

THE  
SPANISH  
ARMADA

THE  
TUDOR SOCIETY



# The Spanish Armada

A Tudor Society Information Booklet

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# INTRODUCTION

The Tudor Society is proud to present this book on the Spanish Armada, bringing together articles and resources about this dangerous and epic moment in British history.

I hope that you enjoy these books and that they become a lasting reference for your enjoyment and research.

CLAIRE RIDGWAY  
& THE TUDOR SOCIETY



**Figure 1.** Philip II, King of Spain  
Artist unknown, c. 1580

# THE LEAD-UP

Mary I had married Philip II of Spain back in 1554, allying England with Spain, and even with the death of Mary and accession of her Protestant half-sister, Elizabeth I, in 1558, relations between England and Spain stayed good. However, by the 1580s, Elizabeth had been excommunicated and deemed a heretic and Philip had invaded the Netherlands and Elizabeth was supporting the Dutch rebels against him. Elizabeth was also angering Philip with her support of Sir Francis Drake's attacks on Spanish ports in the Caribbean. Then, in 1587, Elizabeth had the Catholic Mary, Queen of Scots, executed as a traitor.

Philip set about planning an invasion of England, "the Enterprise of England", to depose Elizabeth. He planned on sending a huge fleet, or armada, from Spain to the Netherlands, where he had an army under the control of Alexander Farnese, Duke of Parma and Governor of the Spanish Netherlands. The fleet, commanded by Álvaro de Bazán, Marquis of Santa Cruz, an experienced naval commander, would pick up the forces there and then sail to invade England.

Philip's plan was postponed for a year after Sir Francis Drake launched an attack on his fleet. On 19<sup>th</sup> April 1587, Drake entered the harbour of Cadiz on the Spanish coast and led a pre-emptive strike on the Spanish fleet, capturing or destroying over thirty and their supplies. Drake referred to this successful attack as "Singeing the King of Spain's beard". In December 1587, Elizabeth I gave orders for Charles Howard, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Nottingham and 2<sup>nd</sup> Baron Howard of Effingham, to



be put in charge of her navy and soldiers at sea. Effingham was in his fifties and was an experienced commander. Sir Francis Drake was appointed as vice admiral.

By the time Philip had got a fleet organised again, in 1588, the Marquis of Santa Cruz was dead, and so he appointed Alonso Pérez de Guzmán, 7th Duke of Medina Sidonia, as the fleet's commander, Captain General of the Ocean Sea. The duke was Captain General of Andalucia, a loyal and hardworking man, and a good soldier, but he had no naval experience.

## 25 APRIL 1588

The Armada's banner, which displayed images of the Virgin Mary and Crucified Christ either side of the arms of Spain and with the motto *Exurge, domine et vindica causam tuam* ("Arise, O Lord, and vindicate thy cause", was blessed in a special ceremony on 25<sup>th</sup> April 1588 at Lisbon Cathedral, Portugal. In his book *England and the Crusades, 1095 – 1588*, Christopher Tyerman writes that the banner was then carried to the fleet and "friars announced the papal crusader absolution and indulgence granted to the soldiers and sailors of the enterprise". The Pope supported this enterprise against heresy, it was seen as a holy mission. Garret Mattingly, in *The Defeat of the Spanish Armada*, explains how all the sailors and soldiers went to confession before they sailed and were warned against bad behaviour such as blasphemous swearing. The ships were also searched to make sure that no women were on board.

## 28 MAY 1588

The fleet of 130 ships set sail from Lisbon on 28<sup>th</sup> May 1588, bound for the Spanish Netherlands. The fleet was said to carry "19,290 soldiers, 8350 mariners, 2080 galley slaves, besides a numerous company of priests to stir up religious fervour in the host." (Strickland) A contemporary account recorded that the force waiting in the Netherlands consisted of "thirty thousand foot and eighteen hundred horses."

The fleet put in at A Coruña, in the north-west of Spain, for water and provisions in June, but unfortunately, a storm scattered some of the ships. Two galleasses and a further twenty-eight ships were missing, along with around 6,000 soldiers. Some of the remaining ships were damaged, and many of the men were ill with dysentery and scurvy, and Medina did not believe that they should carry on with the mission. The orders from the king, though, were to set sail as soon as they could. They set off on 12<sup>th</sup> July 1588.



