*This podcast helps you to understand the leisure pursuits enjoyed by Elizabethans.*

**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 sport, pastimes and the theatre in Elizabethan England. Let’s start the clock.

Question 1: Can you name three sports and three pastimes enjoyed by the upper classes?

**Student:** The preferred sports for gentlemen were fencing, tennis and bowls. As a sign of their wealth and status they liked collecting books, especially the Classics, and paintings. And of course all gentlemen knew had to dance in the fashion of the court.

**Questioner:** Correct! Now, can you name three sports and three pastimes enjoyed by the lower classes?

**Student:** Working people took part in wrestling, running and football. They also liked going to inns and taverns, they even drank beer for breakfast, and enjoyed gambling on the outcomes of sports such as bear-baiting and cock-fighting, as well as playing cards and dice.

**Questioner:** That’s right. Question 3: Can you name three sports and three pastimes enjoyed by all classes?

**Student:** Archery and fishing were popular sports at all levels and all classes took part in hunting although for the upper classes this was usually for deer while working people hunted for rabbit. Music was also a popular pastime. Nobles employed their own musicians, the gentry organised musical evenings and the working classes enjoyed singing popular ballads. Above all, both rich and poor liked going to the new theatres which were just opening up in London.

**Questioner:** Correct! Now can you give three reasons why theatres started in London in the 1570s?

**Student:**

* Many of the nobles, and the Queen herself, enjoyed watching masques and plays and had sponsored groups of actors who often appeared at court. Before theatres were built, actors travelled around the country performing plays, often in the yards of inns and taverns. Noble and royal sponsorship or patronage encouraged the actors to focus on the court in London.
* London was a wealthy city with a growing population. Wealthy traders and manufacturers, who lived in London, and their workers, had the money to go to the theatre.
* Many young playwrights and actors went to London in the hope of finding fame and fortune. This momentum encouraged James Burbage to build the first theatre in London since Roman times in 1576 and it was so popular that others quickly followed, including the Globe.

**Questioner:** Yes! Now, for your last question can you give three reasons why the Elizabethan theatre was so popular?

**Student:**

* All classes could go to the theatre. The working classes could get in for a penny and stand in the pit. For a few pence more the wealthier classes could sit in covered galleries while the nobles sat on the stage.
* Elizabethan playwrights wrote some of the best plays ever written. Audiences loved the complex characters, gripping plots and memorable lines delivered in blank verse.
* The theatre was a lively experience. During performances the audience wandered around, eating and drinking and made their feelings known by clapping and booing and even throwing things at the actors.

**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 education in the home and at schools and universities during Elizabeth’s reign.*

The number of children going to school increased during Elizabeth’s reign but for the majority of people education was a luxury, especially when other concerns such as starvation, taxation, war or disease dominated.

Educational opportunities increased for all classes and ages, but it was mainly boys from well-off families who benefitted the most. Bright boys from the lower classes could go to grammar school and even university if they had some financial support. Hardly any schooling was free – even schools for the lower classes often charged for coal, candles and educational materials.

Most education began with Parish or Petty Schools, local schools where young children, from about four to seven, were taught to read and write as preparation for moving onto a grammar school. It was nearly always boys who attended, although there were a small number of girls from the upper classes. These schools could be attached to a grammar school, or a village church, or could even be in a local woman’s house, the so-called dame schools. Some of the lower classes were taught to read and write by their masters at their place of work.

Sons of the gentry would then go to a grammar school, from the ages of seven to fifteen, or one of the new public schools. 72 new grammar schools were founded in Elizabeth’s reign. Demand for places increased throughout the reign and from all social classes. The subjects taught were mainly Latin and Greek.

The earliest public schools were Winchester and Eton. These fee-paying boarding schools were set up for ‘ruling class boys’. All lessons were taught in Latin and the curriculum combined the methods of the grammar schools with an emphasis on conduct.

Sons of the nobility were first educated at home by a private tutor. At age fifteen they would go to university. Daughters would also be educated at home. Most wealthy and titled women were able to read and write, and some, like Elizabeth herself, received an exceptional education at home, from their tutors.

For those boys who went on to university their degrees involved grammar, rhetoric (the art of developing arguments) and logic, with compulsory lectures in mathematics, music, theology, astronomy and geometry.

On completion of his education, a gentleman would be distinguishable from the lower classes because he could speak and write ‘proper English’ and had some knowledge of French and Latin. He would also have learned the correct social etiquette and how to dance. The number of students entering the two universities of Oxford and Cambridge more than doubled from the 300 of Henry VIII’s reign to 700 under Elizabeth, as all classes realised the importance of higher education in getting to the top, or at least near it.

