Tudor Life

The Tudor Society Magazine

Members Only
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December 2021

The Twelve Days of Christmas

Christmas at Court

Seven Swans a-swimming

Ten Lords a Leaping: Notable Peers of the Tudor Era

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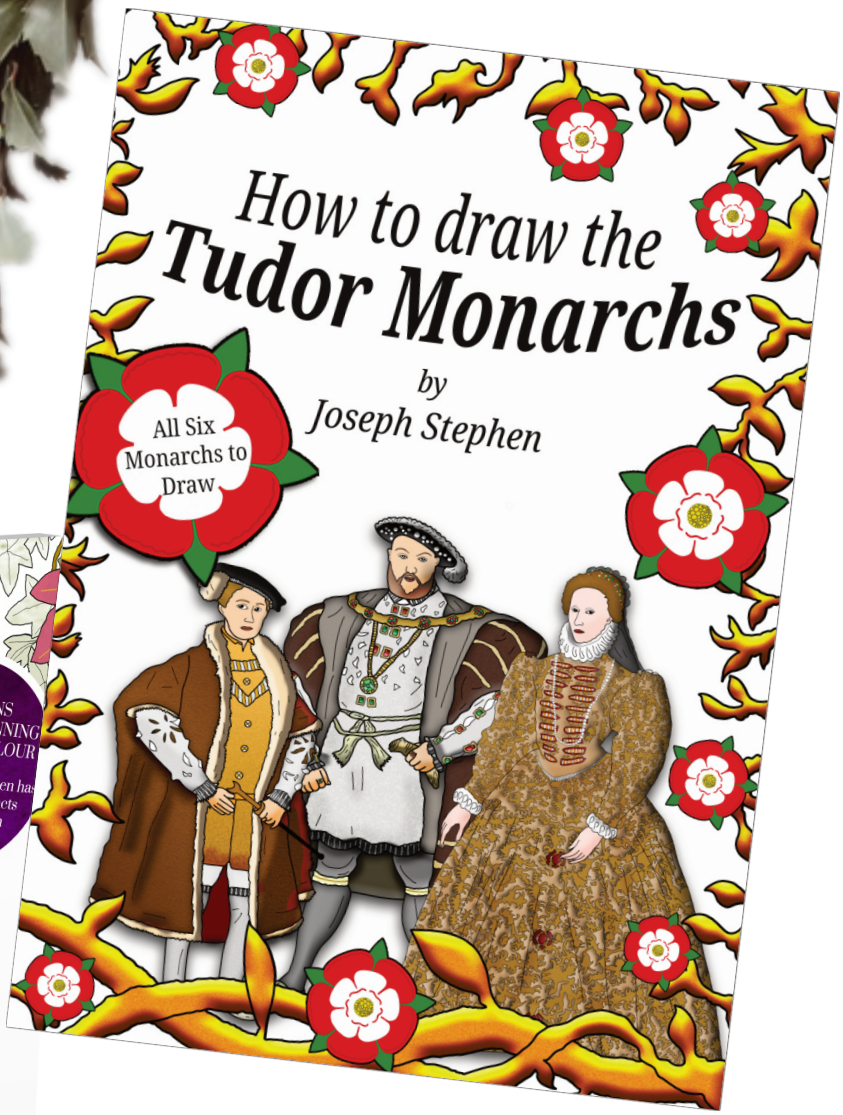
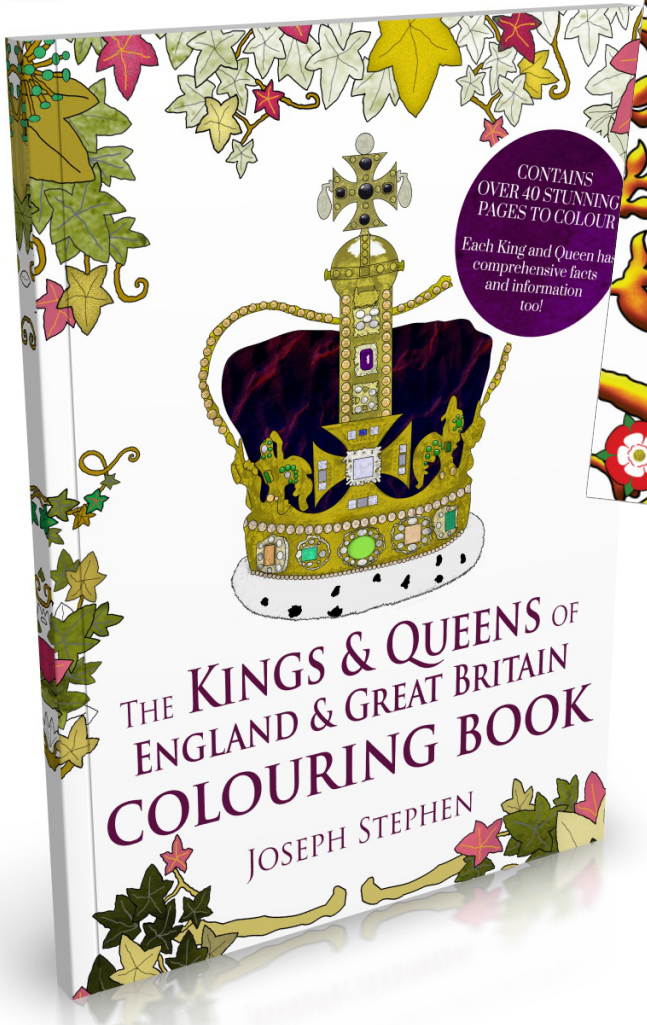
Tudor Cottages in Tewkesbury

By Angela Dunsby





Take some time away from your everyday life to enjoy drawing and colouring. Use your talents and let your creativity flow with these lovely books by artist Joseph Stephen



The Twelve days of Christmas

In the Tudor era, the Twelve Days of Christmas - which runs from Christmas Eve on 24th December to the Feast of the Epiphany on 6th January - were a mixture of religious reflection and merry-making enthusiasm. The commemoration of Christ's Birth saw both the traditional Midnight Mass, before the Reformation, as well as raucous parties and feasts. Here at 'Tudor Life,' we would like to wish you a safe and happy season, as 2021 yields to 2022.

GARETH RUSSELL
EDITOR

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Christmas at Court

by Gareth Russell

Christmas, at court, was a time to see and be seen. An entire class of people gathered in whichever royal palace the King or Queen had selected for that year's Christmas, where they exchanged gifts, received gifts, and tried to discern who was rising or falling in royal favour. Many know, too, of the Twelfth Night parties, at the end of the first week in January, when a Lord of Misrule - a courtier selected for the post - would lead the mischief, puns, games, and ribaldry at the end-of-season party.

There were, of course, traditional Christmas foods, then as now. There might be hippocras, a kind of mulled wine, to fend off the chill and, one suspects, sobriety too. Turkey, however, was nowhere to be seen, as much as it was to become a staple of English Christmases in the years ahead when they began to be imported from the Americas. It was instead the Christmas goose which was synonymous with this time of year. Mince pies were often served, while courtiers tried to dodge the mistletoe hung beneath the Yuletide bough.



