted extraordinary revenue, taxation granted to enable the king to wage war. The most usual form of extraordinary revenue was fifteenths and tenths, which were imposed upon the alleged value of a taxpayer's goods. Fractional taxes of fifteenths and tenths were made in 1487, 1489-90, 1491-92 and 1497, yielding £203,000. Henry's

CROSS-REFERENCE

The chivalric ideal was recorded in literature and stories, which are discussed in Chapter 6, pages 10-11.

Mini
Chamber: the private areas of the court; also a key department for the efficient collection of royal revenues

The lord Chamberlain: also known as the Chamberlain, an experienced nobleman and member of the king's council, and a personal friend of the king; he had administrative and political power,

an official capacity, and was also responsible for organising court

Privy Chamber: comprising the close personal servants of the monarch; its members had direct access to the monarch and therefore could

CROSS-REFERENCE

The attempt of Perkin Warbeck to claim the throne of England is outlined in Chapter 1, page 6.

There is a Key Profile of William Stanley in Chapter 1, page 3.

chivalrous: to be gallant, or courteous; the chivalrous culture of the early Tudor court was a code of conduct associated historically with the dutiful behaviour of medieval knights

extraordinary revenue: money raised by the king from additional sources as one-off payments when he faced an emergency or an unforeseeable expense of government; this could be made up of parliamentary grants, loans, clerical taxes, for example

fifteenths and tenths: standard form of taxation, calculated in the fourteenth century, paid by towns and boroughs to the Crown

ACTIVITY

Pair discussion

Based on the information in this chapter, discuss in pairs whether or not you think Henry's use of bonds and recognizances was 'morally dubious'. Share your thoughts with your partner.

CROSS-REFERENCE

Acts of Attainder are introduced in Chapter 1, page 3.

For the consolidation of power in the early stages of the reign, see Chapter 1, pages 3-7.

Domestic policy: justice and the maintenance of order

A prime responsibility for the king was the maintenance of law and order. At worst, problems with law and order could lead to uprisings or rebellions and Henry was always concerned that potential enemies might exploit trouble to challenge his authority. As had been traditional throughout earlier centuries, the king relied on well-placed members of the nobility to exercise power on his behalf, although there was a delicate balance to strike to ensure that the more influential of these nobles did not themselves become so powerful that they could challenge the king's own authority.

ACLOSERLOOK

The judicial system

Type of court	Area(s) of jurisdiction
Church courts	Church administration Offences committed by the clergy Proving of wills Issues relating to marriage 'Moral' offences
Local courts: Manor courts	Landholding Rights and responsibilities of landlords and tenants Use of common land Responsibilities for drainage and land issues
Borough courts	Medieval trading standards Specific judicial rights granted by royal charter
King's courts at county level	Assizes: held twice a year to deal with major criminal and civil cases and presided over by senior Westminster Judges Quarter sessions: held four times a year, presided over by JPs, to deal with less important criminal cases as well as civil and administrative affairs Special commissions: set up on an ad hoc basis to deal with minor issues such as rebellion
King's common law courts	King's Bench: had superior criminal jurisdiction Common Pleas: dealt with major civil cases Exchequer: dealt with issues relating to royal revenues
Chancery and other equity courts	Exercised jurisdiction on the basis of equity (fairness) rather than on a strict reading of the common law

penalty

Justices of the peace (JPs)

1

Domestic policy: improving royal finances

There were a number of sources of royal income:

- Crown lands
- profits from feudal dues and the exercise of the royal prerogative customs revenue
- pensions from other powers
- profits of justice
- extraordinary revenue.

For many years two things were assumed about Henry VII and finance: that he was a miserly king who begrudged throwing money away like many other

contemporary rulers, and that he had transformed the royal finances by leaving a vast amount of money to his son, Henry VIII. Each of these views can be traced to Francis Bacon's *History of the Reign of King Henry VII*, written in 1621. In recent years, however, there has been considerable research on Crown finances, often based on the interpretation of complex sources, such as Henry VII's own private accounts. As a consequence, a different picture of Henry's finances has emerged.

Activity 1

Henry VII's private accounts from 1497 include the following:

January 6	To Hugh Vaughan for two harpists, 13s 4d [67p]
January 7	To a little maiden that dances, f 12
	To a welsh man that makes rhymes, 6s 8d [33p]
February 17	To the Queen's fiddler in reward, £1 10s 8d [f 1.33]
	To the gardener at Sheen for grafts £2
May 31	Delivered to the Queens grace for jewels. f311 10s. [f3 150]

Activity 2

Evaluating primary sources

What is the value of Source 1 to a historian researching Henry VII's attitude towards finances?

increased during the reign of

Source 1

As for Empson and Dudley's tax mills, they did grind more than ever. so that it was a strange thing to see what golden showers poured down upon the king's treasury at once. And this is the more to be marvelled at, because the had then no occasions at all of wars or troubles. He had now but one son, and one daughter unmarried. He was wise; he was of a high mind; he did not need to make riches his glory; he did excel in so many things else. Besides, he thought to leave his son such a kingdom, and such a mass of treasure, as he might choose his greatness where he would. It is no marvel that the king's treasure of state, that he left at his death, most of it in secret places under his own key and keeping, at Richmond, amounted to the sum of near eighteen hundred thousand pounds sterling [£1.8 million], a huge mass of money even for those times.

