*This podcast helps you to understand the causes and importance of the Revolt of the Northern Earls in 1569–70.*

**Questioner:** Within a year of Mary, Queen of Scots’ imprisonment in England, a rebellion broke out in the North of England led by two powerful Catholic nobles, the Earls of Northumberland and Westmorland. It followed a failed attempt to have Mary married to the leading Catholic noble, the Duke of Norfolk, and acknowledged as Elizabeth’s heir. This was the biggest rebellion of Elizabeth’s reign and so must have been a very significant threat to her.

**Student 1:** Well let’s look at what caused the rebellion first because this would have an effect on how popular it was. It was true that the Earls were Catholic and wanted to bring back the Catholic religion. This was why they stormed into Durham Cathedral and overturned the Protestant communion table. The Earls had other, more personal, grievances against the Queen though. Northumberland had lost his position as Warden of the Middle March, as Elizabeth extended central control from London, replacing the local politically powerful class with her own officials. The Queen had confiscated some of their estates and Northumberland had received no compensation for the loss of his copper mines. The Earls were obviously angry, but a bit vague about their aims; apart from changing the religion they wanted to get rid of the Queen’s ‘evil’ councillors and restore their own political status, but they did not make it clear what they wanted to do about Mary although they did not think she should be kept in prison.

**Student 2:** How does this help us to work out how threatening the revolt was?

**Student 1:** When the Earls raised an army to march south very few people outside their own areas of influence joined them. Appeals to the Catholic nobility failed completely and most English Catholics did not support the revolt. Presumably they were not convinced by the Earls’ arguments or their leadership skills. On the other hand, the Queen kept control of all the major northern towns and was able to raise an army of 10,000 under the Earl of Sussex. Although the rebellion had reached Bramham Moor near York, when the Earls heard Sussex was moving against them they panicked and retreated.

**Student 2:** So the rebellion was not really much of a threat; the Earls were not brave leaders who had a clear strategy and the government moved quickly to deal with the threat.

**Student 1:** Yes, but it is easy for us to look back and make this judgement. At the time Elizabeth did not know how many English Catholics would support the Revolt and more worryingly the Earls were expecting military support from Spain. If this had arrived our verdict, and the survival of the government, might have been very different indeed.

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*This podcast helps you to understand the threat posed by the imprisoned Mary, Queen of Scots between 1568 and 1588 and how the government dealt with it.*

**Questioner:** Hello my name’s John Johnson and I want to welcome you to everyone’s favourite gameshow *List of Three*,where the contestant has to list three facts about a period in time. This week we are looking at the plots made against Elizabeth. Let’s start the clock.

Question 1: Describe three features of the Ridolfi Plot of 1571.

**Student:**

* Mary used Roberto Ridolfi, an Italian banker, to carry messages to the Pope and Spain asking them to organise an invasion to overthrow Elizabeth and replace her with Mary and the Catholic religion.
* Spain was less than enthusiastic about the plan and in London the government arrested and interrogated key Catholics with the result that Ridolfi stayed abroad and the plot fizzled out.
* The details of the plot had been shared with the Duke of Norfolk and the government used this to persuade Elizabeth to approve his execution.

**Questioner:** Correct! Question 2: Can you describe three features of the Throckmorton Plot of 1583?

**Student:**

* Francis Throckmorton was a young English Catholic who carried letters between Mary and the French and Spanish ambassadors.
* He confessed under torture that there was a plan for a rebellion in the north, supported by French troops and Spanish money, which aimed to free Mary and restore Catholicism.
* Throckmorton was executed and the Spanish ambassador was expelled.

**Questioner:** That’s right! Now, Question 3: Describe three features of the Babington Plot of 1586.

**Student:**

* Anthony Babington again had helped carry letters from Mary to her supporters but then got involved in a plot devised by a fanatical priest whose activities were watched by the government. This time the plot called for the assassination of Elizabeth.
* The government placed spies within Mary’s household and intercepted all the letters, including the one in which she agreed to Elizabeth’s murder.
* The government now had the evidence it needed to put Mary on trial for treason.