A Tudor court Christmas was one full of revelry, yet politics did not take a holiday



Anne of Cleves, who returned to court as ex-queen for Christmas 1541

However, as always at the Tudors' court, this splendour ran alongside the business of politics. The culture of the visual was central to how the Tudor generations saw, experienced, sustained, and understood the concept of power. In an age without mass media, showing up to observe and be observed was how the core of politics was expressed and sustained. The Christmas court was therefore one of the busiest, when even landowners and aristocrats who usually stayed away - like the earls of Arundel and Shrewsbury under Henry VIII - arrived. It was part of

their duty as great landowners to bend the knee publicly to their sovereign, as well as to give him and the queen, their gifts. Apparently, the royals received many perfumed gloves at Christmas, which makes those gloves sound a bit like the medieval equivalent of today's Christmas socks! For those higher up the pecking order, like earls or a marquess, a piece of silverware was usually the acceptable gift for the gift-giving ceremonies on 1st January, half-way through the Twelve Days of Christmas.

The King and Queen also gave gifts to their guests; indeed, the monarchy arguably gave away more by way of gifts to its guests than it received in reciprocation. We know from the Christmas documentation for 1536 that Queen Jane Seymour gave some beautiful pieces of jewellery and clothing to her ladies-in-waiting, as did Queen Catherine Howard in 1541.

That Christmas, 1541, was the scene of a particularly memorable interaction, in which gift-giving and the politics of display collided vividly when Queen Catherine was expected to play hostess to her predecessor, and former employer, Anne of Cleves. Anne, who had lost her crown six months earlier when Henry annulled their marriage and married Catherine Howard. To advertise to the world, through the ambassadors attending at Hampton Court, that the King's marital rearrangements were accepted by all parties, Anne of Cleves had been invited to join Henry and his new wife as his Christmas guest, although the bulk of the hosting duties fell on poor Queen Catherine. She handled it beautifully, with the Habsburgs' ambassador Eustace Chapuys telling his Emperor that Catherine had elegantly shown great "favour and courtesy" to the ex-queen Anne, both when she formally received her and at a supper later, when Henry joined the two queens as they all "conversed for a while in the most gracious manner".

By then middle-aged, Henry tired more easily and went to bed quite early, after which Catherine and Anne danced a duet together, before choosing a young man from the King's privy chamber staff as dancing partners. The next day, Anne of Cleves again dined with the King and Queen, during which a diplomat tells us that manners were once again supreme, with the royals "again [having] conversation, amusement and mirth, and on the King retiring to his apartments, as on the previous night, the Queen and Lady Anne danced together." They were interrupted when a servant arrived to kneel before Queen Catherine to present her with two small lapdogs and a ring, as surprise gifts from the King. Catherine, with masterful tact, handed the gifts directly to Anne of Cleves. The King sent an even greater gift to Anne - more land - in the middle of January. Few things better show the complexities of celebration and supplication that characterised a Tudor-era royal Christmas at court.

GARETH RUSSELL



Lynne Frederick plays Catherine Howard during the 1541 Christmas in the movie "Henry VIII and his Six Wives"

Music and entertainment over the 12 Days of Christmas

Yuletide Music and Entertainment

"More mischief is that time committed than in all the year besides. What masking and mumming, what dicing and carding, what eating and drinking, what banqueting and feasting is then used to the great dishonour of God and the impoverishing of the realm."
Philip Stubbes, Anatomie of Abuses, 1583

By Jane Moulder

"More mischief is that time committed than in all the year besides. What masking and mumming, what dicing and carding, what eating and drinking, what banqueting and feasting is then used to the great dishonour of God and the impoverishing of the realm."

Philip Stubbes, Anatomie of Abuses, 1583

For many families today, the Christmas period is a time for gathering together with friends and relations, splashing out on luxurious food and drink, entertaining, playing games and maybe a trip to the theatre or pantomime. Singing



Period instruments belonging to the music group PIVA set out to play at the Christmas celebrations at Little Moreton Hall, Cheshire.

carols and playing seasonal music all enhance the festivities. We may think of these activities as being a 21st century phenomenon, or perhaps rooted in the 19th century, but a Tudor Christmas, regardless of one's position in society, had all of these hallmarks. If anything, they could be more lavish and they certainly lasted for far longer than today's celebrations.

The Twelve Days of Christmas was the longest holiday in the Tudor calendar and it was commonly referred to as Yuletide. Whilst there were many holy days, or holidays, throughout the year, these would have only been single days, unlike the Twelve Days, which were taken as a block. Other than for the servants in a large household, no work was supposed to be undertaken by anyone, except doing what was necessary to tend and care for livestock. Each of the Twelve Days had a particular feast and custom associated with it but with some being minor saint's days, the principal celebrations and entertainments were reserved for Christmas Day, New Year's Day and Twelfth Night. Whilst, of course, religious ceremonies had a place, the majority of events were secular ones resulting in the twelve days as being a time of real celebration filled with games, dancing and no doubt drunkenness, gluttony and lots of laughter.



Research has shown that the format of celebrations comprised of the same basic elements, regardless of people's place in society, however the main difference was the amount of money spent on them, and thus the degree of excess of lavishness. It's been estimated that Henry VIII's first Christmas celebrations as king in 1509, cost the equivalent of a staggering £13.5 million pounds in today's money. This excessive amount is magnified considering his income for that year was calculated to be £16.5 million. He clearly wanted to make his mark! Where a village would club together to find the money to hire one musician, a courtly household would employ 5 or 6 musicians. A troupe of travelling players could perform for whatever the locals



Just some of the produce that would have ended up on a Tudor Christmas table (The Well Stocked Kitchen - Joachim Beuchelaer 1566)

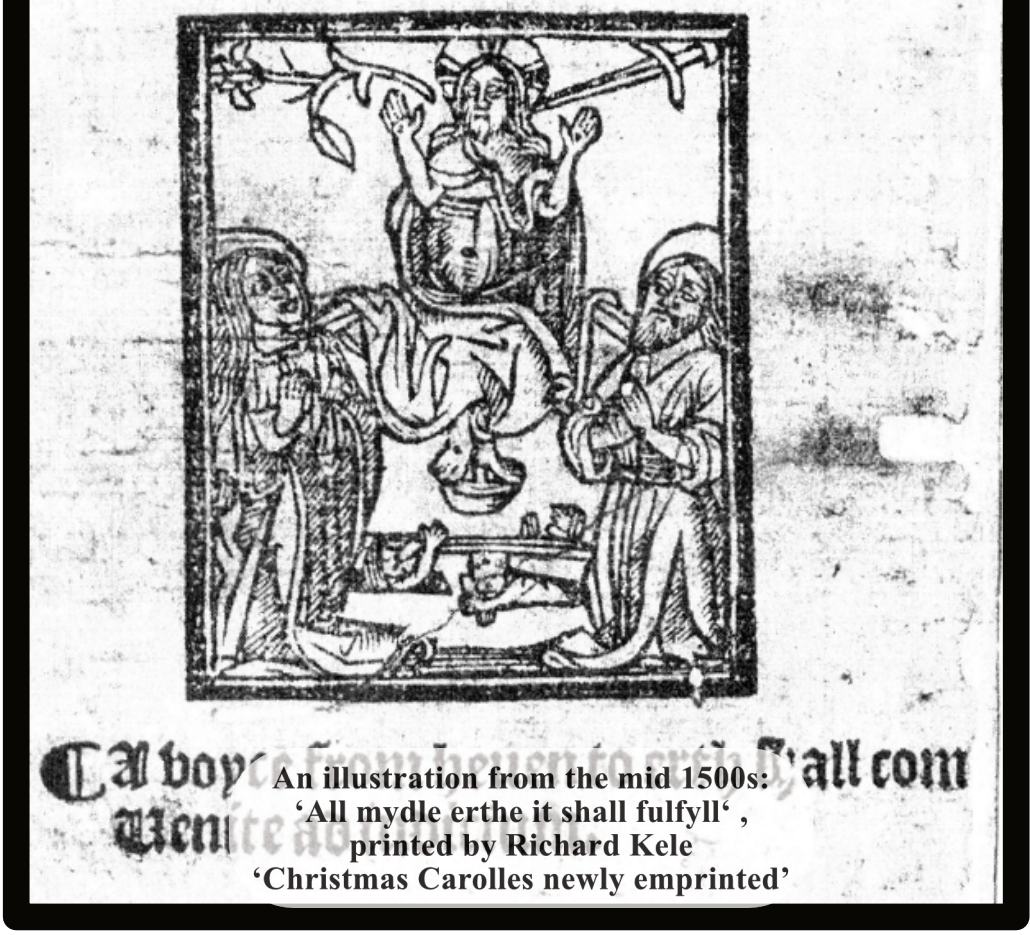
could contribute but an Earl would engage dancers, jugglers and entertainers, often at a premium rate. A lavish masque, with costumes and stage sets, taking many months to prepare, was one way that Tudor royalty entertained their guests but the local gentry would have bought costumes for their servants to dress up in to support one or two professional actors for their play. Each would celebrate according to their means.