Adapted from Francis Bacon
The History of the Reign of King Henry the Seventh, 1621

Source 2

The idea is that Henry VII amassed treasure worth £1,800,000, but this is pure myth. Although his revenue from all sources averaged £104,800 per annum in 1502-05, reaching £113,000 per annum by 1509, Henry had been forced to borrow money, raise 'loans' under his signet, and was granted a benevolence by a Great Council in 1491. After his Chamber system of finance got into gear, he purchased jewellery, plate, cloth of gold etc., and he spent large sums on building.

judgement on which extract is the more convincing.

Activity 3

Henry VII's financial policies

There is some debate as to whether Henry's greed was a feature throughout his reign or whether he became much greedier in the later stages of the reign, as was suggested by the contemporary chronicler Polydore Vergil. Certainly, there is evidence that contemporaries were relieved at his death. Lord Mountjoy wrote that such extreme greed was now dead and Sir Thomas More wrote a Latin poem for Henry VIII which contained criticism of both Henry VII and his advisers. Henry VIII was not slow to take the hint and to achieve cheap popularity by executing Empson and Dudley.

Crown lands

Henry VII was by far the country's largest landowner and the rental income from his property was a very important part of the Crown's ordinary revenue.

Income from Crown lands had significantly

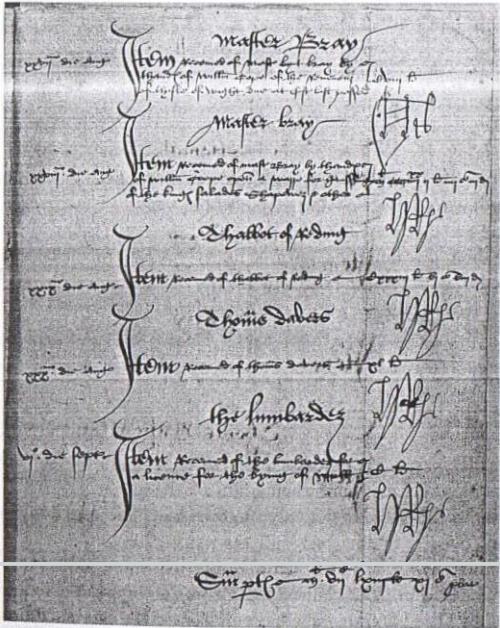
Edward IV.

At the beginning of Henry's reign income had dropped to about £12,000 per year. This was because the income from lands was collected and administered through the inefficient Court of Exchequer, which exemplifies Henry's inexperience in such financial matters. It was probably in 1492 that Henry decided to revert to Edward's system of administration through the king's Chamber (in other words through the royal household rather than through an administrative department), where policies were formulated and decisions were made. Finances improved markedly and the income from land had increased by the end of the reign to around £42,000 per year. This was partly achieved by effective treasurers of the Chamber, such as Sir Thomas Lovell and Sir John Heron.

Activity 4

The historiography of Henry VII

Even Christine Carpenter, who is very critical of many aspects of Henry's kingship, regards this growth of income from Crown lands as impressive.



John Guy, *Tudor England*, 19

Study Tip

Try to comment on the overall

interpretation of each extract and any subsidiary views. In applying your own contextual knowledge, you might find it helpful to think about comments on the amount collected, the efficiency of collection, the level of indebtedness and the distribution of spending. You should provide a

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wardship:an aspect of the feudal system which enabled the Crown to gain the profits from property held by a minor .

feudal aid:a right by which the Crown could impose a tax on their tenants for the knighting of the eldest son, the marriage of the eldest daughter or to ransom a lord; this was typical of the skilful

way in which Henry revived old forms of raising revenue, much to the irritation of landowners

Statute of Uses:a law passed to

prevent landed property from being turned into trusts which in modern terms were mechanisms

for avoiding paying tax on a deceased person's estate

CROSS-REFERENCE : Prerogative powers are explained earlier in this chapter, page 10.

CROSS-REFERENCE : Tonnage and poundage is defined in Chapter 1, page 3.

The Treaty of Etaples of 1492 is discussed in Chapter 3, page 24.

Henry's associations with the Church

and the clergy are covered in Chapter 4, page 36.

CROSS-REFERENCE : Extraordinary revenue is explained in this chapter, page 13.

