

## NOTE-MAKING

In this section, which describes England in 1485, it is recommended that you read the whole section, and then go back and make very brief notes (bullet-points) for key ideas and facts, using the headings to structure your notes. This section will give you the background that you need in order to understand the sections that follow (see page x for tips on different note-making strategies).

## 1 England in 1485

Before you begin to study the Tudors, you need to have a clear picture in your mind of what life was like in England in 1485. What did the countryside look like? How did people live and earn their living? What did they believe? Were ideas fixed or open to change? In politics, what had adults lived through which would affect their views about events under the new king, Henry VII?

## The countryside, the economy and English society

## What was England like in 1485?

So what was this country of England like in 1485? Its landscape would, in the hilly and mountainous areas, be familiar to the England of today. But in every other respect life was unrecognisable. The total population was about three million, 90 per cent of whom lived in very rural communities. Towns were small: a very large town, such as Norwich, had a population of 12,000 – more than enough to be considered a city. London was the largest by far, but this had only about 60,000 residents, living in very cramped and overcrowded conditions. Other urban settlements such as Salisbury had about 5,000 inhabitants. These larger urban settlements were not evenly distributed across the country, with the result that some very small settlements assumed considerable importance as centres for local government as well as for the sale of goods at markets and fairs. These occurred mostly in the more sparsely populated areas of the country. For example, there were no large towns in Sussex, and Lewes, with a population of under 1,000, was important as a commercial centre as well as for local government.

## Farming

Rural communities varied enormously across the country, depending largely on the terrain and the landscape. In parts of southern England and the Midlands open field **arable farming** with a variety of crops was common. Elsewhere, fens, marshes, forests and uplands all had their own identities. In the more hilly areas, for example, livestock farming (cattle, sheep and pigs) was common. Woodland and forests were important for timber as well as grazing animals. Fishing was important in the rivers, lakes and marshes. People, especially the poor, had to be resourceful in order to survive, and the geography and climate of England provided plenty of opportunities for specialisation.

The large open fields were common in many areas of arable farming. The land was divided into strips and given by the local landowner to tenants. Most villages also had common land – land where all villagers had the right to graze their animals. However, this description is over-simplified. Even in the late fifteenth century there was some concern about **enclosure**. Enclosure involved putting a fence around a field so that either one crop could be produced on a larger scale or the field could be used for livestock. This was especially popular in parts of the Midlands where some farmers were moving from arable to pasture farming because sheep farming was more profitable. Tenant farmers could lose their strips of land when landowners wanted to change farming methods. Sometimes the common land was enclosed, and this was likely to provoke fierce opposition, as villagers claimed customary rights of access to common land. Fencing off these areas deprived villagers of land for their animals, cutting timber, or for fishing and hunting. There was an early attempt in 1489 to deal with the perceived problem when an anti-enclosure law was passed, but it had little practical effect.

**Arable farming** – Labour-intensive farming which produced crops using basic tools including ploughs.

**Enclosure** – The fencing off of land from open fields with the ending of all common rights over it.

The amount of enclosed land did not increase much in Henry VII's reign. The area most affected was the Midlands, and even here less than 3 per cent was enclosed. Much more had been enclosed in the years of the Wars of the Roses when law and order was less effective. However, it was seen as an increasing grievance in Henry's reign, partly because it became confused with engrossing – that is, the joining together of several farms to make one unit, usually through a process of one farmer buying up the land of the others, as this usually led to families being evicted.