**Figure 2.** Elizabeth I's "Ermine" portrait  
by Nicholas Hilliard, 1585



## 19 JULY 1588

On 19<sup>th</sup> July 1588, Captain Thomas Fleming, who had been patrolling the mouth of the English Channel, reported to Sir Francis Drake that the Spanish Armada had been spotted off English shores, just off The Lizard in Cornwall. According to legend, Sir Francis Drake insisted on finishing his game of bowls on Plymouth Hoe before leaving to vanquish the Spanish threat. He and Lord Howard of Effingham then set sail from Plymouth with 55 ships in pursuit of the Armada. Beacons were lit along the coast to spread the news.

The English Mercurie records that Effingham and Drake did not receive the news of the sighting until 4 pm that day and there was a strong wind, “yet by the indefatigable care and diligence of the Lord High Admirall, the Ark Royal, with five of the largest frigates, anchored out of the harbour that very evening”, and by the next morning more ships had joined them. The English Mercurie states that there were eighty, in all, divided into four squadrons commanded by Effingham, Drake, John Hawkins and Martin Frobisher. This was compared to what the Mercurie says was a fleet of no fewer than 150 Spanish ships. In a letter to Lord Henry Seymour on 21<sup>st</sup> July, Sir Francis Drake wrote that “the fleet of Spaniards are somewhat above a hundred sails, many great ships.”

## 21 JULY 1588

According to the English *Mercurie*, the English fleet set sail on 21<sup>st</sup> July 1588 and “about one in the afternoon they came in sight of the Spanish Armada two leagues to the westward of the Eddistone (Eddystone Rocks, Cornwall), sailing in the form of a half-moon.” There was a skirmish:

*“We attacked the enemy’s rear with the advantage of the winde. The Earl of Cumberland, in the Defiance, gave the first fire. My Lord Howard himself was next engaged for about three hours with Don Alphonso de Legon, in the St Jaques, which would certainly have struck if she had not been seasonably rescued by Ango de Moncata. In the mean time, Sir Francis Drake and two rear admirals, Hawkins and Frobisher, vigorously broadsided the enemy’s sternmost ships, commanded by Vice Admiral Recalde, which were found to retreat, much shattered, to the main body of their fleet, where the Duke de Medina himself commanded. About sunset we had the pleasure of seeing this invincible Armada fill all their sails to get away from us.”*

The *Mercurie* goes on to say that during the night, a galleon, the *St Francis*, was taken by Drake after she had problems with her foremast. Other sources state that the *Nuestra Señora del Rosario* lost its bowsprit after a collision with another Spanish ship and gunpowder blew up in the *San Salvador*, setting the ship on fire. The two ships had to be abandoned.



**Figure 3.** Charles Howard, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Nottingham  
*by Daniël Mijtens, c. 1520*



**Figure 4.** Sir Francis Drake  
*by Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger*

## 22 JULY 1588

By 22<sup>nd</sup> July, news of the Spanish threat had reached Elizabeth I at Richmond Palace, by a system of beacons, but the queen did not panic and impressed her council with her calm reaction, a reaction which historian Alison Weir believes was down to her “knowing that everything possible had been done to make England ready to repel the invader, and that her navy, with its smaller, lighter and faster ships which sailed “low and snug in the water”, was, in the words of Effingham, “the strongest that any prince in Christendom hath.”” Elizabeth composed a prayer of intercession which was read out in England’s churches, and then queen, council and country waited for Spain’s next move.



## 23 JULY 1588

On 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1588, there was another engagement between the fleets just off the Isle of Portland, when the Spanish fleet turned to attack the English fleet that was pursuing them. The subsequent battle was inconclusive.



