



New Worlds, Lost Worlds: The Rule of the Tudors, 1485-1603

Susan Brigden

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No period in British history has more resonance and mystery today than the sixteenth century. *New Worlds, Lost Worlds* brings the atmosphere and events of this great epoch to life. Exploring the underlying religious motivations for the savage violence and turbulence of the period—from Henry VIII's break with Rome to the overwhelming threat of the Spanish Armada—Susan Brigden investigates the actions and influences of such near-mythical figures as Elizabeth I, Thomas More, Bloody Mary, and Sir Walter Raleigh. Authoritative and accessible, *New Worlds, Lost Worlds*, the latest in the Penguin History of Britain series, provides a superb introduction to one of the most important, compelling, and intriguing periods in the history of the Western world.

New Worlds, Lost Worlds: The Rule of the Tudors, 1485-1603 Details

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JS Found says

If you read a lot of history, or even some, you always get to the bibliography at the end of the book--and you are always amazed. Dozens of pages of names of texts, and always in small print. How does the historian do her job? How does she read all those books, and what does she look for when she reads them? Does she take copious notes on every book, and cull out the what she needs? I could just enroll in a M.A or PHD history program, but who has the time, money, and patience to spend your days in a library reading room poring over ancient texts? I love reading history; not sure if I want to do it.

But anyway, this is a very well-written book on the Tudors, specifically the reigns of Henry VIII and his daughter Elizabeth I. It is a survey of England and Ireland at that time--their politics, societies, religions. Most attention is paid to the latter, with the central event being the English Reformation and how English society adjusted and failed to adjust. The country was always in a precarious situation as Europe was Catholic and there were worries about invasions overthrowing the Protestant monarchs.

It is invalid to fault a history for history that you don't like. That's not the author's fault--she can't change the past to fit your tastes. I skimmed some of the Irish narrative, which is in each chapter. That wasn't as interesting as the main action in England. But one thing I can fault the author for is not paying enough attention to the arts, particularly literature. There are authors and works mentioned, but in the context of the political situations, and they are political writings. I would have liked to seen a chapter on the arts in this fascinating period. But overall a good book.

Sam Rankin says

This is possibly the first history book i have ever read, it was certainly the first i ever enjoyed. Brigden takes the reader on a romp through the lives and impacts of the tudor monarchs. Highly enjoyable and also easy to read, i'd recommend this to anyone who usually finds history too dry for their palate.

Jessica says

I think of this book as my penance for enjoying all the naughty bits in HBO's the Tudors. The book is amazingly dense; I was not surprised to learn that the book is sometimes assigned for college history courses. The author does a great job of creating a conceptual framework of key concepts - the nobility, the English Reformation, how the judicial system evolved, landholding, power of the commons, the contrast of Ireland and Scotland - upon which to hang all the hundreds and hundreds of characters, dates, and historical events that made up the rule of the Tudors 1485-1603. It's a tough penance but I no longer feel guilty about watching the Tudors - the series proves to be quite accurate about all the pivotal changes that Henry VIII brought about.

Susanna - Censored by GoodReads says

Concentrates a lot of time on religious developments (not unexpected), and on Ireland, which was. I almost felt I needed a scorecard for Ireland, whose history I am less familiar with than English history for this period. Very interesting.

Justin Evans says

Pretty uneven- the sections on Ireland were almost impossible to follow, and there was far too much about the endless, pointless court 'politics' of the Tudors. Do you really care to read functional history about Elizabeth's favorites? That stuff's best left to HBO. When Brigden writes about everyday life and religious strife, the book's much more interesting. When she writes about the structures of government at the time, it's not interesting in the same way but I can see those sections as an important part of understanding the times. She refers every now and then to the causes behind the Great Men and Women's actions (population rates, agricultural/ economic history, and so on) but never discusses them at any length. I'm also very confused, because although it's only 360 odd pages long, it feels like a 500 page book. Part of this is that it's just not a great read; but the pages also seem wide. Not much in the way of margins, either. Is this a cost-cutting measure? In any case, it took me forever to read.

Dan Walker says

This is a brilliant book - and in glad I'm done. This is a master's level course on history - you had better have already read the textbook. This is the lecture, or sermon, that assumes you have a thorough grasp of the basic historical facts. I do not, so found myself regularly consulting Wikipedia.

The author displays a thorough grasp of the late 15th and 16th centuries under the Tudors. Surely everyone has heard of Henry VIII and Queen Elizabeth. It's hard to imagine what Britain would be like today if they had not ruled. This book is an eye-opening look into that time - really a commentary on the events and what drove them - not at all a summary of the events themselves. It's the editorial to the headlines.

For example, while Elizabeth was known as the Virgin Queen, she was not above letting important political figures think she was interested in marrying them - as long as it kept them from building an invasion force. And it's easy to see why her reign provides so much material - she was not that powerful, so was constantly attempting to keep things in balance: her advisors, Spain and France, Protestantism and Catholicism, etc. "Everything the same," was her motto. Henry VIII had as much if not more such intrigues.

