

# TudorLife

THE  
TUDOR  
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## GREED

If Music be the food  
of love...

The Earl of Lennox's  
Greed and Avarice

Elizabeth Stafford

The Ambitious  
Dudleys

*PLUS*

Tudor Money

What's your poison?

AND MUCH MORE



**Ballad representations in mischief**  
*by* **Lauren Browne**









## GREED...

The Holy Bible's first Epistle of Timothy, in its sixth chapter and tenth verse, warns us that “Radix malorum est cupiditas” – that the root of evil is greed. Charles de Marillac, France's ambassador to England in 1540, certainly agreed. As a clergyman, we might well expect him to. For de Marillac, Henry VIII's greed was the root of all the other evils de Marillac felt he inflicted on his subjects, highborn and low-. In analysing how the Tudors' fear of greed - fourth in our seven deadly sins series – shaped both their morals and their politics, I'm delighted to welcome back James Baresel to “Tudor Life,” who turns his attention to the avarice of Mary, Queen of Scots' father-in-law, the Earl of Lennox. Along with our regular contributors, they offer a particularly nuanced view of avarice's impact on early modern society.

**GARETH RUSSELL**  
**EDITOR**

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**ABOVE:** A lavish golden ceiling at Hampton Court Palace

**LEFT:** Detail of the clock at Hampton Court Palace, installed in 1540.

Photos by Claire Ridgway © 2018



# Tudor Life



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# Feasting and Entertainment

If music be the food of love, play on;

Give me excess of it, that, surfeiting the appetite may sicken and die.

By Jane Moulder

This quote from Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* immediately comes to mind when thinking about the combination of food and entertainment in the Early Modern period. There is plenty of evidence to suggest that eating and music went hand in hand and there are numerous surviving records from both the royal courts and grand households which list the expenditure incurred in staging lavish feasts for the delight of guests and entertainment of visiting courtiers. At this level of society, excessive quantities of food and beverage, coupled with music and entertainments, were more about making a statement of wealth and influence than simply satiating hunger. In fact, mention a Tudor feast and the picture that is brought to mind is that of a royal banquet, in a richly decorated room filled with well-dressed courtiers enjoying a surfeit of food, served on ornate plates and dishes. But feasting took place in all levels of society from the highest to the lowliest, although the amount of expenditure occurred would have been very different!

It seems that there were plenty of occasions which warranted the staging of a feast and these are listed in Si-

mon Schama's book on Dutch culture during the late 16th/17th centuries,

*"There were lying-in feasts, birth feasts, baptismal feasts, churching feasts, feasts when infants were swaddled and another when boys were breeched, birthday feasts and saints' days feasts (not necessarily the same), feasts on beginning school and beginning apprenticeship, betrothal feasts, wedding feasts, feasts on setting up house, feasts for departing on long journeys and feasts for homecoming, wedding anniversary feasts and co-optation (to a municipal reGENCY or the board of a charitable institution) feasts, feasts on the inauguration of a lottery and the conclusion of its draw, feasts on the return of a grand cargo or the conclusion of a triumphant peace, on the restoration of a church, the installation of a window or organ or organ loft or pulpit and on the setting of a family gravestone in its floor, feasts on recovering from sickness, feasts at funerals and burials and the reading of a testament, even 'jokmaalen', feasts of inversion when master and mistress would act the part*





of servants and wait on their own retainers. And for each there would be particular foods: spiced wine and caudle for lying-in, another kind of caudle of sweet wine and cinnamon for birth parties."

At all of these feasts, music and musicians would have been called for to provide entertainment. In a play by Thomas Deloney, there is a

character, a clothier, who "could not digest his meat without music" indicating that the two go hand in hand even amongst the middling sort. But feasting is about excess and whilst there's no doubt that even the poorest families would have saved up to buy some expensive spices for a special meal, it's difficult to assess exactly how the lower and middle classes indulged

as there are so few written records. However, the village feasts of the period are vividly captured in the paintings by Flemish artists, such as Pieter Breughel in his famous 'The Wedding Feast'. It shows bowls of pottage (no doubt made more interesting by the addition of some exotic spices as befitting the occasion) being served while the music is provided by the local bagpiper. Dancing and much merriment would no doubt have followed the wedding meal.

The bagpipe would have been the instrument providing the music at this level of society as corroborated by Robert Armin's description of holiday festivities in *A Nest of Ninnies* (1608):

*"At a Christmas time, when great logs furnish the hall, when brawn is in season and, indeed, all revelling is regarded, this gallant knight kept open house for all comers, where beef, beer and bread was no niggard. Amongst all the pleasures provided, a noise of minstrels and a Lincolnshire bagpipe was prepared – the minstrels for the great chamber, the bagpipe for the hall – the minstrels to serve up the knight's meat and the bagpipe for the common dancing."*

Feasts with entertainments would have been staged by the civic authorities of cities and towns as well as the various trade guilds. They were held for a variety of reasons such as the occasion of a visiting dignitary, a religious festival or a civic celebration such as the Lord Mayor's pageant. For these occasions, the Waits (musicians employed by the authorities) or freelance entertainers would have been engaged. The Waits were also musicians for hire, so they were also employed by



*The Wedding Feast, Pieter Breughel, 1567, Kuntshistorische Museum, Vienna.*





*A fresco at the Castello di Malperga, Italy showing guests as a feast being entertained by shawm players. C1520*

wealthy citizens to provide music at weddings or social events, such as dinners and entertainments. These musicians were in demand and it seems that, on more than one occasion, the London civic officials found that the Waits were already booked out to a private client when they were needed for an official function. It meant that the musicians could demand more money to ensure that their services were retained by the authorities. But private clients could always pay more and a treatise, published around 1600, recommends that an Earl ought to employ five musicians to undertake duties at a banquet:

*"At great feastes when the Earles service is going to the table, they are to play upon Shagbutts, Cornetts, Shalmes and such other instruments going with winde. In meale times to ply upon vials, violens or other bro-*

*ken musicke."*

This shows how loud music was played before the feast and then quieter music played during the meal.

Let us now turn to the grander, courtly, feast. There is no doubt that these were lavish affairs and whilst excessive quantities of food were undoubtedly consumed, their purpose and function was more about making a statement than simply providing sustenance. Feasts could be lengthy affairs and a number of courses (or 'removes') were served. Between each course there was an 'entremet' or entertainment. The term *entremets* originated in the medieval period and it literally means 'between servings' and would have been a simple dish, such as a pottage. Gradually, over time, these dishes became more elaborate and expensive as spices were added to reflect the host's wealth. The idea of ostentation took over so that the *en-*

*tremets* morphed into something else entirely. In the late medieval period *entremets* became 'distractions' or illusions and they could take many forms, including spectacular dishes, pageants, jugglers and dancers. In England, the word 'subtlety' was adopted for a food based display. Subtleties ranged in style and extravagance, from a sugar paste castle, to a peacock pie brought into the Great Hall with the bird spitting fire and brimstone. Think of the old nursery rhyme of 'Four and Twenty Blackbirds baked in a pie', this harked back to a subtlety from the renaissance period.

An Italian cookbook '*Epu-lario*' by Giovanni de Roselli, written in 1549 but translated and published in English in 1598, describes how "to make pie that the birds may be alive in them and flie out" when it is cut up:

*Make the coffin of a great Pie or pasty. in the bottome*



*whereof make a hole as big as your fist, or bigger if you will. let the sides of the coffin be some what higher then ordinary Pie, which dome. put is full of flower and bake it, and being baked, open the hole in the bottome and take out the flower [flour]. then having a Pie of the bignesse of the hole in the bottome of the coffin aforesaid. you shall put it into the coffin, withall put into the said coffin round about the aforesaid pie as many small live birds as the empty coffin will hold besides the pie aforesaid. And this is to be done at such time as you send the Pie to the table, and set before the guests: where uncovering or cutting up the lid of the great Pie, all the Birds will flie out. which is to the delight and pleasure shew to the company and because they shall not bee altogether mocked, you shall cut open the small pie and in this sort tart you may make many others, the like you may do with a Tart.*

However, it wasn't only birds that were put in a pie – musicians were as well! In 1453, the Duke of Burgundy staged 'the Banquet of the Oath of the Pheasant' and we have very good description of how the entertainments were staged.

*"At the proper hour, they gathered in a hall, where my lord had prepared a rich banquet; and there my lord, accompanied by princes and chevaliers, lords and ladies, finding the banquet ready to be served, went to see the entremets which had been prepared."*

There then follows a detailed account of each of the courses and each of the entremets. These included:

*"a large pastry in which were twenty-eight persons playing different instru-*

*ments, each when their turn came", "a shepherd playing a musette" (a type of bagpipe), "a horse entered walking backwards, on it were two trumpeters seated back to back, with hats on their heads and they wore masks... they led the horses backwards up and down the hall while they played flourishes on their trumpets", "in the pastry a German cornet was played very curiously, and then a goblin or monster of strange appearance appeared...." "a doucaine played (a type of woodwind) with another instrument, and after it four clairons sounded (a type of horn) very loud and made a joyous fanfare". Also described are various singers, organ players and other instrumentalists such as viols, lutes and bells, together with animals such as a stag dressed in silk and "four minstrels in the pastry played flutes. Then, in the highest part of the room, a flying dragon appeared, all fiery, and flew the length of the hall, passing above the assembly and disappeared, and no one knew what became of it".*

The 'subtlety' became anything but subtle!

By the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, Robert May in 'The Accomplisht Cook', described how to make spectacles for banquets out of sugar paste and marzipan. One of the more spectacular displays he described was to fashion a stag out of paste, put an arrow in its side and then fill the animal with claret wine. On a large dish, the stag was to be surrounded by pies which enclosed live frogs and birds. The chef is then instructed on how to put the tableau together so that when one of the female guests is encouraged to pull out of the arrow of the stag, the claret wine will pour out like blood. The

author encouraged the reader to imagine the shock and delight of the audience when live frogs hop out of the pies and birds flew away. When this had "brought delight and pleasure to the whole company ... then music sounds."

By the time Henry VIII is on the throne, the protocols of a Tudor feast had become exact and the format clearly defined and dictated, everything was done to impress wealth, power and influence upon the guests. Books and pamphlets described how a feast should be organised from the placement of the tables, the cushions, the seats, and who could sit next to whom. Even the order that both the guests and the servants should enter the hall was strictly pre-determined and adhered to. A document survives from the household of The Earl of Northumberland which stipulated, in step by step detail, all the stages for the preparation and execution of the Christmas feast at his castles in Yorkshire, at the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Following the entrance of all the serving staff and guests in designated order, beer, ale and wine was served. Then a play was performed either by members of the household or by visiting players. This was followed by a masque (all the props are listed including paper hats, false beards and wooden swords) and then the Earl's four minstrels would play music for the family and guests to dance to. Once the dancing was completed, the feast began. After many courses of food, the musicians would again enter, along with the trumpeters, for the wassail bowl and singing. This was followed by more drinking and the processing in and distribution of the spices – comfits (sugared sweets – an expensive delicacy at this time) and hippocras, a spiced wine. And it seemed that there was





*Enjoying music whilst eating. The Prodigal Son among the Courtesans by Pourbus the Elder, Museum Mayer van den Bergh, Antwerp, c1560*

then more dancing for as long as the party wanted it.

Through Henry's influence, the early 16<sup>th</sup> century saw the renaissance culture of Greek doctrine of 'ethos' become embedded into English courtly life. This dictated that in the same way that food was good for the body, good music was food for the soul. Music could cure angry thoughts and surliness; it could lighten the humours and reduce the impact of melancholy; it was important for keeping the peace and calming warring spirits and, as Plato stated, that music could aid those attending a feast to remember an ideal world.

Considering how music could also give spiritual nourishment, Thomas More in 'Utiopia' wrote how meals should be executed;

*"Lunch is pretty short, because work comes after it, but over supper they rather spread themselves, since it's followed by a whole night's sleep, which they consider*

*more conducive to sound digestion. During supper they always have music, and the meals end with a great variety of sweets and fruit."*

More suggested music can aid digestion. Likewise, the humanist thinker Rabelais, wrote of his character, Gargantua, that from an early age he found that music would aid digestion;

*"Afterward, they delighted themselves in singing musically in four or five parts, or on a set theme, to their throats' content. As regards musical instruments, he learned to play the lute, the spinet, the harp, the German flute and the one with nine holes, the viola, the sackbut. This hour thus employed and digestion completed, he purged himself of natural excrements."*

From the earliest of times, music has always played an important role in accompanying special meals and feasts, however, the way that enter-

tainments and music was organised as part of these events changed from the medieval to the renaissance periods. In the medieval period, daytime entertainment was all about the joust and displays of military prowess, to be followed, into the evening, by a meal during which music was played. But by the Renaissance, the banquets conformed to more humanist views, looking to Greek and Roman literature and ideals, so that the joust was replaced by artistic and cultural displays, such as those described by Giovanni Boccaccio;

*"At these gatherings of ours you'd scarcely imagine the gorgeous hangings that be-*

*deck the dining-halls, the place-settings fit for a king, the elegance of the attendants waiting*

*on the tables, the beauty of the serving-maids, the pleasure of feasting off gold and silver plates, the salvers, ewers, goblets and flasks;*



and the dishes brought to the table as each guest desires—such abundance, such variety, each one served at its proper

time. How can I describe to you the airs and melodies played on any number of instruments, the melodious concert of voices.”