**Figure 5.** English ships and the Spanish Armada, August 1588  
Artist unknown

## 25 JULY 1588

By 24<sup>th</sup> July 1588, the Armada was off the coast of the Isle of Wight, and it appears that Medina intended to take the island and use it as a base to launch further invasions. On 25<sup>th</sup> July 1588, the Battle of the Isle of Wight took place. The San Luis, a Portuguese galleon, had become separated from the rest of the Spanish fleet during the night and an Andalusian ship, the Santa Ana, had lost her station. John Hawkins, in the Victory, decided to cut off the San Luis and there was a battle between Spanish ships coming to rescue the San Luis and Hawkins, who was supported by the Ark Royal and Golden Lion. Sir George Carey, who was camped at Carisbrooke Castle, recorded that the action lasted for five hours, and then “both fleets shot into the sea”. The invasion of the island had been prevented, and the Armada had been forced to carry on towards Calais.



**Figure 6.** Robert Dudley, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Leicester  
*by Nicholas Hilliard, 1576*



# 27 JULY 1588 THE EARL OF LEICESTER INVITES ELIZABETH I TO TILBURY

On 27<sup>th</sup> July 1588, Robert Dudley, the Earl of Leicester and the Lieutenant and Captain General of the Queen's Armies and Companies, wrote to Elizabeth I and invited her to visit Tilbury Fort, where he was busy assembling troops.

The reason for his invitation was to stop his beloved queen and childhood friend from doing what she was threatening, that is riding to the south coast to be with her troops meeting the Duke of Parma's forces as they landed. Leicester wrote to Elizabeth inviting her to come and "comfort" the forces gathered at Tilbury.

Here is his letter in full:

*My most dear and gracious Lady! It is most true that these enemies that approach your kingdom and person, are your undeserved foes, and being so, hating you for a righteous cause, there is the less fear to be had of their malice or their forces; for there is a most just God that beholdeth the innocency of your heart; and the cause you are assailed for is his and his church's; and he never failed any that faithfully do put their chief trust in his goodness. He hath,*

*to comfort you withal, given you great and mighty means to defend yourself; which means, I doubt not but your Majesty will timely and princely use; and your good God that ruleth all, will assist you and bless you with victory.*

*It doth much rejoice me, to find, by your letter, your noble disposition, as well in present gathering your forces, as in employing your own person in this dangerous action. And because it pleaseth your Majesty to ask mine advice touching your army, and to acquaint me with your secret determination for your person; I will plainly and according to my poor knowledge, deliver my opinion to you. For your army, it is more than time it were gathered, and about you, or so near you, as you may have the use of it upon few hours warning; the reason is, that your mighty enemies are at hand, and if God suffer them to pass by your fleet, you are sure they will attempt their purpose in landing with all expedition. And albeit your navy be very strong, yet, as we have always heard, the other is not only far greater, but their forces of men much beyond your's; else were it in vain for them to bring only a navy provided to keep the sea. But, so furnished, as to both keep the seas with strength sufficient, and to land such a power as may give battle to any Prince; as, no doubt, if the Prince of Parma come forth, their forces by sea shall not only be greatly augmented, but his power to land shall the easier take effect, wheresoever he will attempt; therefore it is most requisite for your Majesty to be provided for all events, of as great force every where as you can devise. For there is no dalliance at such a time, nor with such an enemy; you shall hazard your own honour, beside your person and country, and must offend your gracious God, that gave you these forces and power, and will not use them when you should.*

*Now for the placing of your army; no doubt but I think, about London, the meetest for my part; and suppose others will be of the same mind; and that your Majesty do forthwith give the charge thereof, to some special nobleman about you; and likewise do place all your chief officers; that every man may know what he shall do; and gather as many*

*good horses, above all things, as you can, and the oldest, best, and assuredest Captains, to lead; for therein will consist the greatest hope of good success, under God. And as soon as your army is assembled, that they be, by and by, exercised, every man to know his weapon; and that there be all other things prepared in readiness for your army, as if they should march upon a day's warning; especially carriages, and a commissary of victuals, and your master of ordnance. Of these things, but for your Majesty's commandment, others can say more than I, and partly there is orders already set down.*