**Questioner:** Correct! Question 4: Can you explain three ways Walsingham monitored the activities of the plotters?

**Student:** Sir Francis Walsingham has been called Elizabeth’s ‘Spy-Master’ for his work in:

* Intercepting and decoding letters and messages using known experts
* Employing a network of spies and agents and using informers.
* Interrogating, usually using torture, captured Catholic priests and recusants.

**Questioner:** That’s right. And finally, can you give three reasons why these plots were significant.

**Student:**

* They showed the threat to Elizabeth posed by Mary, Queen of Scots.
* They showed the determination of some Catholics to get rid of the Protestant Church of England.
* They helped explain the deterioration of relations with Spain.

**Questioner:** Congratulations you got a perfect score! Thanks for joining us and see you again for another *List of three*.

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*This podcast helps you to understand why Mary was executed and its significance.*

Early on a grey February morning in 1587, Mary, Queen of Scots, was escorted into the Great Hall at Fotheringhay Castle where a crowd of about four hundred people were waiting. In the centre of the hall was a scaffold, draped in black. Mary too was dressed all in black and accompanied by two of her ladies-in-waiting. She was given time to pray and kiss her crucifix and then was killed with two blows of the executioner’s axe.

The reasons for Mary’s execution had built up over the twenty years she was imprisoned in England. The Revolt of the Northern Earls in 1569 and the Ridolfi Plot two years later provided evidence that Mary was a danger to Elizabeth. In 1573 the Throckmorton Plot planned for a French army to invade England and restore the Catholic religion. This alarmed Elizabeth’s councillors because they feared Elizabeth’s life was at risk. The assassination of the Protestant ruler William of Orange in 1584 and the outbreak of war with Spain a year later, made the government even more worried about Catholic attacks and the threat to Elizabeth’s life. Sir Francis Walsingham finally secured written evidence showing that Mary approved Anthony Babington’s plot in 1586 to assassinate the Queen. Mary was found guilty of treason and sentenced to death.

Although Mary had been found guilty she could not be executed until Elizabeth signed her death warrant. For two months Elizabeth drove her councillors and Parliament to distraction by finding reasons to avoid doing this. Many historians believe she found it difficult to authorise the killing of a fellow monarch who had been divinely appointed by God, and that she was genuinely concerned about how other monarchs would react, not least Mary’s son who was now King of Scotland. Elizabeth’s Privy Councillors had almost to beg her to sign and even then Elizabeth refused to send the warrant. On 3 February, a secret meeting of the Privy Council proposed sending it without telling Elizabeth and began to make arrangements for the execution which went ahead on 8 February. When she heard the news, Elizabeth was furious. She refused to speak to William Cecil for a month and imprisoned William Davison, who had taken the warrant, in the Tower of London for eighteen months. On the other hand she could tell James VI that she had never wanted his mother’s execution. In the event, James preferred to safeguard his claim to the English throne rather than avenge his mother, France was still involved in a civil war and England was at war with Spain anyway. Mary’s execution had surprisingly little effect except on Elizabeth’s reputation.

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*This podcast helps you to understand the role played by politics and religion in the breakdown of relations between England and Spain from 1569 to 1585.*

At the beginning of Elizabeth’s reign Spain was England’s ally. In many ways they needed each other. Philip was more worried about the threat from France and Elizabeth had enough to deal with in establishing herself on the throne and securing her Religious Settlement, not to mention the issue of Mary, Queen of Scots. But by 1585 England and Spain were at war. When analysing the reasons for this breakdown in relations historians tend to pick out four causes. This podcast examines the first two: politics and religion.

It is hard to separate religion and politics in the sixteenth century because monarchs, as well as ruling their country, were responsible for its religion. Philip II, apart from being a strong Catholic, was ruler of the most powerful country in the world. In addition to Spain itself, Philip ruled the Netherlands and owned land in South America. In 1580 he became King of Portugal as well. Treasure from the New World made Spain a very wealthy country and able to support a strong army and fleet.

Philip did not want any other country to challenge Spanish power but political rivalry does not seem a major reason for the war. Philip’s anxiety about the power of France meant that he preferred to have Elizabeth as Queen of England rather than Mary, Queen of Scots. Mary, although Catholic, had close ties with France. This is why, although Spain was involved in the plots and rebellion to overthrow Elizabeth for Mary, Philip never did anything concrete such as send an army. From Elizabeth’s point of view, Spain’s interference was a major source of irritation, but she reacted by expelling Spanish ambassadors rather than declaring war. Given the difference in the power of the two countries, it would have been a very brave or very foolish act for Elizabeth to declare war on Spain.

