

St Augustine's Centre, Halifax, UK
English for Life in the UK

Season 2 - Episode 10 - The English Civil War
January 2021

Mark Welcome to the podcast of **English for Life in the UK**. We've reached Episode 10 of Season 2, this week. We link some of our episodes to the Official Government Guide¹ for those wanting to become British citizens. It's called **Life in the UK**. Today, we're doing some more history from that Guide and, in particular, we're looking at the Stuart Kings and the Civil War, and it's Sheena who's going to start us off.

(Music)

Sheena Oh! Hello, Mark and John. Nice to see you.

John Hello, Sheena.

Sheena Hiya. How are you today, John?

John Very well, thank you. Snowed in, but well.

Sheena **You're snowed in**. Right, so you will have been doing lots of history research, I think.

John laughs

Sheena And what about you, Mark? Are you snowed in, as well?

Mark Yes, lots of snow here as well, Sheena, as most of the North of England, I think, is covered in snow at the moment, But yes, I'm fine, thank you.

Sheena Great, and we've all had some good fun, in the snow, I think. So, today, we are looking at the Stuarts. Last week in the podcast, we looked at the Tudors and we saw there were problems with the succession and with religion, with the Tudors, and I think maybe we will see the same themes coming up again, today.. Last week also, we finished with talking about James I [*the first*] of England, who was James VI [*the sixth*] of Scotland, who was the first Stuart King, maybe, best remembered for his Bible, the King James Bible. But I think we're going to start with John, who's going to tell us about Charles: the reign of Charles that [who] came after James I.

John So yeah, we're looking at today, erm, at the reign of Charles I [*the first*] who, Sheena has rightly pointed out, was the son of James I [*the first*] of England, and the events that led up [to] and the events throughout the English Civil War, or what has also been known as, the 'War of Three Kingdoms', as it did take in England, Scotland and Ireland. So there are a number of background issues, leading up to the Civil War, some of which we discussed last week.

So - during the reign of Elizabeth, and then James - we have the establishment and spread of the Protestant religion in England and Scotland and the wider Reformation in Europe. We have wider access to education; we have quite a lot of economic changes; we also see an increase in the spread of literacy and science. So there's a lot of changes going on socially, and economically but also, politically and

¹ Life in the UK: Official Study Guide - published by the UK Government, through The Stationery Office (TSO) and available in most public libraries

philosophically. People are beginning to question the old ways: new modes of living, there's printing and literacy, and all these things are combining, along with the religious changes in society, to really upset things that have been going on for, you know, for hundreds of years. So lots of new ideas coming to the fore².

(3 minutes: 42 seconds)

Now, unfortunately, eventually, for King Charles I: he was a man **who was quite wedded to the old ways** of doing things. Now, although he was a Protestant, he believed very firmly in an idea called "the divine right of Kings" which is a political concept, which meant that although there was, at various times during his reign, a Parliament, for long periods of his reign, he governed without any recourse to Parliament. So he governed as, if you like, an old-fashioned King, so what he said, went³. **He didn't really brook any disagreement** or any advice from the people who'd been elected to Parliament, at various times. These kind of ideas were, if you like, old-fashioned ideas, were reflected in his attitudes to religion. So even though he was a Protestant, he sought to take the Church of England back to some, if you like, more Catholic ideas; he wanted churches to go back to a more Catholic way of worshipping, so when you think about things like stained glass in churches and cathedrals, and a lot of the ceremony that is involved in the Catholic way of worship.

This eventually caused problems because we had a lot of people in his realm, at the time, who were quite averse to this: they were known as Puritans. So, as the name kind of suggests, they were looking for a purer, more austere⁴, more Protestant way of worshipping and Charles's interference in religious matters - also, the fact that he was married to a Catholic: Queen Henrietta - kind of upset a lot of these Puritans. Certainly, upset a lot of people in Scotland who were more determined to keep a more Protestant way of exercising their Christian faith. This **came to a head** in Scotland. He came up against the Scottish Protestant church where he were [was] trying to impose what was known as the Common Book of Prayer. He'd already imposed Bishops on the Scots, which they weren't very happy about, but they'd managed to live with. [He] Took it really a step too far and really started to push his own religious agenda on the Scottish people, so [if] anybody knows anything about the Scottish people, they don't take too kindly to being bossed around and told what to do: especially, not by the English.