Henry VII had introduced disguisings and masques as part of the entertainments of great feasts. These were staged, designed and performed exclusively by professional entertainers. But Henry VIII revolutionised the style of the court events so that members of the royal entourage, as well as high ranking courtiers, took an active part in the various disguisings and performances alongside the professionals. These became known as ‘the revels’. A typical revel is detailed in February 1511, which included an interlude performed by the Gentlemen of the Chapel Royal (the choir retained by the king), ‘with divers fresh songs’, the conferring of a knighthood on an Irish lord; a general, informal dance; a disguising called ‘The Gollodyn Arber in the Archeyerde of Plesyr’; a formal dance for couples; followed by ‘a great banquet’; followed by more dancing with an interval for a ‘void’ (light refreshments).

Henry set the standard and the fashion and, therefore, others followed: courtiers would go to great expense and efforts to stage banquets with



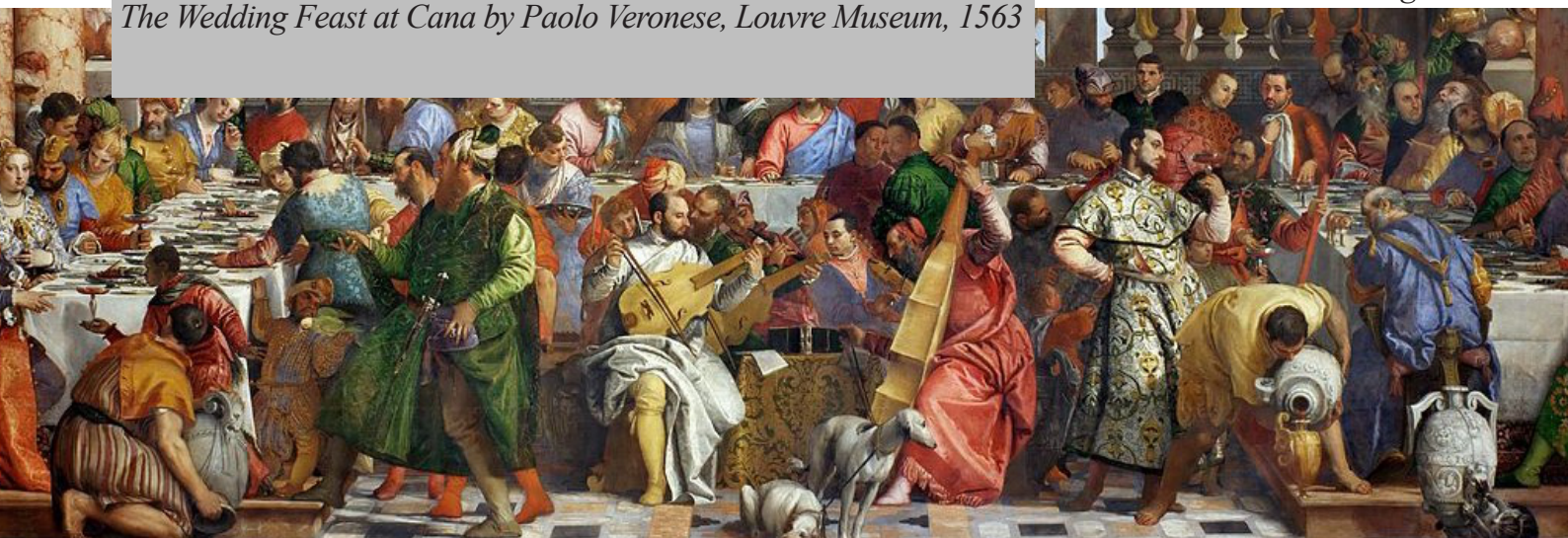
A detail from the portrait of Sir Henry Unton (National Portrait Gallery, London). It shows a lavish feast, whilst the masque of Mercury and Diana is being performed, accompanied by musicians.

entertainments. These practices came at a price and the costs were undoubtedly significant.

In 1518, Cardinal Wolsey en-

tertained the French Ambassadors “and when the banquet was done, in came six minstrels, richly disguised, and after them followed three gentlemen in wide and long

The Wedding Feast at Cana by Paolo Veronese, Louvre Museum, 1563





gowns of crimson satin, everyone having a cup of gold in their hands, the first cup was full of angels and royals, the second had diverse bales of dice and the third had certain pairs of cards. These gentlemen offered to play at mom-chance [a dice game] and, when they had played the length of the first board, then the minstrels blew up, and then entered in the chamber twelve ladies disguised.....”

The records of some of Wolsey’s vast feasts remain and we will look at one, held in January 1527, for a visit by the Venetian ambassador. We don’t have a menu of the actual dishes served but we do have the accounts of the raw ingredients which were purchased. There is not room here to reproduce the entire accounts for just one supper so I have highlighted some of the key items - bear in mind when reading this that there were just 31 diners in all:

8 muttons, 3 veal, 2 fat hogs, 120 calves tongues, 8 lambs, 16 kids, 36 fat capons, 360 chickens, 108 geese, 18 cranes, 24 herons, 15 peacocks, 22 pheasants, 24 great carp, 2 salmon, 9 turbot, 14 conger eels, 13 pike, 466 dishes of butter, 32 gallons of cream, 15 gallons of milk, 3857 eggs and 1 great Parmesan cheese.

I have not even mentioned all the different spices, the flour, the fruits, nuts, vinegars and sweets but I will mention the 377 gallons of ale, 52 gallons of beer, 13 gallons of French wine, 4 gallons of Malmsey and 3 gallons of rum.

One would hope there were a

Course one:	a citole, a lute, a harp, and a recorder.
Course two:	3 trumpets, three cornets, and chorus.
Course three:	a dolzaina ( <i>a reed instrument</i> ), a trom bone, and a recorder.
Course four:	a harp, a recorder, and a harpsichord.
Course five:	a dolzaina, a viol, two cornamuse, and a citole.
Course six:	bergamasca ( <i>a type of dance</i> )
Course seven:	the nobility sing.
Course eight:	Spanish basse dance with a small drum.
Course nine:	3 recorders, 3 cornemuses ( <i>bagpipes</i> ), and one viol.
Course ten:	shawms.
Course eleven:	solo dulcian ( <i>bassoon</i> )
Course twelve:	voices and lute, for a madrigal
Course thirteen:	“songs in the pavan and villanesco” ( <i>types of dance</i> )
Course fourteen:	five viols, and a voice.
Course fifteen:	shawms playing a Moresca ( <i>a dance</i> )
Course sixteen:	a singer with a lire in the manner of Orpheus.
Course seventeen:	four putti voices.
	( <i>I imagine these would be children</i> )
Course eighteen:	six voices, six viols, a lyre, a lute, a cit-tern, a trombone, a bass recorder, a tenor recorder, an alto recorder, a clavichord, and two instruments using plec-trums, one large and one small.

few leftovers for the staff who had worked for days to prepare the food, which was all served to the guests on gold plates. At the end of the evening, there was dancing. Had I been at that feast, I don’t think I could have moved, let alone danced.

To conclude, let us look at one of the most detailed instructions we have for a feast with entertainments. It comes not from England but Italy and the event took place in the court of Ippolito d’Este in May 1529. Details of the meal were published 20 years later in a manual by Cristoforo da Messisbugo in his *Banchetti, Composizioni di Vivande e Apparecchio*

*Generale* of 1549 (Banquets, Course Compositions, and General Table Design). The feast started at 10.00 in the morning and continued through the day, finishing at 5.00pm, during which the guests ate their way through 18 courses. In between each course was a musical entertainment and the music and instruments were designed to complement the foods being served. It shows the importance of the interplay between mood and music and how music could feed the soul as well as the range of food on offer. A true renaissance feast.

**JANE MOULDER**

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The image is a composite. In the foreground, a modern woman with long, light-colored hair is smiling and looking towards the right. In the background, there is a faint, stylized illustration of a royal crown and a portrait of a woman in historical attire, likely Queen Margaret Beaufort.

# *The Uncrowned Queen Margaret Beaufort*

*by  
Nicola  
Tallis*





# AVARICE AND DEADLY AMBITION IN STUART SCOTLAND

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**Few stories from Tudor era history are better known than that of the relationship between Mary Queen of Scots and her second husband, Lord Darnley...**

*James Baresel investigates*

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**F**ew stories from Tudor era history are better known than that of the relationship between Mary Queen of Scots and her second husband, Lord Darnley. Perhaps no incident in Tudor era history has been the source of as much controversy about the facts as has Darnley's murder. Yet it would be hard to find a story from Tudor era history that is more frequently recounted without regard to one of its decisive facets than that of Darnley's role in his wife's life, an omission based entirely on the preoccupations of writers rather than lack of evidence.

Accounts of Mary's reign invariably focus on three points: 1) The Stuarts' place in the English succession; 2) conflict between Catholics and Protestants; and 3) tension between Scotland's monarchy and nobility. No matter

how nuanced a book's analysis of the shifting alliances and rivalries of a multiplicity of small factions and policy viewpoints on both sides of the Anglo-Scottish border, Darnley appears almost out of nowhere, becomes embroiled in Scotland's violent politics, treats Mary brutally and most others contemptuously, and ends up dead—his significance seemingly limited to his Tudor ancestry and status as royal consort. If his father, the 4th Earl of Lennox, is (at best) treated as another tumultuous noble.

Historical reality tells a different story, one placing Lennox and Darnley at the center of a fourth major political controversy of Mary's reign—a dispute over Scotland's royal succession.

When Darnley's paternal grandfather was born a fairly junior descendant of King James II



through the latter daughter, Princess Mary Stewart. But by the time King James V died in 1542 leaving his six-day old daughter Mary as queen of Scots, two lines of descent from the long-dead Princess Mary Stewart provided the infant monarch's immediate royal heirs. One line was headed by the 2nd Earl of Arran (son of Princess Mary's son), the other by 4th Earl of Lennox (son of her daughter). The 1st Earl of Arran, however, had an unusual marital history. Some years after going through a wedding with a woman who believed herself to be the widow of Lord Hay the pair learned (to their mutual surprise) that Hay had still been alive, having left Scotland and failed to leave adequate information concerning

his whereabouts. Lady Hay was then replaced by Janet Bethune, mother of the 2nd Earl of Arran—who Lennox claimed was illegitimate and disqualified from the succession on the grounds that Janet Bethune was the first earl's mistress and Lady Hay his true wife.

If only pragmatic desire for a plausible alternative to Arran could have gained Lennox much of a following the basis for that desire was provided by the new division between Catholics and Protestants, one assuring each earl could obtain a solid base of support by allying with each other's religious opponents. Arran provided Lennox the perfect opportunity by playing politics with religion in an attempt



Mary,  
Queen of Scots with Lord  
Darnley, as played by Vanessa  
Redgrave and Timothy Dalton in  
“Mary, Queen of Scots”  
(1971)

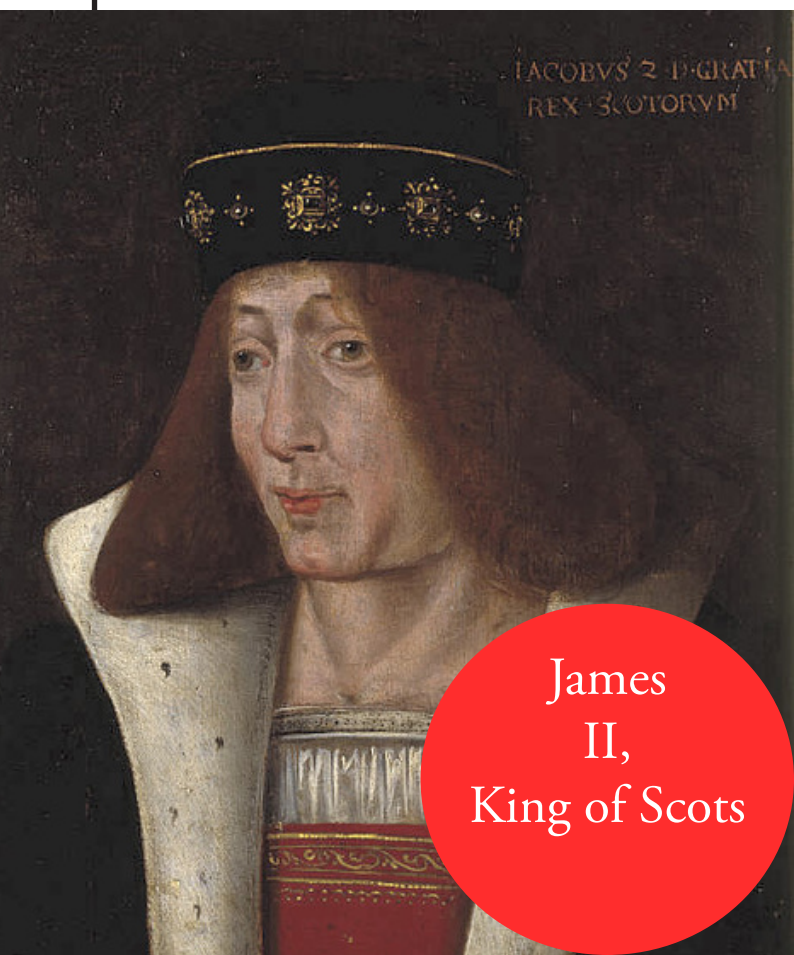


to obtain the regency, for which, as heir apparent, he was one of three leading candidates. The others were James V's devoutly Catholic widow, Mary of Guise, and Cardinal David Beaton, both of whom supported Scotland's longstanding alliance with France. Tradition was on the side of queens dowager. Beaton claimed to have been chosen by the late king. Arran countered by siding with Protestantism and realignment towards England, thereby gaining the support of Scottish lords who had been captured by the English at the Battle of Solway Moss and released on condition they advance the agenda of King Henry VIII—a treaty for marriage between his son Edward and the infant Queen of Scots and creation of Scottish

equivalent of the Church of England.