With the four weeks of Advent being a period of fasting and reflection, the festivities did not get underway until Christmas day itself. However, that did not mean that there could be no preparation beforehand. In order to ready themselves for the feasting and entertainments which were due to take place over the Yule period, extensive preparations would have had been made. This could entail saving up for and acquiring the special foods and spices that were to be consumed during the holiday and then getting the food ready so that they could be enjoyed at the feast on Christmas day. If theatrical productions and disguising were planned, then props and costumes needed to be designed, sourced and made.

Christmas Eve required the strictest fast of the advent period, cleansing oneself for the gast-

ronomic overload to follow, but this would not have prevented preparations in earnest getting underway. Having ceased work at the end of the day, households would set about decorating their homes. Greenery was the decoration of choice whether in a humble, village home, church or grand house. Holly, ivy, bay and other greenery was gathered or bought in order to adorn the houses. These plants were thought to help deter evil spirits from entering the houses but also the evergreen nature was thought to signify life during this, the dark and barren time of year. Another tradition was to place the 'yule log' at the back of the fireplace, ready to be lit on Christmas day morning and large enough to keep burning throughout the twelve days. These preparations would have been done to the accompaniment of music. It is clear from descriptions and records, that very often a bagpiper or musician would be hired to accompany the bringing in of the yule logs from the woods and during the decoration of the halls. However, whilst the full celebrations would not start until the next day, hearing bagpipes playing dance tunes would no doubt have been a foretaste and setting the scene for what was to come.

Today, singing carols is an integral part of Christmas but, in earlier times, carols could be sung at other times of year. The origin of the carol goes back into the early medieval period and to carole, in French, was to dance. Sometimes the tune of the dance was sung rather than played by instruments and, over time, carolling was associated with the words rather than the dance. The carols became associated with different times of year and the various celebratory calendar festivals. The church, always keen to integrate secular fashions, adopted carols with various religious festivals. So, Spring carols became Easter carols and carols danced and sung at the winter solstice became Christmas carols. In medieval England, the carol was still considered to be a secular dance as illustrated in the late 14th century poem, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. "The king lay at Camelot at Christmas-tide with many a lovely lord … to the court they came at carols to play …. They danced and danced on, and dearly they carolled." By the Tudor period, the word 'carol' could be loosely applied to any song with a seasonal connection, not just Christmas. So, we have William Cornysh 'setting a Carrall upon Xmas Day' in 1520 and William Byrd setting



An illustration from the mid 1500s:
'All mydle erthe it shall fulfyll' ,
printed by Richard Kele
'Christmas Carolles newly emprinted'

'A Caroll for New Yeares Day'. But in many of the early carols, the dance element is still identifiable. One of the best sources for carols is Piae Cantiones, a document printed in 1582 but it actually contains much earlier medieval tunes and songs from Sweden/Finland. From this one source, we have many carols familiar to us today, although some have had new lyrics set to them. In Dulci Jubilo, Good Christian Men Rejoice, Unto us a Son is Born and Gaudete are just some of the tunes found in this collection. The collection include 12 carols for Christmas and 12 carols for Easter. In the 19th century, the tune of a spring carol – Tempus Adest Floridum – was selected and a completely new set of lyrics set to it and Good King Wencelas was born. Likewise, a 16th century French dance, the Bransle d'Official (pronounced brawl) or Dance of the Kitchen Staff in English, was used as the melody for Ding, Dong Merrily on High!

In 1521, Wynken de Worde, a German printer who came to London to work for William Caxton, printed a book of "Christmasse Carolles newley emprinted" in 1521. Sadly, no complete copy of it remains – but there are two surviving pages in the British Library. One is a 'caroll of huntynge' – which despite the secular title was about the search and meeting with a hart (deer) and was an allegory for seeking and finding God. But it is the carol on the other page that has become famous, the 'carol bryngyng in the bores heed'. The Boar's Head carol became associated with Queen's College, Oxford where it was sung to accompany the entry of a large pig's head on a platter. By the time the carol became well known, wild boar had more or less become extinct in England through over-hunting. The ceremony described within the



The Christmas Waits from a cartoon printed in 1883.

song would have been typical of a dish on Christmas Day, food brought in to the Great Hall, accompanied by singing and instruments and the start of a great feast.

However, the association of carols with Christmas was beginning to become popular and in 1520, the bookseller John Dorne of Oxford recorded that the peak month for the purchase of single sheet carols was December, overtaking sales for the other festivals during the year. Carols survived the Reformation and in 1588 John Rhodes included some Christmas carols in a song book where the words of the seasonal songs were set to popular ballad tunes of the time. Unlike today though, carols were not sung in Church but rather for people's personal enjoyment in the home and in the street and they seem to have been popular across all levels of society.

Civic or Town Waits were a familiar scene in Tudor England. The waits were musicians employed by the town or city to provide music for various occasions, such as civic banquets, ceremonial occasions and to entertain visiting dignitaries. But one of their most im-



A Christmas table set out with the feast – Little Moreton Hall, Cheshire. A lutenist provides some background music.

portant duties was to keep the watch during the early hours of the morning and also to act as musical alarm clocks. The hours and times of their duties differed across the country, but typically the waits' role as musical policeman ran from Michaelmas until Candlemas or Easter, after which the lighter hours negated the need for them. For example, Coventry Waits were required to play from 2.00am onwards and the solitary Liverpool wait (a bagpiper) had 4.00am as his start time. During these times, the waits sounded the hours, alerted citizens to any danger, kept an eye out for miscreants or those breaking curfew and they even told the weather forecast! As well as playing instruments, they were known for singing carols at Christmas for the benefit of the townsfolk. By the 19th century, their role had diminished with Christmas being the only time they appeared, they were then called the "Christmas Waits" as their sole role was providing music for singing carols.