So there were political ideas of state power coming up against each other, combined with these religious ideas. There was also the economic factor, because eventually the Scots raised an army and Charles, actually, ended up fighting, in 1640, fighting wars against Scotland, to try and impose his religious ideas.

(6:39)

So you've got political conflict, religious conflict and then, in order to raise the taxes, he had to go to Parliament and came into conflict with Parliament. As I say, Charles, was sitting as a monarch, for 11 years, from 1629 - 1640, without a Parliament. So he

²to the fore = coming forward, to the front, and by this, coming more to the favourable notice of people interested in such things

³ what he said, went = he was obeyed without questioning.

⁴ austere = plain, basic, having no comforts or decorations

recalled Parliament in order to get them to raise the taxes to pay for the war with Scotland. Now, as we've mentioned before, the rise of the group of people called the Puritans - a lot of the members of Parliament were Puritans, and a lot of them were very upset about Charles's religious behaviour, about his autocratic behaviour and, even though there were [was] a Scottish army all the way down to Newcastle⁵, they still refused to "okay"⁶ the tax for funding Charles's army. Many people traditionally call this series of events, the 'English Civil War'. You'll see some historians will refer to it as the "War of Three Kingdoms"; the three kingdoms being England, Scotland and Ireland.

At the same time as these events were occurring, there was a Catholic rebellion in Ireland, so: trouble right across the British Isles. Charles then goes into Parliament, actually, physically, goes in: he's making demands on Parliament. Erm ... several of the leading Puritans - who are leading the resistance - who've been organised. Charles attempts to impose his will on Parliament and have these 5 ringleaders⁷ arrested. And this is, effectively, the spark that ignites the beginning of the three Civil Wars that we're going to be discussing.

And interestingly, today - anybody who ever watches the opening ceremony, the State Opening of Parliament, the English, or British, monarch still never sets foot in the House of Commons. She sends down her messenger to bang on the door and the House of Commons, go to see the Queen, the monarch. So that's quite an interesting precedent - so not since that day in 1642, has an English Monarch actually set foot inside our Parliament [House of Commons]⁸, so that's the beginning of the Civil War.

These events led to conflict across the country and, by August 1642, the King raised the royal standard⁹ in Nottingham and that day marked the actual beginning of the Civil War. At this point, the country split into two opposing camps. So you had the people who supported the King, who were known as Cavaliers, and the people who supported the Parliament, who became known - due to their steel helmets - became known as the Roundheads. In English popular imagination we always think of the Cavaliers and the Roundheads - the Cavaliers with, kind of, long hair, and their dandy¹⁰ clothes and the Roundheads being quite austere and Puritan.

(9: 32)

Sheena Wow! So John, can you tell us what happened next?

⁵ Newcastle = Newcastle-upon-Tyne, a city in the north of England

⁶ okay = an informal way of saying "approved"

⁷ Ringleaders = leaders of a small group of followers, usually "trouble-makers", or rebels.

⁸ House of Commons = is one part of the Houses of Parliament; the other is the House of Lords, the titles of each "House" signifies the role of each; "Commons" refers to representatives of "commoners": that is, ordinary citizens. The Queen visits the House of Lords to attend the State Opening of Parliament.

⁹ Royal Standard = another word for a flag or banner identifying the army and signalling to others they are ready to fight

¹⁰ Dandy clothes = the Cavaliers are often portrayed as wealthy friends of royalty and are portrayed in paintings as self-indulgent, in expensive clothes and lace collars.