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*This podcast helps you to understand reasons for the increase in poverty and vagabondage.*

**Questioner:** Why was there an increase in poverty and vagabondage during these years?

**Student 1:** There were several reasons. One was **poor harvests and changes in farming methods.** There was a sequence of poor harvests in the early 1570s and this meant that the price of bread and other foods went up. Many farmers began to look for more profitable ways to earn their living by enclosing land with hedges and putting sheep on it instead of crops. This saved the farmers money because they did not have to employ labourers to work the land so these labourers lost their jobs and homes. Some landlords also increased the rent on the lands they rented out to farmers forcing them out of their homes.

**Student 2:** The **population increase** is just as important. England’s population was low until the sixteenth century when it began to increase, especially in Elizabeth’s reign. This rise in population meant that more jobs were needed but there were now fewer in farming and the cloth industry. English woollen cloth was exported to Europe and this had provided work for many spinners and weavers. When the cloth trade collapsed in the 1550s tens of thousands of people lost their jobs. More and more people couldn’t find work to earn money.

**Student 1:** Don’t forget about **inflation**.Prices were going up all across Europe while wages were increasing very slowly. The price of food in particular rose much more steeply, especially after 1570. The result was that people, especially those on lower wages, struggled to afford even basic food. Although historians do not all agree about the causes of inflation, most think that it was caused by an increase in demand for goods such as food, probably due to the growing population, and an inability to produce enough to meet this demand.

Henry VIII’s debasement of the coinage, when he ordered all the coins be melted down, also played a part in the rise in prices from the middle of the sixteenth century. These coins had contained precious metal like gold or silver but when new coins were minted they contained far less gold and silver. After this people no longer trusted the value of the coinage so merchants and shopkeepers began to put up prices.

**Questioner:** So there was not one single reason for the increase in poverty in Elizabeth’s reign but people at the time were aware of the increasing number of vagrants. Until the 1530s the monasteries provided food and shelter for the homeless and unemployed. However the Dissolution of the Monasteries in the 1530s meant there was less help for the poor and many of them were left to wander the roads or drift to the towns. The government would have to find new answers.

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*This podcast helps you to understand reasons for the changing attitudes towards the poor in Elizabethan England.*

**Headline: Vagrants and beggars on the rise!**

**News reporter:** Many people thought that there were huge numbers of vagabonds travelling around the country. Exaggerated writings like Thomas Harman’s categories of rogues increased panic. Some believed that wandering groups of vagabonds spread deadly diseases. Beggars also often turned to crime, robbing people in the streets or breaking into houses. There was no police force to catch criminals. Justices of the Peace (JPs) were responsible for enforcing law and order locally and they thought the beggars threatened their authority. Most people believed that everyone should work hard to look after themselves and their families and that idle beggars set a bad example. Large numbers of discontented beggars wandering around the countryside threatened the social order. They did not seem to know their place, and were not obeying their superiors. If this continued, thousands of poor people might rebel and overthrow the ruling classes. This had nearly happened two hundred years earlier in the Peasants’ Revolt of 1381.

**Headline: The poor need help!**

**News reporter:** Rich and powerful people had a duty to help local people who had fallen on hard times. Many landowners took this seriously. They gave gifts of money and food to the poor. This was called Poor Relief. The monasteries helped them care for the poor until Henry VIII closed them down. By Elizabeth’s reign, many landowners could not cope with the growing numbers of poor people. Sixteenth-century governments were always worried by the danger of rebellions. They did not have a permanent army to deal with them. Rising numbers of poor people made the threat of rebellion even greater. Powerful people who opposed Elizabeth, such as discontented nobles or Mary, Queen of Scots, might try to win the support of the poor for a rebellion against the government.

Despite these fears Elizabeth’s government developed a largely caring approach to the poor. It accepted some responsibility for looking after the poor and thought that the rich should finance that help. It distinguished between the poor who wanted to work but couldn’t (the ‘deserving poor’) and those who were able-bodied but wouldn’t work (the ‘idle poor’, also known as ‘sturdy beggars’). The government dealt differently with the deserving poor and the idle poor. Two Acts were passed by Parliament in 1572 and 1576, telling towns how to deal with or help the poor. Today Elizabeth’s government is thought to have had an enlightened approach towards the poor and a later Act of 1601 became the basis of Poor Relief until Victorian times.