Another argument is that religion was the most important reason for the outbreak of war. The religious rivalries between the two countries were so great that they seemed to make war inevitable Elizabeth had established a Protestant Church in 1559 and, from the 1570s onwards began to increase penalties against Catholics. When Catholic priests began arriving in England, this increased fears of a religious crusade. Philip II was certainly a devout Catholic, however he took no action when Elizabeth created her Protestant Church, nor when the Pope excommunicated Elizabeth in 1570. If religion was a cause of the outbreak of war it was a long-term one. Philip had lived with a Protestant England for over twenty-five years. It would seem that the real causes of the war lay elsewhere.

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*This podcast helps you to understand the role played by tensions in the New World and the Netherlands, in the breakdown of relations between England and Spain from 1569 to 1585.*

Most historians nowadays think that the causes of the decline in relations between England and Spain were not religious or political but were due to tensions in areas which were vital to Spanish, and English, trade, mainly the New World and the Netherlands.

Before 1550 the bulk of English trade abroad was based on the export of woollen cloth to Antwerp. In the mid-1550s this market became more unstable both because of overproduction and Spain’s attempts to tighten its hold on the Netherlands. English merchants and explorers began to search for new markets overseas. The most lucrative area was the New World. Spain had already established an overseas Empire there, consisting of Mexico, Peru, Chile and the Caribbean. The New World offered Elizabethan seamen opportunities to make money fast, but illegally, either by attacking the Spanish treasure fleets or by trading with Spanish colonists.

There many were clashes in the New World between England and Spain:

* In the early 1560s John Hawkins made two voyages, where he sailed to West Africa and bought slaves which he then took across the Atlantic and sold illegally to colonists.
* In 1568 on his third voyage John Hawkins was attacked by the Spanish at San Juan de Ulua in Mexico. Hawkins lost four ships and over 300 men. England retaliated by seizing a Spanish bullion ship which was sailing through the Channel from Spain to the Netherlands to pay the Spanish army there.
* In 1572 Francis Drake attacked Nombre de Dios (Peru) and seized silver worth about £20,000 (£30 million in today’s money).
* During his circumnavigation of the world, Francis Drake attacked Spanish settlements on the west coast of South America and in 1579 captured the *Cacafuego*, a Spanish treasure ship with a cargo worth £140,000.

These clashes, although serious and, particularly in the case of Drake, a source of great annoyance to Spain, took place years before war was declared. Spain made many formal complaints about the activities of the English pirates, but the chronology of these events shows that Philip did not go to war directly because of them.

Most historians are now agreed that the war with Spain was caused by England’s increasing involvement in the Netherlands, which was part of Spain’s empire. Protestants in the Netherlands challenged Spanish rule in 1572 with the result that a large Spanish army was sent against them. Elizabeth did not want to see an increase in Spanish military force along the Channel’s coastlines and cloth exports to the Netherlands still formed part of England’s trade and commercial activity. Elizabeth at first supported the rebels secretly with money and weapons but overtime the situation escalated. You will go on to study the events which led to the direct involvement of the English in the Netherlands and the outbreak of war with Spain.

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*This podcast helps you to understand the direct involvement of the English in the Netherlands between 1585 and 1588, and the role of Robert Dudley.*

**Questioner:** Hello my name’s John Johnson and I want to welcome you back to everyone’s favourite gameshow *List of Three*,where the contestant has to list three facts about a period in time. This week we are looking at the outbreak of war with Spain. Let’s start the clock.

Question 1: What were Elizabeth’s three reasons for sending an army to the Netherlands in 1585?

**Student:**

* The Netherlands were important to England because of its proximity just across the Channel and because English woollen cloth was exported to markets in the Netherlands before being sold throughout Europe.
* The Protestant rebels in the Netherlands had been fighting the expansion of Spanish control there since 1572 but in 1584 their leader, William of Orange, was assassinated by a Catholic. For years many of Elizabeth’s councillors had urged the Queen to send help to their fellow Protestants. Now they feared that a Spanish victory would extend the power of Catholics in Europe and leave England isolated.
* If the rebels were defeated it would leave a large Spanish army just across the Channel and in a good position to threaten England.