*Now for your person, being the most dainty and sacred thing we have in this world to care for, much more for advice to be given for the direction of it, a man must tremble when he thinks of it; especially finding your Majesty to have that princely courage, to transport yourself to the utmost confines of your realm, to meet your enemies and to defend your subjects. I cannot, most dear Queen, consent to that; for upon your well doing consists all the safety of your whole kingdom; and therefore preserve that above all. Yet will I not that, in some sort, so princely and so rare a magnanimity should not appear to your people and the world as it is. And thus far, if it please your Majesty, you may do, to draw yourself to your house at Havering; and your army being about London, at Stratford, East Ham, and the villages thereabout, shall be always not only a defence, but a ready supply to these counties, Essex and Kent, if need be. And in the mean time, your Majesty, to comfort this army, and people of both counties, may, if it please you, spend two or three days to see both the camp and the forts. It is not above fourteen miles at most from Havering, and a very convenient place for your Majesty to lie by the way, and to rest you at the camp. I trust you will be pleased with your Lieutenant's cabbins; and within a mile there is a gentleman's house, where your Majesty may also be. You shall comfort not only these thousands, but many more that shall hear of it. And thus far, but no farther, can I consent to adventure your person. And by*

*the grace of God, there can be no danger in this, though the enemy should pass by your fleet. But your Majesty may without dishonour return to your own forts being but at hand; and you may have two thousand horse, well to be lodged at Rumford and other villages near Havering; and your footmen to lodge near London.*

*Lastly, for myself, I see, most gracious Lady, you know what will most comfort a faithful servant; for there is nothing in this world I take that joy in, that I do in your good favour; and it is no small favour to send to your poor servant, thus to visit him. I can yield no recompence, but the like sacrifice I owe to God, which is a thankful heart, and humbly next my soul to him, to offer body, life and all, to do you acceptable service; and so will pray to God, not only for present victory over all your enemies, but longest life, to see the end of all those that wish you evil, and make me so happy as to do you some service.*

*From Gravesend, ready to go to your poor, but most willing soldiers. This Saturday the 27th July.*

*Your Majesty's, &c.*

R. LEYCESTER.

*P. S. I have taken the best order I can possibly with the Lieutenants of Kent, to be present at Dover themselves, and to keep there three or four thousand men to supply my Lord Admiral, if he come thither, and with any thing else that there is to be had. I wish there might be some quantity of more powder sent to lie, in Dover, for all needs."*

Leicester had also created a blockade of boats across the Thames. England was as prepared and protected as she could be.

Tilbury Fort was built in 1539 by Henry VIII on the site of a dissolved hermitage, hence its original name "The Hermitage Bulwark" or "Thermitage Bulwark". It had been built as a D-shaped blockhouse and was designed to cross-fire with the Gravesend Blockhouse built in the same year. In

Elizabeth I's reign, with the threat of Spanish invasion in 1588, the fort was reinforced with a star-shaped line of earthworks, built on its landward side.



**Figure 7.** Elizabeth I at Tilbury  
Vintage etching

## 28 JULY 1588

At midnight on 28<sup>th</sup> July 1588, eight hell-burners were ordered to be sent amongst the galleons of the Spanish Armada which were anchored just off Calais. Hell-burners were fire-ships, ships that were packed with wood and pitch and set alight. The high winds at Calais caused an inferno which resulted in complete chaos, and the Armada's crescent formation was wrecked as galleons scattered in panic.



**Figure 8.** Alonso Pérez de Guzmán,  
7<sup>th</sup> Duke of Medina Sidonia, Artist unknown

## 29 JULY 1588

The day after the English fleet had wrecked the crescent formation of the Spanish Armada and caused havoc with their hell-burners, they attacked the Spanish fleet. This battle is known as the Battle of Gravelines because it took place just off the port of Gravelines, a Spanish stronghold in Flanders, part of the Spanish Netherlands, but near the border with France. The Duke of Medina Sidonia had been unable to reform the Spanish fleet at Calais, due to a southeasterly wind, and had been forced to regroup at Gravelines.

The English fleet had learned from previous encounters with the Spanish fleet and so used new and more successful tactics. They had learned from the skirmishes in the Channel that the Spaniards could not easily reload their guns, so with their smaller and lighter ships, the English were able to provoke the Spaniards into firing, but keep out of range, and then close in for the kill. As the Spaniards tried frantically to reload, the English ships took advantage of the situation by getting close to their enemy and firing repeatedly. The Spanish fleet was also adversely affected by the wind, which kept driving them into shallow water.