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*This podcast helps you to understand the factors which prompted exploration, including the impact of new technology on ships and sailing, and the drive to expand trade.*

**Questioner:** Was the expansion of overseas exploration in the reign of Elizabeth I caused by the impact of new technology on ships and sailing?

**Student 1**: Well, that is certainly one of the reasons. By the middle of the sixteenth century developments in the design of ships and the navigational instruments they carried meant sailors could make longer voyages than ever before. Elizabethan sailors could now use an astrolabe to determine their latitude by measuring the angle between the horizon and the North Star. The Elizabethan mathematician and astronomer, Sir John Dee, developed ‘an instrument magneticall for the finding of the variation of the compasse’. This enabled sailors to take readings and determine true north. English sailors also benefitted from the new technology in shipbuilding. New designs enabled expeditions to cross the Atlantic with stronger and faster ships with an increased carrying capacity. Ships were now fitted with triangular sails which could easily be turned to catch the strong winds of the open seas.

**Student 2:** But there were other reasons too, especially trade and the need to find new markets overseas. Before the 1550s nearly all English trade was concentrated on exporting woollen cloth to Europe; once this trade collapsed, English merchants needed to find new markets. The most lucrative form of trade was the illegal selling of items to the Spanish colonists in the New World. The English desire to attack and plunder Spanish territories increased as relations with Spain grew worse in the 1580s. English explorers took no notice of trade restrictions on Spanish territories once it was clear that Spain was no longer England’s ally.

**Questioner:** So it was the new technology and the drive to expand trade that lay behind this expansion?

**Student 1**: They were the main causes but there were others too. Many of the English upper classes, including the Queen, were prepared to put up the money for overseas voyages as a way of making a quick profit. Attacks on Spanish cargo ships, like the *Cacafuego*, carrying gold and silver to Europe, resulted in a fast and big profit for any investors. At a lower level, signing on as a sailor ensured a regular wage and offered a way out of the poverty experienced by some of the labouring classes, especially those living near ports. Some Elizabethan explorers were also motivated by the drive to spread Protestantism. Also, the increase in learning, due to the ideas of the Renaissance, encouraged a thirst for knowledge and adventure. The confident Elizabethans also felt it was their duty to spread the advantages of their age and country to other lands and to civilise them.

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*This podcast helps you to understand the reasons for and the significance of Drake’s circumnavigation of the globe.*

The main reasons for Drake’s circumnavigation of the globe were personal, economic and strategic. Personally, Drake wanted to attack Spain’s Empire in the New World to get revenge for the attack on Hawkins’ fleet in 1568 and to strike a blow for Protestantism against the greatest Catholic power in Europe. Economically the expedition aimed to capture Spanish gold, silver and other treasure, to reward courtiers, and the Queen, who had invested in it, and to establish new and better trade routes and find new markets. Strategically, a weaker Spain would make England more secure from attack while any new lands would be claimed for the Queen, making England more powerful.

Drake’s three-year voyage added considerably to the knowledge of world geography. After crossing the Atlantic and sailing down the east coast of South America he discovered that Tierra del Fuego, the land at the tip to the south of the Magellan Strait, was not a large southern continent, as had been supposed, but a group of islands. This opened up the possibility of sailing to the Cape of Good Hope, the southern tip of the African continent, by going south of Tierra del Fuego.

Along the west coast of South America Drake’s ships were considerably successful in challenging Spanish settlements. They seized gold, coins, wine, silver and silk. They also captured the *Cacafuego*, a Spanish treasure ship, with a valuable cargo.

By now Drake had only one ship and about 55 men. Even so, he sailed up the coast of North America to a latitude no Englishman had ever reached before. He landed in California and claimed it for Queen Elizabeth, calling it Nova Albion. This claim was the basis of future plans to establish colonies of English settlers in America.

From California Drake sailed west across the Pacific Ocean to the Spice Islands and made a trade treaty allowing English merchants to trade in spices. Drake’s route through the East Indies then followed the uncharted southern coast of Java. Drake discovered that Java was an island and not connected to a southern continent as earlier Dutch explorers had believed. Then Drake sailed across the Indian Ocean, past the Cape of Good Hope and up the coast of West Africa, reaching Plymouth on 26 September 1580.

The Queen knighted him aboard the Golden Hind. He had brought back gold, silver and jewels worth about £140,000 (about £200 million pounds today). The Queen’s share enabled her to pay off the national debt. He had successfully challenged the invincibility of the Spanish Empire, which encouraged others to do the same, claimed new lands for England, made valuable trading contacts with the Spice Islands and increased knowledge of the known world.