## Cloth industry

Linked with farming, England's major industry was cloth, accounting for nearly 80 per cent of England's exports. Although agriculture provided the main livelihood for people in Tudor England, the woollen cloth industry created the most wealth. Different types and sizes of cloths were exported mainly to the Netherlands, but also to Spain, the Holy Roman Empire (see page 28) and Venice. Most of this trade was controlled by the Merchant Adventurers, a powerful company based in London. It exported the cloth and imported foreign goods in return. The quality of wool produced by English sheep made both the raw material and cloth woven from it greatly in demand at home and abroad. Tudor governments from Henry VII onwards would all be keen to encourage this sector of the economy because its success brought in valuable income to the Crown from **customs duties** on exports. In the Middle Ages, raw wool was a primary export, but increasingly governments tried to discourage this as it meant that the **finishing** work to produce a piece of cloth was being done elsewhere, costing the Crown export income and hampering the development of a domestic finishing industry. All this, of course, brought the industry into conflict with arable farmers who objected to farmland being converted into sheep-runs, or enclosed.

Woollen cloth production was widely scattered, but the best quality cloth came from the west of England – from towns and villages along the Welsh borders and down into Gloucestershire, Wiltshire and Hampshire. Production was specialised but not intensive. Most cloth was made by hand, either in a room in a peasant cottage or in a small workshop within the cloth merchant's house. Few people worked full-time in the woollen industry, although there were 'journeymen' who travelled to make a living, hiring out their skills.

## English society

It was expected that everyone recognised their place in society – from the King, downwards through the ranks of clergy, nobles, gentry, merchants, commoners, servants and paupers. It was generally accepted that 'The Great Chain of Being' had been ordered by God with a strict hierarchy of ranks. Social status dominated society. This put the Church in a powerful position to control the people by preaching obedience to the will of God and it made the Church an indispensable ally of the government.

The nobles were few in number – just over 50 – who owned large areas of land which provided power and influence in the localities. Strict inheritance rules of **primogeniture** meant that estates were passed down intact to the eldest son or the nearest male relative. The King relied on the support of these noble families to maintain law and order in their areas of the country, otherwise rebellions could easily occur. A successful monarch, therefore, ruled co-operatively with the nobles and it was one of his duties to make sure that was possible. Some monarchs in the fifteenth century had tried to 'buy' support by granting many new titles. Henry VII did the opposite; he created only three Earls in his reign, thus making the honour very special and ensuring that those who wanted the

**Customs duties** – Money paid on goods entering or leaving the country. Money came from tunnage (taxes on exports) and poundage (taxes on imports).

**Finishing** – The final stages of woollen production when spun yarn is converted into cloth by weaving, which includes fulling (cleansing the wool to eliminate oil, dirt and other impurities) and dyeing it.

**Primogeniture** – The eldest son or nearest male relative inherited everything.



**Divine Right of Kings** – The belief that monarchs were ruling on behalf of God. They were therefore answerable to God, and the monarch's subjects were expected to obey the monarch, otherwise they were disobeying God.

title were loyal and supportive of him. Important nobles maintained extensive households, consisting of all family members, friends and servants. For example, Richard, Duke of Northumberland, had 187 household members in 1503–04.

Below the nobles were the gentry, the merchants, the commoners (ranging from those who farmed on small areas of land down to those who were landless and worked for others) and the beggars. In the Tudor period the commoners often suffered badly because of changes in agriculture, such as enclosure, and because of the rise in prices that was a major feature of the period (see Chapter 6, pages 170–71).

At the pinnacle of the social hierarchy was the monarch. He ruled under God, though the later theory of **Divine Right of Kings** had not been fully set out. These theoretical powers did not mean that the monarch could be a dictator. He needed the support of leading nobles to provide law and order and an army in times of war. Indeed, he was expected to consult with his advisers who would largely be drawn from the nobility. Henry VII was fortunate to have loyal noble advisers whom he could trust. Henry also needed to summon Parliament from time to time to get support and to pass laws.

The country of England was more unified than countries in Europe such as France. In England there was a common law; there was an accepted language (except in the peripheries such as Cornwall). Wales was regarded as a part of England, in spite of the Welsh language that predominated in some parts. In theory the monarch controlled the whole country, but in practice some areas were semi-independent, either under the control of leading nobles or ruled by the Church from Durham or York.