John So, the war broke out. Ok. So right across England, as we said, people were split into different camps; so, different parts of England, different people, different classes in society, took their sides in the war. One of the most important things that happened, a guy called Oliver Cromwell, who'd been one of the leading Parliamentarians, rose to lead the parliamentary army. As I say, Cromwell was a Puritan - one of the leading Puritans - had been a member of Parliament from East Anglia, in the south-east of England, and he established his reputation, really, during the Civil War, as a great military and political leader.

At the start of the Civil War, the armies were fighting in a very traditional sense, so they had lords, princes, one thing and another: they would raise armies from the people who lived on their land and they would go into battle. Cromwell's revolutionary idea was that he brought up ordinary men - it didn't matter really what social class they were from - if they were good soldiers, they were good leaders, they were good organisers, he gave them the chance to fight and one of the most important things, really, and that led to the Parliamentary victory: the people who were fighting for Cromwell - they weren't mercenaries¹¹, they weren't press-ganged¹² into fighting - they were fighting through a real belief that God was on their side, that they were fighting for their religious freedom and their political freedom. This new force became known as the "New Model Army", and they were instrumental in delivering victory, eventually, for the Parliamentary cause.

Sheena So what happened at the end of the war?

John Well, throughout the next few years, up to 1645, various battles were fought concluding with the Battle of Naseby - a very famous battle. Now, the King and his forces were defeated. Something that occurred in 1647, was known ... became known as the "Putney Debates". The victorious New Model Army came together as a very important political force. So this was the very first time in English history that the army had had so much political power. So, a lot of these people who fought in the army, with the onset of widespread printing, and the dissemination of pamphlets and literature, and a widespread literacy in the army, a lot of these people started to come out with some very radical ideas, some very interesting discussions, in these Putney debates, and wider, throughout the army, about what should happen now: we've defeated the King, Parliament is victorious, ideas about basically every man - unfortunately, it was only men, at the time, Sheena, but every man, or every household, in the country, to have a vote and to have regular Parliaments and to have a written constitution. So anybody who thinks about French history, American history: their revolutions - these radical political ideas from the mid-1600's weren't just influential in British history, they kind of **formed the seed** in many ways of, you know, the development of democracy and the revolutions in America and in France in centuries to come.

(12:50)

¹¹ mercenaries = soldiers who are paid to fight for a cause, rather than those who fight for a cause or leader they believe in, so who may more easily be persuaded to stop fighting

¹² press-ganged = forced by threat of state-backed punishment to enlist as a soldier or sailor, so not there willingly.

During this time, 1647, Charles escaped from prison, the second Civil War, as we've come to know it, reignited. He was again defeated and, in January 1649, he was condemned to death as a traitor and a tyrant, that shed the blood of his own people. Now, Charles was beheaded, in January 1649, a **monumental, historic event**, in British history - not just British, but world history - it was the first time you know, kings and monarchs had killed each other before, and been assassinated, before - but to actually be put on trial, effectively by the people, and to be executed in that sort of legal way, through due process, was absolutely revolutionary. So that really brought ...certainly brought Charles I's reign to an end. Erm ... As we've discussed, though, previously, our kings and queens have heirs - their children who were their successors - so we ended up with yet another episode of civil war, the third civil war which took place, largely in Ireland, because Charles's son - Charles II [the second] - had escaped and subsequently been proclaimed King of Ireland. Now this is where we talked, obviously, quite a lot about Oliver Cromwell. This campaign in Ireland, where he took the New Model Army to defeat the rump¹³ Royalist forces and the Irish Catholics. This has been in a series of events that really tarnished Cromwell's historic reputation - quite a lot of the conduct of the armies was very brutal, during the war in Ireland. Some historians have even likened it to modern day ethnic cleansing or genocide¹⁴, that we might have seen in the twentieth century. So, to this day, in Ireland, Cromwell is a very, very divisive figure. There is still a lot of historical controversy about these events.

(14: 58)

Following his (*that is, Cromwell's*) defeat at [by] the Irish and the Royalists, the Scots also accepted Charles II as King. So he raises an army in Scotland eventually, finally, defeated by Cromwell, at the Battle of Worcester. Charles escapes again to exile in Europe. This finally puts an end to the series of civil wars - the 'Wars of the Three Kingdoms' - but we don't have a king, for the first time in thousands and thousands of years, what do we do?