**Questioner:** That’s right! Now, Question 2 Can you describe three features of Dudley’s campaign in the Netherlands?

**Student:**

* Dudley’s orders from Elizabeth were very cautious, mainly to stop Spain expanding its power in the Netherlands, but he acted like a conquering general, basking in the enthusiastic welcome of the government in the Netherlands.
* Dudley did not believe that Elizabeth had provided him with enough money or equipment and spent much of his time complaining about this.
* Dudley accepted the title of ‘Governor General of the Low Countries’ further infuriating the Queen who thought, rightly, it would enrage Spain even more.

**Questioner**: Correct! Now, finally, can you explain the three main results of English involvement in the Netherlands, between 1585 and 1588?

**Student:**

* Although there was no formal declaration, Philip II saw Dudley’s arrival in the Netherlands as an act of war and from 1585 both Elizabeth and Philip considered that England and Spain were at war.
* The campaign in the Netherlands was not a great success in military terms but the presence of the English army did slow down the advance of the Spanish army under the Duke of Parma and prevented him from capturing the deep water port of Flushing.
* This in turn had an impact on Philip II’s plan for the Spanish Armada of 1588 which depended on his ships rendezvousing with Parma’s army in the Netherlands. Parma was too late and this contributed to the Armada’s defeat.

**Questioner:** Congratulations you got full marks! Thanks for joining us and see you again for another *List of three*.

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*This podcast helps you to understand Drake’s raid on Cadiz: the ‘Singeing of the King’s beard’.*

**News headline: Francis Drake challenges the might of Spain!**

**Reporter:** In 1585 as soon as war broke out and perhaps aware of the expense this would bring, Elizabeth put Francis Drake in charge of an expedition to attack the lucrative Spanish West Indies. He sailed in 1585 with about 30 ships and 2,300 men. Not everything went to plan. Drake missed the opportunity to attack the Spanish treasure fleet and his raids in the Caribbean caused him heavy casualties, some due to disease. He did, however, capture two wealthy towns so that he returned home to England with treasure worth £30,000.

This expedition helped to convince Philip that he could not put up with this drain on Spain’s finances, or continue to be humiliated by Drake, who was known as ‘El Draque’ (the Dragon). Philip speeded up his plans to deal with England once and for all. Robert Hutchison in his book, *Elizabeth’s Spy Master* believed Drake’s expedition was one of the two main causes of the war between England and Spain.

Many believe the execution of Mary, Queen of Scots, triggered, or at least accelerated, King Philip II of Spain’s plan to assault England. In truth, the genesis of the invasion was more the anger caused in 1585 by Francis Drake’s plunder and burn voyage to the West Indies and Leicester’s expedition to the Low Countries.

**News headline: Drake humiliates the King of Spain – Philip’s beard is well and truly singed!**

**Reporter:** When news of Philip’s assembling of a great fleet reached England, Francis Drake persuaded the Queen that attack was the best form of defence. In April 1587, with a small but carefully selected group of ships, he set sail to weaken Spain’s preparations for war. In a cheeky and daring raid, he sailed into Cadiz harbour in Spain, avoiding its forts and guns, and inflicted heavy damage on the Spanish ships anchored there. This act, known in England, though not in Spain, as ‘the singeing of the King of Spain’s beard’, delayed the construction of the Armada by destroying ships and supplies and then diverting Spanish warships in pursuit of Drake.

After the attack on Cadiz, Drake’s convoy sailed northwards, destroying local Portuguese vessels heading for Lisbon with supplies needed for making the barrels that would hold the Armada’s food supplies. Finally, Drake headed off to the Azores where his men captured a Spanish treasure ship, the *San Felipe*, returning home to England with £114,000. His actions left the Spanish admirals in confusion and dread, and bought Elizabeth another twelve months to prepare England’s defences.

