

Hey guys, welcome to the Renaissance English History Podcast, Episode Forty on The Armada, Part 2: The 12 Day Battle. Seats are filling up quickly on our Spring English Cathedrals tour, so if you'd like to come spend a fantastic week exploring amazing places and hearing fantastic music in the most authentic settings, go to www.bigworld.com for the dates, itinerary and price information. That's www.bigworld - all one word - .com

Then start music

Hello, and welcome to Episode Forty of the Renaissance English History Podcast: The 12 Day Battle. I'm your host, Heather Teysko, and I'm a storyteller who makes history accessible because I believe it's a pathway to understanding who we are and our place in the universe, and being more deeply in touch with our own humanity.

Real quick admin notes this week... I have just joined the Agora Podcast Network - it's a growing network of independent podcasts who work to grow the entire podcast audience. Agora is a marketplace of the mind where intelligent, independent podcasts meet curious and discerning listeners, and somehow I have convinced them that this podcast should qualify. So as part of that, I'm switching hosting services. I'm a bit nervous about this as I've been with hipcast for almost 7 years now, but they assure me that the switch should be painless and straight forward. If you notice any down time or experience any problems, please let me know. Also as part of that move, you will hear ads on this podcast. I have debated internally a lot about ads. I never wanted to flood my podcast with ads, but as it stands right now, ads are an easy way to generate a bit of income to help pay for the expenses. Most of the podcasts I listen to do have ads, and the other Agora podcasts, many of whom you might already be listening to, also have ads that are fairly unobtrusive at the beginning and end of the episode. So, let me know what you think. My hope is that being part of Agora will help grow this audience, as well as the audiences of history podcasts in general, which is something I am committed to. A rising tide lifts all ships and all that.

Next, a reminder that if you aren't signed up for my newsletter yet, it's free, and you can do so at the website - englandcast.com. Newsletter subscribers get exclusive content - in December there was the digital advent calendar as well as an extra minicast, and this month there's the videocast of my trip to Cadiz as well as an extra minicast on Kett's rebellion. It's totally free and I won't ever spam you or sell your email address. Also, don't forget there are show notes available for each episode now at <http://www.englandcast.com>. And you can now or text the listener feedback line, which is 801 6TEYSKO or 801 683-9756 to leave feedback, show ideas, nice thoughts, etc.

And before we get started officially, the Agora Podcast member I want to plug this month is the History of the Papacy podcast from Stephen Guerrero. I talk a lot about religion on this podcast because it's such a big influencer of the history of the time - Renaissance England wouldn't be Renaissance England without the particular brand of Protestantism that emerges out of the Reformation. If you want more background on the Pope, and on Catholic history, though, check out this podcast.

So now, with that out of the way, let's move on to the Armada! When last we spoke, Phillip of Spain was on a holy mission to eradicate Protestant England, restore England to Catholicism, and most likely imprison or kill Elizabeth. This is the unsinkable Armada. The most powerful empire in the world coming after our teeny tiny little outpost of an island which has hardly any defenses. Woe is me! How will we ever survive! What to do, what to do.

But it's important to remember that things weren't all doom and gloom for England. First off, they had home court advantage. News of the developments could be carried to Elizabeth in Richmond in a matter of hours, whereas Phillip was in Spain, in his compound El Escorial, north of Madrid. Changes to the battle plan could be made on the fly much more easily. Also, psychologically, it is much easier to rally troops to defend their homeland and their families than it is to get them to fight to capture another country. Finally, as we've talked about in other episodes, England's ship building technology, mixed with the small industrial revolution going on in the Weald with the blast iron furnace and the many cannon, had meant that technologically England was far more advanced than other countries at this time. Spain was relying on the fact that they had the best footsoldiers in the world, but none of those footsoldiers meant anything if your enemy wouldn't grapple with you and instead favored shooting your ships with their cannon. Also, England had a cast of characters that were extremely talented, and the people who dictated policy, didn't micromanage to the same level as Phillip, and let the talented sailors like Drake and Frobisher make their own decisions. So as much as this was scary, and a major threat, England wasn't the sitting duck that it is so often portrayed to be.

Let's look at the cast of Characters on each side.