The waits were musicians for hire to private clients and, quite often, they would be called on by local gentry to play for Christmas feasts and banquets. Musicians were in short supply at this time of year and, as the standard of musicianship amongst the waits was high, they were sometimes called upon to play at towns or residences further afield. In 1576, the waits of Derby travelled to Chesterfield to play at Christmas, a fact we know only because two of them sadly died whilst they were away. It

seems they had travelled the thirty miles to earn extra money (waits were notoriously badly paid by the civic authorities!). The Earl of Rutland engaged the waits of Grantham for three pounds for playing throughout Christmas (this was a huge sum of money at the time) and another year, he also hired the waits of Lincoln. Sir Henry Sidney, at Christmas in 1571, paid over £6.00 for musicians to play throughout the Christmas period. Clearly, one had to pay well in order to have music to accompany the Yuletide festivities.

Only the very wealthiest of households could afford to employ musicians as part of their permanent household. Even those that did still had occasion to hire in other musicians to supplement their own, so that they could get the necessary number to impress their guests or have the appropriate musical forces for all the planned celebrations. Gentry were known to hire out their household musicians to other courts, for a price, as a way of gaining favour and perhaps also in the hope that the arrangement



Travelling players, c1605, British Library.

could be reciprocal if it were ever needed. The Earl of Northumberland's Household Book, in its accounts, shows that over Christmas various musicians, players and entertainers were employed from other households and that they were remunerated according to the status of their usual employer. Pay rates were also determined by how frequently the musicians were required to play by their normal employer – the more times they played, the more they were paid. (Presumably, the more frequent a player, then the more proficient a musician he was.) It seems that everyone, whether musician, performer or employer, was well aware of the sliding scale of pay rates and used it to their advantage at Christmas when they were in high demand.

Independent, freelance musicians were likely to earn some much needed extra income over the Christmas period and the study of various household accounts of the period give good evidence for this. 'Thomas Lathom, the piper for pipeing all chrismas', 'given vii pipers that came in Christmas', 'given five pypers that Came to the gaites this Chrstemas', 'she gave the fidelers at Christenmas', 'given ix pipers and fidleres iiii d each after ould cusomes' are typical of the entries that appear in a range of households, even from the middling sort. From these, it seems that some musicians were specifically engaged but others turned up on off-chance and in the hope of getting some



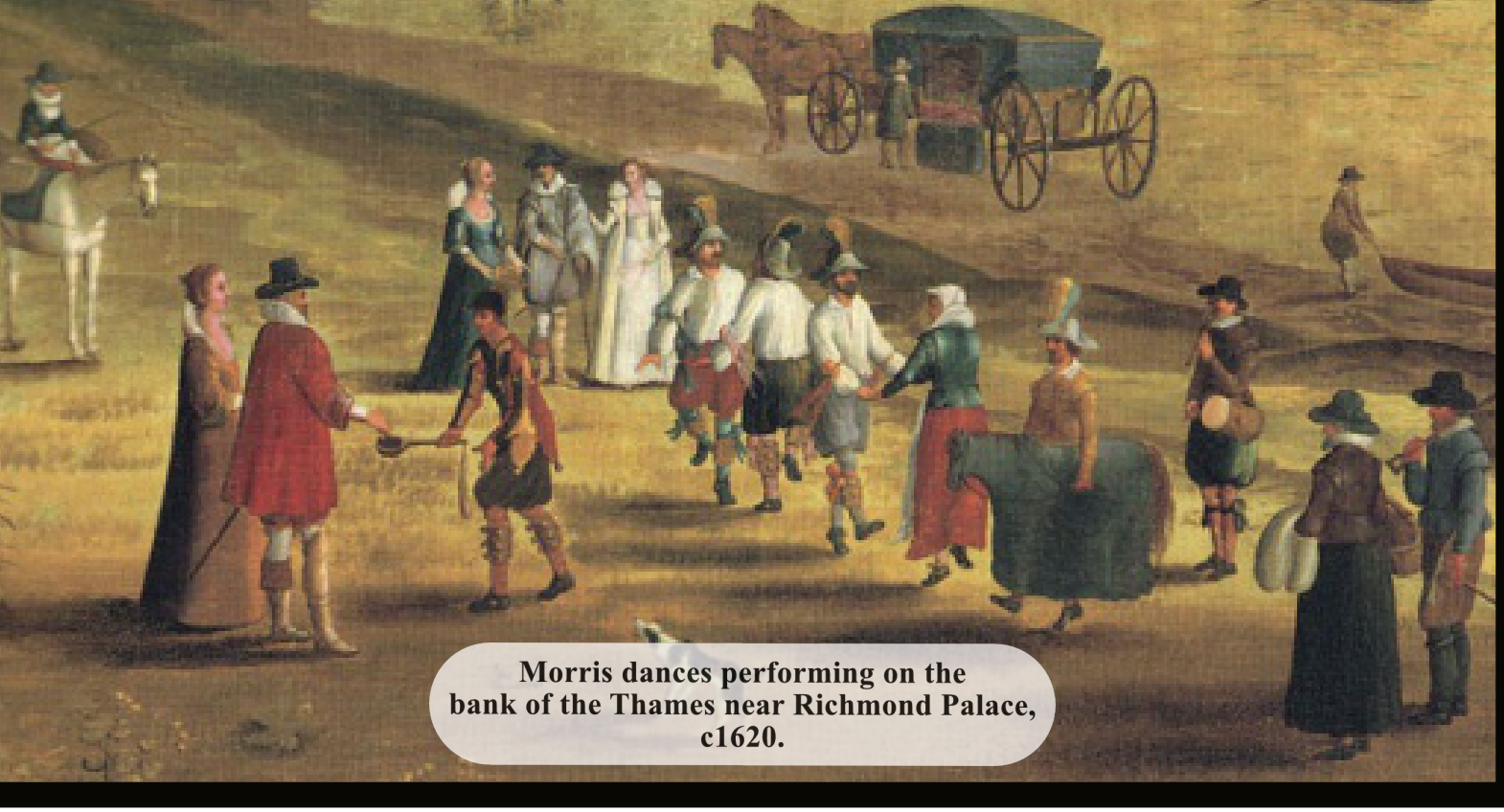
Two masked revellers by Jacob de Gheyn, circa 1595. Rijksmuseum

payment for their music. But the plethora of records mentioning payments to fiddlers and pipers and the like, shows that music over the Christmas period was plentiful and conjures up pictures of roaring fires, music, enjoyment and dancing. It seems that some musicians also offered other skills and there is an account of 'tomblinge fidlers' performing at a private house in Lancashire – being an acrobat whilst playing the violin is a skill indeed! Even families sympathetic to the growing Puritan zealousness were not averse to spending money on entertainment at Christmas and Sir John Barrington had instructed his servants to pay a 'bagpiper at the dore' and 'to the men that danced in their disguise and to the fidler, at the making an end of Christmas'.