## The Catholic Church

**Why was the Catholic Church so powerful? And why had it been criticised?**

In this section you will examine how powerful the Church was in late fifteenth century society – and why it was being criticised. However, it is important not to view the situation through the eyes of a twenty-first century student living in a society where religion is often not so central. Try to understand how it was five hundred years ago.

The Catholic Church was immensely powerful in the late fifteenth century. It owned about one-third of the land and had considerable wealth. Mirroring the structure of **secular** society, the Church had a hierarchy from Archbishops to Bishops, all the way down the chain to poor parish priests who earned less than £15 a year. There were about 35,000 ordained clergy and about 10,000 monks and nuns. The Church had its own legal system, and clergy were tried in Church courts. In theory, the Pope in Rome decided on all matters both religious and political. There was a constant flow of paperwork between England and Italy, dealing with legal cases and administrative issues. As such, England was a fully integrated part of the international Catholic Church. However, often the Pope's primary political focus was on the Papal States which were frequently in conflict with neighbouring states.

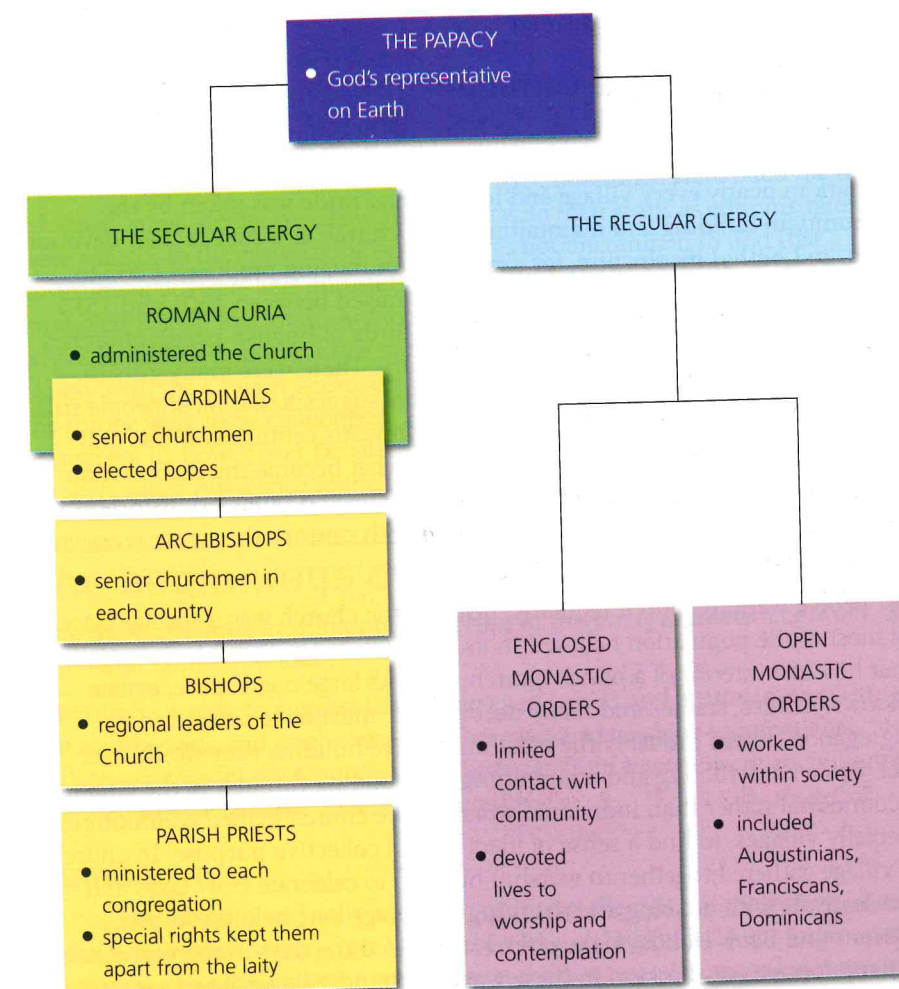
The power of the Catholic Church stemmed from people's beliefs and fears. Life was often short, disease was common and medicines were few. People needed certainties and the Church provided for this. Many church walls had contrasting and lurid pictures of heaven and hell. Others, such as the wall paintings at Pickering in Yorkshire, showed scenes of the life of Christ, with

