



## What kind of king was Charles I?

### Case Study 2: Charles I as a ruler

The rulers who came before Charles I were Elizabeth I (1558-1603) and James I (1603-25).

**Elizabeth & James: the downsides**

- Both clashed with Parliament.
- Both were often short of money.
- Both were criticised for spending too much money on luxuries.
- Some people criticised James because his court was very relaxed, behaviour was sometimes rowdy and James often swore and got drunk.

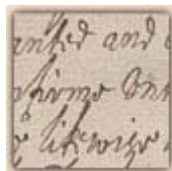
**Elizabeth & James: the upsides**

- Both usually managed to work out a compromise that most people could accept.
- Both thought it important to try to keep on good terms with the political nation (the top people in the country).
- James tried to spread out the best jobs and rewards between different families and groups among the political nation.
- James made it easy for MPs and others to come and talk to him.
- Both managed to avoid major splits over religion. (This was quite an achievement. There were big differences of opinion about religion, even between members of the same Protestant faith.)

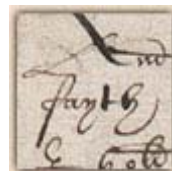
In this case study you can examine a range of sources to see whether Charles I carried on ruling in the same style or whether he brought in changes.



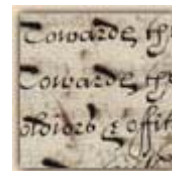
**Image of Charles I, c. 1625**



**Documents on the Duke of Buckingham,**



**Order to pay a bill for royal gowns, 1627**



**Petition against royal tax by a Suffolk town, 1627**



## Case Study 2: Charles I as a ruler – Source 1

### An image of Charles I from the records of the Court of King's Bench, c.1625

(Catalogue ref: KB 27/1542/2)

#### What is this source?

This image of Charles I appears at the start of a document recording a court case.

Cases dealt with by the Court of the King's Bench usually involved the monarch in some way, for example cases involving taxes or customs duties. Monarchs were always interested in cases concerning how much money they received.

#### What's the background to this source?

Charles did not actually sit in the court and make the judgements. His image is in this record to show that he was the ruler of the kingdom. However, Charles was very involved in the daily business of government.

Records like the State Papers in the National Archives show that Charles was always on top of his paperwork. He personally took charge of appointing top government officials. He also took personal charge of important decisions such as war or peace or summoning Parliament.

#### It's worth knowing that ...

Charles had very similar ideas to his father about the Divine Right of Kings. This was the idea that kings were appointed by God, therefore their subjects should obey them.

At the time Charles was beginning his reign, monarchs in Europe were becoming increasingly powerful. Rulers like Louis XIV of France were becoming 'absolute monarchs'. They had absolute control of their kingdoms and no person or organisation was allowed to challenge them. They could even break their own laws if they felt the need. Charles had a similar attitude towards ruling his lands.



## Your turn: What does this source tell us?

1. In what ways is this image similar to the images in the seals of Elizabeth I and James I? (See Case study 1: Monarchs before Charles I)
2. Does this image give you any clues about Charles's views on how a king should rule?
3. Study some other images of Charles I painted at the time. What do they tell us about how Charles saw his role as king? Good examples can be found at:
  - <http://www.abcgallery.com/V/vandyck/vandyck52.html>
  - <http://www.abcgallery.com/V/vandyck/vandyck1.html>

## Source 1



## Case Study 2: Charles I as a ruler – Source 2

### Documents relating to the Duke of Buckingham, 1627

(Catalogue ref: SP 16/68/52, SP 16/68/54, SP 16/67/53)

#### What is this source?

These are extracts from the State Papers of Charles I. The documents concern George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham.

By the early 1600s it was impossible for monarchs to look after every detail of government personally. Most relied on trusted allies to help them run the government. These officials usually came from important and powerful families.

The first two extracts are official documents that show how Charles gave various powerful positions to Buckingham.

(The third extract is a private letter to Nicholas Windebanke, Secretary of State, from a man in Buckingham's household. We've included it just because it shows how different court life was in those days compared with modern times.)

#### What's the background to this source?

Villiers (usually known as Buckingham) was Charles's closest friend and political ally in the earliest years of his rule. Charles trusted him with many important posts.

Important posts in the government brought a lot of honour and prestige. They usually brought wealth and power as well. Important posts allowed you to appoint your own family members and friends to other positions (often in return for a fee). There was a lot of competition for the top jobs in the government. The great families expected to get a share of important positions in return for serving the king loyally.

#### It's worth knowing that ...

James I had always been clever at giving different government posts to members of different groups or families. He tried to keep the political nation happy this way. Charles I was less skilled at spreading top jobs among different rival groups. He gave enormous power and influence to Buckingham.



Under James I it was relatively easy for an important noble to meet the king. Under Charles I it became much more difficult. Charles wanted a very formal, ordered court with rigid rules. He could only be seen at certain times. To get an appointment to see Charles, you usually had to go through Buckingham first. His job as first gentleman of His Majesty's Bedchamber allowed him to control the king's appointments.

