

Charles II and the Restoration 1660-1685

Why did the Commonwealth fail?

- Although the Royalists were defeated, disarmed and in many cases financially ruined, they formed a large part of the population. **Very little had been done** since 1649, to **heal the wounds of the Civil War** and to win them over to the side of the new government.
- Most people found that they **paid more taxes** under the Commonwealth than under the King.
- The **army commanders were struggling for power**, and even their own men did not trust them. The army was still seen as the power behind Parliament.
- The ideals for which the war had been fought, a republic; - and ideal government - rule by Parliament - less taxation - Presbyterian religion in England: had not happened. People were disheartened. Many felt that they had fought a Civil War, suffered horribly and executed a King for nothing or in fact were now worse off.

The struggle for power in the army came to a head in 1659, with Monck and his Scottish based army coming out on top. Monck marched to London, forced Richard Cromwell to resign, reversed Pride's Purge, and flooded the Rump Parliament with Presbyterians. The Long Parliament then voted itself out of existence, so that a new election could take place, in which Royalists could participate.

In 1660, the new Parliament met (Convention Parliament) and they heard Charles II's **Declaration of Breda** in which he stated that he was opposed to persecution and to the over punishment of enemies, but was willing to take advice from Parliament. Parliament then voted to restore the Monarchy, and set about getting the King home. The Interregnum was at an end.

Charles II

Charles II returned in May 1660. The New Model Army was disbanded, with the exceptions of the Coldstream Guards, the Life-Guards and Royal Horse Guards. These disciplined and loyal troops would be needed to protect Charles.

The 'Cavalier' Parliament 1660-1678

Charles' chief minister was **Edward Hyde**, the Earl of Clarendon. Parliament met and over the next few years passed an series of Acts, which became known as the **Clarendon Code**, a somewhat misplaced name as Edward Hyde disagreed with many of the Acts that were passed. Clearly, within Parliament they were Royalists bent on revenge. Cromwell's body was dug up, hanged and then beheaded, with his head being stuck on a pole on London Bridge. Shortly afterwards, it was joined by the heads of the "regicides" mentioned on page two. The series of Acts that followed, gradually prevented all persons who were not members of the Church of England (Anglicans) from sharing in government, administration or education of the country. These non members were called **nonconformists**

1. **Act of Indemnity and Oblivion 1660**

This act provided protection for all Charles I's enemies except the "regicides" and selected "outrageous parliamentarians". The nine surviving men who had signed Charles I's death warrant were executed, along with 5 others who were deemed responsible. A small number of other parliamentarians were imprisoned.

2. **Corporation Act 1661** (Puritans could not be voted into Parliament)

- All town councilors who were nonconformists were dismissed.
- Nonconformists were also dismissed from Universities.
- All town councilors had to swear an oath of non-resistance to the King.
- All town councilors were to renounce the Covenant.
- All town councilors were to take Holy Communion according to the Anglican rites.

3. **Act of Uniformity 1662**

- Authorised a new Prayer Book, resulting in the sacking and eviction of over 1,000 Puritan ministers who refused to use the new prayer book.

4. **Conventicle Act 1664**

- Made illegal religious services punishable by imprisonment and transportation for a third offence.

5. **Five Mile Act 1665**

- Banned nonconformist ministers from preaching, teaching or coming within 5 miles of their former lodgings or town, unless they took an oath.

6. **Test Acts of 1673 and 1678**

- Prevented nonconformists being Members of Parliament or holding government posts.
- Required all holders of a public office, to take the Oath of Supremacy
- All holders of public office had to take Anglican Holy Communion
- Transubstantiation was condemned.

What the Clarendon Code did, was to create a large class of second-class citizens, the nonconformists. However, it did not destroy their way of life, which continued after the Code was forgotten. The actions of the Cavalier Parliament seemed to contradict the Declaration of Breda, which they had agreed with Charles II. This witch-hunt by the Royalists only serves to aggravate the situation and distracted from the most important issue, -the question of power between King and Parliament remained unsolved, left on the back burner.

The Cabal 1667-73

After Clarendon's fall from power, Charles decided that he didn't want a chief minister, but instead would have a committee of advisors. The name Cabal comes from the first letter in the name of its five members, **C**lifford, **A**rlington, **B**uckingham, **A**shley-Cooper and **L**auderdale. They were a real mixture of beliefs. They advised Charles, although he took responsibility for foreign policy.

Charles' Secret French Policy 1674-78

- Parliament was hostile to Catholic France. In 1677, Danby, Charles chief minister, arranged for his niece Mary (eldest daughter of James, his brother) to marry William of Orange, a Protestant.
- However, at the same time Charles was secretly negotiating with Louis XIV of France. Louis was paying Charles money (pension) to remain neutral in the war between France and the Dutch. Charles also promised Louis that in return he would change to Catholicism when the right time came. This was known as the Treaty of Dover.
- As a result of Charles' duplicity, he always vetoed (blocked) Parliament's attempts to go to war with France.