By around 4 pm, both sides had run out of ammunition, although the English had been loading objects like chains into their cannons so that they could continue inflicting damage on the Spanish Armada. Spain was defeated, losing at least five ships and having several others severely damaged. Alison Weir writes that Spain lost 2,000 men compared to England's 50 men, a huge difference.





**Figure 9.** Defeat of the Spanish Armada at Graveline  
*by* Philipp Jakob Loutherbourg the Younger

## 30 JULY 1588

On 30<sup>th</sup> July 1588, the wind changed, and the remaining ships of the Spanish Armada were forced northwards and scattered. It really did seem that the elements, particularly the wind, were on England's side. Sir Francis Drake wrote to Sir Francis Walsingham on 30th July 1588, saying "There was never anything pleased me better than seeing the enemy flying with a southerly wind northward. We have the Spaniards before us, and the mind, with the grace of God, to wrestle a pull with them."

Things got worse for the Spaniards as terrible storms began, causing more damage to the Spanish ships. It is little wonder that the wind that helped the English at the Battle of Gravelines and which scattered the Spanish fleet the following day became known as the "Protestant wind" because people believed that God had sent this wind to protect England from the Catholic Spanish Armada. Later, when it was obvious that the Spanish Armada had been defeated, medals were struck to celebrate, and these medals were inscribed with "Flavit Jehovah et Dissipati Sunt", meaning "Jehovah blew with His wind and they were scattered". The wind certainly helped the English fleet.

Also on 30<sup>th</sup> July 1588, Elizabeth I moved from Richmond Palace to St James's Palace, which was seen as more secure. Henry Carey, Lord Hunsdon and Elizabeth's cousin, was in charge of the Queen's safety, and the Queen was surrounded by a guard of 200 men. They were not taking any chances.

# EARLY AUGUST 1588

By the first week of August 1588, the battered, defeated and demoralised Spanish Armada had started the first part of its long journey back home to Spain.

The Battle of Gravelines had seen England victorious, and between that and the awful weather Spain had lost five of its main ships and was suffering major damage to many others. Ammunition was pretty much non-existent, and food rations were low. All the Spanish commander, the Duke of Medina Sidonia, could do was to try and salvage what was left of his fleet and men and get them home to safety. The English fleet, led by Lord Howard, pursued the Spanish ships as far north as the mouth of the Tyne but gave up on 2<sup>nd</sup> August and turned back, dropping anchor at ports such as Harwich and Margate.

Although the Spanish fleet had suffered the worst, England had not got away scot-free. Alison Plowden, in “Armada 1588”, writes of how an epidemic of typhus was “raging through the ships” and quotes the Lord Admiral, Charles Howard of Effingham, as writing:

*“It is a most pitiful sight to see here at Margate how the men, having no place to receive them, die in the streets. I am driven myself of force to come on land, to see them bestowed in some lodging; and the best I can get is barns and such outhouses; and the relief is small that I can provide for them.”*

Howard went on to say that he was grieved to see “them that have served so valiantly to die so miserably.” How sad that these men had survived battle at sea only to die in outhouses of disease.

## 8 AUGUST 1588

Even though the remaining ships of the Spanish Armada were homeward bound, England was still expecting to be threatened by the troops of the Duke of Parma who could come across the English Channel as soon as the wind was favourable.

On 8<sup>th</sup> August 1588, Elizabeth I decided to accept the Earl of Leicester's invitation and visit the troops he had gathered near Tilbury Fort. Against the advice of her council, who wanted her to remain in the safety of London, Elizabeth travelled from St James's Palace to Tilbury by state barge on 8<sup>th</sup> August. On her arrival at Tilbury, the queen reviewed her troops, who had gathered to greet her, and then spent the night at Saffron Garden, in Edward Ritchie's manor house.

The Earl of Leicester must have been exhausted. Susan Frye, in "The Myth of Elizabeth at Tilbury", writes of how he had quickly assembled the 8,000 men who were present on the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> August, he had organised a boom across the Thames and, as he complained to Sir Francis Walsingham in a letter dated 4<sup>th</sup> August, "he was having to do everything - to be cook, caterer and huntsman". All that and there were reports that the Armada had been sighted coming up the Channel.