The rise of Puritanism and keeping the Sabbath free from potential vice was beginning to take hold and this was beginning to impact on Yuletide festivities. In 1588, Adam Holte from Lancashire was reported to the courts by the local churchwarden for having a Christmas dancing session in his own house 'uppon the Sabbothe daye in the Eveninge beinge eyther the Laste Sunday in December or the fyrste in Januarie" .

The way we find out how common folk celebrated the Christmas period is by these occasional court cases but, from these scant records, we are able to build up a picture Yuletide in a Tudor household. To supplement these, there is a great account written by Robert Armin in a 'Nest of Ninnies', published in 1608. In this book Armin sought to capture the spirit of Christmas in a traditional gentry household. He conjured up a picture of old-fashioned hospitality with 'open house for all commers'. The aristocrats were entertained in the Great Chamber by a group of musicians whilst the tenants in the Hall indulged in 'common dauncing' to the sound of Lincolnshire bagpipe.

As with Christmas Day, Twelfth Day or Epiphany would have started with a church service before commencing the entertainments. Some of the largest and most lavish celebrations of the season were saved for Twelfth Day and this was the time at the Tudor court, where staged entertainments, masques and disguisings took place. During this period, disguisings and masques would often involve the courtiers, including members of the royal family, dressing up and taking an active part in the proceedings, the fact that they were disguised adding to the entertainment of the



Morris dances performing on the bank of the Thames near Richmond Palace, c1620.

event. These were extravagant and lavish affairs costing the equivalent of many hundreds of thousands of pounds in today's money.

By studying the royal household accounts and those of the Master of the Revels, we know the costs of staging the masques, the props that were made and the costumes worn by the various characters but we actually have little description of how the various entertainments were actually performed. However, we do have a highly detailed account of the celebrations undertaken at the Earl of Northumberland's court over one particular Christmas. The Earl employed four musicians and they were first directed to stand at the side of the hall and play as the disguisers entered and, having bowed to the Earl, they then all danced. There were both men and women in disguise, there was then a pageant (think of a carnival float) brought into the Hall which contained a number of henchman. When they got off the cart, they performed a Morris dance and then left the Hall. The minstrels played some basse dances and then some circle dances and the assembled men and women danced together. This account shows the wide range of different dances and type of music that they were required to play. Formal and stately for the basse dance, lively and rumbustious for the circle dance and Morris dance, ceremonial for the initial entry. No doubt the musicians were also required to play quieter mood music whilst people were eating during their banquets. It was a busy night for those four musicians!



Morris Dancers, 1480, Erasmus Grasser, Muenchner Museum, Germany

At the court of Henry VIII, the Revels Office choreographed a number of different entertainments for the delight of the royal party and its guests. In 1513, there was a 'Disguising' at which 6 minstrels, dressed in blue and yellow, came in playing music along with another group of musicians playing rebecs and a tambourine, who were dressed in 'garments spangled with copper form the King's old store'. The musicians played for dancing as well as to accompany the various pageants and masked characters. There was also another group of minstrels providing yet more dance music, dressed in a different type costume. That year, all the musicians were allowed to keep their costumes after the event – this was a typical 'perk' of the job. In 1515, the disguising was called 'The Pavilion in the Place Perilous' and this included blue and white costumes for all the musicians other than the drummers who played the music for the mock battle and they were dressed in violet and yellow.

Edward Hall's description of the pageant in the Great Hall at Richmond Palace during the 1520s gives some sense of the scale and spectacle that would have been witnessed:

'Before the banquet… was a pageant [performed with a set that

looked] like a mountain glittering by night, as though it had been [made] all of gold and set with stones, on the top of the which mountain was a tree of gold, the branches and boughs [of which were trimmed] with gold, spreading over the mountain with roses and pomegranates [the badges of Henry VIII and Katherine of Aragon]… and out of the mountain came a lady [wearing] a cloth of gold, and children of honour called the Henchmen, who were freshly disguised, and [they] danced a Morris before the King. And that done [they] reentered the mountain and then it was drawn back, and then was the wassail or banquet brought in'.

Morris dancing was a favourite entertainment at any time of the year but especially so at Christmas and especially in the royal court. This was a tradition which was first started in 1492 by Henry VII when he paid for Morris dancers to appear at his Christmas court. The dance was described as being vigorous, with capering and arm movements and the dancers had bells and ribbons attached to ankles and wrists. Hobby horses were also a feature of these early Morris troupes.

This article has been a small snapshot looking at just some of the musical festivities over the Yuletide period. The more I research the period, the more I find out about how the Tudors celebrated this time of year, the more I wish I had my time machine to travel back to join them. Singing carols, listening and dancing to bagpipers, eating highly spiced foods and consuming vast quantities of ale and wine, whilst doing it all under the anonymity of a mask, makes it all sound very appealing! I wish I was there.

Wishing you all a very happy Yuletide – Waes Hael! Drink Hael!

JANE MOULDER

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Christmas Quiz

It's Christmas! This month, we have some Tudor Christmas traditions. Each tradition has an error in. Can you spot it and find the right answer?

1. On Christmas Eve, you were not allowed to eat eggs, cheese or pottage.

2. In the Tudor period, gifts were not given on Christmas Day, but on the 26th December.

3. The first day of the new year, the Feast of Annunciation, was actually on 25th January.

4. During the 12 days, there was no working on the land and no sewing
.

5. Minced Pyes actually were made of meat and not dried fruits and suet. They contained 12 ingredients, to represent the apostles.

6. Tudor Christmas pie contained a turkey, stuffed with a goose, stuffed with a chicken, stuffed with a partridge, stuffed with a quail.

7. The chocolate Yule Logs we have now represent the traditional wooden ones, which were decorated with ribbons and burned during advent
.

8. On the 6th December, the Feast of St Nicholas, the Tudors often celebrated 'The Boy Bishop'. This involved a boy from the choir being taken and he would the lead the mass
.

9. Plough Sunday marked the end of the 12 Days of Christmas and work was permitted to start on the land again.

Wishing you all a very Happy Christmas and a 'back to normal' 2022!

Catherine

Seven Swans a' Swimming

The old song The Twelve Days of Christmas was originally published in 1780 but it has seen many reiterations. French hens have turned into fat hens, maids a milking have changed to boys a singing and pipers piping have turned into ships a sailing so depending on where you heard the Christmas carol, depends on the version you remember. Only once have swans a swimming turned into squabs but in Tudor times swans often found themselves out of the water and onto a plate!

Although we may think of swans as regal birds today and they are a protected species, in Tudor times they were just another bird for consumption. Only young birds were eaten, captured early and raised in water-filled pits where they were regularly fed barley to fatten them up.

Roast swan was a dish for the highest in the land and at the installation of the archbishop of York in 1466, 400 swans were eaten at a grand feast. A typical recipe is as follows:

To bake a Swan

Scald it and take out the bones, and parboil it, then season it very well with Pepper, Salt and Ginger, then lard it, and put it in a deep Coffin of Rye Paste with store of Butter, close it and bake it very well, and when it is baked, fill up the Vent-hole with melted Butter, and so keep it; serve it in as you do the Beef-Pie

Swans were often the centrepiece of a royal meal, especially at Christmas, and could be dressed up – even to the point they had a crown on their head. A roasted swan would be skinned and redressed in its feathers and served with a yellow pepper sauce with a burning piece of incense in its beak. Or as above baked in a pie or be stuffed with a series of increasingly smaller other birds.