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*This podcast helps you to understand Philip’s plans for the Spanish Armada.*

It is easy to assume that the Spanish plan for the Armada was for the Spanish ships to sail directly to the English coast and then for the Spanish soldiers to go ashore and invade England. This was NOT the case. Philip’s plan was very different. It stated that:

* A huge Armada, or fleet, was to sail from Spain, through the English Channel to Calais.
* The Spanish Duke of Parma, one of the most able commanders in Europe, was to march his army of 20,000 troops from the Netherlands to meet the Armada at Calais.
* Parma’s army was to be ferried across from Calais to England in barges, protected by the big ships of the Armada.
* The Spanish forces were to land in Kent and then march on London.
* This would be a signal for all English Catholics to rise up against Elizabeth.
* Elizabeth would have to surrender. After she was overthrown the Catholic religion would be restored in England.

The first problem with the plan was how the ships of the Armada and Parma’s army were going to link up. This required good communications between the ships – which were at sea – and Parma, so that his troops would be ready when the Armada arrived. Parma’s army could not be at Calais too soon because their barges could easily be attacked by Dutch pirates. The timing had to be spot-on.

On 21 July 1588, 130 Spanish ships carrying 17,000 men, following Philip’s invasion plan, sailed up the English Channel in a crescent formation, to meet up with Parma’s Spanish army. The English fleet left harbour in Plymouth and followed the Armada for eight days. The English navy had slightly more ships than the Spanish fleet and they were quicker with longer-range guns. The English fleet aimed to destroy the Spanish ships from a distance by firing cannon at them, but in those eight days they failed to inflict serious damage on the Armada.

Philip had instructed his commander to get close enough to the enemy’s ships for the Spanish sailors to board them and then capture them, but this wasn’t possible because the English kept their distance. Despite this, on 6 August the Spanish ships reached Calais harbour and dropped anchor. The first stage of the Spanish plan seemed to have been successful, but this was an illusion. Parma and his army were not at the rendez-vous and the failure of the Spanish to secure a deep-water port in northern waters meant that the Armada had to anchor off the coast of Calais where it was an easier target for firstly the English fire-ships and then the English fleet proper.

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*This podcast helps you to understand why the Armada was defeated by the British and the significance of its defeat.*

**Questioner:** Most people think that the Armada was defeated when the wind changed direction and the English sent in fire-ships which caused the Armada to scatter.

**Student 1:** it’s true that the weather, particularly the wind, played a key role in the defeat of the Armada. The wind direction enabled the English to send eight fire-ships into the Armada fleet when it was anchored off Calais, and to then inflict serious damage at the following Battle of Gravelines. The next day the wind changed direction forcing the Spanish fleet out into the North Sea so the Spanish sailors tried to make their way back to Spain by sailing around the British Isles. Stormy weather drove many Spanish ships onto the coasts of Scotland and Ireland where many sailors either drowned or were murdered by locals.

Up until the use of the fire-ships the conflict had been level. The two sides were pretty evenly matched in terms of numbers of ships and sailors, although where there were differences the English fleet tended to have the advantage; English battleships were faster and lower and could nip between the heavier Spanish galleons, they were also equipped with guns that could fire consecutively and English sailors had more experience of difficult seas.

**Student 2:** It’s also true that the strategy and tactics Philip II gave to his Spanish commanders were complicated and did not allow for any flexibility or Plan B. The plan for Philip’s ships to meet up with the Duke of Parma’s army in the Netherlands at Calais and then to ferry his army over to England on barges, depended on good communication and timing. Neither of these was in place. Philip also ordered his commander to get close enough to the English ships for the Spanish sailors to board them, but this was not possible because the English kept their distance. The Spanish commander, Medina Sidonia, was not a bad commander but he had little naval experience and was up against the likes of Francis Drake and John Hawkins who were far more likely to interpret their orders to suit the changing situation.

**Questioner:** So which of these causes of the Armada’s defeat do you think was the most important?

**Student 1:** They probably all played their part. At the time however the English celebrated this as a great naval victory and credited it to a Protestant God who had sent them favourable winds. The Armada defeat did not end the war with Spain which continued almost until the end of Elizabeth’s reign but it did make the Queen and her Protestant Church secure and **showed** the potential for the development of England as a maritime power with an overseas empire.

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