In the Spanish corner you have Phillip II on top. He is a beaurocrat in every sense of the word. He loves micromanaging. I would have hated to have had him as a manager. He believed that his was a holy mission, and he felt little need to meet with his commanders and understand their perspectives because his directions were given to him directly by God.

His Armada Team includes the Duke of Parma, who is heading the Spanish army of 30,000 soldiers in the Netherlands. He has doubts about the success of this operation, and he resents that the command of it has been given to someone else, the Duke of Medina Sidonia. He wasn't directly obstructionist, but he didn't help nearly as much as he could have.

The Duke of Medina Sidonia was an army commander but got seasick on ships. In fact, he didn't want anything to do with the Armada. He begged to not have be appointed the head of it. He didn't have the money, he didn't like boats, he had no experience. But he was good at following orders, and when Phillip ordered him to do something, and gave him the plan, he carried it out.

Juan Martinez de Recalde was the third person carrying out the plans. He was the Drake equivalent of Spain, the best admiral they had. Time and time again, he felt that if he were given the chance to deviate from the battle plan, he could have defeated the English.

On the English Side we have Elizabeth. Elizabeth is clearly a woman, and so she is not expected to participate in making war. As such, she delegates.

The Lord High Admiral is Charles Howard, Howard of Effingham, and while he doesn't have the same naval skills, similarly to Medina Sidonia, he trusts the renegades like Drake, Hawkins and Frobisher. He is put in place to be a check on them and keep them in control, but he doesn't overrule them to the same extent as Medina Sidonia with Recalde.

Then we have the brilliant sailors and admirals, familiar names like Sir Francis Drake, John Hawkins, and Martin Frobisher.

So the Armada sails in May with 130 ships, 30,000 men, 180 priests, 11 million pounds of ships biscuits, 40,000 gallons of olive oil, 600,000 pounds of salted pork, 11,000 pairs of sandals, and 14,000 barrels of wine. These 130 ships were largely converted merchant ships, not conducive to a naval battle, but a naval battle wasn't part of the plan. The plan was to use the ships simply to transport the soldiers for their land invasion.

The idea in theory was a sound one. Send the ships up and meet with the Duke of Parma from the Netherlands, sail across to Dover, land your kickass troops, march to London, get the queen, restore Catholicism, burn some Protestants. It sounds pretty easy, right?

But there are a few problems. Communications at sea before texting or phones was difficult. The idea that you could have all these ships meet up with a whole crew of other ships, somewhere in the ocean, just sort of randomly is absurd. And yet, that's what the plan called for.

By July, the English navy is in Plymouth waiting to see where the Armada will arrive. When Drake first heard that the Armada was spotted, he moved his ships into the Channel and began what would be one of the unique methods of the English fighting, which was to simply harrass and shoot at the Spanish ships. Not engage them, but simply fire cannon after cannon at them, broadside. Rather than turn back and attack, the Spanish fleet kept sailing, trying to figure out how and where to meet up with the Duke of Parma.

After one of these early exchanges the Spanish did lose a carrack and galleon, the Rosario and San Salvador, which were abandoned. Francis Drake boarded these ships and captured the equivalent of 2.5 million pounds and a huge supply of gunpowder and ammunition.

The harrassment went on for several days like this with the Spanish sailing, trying to look for Parma, and the English just nipping at them like annoying dogs. The Spanish tried to get into the Solent, which was the bit of land in between the Isle of Wight and the English Mainland. They hoped to have a protected base there, and then meet Parma. This was where the first real attack from the English comes in to play. It's important to remember that Elizabeth has put all of her resources into the navy. If the Spanish are allowed to land anywhere, there is hardly any army there to protect the mainland. They cannot allow the Spanish to land.

So the English break into four groups to attack in different ways, and forced the Spanish back out into the open sea. They wound up heading for Calais, still not sure where Parma's army was.