The Tudors obviously loved the dish but a later commentator was not so keen saying goose was better as swan was 'blacker, harder, and tougher' although 'for its Rarity (it) serves as a Dish to adorn great Men's tables at Feasts and Entertainments, being else no desirable Dainty'.

As gruesome as this may seem to us now, swans were actually held in high esteem. In



1496, the Secretary to the Venetian Ambassador said it was 'a truly beautiful thing to behold one or two thousand tame swans upon the River Thames'. During the reign of Elizabeth I, the German Paul Hentzner wrote of swans living 'in great security, nobody daring to molest, much less kill, any of them, under penalty of a large fine'.

Swans symbolise grace, beauty, love, and loyalty. A pair of swans represent soul mates for life. In the TV series, *The Tudors*, Henry VIII is shown as looking at two swans together and then depicted as savagely tucking into a swan pie after Anne Boleyn's execution. Supposedly this was done to dramatically show that Henry had ruthlessly killed his mate but in reality he would have been eating a young swan that was unmated.

Swans have always been associated with royalty and in the UK the Crown has held the right to claim ownership of all unmarked mute swans swimming in open waters across the country since the twelfth century. So swans belong to whatever monarch is currently reigning. For Henry VIII this meant only he had the right to kill and eat them although he allowed some of his trusted courtiers to do the killing (and eating for him!).

Today apart from the Queen three organisations are allowed to keep swans - Abbotsbury Swannery from the fourteenth century, and the Vintners and the Dyers guilds since the fifteenth. They are allowed to mark the swans' beaks and those unmarked are owned by the Queen. These 'swan marks' were sometimes sold at a high price to someone who was allowed to keep swans in an official capacity for the Crown. In 1570, the Order of Swannes, set out the legalities and punishment for 'if any person do raze out, counterfeit or alter the mark of any swan [they …] shall suffer one year's imprisonment'.

Today Christopher Miles Perrins is Her Majesty's Warden of the Swans. He works with the marker of the swans, David Barber, and together they conduct the annual census of swans on the Thames called 'swan upping'. In July, swan uppers of the queen as well as those from the Vintners' and the Dyers' guilds row up the Thames from Sunbury-on-Thames to Abingdon to mark and check their health of the birds. Swan marks are no longer made on their bills – rings are attached to their legs. In 2009, the Queen attended as 'Seigneur of the Swans', to watch the ceremony.

Neither he nor the queen eat them!

SARAH-BETH WATKINS

Christmas 1527

Gayle Hulme uncovers the turmoil caused by Henry VIII's 'secret matter'…

In the Tudor era, the 40 days before Christmas Day were a sombre time, when all people high and low were required to prepare themselves for the coming of the Saviour. This meant that the population were required to abstain from eating eggs, cheese or meat and use the time for reflection and atonement. Court festivities and banquets may have been missing from court during advent in 1527, but the turmoil caused by Henry VIII's 'secret matter' continued to be the primary issue of the Privy Council. According to Henry VIII's Letters and Papers, Henry and his servant Cardinal Thomas Wolsey were in regular correspondence concerning matters vital to 'the king's life and safety. The reasons for this critical correspondence are made clear in a letter Henry VIII wrote to Lady Anne Boleyn in July of 1527. The king, who loathed writing letters, had penned missives to Anne at Hever Castle in Kent declaring that for 'more than a year (he had) been wounded by the dart of love. He also begged her in another letter to 'give [herself], body and heart to [him].' Of course, there were two major impediments to the king attaining the object of his desire; firstly, his wife Katherine of Aragon's point-blank refusal to step aside and secondly, Anne Boleyn's disinclination to become his mistress.

King Henry's wish to be free of his wife of 18 years in order to marry Anne Boleyn was a case of the unstoppable force meeting the immovable object and the man charged with finding a remedy to the king's difficulties, Cardinal Wolsey, was aware that whether he succeeded or failed his long-held position as the king's principal councillor was being undermined by the Norfolk/Boleyn faction who naturally were both supporting the Boleyn match. Wolsey was in an impossible position; he knew that if he failed, his master's retribution could be deadly, and if he succeeded, Anne Boleyn, as Henry's consort and queen, would have more influence over the king than he did.

Even though Wolsey's earlier efforts to annul the king's marriage had been thwarted, he continued, either out of loyalty to the king or self-preservation to try and find a way out of the impasse. This would be no mean feat. The power to annul the marriage rested with Pope Clement VII, and he was currently a prisoner of the queen's nephew, Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor. As mentioned above, Thomas Howard Duke of Norfolk, Charles Brandon Duke of Suffolk, and Anne's father, Viscount Rochford, were hindering his reputation with the king by raising doubts about Wolsey's appetite for the task. Additionally, they were openly questioning Wolsey's loyalty to the king. This was not the first time the premier dukes of England had shown their dislike for the vainglorious Wolsey. According to Tracy Borman in *'Henry VIII and the Men Who Made*

Henry VIII by
Joos van Cleve
c. 1531



Him' the two dukes had already shown their dislike of the low born Cardinal by absenting themselves from court in the early part of the reign. Upon leaving, they advised the king "not to suffer any servant to be greater than his master". The difference in 1527 was that the Norfolk/Boleyn faction now held a playable trump card; they knew that if Wolsey failed "to satisfy the king's mind" (Cavendish 1557), then his career would be over because although '[the king] loved the Cardinal, he loved Anne Boleyn more' (Borman 2018).

The early part of December 1527 saw Wolsey corresponding with the king's ambassador to the Apostolic See in Rome. Gregorio Casali, or Sir Gregory Casale, as Wolsey's letters address him, was an Italian born diplomat who, according to his biographer Catherine Fletcher 'spent six years…handling Henry VIII's divorce' (Fletcher 2012). In an effort to further the king's cause, Wolsey had written to the imprisoned Pope Clement on 5th December advising him that Casale would be seeking a clandestine audience with him to discuss 'great moment pertaining to the king'.

Wolsey then corresponded with Casale, apprising him of the king's difficulties and what measures he should employ first to gain a private audience with the pope and how to further his royal master's cause'. The letters of 6th December are interesting in that Wolsey spells out to Casale in no uncertain terms that these matters 'concern the relief of his (Henry VIII) conscience, the safety of his soul, the preservation of his life, the continuation of his succession, the welfare and repose of all his subjects now and hereafter'. Casale is told that the king has consulted with theologians and undertaken a personal study of the dispensation that allowed him and Catherine to marry in 1509. The king concluded that his marriage was invalid and that the punishment for the sin of marrying his brother's wife had been the death of his male children. Although mention is made of the king contracting another marriage in the hope of male children, at no stage is Anne Boleyn's name mentioned.

Wolsey goes on to advise Casale to impress on his Holiness 'his (Henry VIII) services to the Church' and that as the 'Father of Christendom' the pope should do all he can to release the king from the 'illegality of the marriage' in order to avoid a bloody civil war after his death. Aware that there is still the difficulty of Casale being able to gain a private audience with Clement, Wolsey seeks to solve this by making the vast sum of 10,000 ducats available to Casale for the purposes of issuing bribes to those who can arrange private access to the pope. Another tactic suggested by Wolsey is that Casale should disguise himself and insist that he has come as a servant of the Duke of Ferrara. Once the meeting has been granted, the pope must be left with no doubt of the seriousness of the situation. Over and over again, Wolsey writes of the king's devotion to the pope, his disgust at the manner of his imprisonment and promises that once he is formally extricated from his marital problems, he will go to war with the Emperor if the pope is not released. Perhaps the most telling lines within the correspondence relate to a prepared document that the pope need only sign, seal, and keep secret for Wolsey to rule on the marriage in England if an independent

Wolsey could grant the king his heart's desire without recourse to Rome then no doubt the king would take the Cardinal's part and ignore his noble's complaints about his over-reaching servant.