### 9 AUGUST 1588

On 9<sup>th</sup> August 1588, Elizabeth I appeared before her troops gathered at Tilbury. In her article, "The Myth of Elizabeth at Tilbury", Susan Frye, writes that there are no reliable eyewitness accounts regarding Elizabeth I's appearance

on that day, but that tradition places the queen in armour, giving a rousing speech - an iconic Gloriana.

Many historians and authors have described Elizabeth I on that August day in 1588. In “Elizabeth the Great” (1958), Elizabeth Jenkins wrote:

*“A steel corselet was found for her to wear and a helmet with white plumes was given to a page to carry. Bareheaded, the Queen mounted the white horse. The Earl of Ormonde carried the sword of state before her, Leicester walked at the horse’s bridle, and the page with the helmet came behind.”*

Carolly Erickson, in “The First Elizabeth” (1983), wrote:

*“She rode through their ranks on a huge white warhorse, armed like a queen out of antique mythology in a silver cuirass and silver truncheon. Her gown was white velvet, and there were plumes in her hair like those that waved from the helmets of the mounted soldiers.”*

J E Neale, in “Queen Elizabeth I: A Biography” (1934), wrote:

*“Mounted on a stately steed, with a truncheon in her hands, she witnessed a mimic battle and afterwards reviewed the army.”*

In “The Armada” (1959), Garrett Mattingly wrote:

*“She was clad all in white velvet with a silver cuirass embossed with a mythological design, and bore in her right hand a silver truncheon chased in gold.”*

Agnes Strickland, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in her “Lives of the Queens of England”, wrote:

*“She wore a polished steel corslet on her breast, and below this warlike bodice descended a farthingale of such monstrous amplitude, that it is wonderful how her mettled war-horse submitted to carry a lady encumbered with a gaberline of so strange a fashion; but in this veritable array*

*the royal heroine rode bareheaded between the lines, with a courageous and smiling countenance.”*

Reading those descriptions, it is clear, as Susan Frye points out, that an analogy is being drawn between Elizabeth I and Britomart, the armed heroine of Edmund Spenser’s “The Faerie Queene”, the virgin Knight of Chastity and Virtue. However there is no firm evidence that Elizabeth dressed like that on that day, but I like to think, with Elizabeth’s love of drama and her belief in the power of image and propaganda, that she appeared before her troops just like that.

There are three versions of the speech that Elizabeth I gave to the troops at Tilbury. The first is recorded by Dr Leonel Sharp in a letter to the Duke of Buckingham, thought to have been written sometime after the Duke of Buckingham’s 1623 marriage expedition to Spain. Sharp’s is the most famous rendition of Elizabeth I’s speech:

“My loving people,

*We have been persuaded by some that are careful of our safety, to take heed how we commit our selves to armed multitudes, for fear of treachery; but I assure you I do not desire to live to distrust my faithful and loving people. Let tyrants fear. I have always so behaved myself that, under God, I have placed my chiefest strength and safeguard in the loyal hearts and good-will of my subjects; and therefore I am come amongst you, as you see, at this time, not for my recreation and disport, but being resolved, in the midst and heat of the battle, to live and die amongst you all; to lay down for my God, and for my kingdom, and my people, my honour and my blood, even in the dust.*

*I know I have the body but of a weak and feeble woman; but I have the heart and stomach of a king, and of a king of England too, and think foul scorn that Parma or Spain, or any prince of Europe, should dare to invade the borders of my realm; to which rather than any dishonour shall grow by me, I myself will take up arms, I myself will*

*be your general, judge, and rewarder of every one of your virtues in the field.*

*I know already, for your forwardness you have deserved rewards and crowns; and We do assure you in the word of a prince, they shall be duly paid you. In the mean time, my lieutenant general shall be in my stead, than whom never prince commanded a more noble or worthy subject; not doubting but by your obedience to my general, by your concord in the camp, and your valour in the field, we shall shortly have a famous victory over those enemies of my God, of my kingdom, and of my people.”*

The second version of the Tilbury Speech is one recorded in 1612 by William Leigh, in his sermon “Quene Elizabeth, Paraleld in Her Princely Vertues”, where he described Elizabeth appearing before her troops “with God in her heart, and a commaunding staffe in her hand” and saying the following:

