

NAXOS
AudioBooks

H.E. Marshall

OUR ISLAND STORY VOLUME 3

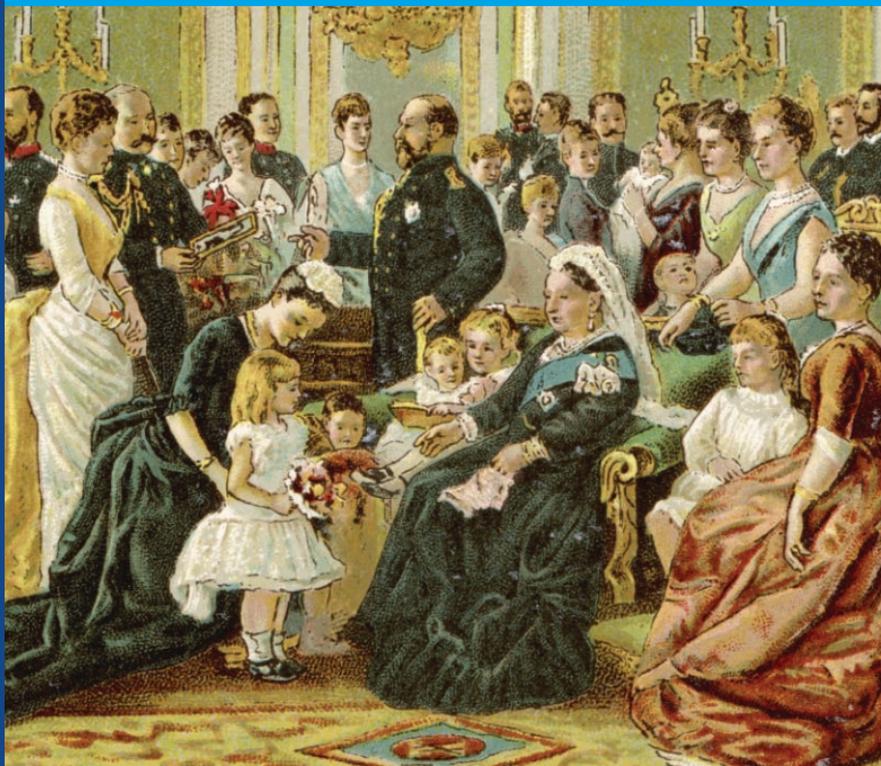
THE
COMPLETE
TEXT

UNABRIDGED

from James I and Guy Fawkes to Queen Victoria

Read by **Anna Bentinck** and **Daniel Philpott**

JUNIOR
CLASSICS



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1	Chapter LXXIV	The Story of Guy Fawkes	9:17
2	Chapter LXXV	The Story of the Mayflower	8:30
3	Chapter LXXVI	How a Woman Struck a Blow for Freedom	7:30
4	Chapter LXXVII	How the King and the Parliament Quarrelled	8:52
5	Chapter LXXVIII	The Story of How the King was Brought to His Death	6:09
6	Chapter LXXIX	The Commonwealth – The Adventures of a Prince	9:03
7	Chapter LXXX	The Commonwealth – The Lord Protector	6:53
8	Chapter LXXXI	How Death Walked in the Streets of London	9:16
9	Chapter LXXXII	Charles II – The Story of How London was Burned	7:49
10	Chapter LXXXIII	The Fiery Cross	6:09
11	Chapter LXXXIV	The Story of King Monmouth	3:16
12	Chapter LXXXV	The Story of the Seven Bishops	7:34
13	Chapter LXXXVI	William the Deliverer	5:40
14	Chapter LXXXVII	William III and Mary II – Brave Londonderry	4:52
15	Chapter LXXXVIII	The Story of a Sad Day in a Highland Glen	7:41
16	Chapter LXXXIX	Anne – How the Union Jack was Made	7:03
17	Chapter XC	The Story of the Earl of Mar's Hunting Party	7:49
18	Chapter XCI	George II – The Story of Bonnie Prince Charlie	8:32
19	Chapter XCII	George II – The Story of Flora MacDonald	8:20
20	Chapter XCIII	The Story of the Black Hole of Calcutta	4:12