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*This podcast helps you to understand the significance of Raleigh and the attempted colonisation of Virginia.*

Walter Raleigh was born to a gentry family in the West Country and educated locally. In the 1570s he served in France as a volunteer in the Protestant army and commanded a company sent to put down rebellion in Ireland. At court his ‘dashing and flamboyant nature’ caught Elizabeth’s attention and he became a close favourite. In 1578 he was given command of his first ship, the Falcon, and sailed with this half-brother, the explorer Sir Humphrey Gilbert, to North America to establish an English settlement there. Despite reaching the coast of Nova Scotia they were unable to secure a suitable location.

Over the next ten years Raleigh continued to be the Queen’s favourite at court. Elizabeth knighted him, made him Captain of the Queen’s Bodyguard and Vice-Admiral of Devon and Cornwall. He was also given considerable lands in England and Ireland. In 1584 he persuaded Elizabeth to agree to an expedition to explore the coast of North America which he would name Virginia, in her honour. She gave Raleigh, in effect, exclusive rights to possess and exploit all the resources of the area, including minerals – except where there were other Europeans already established. The advantages of establishing a colony in North America were:

* To have a base for attacking Spanish interests in the area.
* To launch raids on the Spanish West Indies and annual treasure fleets.
* To prevent the Spanish and the French from settling there.
* To provide the prospect of a better life for the growing number of poor in England.
* To gain access to rich local resources, including minerals.
* To add to the territories under the English crown and so increase its prestige.

Sir Walter Raleigh was responsible for planning, organising and financing the two voyages that sailed in his name in 1585 and 1587 to establish English colonies in America. However, it’s important to remember that Raleigh himself did not sail with them. Despite this, they are referred to as his voyages and he is given the credit for founding Virginia. Neither of the two attempts to establish a colony on the eastern coast of America was successful and later you will examine the reasons for their failures. Although Raleigh’s expeditions were not seen as a success at the time they were significant because they:

* Laid the foundations for the eventual colonisation of America by the English in the next century.
* Returned a profit due to captured Spanish ships.
* Excited merchants with examples of goods to trade including the potato.
* Increased knowledge of the continent through:
* increased navigational knowledge
* the books of Thomas Hariot, which described the plants, animals and minerals of the area in great detail
* the paintings of John White.

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*This podcast helps you to understand the reasons for the failure of the colonisation of Virginia.*

Sir Walter Raleigh organised two expeditions to establish an English settlement or colony on the eastern coast of America. Neither was successful, although we know more about the first one than the second. In 1585, 108 male settlers under the command of Ralph Lane sailed to America with Sir Richard Grenville.

The settlement got off to an unfortunate start when Grenville’s ship hit rocks as it came into land. The resulting seawater in the hold damaged supplies and seed crops. After a couple of months, Grenville returned to England to get more settlers and supplies, leaving the garrison of 108. Relations with the local American Indian population deteriorated when some tribes started to get angry that the colonists were taking up good land and resources. Lane was forced to abandon Roanoke Island in June 1586. When Francis Drake arrived at the colony on his way home from the West Indies, starving colonists climbed aboard his ships.

On his return to Court, Ralph Lane enthused about the virtues of Chesapeake Bay which had a better harbour and Raleigh, determined to learn from the mistakes of the first expedition, began to sponsor another. His second expedition was to take settler families rather than soldiers and to head further north to Chesapeake Bay. This expedition which was led by John White, who had been on the two previous voyages, sailed in 1587. However, it was forced to land again in North Carolina when the master pilot put the settlers off at Roanoke Island and refused to take them any further.

They established a second colony at Roanoke Island, but it was too late to plant seeds and again relations with the local American Indians were poor. White decided to return to England to bring back more supplies, but by then all ships were needed for defence against the Armada. He was unable to return to Roanoke until 1590 when he found that the settlers he had left behind had disappeared, leaving only a message saying ‘CRO’. It was widely believed that this meant the colonists had moved to the nearby island of Croatoan, but they were never seen again. Most historians think that the ‘lost colonists’ encountered either disease or violence, and that when tragedy hit them they split up into smaller groups and spread out amongst American Indian villages.

The main reasons for the failure of Virginia can therefore be summarised as:

* Food supplies did not survive the journey
* Seeds were sown at the wrong time of year
* Colonists depended on local American Indians for food
* Relations with American Indians deteriorated
* Starvation
* Lack of a good harbour
* Disease
* Failure of ships to return from England with fresh supplies and men.

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