**Henry VIII facts**

***Who was Henry VIII?***

Henry VIII was King of England and Ireland from 21 April 1509 until 28 January 1547, and is perhaps one of the most famous monarchs in English history.

The young prince was never expected to become king, but when his older brother, Arthur, Prince of Wales, died unexpectedly at the age of 15, Henry became heir to the throne.

Upon the death of his father, Henry was coronated on 24 June 1509 — he was just 17 years old. He immediately set about marrying his elder brother’s widow, Catherine of Aragon.

***What was Henry VIII like?***

The young King Henry was said to be handsome, clever and fun in contrast to his boring father. He was over six feet tall and loved jousting, hunting, composing music and throwing big, expensive parties!

He loved spending money.

But, in his later years, all that indulgence took its toll on his physical health. The older King Henry was hugely overweight and struggled to walk. At the age of 50 he had a 54-inch (137cm) waist! He also suffered from a gruesome ulcer on his leg that caused him constant pain — which may have explained his bad temper!

Henry is known for being a ruthless King who ruled with an iron fist. Strong-willed and bullish, he handed out executions to anyone who stood in his way. In fact, during his 38-year reign, it is said he had more than 70,000 people executed

***Henry VIII and the English Reformation***

One of the biggest changes that Henry brought about during his reign was the English Reformation.

After 24 years of marriage, his first wife, Catherine, had failed to give Henry a male heir. Frustrated, he went to the Pope to ask for a divorce, but the Pope wouldn’t allow it.

Unhappy, Henry took matters into his own hands. He broke away from the Catholic Church, creating his own Church of England and naming himself the head.

***Henry VIII’s children***

Henry’s first wife, ***Catherine of Aragon***, had many pregnancies but unfortunately most ended in stillbirths. The royal couple were thrilled when their first-born son, Henry, was born in 1511. A lavish party was thrown, but sadly he only lived until he was seven weeks old.

The only surviving child from Henry and Catherine of Aragon’s marriage was a daughter – born in 1516 – who they named ***Mary***. Once Catherine was no longer Queen, she was forbidden from seeing or communicating with her daughter, although they sent each other secret letters until Catherine’s death. Mary later went on to become Mary I, the first Queen of England and Ireland (ruling in her own right).

Henry’s next child, born during his marriage to ***Anne Boleyn***, was a baby girl, Elizabeth, whom they named after Henry’s mother. Elizabeth was a healthy baby but after Henry had Anne executed (awkward!), he had little to do with Elizabeth’s upbringing.

In 1537, Henry’s dream of a son finally came true when his third wife, ***Jane Seymour***, gave birth to ***Prince Edward***. The celebrations didn’t last long however, as less than two weeks later, the Queen died due to complications from the birth.

No children came from his next three marriages.

Henry died in 1547 at the age of 55, obese and riddled with health issues. He was buried in St. George’s Chapel in Windsor Castle next to his third wife and mother to his only surviving son, Jane.

***What is Henry VIII remembered for?***

Henry is often remembered as a fierce King who loved eating, drinking and partying, with a fancy for chopping people’s heads off! But he is also seen as a great symbol of our monarchy.

He was a controversial King who made many scandalous and significant changes during his rule. He changed the face of Christianity and his influence can still be seen in England today.