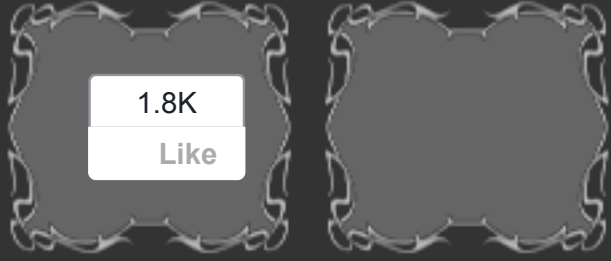




Picture of Queen Elizabeth I



Elizabethan Marriages and Weddings



- Interesting Facts and information about Marriages and Weddings in Elizabethan Life
- Arranged Weddings and Marriages
- The Dowry or Marriage Portion
- The Elizabethan legal age to marry and the Age of Consent

EElizabethan Marriages and Weddings - Arranged Marriages

Just as today a woman's wedding was one of the most important days of her life. The major difference to Elizabethan wedding customs to a modern day Western marriage is that the woman had very little, if any, choice in who her husband might be. Elizabethan Women were subservient to men. They were dependent on their male relatives to support them. Elizabethan woman were raised to believe that they were inferior to men and that men knew better!



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Disobedience was seen as a crime against their religion. Marriages were frequently arranged so that both families involved would benefit. Marriages would be arranged to bring prestige or wealth to the family - a surprising fact is that young men were treated in a similar way as to women. Many couples would meet for the very first time on their wedding day. This particular Elizabethan custom usually applied to the nobility but the married or religious life were the only real options for the Elizabethans (a career for a woman was absolutely unheard of.) Regardless of their social standing women and men were expected to marry. Single women who were thought to be witches by their neighbours...

Elizabethan Marriage and Weddings - The Dowry or Marriage Portion

Elizabethan women were expected to bring a dowry to the marriage. A dowry was an amount of money, goods, and property that the bride would bring to the marriage. It was also referred to as her marriage portion. After marriage Elizabethan women were expected to run the households and provide children. The law gave a husband full rights over his wife. She effectively became his property.

Elizabethan Marriage and Wedding Customs - The Age of Consent

With parental permission the legal age for Elizabethan marriages was as follows:

- it was legal for boys to marry at 14
- it was legal for girls to marry at the age of 12

It was not usual or traditional for marriages at such young ages. The actual age of consent was 21. Elizabethan men would generally not marry until this age.



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Elizabethan Church Marriage and Wedding Information

Arrangements for Elizabethan weddings would have been with the local church. Weddings were always a religious ceremony, conducted by a minister. The religions varied but the legal process prior to the wedding was always the same. There were no Registry Office marriages or marriages conducted by a Justice of the Peace. The first stage was Crying the Banns, announcing a couples intention to marry. The same procedure still applies to Church marriages in England today. The Elizabethan Wedding custom dictated that the couple's intention to marry had to be announced in the church three times on three consecutive Sundays or Holy days. This allowed time for any objections to be raised or pre-contracts to be discovered. Any marriage not published beforehand was considered clandestine and illegal. Wedding invitations were not issued. People lived in small communities and knew what was happening in common life. If there was an Elizabethan wedding then people would just attend. Gifts were occasionally given to the Bride and Groom.

Elizabethan Marriage and Wedding Contracts

Should a couple need to marry in haste an alternative, faster, route to legalising a marriage required a Marriage Bond which acted as a contract, security and proof to a Bishop that the issue of a Marriage Licence was lawful. The Marriage Bond was accompanied with a sworn statement that there were no pre-contract. The issue of a Marriage Bond would require only one reading of the Banns - thus saving a couple of weeks. Such a Marriage Bond was required by Anne Hathaway and William Shakespeare - Anne was 26 years old and pregnant. William Shakespeare was only 18 and under the age of consent. Elizabethan wedding customs and contracts would have required that his father would have had to agree to the marriage.

Elizabethan Marriage and Wedding Customs - Preparing for the wedding ceremony

The Bride and Groom would be attended by their family and close friends. The color of the wedding clothes were varied - the tradition of wearing white came much later. A bridal procession would move from the family's house to the church. This was a particularly festive event and the procession would be accompanied by musicians. Additional information may be accessed from [Elizabethan Wedding Dress](#).

Elizabethan Marriage and Wedding Customs - The ceremony

Once at the church the ceremony would be a solemn one. In Elizabethan times everyone would stand as there were no pews in the churches. When the marriage ceremony was over the wedding procession would return to their homes. The families of the couple would sometimes enjoy a wedding feast and were wished a long and happy life.

Elizabethan Marriage and Wedding Reception & Food

It was an Elizabethan Wedding custom to celebrate the marriage with a wedding feast. The special feast had to be carefully planned. The menu was discussed and arrangements for acquiring the content of the more exotic dishes, such a peacock, had to be made. The Elizabethans were keen on presenting dishes as attractively as possible - in the case of the peacock its colorful feathers would adorn the dish. Bread and sweetmeats would also be prepared. Sweet and Spicy foods were extremely popular and many of the dishes would be highly flavored. The staple drink of the Elizabethans was ale (water was unclean) but wine was also available and would have been ordered for the wedding feast.

Elizabethan Life after Marriage

Large families were the norm as the mortality rate for children and babies was so high. Many Elizabethan woman made arrangement for the care of their children in case they themselves died during childbirth.

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Elizabethan Elizabethan Marriages and Weddings

Details, facts and information about Elizabethan Life can be accessed via the Elizabethan Era Sitemap click the following link for information about [Elizabethan Wedding Dress](#).

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