

**Sometimes history is more fantastic than an invented, imaginary story Henry VIII** (1491 –. 1547) He was the son of Henry VII. was King of England from 21 April 1509 until his death. When his father died the throne passed into the hands of the elder son Arthur, who soon died in battle. So Henry VIII was crowned King of England and had to marry his dead brother's wife, Catherine of Aragon. The couple had an only daughter, Mary. Henry wanted a son to keep the Tudor line going ...and he did not care about how many wives he had to marry. He asked the Pope to get the divorce from Catherine, but she was a Spanish, a supporter of the Church of Rome and the Pope did not approve. Henry broke with the Catholic Church and created his own church with himself as the head. After Catherine Henry married six women. The first was Anne Boleyn who gave him another daughter, Elizabeth. She was beheaded under the charge (accusation = accusa) of betrayal (tradimento) .Anna was followed by Anne Seymour who gave Henry a son, Edward, but soon after died. Henry divorced also by Anne of Cleves and make Catherine Howard executed (put to death = uccisa). Only his last wife survived him, Catherine Parr. The last three did not give Henry any heir. There is a sort of rhyme to remember Henry's wife. Divorced, beheaded, died, divorced, beheaded, survived.

**Mary**, first daughter of **Henry VIII** and **Catherine of Argon** remained Catholic.

During the reign of her brother, **Edward VI**, England became a Protestant country, but after his early death Mary took the power. She marched to London and removed the successor her brother had chosen, **Lady Jane Grey**, proclaiming herself the new Queen of England.

Mary wanted to restore the Catholic faith to the country and in 1554 she married the heir to the throne of Spain, **prince Philip**. Spain was an old enemy of England and the idea of an English Queen married to a Catholic Spanish prince caused social troubles. **Sir Thomas Wyatt** led a revolt which was repressed. Wyatt was sent to the block (executed = mandato al ceppo) together with Lady Jane Grey. Mary eliminated the Protestant Laws and made **Thomas Cranmer** , Archbishop of Canterbury, execute together with 270 Protestant priests and followers. For this reason she got the nickname of **Bloody Mary** . She was very unpopular. As her marriage was loveless and without children Philip of Spain returned home to become the King of Spain

Mary died in 1558 died without an heir: she was buried under a pile of stones. Later, the tomb of her sister Elizabeth – Elizabeth I – was built on top of her.

After Mary's death her sister **Elizabeth** came to the throne. She was **Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn's** daughter. Her father had sent her mother to the block when Elizabeth was just two and a half years and she was declared illegitimate. England was a an unsettled country. Protestant fought Catholics and there was very little money. With a group of trusted adviser the young queen began to unite her country: she sold land, stopped building new palaces and made peace with her country's enemies. The quality of life started improving with better housing, health and education. England became a strong trading nation with towns and ports. A curiosity: to raise money Queen Elizabeth I put a tax on beards. Men like **Sir Francis Drake** and **Walter Raleigh** sailed the world and returned with new discoveries and knowledge. Her reign was a peaceful one, but she fought a very important war with Spain, when Sir Francis Drake and his fleet of ships met and destroyed the **Spanish Armada** in 1588. Queen Elizabeth had many fine jewels and clothes. She loved hunting, the theatre and fireworks. She enjoyed meeting her people and often visited towns and the countryside in colourful royal processions. Elizabeth had many admirers but she never married and she died childless in 1603.

**Mary Stuart**, known as the Queen of Scots, was born in 1542. she was one of Henry VII's great granddaughters, and cousin to Queen Elizabeth I of England. Mary was a Catholic, but Scotland was a Protestant country and she found it hard to control both the Church and her nobles. After being widow (vedova) of the Dauphin of France, and looking for help she married the vain (vanitoso) and cruel Lord Darnley. The marriage was a disaster. Mary began to grow close (avvicinarsi) to her young secretary David Rizio, and jealous, Darnley, had the young man brutally murdered. Lord Darnley himself died in a mysterious explosion. Soon afterwards (dopo) and many people believed that Mary had planned (organizzato) his death. When the young Queen later married her new love, the Earl of Bothwell, her noblemen rebelled and imprisoned Mary in the island castle of Lochleven.

With the help of friends Mary managed (riuscì) to escape from her rooms in the castle disguised (travestita) as a maid and made her way to England. Queen Elizabeth was not pleased to see her young catholic rival and she imprisoned Mary in a series of remote castles. Mary's passion for intrigue continued and many plots were discovered by Elizabeth's agents. The English Queen was afraid to put a Catholic relative on trial (in processo), but once a plot (complotto) was revealed involving the murder of Elizabeth and an invasion from Spain, Mary's fate was sealed. (segnato).

Mary was executed at Fortherinhay Castle in 1587. She had been a captive in Britain for 19 years.

### **The Spanish Armada**

The Armada was a great fleet (flotta) which the King of Spain sent to attack England, in the days of Queen Elizabeth. There were more than a hundred ships, so large and high that they looked like towers on the sea; and they came sailing along arranged in the shape of a big half-moon ( mezza luna). The great English admiral, Sir Francis Drake, was playing at bowls when messengers came hurrying ( affrettandosi) to tell him that the Armada was approaching. He quietly finished his game, and then set sail to fight the Spaniards. His fleet was not so large as the Armada, and the ships were small, but they were light and fast. They met the Armada in the English Channel, and sailed round it, attacking any ship and speeding away (allontanandosi velocemente) before the clumsy (goffe) Spanish vessels could seize ( prenderle) them. In this way they did much harm to the enemy. Then, one night, when it was dark, and the Spanish vessels were lying quietly at anchor, Admiral Drake sent eight blazing (in fiamme) fire-ships into their midst (=mezzo) . In great fear, the Spaniards cut their anchor-ropes ( catene che tengono le ancore) , and sailed out to the open sea, and the English ships followed, firing upon them as they fled ( se ne andavano). For two days the English chased (diedero la caccia) the flying Spaniards. Then their powder (polvere da sparo) and shot (proiettili) failed, and a tempest arose; so they had to go back. The Armada sailed on, hoping to escape, but the wild tempest threw (gettò) many of the great vessels on the rocks and cliffs (scogliere) of the coast, and sank them to pieces. Only a few, broken and battered (rotte) , with starving (affamati) and exhausted men on board, ever reached Spain again. And so England was saved.