Popish Plot 1678

Ever since the Gunpowder Plot 1605, there has always been a lurking fear and suspicion of Catholics. This fear had increased during Charles II's reign because of the ever increasing power of Louis XIV of France, himself a Catholic. The Fire of London was even being blamed on Catholics. The Popish Plot was invented by a dubious character called **Titus Oates** and a friend Israel Tonge. Oates had been expelled from school, kicked out of various colleges, changed religion on at least two occasions, and was well known for masquerading as a doctor. He approached Sir Edmund Godfrey, a Justice of the Peace (J.P.) in Westminster, with details of a plot he had uncovered.

- The Catholic conspirators planned to assassinate Charles II
- They were going to set fire to London again,
- There would be a general massacring of Protestants,
- The Duke of York, James (Charles' Catholic brother) would be placed on the throne.

Oates was questioned by Charles II, who was convinced that Oates was lying. However, because of his negotiations and promises to Louis XIV in the Treaty of Dover, Charles had to tread carefully, because if news got out of his secret dealings with Louis, then Charles might well lose his throne. However, the rumours of the plot were already spreading. Strangely, shortly afterwards, Sir Edmund Godfrey disappeared, and his body found a few days later, impaled on his own sword in a ditch. Was it suicide or murder? Was he embarrassed about bringing a cock and ball story to the King's attention, or was this as many Catholics believed, further evidence of the Popish plot? There is even some suggestion that Oates was behind the murder in order to strengthen his claims to the plot and further discredit Catholics. Oates got what he had wanted - panic. To add to the hysteria, letters were found in possession of Edward Coleman who was James, Duke of York's secretary.

These letters showed that the Pope and Louis XIV had been in communication about a plot to overthrow Charles in favour of his brother James. Other anti-papist such as Ashley Cooper, the Earl of Shaftesbury, who had got wind of Charles' secret negotiations, jumped into action.

- London was engulfed in a wave of anti-Catholic madness.
- Chief Justice Scroggs, presided over the trials of those arrested.
- Among them were three innocent labourers condemned to death for the murder of Edmund Godfrey.
- In total 35 men died between 1678-1681, among them 7 Jesuit priests, the Archbishop of Armagh, and Edward Coleman, all innocent in reality but guilty according to the fabrications of Titus Oates.
- In all this, James felt that he should leave the country.

Charles remained calm, waiting for the storm to die down. Unfortunately, one more complication arose. Charles had asked Danby to write to Louis about his pension. Danby, a loyal cavalier, reluctantly did so but his letters were discovered. Parliament impeached him with a Bill of Attainder, accusing him of treason. His life was only saved when Charles dismissed the 'Cavalier Parliament'

Whigs and Tories

- The Popish Plot gradually became a battle of the succession to the throne.
- There was one major problem. Charles had 14 children, but unfortunately all of them were illegitimate, born to a series of mistresses. He had had no children with his wife Catherine of Braganza. His eldest son was James, Duke of Monmouth.
- As a result of these illegitimate children, it was likely that Charles brother, James, Duke of York, a Catholic would succeed to the throne. Many Protestants were not prepared to accept this.

What should happen?

- **Argument 1.** Was for Charles to do a Henry VIII and divorce Catherine, remarry and produce a son.
- **Argument 2.** Was that Charles' niece Mary (James' Daughter), a Protestant, should become Queen. Anne, the other daughter was also a possibility.
- **Argument 3.** Was that James, Duke of Monmouth should be made King. Shaftesbury was behind this plan. It was suggested that in fact Charles had been married to Lucy Walter, James' mother and that there was a marriage certificate hidden in a mysterious black box to back up this claim. However, Charles denied the marriage.

- An **Exclusion Bill** was placed before Parliament, which would have banned James, Duke of York becoming King.
- This bill had the effect of splitting Parliament into two groups. The Exclusionists (Whigs) wanted James banned, whereas the Abhorreners (Tories) detested the suggestion of the bill and were willing to accept James, Duke of York because he was the rightful heir.

Tories derives from the name given to Irish Catholics battling to be free of English rule. Comes from the Irish for bandit - **toraidhe**. They supported legitimacy, the royal prerogative and Anglican Church.

Whigs comes from the Whiggamores, Presbyterian rebels still fighting against the Royalist government in Scotland. They supported exclusion, Parliament, and nonconformity (Protestant)

- Charles II managed to get enough support to defeat the Bill of Exclusion.
- Shaftesbury would not let matters rest. In 1682, he planned an armed rebellion, known as the

Rye House Plot.

- They followed a Guy Fawkes type plan. It was planned to shoot both Charles and James as they were out riding down a narrow lane near Rye House, in Hertfordshire on their way back from the Newmarket races.
- Monmouth was involved in the plot, although he later denied wishing to kill his father.
- The plot failed because Charles and James travelled back to London earlier than expected, because of a fire in Newmarket. Also one of the conspirators betrayed the plot.
- Several Whig Lords were executed and both Shaftesbury and Monmouth escaped abroad.

Gradually the Popish Plot panic died down, and people began to see the foolishness. Duke of York, became more popular, and Titus Oates was flogged and imprisoned for calling James a traitor.

In 1685, Charles suffered a stroke. On his deathbed, he dismissed all the Anglican priests around him and called for a Catholic priest. The priest gave Charles his last rites - Catholic rites. Charles had kept his promise to Louis XIV, be it a few years late. His brother, James, succeeded him to the throne as James II.