*“Come on now, my companions at arms, and fellow soldiers, in the field, now for the Lord, for your Queen, and for the Kingdom. For what are these proud Philistines, that they should revile the host of the living God? I have been your Prince in peace, so will I be in war; neither will I bid you go and fight, but come and let us fight the battle of the Lord. The enemy perhaps may challenge my sex for that I am a woman, so may I likewise charge their mould for that they are but men, whose breath is in their nostrils, and if God do not charge England with the sins of England, little do I fear their force... Si deus nobiscum quis contra nos? (if God is with us, who can be against us?).”*

The third version of Elizabeth’s speech appears beneath the painting of “Elizabeth at Tilbury” in St Faith’s Church, Gaywood, which was commissioned by Thomas Hare (1572 - 1634), the rector and is dated 1588, although it may well have been painted in the early 16th century. This speech, published in Susan Frye’s article, reads:

*“Now for Queene & For the kingdome I have beene your Queene in P[e]a[ce] in warre, neither will I bid you*



*goe & Fight, but come & let us Fight the battell of the  
 Lorde-For what ar thes proud Philistines that they should  
 Revile the host of the Living God. It may be they will  
 challenge my [suxe] For that I am a woman so may I charge  
 [their] mo[uld] [flor that they ar but [men] whose breath  
 is in theire nostrells and if God doe not charge England  
 with the sinnes of England we shall not neede to feare what  
 Rome or Spayne can doe against us w: whome is but An  
 ar[mi]e o[f] Flesh where as with us in the Lord our God to  
 Fight our battells & to helpe I with us yt skills not Greatley  
 if all the devills in hell be against us[.]”*

Frye points out that this Gaywood speech and Leigh's record of Elizabeth's speech are scrambled versions of one another. She believes that the Gaywood painting speech is a copy of Leigh's sermon and is convinced that Leigh's speech is “a more probable Tilbury speech, while Sharp's may be a memorial reconstruction.”

Whatever the truth regarding Elizabeth's appearance and speech that day, Elizabeth's visit was to raise troop morale and to serve as propaganda, and it succeeded on both those counts.

## 20 AUGUST 1588

On 20<sup>th</sup> August 1588 a thanksgiving service was held at St Paul's in London to give thanks to God for England's victory over the Spanish Armada. The Armada had been defeated, obliterated in fact, yet the English fleet was left intact, and only around 100 English men had been lost in the skirmishes.

Although Sir Francis Drake and Lord Howard of Effingham should be given credit for the English fleet's successful tactics, much of England's victory was down to the weather, the 'Protestant Wind' which scattered the Spanish fleet and caused damage to their ships. King Philip II of Spain commented on the defeat of his fleet, saying "I sent you out to war with men, not with the wind and waves", recognising that it was the weather and not any shortcomings of his commanders who were to blame for England's victory. The wind had helped the English navy at the Battle of Gravelines because the Spanish fleet kept being driven into shallow water and then on 30<sup>th</sup> July 1588 the wind changed direction and forced the remaining Spanish ships northwards and to scatter.

Elizabeth I also recognised that England's victory was down to the weather, but she believed that it was because God was on England's side. A special medal was struck to commemorate England's victory. The medal was inscribed with the words *Flavit Jehovah et Dissipati Sunt* – "God blew and they were scattered". The defeat of the Spanish Armada was a divine victory, or so the English people believed.

The defeat of the Spanish Armada was commemorated in the famous Elizabeth I Armada portrait which was once thought to have been painted by George Gower. It is a beautiful portrait and is rich in symbolism. I did a video talk on the painting for the Tudor Society and you can see it at <https://www.tudorsociety.com/elizabeth-i-armada-portrait/>.



**Figure 10.** Portrait of Elizabeth I of England  
The Armada Portrait

Artist unknown (formerly attributed to George Gower), 1588



# SOURCES AND FURTHER READING

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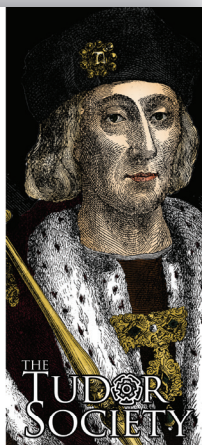
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THE  
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# Henry VII



# Henry VIII



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# Mary I



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