

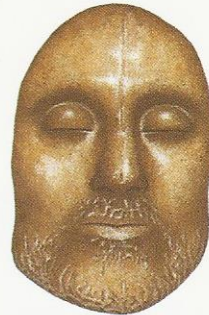
# The Commonwealth

On 20 April, 1653, Cromwell called his musketeers into the chamber of the House of Commons. He declared to the astonished MPs that they were 'corrupt and unjust men' before removing the Speaker. The Rump Parliament was dismissed.

Cromwell's anger with the MPs of the Rump Parliament was caused by their unwillingness to act on the many reforms he and the army considered necessary. Cromwell ordered a new parliament to be chosen from a list drawn up by church representatives but this 'Nominated Parliament' did little better than its predecessor. In December, its members handed back power to Cromwell and a new plan was drawn up, in which Cromwell became 'Lord Protector' of England, Scotland and Ireland.

Many people remained suspicious of Cromwell and fearful of the power of the army. After an unsuccessful Royalist uprising in the West Country, Cromwell divided the country into 11 districts and appointed military leaders to run them. Some were strict Puritans who were unpopular because they closed down alehouses and stopped popular pastimes and sports. Nevertheless, this was a time of relative religious tolerance and prosperity after the strife of the Civil War. In 1658, on his deathbed, Cromwell named his son Richard as his rightful successor.

*After the horrors of the Civil Wars, the Commonwealth was a time of peace for most ordinary people. Trade flourished in coastal towns such as this. However, Puritan rule was strict – theatres were closed, and Christmas was a fast-day.*



**The death mask of Oliver Cromwell** who died on 3 September, 1658. He was buried in Westminster Abbey. In 1661, after King Charles II was restored to the throne, Cromwell's remains were dug up and hung at Tyburn where criminals were executed. His head was stuck on a pole on top of Westminster Hall.

**1652** Act of Settlement – six Irish counties are cleared of Catholic landholders and settled by English Protestants.

**1653** Cromwell forcibly dismisses the Rump Parliament (20 April). 'Nominated Parliament' hands back power to Cromwell (12 December). Cromwell becomes Lord Protector.

**1654** End of war with the Netherlands. First Parliament of the Protectorate (3 September).

**1655** Royalist uprising in the West Country led by Colonel John Penruddock is put down by New Model Army. Military leaders, called major-generals, are appointed to each region to keep the peace.

**1656** Second Parliament of the Protectorate.

**1658** Death of Oliver Cromwell.

**A Puritan family in typical sombre dress.** The Puritan movement began in the late 1500s and gathered strength through the 1600s. Puritans wished to purify the Church of England from Catholic ways.





### LORD PROTECTOR

The first parliament of the Protectorate was held in 1654. Cromwell had several aims. He wanted to set up a Puritan Church, but wished to allow freedom of worship. He was very interested in education and wanted to reform the legal system. He believed that capital punishment (execution) should be used only for major crimes such as murder, treason and rebellion.



**Cromwell dismisses the Rump Parliament.** 'You are no parliament; I will put an end to your sitting...' he told the MPs. The Rump was unwilling to pass reforms required by Cromwell and the army.