**Secular** – The opposite of 'sacred', i.e. worldly things, not spiritual.

special emphasis on his suffering and crucifixion. Illiterate peasants could easily understand where they wanted to go after death, but their religious beliefs were of necessity rather simple and sometimes close to what we would term 'folk religion'. Their lives were dominated by the seasons of the year and the contrasts of the weather. Priests tried hard, by using paintings and statues, to explain Christian beliefs, but it is hardly surprising if beliefs focused more on the god of nature and the fear of going to hell than on the subtleties of Christian belief centring on the death of Jesus on a cross 1,500 years earlier.

Therefore at the beginning of the sixteenth century, English people, with few exceptions, followed the teachings (or doctrines) of the Catholic Church. This meant that they accepted the following:

- The Pope, in Rome, was head of the Church and had supreme authority over all spiritual matters. The Papacy was also recognised as a Court of Law. The *Papal Curia* under the Pope also acted as a Court of Appeal.
- There was an elaborately organised hierarchy of churchmen, many of whom worked in the community tending to the spiritual needs of ordinary people. These included clergy attached to parishes and also friars and nuns. Some, including monks, closed themselves off to concentrate on prayer. Even those were often active in the local community and owned large estates, which they managed.



▲ Figure 1 The structure of the Catholic Church in England at the beginning of the sixteenth century.



- The clergy held a special and powerful place within the community. Only formally ordained appointed priests could conduct services in church. Access to the Bible, written in Latin, was limited to priests and others who could read the language. Priests interpreted what it said for the benefit of their parishioners. The unique role of the priesthood was confirmed by their appearance at church services (they wore particular clothes – vestments – to conduct services) and their status set them apart (they were not allowed to marry or have sex).
- People should submit to the authority of the Church in their lives. According to the teachings of the Catholic Church there were seven essential sacraments which the Church performed. These were:
  - the eucharist (the commemoration of the Last Supper of Jesus with his disciples)
  - baptism
  - holy orders (the granting of the status of priest to someone who had completed their religious training)
  - confirmation (the recipient confirming the acceptance of God's spirit in their hearts)
  - marriage
  - confession, leading to penance (doing tasks to show repentance)
  - unction (otherwise known as the anointing of the sick, part of the Last Rites).
- For their souls to be saved, people should attend church regularly, believe in the sacraments and show their faith in God.

### Churches within the community

The church was also part of the social fabric of the community. It was the most common building to be found across the country, an easily identifiable landmark in nearly every village and town. Great pride was taken by the community in building and maintaining their church as a sign of their devotion to God. In Louth, Lincolnshire, for example, fundraising produced £305 to build the parish church and more money was raised between 1501 and 1515 to construct a magnificent spire. Nearly two-thirds of English parish churches were built or rebuilt during the fifteenth century. There were many gifts to churches of vestments, plate and jewels. All this suggests that most people still supported the Church in the same way as in previous centuries. It was only when Henry VIII wanted a divorce, leading to what became the Reformation, that the focus was on criticisms of the Church. This has often led historians to paint a picture of church life in the early sixteenth century that was excessively focused on the failings of some church officials.

Most people went to church regularly, because the church was a special place and most of the population believed in its basic teaching. Think for a moment about how the interior of a parish church, with its large open space, ornate windows, images, statues and many decorations, must have seemed to its congregation. It was probably the most impressive building they would ever enter. From constructing and maintaining the building through to the emphasis on communal rather than individual worship, the church helped communities, especially villages, to find a sense of identity and collective purpose. In church, the village gathered together to worship but also to celebrate Holy Days and other festivals with dancing and drinking. In an age long before summer vacations and Bank Holidays, the church organised the days in the year when the daily routine was broken. In these ways, it bound villagers together into one community. There were in fact quite a few such days during the year, some local and some common throughout the country. Two examples of the latter were 23 April, St George's Day, which had been declared a saints' day in 1222, and May Day, with dancing round the maypole and much merry-making.