Buckingham used his links to Charles to make himself, his friends and his family wealthy and powerful and exclude other families. Many rivals resented Buckingham. In 1627 many MPs felt that Buckingham was a bad choice to lead the army and navy. He had already led one disastrous expedition to Spain in September 1625. Charles refused to listen and Buckingham led his forces to another humiliating defeat in October 1627. Buckingham was later assassinated in August 1628.

## Your turn: What does this source tell us?

1. In source 2a Charles gave Buckingham the power to appoint his own deputy. James I had always kept this type of power for himself. Which king would you say was wiser? Why?
2. Study source 2b. Which important positions did Buckingham hold?
3. Buckingham was extremely unpopular with many leading nobles. Does source 2b give any clues as to why?
4. Which of these two interpretations is best supported by sources 2a and 2b?
  - Charles was a good monarch because he rewarded loyal servants well.
  - Charles showed poor judgement by giving too much power to one man.
5. Study source 2c. Does this tell us anything about the Duke of Buckingham and court life?



## Source 2a

534  
And by vertue of the same power, which we have  
granted and confirmed, and do hereby grant and  
confirm unto the Duke of Buckingham; We  
do likewise hereby authorize him the said Duke  
of Buckingham, to make election of his Deputies  
in his absence, upon the occasion of other Affairs;  
or in his sickness; and to confer and confirm  
upon and to his said Deputies, the same Commission  
of power, to execute all things, in all points,  
belonging to the Office and Command of him the  
said Duke in this employment; with as full  
and absolute an authority; and as if he were  
as if he the said Duke of Buckingham were  
himself in person present.



## Source 2b

George Duke Marquis and Duke of Buckingham Duke of Rohan's preferred will  
 Baron of Wotton Esq. High Admirall of England Lord Warden of the Cinque ports  
 Lieutenant of the Countie of middes and Berke, chiefe Justice and Justice in Court  
 of his ma<sup>ty</sup> Higheste Chastie and Peace in this Reame one of his ma<sup>ty</sup> most honourable  
 Gentleman of his ma<sup>ty</sup> Chamber Knight of the most noble order of the Bath  
 one of his ma<sup>ty</sup> most honourable privie Counsell and Lord Generall of his  
 Ma<sup>ty</sup> Fleet and Army employed in this present Expedition to

## Source 2c

our occurrences heard  
 are of noe great consequence; wee have them  
 all at the second hand from you: Little Jeffrey  
 the queens dwarf fell last day out of the  
 window at Denmark house; the queene took  
 it for heavily that she attyrd not her selfe  
 that day; wee are all well, only my lady  
 takes a little, we hope she is with  
 child; for wishing you all hapines in your  
 proceedings I rest  
 Buckingham house  
 18 June 1627  
 Your most faithfull &  
 affectionated friend  
 witthall

## Case Study 2: Charles I as a ruler – Source 3

An order to pay a bill for embroidering royal gowns, March 1627  
(Catalogue ref: SP 39/19/51)

### What is this source?

This is an order to pay a bill for embroidering the gowns of Charles's wife, Queen Henrietta Maria, and thirteen ladies in waiting.

The order went to the Treasurer of the Exchequer, the man in charge of the government 'department' that dealt with money and taxes. The £913 10s in this bill would be the equivalent of about £115,000 in the early 2000s – just for the embroidery, not the gowns themselves!

### What's the background to this source?

Charles was a small shy young man with a stammer. He was probably a little insecure. This was one reason why he wanted to be surrounded by impressive art, buildings and clothes for him and his wife and his nobles.

Most of the nobles loved art, architecture and fine things. As king, Charles was keen to have the finest things of all. Magnificent buildings like the Banqueting House and the Palace of Whitehall did impress people. Charles also insisted on strict rules of behaviour at court. People could only talk to him at certain times. His rules were designed to remind people that he was the king.

### It's worth knowing that ...

All monarchs liked to be surrounded by beautiful things. Elizabeth I and James I both spent large amounts of money on art, architecture, entertaining, clothing etc. Charles I was the same.

Elizabeth and James were often in financial trouble. When their money troubles became critical they usually called a Parliament. Both realised that ruling involved give and take. MPs would agree to taxes and in return the monarch listened to the concerns of MPs and tried to do something to help. Charles found it hard to listen to any advice or concerns and saw all comments as criticism. This meant he had a difficult relationship with MPs, but he needed them because they had to agree to new taxes to raise money.





## Your turn: What does this source tell us?

1. What is being paid for in this document?
2. Does it seem like a lot of money?
3. Check out a newspaper or website. Do celebrities today spend similar amounts on clothes?
4. Do you think people in the 17th century would have all agreed with one of the following views, or do you think they would have been divided?
  - It's an outrageous amount of money to spend on decorating clothes.
  - It's necessary that the queen and the royal court look their best so that the country looks rich and important.