England is declared a Commonwealth - *ie.*¹⁵ a republic - so, this is, again, a revolutionary stage, in, not just British, but world, history. So England now declared a republic: there's no king. Various of the parliamentarians approach Cromwell and ask him if he would become King. Obviously, on a point of principle, he couldn't see this - he'd fought against a king and against his autocratic ideas, so what happened was, he was declared as Lord Protector. So, kind of King in all but name, really, and he presided over the new Commonwealth, the Republic, until his death in 1658. At which point, he was succeeded by his son, Richard Cromwell, who [was] unable, [un-]like his father, to control the army and the Parliament. [He] Really didn't have a very successful reign at all - he was only in power for two years, and eventually, we move on to a period what [that] is known as "The Restoration". So - there was clamour for

¹³ rump = those remaining after so many had been defeated or killed; the last small number that continued to try and fight

¹⁴ ethnic cleansing = the killing or removing of a particular ethnic or religious group; genocide = the killing of a large number of people from a particular group

¹⁵ *ie* = translates as : "that is (to say)"; the abbreviation is always used, but derives from two Latin words "*Id est*"

people to return to some form of normality and I think Mark's going to go on and talk about this: about the reintroduction of the Monarchy, under the kingship of Charles II.

Sheena That's great, John - thank you so much. And Mark, now - it's over to you, to tell us about the Restoration.

Mark Thank you very much, Sheena. So as John was saying, Charles II - Charles at this stage was in Europe - he was in what's called 'exile' in Europe - so, he was, in a way, hiding away in Europe, because there was no king in England at the time, but because Cromwell's son was really not a very good leader - [Thomas] Cromwell had been a very successful leader, but his son [Richard] really wasn't - in the end, it was Parliament who actually invited Charles II to come back and to become King again, to restore the monarchy. So Charles was invited back and there was an interesting period of British history, there, where Charles is king again. A couple of the things that happened, during his time, which are particularly of interest. One is there was something called the Great Plague, in which thousands of people died from this terrible illness that struck large parts of the population, particularly the poor.

Sheena Would you say that's a bit like Covid, now, Mark?

Mark Yes, in some ways, it is. It's an example of how there have been viruses that have appeared at various times, during history, and have actually had a **devastating** impact on the population - and that certainly was the case with the Plague. And today we're living through another one of those. Luckily, we are in better place with our knowledge of medicine and how to care for people, to cope with that, but back in those days, thousands and thousands of people died. And, the following year, was the 'Great Fire of London', so as if the plague wasn't enough, there was this enormous fire that went through the main ... the central part of the city of London, burnt down many of the famous churches and bridges, which then had to be rebuilt, afterwards.

(19:27)

So, all that happened during the period of Charles II. He dies and James II then takes over as King. Now, James is a Catholic - Charles had been a Protestant. James is a Catholic so now there were problems again around religion. Now, the daughter of Charles was called Mary, and she had married William of Orange, so he was effectively the King of the Netherlands - that part of Europe there - quite a powerful nation at the time. And he was a Protestant so Mary had married into a Protestant family. And many of the Protestants in England, particularly in the Parliament, who were very unhappy with the idea of James - a Catholic - taking over as King - decided to invite William to invade England. So William and Mary come over and they invade England but actually, there is no real fighting, because he'd been invited in, there wasn't any serious fighting, and James saw what was going to happen and he fled. He went off to France, which was a Catholic country, so he left and William became the new King, and that is known as the "Glorious Revolution". So this is a new line of Kings starting. It was a "Glorious Revolution" because there was very little violence. It happened in a relatively peaceful way. William also had ... came in with modern and new ideas that worked well with what had come out of the civil war.