21	Chapter XCIV	George II – The Story of How Canada Was Won	9:24
22	Chapter XCV	George III – The Story of How America Was Lost	10:03
23	Chapter XCVI	George III – A Story of a Spinning Wheel	8:31
24	Chapter XCVII	England Expects That Every Man Will Do His Duty	9:51
25	Chapter XCVIII	George III – The Battle of Waterloo	6:13
26	Chapter XCIX	George IV – The First Gentleman in Europe	4:40
27	Chapter C	William IV – Two Peaceful Victories	8:22
28	Chapter CI	Victoria – The Girl Queen	4:36
29	Chapter CII	Victoria – When Bread Was Dear	6:05
30	Chapter CIII	Victoria – Peace	5:35
31	Chapter CIV	Victoria – War	13:56
32	Chapter CV	Victoria – The Land of Snow	6:52
33	Chapter CVI	Victoria – The Siege of Delhi	9:24
34	Chapter CVII	Victoria – The Pipes at Lucknow	8:49
35	Chapter CVIII	Victoria – Under the Southern Cross	7:40
36	Chapter CIX	Victoria – From Cannibal to Christian	6:46
37	Chapter CX	Victoria – Boer and Briton	9:24

Total time: 4:42:23

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When James VI of Scotland became James I of England in 1603, and the reign of the Stuart family began, social change began to happen more rapidly and radically than before.

Religion was still a most important issue for many people. In 1611, a new translation of the Bible was published. It came to be known as both the King James Bible (because it was published in his reign) and the Authorised Version. Some 50 years before, men such as William Tyndale were burnt for translating the Bible into English, but at last it was accepted that people should be able to read it in their own language.

Many communities began to take their religious purpose into their own hands. In 1620 a Puritan community, feeling that it could not practise its religion freely, left England and sailed to America to set up a new home there. These people wanted to live by their own rules, not religious or social rules imposed by tradition, or by others. It demonstrated the strength of feeling within the Puritan movement in England.

At the same time, men were looking at the natural world around them with new eyes.

Some looked inwards, into their own bodies. In 1628 a physician, Sir William Harvey (1578–1657), discovered the circulation of the blood – the way in which the blood travels around the body. He concluded this in considerable detail even though he had no microscopes at the time to confirm it; in fact it wasn't proven for another two centuries!

Others looked outwards. In 1664 (after Charles I had been beheaded, the Civil War had been won by Oliver Cromwell and the Roundheads, and Charles II had been restored to the throne) a young man was sitting in a garden and, as the story goes, an apple fell on his head. Suddenly, he realised the principle of gravitation. His name was Isaac Newton (1642–1727) and he was just 22 years old. Between 1664 and 1666, while the plague was raging throughout England, and London suffered its Great Fire, he thought about gravitation, mathematics, and the fact that white light actually consists of all colours of the spectrum. His discoveries helped to show what our natural world was really like.

In the generations that followed, more discoveries were made about biology and

physics. In 1821 Michael Faraday (1791–1867), the brilliant son of a blacksmith, experimented with electromagnetism and developed an electric motor. Ten years later, in 1831, he developed the dynamo.

At the same time, Charles Darwin (1809–1882) was sailing around the world on *The Beagle*, carefully cataloguing all that he saw among the flora and fauna of the islands he visited, especially the Galapagos Islands. This was to lead to his major book *The Origin of the Species*, which presented the theory of evolution for the first time in a scientific manner. The concept of all human life evolving from tiny organisms shocked the Western world, rooted as it still was in the Book of Genesis and the garden of Eden.

So, while kings and queens came to the throne, ruled and died, and men and women fought for social freedoms and rights, individuals were pushing science and invention forward in a way that was literally to transform the landscape of England and the lives of her inhabitants.

In the late 18th century, the Industrial Revolution began. With the harnessing of power and development of mechanics, life under the Hanoverians became totally different. George II had been on the throne for nine years when James Watt (1736–1819) was

born in Scotland, the son of a merchant. Watt proved an ingenious engineer. He started building canals – for canals were being dug all over England, providing the means for a slow but smooth method of transport which was far more reliable than travelling on the muddy, potholed roads.

At the time, there were some basic steam engines which drained water from mines. Watt was asked to repair a Newcomen steam engine and decided that he could actually make it much better and more efficient. His further developments made the steam engine work so well that some factory owners realised it could be used to drive machinery – in textile factories, for example. This ushered in a new age of powered manufacturing, and, along with other developments, sparked the Industrial Revolution.

Other inventions during the reign of George III advanced the manufacture of textiles. Until the start of the 18th century, all cloth had to be woven, sewn or stitched by hand. Then, an accident in the home of a Lancashire weaver, James Hargreaves (1720–1778), changed all that. His young daughter Jenny knocked over the family spinning wheel by mistake, and James saw the wheel still spinning on its own. He realised that one wheel spinning could drive a lot of

spindles! It was a flash of inspiration.