I also learned a saying: "It thunders around kings' thrones." It was shocking how many royal advisors were beheaded. Power was a fleeting thing to grasp, and once obtained it had to be tended vigilantly.

So if you've covered all the usual fare on the Tudors, step up your understanding of the religion, politics, and wars of that age - really a transition from rule by the nobility to that of the king - and read this book.

Edoardo Albert says

At school, my children have studied the Tudors in Year 1, Year 3, Year 6 and Year 9 and, looking ahead, they will probably turn up in years 11, 12 and 13 too - and that's not to mention Shakespeare in English, The Tudors on TV, Wolf Hall on stage and screen, and hundreds of other books, plays, films, series and shows. In an age of historical ignorance, we are left with 1066, Elizabeth, bluff King Hal and his wives and, er, that's about it. But the problem with all of this is its bittiness - we get parts, rather than the whole. Susan Brigden's book is a wonderful corrective to this, providing an overview of the whole period, from the grey penury of Henry VII through to the dog days of Elizabeth's reign. In fact, I'd say this is the best one volume history of the Tudors that I've read. Brigden is particularly good on the religious upheavals that made the Tudor era the definitive break between medieval and modern eras, and the revolution in world views that brought about and was caused by these changes.

Ty says

The writing style deserves a single star, but the author impressively integrates quotations from numerous period sources into every paragraph and almost every sentence. Also, the bibliographical essay at the back is valuable for researchers in the Tudor culture.

John says

In going over such well-trodden ground, a modern author needs an "angle" -- here Brigden focuses on Elizabeth, religion and Ireland for specialization, which made the book a bit dense, but okay for those in need of "Tudor fix" gratification.

Jenny says

Well, I definitely learnt a lot about Ireland and religion as the book focused alot on these topics, which is good because Ireland isn't often discussed when reading about the Tudors unless it's about rebellion. The book provides some nice context and narrative for this time but skipped over important events quite quickly. It was also a little dry.

James Webster says

Pretty good general history of the Tudor period, though I felt that Elizabeth I's reign was given rather more attention and detail than those of the other monarchs. The sections on Ireland seemed interminable...

Andrew says

This is by far one of the strongest entries in the Penguin History of Britain: it's comparable to Carpenter's *Struggle For Mastery*, still the best in the series.

Brigden's strength is that she manages to integrate the social and political history in a way that moves the historical narrative forward. Too often, a history text will have the political history that's then followed by the cultural and social history in a way that leaves the two feeling disjointed, but Brigden manages to integrate the two nearly seamlessly, so you'll have a few chapters of politics, a chapter on social history, and then back to the politics.

This entry is also strong in that Brigden integrates Ireland into the political history of Tudor England in a way that shows how the events in Irish periphery were closely tied in with events of the English core.

As with most of the Penguin History of Britain, the bibliographical essay at the end is very helpful in both pointing out the major surveys and also providing the reader a helpful guide to further pursuit of the various topics touched on in the book.

All told, this is an outstanding guide to the history of Britain during the English Reformation.

Peter Hutt Sierra says

A very engaging look at Great Britain under the Tudor dynasty. It's genuinely enjoyable to read, and thanks to Susan Brigden I've become a real fan of the early modern period in European history. This book also has a slightly melancholy feel for a Roman Catholic, as I watch the faith slowly fade away with each successive persecution. Each rebellion becomes fainter, and every decade the community of faithful withers away their hopes of a restoration becoming nothing more than pipe dreams. I imagine it feels the same for many evangelicals as the impulse to create a truly reformed church is systematically smothered by monarchical power. At the same time we see the degeneration of the nobility, for better or worse, from feudal lords who can raise armies at will to glorified landlords distinguished only by their names. Any semblance of noblesse oblige is steadily ground away by the wheels of capitalism and the unceasing enclosure of peasant lands. It wasn't until the epilogue that I realized how relevant the title is. The kingdom we see at the end of Elizabeth's reign is fundamentally changed from that which her grandfather conquered.

This book has left me with a profound respect for the peasantry of early modern England and for all the hardships they managed to endure. For all my ancestors' flaws I admire their ability to survive this era. I've also become a great admirer of the dynasty's founder, Henry VII, and its loyal servant Thomas Moore.

Chiara Arisio says

Un saggio interessante che fornisce un quadro di insieme della Gran Bretagna nell'epoca Tudor, dalla fine della Guerra delle due Rose, al regno di Elisabetta I, ricco di particolari, ma senza annoiare.

Tom says

Plenty of information here but I did sometimes find her writing a bit difficult, worth getting some

background historical knowledge before diving into this, may be a bit daunting to those new to the history of the Tudor period.