The immediate outcome was a compromise. The Treaty of Greenwich provided that Mary would Mary, Queen of Scots with Lord Darnley, as played by Vanessa Redgrave and Timothy Dalton in “Mary, Queen of Scots” (1971) would remain in Scotland until she was ten and then, in preparation for marriage to Edward, be turned over to an English king who got what he wanted, on paper, at the price of allowing the Scots a decade within which to unilaterally reverse course. Arran became regent but with Cardinal Beaton as chancellor, then foolishly attempted to strengthen his position by seizing both the queen and the queen mother then holding them in his nearly fortified Linlithgow Palace. Lennox, already well-placed to put himself forward as a Catholic and pro-French heir apparent, raised an army, laid siege to Arran's stronghold and forced a new agreement that gave the upper hand to the Catholic and pro-French party. Arran would continue as regent, but his office's authority would be greatly curtailed by a council of nobles. Mary of Guise gained a decisive combination—custody of the queen and control of Scotland's most formidable fortress, Stirling Castle. The Treaty of Greenwich was repudiated.

It wasn't enough for Lennox. His goal was to combine his position on the council with marriage to Mary of Guise to become the power behind the



James  
II,  
King of Scots



throne and displace Arran as royal heir. His plans quickly unraveled. The queen dowager refused to marry him. He was expelled from the council for whose rise he had been largely responsible. Arran increased his own influence through closer alignment with Scotland's French-oriented Catholics. And so Lennox, never one to admit defeat, turned to an expedient as simple as it was unscrupulous—an alliance with Henry VIII that included such grandiose plans as kidnapping the young Mary, Queen of Scots, ruling Scotland with Henry VIII as his overlord and separating the northern kingdom from the Catholic Church. The earl duly became one of the English king's leading commanders during the invasions of Scotland known as the "Rough Wooing," which were intended to force compliance with the Treaty of Greenwich but resulted only in pillage and the arrival of a French army at the request of the Scottish government. But, in return for his failed efforts, Lennox was rewarded with marriage to Lady Margaret Douglas—daughter of Henry's sister Margaret (widow of King James IV and mother of James V) and the Scottish Earl of Angus.

The match had the potential to be a dynastic perfect storm. Judging which partner was more ambitious is humanly impossible. Margaret's religious flexibility was more moderate, compromising her more or less Catholic inclinations when it suited her without ever fully abandoning them. While Henry VIII

lived she conformed to his semi-Catholic church. Decades later she acted in apparent disregard of Pope Pius V's bull *Regnans in Excelsis* (that forbid English Catholics to accept Elizabeth as queen). Admittedly, her only motive may have been a desire to keep her head on her shoulders and her refusal to accept both the full Protestantism of Edward VI and the re-established Anglicanism of Elizabeth constituted more principled stands, but her true attitude came to the fore after Darnley's murder—when she proved willing to sell-out Catholicism and ally with its greatest enemies in English politics in order to destroy Mary Stuart.

Lord and Lady Lennox's first joint bid for power occurred during the reign of Queen Mary Tudor and was suitably duplicitous. In her continuing struggle with the former Earl of Arran (who passed the title to his heir after being created Duke of Châtellerauld), Mary of Guise again turned to Lennox—who immediately began plotting with leading figures in the English government (though perhaps not the queen). The new plan called for him to return to Scotland under the pretense of supporting Mary of Guise, overthrow her in alliance with Châtellerauld and then double cross the duke to set himself up as a pro-English Catholic king of Scots. Before anything could come of the proposal Châtellerauld had backed under French pressure and turned the regency over to the queen



mother in return for official recognition as heir to the throne.

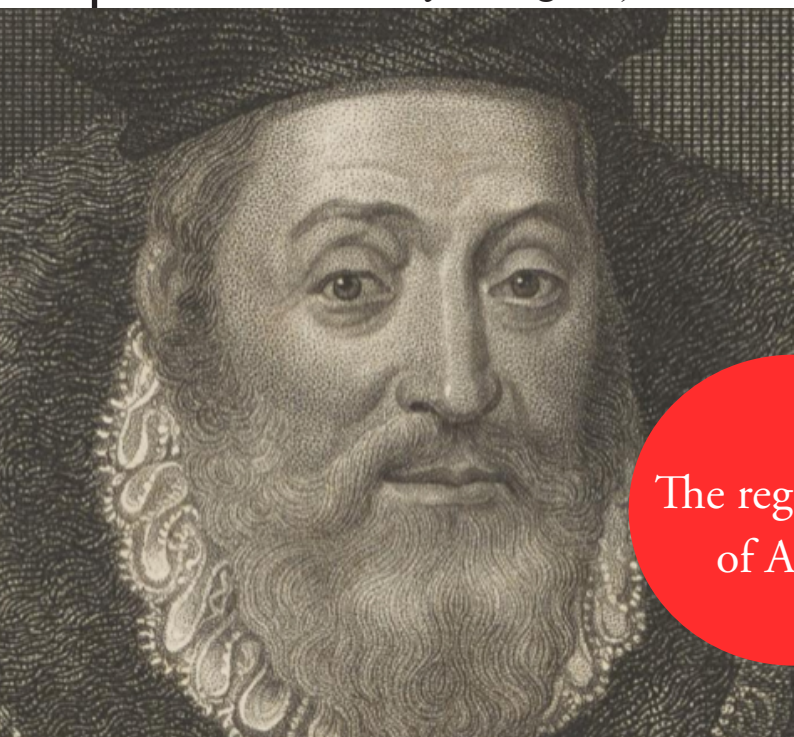
Never one to let an unrealistic plan go to waste, Lennox resurrected the idea following the death of Mary of Guise and the passing of power to the rebellious Protestant Lords of the Congregation. Elizabeth was ruling England by then, but Philip II of Spain was acting as a patron of hers in an effort to maintain the Anglo-Spanish alliance against France. Certainly, Philip would prefer Scotland ruled by a pro-Elizabeth Catholic than by Protestants, while Elizabeth herself (as distrustful of rebels as she was willing to make pragmatic use of them) had only reluctantly given support to the Lords of the Congregation under pressure from Sir William Cecil. And so Lennox tried to talk the Spanish ambassador to support him in an effort to become a Catholic king of Scots allied to Philip and, at least indirectly, to Elizabeth (though it would have been in character for him to intend using Scotland as a power base to overthrow her in favor of Lady Margaret). Events

were prevented from again overtaking Lennox's plans by the latter's inability to appeal seriously to anyone other than the earl's closest collaborators.

Finally, however, the growth Lord Darnley into an adult and the death of Mary Stuart's first husband (King Francis II of France) gave Lennox and Lady Margaret their last and strongest card—a marriage between their son and the Queen of Scots that historians tend to see purely as a means to strengthening the English royal claims of both. Lennox saw it different, as a chance to become Scotland's dominant noble and to bypass Châtellerauld in the Scottish succession by gaining for Darnley the Crown Matrimonial—a legal office that included the right to succeed to the throne should the queen die first without living descendants.

Mary's refusal to grant Darnley the Crown Matrimonial—which became his reason for plotting against her—was not, therefore, merely denial of a high honor to a man she quickly learned was a vain, selfish, duplicitous and cruel political lightweight, whose alternations between domineering arrogance and craven submissiveness further alienated almost everyone, whose schemes moved from his father's grasping at improbabilities to the fanciful and whose rapid changes of religious and factional alignment make

Lennox appear a rock of stable principles and allegiances. It was a



The regent-earl  
of Arran



decision that subverted one of the Lennox faction's primarily goals. And since the queen (as John Guy in particular has demonstrated) was an astute politician able to play weak hands well, it may well have been a decision grounded in fear that Darnley would try reducing her to a figurehead or even that her life might be in danger if it was all that stood between her husband and the throne.

Whatever the exact reasons, Darnley and Lennox both participated in plot that resulted in the murder of Mary's secretary David Rizzio, that was intended to gain Darnley the crown matrimonial and that gratuitously risked the death of and briefly imprisoned the queen, until she successfully manipulating her husband's fear of his co-conspirators to escape and raise an army with the aid of the Earl of Bothwell. Darnley's death

just under a year later occurred shortly after Mary had ordered him to leave Lennox territory (from where, evidence suggests, father and son had been contemplating another bid for power) and take up residence in Edinburgh.

The tragic irony is that the death of Lennox's son led to the earl finally fulfilling his long-standing ambition to control Scotland. After Mary was overthrown and imprisoned for her alleged part in the assassination, her half-brother the Earl of Moray, governed (as regent on behalf of the queen's son) until he was killed in January 1570. His replacement—who in turned died in a skirmish the following September—was Lennox.

**JAMES BARESEL**

Baby King James VI mourns the death of his father, flanked by his praying grandparents, the Earl and Countess of Lennox







# The Man Who Would be King

Francis, Duke of Alençon

*Unknown Artist*



Even as a girl, Elizabeth Tudor said she would never take a husband. As Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester - who knew her best - told a foreign ambassador to the English court, he had known Elizabeth since they were children together. At about the tender age of eight, Dudley recalled, she had 'invariably declared that she would remain unmarried'.<sup>1</sup>

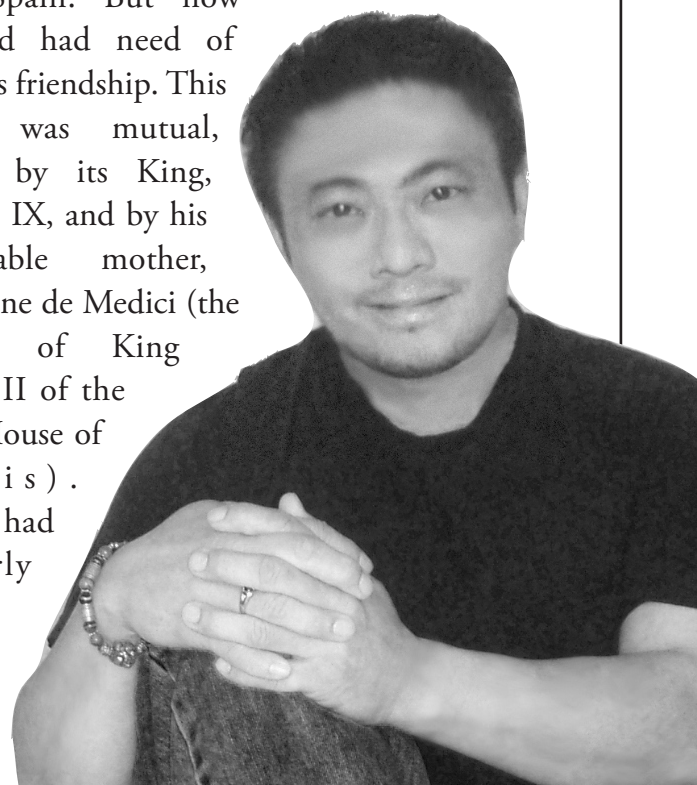
Perhaps it was the trauma of knowing that her mother Anne Boleyn had been put to death by her father Henry VIII, or that her stepmother Katheryn Howard had suffered a similar fate, that made the young Princess determined to stay single. Later as Queen, Elizabeth seemed to have not wavered in her resolve. During the reign of her half-sister Mary Tudor, she had seen how her reputation was damaged by marriage, particularly one to a foreign prince. Mary's objective to wed Philip of Spain was very unpopular, and had even spurred a rebellion. In 1559, when Parliament appealed to Elizabeth to marry 'whereby to all our comforts, we might enjoy the royal issue of her body to reign over us', she was resistant.<sup>2</sup> The young Queen would only promise that should the Almighty one day inspire her to wed, she would, but meanwhile, it would be sufficient 'that a marble stone shall declare that a queen, having reigned such a time, lived and died a virgin'.

Despite Elizabeth's aversion to matrimony, she did not lack suitors. First and foremost among them was Robert Dudley. He was her favourite at court, and she nicknamed him her 'Eyes'. Her affection towards him had many tongues wagging, but as Elizabeth herself affirmed, nothing untoward had ever passed between them. Even if she was inclined to have the handsome Dudley as her bedfellow, the matter was fraught with complications. As a monarch, it was considered beneath Elizabeth's station to marry a commoner, and even if she did, it would create jealousy and faction among her courtiers. But what of her equals then?

Elizabeth was a great catch, and she received offers from foreign rulers, including King Philip of Spain (her former brother-in-law of all people) and Prince Eric of Sweden. But despite the appeal of an alliance with another power, she was uninterested.