The relationship between Henry VII and the nobility is discussed in this chapter, page 14.

Profits from feudal dues and the exercise of the royal prerogative

The pursuit of the king's feudal rights was tightened. There were increased profits from **wardship** and Parliament granted a **feudal aid** in 1504. A thirteenth-century text, *Prerogativa Regis*, was examined by court lawyers anxious to find precedents for the levying of fees deriving from the king's prerogative, and from feudal powers. Obligations payable on the death of a feudal tenant-in-chief became a useful additional source of revenue which landowners found particularly irritating, especially when the **Statute of Uses** of 1489 cut out a potential loophole for avoidance of the charge.

A CLOSER LOOK

Feudalism was the dominant social system in medieval Europe, in which the nobility held lands from the Crown in exchange for military service.

Other sources of revenue

- Customs revenue: tonnage and poundage had been granted for life by

Henry's first parliament. Over the course of the reign there was a small increase in the annual revenue from this source from £34,000 to £38,000.

- Pensions from other powers: at the Treaty of Etaples in 1492 the French agreed to pay Henry a pension of £5000 per annum.
- Profits of justice: this included fines and income from bonds. Bonds represented a potential rather than an actual asset. For example, between 1504 and 1507 a total of at least £200,000 was promised to the king, though not all was collected.
- Extraordinary revenue: Henry received over £400,000 from extraordinary taxation. However, raising all this revenue came at a price and helped to provoke rebellions in 1489 and 1497. Henry had to promise the Parliament, of 1504 not to raise any more money by this method. In 1489, when Parliament had granted Henry a subsidy of £75,000, the Convocation of Canterbury in addition offered £25,000 on behalf of the clergy. In total, Henry left plate and jewels worth around £300,000 and £10,000 in

cash. Although a substantial sum, this was a far cry from Wolsey's estimate of £1,800,000. Much energy was spent on improving Henry's revenues, but there was

a political price to be paid. The main victims of Henry's policies were the nation's landowners, precisely the people whose support Henry would need if his throne was threatened. Yet Henry treated them in a way which might have made them threaten the Crown. Whenever earlier medieval monarchs had adopted this strategy, the outcome for the Crown's authority had been disastrous. Henry's policies were therefore quite dangerous ones.

Summary

In 1874 John Richard Green put forward the argument that Edward IV and Henry VII together represented a 'new monarchy'. For a long time historians accepted that Henry was a 'new monarch' either by taking further Edward's innovations in government or by being himself the innovator. The latter view

Some recent views of Henry VII have revived notions of a new monarchy, though in rather different forms. Steven Gunn, for example, places Henry's reign in a century of governmental centralisation lasting from the reign of Edward IV to the accession of Elizabeth I. He regards the reign as having been • broadly beneficial to both the monarchy and most of the people and believes that Henry's policies, though sometimes harsh, were a necessary response to the problems which he inherited as king. Moreover, Gunn sees the monarch as being deeply involved at a personal level in the business of government. In this respect, Gunn's views differ from those of John Watts, for whom Henry largely stood aside from the business of government, leaving the work to bureaucrats such as Morton, Bray and Empson who pursued their own interests as much

as they pursued those of the king. Each of them arguably accords more substance to Henry than does Christine Carpenter; for Carpenter, Henry is a ruler of very modest ability who failed to understand the needs of the nation over which he had control.

AGI WIR

Evaluating historical extracts

Look back at Wallace MacCaffrey's interpretation in Extract 1, at the beginning of this chapter (page 9). In small groups, consider whether you find his interpretation convincing. How far does the evidence presented in this chapter support the view that Henry VII's government was 'baffling' to the nobility? You will need to find specific evidence to support or refute MacCaffrey's views.

Most historians agree that Henry VII's rule was distinctive, though they might differ about its nature. John Watts, in particular, has played down Henry's role in the day-to-day management of government. After Henry's death the downfall of some of Henry's key courtiers was sudden. However, as Margaret Condon has argued, it was Henry himself who created the fragility in government, which brought about a division within the ruling elites.

Li Mo: 'Henry VII's reforms in government were limited both in scope and in success.' Assess the validity of this view.

ACTIVITY

Thinking point

Why do you think there has been so much debate about Henry VII's monarchy?

It is important when answering questions such as this to address!

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sing dynasty that had set aside the weaknesses of medieval and personal monarchy. On the other hand, Stanley Chrimes, in his biography of Henry published in 1972, claimed that he was no innovator, a view condemned by David Starkey, who has emphasised the originality involved in the establishment of the Privy Chamber.

both parts of the quotation. In deciding whether or not reforms were limited in scope it is necessary to identify what the reforms were and how much change they brought about. In deciding whether or not they were successful it is important to establish what they were trying to achieve and the extent to which they achieved these aims.