The Church was powerful, but it also suffered from faults. Indeed, its very power encouraged corruption. Some clergy were absent from their parishes (yet claiming the **stipend**); some clergy were pluralists (that is, claiming the stipends from several parishes); some clergy were immoral (they had mistresses) and some clergy were ignorant and could not even recite the Lord's Prayer.

Historians have held different views about the state of the pre-Reformation Church. Some, such as Professor A.G. Dickens, looking at the evidence from a Protestant perspective, found plenty to suggest that the Catholic Church in England faced much criticism because of the faults and shortcomings that undoubtedly existed in some parishes. These historians saw the Reformation process and England becoming a Protestant nation as a logical consequence. Other more recent historians have argued that shortcomings in the Church were nothing new; the Catholic Church had strength and vitality and much active support, both in worship and in outward signs such as church building projects. These historians argue that the Reformation's origins were primarily political – that is, Henry VIII's wish for a divorce – and this political reformation by coincidence happened at the same time as the European Reformation had started under Martin Luther.

### The Church's political sphere

In these different ways the Church had become an accepted and intrinsic part of the lives of ordinary people. However, it was also a force in national and international politics. Since the **Norman Conquest** the Church had operated its own law courts to try crimes involving priests or breaches of doctrine. These were still active in the fifteenth century, although medieval kings had done their best to weaken the Church courts' independent power. Bishops and abbots had a political role; they sat in the House of Lords. Churchmen were often the best educated, most literate people in the country, so their skills as administrators were valued. In the early Tudor period it was not uncommon to find that government advisers and ministers were also members of the clergy. Henry VII promoted Bishop Morton to Archbishop of Canterbury and then Lord Chancellor, where he had an important role in advising the King. Henry was keen to work closely with the Church because it could be used as a powerful ally if his claim to the throne were to be challenged. The Church also offered an additional service to monarchs. Its power over people's minds through its teachings created a channel through which obedience to the will of the King could also be taught.

### The beginnings of change

**Why were changes in thinking occurring in the early sixteenth century, and with what consequences?**

It would be wrong to suggest that in terms of beliefs and attitudes everything was totally static and unchangeable. There were some signs of impatience with the failings of the Church and influences from Europe were encouraging educated people to think in less restricted ways.

### Humanism

During the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries the cultural movement known as the Renaissance spread from its home in Italy to England. An important part of Renaissance thinking was the emphasis on the power and potential of mankind. Henry VII commissioned new buildings, including a new palace at Richmond and the Henry VII chapel in Westminster Abbey. He and his wife are buried in the chapel, whose magnificence links the greatness of kings with belief in the power

**Stipend** – The term used for the payment received by a priest for his appointment to a parish.

**Norman Conquest** – The events in which William came from Normandy and defeated the English King, Harold, in 1066. William and his successors imposed their own laws and system of government.

**Source A** How our view of the Catholic Church c.1500 has been changed by events that followed. From *The English Reformation Revised* by C. Haigh, (Cambridge University Press), 1987, p.58.

Relations between priests and parishioners were usually harmonious, and the laity complained astonishingly infrequently against their priests. There were local tensions, certainly, but they were individual rather than institutionalized, occasional rather than endemic. In a frantic search for the causes of reformation, we must not wrench isolated cases of discord from their local context, and pile them together to show a growing chorus of dissatisfaction.

Why do you think there are differing views on the state of the Church in c.1500 (Source A)?



of God. Renaissance scholars believed that it was possible to improve human knowledge and behaviour through education. They were also keen to study classical literature and architecture, and to discuss ideas and beliefs. Humanism was a positive movement, borne out of optimism about the present and future. It was only much later, in the nineteenth century, they were dubbed 'humanists'.