To the frustration of her councillors and her people, Elizabeth was still unwed more than a decade into her reign. But by the 1570s, she appeared more amenable. It was not that she herself wanted to be a wife or even a mother. The Queen never desired offspring, and she went so far as to declare how 'Princes cannot like their own children, those that should succeed unto them'.<sup>3</sup> While motherhood was not important to her, the safety of her kingdom was. King Philip and the Pope were ever a menace, and now her cousin Mary Stuart was just as dangerous. Since 1568, the Scottish Queen had taken refuge in England. Although she was carefully guarded, Mary was the focus of conspiracies to take Elizabeth's throne.

To counteract its enemies, England looked to France for support. The two Countries had long been at loggerheads. In the 14th century, Elizabeth's ancestor King Edward III had invaded France laying claim to it, as did Henry V later on. More recently, Queen Mary had also made war upon the French due to her tie with Spain. But now England had need of France's friendship. This desire was mutual, shared by its King, Charles IX, and by his formidable mother, Catherine de Medici (the widow of King Henry II of the royal House of Valois). France had formerly







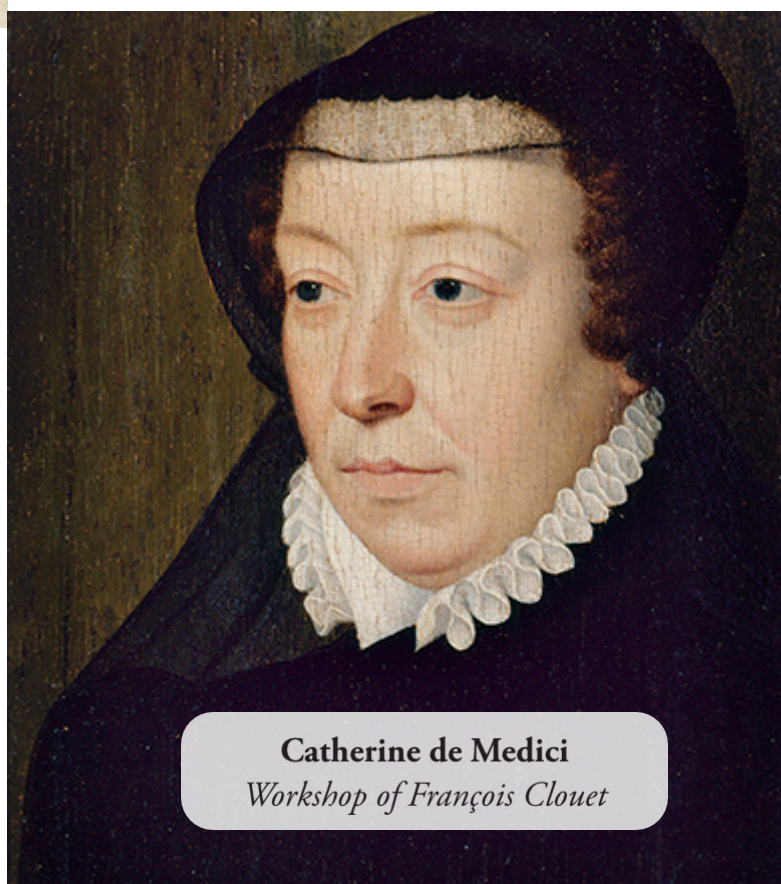
A pact was proposed in which Elizabeth would marry Henry, Duke of Anjou, the brother of the French King. But Anjou had no interest in taking a woman who was almost twenty years his senior. Also, it was said that he preferred the company of his male favourites, his so-called 'mignons'. Knowing that the Protestant Elizabeth would likely deny him the right to practice his Catholic religion in her realm should he be her husband, Anjou suddenly affected a great devotion to his faith as a deterrent.

Rather than Anjou, in early 1572, Catherine de Medici offered up her other son Francis Hercules, Duke of Alençon.<sup>4</sup> He was

twenty-one years younger than Elizabeth, but that made no difference to his mother who wanted to extend her influence over Europe by having Elizabeth as part of her family. 'I already love you as a mother does her daughter', as Catherine would write her.<sup>5</sup> And in another letter, she called herself 'your good sister and cousin, who begs God to have the honour to say *mother* soon'.<sup>6</sup>

But Catherine's plans were thwarted by events in France. The religious turmoil affecting her Country culminated with the Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre. Over several weeks, thousands of French Protestants (Huguenots) were slaughtered by fanatical Catholics. Much of the blame was put on the King and his mother. Across the Channel, the English were horrified, and diplomatic relations with France became strained. When the French ambassador arrived at Elizabeth's court to offer King Charles' explanations, he received a frosty welcome. The courtiers turned their backs to him, and he was greeted by the Queen wearing black in mourning.

Eventually, warmer relations were resumed, and the marriage alliance was





revived. In the time since, Charles IX had died, and his brother Henry was now King. This made Francis heir to the throne until Henry had a son (French law did not permit a daughter to succeed even if there was one). But after years of marriage, the King and his wife, Louise of Lorraine, had still not produced a successor.

Besides picturing himself as the future King of France, Francis had aspirations in the Netherlands as well. The Dutch Protestants (under William of Orange) were trying to free themselves from the rule of Catholic Spain, and Alençon imagined himself, with backing from the English, as their deliverer given the chance. Greedy for military glory and political might, the Duke announced himself - to the joy of his mother - eager to marry Elizabeth. But before she would even receive Alençon, the English Queen had her own conditions. The Duke must come and court her in person, and he 'should hold it to be neither prejudice nor disgrace unto him, if he returned without speeding in his suit'.<sup>7</sup> In other words, Elizabeth was free to send him back if she thought him damaged goods!

Instead of going to England himself right away, Alençon sent his agent Jean de Simier ahead in January 1579. Simier was a great charmer. On his master's behalf, he wooed Elizabeth with 'love toys, pleasant conceits, and court dalliances'.<sup>8</sup> He was also a great deal of fun, and he even went as far as to steal the Queen's nightcap from her bedroom to send to the Duke. But those who were opposed to the French marriage were not amused by such antics. One of the most vocal critics was the Earl of Leicester. Unable to have Elizabeth for himself, he was jealous of her French suitor, and he made no effort to hide his feelings about Alençon. Simier struck back, for he knew a great secret the Earl was keeping. Since 1578, Dudley had

been married to Lettice Knollys, a cousin of the Queen. When Elizabeth was told, she was shocked. For years, she had trusted and loved Dudley in the way that she could, and she now thought herself utterly betrayed. Hurt and angry, she ordered him to be put under house arrest. There was even talk of sending him to the Tower of London. But as Elizabeth's councillors cautioned her, Dudley had committed no crime, and her treatment of him only made her look foolish. The Queen relented, and eventually, Leicester won her forgiveness.

After her humiliation by Dudley, Elizabeth was even more anxious to see the man who might be her husband in the flesh. In August, she finally laid eyes upon Alençon. In truth, he could hardly be called attractive. He was short, had a big nose, and his face was scarred by the smallpox which he had caught as a child. To Elizabeth's credit, she was able to look beyond the superficial. She found the Duke - commonly referred to as 'Monsieur' - very delightful and charismatic; perhaps even sexy in his own way. At a court ball where Alençon remained incognito (though everyone knew he was there), Elizabeth was seen to make loving expressions and gestures to him as she danced. As she did with Leicester, she gave Alençon a nickname - he was her 'Frog'. When he finally had to return to France, Elizabeth, it was said, saw him off with sadness.

During the Duke's absence - he promised to return soon, Elizabeth had to deal with her subjects. She had apparently reconciled herself with the fact that she must marry and produce an heir, but would others agree that it must be with Monsieur? Even though her councillors had always been adamant that she must wed, some of them disliked the French marriage. As a Catholic,





**Francis Duke of Alençon**

by Lambert Cornelisz

though a lukewarm one, Alençon insisted on the privilege to attend Mass in England as his brother had once demanded.

Catherine de Medici was equally firm on the matter. As

she wrote her son King Henry III, 'the said Queen will have to agree with you on the matter of the practice of our Catholic religion for your brother and for his fellowmen, not with a promise on the side that will not be in the treaty, but written and signed in the hand of the said Lady Queen'.<sup>9</sup>

The more extreme Protestants (the Puritans) were appalled by such a request, though Elizabeth herself thought it reasonable. One who was particularly upset was a lawyer named John Stubbs. In response, he wrote a book entitled *The Discovery of a Gaping Gulf whereunto England is like to be swallowed by another French marriage if the Lord forbid not the bans by letting Her Majesty see the sin and punishment thereof*. Stubbs' denunciation of the Duke gave the Queen much offense, and she ordered him punished by losing a hand. On the day when Stubbs had his dreadful sentence carried out, he then raised his hat with his other hand and shouted "*God save the Queen*"! before he fainted.<sup>10</sup>

The incident made Alençon even more unpopular among the English, and made Elizabeth hesitant to forge ahead. She could not decide to marry or not. The delay exasperated Catherine de Medici. As she grumbled in the spring of 1580, 'time is pressing upon us - on the Queen of

England's part, who hopes to have children, and on my part, given my age'. At a crossroads, Elizabeth sought the advice of her Council. But when the members failed to give her a unanimous decision, saying that it was all up to the Queen herself, Elizabeth was enraged. Unable to make up her mind on her own, she had expected them to push her into accepting the Duke. After all, hadn't they for years begged her to take a husband? She gave them all a good scolding. Instead of 'a universal request made for her to proceed in this marriage', all she got was 'doubt in it', she fumed.<sup>11</sup>

The negotiations would drag on into 1581. It was then that an agreement was drawn up satisfactory to both parties. The Duke was to be allowed to practice his faith (though in private as to not offend Elizabeth's Protestant subjects), and like Philip of Spain before him, he would have the title of King of England, but with no authority attached to it. As such, Monsieur would not be permitted to put his own countrymen into important posts, nor would he be able to tamper with the State religion as it was. Furthermore, if he and Elizabeth had children, he would have care of them if she died, but only until they reached adulthood. Lastly, the Duke was expected to provide his wife with a dowry, for which the Queen would then pay him a handsome pension.

But even with a treaty in place, there was still setback. As Elizabeth told the French, her people were still much against her match with a Catholic, and she needed time to convince them otherwise. In October, Alençon returned to England intent on speeding things up in person. He still had dreams of being a leader of the Dutch Protestants, but that required English money. His visit was successful in rekindling his romance with Elizabeth. On a November



day, in the presence of her courtiers and the French ambassador, the Queen made an astonishing announcement. "You may write this to the King", she addressed his envoy. "The Duke of Alençon shall be my husband"! She then put a ring on his finger, and gave him a big kiss.<sup>12</sup>

Monsieur was transported with joy as the marriage was set to go ahead at last. But Elizabeth felt very differently; she was having second thoughts. She regretted her spur of the moment decision, and she told those closest to her how she hated the idea of marriage more and more each day. Having made up her mind once and for all, she gave the bad news to her fiancé in private. He was later heard muttering angrily about 'the lightness of women, and the inconstancy of islanders'.<sup>13</sup>

To save face on both sides, no public announcement was made. As far as the world was concerned, the Queen and the Duke were still engaged and on the best of terms. As a show of her 'commitment' (and to buy off the offended Monsieur), Elizabeth's government gave him £60,000 to finance his war chest in the Low Countries. She would give more, the Queen exclaimed - a million pounds even - to have her Frog 'swimming in the Thames rather than in the stagnant waters of the Netherlands'.<sup>14</sup>

Even with English money to support his campaigns, Alençon never made a success of himself. He was offered the sovereignty of the United Provinces, but he was of no help to the Dutch against the Spaniards. In 1583, Monsieur led a disastrous attack on the city of Antwerp, which had him fleeing back to France in disgrace. His dishonour was depicted in an allegorical painting showing the contested Netherlands in the form of a cow. According to the inscription by the artist:

Not long time since I saw a cow  
Did Flanders represent  
Upon whose back King Philip rode  
As being malcontent  
The Queen of England giving hay  
Whereon the cow did feed  
As one that was her greatest help  
In her distress and need  
The Prince of Orange milked the cow  
And made his purse the pail  
The cow did shit in Monsieur's hand  
While he did hold her tail

As for Elizabeth, she was said to have danced with joy in being rid of Alençon. But as she was always of two minds regarding him, another part of her regretted her decision to let him go. While the Duke's intentions may have been more mercenary than loving, Elizabeth, it seems had been genuinely fond of him. As she wrote in a poem entitled 'On Monsieur's Departure':  
I grieve and dare not show my discontent;  
I love, and yet am forced to seem to hate;  
I do, yet dare not say I ever meant;  
I seem stark mute, but inwardly do prate.  
I am, and not; I freeze and yet am burned,  
Since from myself another self I turned.  
My care is like my shadow in the sun --  
Follows me flying, flies when I pursue it,  
Stands, and lies by me, doth what I have done;  
His too familiar care doth make me rue it.  
No means I find to rid him from my breast,  
Till by the end of things it be suppressed.  
Some gentler passion slide into my mind,  
For I am soft and made of melting snow;  
Or be more cruel, Love, and so be kind.  
Let me or float or sink, be high or low;  
Or let me live with some more sweet content,  
Or die, and so forget what love e'er meant.<sup>15</sup>

Elizabeth appeared to be truly affected by his death as well. In 1584, Monsieur sadly died of a fever in his native France. For a while, Elizabeth dressed herself in black, and





**The Dairy Cow - The Dutch Provinces  
Revolting Against the Spanish** by an  
Unknown Artist

called herself 'a widow woman'. In her condolences, she wrote to Catherine de Medici - 'your sorrow cannot exceed mine, although you are his mother. You have several

other children, but for myself I find no consolation, if it be not death, in which I hope we shall be reunited'.<sup>16</sup>

**ROLAND HUI**

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3. Pollen, John Hungerford (edited by), *Queen Mary's Letter to the Duke of Guise*, Publications of the Scottish History Society, XLIII, 1904, p. 41.
4. By 1576, Alençon was also called Duke of Anjou. Alençon had had a brother also named Francis who ruled France briefly from 1559-1560. He died at the age of sixteen, and was married to Mary Queen of Scots.
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# Dissolution of the Monasteries

**THE DISSOLUTION OF THE MONASTERIES WAS SEEN BY MANY PEOPLE AS SIMPLY DESTROYING THE RELIGIOUS HOUSES IN A WAY THAT ALLOWED THE CROWN TO STEAL ALL THEIR WEALTH. WITH THIS MONTH'S TOPIC BEING 'GREED', THE QUESTIONS ARE ALL TO DO WITH THE DISSOLUTION ITSELF AND THE EVENTS AROUND IT.**

FILL IN THE ANSWERS IN THE BOXES PROVIDED AFTER EACH CLUE.  
WHEN YOU'VE FINISHED, TAKE THE LETTERS WHICH ARE HIGHLIGHTED AND THIS WILL GIVE YOU THE  
HORRIFIC PUNISHMENT INFLICTED ON THE SUBJECT OF QUESTION 9. GOOD LUCK!