## Source 3



## Case Study 2: Charles I as a ruler – Source 4

### A petition against royal taxes from the town of Woodbridge in Suffolk, February 1627

(Catalogue ref: SP 16/55/59)

#### What is this source?

This is a petition or request from the people of Woodbridge in 1627. They were explaining to the government why they had not supplied the information they were asked for. They wanted to get out of paying a tax called 'ship money'.

The government had asked for information about shipping in Woodbridge. Once the government had all the information, the town would be told how much tax it had to pay. Ship money was a tax which was usually paid by coastal towns to help pay for the navy. It was a tax that Charles could collect without consulting Parliament.

#### What's the background to this source?

There were several different types of taxes that towns had to pay. As well as ship money, other taxes took the form of paying for the king's soldiers. This might be cash for the wages, ships to transport them, equipment or food for the troops. Plus in the 1600s the government did not have police forces, traffic wardens and all the other officials it has today. Instead people in towns like Woodbridge had to carry out many different jobs for the king.

- They had to raise money for a royal building.
- There was no full time army with bases and barracks. Soldiers were recruited and trained in local areas. The local people had to find food and shelter for these soldiers in their homes, farms and barns.
- They paid for powder and matches. These were essential for an army in the 1600s. Without them the guns did not work.
- They kept the beacons. These were alarm signals. If attackers were spotted coming in from the sea, a beacon would be set on fire. The next beacon further away would see the first beacon and send a signal, and so on. This would raise the alarm.

### It's worth knowing that ...

Most monarchs in the 1600s were short of money. Charles I was no exception. Charles was facing a war against Spain in 1626. He was recruiting and training soldiers and sailors. He needed money to feed, pay and equip them.

Monarchs usually called Parliaments when they needed money for wars, but Charles did not like dealing with Parliament. His father (James I) had always understood that running the country meant some give and take. Charles disliked the idea of making deals and compromising. He simply wanted people to do what he told them.

### Your turn: What does this source tell us?

1. The petition set out five reasons why Woodbridge would struggle to pay ship money. What were they?
2. Which reasons do you find most convincing?
3. What does this source tell us about what people had to pay for in towns like Woodbridge?
4. According to this source, had Charles been paying his bills?
5. Do you get the impression that the people of Woodbridge have a good case or do you think they are just dodging taxes?



# Civil War

## Source 4a

Whayltt nowe please yo<sup>e</sup> goodnes for yo<sup>r</sup> to take into yo<sup>r</sup> grabe Consideratoun  
 the causes & reasons wh<sup>ch</sup> they the said Inhabitants doe humbly offer  
 to yo<sup>r</sup> goodnes in the tyme of yo<sup>r</sup> not proceedinge therein accordinge  
 to that wh<sup>ch</sup> was of them required wh<sup>ch</sup> be as  
 first

the same is a countrey <sup>where</sup> <sup>of which</sup> <sup>townes</sup>

Secondly they gave betwix all waies charged w<sup>th</sup> the rest of the county  
 for the carriage of the late Kinges Ar<sup>m</sup>ies materials for his buildinge  
 all Newmarket & are still charged  
 Towards his Ar<sup>m</sup>ies  
 Obisoun for his household  
 Towards the Payinginge and  
 warringe of his Ar<sup>m</sup>ies  
 Towards the Obisoun of powder &  
 Wheatte, and the wayes of Soldiers & offiters in the band for ody  
 fine wretts trayninge  
 Towards the fore of powder Wheatte &  
 Bullette to be obided  
 Towards the Carre wynde sedall cooled  
 & Wagges for ody of them  
 Towards the Charge of 3000 men  
 to march into Kent w<sup>th</sup> any certayne notice or Alarme, And 5000  
 men w<sup>th</sup> the Coastes of Suff<sup>r</sup> & 4000 men to march to Harmondw<sup>th</sup>  
 w<sup>th</sup> the like occasioun, And towards all other charges w<sup>th</sup> the  
 Countrey be charged w<sup>th</sup>



## Source 4b

Firstly the Owners of Spixwinge w<sup>ch</sup> in the said Towne are not in a  
manner about Enghelund & the but Collyer's only & but graunde  
for the of the said Spixwinge doe belonge unto Newcastell  
London & other remote parts & but diuise of the Country  
And the said Owners of Woodbridege haue bene hindered w<sup>ch</sup> in  
the two yeres by takinge of their Spixwinge into his Ma<sup>ties</sup>  
Seruice (where diuise of them shall be) to the value of 800  
at least altho they haue retained their ways w<sup>ch</sup> ad yett  
they haue not

for the Towne consisteth of Gent & others who live vpon their lande  
& husbandrie and handicraft men who haue not any towner  
relation to the Sea or to marchandize, vpon whom if any  
such poore charge shall be imposed more then vpon the  
Country they will be ready to forsake the said Towne, & if on  
the estate of the said Towne will be quite outgrowne,