What we call 'humanist' ideas were not entirely new. Scholars in the fifteenth century had been studying classical and medieval authors, including Plato, Aristotle, Cicero and Plutarch. Some travelled to Italy, attended lectures at universities there, and returned with copies of classical and medieval manuscripts. Some Italian scholars came to England and taught at Oxford and Cambridge. As a result of increasing interest in learning, over 100 endowed schools were set up in England in the fifteenth century, and many became influenced by humanism. Greek began to be taught at Oxford, and a generation of scholars benefited from this.

Henry VII himself was a patron of the arts. He encouraged writers, poets, musicians and artists, including those from Europe. Polydore Vergil was commissioned to write a history of England which told the story of England leading up to Tudor rule. Poets such as John Skelton were employed to write enthusiastically about England's happy situation under the wise rule of Henry VII. John Colet, Dean of St Paul's Cathedral, founded St Paul's School. Another scholar, William Grocyn, taught Greek at Oxford University, and stimulated much interest in the study of Plato and other Classical writers. Henry VII's own children received an education that reflected the Renaissance, with an emphasis on foreign languages, classics, music and religion, as well as learning the arts of being a courtier, which included dancing and hunting.

Humanists became involved in the religious debate in England because they were disturbed by the poor quality of the parish clergy and wanted to improve standards of education among both the clergy and the **laity**. They attacked the Church's exploitation of practices, such as the veneration of saints and the selling of **indulgences** in order to raise money. They were concerned that this exploitation not only led souls away from God, but also raised money that was spent on luxurious living for the higher clergy, rather than the promotion of education or charitable works. One such writer was William Melton, a Cambridge scholar and Chancellor of York Minster from 1496 to 1528. His studies led him to believe that many of the parish clergy were lacking in training and discipline – a theme echoed by his friend John Colet (see page 9).

**Source B** From William Melton's *Exhortation*, published at the beginning of Henry VIII's reign. It is translated from a Latin sermon addressed to a group of trainee priests in York by Melton, the Chancellor of York Minster.

... Everywhere throughout town and countryside there exists a crop of oafish and boorish priests, some of whom are engaged on ignoble and servile tasks, while others abandon themselves to tavernhaunting, swilling and drunkenness. Some cannot get along without their wenches; others pursue their amusement in dice and gambling and other such trifling all day long. There are some who waste their time in hunting and hawking ... This is inevitable, for since they are all completely ignorant of good literature, how can they obtain improvement or enjoyment in reading and study?

We must avoid and keep far from ourselves that grasping, deadly plague of avarice for which practically every priest is accused and held in disrepute before the people, when it is said that we are greedy for rich promotions ... and spend little or nothing on works of piety...

**Laity/Laymen** – A general term referring to people who had not been trained and accepted as priests.

**Indulgences** – The indulgence was a document, issued with the Pope's authority, setting out the cancellation of punishment in purgatory – a place where it was believed souls of the dead went to while waiting to be sent to heaven.

Based on what you have read in this chapter so far, do you think that Melton is portraying an accurate picture of the clergy in the early sixteenth century [Source B]?

## Erasmus' teachings

In 1499 Erasmus, a celebrated Dutch humanist scholar, visited England for the first time. He found a few scholars with whom he was in great sympathy. One was John Skelton, a poet and linguist, who became one of the tutors to the future Henry VIII. Skelton's flamboyant attitude and wit widened Henry's horizons. Another person Erasmus admired was John Colet, Dean of St Paul's Cathedral and founder of St Paul's School. He had travelled in Italy and been greatly influenced by his revulsion at the misuse of wealth and extravagance in the Church that he came to detest. Back in England he delivered a famous set of lectures about St Paul, which included forthright denunciations of the abuses of the Church and the corruption of the clergy. Another humanist was Thomas More, who became Chancellor to Henry VIII in 1530 (see Chapter 3, page 68).