- ## 1. HENRY VIII'S SERVANT, MOST ASSOCIATED WITH THE DISSOLUTION OF THE MONASTERIES

- ## 2. THE ACT OF 1535 ALLOWED FOR WHAT TO HAPPEN TO THE LESSER MONASTERIES?

- ### 3. THE 1534 ACT OF SUPREMACY GAVE HENRY THE AUTHORITY TO START WHICH PROCESS REGARDING THE MONASTERIES?



- #### 4. THE FATE OF A VAST AMOUNT OF THE REBELS THAT TOOK PART IN QUESTION 5

- 5. WHICH FAMOUS REBELLION BEGAN IN OCTOBER 1536?**

- 6. WHAT IS THE NAME OF THE PARLIAMENT RECALLED FROM FEBRUARY TO APRIL 1536?**

- ## 7. WHICH ACT OF 1534 CONFIRMED THE BREAK WITH ROME?

- 8. 3RD DUKE OF NORFOLK, SENT TO MEET THE REBELS INVOLVED IN QUESTION 5**



- ### 9. LEADING FIGURE IN QUESTION 5, INVITED TO SPEND CHRISTMAS 1536 WITH THE KING



10. ON THE 17TH DECEMBER 1538, POPE PAUL III ANNOUNCED HE HAD DONE WHAT FROM THE CHURCH TO HENRY VIII?

- ## 11. WOMAN FOR WHOM HENRY WAS SAID TO HAVE BROKEN FROM THE CHURCH

- 12. DUKE OF WHERE, SENT BY HENRY VIII TO EXACT PUNISHMENT ON THE REBELS OF QUESTION 5?**





# The Greediest Land Grab in Tudor History

**T**he dissolution of the monasteries turned in to the greediest land grab in Tudor history. Over 800 monasteries were dissolved displacing around some 12,000 monks, canons, friars and nuns. Henry VIII had become Supreme Head of the Church of England through the Act of Supremacy in 1534. This separation from papal authority gave him the authority to disband monasteries across the country and seize their property and assets.

Many people blame Cromwell for his role in the dissolution of the monasteries but apart from the king absolutely supporting the destruction it was actually Wolsey who made the first foray into cashing in on religious orders. He dissolved 29 monasteries between 1524 and 1527 including Bayham Abbey, Felixstowe Priory, Lesnes Abbey and Ravenstone Priory raising around £1800 to finance the building of his school in Ipswich and Cardinal's College in Oxford.

Of course Cromwell was Wolsey's man which may have given him the idea to raise money for the crown by

suppressing further monasteries but there is evidence that he was not comfortable with the wholesale destruction of religious orders. He was however a talented administrator and Henry would use him to carry out his plans making him Vice-regent of Spirituals in 1535 to act on his behalf. The court of augmentations would also be set up to manage the transfer of monastic properties and revenues.

In 1536 an act was passed for the dissolution of the minor monasteries which were those with an income of less than £200 a year. The act stated that 'the manifest sin, vicious carnal and abominable living is daily used and

committed amongst the little and small abbeys, priories and other religious houses of monks canons and nuns where the congregation of such religious persons is under the number of 12 persons.'

V i s i t i n g commissioners had been travelling the country assessing the monasteries and in some cases falsely reporting back scandals, financial offences and sexual transgressions. Cromwell gave them orders to ask eighty-six questions including things like

Whether the divine service was kept up, day and night, in the right hours?





Whether they (monks) kept company with women, within or without the monastery?

Whether they had any boys lying by them?

Whether you do wear your religious habit continually, and never leave it off but when you go to bed?"

David Starkey in his book *Six Wives: The Queens of Henry VIII* states 'Their subsequent reports concentrated on two areas: the sexual failings of the monks, on which subject the visitors managed to combine intense

disapproval with lip-smacking detail, and the false miracles and relics, of which they gave equally gloating accounts.'

The crown gained financially by selling off of monastic property and land to the nobles albeit at cheap prices. It has been suggested that this is exactly why the upper echelons of Tudor society supported the dissolution as it added to their land portfolios. It's interesting to note that Anne Boleyn felt that any monies accrued should be spent on

education or other religious purposes rather than it just lining Henry's coffers but the king saw the money as a way to fund future military campaigns and the building of forts along his coastline.

Another point that has been made is that this grab for land was also a defensive mechanism. If a noble had lands surrounding a monastery they needed to also own it so that a stranger and/or enemy didn't end up with property within their own holdings.

Lord Lisle's mention of wanting one such property is the first we find in any Tudor correspondence that the dissolution was happening. In February and June of 1536 he was angling for Beaulieu Abbey in Hampshire but his agent Husee thought it already granted and suggested he look at other properties like St Mary's in Winchester or Waverley in Surrey. Beaulieu would go to Thomas Wriothesley, 1st Earl of Southampton,



Thomas Cromwell



who would pay £1350 for the privilege of owning it and allow the abbey to fall into ruin whilst he built his own home there.

The 1536 act was followed by another Act of Suppression in 1539 which covered the larger monastic sites. Nobles who paid for properties could then fund the building of their own homes, like Wriothesley did, by stripping the properties of furniture, wall hangings and other goods and selling on these and building materials like glass, stone and lead.

But it wasn't just the nobility who gained from the dissolution of the monasteries. Local people also looted the vacant properties. One of Cromwell's agent said:

The poor people thoroughly in every place be so greedy upon these houses when they be suppressed that by night and day, not only of the towns, but also of the country, they do continually resort as long as any door,

window iron or glass or loose lead remaineth in any of them

But they lost out in other ways when the monasteries closed. They had provided charity, health care and education in local areas and the nobility that took over as landowners provided little in the way to make up for what communities lost. They also employed local people as servants, cooks, gardeners, cleaners as well as providing respite for travellers with accommodation and refreshment.

Those that lived in the monasteries, monks, canons, friars and nuns found themselves homeless. Some had hidden relics or jewels from the visiting commissioners and fled into exile. Others were pensioned off and the less fortunate who failed to comply with the king's wishes were executed.

Henry VIII also gained from dispersing the members of religious orders – now

there were less people to question his supremacy and the nobles that had profited had every reason to support their king all the more. A L Morton wrote that the properties were 'seized by the crown and sold to nobles, courtiers, merchants and groups of speculators. Much was resold by them to smaller landowners and capitalist farmers, so that a large and influential class was created who had the best of reasons for maintaining the Reformation settlement. This dispersal of the monastic lands by the government was poor economics, but politically it was a master-stroke'.

The last monastery to be dissolved was Waltham Abbey in April 1540. The disbandment, stripping and destruction of some of England's most beautiful buildings is thought to have swelled Henry's coffers by over a million pounds.

**SARAH-BETH WATKINS**



# Tudor Life

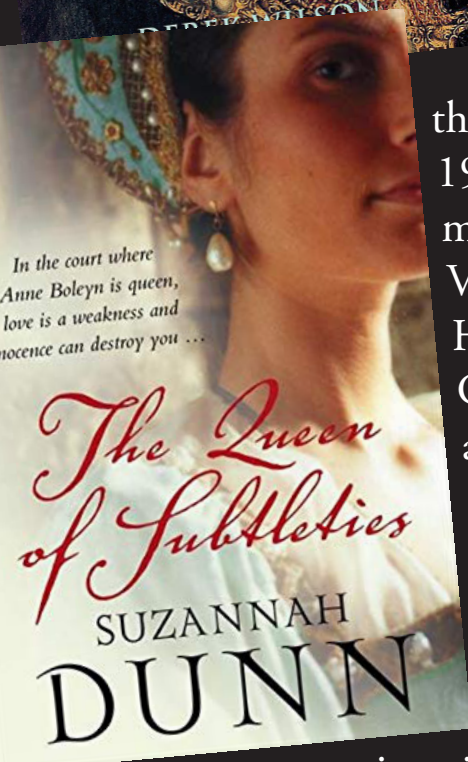
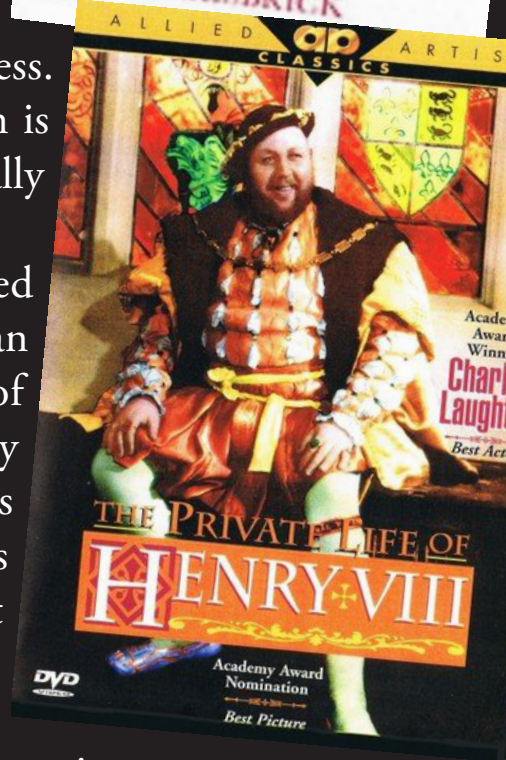
## EDITOR'S PICK



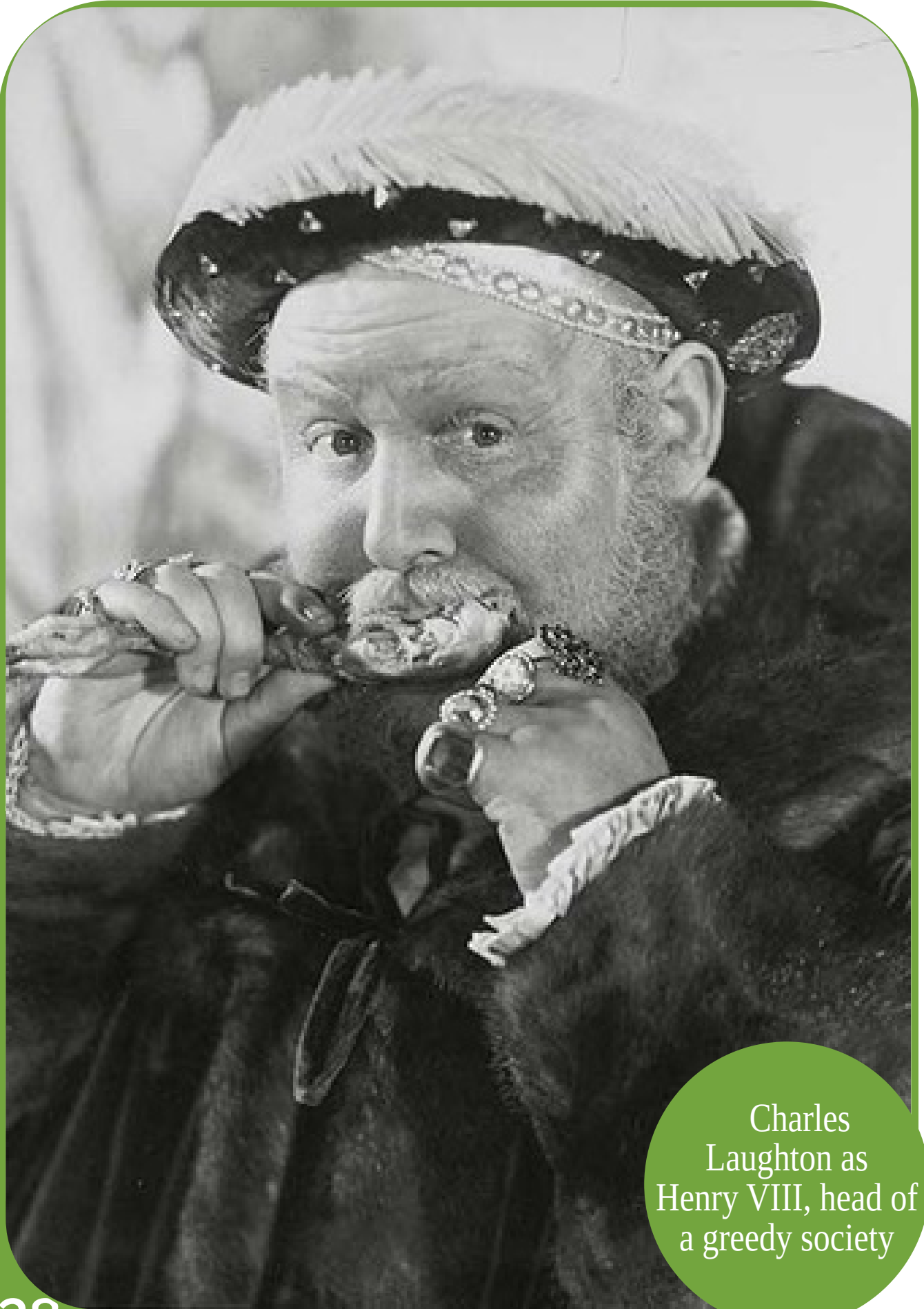
Few kings are more associated with the vice of greed in popular culture than Henry VIII, so for an academic read (and devastating critique) of his career, try Professor J. J. Scarisbrick's majestic biography "Henry VIII," published by Yale University Press. Derek Wilson's biography of him is shorter, no less critical, and equally entertaining.