In 1764 he built a machine in which eight spindles driven by one wheel could all spin thread, instead of one spindle at a time. He called it the 'Spinning Jenny', after his daughter. It was a basic design, and he quickly improved it so that one wheel could drive *eighty* spindles. The thread produced wasn't of very high quality, but good enough for certain things.

Eleven years later, Samuel Crompton (1753–1827), son of a small farmer in Lancashire, took the Spinning Jenny further. His development was called the Spinning Mule and produced better-quality thread. What's more, he was able to link it up to a Watt steam engine and mechanise it.

While this produced cheaper goods, it was not without implications. Many workers were worried that mechanisation would rid them of their jobs, and in many cases it did. Furthermore, the working conditions of most of the factories were terrible, with not only men but women and children forced to work long, hard, dangerous hours. There were many industrial injuries. It was a far cry from the slow, predictable but healthier life working on the land.

The countryside was also being scarred by the Industrial Revolution. Since coal was

needed more than ever before as fuel to drive the steam engines, mines were producing ugly slag-heaps; and factories and industrial waste were blackening the landscape. The poet William Blake warned of this with phrases such as 'dark satanic mills'. But progress couldn't be halted.

With all these goods being made all around the country, efficient transport became more important than ever before. Not since the time of the Romans did England have a properly paved road system. Coaches and wagons had to put up with poorly maintained roads which were subject to the whims of the weather, making the surface wet and muddy or cracked, dry and full of potholes.

Thomas Telford (1757–1834) was the son of a Scottish shepherd. He built canals, bridges and docks – and also more than 1,000 miles of improved road in his lifetime. But it was John Macadam (1756–1836) who introduced a new construction of roads. He laid a foundation of large stones – in fact, a mixture of crushed stone and gravel – and gave it a camber (an arched shape) so that the water would run off. This was a vast improvement for the horse and coach, which was the mainstay of everyday transport.

This was until the third strand of transport happened: the train. If the steam engine could

drive a Spinning Mule, it could drive wheels... George Stephenson (1781–1848) started life by herding cows. When he was 18, he went to evening classes to learn to read and write. He was deeply interested in machines. He began working as a colliery engineman, and on Saturdays he would take apart Watt and Newcomen steam engines to see how they worked.

He persuaded his colliery manager to see if he could develop a steam engine that would work – as he knew others were doing. By 1814 – the year before the Battle of Waterloo – Stephenson had made a steam engine that he called the *Blutcher*, which carried 30 tons up a hill at four miles per hour.

He made more improvements and was helped by other developments happening at the same time. He realised that railroads would have to be made fairly flat, though this was a challenge of its own as England was not flat! It was necessary to build bridges, cuttings, embankments... and eventually tunnels. He discovered someone else who was making better cast-iron rails, and (though it cost him quite a lot of money) he decided to use those.

By this time Stephenson was working on a project to build a railway running the 22 miles between two collieries, at Stockton and Darlington: the Stockton and Darlington

Railway. On 27 September 1825, the railway was opened. An engine called *Locomotion* pulled no fewer than 36 wagons filled with sacks of coal and flour, and at one point reached a speed of 15 mph!

Four years later, Stephenson produced his *Rocket*, which won a competition to be the engine for the Liverpool and Manchester company. The opening of the railway was in 1830 and attended by the Duke of Wellington. However, it was marred by an accident when a government minister was knocked down and killed by a locomotive which he didn't see coming.

Soon, Stephenson was producing locomotives that travelled at nearly 30 mph; and train lines began criss-crossing England.

At the same time, the engineering genius of Isambard Kingdom Brunel (1806–1859) was beginning to make its impact. In 1833 he became chief engineer of the Great Western Railway, which ran from London to Bristol. His viaducts, bridges, tunnels, and the station in Bristol itself made his name.

His imagination and daring knew no bounds. He built the longest steamship, the *Great Western*, which took passengers to New York in just 15 days. It crossed the Atlantic 60 times over the next eight years.

Then came the SS *Great Britain*, which

was the first ship to have an iron hull. It was a remarkable piece of engineering. This was the first ship to be powered by a screw, which could be lifted so that the vessel could revert to a sailing ship when the wind was right. This extraordinary invention saved a lot of coal. The ship made numerous journeys to Australia.

The face of England had changed, as had the pace of life.

Gas lighting was now in use all over the country. As early as 1792, William Murdock (1754–1839) had managed to create a gas light in his home using burning coal; and Matthew Boulton developed the concept further. By 1814 the first gas street lamps were erected, and by 1820 gas lights were common in the foggy streets of London.