Erasmus spent several years in England, briefly in 1499 and then at Oxford between 1504 and 1506. He was then based at Queens' College, Cambridge in the first few years of Henry VIII's reign. He had enormous influence at the time across Europe and to some extent in England because of his wide circle of influential writers. Many works were published, encouraging learning and reform within the Catholic Church. For example, in 1500 he published *The Adages*, in which he took ancient Roman proverbs and made them relevant to his time, urging all to live a wise and good life. In 1511 he published *In Praise of Folly* which is a biting satire on all forms of human folly. Among his targets were those monks who did not live godly lives. In his *Handbook of the Christian Knight* (*Enchiridion Militis Christiani*), written in 1501 but not published in England until 1533, he set out what he saw as the guidelines for a Christian life. He advocated an inward and personal faith, centred on prayer and reflection, with a focus on the example of Jesus.

**Source C** From *The Adages* of Erasmus (1500)

*Dulce bellum inexpertis* (War is sweet to those who have not tried it)

There is nothing more wicked than war, more disastrous, more widely destructive, more deeply tenacious, more loathsome, in a word, more unworthy of man, not to say of a Christian. Yet strange to say, everywhere at the present time war is being entered upon lightly, for any kind of reason, and waged with cruelty and barbarousness, not only by the heathen but by Christians, not only by lay people but by priests and bishops, not only by the young and inexperienced but by the old who know it well, not so much by the common people and the naturally fickle mob, but rather by princes whose functions should be to restrain with wisdom and reason the rash impulses of the foolish rabble.

**Source D** From *In Praise of Folly* (1511), a satire by Erasmus (written in 1509).

As for the Supreme Pontiffs [Popes], if they would recall that they take the place of Christ and would attempt to imitate his poverty, tasks, doctrines, crosses and disregard of safety; if they were even to contemplate the meaning of the name Pope – that is, Father – or of the title of Most Holy, then they would become the most humble and mortified of men. How many men would then be willing to spend all their wealth and efforts in order to procure the position [of Pope]?

Under the present system what work that needs to be done is handed over to Peter or Paul to do, while pomp and pleasure are personally taken care of by the Popes ... The Popes, neglecting all their other functions, make war their only duty ... a thing befitting of beasts, not men.

- 1 In Sources C and D, what can you learn about the beliefs of Erasmus?
- 2 Why would these be seen as important at the time?



It is important, however, to put the impact of humanist thought and religion in perspective. Only some educated people were under its influence. What we can term 'medieval attitudes' to piety and study predominated. Traditional forms of worship remained unquestioned. Pilgrimages, saints, miracles and the veneration of images remained central to religious devotion. The writings of mystics such as Julian of Norwich, who lived in the fourteenth century, remained popular two centuries later.

### The invention of printing

The printing press was brought to England from Germany in 1476. Edward IV (1461–83) encouraged this, and books in English were printed after being translated from French and Latin. Previously it had been mainly the clergy who could read using handwritten manuscripts. Now there was the opportunity to read printed material in English. It also helped the standardisation of English across the country. There were five main regional dialects at the time, with many local variations.

Printing encouraged the spread of new ideas including those of humanist writers. People who could read could then study humanist ideas. However, many of the early books printed in English were mythical tales or popular stories, such as Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* or Thomas Malory's *King Arthur*. This situation was reflected at court. Henry VII supported the development of printing. In 1504 he created the post of King's Printer. However, both Henry VII and Henry VIII showed little interest in the new thinking that was being publicised by humanist writers, and preferred stories of chivalry.

In fact, it was printing, partly encouraged by the royal family, rather than new ideas, that led to change. Printing led to more of the gentry and noble classes learning to read and assimilate a wider culture than had been traditional in England. More and more books were published. The market became much larger from the 1520s onwards, partly because of the Reformation. Print runs were small by modern standards, but books were expensive items and so were shared, and then ideas passed on orally. Due to printing, England became a more literate nation, leading to the cultural Renaissance of Elizabeth's reign.