No movie better enshrined the legend of the 'greedy king' than 1933's sumptuous comedy of manners, "The Private Life of Henry VIII." Starring Charles Laughton as Henry VIII, Binnie Barnes as Catherine Howard, Robert Donat as Thomas Culpepper, and Merle Oberon as Anne Boleyn, the movie was one of the first British motion pictures to "crack" the American market.

In terms of novels, I can recommend "The Queen of Subtleties" by Suzannah Dunn, a stark modern novel imagining the lives of two real-life historical figures, Queen Anne Boleyn and Lucy Cornwallis, Henry VIII's "confectioner," a chef-artist who crafted sugar into dizzyingly beautiful sculptures for the royal tables.







Charles  
Laughton as  
Henry VIII, head of  
a greedy society



# Ballad representations in mischief

‘Few mischeefes at all that money makes not’: Ballad Representations of Greed, Covetousness and Social Disruption

In medieval and early modern political thought, society was roughly comprised of three orders: The political order (the nobility), the religious order (the clergy), and the labouring order (the commons). The different sections of society were weaved together by various responsibilities owed by certain groups to the other orders. The common people, and especially the poor, were to be taken care of by the political order, and the religious order would ensure that adequate charity was given to them. In return, the poor were expected to accept their lot in life, be good Christians, and receive the aid they were given with thanks. In the Tudor period, ‘wealth had social responsibilities, and individuals – whether nobles or merchants – could not do with it what they willed without violating traditional norms.’

It will come as no surprise when I tell you that this ideal was not the reality experienced by the poor of

Tudor England. During the second half of the sixteenth century, the country experienced a population boom. As prices began to rise real wages fell and this pushed more and more people into poverty. The Norwich census (1570) is an extraordinary document which survives in its entirety. It gives a unique insight into the lives of the poor families living in England’s second city. An analysis of poor families from just one ward – St. Stephen’s – demonstrates the extreme poverty faced by both skilled and unskilled labourers. The majority of the household income in many of families recorded in the census was earned by the wives and children, who participated in Norwich’s booming cloth trade. Many of the accounts note that the families were ‘veri pore’ and that most of them did not receive alms or other institutional help.

The England represented in Tudor ballads mirrored reality rather than the ideal. They depict a moral world ‘in the process of disintegration’. The natural order of social relations had ruptured, and the reciprocal responsibilities were forgotten. The cause of this disruption to the natural order of things was, according the ballads, ‘sinful pride, greed



(covetousness), and especially the private view of wealth as free of social restrictions.' The poor were the main victims of this breakdown in the social order, and poverty became a widespread issue. In many representations of the poor in Tudor England, and to some extent even right through until today, they are considered a homogenous group. Unlike the early Stuart ballads – such as *Ragged, Torne and True*; or, *The Poore Man's Resolution* and *A New Ballad*, shewing the great misery sustained by a poore man in Essex, his wife and children, with other strange doings done by the Devill – the poor of the Tudor ballads are denied any aspect of individualism.

The ballad *The Maner of the World now a dayes* (late 1550s), complains of various perceived social ills – including unmarried mothers, gambling, and the decline of religion. The world it describes is corrupt, seedy, and underpinned with extreme strife. The anonymous narrator complains that 'So much wrath and evny/ Covetous and gluttony/ and so litle charitie/ sawe I never.' These deadly sins were the reason for the disintegration of the natural social order.

In *A New Yeres Gift*, intituled, *A Christal glas for all Estates to look in* (1569) the most pervasive and deadly sin committed by humankind is deemed to be greed, or covetousness. The ballad argues that all the evil done in the world, right back to

original sin, stems from the human propensity toward greed. 'Beware of Covetousness, saith Christ Jesus,/ It first confounded Adam being then in Paradice,/ Coveting to be as God, and so began to slide... Beware therefore of it, for this I do confesse,/ The originall of all sin, must needs be covetousnesse.' The ballad then assesses other biblical examples of greed and envy before telling the listener that is primarily responsible for the plight of the commons; 'seing covetousness doth rob us of mercie and grace.'

This theme is also explored in the ballad *No wight in this world that wealth can attain* (1560s). The author 'dwells... on a vanished Golden Age when all was right with the world.' The world of reciprocal social relationships, respect, and plenty is replaced by a culture obsessed with the accumulation of wealth. This new society is entirely disrupted 'for money is cause of muther and thefe,/ of battle, and bloodshed, which would God were left; of ravine, of wronge, or false witnesse-bearing, of treason conspired, and eake of forswearinge.' Greed turns children against parents, destroys good governance, and attracts flatterers and false friends. The society represented in this ballad is rife with sin and suffering, and it argues that the corruptive nature of money lies at the heart of the disintegration of society.

The idea that society was becoming more corrupt, greedy, and individualistic was a pervasive

theme in the Tudor ballads. From the start of the sixteenth century broadside ballads began to explore the rift between the old ideals of 'Merry old England' and apparently new cultural obsession with self-advancement and wealth accumulation. These earlier ballads include *Ruyn of a Realm* (c. 1510-1530), *Now a Dayes* (Henrician period), *Dires and Lazarus* (1550s), and *Vox Populi, Vox Dei* (late 1540s). The general themes of sin, corruption, and the passing of a golden age in

social relations examined in the later ballads are also present in these earlier examples, showing that these were concerns experienced throughout the Tudor period. The idea that society is in decline and a general wish to go back to 'the good old days' appears to be a common notion felt across time and place. How often have we heard older generations reminisce about the days of unlocked doors and good neighbourly relations?

**LAUREN BROWNE**



How accurate were the Tudor laments on modern greed?



# THE AMBITIOUS DUDLEYS

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**Gayle Hulme** will examine the fortunes of two generations of Dudley men, whose greed for money and power ended under the sharp blade of the executor's axe.

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**S**ir Edmund Dudley was the son of the first Baron Dudley. As was common among the elite ranks of society during the turbulent 14th century, the Dudleys, depending on who was currently in ascendancy, vacillated between the Lancastrian and Yorkist cause.

Dudley, a lawyer by training, brokered his way to the top by expertly deploying his professional skills and shamelessly cultivating the favourable opinions of influential men at court. Once in Henry VII's pay, he ruthlessly, and to the fury of the nobility, enforced the crippling financial policies of his master.

It is useful to remember that Henry VII's claim to the throne was through the right of conquest. Therefore, there were many nobles in England still grinding an axe against the Tudors because of their more substantial hereditary claims to the crown. These ancient families had

vast estates and huge incomes that gave them the ability to topple the fledgling Tudor dynasty. To nullify those who held notions of kingship, the King, Dudley, and other financial enforcers reinstated an old but perfectly legal system of fines and bonds against the future good behaviour of any subject who had shown the slightest inclining of disloyalty.

Sir Edmund reached the pinnacle of his service to the king in 1503. He had collected £219,316 for Henry's Exchequer in less than four years, and as the royal coffers swelled, so did Dudley's. According to his will, he was a fabulously wealthy individual, owning estates and property all over England at the time of his death. Of course, his efforts were much appreciated by the parsimonious king. However, for the ordinary taxpayer, the nobility, and the country at large, Dudley was hated for his unyielding cold-heartedness.

**Right: Sir  
Edmund  
Dudley**



By the time Henry VII breathed his last in April 1509, Sir Edmund Dudley had become one of the most despised and loathed men in England, and his career collapsed with the same lightning speed with which it began. Days after Henry VII's death, Dudley was ignominiously arrested on wafer-thin charges of trying to 'hold, guide and govern the King and his council'. In reality, Henry VIII wished to distance himself from his father's punishing regime, so Dudley and Empson were served up to the braying mob as scapegoats.

Dudley's death is an example of how greed for money and a hunger for power can rapidly turn to disaster. Although, perhaps in this instance, we also see a foreshadowing of how calculating and cruel Henry VIII would eventually become.

Sir Edmund left behind a young family, and it is to his son John Dudley that we now turn. Only six years old at the time of his father's attainder and execution, he would as an adult ruthlessly attempt to elevate his family to the very pinnacle of power in England, and, like his father, he would die on the scaffold.

The Dudley family fared better than most families after the disgrace of attainder and execution. His son John was 12 when the attainder was lifted. He also benefited from his mother's hereditary rights to the Lisle estates, later becoming Viscount Lisle. He was knighted in 1523 for his military efforts, rose to the rank of High Admiral, was created Earl of Warwick and later 1st Duke of Northumberland. Towards the end of Henry VIII's life, he held him in such high esteem that the king



named him a member of the Council that was to rule until Prince Edward reached 18.

When Edward VI did ascend to the throne at 9-years-old the tensions between Edward Seymour, Earl of Hertford, the king's maternal Uncle, and John Dudley, now Earl of Warwick, were apparent from the moment Hertford exploited his position as executor of the late king's will. Hertford created himself Duke of Somerset and browbeat 13 members of the Council into electing him as Lord Protector of the Realm and Governor of the King's Person.

Contrary to Henry VIII's will Somerset did not consult other members of the Council over policy and was eventually arrested and castigated by the young king in 1549 for "ambition, vainglory, entering into rash wars... enriching himself of my treasure, following his own opinion, and doing all by his own authority" (Ridgway, 2016). Of course, Warwick was at the epicentre of the whispering campaign to oust Somerset and opportunistically used his rival's temporary sojourn in the Tower to step into the vacant position of Lord Protector. Once Somerset was released, the accord between the two men was short-lived, and Somerset was executed for Treason in January 1552.

Northumberland now fully assumed the role of de facto king. However, at the beginning of 1553, the Council was facing a potentially

explosive dilemma. Edward VI's health was failing. Measles, coupled with a severe cold, had seriously debilitated the king. By March, it was dawning on all concerned that the king was mortally sick. Edward was unmarried, had no heirs, and by the terms of his father's will, the Catholic Lady Mary was next in line.

Northumberland had a choice; he could ingratiate himself to Lady Mary, although the chances of success were slim and the thought of her succeeding Edward was not only a religious anathema, it was a perilous gamble. On the other hand, Lady Mary would not be swept aside easily. She had vast support from her clients in Norfolk, who detested Northumberland. The stakes could not have been higher; if he challenged Lady Mary's rights as heir and lost, he risked being tried for High Treason. One thing was clear; as the king moved rapidly towards the end of his life, Northumberland would have to act quickly to preserve his privileged and influential position.

By the beginning of June, Edward's lungs had deteriorated to such a state that his doctors reported him coughing up material that was "livid, black, fetid and full of carbon: it smells beyond measure" (Guy, 2014).

Historians are split on whether Edward's next endeavour was an independent act or whether Northumberland coerced him as part

of his grander scheme. Whatever the geneses of the original handwritten devise for the succession, it did, by convenience or manipulation, enable Northumberland to initiate a plan that would establish the House of Dudley as the next rulers of England.

The devise stipulated that if Edward were to die without heirs, then the crown would pass not to his cousin the Duchess of Suffolk as he had initially drafted, but in turn to her daughters and their sons. Northumberland moved with indecent haste to persuade the Duke and Duchess of Suffolk that his 19-year-old son, Lord Guildford Dudley, was a suitable husband and consort for their daughter Lady Jane Grey. However, even this was not enough for Northumberland to feel confident of success. As a backup to Guildford and Jane's union, their wedding day on 25 May 1553 became a triple celebration that saw Jane's two younger sisters married off to men loyal to the Duke.

