



The Catholic plots against Elizabeth I



Elizabeth I inherited a nation divided along religious lines. A fear of Catholic plots to usurp her was an ongoing and serious threat. The main figurehead for these attempts was Mary, Queen of Scots, who was seen as a potential replacement for Elizabeth...

1569 The Northern Rebellion

The plot:

The Catholic Earls of Northumberland and Westmoreland hatched a plan to release Mary, Queen of Scots, from imprisonment and on to the throne. They gathered an army of 6,000 soldiers in their attempt to return England to Catholicism.

Elizabeth's reaction:

Elizabeth found out about the plan and sent a huge army to crush the rebellion. Elizabeth put 800 rebels to death and the two Earls fled to Scotland.

1571 The Ridolfi Plot

The plot:

Roberto Ridolfi, an Italian banker, planned to assassinate Elizabeth and make Mary Queen. He had the support of King Philip II of Spain, the Duke of Norfolk, and Mary, Queen of Scots herself.

Elizabeth's reaction:

The plot was uncovered by Elizabeth's advisor, Cecil. Ridolfi and the Spanish ambassador were arrested and expelled from the country and Norfolk was executed.

1583 The Throckmorton Plot

The plot:

A young Catholic man, Francis Throckmorton, organised a plan for a French army to invade England and replace Elizabeth with Mary, Queen of Scots, paid for by the Pope and King Philip II of Spain.

Elizabeth's reaction:

Throckmorton was executed and Mary was moved to Tutbury Castle in Staffordshire, where she was held in isolation and allowed no visitors.

1586 The Babington Plot

The plot:

Sir Anthony Babington planned to rescue Mary, Queen of Scots, from jail and murder Elizabeth. Secret letters between the plotters and Mary were discovered which gave the evidence needed to prove Mary's guilt.

Elizabeth's reaction:

This finally led to the execution of Mary, Queen of Scots, Babington and six other plotters.

Source: BBC Bitesize