



1603: The Death of Queen Elizabeth I, the Return of the Black Plague, the Rise of Shakespeare, Piracy, Witchcraft, and the Birth of the Stuart Era

Christopher Lee

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1603 was the year that Queen Elizabeth I, the last of the Tudors, died. Her cousin, Robert Carey, immediately rode like a demon to Scotland to take the news to James VI. The cataclysmic time of the Stuart monarchy had come and the son of Mary Queen of Scots left Edinburgh for London to claim his throne as James I of England.

Diaries and notes written in 1603 describe how a resurgence of the plague killed nearly 40,000 people. Priests blamed the sins of the people for the pestilence, witches were strangled and burned and plotters strung up on gate tops. But not all was gloom and violence. From a ship's log we learn of the first precious cargoes of pepper arriving from the East Indies after the establishment of a new spice route; Shakespeare was finishing *Othello* and Ben Jonson wrote furiously to please a nation thirsting for entertainment.

1603 was one of the most important and interesting years in British history. In *1603: The Death of Queen Elizabeth I, the Return of the Black Plague, the Rise of Shakespeare, Piracy, Witchcraft, and the Birth of the Stuart Era*, Christopher Lee, acclaimed author of *This Sceptred Isle*, unfolds its story from first-hand accounts and original documents to mirror the seminal year in which Britain moved from Tudor medievalism towards the wars, republicanism and regicide that lay ahead.

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