All the pieces of Northumberland's plan to circumvent Henry VIII's wishes were falling into place. Edward's device had been ratified at the highest echelons of government, and when Edward finally passed away on 6 July 1553, the news was contained by Northumberland until "[he] sent his allies to take control of the Tower and the royal treasury and to swear the head officers of the royal household and the guard

to an Oath of loyalty to Queen Jane." (Guy 2014).

By the evening of 6 July, Queen Jane, her consort Lord Guildford Dudley and her Council had taken up residence within the Tower.

However, there was still one remaining but critical point in Northumberland's carefully constructed grab for power that had yet to be successfully executed: Lady Mary. She had been tipped off and managed to slip the reach of the men sent to Norfolk to capture her. This flaw was the dropped stitch that caused the whole plan to unravel catastrophically.

With his enemy at liberty to rally support, the plan failed and Lady Mary was proclaimed Queen on 19 July 1553. She arrived in London at the beginning of August, and by that time, the conspirators had been removed from their royal lodgings within the Tower and placed under arrest.

Queen Mary's retribution against Northumberland was swift. He was tried on 18 August and condemned to die on the 21st. However, he had one last card to play before he was lead out to the scaffold erected on Tower Hill. He publicly recanted his Protestant faith and received Holy Communion. Was this a genuinely penitent man readying himself to stand before his maker or a cynical last ditched plea to his Catholic sovereign for mercy?

Whatever his motives, it was to no avail. His conversion bought him one



more day of life. On 22 August, he retraced his father's footsteps towards the executioner and paid the ultimate price for his ambitious attempt to place his family on the throne of England.

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# THE TUDOR SOCIETY



*Members' Bulletin*

We're so thrilled and happy with the way the Tudor Society is developing and growing, and it's thanks to you as a member and to the dedicated hard work of our regular contributors, article writers, guest experts and the core team (plus our wonderful interns). Thank you to all who contribute in one way or another to the Tudor Society.

This month I need to make a special mention of Joel, my son, who has chosen to help in the layout of the magazine, plus help in the management of our many websites. Last month he brought [www.ElizabethFiles.com](http://www.ElizabethFiles.com) back to working again after quite a number of years offline. As with all things new, he's really enjoying his work. As a part of this change, we've done this month's magazine using completely new layout software. If you see anything you think isn't working please do let us know ([info@tudorsociety.com](mailto:info@tudorsociety.com)) and we'll make it better for you.

I'd also like to mention a HUGE thanks to Charlie Fenton who has been the Tudor Society book reviewer since our very first magazine edition. Charlie has been unwell and unable to review books for this magazine edition, but is well on the way to a full recovery and will be back soon! Get well soon, Charlie.

Well, onward with improving and growing things...  
THANK YOU!



TONI MOUNT

# Tudor Money

## 1485-1547

‘The finest, best-executed and most handsome coinage in Europe [became] the most disreputable money... since the days of [King] Stephen [mid-12th century]’. (Charles Oman [Coinage of England, 1931.]

The historian, Charles Oman, was referring to the dreadful state of the currency of England during the reign of Henry VIII yet it was only in the previous reign of his father, Henry VII, that it had been ‘the most handsome coinage in Europe’. Within a generation, English money had deteriorated from the best and most respected to the worst and most unreliable in the western world. How on earth had this come about so suddenly?

Anyone who knows anything about the first Tudor monarch, Henry VII, is probably well aware of his reputation for being ‘careful’ with money. This likely began in his youth, much of which was spent as a penniless exile, reliant upon the benevolence of others, like the King of France, for his survival, food on the table and the clothes on his back. When he became King of England by right of conquest in 1485, he was determined to ‘live of his own’. This phrase was used

during the medieval period to mean that a king had sufficient income from Crown estates, customs duties and taxes to pay his expenses and only required extra financial aid in time of war to defend the realm. This had, in theory, been the aim of every monarch since Anglo-Saxon times but had rarely been the case.

The previous king, Richard III, with similar intentions, had overhauled the management of the Duchy of Lancaster estates from which the kings of the fifteenth century derived the



Henry VII [r.1485-1509]  
Society of Antiquaries, London.  
Artist unknown



biggest chunk  
of their  
personal

**Richard the Lionheart – statue outside the Houses  
of Parliament, Westminster  
Raising his ransom almost bankrupted England  
in 1192-94**

[15th Feb  
1971], I recall  
our own pre-

income. However, his two-year reign began with the serious disadvantage that the royal treasury had been looted by the Woodville faction as soon as Edward IV was dead and his time on the throne was too short to reap the benefits of his financial efforts. In addition, Richard had had to quell a rebellion in 1483 and prepare the defences of the country against the invasion of this same Henry Tudor in 1485. Therefore, the coffers must have been empty and the Crown in debt when Henry claimed it but the increased revenues from the Duchy of Lancaster were a good foundation to build on.

The medieval monetary system of England was complicated, to say the least. As I write this article on the 50th anniversary of decimalisation in Britain

decimalisation coinage was still based upon the medieval system: 12 pennies [12d] = 1 shilling; 20 shillings [20s] = £1 and, therefore 240 pennies = £1. It made accounting tricky and you had to know your 12 times table. But until 1489, there was no coin of the value of £1 and there were no shilling coins until 1504.

In some ways, to the average carpenter, shoemaker and housewife, this didn't matter very much because with a skilled man's wages counted in pennies, the chance of him requiring, handling – or even seeing – a coin of denomination larger than a groat was slim indeed. A groat was a silver coin worth 4 pennies – so 3 groats = 1 shilling – but even then a groat was engraved with a design to divide it exactly into four quarters so it





Henry VII gold Sovereign worth £1

could be reduced to 2 half-groats [worth 2d each] or even 4 equal pennyworths of silver. The round 1 penny coins [1d] were similarly engraved so they could be cut into 2 halfpennies and again into 4 farthings [originally 'fourthings']. England still used farthings as proper, circular coins, not cut-downs, into the 1950s. These were the coins of everyday use in medieval times. The huge ransom of 150,000 marks [about \$17.4 million] demanded for the release of Richard the Lionheart from captivity in 1192 was paid almost entirely in English silver pennies.

But there were people who dealt in larger sums than pennies. A medieval merchant's cargo of wine imported from Bordeaux was going to cost more than a few pence, as would the hire of the ship and the customs duties to be paid. Counting out hundreds of tiny coins, some of them wedge-shaped from being cut down, was a time-consuming business and time – as ever – was money. So it made sense to have some higher value coins in use for such transactions. Pounds and shillings,

maybe? No. Nothing so simple as that. The account ledgers might show business conducted in pounds, shillings and pence but the coins changing hands bore little resemblance to what was noted down. A common amount used in both theoretical and practical accounting was the mark.

The mark had been around since Anglo-Saxon times and had varied in value but, by the fifteenth century, a mark was worth 13s 4d. This may seem an arbitrary amount but is 160 pennies = two-thirds of £1. The half-mark [6s 8d, one-third of £1 or 80 pence] was an actual coin so that three half-marks equalled £1 in total comprised of just three coins that were so much easier to count and handle. There were even quarter-marks worth 3s 4d. This explains the frequent appearance of these values in medieval accounts ledgers. The half-mark was minted in gold and at various times was known as the noble, the rose-noble and the angel – this last after the image of St Michael the Archangel on the reverse. There was also a short-lived gold ryal [or royal]

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from 1465 worth 10 shillings.

Henry VII was not only determined to refill his empty coffers, by fair means or otherwise – his tax-gathering methods were notorious – he wanted to be certain the actual coins were worth their face value, so one of the first things he did after becoming king was overhaul the coinage. Firstly, in 1489, he invented the £1 coin, called it a sovereign and had it minted in gold with his own image on the the obverse – a declaration that the Tudor king had arrived, if ever there was one.

The 10 shilling ryal and the 6s 8d angel were both re-minted as silver coins, their previously gold counterparts having often been hoarded or melted down into cups, plates and jewellery. Pennies, half-groats [2d] and groats were all redesigned and their silver content

assured, as well as the new silver shillings by 1504. This was the coinage praised by Charles Oman as the envy of Europe but it didn't last. So what went wrong?

There were a number of factors involved and all seemed to snowball together in the second half of Henry VIII's reign. There was inflation on an unprecedented scale as the population of England grew by 500,000 during the 1530s, reaching 3 million by the late 1540s, a total not seen since c.1340, before the Black Death did its worst. Workers had been demanding higher wages for their labours since the later fourteenth century when their numbers had been so reduced by the plague's continuing epidemics. In the meantime, landowners found ways to compensate for their reduced income from rents and increased costs in wages.

Henry VIII arrives in a splendid cavalcade at the Field of the Cloth of Gold, 1520





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Agricultural land was being turned over to more profitable, less labour-intensive sheep farming. As a result, not only was there mass unemployment among the growing population, less foodstuffs were being produced to feed them, so prices rose. According to David Sinclair, between 1490 and 1530, prices rose by 70% while wages dropped by 50%, that is for those who had any employment at all. And inflation continued, reaching 500% by the end of Queen Elizabeth's reign in 1600.

England's money supply was further depleted by Henry VIII's spending sprees. At first, these were concerned with personal aggrandisement in spectacular displays of conspicuous consumption and expenditure, such as at the 'Field of the Cloth of Gold', held near Calais in northern France in June 1520 to impress Francis I, King of France.

Later in the reign, after Henry's break with Rome in 1533, his coffers were refilled, briefly, by the sale of

dissolved monastic estates and ecclesiastical wealth. But this was dissipated by his fear of a Catholic invasion attempt against England, leading to vast sums being spent on coastal fortifications, warships, cannon and other armaments as the king's policies concerning the defence of the realm verged upon paranoia.

As a result of his reduced finances, Henry had a choice: he could either cut back on his outgoings and live less lavishly, or he could increase the number of coins available to spend. Henry was not a king to tolerate economising in any form since that would diminish his apparent position as a monarch of power and influence, not to mention his personal love of luxury. So began the systematic debasement of his father's 'handsome' and once-respected coinage. In 1526, without changing the coins themselves in any way, Henry declared that the sovereign, previously worth £1, was now worth £1 2s 6d without any additional gold added. Likewise, the



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angel was now to be worth 7s 6d and its previous value of 6s 8d represented by a smaller coin, known as a george-noble because of the image of St George on its reverse.

The silver shilling was re-minted with more base metal added and the penny – the foundation of England's economy since the ninth century – now contained less than half its weight in silver. As old, less adulterated coins were recalled to the mints, exchange was made for the new, less-valuable currency. Since this meant the mints themselves were making a considerable profit, in 1544, Henry increased his share of the fees. More mints were set up to cope with the re-minting process and this resulted in an increase of £1 million to the Exchequer in eight years, exceeding the income from taxation by a wide margin. The king must have been feeling smug at his ingenuity.

However, while Henry did well out of his money-making schemes and the gold coins in use by the wealthy were still of considerable value, the common folk, as usual, bore the worst of the burden. Prices of basic necessities and rents continued to rise while the pennies in their purses decreased in purchasing power. One chronicler noted how, during Henry VII's reign, his father was a yeoman renting his house and farm at £3 to £4 per annum. He employed six labourers, had 100 sheep and thirty cattle. He could afford to send his son [the chronicler] to school and gave each of

his daughters £5 as a dowry, as well as giving charity to his less fortunate neighbours. But the poor fellow who farms that land now, in the reign of Henry VIII, says the chronicler, pays £16 per annum in rent and cannot do anything for his children's future nor even 'give a cup of drink to the poor'.

The effect on trade was also severe. Although English exports were cheaper as a result of the debased currency, the cost of imports soared as foreign merchants refused to accept English money in exchange.

Spanish galleons brought £1 billion of silver from the Americas to Europe undermining the value of currencies

Another factor affecting trade over which Henry had no control but made the situation worse was the discovery by the Spaniards of vast hoards of silver in the Americas. As the precious metal was brought back to Europe by the galleon-load, its value decreased across the trading networks. England's coinage would have been reduced in its purchasing power even if it hadn't been debased. Overall, in just sixty years, by the time Henry VIII died in 1547, Henry VII's excellent coinage had become the most adulterated and devalued in Europe, considered worthless in trade, mostly thanks to his spendthrift son

**TONI MOUNT.**





# FROM THE SPICERY

WITH  
RIOGINACH

**WHAT'S YOUR  
POISON**





We're all familiar with what can and can't be safely eaten or drunk. But this wasn't always the case. Take medieval era wine; sweetened with lead acetate (also added to ceruse, and numerous folk remedies). Welcome to the world of medieval culinary roulette, where everything's edible, but some things only once.

One of the most recognisable groups of things that can potentially only be eaten once is fungi. Mushrooms appear to have suffered from the same poor reputation as vegetables. Like carrots, swedes, and parsnips, in fact, anything that grows upwards from the earth, mushrooms were considered as simply not good enough to grace the tables of the upper classes. The mushroom's questionable reputation was further marred by the Fifteenth Century Italian humanist and gastronome, Bartolomeo Platina (1421- 1481) who argued that mushrooms and other fungi (such as truffles) contributed to criminal activity. I'm not aware of any empirical evidence to support this and wonder if Platina was referring to the psychoactive effects of specific members of the *Amanita* genus, or the hallucinogenic properties of psilocybin-containing mushrooms. Just to confuse the issue, some *Amanita* genus members are

eminently edible and highly sought after.