Many of the seemingly smaller inventions and improvements also played a vital role. James Nasmyth (1808–1890) was a Scottish tool maker. Without his massive steel hammers, the works of Brunel would not have been possible. Nasmyth also built large pile drivers and hydraulic punching machines.

Henry Bessemer (1813–1898) developed new ways of producing higher-grade steel from molten pig-iron. He used it to make train rails, but also guns – for the military realised very quickly how useful these inventions were for the process of war and killing. Bessemer

wasn't the only inventor to be drawn into the demands of war. Sir Joseph Whitworth (1803–1887) used his inventiveness to design rifles and field guns.

When Queen Victoria died in 1901, England and the world were facing an even faster rate of social change. The very concept of change was becoming in-built into society. This was quite unlike the time of James I, when, generally, society wanted and expected stability, and only a few far-sighted men realised that individuals could be free and more in charge of their own destiny. In the time of James I, if you were born a shepherd, the likelihood was that you would die a shepherd. But 300 years later, this was not so.

If James I wanted to travel from London to Canterbury, it would have taken him about the same time as it took Chaucer with his pilgrims, 200 years earlier. By 1900 the time, by train, was cut to a little over an hour – scarcely time for the first of Chaucer's tales, told by The Knight, to be completed.

Notes by Nicolas Soames

STUART MONARCHS

James I of England and VI of Scotland reigned 58 years, 36 as King of Scotland only, from 1567 to 1603, and 22 as King of Great Britain and Ireland, from 1603 to 1625 A.D.

Charles I reigned 24 years, from 1625 to 1649 A.D.

The Commonwealth lasted 11 years, from 1649 to 1660 A.D.

Charles II reigned 25 years, from 1660 to 1685 A.D.

James II of England, VII of Scotland, reigned 3 years, from 1685 to 1688 A.D.

Mary II and **William III** reigned together for 5 years, from 1689 to 1694 A.D.

William III reigned alone for 8 years, from 1694 to 1702 A.D.

Anne reigned 12 years, from 1702 to 1714 A.D.

HANOVERIAN MONARCHS

George I reigned 13 years, from 1714 to 1727 A.D.

George II reigned 33 years, from 1727 to 1760 A.D.

George III reigned 60 years from 1760 to 1820 A.D.

George IV reigned 10 years, from 1820 to 1830 A.D.

William IV reigned 7 years, from 1830 to 1837 A.D.

Victoria reigned 68 years, from 1837 to 1901 A.D.

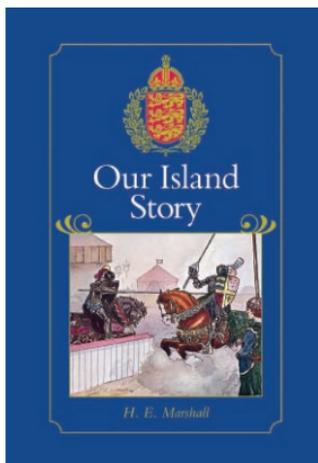


Anna Bentinck was trained at The Arts Educational School and has made over 800 broadcasts for BBC radio. Animation voices include the series *64 Zoo Lane*, and on TV she has played Mary Dickens in *Charles Dickens* and Mary Rutherford in the *Marie Curie* series. Her many audio books range from *Lyra's Oxford* by Philip Pullman and *A Little Death* by Laura Wilson to *Queen Victoria* by Evelyn Anthony. She has also recorded *Five Children and It* and *The Phoenix and the Carpet* for Naxos AudioBooks.



Daniel Philpott trained at LAMDA and, after success in the prestigious Carleton Hobbs Award for Radio Drama, has been prolific in BBC Radio and the Spoken Word industry. His theatre work includes numerous productions on the London fringe. For Naxos AudioBooks he has recorded *A Life of Shakespeare*, *Famous People in History – 2*, *Dracula*, *Frankenstein* and *Pygmalion*.

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Our Island Story is a remarkable history book. It tells the history of Britain from its legendary beginnings to the end of the 19th century through the principal political personalities. This volume covers three centuries and is basically the account of two families, The Stuarts, from **James I** to **Charles II** and the Hanoverians, from **George I** to the death of **Queen Victoria**.

That period encompassed the Commonwealth, the loss of the American colonies, the Napoleonic Wars and the expansion of the British Empire. Among the featured stories are **Oliver Cromwell**, **the Fire of London**, **Nelson** and **Wellington**, **Florence Nightingale**, **Queen Victoria** and **Prince Albert**.

This is history at its most entertaining and engaging.



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