(21: 34)

Now, that's not to say there weren't some difficulties and, in fact, James had support in both Ireland and Scotland and so there was then fighting, and William had to defeat James in both of those countries ... armies that were supporting James ... in both of those countries. And one of the most famous battles, of those in Ireland, was known as the Battle of the Boyne, in 1690, and that's where William defeated the Catholic army of James, in Ireland, and that is a battle that is still celebrated today, by, what is known as the "Orange Order". That is the organisation of Protestants in Northern Ireland. William who is crowned as the new King and many people recognise that period as the beginning of what we might call a constitutional monarchy.

Sheena And how does that compare with what we have today, Mark?

Mark Well - you can trace much of our current system back to that period, although it was clearly, very different. But it was the beginnings of what you could call a partnership between the monarchy and Parliament. So, the King was still very powerful in this period, but he recognised a legitimate, a fair role, for Parliament. And this began to get written down into law, and there was a Bill of Rights that set out some of the powers of both the King and of Parliament. It was a period when the idea of people having a fair trial comes in, where you have to have regular elections for Parliament.

Now, we have to say it's a very different Parliament that we have today. It was very much the rich landowners, the aristocracy - those people with titles, who were part of Parliament, not the common people at all. But it was the beginning of recognising that there was a role for Parliament and a role for the King, and so many ... in many ways, it was the beginning of what becomes known as a constitutional monarchy and I think that's where we're probably going to leave it, for today.

Sheena Right. That's great. What a **dramatic piece of history** we've discussed today! But also, a profoundly important piece of history, that I am sure will have repercussions for many years.

(Music) (24:35)

Mark **Language Support**

This is the part of the podcast where I choose a few words and phrases from the episode and explain them in a bit more detail. There were quite a few interesting phrases that we used today.

- Early on, when we were introducing ourselves, Sheena said she **was snowed in**. That really just means that there was so much snow around, that it was difficult to get out of the house, and probably would mean it would be difficult to go anywhere, in your car, because the roads were covered in snow.
- John talked about one of the Kings **being wedded to the old ways** - that means - stuck doing things the way they used to be done - to be wedded to - to be stuck to - to be continuing to do something, even when other things are changing.
- Then, John used a rather old-fashioned phrase but you do still hear it now - he said that the king "**didn't brook any disagreement**". To brook, as a verb, means "to put up with" - so the king wouldn't put up with anybody who disagreed with him.

- Later, John said that the arguments had " **the arguments came to a head**" - if something comes to a head, it means it gets to the point where people can't tolerate it anymore. Something else has got to happen.
- Later on, John talked about some of the ideas which were being debated after the civil war and he said they **formed the seed of democracy and revolution in places** like France and the USA, So to form the seed of something, means it began some of the ideas - so, it was the idea of seeds being planted in the ground and then growing into something much more significant. So those ideas were the seeds, and out of them, grew democracy and revolution in some other countries.

Finally, I wanted to highlight three adjectives that were used, all of which are used where you want to describe something that is very strong or a very extreme version of something.

So John talked about the **monumental** events that were taking place. So monumental means enormous, very large, in this case, very significant, events; so they were monumental.

Sheena talked about a **dramatic period of history** - if something is dramatic, it's something that happens suddenly or surprisingly - like a drama - that is, a play that might be put on, in a theatre - so lots of the events that were happening then, were like being in a drama - like being in a play - they were dramatic events.

And finally, I talked about the **devastating impact of the Plague**; if something is devastating then it is very damaging, very destructive.

So there are three very strong, less usual, adjectives that you might find useful to use in those extreme circumstances.

(Music) *(ends) 29 minutes.*

You can find the transcript - that's the written version of this episode - on our website:

www.staugustinescentrehalifax.org.uk

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We also have an email address - that's **englishforlifeintheUK@gmail.com**

And we would love to hear from you - your thoughts on our podcast and ideas for the future.

We also have a Twitter account : **@EsolSaint**
and there is additional material on that site.

I'll spell out all those addresses:

So, the website: w-w-w-.s-t-a-u-g-u-s-t-i-n-e-s-c-e-n-t-r-e-h-a-l-i-f-a-x.org.uk

So that's the website.

The email is: englishforlifeintheUK@gmail.com - And that's "English for" spelt: f-o-r

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end.