There's an excellent article on mushrooms in the August 2018 edition of *Tudor Life*; however, I can't seem to remember the author's name :-)

Another potentially dangerous ingredient in medieval cookery is the seeds of *Papaver somniferum*, more familiar to us as blue, black and white poppy seeds. And I need to make a distinction here. I'm not referring to the entire plant or resin, just the seeds. The benefits of steeping a poppy capsule in wine as an aid for sleep have been well known since antiquity. But steep too long and the drinker will forever slumber in the arms of Morpheus.

There's a long history of debate over whether the seeds also possess the same potential to harm as the rest of the plant. The answer is a resounding yes! Originally used as a thickening agent in various dishes and a delicious filling in sweet



pastries, the seeds of *P. Somniferum* also contain small amounts of opiates. Combine this with any form of alcohol at a typical medieval meal, and you've a recipe for an unexpectedly lethal outcome.

Maybe I'll reconsider nibbling on that oh-so-tempting-poppy seed pastry while I drink my mead.

Which brings us to the next potentially harmful medieval staple (although you'd probably never guess it); honey and more specifically, mead. Regardless of whether there are poppy seed pastries on offer, what medieval event doesn't have a jug of mead on the table? But did you know that fermented honey contains psychoactive agents traditionally used in trance divination and shamanism? I suspect that this is more to do with the type of flowers the bees visited, rather than a defect in the brewing process.

I have an old Wendish recipe for a liquor that involves placing *Lactarius deliciosus* (aka saffron ink caps) in mead as its being fermented. The result is allegedly a mead that is golden yellow in colour, an ever so slightly meaty nose, and a well-disguised ability to cause unexpected drunkenness. BTW the Wends were a Slavic people who settled in parts of what is now Lower Saxony. They are also the Barossa Valley's original settlers (where I live), which is how I got the recipe. There is also



reference to substituting *A. Phalloides* for *L. deliciosus*, which has an altogether more lethal outcome. I have no idea if this was accidental or malicious. Still, I suspect it can't have been accidental as the two mushrooms look nothing similar.

I have also seen reference to things like deadly nightshade (*Atropa belladonna*), foxglove (*digitalis* genus), and infected ergot heads of rye (*Claviceps purpurea*) to both mead and ale. While I'd like to give the brewers the benefit of the doubt, I'm not sure I can. *A. Belladonna* contains alkaloids that cause hallucinations and delirium, while all members of the *digitalis* genus contain a cardiac glycoside that is lethal if ingested. *C.purpurea* (aka rye blight or diseased rye) contains



alkaloids that may be either convulsive (in acute poisoning), or gangrenous (in low exposure long-term poisonings). Ergot gained a reputation as an abortifacient (albeit a very hit and miss one), and is responsible for the condition known as St. Anthony's Fire. It would appear that several medieval European monarchs had the symptoms of St. Anthony's Fire close to their untimely deaths ...

As with many new discoveries, explorers of the New World would bring back new taste sensations, perhaps without realising the potential for harm. When tomatoes first appeared in Europe in the mid-fifteenth hundreds, they cause something of a stir. John Gerard of Gerard's Herbal fame cited European sources to support his argument that tomatoes were poisonous, and he was on to something. Tomatoes come from the same botanical family as deadly nightshade (and tobacco and potatoes), and the plant and its unripe fruit contain a toxic alkaloid. It's this alkaloid that reacted with pewter tableware, turning it black. Perhaps this is where to believe that tomatoes were poisonous originated.

Another culinary delight that originated from the New World was cocoa. This story doesn't involve the dried roasted and ground cocoa seed, but the pod's fruit. Cocoa pulp and seeds (*Theobroma cacao*) contain an alkaloid that is rendered harmless

through the seeds' roasting. Not so the fruit. Somewhere along the line, someone thought it would be a good idea to ferment the cocoa pulp and drink it; bad idea. Alkaloids don't play well with alcohol, with the result is recorded as being extremely unpleasant.

Unpleasant experiences and potential poisonings aren't restricted to the table, they're found in the spice box too.

The medieval spice staple and cook's friend, nutmeg, has a long history of knocking people sideways, and occasionally killing them. Nutmeg (*Myristica fragrans*) contains a volatile oil that is psychoactive in large doses. Very large amounts by modern standards. But as with most things new, nutmeg and other spices were a status symbol in wealthy medieval households were used with little restraint. The insidious thing with nutmeg poisoning is the time it takes for symptoms to become apparent. By then it's often too late. Historical records show that people did become seriously ill after a meal liberally spiced with nutmeg, and some did die. This still happens now when the curious decide to experiment after reading something online.

The tales of the next two members of the spice box are well known medieval aphrodisiacs; galangal and calamus (aka sweet flag). We'll start with galangal.





As a member of the ginger family (Zingiberaceae), galangal works by increased blood flow and warming the body (vasodilation). This is a result of the volatile oils found in the rhizome. The problem is that galangal's oils are also psychedelic in nature, and in large doses. Galangal was typically prepared by candying to produce comfits, and it's the sugar that is the unintended vehicle that would lead to problems in the bedchamber.

So picture this if you will.

You've just treated your lady love to a spectacular dinner where you both eat lots of sweet and delicious galangal comfits. So far, so good. You begin to feel the warming effects of the galangal and decamp to the bedchamber. Everything's still going

well. It's not until you start 'the act' that you discover problems. You're hot and uncomfortable, sweating profusely, and begin to imagine things are in bed with you (other than your lady love). This turns you off completely, but there's a particular part of your anatomy that you no longer have any control over. The adverse effects of galangal toxicity have been documented as lasting for several hours, and yes, there are historical records of this. Oh, and it's not something that would only affect men. Ouch! Definitely not the way one would want an evening of dinner and romance to end!

Like galangal, sweet flag or calamus (*Acorus calamus*) is well known aphrodisiac, but its properties are far more insidious in the long term. The



calamus plant produces an alkaloid to ward off pests in much the same way that *P. Somniferum* does. However, eat enough calamus comfits and medieval lotharios would find themselves quickly being violently ill. The real problem with this particular alkaloid is its extremely carcinogenic nature.

Modern science has established how little of the chemical is required to cause cardiac cancers. That's one hell of a price to have paid for a bit of bedchamber action!

**RIOGHNACH  
O'GERAGHTY**

# QUIZ ANSWERS

Thomas Cromwell, *H*

Suppression, *U*

Dissolution, *N*

Hanging, *G*

Pilgrimage of Grace, *I*

Reformation Parliament, *N*

Supremacy, *C*

Thomas Howard, *H*

Robert Aske, *A*

Excommunicated, *I*

Anne Boleyn, *N*

Suffolk, *S*

AND THE COMBINED ANSWER IS "Hung in chains"

How did you do this month?

Fancy writing a quiz for Tudor Life Magazine?





# Member Spotlight

## Hot Cross Buns for Good Friday

Easter was never Easter in our house when I was growing up without hot cross buns. My mum would buy these spiced buns for Good Friday, and she'd split them in half and toast them, then serve them spread with butter – yum!

This year I managed to buy some frozen hot cross buns from one of the English supermarkets about an hour from us – hurrah! But if we'd still been in lockdown, I would have made my own. This inspired me to write this article to share the history of these spiced buns and also to give you a recipe to make your own.

Hot cross buns are sweet spiced buns which contain dried fruits and sometimes candied peel. They are marked with a cross on top, which obviously symbolises the crucifixion of Jesus Christ on Good Friday. The cross could be just cut into the bun or made from pastry, but these days it is usually made from a paste of flour and water. The spices are said to symbolise the spices used to embalm Christ's body after his crucifixion.

But do hot cross buns date back to Tudor times?

Well, yes and no. The tradition of eating spiced buns at Easter dates back to at least Elizabeth I's reign because in 1592 according to "ancient laws, customs, and good ordinances, set down for bakers" who sold goods "unto the Queen's subjects in the Commonwealth":

"no Bakers, or other Person or Persons, shall at any Time, or Times hereafter, make, utter, or sell by Retail, within or without their Houses, unto any the Queen's Subjects, any Spice Cakes, Buns, Bisket, or other Spice Bread....except it be at Burials, or upon the Friday before Easter, or at Christmas, upon Pain of Forfeiture of all such Spice Bread to the Poor."

So these spiced products had obviously become rather popular and the authorities wanted to control their production so that they were only made on special occasions, including Easter.

There is no mention of them being marked with a cross, but in *A History of English Food*, Clarissa Dickson Wright explains that following the English Reformation, crosses marked on bread were seen as superstitious and papist, but hot cross buns were allowed to continue having the cross marked because of their link to Good Friday. I haven't found a source to back this up though. However, by 19th century, they were definitely marked with a cross and had become known as hot cross buns.



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Spiced buns at Easter date back many centuries, with St Albans in the UK laying claim to the origin of the tradition. The Cathedral and Abbey Church of Saint Alban website states that in 1361, Brother Thomas Roccliffe, a monk at St Albans Abbey, developed a recipe for a bun, which contained flour, eggs, yeast, currants and grains of paradise or cardamom. He made these spiced buns and then distributed them to the poor every Good Friday. The Cathedral and Abbey Church also explains that the Alban Bun, as this spice bun is called, has been part of the cathedral's Easter traditions for nearly 700 years and that they are sold at the Abbot's Kitchen from the start of Lent to Easter Monday. They are made at Redbournbury Mill, which was once owned by the Abbey, and the bakers follow the traditional 14th century as closely as possible, just adding a bit extra dried fruit. The buns are hand-shaped and the cross on top is made with a knife.

Historian Ronald Hutton explains that it was believed that these special Easter spiced buns had “especially beneficial powers”. They wouldn't go mouldy, and, if you ate them, they could cure any disease you were suffering from. You could also hang them up in your house to protect your household against misfortune. I think I'm going to eat mine rather than waste it by hanging it up!

If you want to make your own hot cross buns, here is a recipe from English Bread and Yeast Cookery by Elizabeth David for spice buns, with a note regarding how to adapt the recipe to make them hot cross buns:

## Spice Buns Ingredients

Makes 24

1lb to 1lb 2oz (3-3 ¼ cups, 450g to 500g) plain flour, preferably strong bread flour

1oz (2 teaspoons dry, 25g) yeast

4oz (two thirds cup, 100g) currants

1 level teaspoon salt

½ pint (just over 1 cup, about 280ml) milk

2oz (a third of a cup, 50g) light brown sugar

2oz (4 tablespoons, 50g) butter, softened

2 teaspoons mixed spice (or make your own – allspice, nutmeg, cinnamon and cloves)

2 whole eggs

For glazing: 2 tablespoons milk taken from the half pint above, 2 tablespoons caster sugar.

## METHOD

Warm the milk to blood temperature and use a little to cream the yeast. Put the flour in a large mixing bowl and add the salt, sugar and spices. Make a well in the centre and pour in the creamed yeast.

Add the softened butter, the whole eggs (one at a time) and the rest of the milk (retaining 2tbsp for glazing), or as much of the milk as can be absorbed by the dough to make it soft but not too liquid.





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Stir or mix by hand until well-mixed.

Add the currants and mix in so that they are well-distributed.

Cover the bowl and leave for 2 hours until at least doubled in size, and light and puffy.

Knead it briefly.

Using a tablespoon, fill the moulds of non-stick bun-trays (or trays prepared with flour and butter) to two-thirds, doming up the dough to give a rounded, plump shape, and smooth over with a palette knife.

Cover with waxed paper or cling-film and leave in a warm place (or a steamy atmosphere) until the dough has doubled in volume and feels soft and light to touch.

Bake in the oven at 375° to 400°F/190° to 205°C/Gas Mark 5 or 6 for 15-20 minutes.

Just before they're due to come out of the oven, boil the milk and sugar for the glaze until bubbly and syrupy. Brush this glaze onto the buns while they are still hot, giving each one two coatings. It will give a shiny, mirror-like finish.

\*For hot cross buns, use a little less milk in the dough to make it firmer. When the buns have had their time doubling in volume in the bun trays, use a knife or a thin wooden or metal spatula to make fairly deep crosses on them.

Elizabeth David notes that some bakers use candied peel or bands of pastry to make the cross more noticeable, but she thinks the cross shape is sufficient.

You can also google Mary Berry's hot cross bun recipe. Mary pipes a paste of flour and water onto her buns.

Serve sliced and cold or sliced, toasted and spread with butter.

If you're vegan, there are plenty of vegan variations online.

Enjoy!

**CLAIRE RIDGWAY**

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CONTRIBUTORS**

Charlie Fenton  
Rioghnach O'Geraghty

Roland Hui

Toni Mount

Lauren Browne

Sarah-Beth Watkins

Susan Abernethy

**LAYOUT** Tim Ridgway

Joel Ridgway

**VIDEOGRAPHER** Tim Ridgway

**MAGAZINE EDITOR**

Gareth Russell

[info@tudorsociety.com](mailto:info@tudorsociety.com)

**CONTACT**

[info@tudorsociety.com](mailto:info@tudorsociety.com)

*Calle Sargento Galera, 3*

*Lucar 04887*

*Almeria*

*Spain*

**ONLINE**

[www.TudorSociety.com](http://www.TudorSociety.com)

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