



INSIDE

# THE COURT OF HENRY VIII

1 X 60 HD



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Henry VIII is the most iconic king of English history. Part medieval tyrant, part Renaissance prince, he ruled over his people as no king of England had ever done before. He took a country salvaged by his father from the wreck of civil war and set over it a single, sovereign ruler. By the end of his reign the power of the Tudor dynasty was absolute—but at a terrible cost. Personally responsible for the death of two of his own wives, along with many of his closest friends and advisors, King Henry VIII is said to have ordered the execution of up to 72,000 Britons. His reign will go down as one of the bloodiest in history.

When young Henry came to power in 1509 he was regarded as the jewel of Europe—young, handsome, vivacious, and educated. From the beginning, he understood the need for grandeur and pageantry in a way his father never had. Obsessed with the art of war, he was an expert jousting and spent vast amounts of money on tournaments, displays, and increasing the size of his military retinue. Henry's court was the most magnificent in Europe and he was at its glittering center.

Yet by 1547, his swollen 400-pound frame was putrid with ulcers and sores, and his country was as broken as his body. The coffers of the nation had been bled dry while the very fabric of the nation had been torn apart in his quest for an heir and his overthrow of centuries-old religious certainties. He rejected the shackles of papal authority to found a new English form of Christianity and decades of religious persecution and bloodshed would follow his reign.

What went wrong? *Inside the Court of Henry VIII* pulls back the veil to expose the vicious rivalries, diabolical conspiracies, and paranoia that characterized Henry VIII's court. Under Henry's reign the court was no longer only a place for nobles, and a new breed of man could gain power. Two men in particular, Thomas Wolsey and Thomas Cromwell, the son of a butcher and the son of a blacksmith, would rise to great heights. But as easily as Henry could elevate a man, he could cut him down. Both rose to be Henry's right hand man, and both died in dishonor, their monarch having turned lethally against them.

*Inside the Court of Henry VIII* journeys back into this remarkable story, visiting the castles and palaces where Henry lived and examining the relics that still survive—the carvings, engravings, and symbols that each tells part of the story of his remarkable court.

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## CREDITS

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Executive Producer: Jeremy Dear

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