On the same day that Wolsey issued Casale his instructions, Pope Clement managed to escape his captors dressed as a peddlar. However, Wolsey had already envisaged the pope regaining his freedom and had formulated backup instructions. He advised Casale to remind the pope that Charles V was not to be trusted and that the Imperialists were duplicitous, writing 'you shall set before him the uncertainty of the Emperor's promises, and the inevitable tendency of his party to exalt the Imperialists at the expense of the Church'. Furthermore, if the pope would not allow Wolsey to rule independently, he asked Casale to firmly insist that a man named Staphylæus, the dean of the Rota, be appointed to rule jointly with Wolsey.

A private meeting with the pope was essential, and none of the correspondence enclosed with these letters should be shown to anyone other than the pope himself. Wolsey would not risk the pope's jailers or Henry VIII's detractors being able to sway the pope's mind. In another letter written the same day, Wolsey spelt out in plain language the consequences of failure for himself and the church in England. For himself, 'if the Pope is not compliant my life will be shortened, and I dread to anticipate the consequences' and in regards to the church, 'the King's friendship is of the utmost moment to the Pope, as his enmity is fraught with the most terrible consequences.'

Even though Casale did manage to gain an audience with the pope and Clement did assure Henry on 16th December that he would be 'glad of an occasion to oblige him.', the next appearance concerning the king's 'secret matter' comes on 23rd December when Clement VII issues a conditional dispensation for Henry to marry a woman within certain degrees of consanguinity. Historians believe that in this document lay the admission that Henry VIII had taken Anne Boleyn's sister, Mary Carey (nee Boleyn), as his mistress.

Therefore, by the end of advent and despite the endeavours of Wolsey to legislate for every eventuality, the matter of the king's marriage was no further forward. The court would have to wait for the arrival and recuperation of Cardinal Campeggio in 1528 for the next dramatic episode at the Parliament Hall of the Dominican Friary of Blackfriars over six months later.

GAYLE HULME

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Three Queens

By Roland Hui

TEMPORAL HORIZONS THEATRE
PRESENTS

THREE QUEENS

Directed by
HARRY FITZPATRICK

Written By
ROSAMUND GRAVELLE

COMING
SOON

Three Queens (artwork by Charles Pickering)

TEMPORAL HORIZONS THEATRE

Three Queens, a New Tudor Play by Rosamund Gravelle

Fight for life and show that in this world of men
that would crush others with their power, that we survive and thrive.
This is our strength, our light.
(Three Queens, Act One, Scene 2)

The summer of 1553 was the year of the two queens. King Edward VI had died that July, and instead of allowing his half-sister Mary Tudor to succeed him following the proper order, he nominated their cousin Lady Jane Grey instead. But after a brief reign of nine days, Jane was overthrown by Mary, and in the following February, she was to die as a traitor.

Shortly after Jane was dethroned while in the Tower of London, Mary, as the new queen, came to take up residence there as well, but historically, there is no record of them ever meeting. But playwright Rosamund Gravelle has imagined such an encounter in her new play *Three Queens*. Recently, *Tudor Life Magazine* had the pleasure to chat with Rosamund about this exciting new Tudor-themed drama.

Hello Rosamund, we're so happy you can join us to discuss your new play Three Queens! Before we begin, please introduce yourself to our readers.

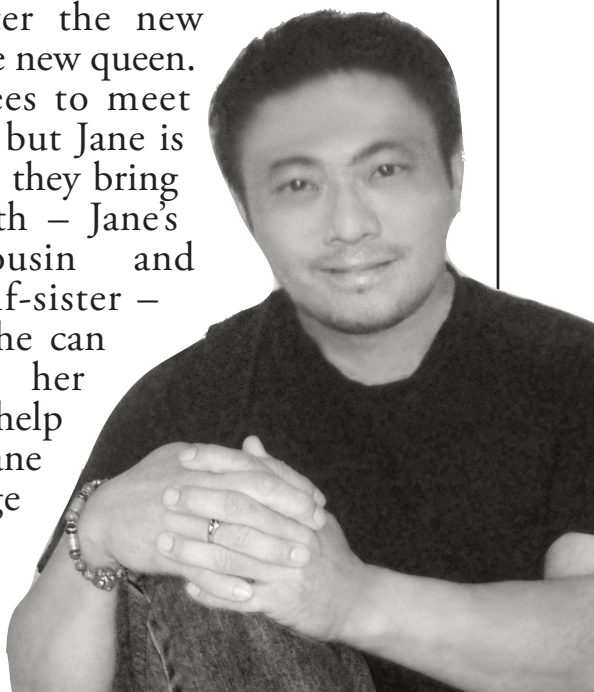
Hi Roland, so glad to be able to discuss *Three Queens* with you and thank you for interviewing me! I'm an emerging playwright and published poet based in the UK, and an associate member with Temporal Horizons Theatre. The plays that I write currently tend to be mainly historical and political drama plays with a focus on big dramatic central female identifying roles.

How did your interest in the dramatic arts begin?

A good question! I think it has always been there so it's difficult to say when it began! From a very young age I was involved in dance, music and acting; not only that, there were loads of plays and books in my house and we were all encouraged to read; TV and film were also constant too! I was lucky to be brought up in London, so from a young age, my mother would take me to the theatre and to concerts– she loves the arts too - so we would go see everything from musicals to plays to drama to Shakespeare to comedies; all with really good productions and actors.

Your play centers around three Tudor era queens: Mary I, Lady Jane Grey who reigned for nine days, and the future Elizabeth I. Can you give us a synopsis?

It's the night before Lady Jane Grey is due to be executed, but Cardinal Reginald Pole – cousin to the new Queen Mary Tudor – decides to bring Lady Jane Grey to Greenwich to see if Jane's mind can be changed and that she recants her faith, to help bolster the new reign of the new queen. Mary agrees to meet with Jane, but Jane is resistant so they bring in Elizabeth – Jane's other cousin and Mary's half-sister – to see if she can use all her powers to help persuade Jane to change



her mind. If she does, it will have a profound effect for all involved – but it will be down to a loose cannon that will ultimately seal Jane's fate. Politics, desire, family, and fate all interweave in the ever shifting and deadly Tudor court, with everyone's destiny and reputations hanging in the balance.

How did you come to write a Tudor-themed play? Were you drawn to this era before?

I have always been interested in the Tudors and have been an avid history buff since childhood! As I was growing up, my mum took me to see lots of Shakespeare, so Tudor times have always been fascinating to me, as learning about them helped me love Shakespeare more. When I was growing up, there was always a film or series on the TV either about the Tudor period or about the Tudors themselves or those around them on – be it *A Man for All Seasons, Anne of the Thousand Days, Mary Queen of Scots, Lady Jane, Elizabeth R*, or even the second series of *Blackadder* to name just a few!