### Widening horizons

It was not just the printed word that was widening horizons in educated people's thinking. From Portugal and Spain intrepid sailors were setting out on dangerous missions to explore the unknown and to find new routes to the lucrative Spice Islands in the East. A new, reliable route was needed as the Turks, who were Muslim in religion, controlled the overland route from the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean. The Portuguese were the first to reach the southern tip of the African continent in 1487, just after Henry VII had become King of England. Ten years later Vasco da Gama sailed from Portugal, round the southern tip of Africa and reached Calicut in India. In between these two voyages, Columbus sailed west from Spain in 1492 and discovered what was later named as **America** in a bid to find an alternative route to Asia. He thought that the world was much smaller than it actually is, and Europeans did not know of the existence of the continent of America. Tales of non-Christian civilisations beyond Europe, both in America and Asia, later had an impact on European thinking in a society dominated by the Catholic Church. In the new age of the printing press, accounts of other civilisations could be published, drawings showing the different appearances of humans in other continents could be circulated, and detailed maps could be drawn up. Explorers also brought back new plants – potatoes, tomatoes, tea and coffee – which affected people's way of life as well as their attitude to the wider world.

**America** – America was named in 1500 on an early sketch map of the newly-discovered continent after the explorer Amerigo Vespucci.

## 2 Henry VII and the consolidation of power

The monarchy had been unstable for substantial parts of the previous century. There was no obvious reason why Henry VII would be as successful as he actually was. In many ways, the odds were against him. Therefore, you need to consider this when studying what actually happened. His success was certainly not inevitable.

### Henry becomes King

How was Henry able to move rapidly from a 'claim' to being crowned King of England?

#### Background of Henry Tudor

Henry did not have a strong claim to the throne of England. His claim lay through his mother, Margaret Beaufort, who was a direct descendant of Edward III by the marriage of his third son, John of Gaunt, Margaret's great grandfather. However, this claim was weakened by the fact that John of Gaunt and Catherine Swynford were not married when John Beaufort, Margaret's grandfather, had been born. Henry was also linked to royalty on his father's side. His grandmother, Catherine, had been married to the King of England, Henry V, before she married Owen Tudor, his grandfather. Because of this marriage, Henry's father and brother, Edmund and Jasper, were half-brothers to Henry VI and had been created Earls.

Henry was born in 1457, the son of Edmund Tudor, Earl of Richmond, who had died a few months before his son's birth. As a young boy, Henry grew up with his mother and uncle, Jasper Tudor. After various deaths (both natural and in battles) during the Wars of the Roses, Henry unexpectedly became the main Lancastrian claimant to the throne. His uncle, Jasper, took Henry to safety in France. Most of the next fourteen years was spent in Brittany, which at that

#### What were the Wars of the Roses about?

In the earlier fifteenth century groups of nobles had wrestled for power under a monarchy that sometimes appeared to be weak, especially that of Henry VI (1422–61). It was towards the end of his reign that two groups of families under the banners of 'Lancaster' and 'York' fought to control the Crown. Although there were a few quite large battles, many of the conflicts were no more than skirmishes; there was little physical destruction and the fighting was not continuous. But the open hostility encouraged violence, instability and weakness within society. Many nobles used this period of weak rule to take more control of their local areas.

The term 'Wars of the Roses' comes from the supposed heraldic badges worn by Lancastrians and Yorkists. It came into popular use only after the publication of a novel by Sir Walter Scott in 1829. He based one part of his novel on a scene from Shakespeare's *Henry VI, Part 1*, where a group of noblemen pick red or white roses to show their loyalty to the Lancastrians or Yorkists.

#### NOTE-MAKING

Using pages 11–14, make notes on the ways Henry established his *right* to rule (see page x for advice on note making).