On July 27 the Armada was anchored off Calais in a defensive formation close to where Parma's army was meant to be waiting. Parma's army was dealing with disease and was reduced to about half its size, about 16,000 men. Here they find out the Parma's army is still not able to be transported or assembled in port, and that it would take at least another six days. Also, the port where they were meant to be waiting was being blockaded by a dutch fleet. Parma suggested that the Armada separate and drive away the dutch, but Medina Sidonia was afraid he would need all his ships for his own protection. The Dutch blockade had been there for a while, and it seems as if nobody in Spain really took the Dutch seriously. They were always going to have to cross the Dutch navy, but it didn't seem like that big of a deal to them in the planning.

That night the English sent eight fireships into the Spanish fleet. They sacrificed some of their warships, packing them with pitch, brimstone, gunpowder and tar, and they sent them into this densely packed group of Spanish ships. The Spanish managed to intercept 2 and tow them away, but the others floated into the

fleet. Much of the fleet had to cut their anchors, and drifted around, scattering in confusion. No Spanish ships were lost, but they did lose their defensive position, and the English were able to take advantage of this confusion and close in.

The following battle lasted for 8 hours, during which time the English used their superior manoeuvrability to get off shot after shot at the Spanish. The Spanish guns were different - took longer to reload and were much more unweildy. The Spanish were relying on grappling, but Drake and the English knew this, and stayed well away from them. After 8 hours the English were running out of ammunition, and they had to pull back.

Five Spanish ships were lost, but even more important, the Spanish planned rendezvous with Parma was clearly not going to happen. The Spanish Armada drifted North, and while this provided England a bit of space to relax, it was clear that they were still a threat and it wasn't over yet. Howard harrassed the Armada all the way into Scotland, and then Howard called off the pursuit. Medina Sidonia decided to go back to Spain via the North Sea, around the tip of Scotland. There was still a fear that an invasion from the Netherlands could come, though, and so Robert Dudley, Elizabeth's favorite Earl of Leicester, had a force of 4000 soldiers in Essex to defend the Thames Estuary. This is where we see the famous speech by Elizabeth to rally her troops. It is worth quoting here:

My loving people, we have been persuaded by some that are careful of our safety, to take heed how we commit ourselves to armed multitudes for fear of treachery; but, I do 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 goodwill 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 battle, to live or die amongst you all – to lay down for my God, and for my kingdoms, and for my people, my honour and my blood even in the dust. I know I have the body 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 should 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, on 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.

So this brings us to September, as the Armada is sailing around Scotland and Ireland into the North Atlantic. The ships are in disrepair. The men are sick. Some of the ships are only staying afloat because their hulls are tied up with cables. Supplies of water and food are scarce. The ideal plan was to keep well off the coast of Scotland and Ireland, but as there was no way to accurately measure longitude, the Spanish were not aware that the Gulf Stream was actually carrying them north and east, and they eventually turned south - a devastating error in navigation. Off the coasts of both Scotland and Ireland they ran into a series of westerly winds, often called the Protestant Winds which drove many of the damaged ships off. Because they had to abandon their anchors during the fireship care, they were unable to secure any kind of shelter as they approached Ireland, and they wound up being driven into the rocks. Locals looted the ships. It is estimated that 5000 men died by drowning, starvation, and even slaughter by English forces in Ireland.

In the end, only 67 ships and fewer than 10,000 men survived. Many men, like Recalde, survived but were deathly sick and died back in Spain. It is said that when Phillip learned of all of this, he said, "I sent the Armada against men, not God's winds and waves."

The war between England and Spain wasn't over yet, and in fact it wouldn't be over until after Elizabeth died. But England had secured the safety of the Channel, and wouldn't be threatened like that again.

So, for the book recommendation which is, *The Confident Hope of A Miracle, the True History of the Spanish Armada*, by Neil Hanson. I'll put a link up on the site and facebook page, which again is [facebook.com/englandcast](https://www.facebook.com/englandcast), where you can again contact me, send me show ideas, or just say nice things. There are extensive show notes for this episode including lots of links to dive in more deeply. And again, you can get all the book recommendations, show notes, sign up for the mailing list, etc at <http://www.englandcast.com>. Next time, I'm going to be posting an interview I just did with Benjamin Redding, a PhD student at Warwick whose research is in the development of the Tudor Navy. I think that it will round out this little boat and battle phase we've been in, and then I'm going to move on to that wonderful Elizabethan institution, the Theater later in February.