I also remember the hoisting up of the Mary Rose ship and the reports on the news. I read many books on the Tudors themselves, as well as reading and loving historical fiction and history books in general. Also, being based in London, my mum would take me as a child to Hatfield House and to Hampton Court, and I also remember when I was in primary school, we had trips to the Tower of London and to the former site of Greenwich Palace – all given with stories about the Tudors and the War of the Roses. In fact, I wrote a poem about Elizabeth I when I was around 11 or 12 (based on the her Armada portrait) that was included in the *WH Smith Young Writers Anthology* for that year.



Playwright Rosamund Gravelle (Photo by Adam Hills Photography)

I came to write *Three Queens* due to the musical Six being around and the popularity of that. I was also working as an assistant at a talent agency and we were helping clients get into the shows on tour and cruises for that. The Tudor era has become popular again with a new generation, but this time there's a stronger focus on the women and showing more agency. Elizabeth has always been a strong character, but I was intrigued about Mary I and Jane too, and how interesting was this dynamic of three very different powerful women, and what would it be like if they had all been in the same room with each other. I also wanted to show Elizabeth as her younger self – her life on film tends to be when she has ascended the throne, rather than the making of the woman, and although there are glimpses of her before in those films and TV series, I was intrigued to write a piece of how she might have been previously – it would have taken a lot for her to

survive not only her childhood, but to survive to become queen with all these forces around her. I was also interested in Mary – there's not much seen or written on her but yet she's England's first recognised ruling regent (there was Matilda but she was edged out by King Stephen, and she ultimately agreed to let her son Henry II reign after him). I just found these women intriguing to write about, and how they have different aspects about how power is wielded and what it means to them. Not only all this, but with Six the musical being popular, the Tudors and particularly Elizabeth are still popular.

When Harry Fitzpatrick, the Artistic Director for Temporal Horizons Theatre, asked me for a smaller play (I had given him my *Medea Attica* – the second half of the Medea myth) and if I had anything to hand – I said no, but I had this idea about *Three Queens* as a screenplay that I could

turn that into a one-act play, and that's how it came about being written as play instead of a movie. And with my writing, I kind of 'see' the play/TV series/film as if it's there in front of me, so it's chicken-egg thing as well, it wants to be written and I'm just the conduit for it to be seen in reality (if that makes sense!). So I saw a glimpse of the screenplay in my mind's eye and then the whole thing was sort of there. As I wrote it, it revealed itself to me! I did have to craft it though, as writing for stage is different than writing for film/TV.

There are so many interesting Tudor women. How did you come to decide on this trio of ladies? And what themes did you want to explore through them?

I had an idea for an Elizabeth play for a very long time (which I hope I get to write!), and I always wanted to do history plays that feature strong central female-identifying parts that are more in the classical style and that have big dramatic roles. With the world changing and with more women in political and business power, we still don't have so many voices in the theatre of classical plays that can maybe resonant; although the play is set in a specific time and location, women's power struggles and how we relate to each other within those have been always there – just not really shown, although this is changing, such as in the Netflix series remake of the tele-novela Queen of South; so Elizabeth has always been a character I wanted to write.

I then thought of Jane, this other claimant to the throne and of course and in a way, a mirror of a young Elizabeth, but not as lucky. And then Mary, who is so often made to be the 'bogeyman' of history, especially with Protestant propaganda vilifying her - which also made me think of Jane whose been made into this weak victim / puppet over the years, but there must have been more to her! It excited me because here were three strong women all vying and seeking the throne and power, and what that means to them, and here were 'different' women and viewpoints within one family, as well as slightly different ages (Jane is 16, Elizabeth early 20s, and Mary in her 30s), so it felt good to have this panoply of different stages of womanhood on stage too.

Also, it interested me this period of clash of faith and belief were there are two extremes trying to determine which is right and which is wrong in their view, and the lengths and punishments they go to in order to have these beliefs win. Also, this is a point where there the divide between

Europe and England starts to get a bit entrenched. With the latter becoming Protestant, there's this feeling about being set apart and set on a special destiny, which interestingly, the UK is still dealing with. Themes include power, extremism, faith and belief in all its different guises, strong roles for women, being coerced in doing / saying / being, good vs. bad leadership, love, anger and betrayal and of course family and family ties, whether one works within a system (just or unjust!) until you have the power to change that system from within or if you step outside of it and defy it.

Queenship seems to be compared to a game of chess in your drama - a 'game of thrones' one might say. You have chess in the play's artwork, it opens up with Elizabeth and Robert Dudley playing at it, and it ends with Elizabeth clutching a queen piece. Can you explain the symbolism to us?

When I first thought of this play/ screenplay, I saw Elizabeth playing chess with Robert, so that was my first image of this play. I suppose it's about the games that are being played with everyone and by each other – and the positions of power and loss each have – and also about sacrificing positions for the end ultimate win. I also read in passing about how the queen piece in chess was able to only move one square in the game, until 1495 when the queen was given the rule that it could move in all directions on a chess board, inspired more than likely by Queen Isabella of Castile, who happens to be Queen Mary's grandmother... and here are three women all vying for winning



Yaiza Freire-Bernet and Edina Hadley as Jane and Elizabeth respectively at a preview performance of *Three Queens* (photo by Charlie Catton)

a game of power, or holding power in different ways, and we're watching them play this game in all these directions and different ways. But you also have the other pieces

on the board too (not just the queens!) and how they play and fit into the game, as well. Are the queens really in power or are the pawns or knights? Also, all the characters are playing a game of strategy too – maybe not as the queen pieces but maybe as the king or knight or pawn, or maybe they are playing as queens too, or trying to be? Furthermore, it could be that all the characters in the play that are playing chess with each other in some way or another.

Jane Grey is often depicted as a 'victim' figure, for example as in the famous Paul Delaroche painting of her at her execution, but your conception of her is different. She is strong-willed, uncompromising, and determined to be on the path she is set on. Tell us how you conceived her character. Were you influenced by historical accounts? Do you think the historical Jane was tougher than she has been made out to be?

With the play, because I was showing Mary and Elizabeth as somewhat different political operators, and to show different ways of wielding power, I needed a fixed point that was uncompromising (at least at the start) – to then have others try to change her mind in their different ways and approaches. I think also it excited me to show how the other relations of the main Tudor grouping could potentially run the country, had they the chance. I remember reading about Edward VI and how he was an extremist in his faith, and one of the reasons Jane was picked to be queen, (although through the Duke of Northumberland), was because she was of the same strain of Protestantism as Edward, which could also be a mirror to Mary's zealotry. And zealots tend not to be compromising – and then I thought of how confinement can make people more extreme, so that is why at least at first, Jane is this figure who is so inflexible. Also, I wanted to show a different Jane rather than the one that has been fed to us over the centuries – which has been, I think, the fetishization of Jane as victim/martyr/ puppet for the Protestant and English nationalist cause, which ran of course alongside the demonization of Mary and Catholicism, which would then in the nineteenth century feed into British imperialism/ exceptionalism. I wanted to present a complex Jane, (along with the other characters too), and I think just presenting her a poor sweet girl would be a disservice to her and to history.

Your play mentions that Jane suffered under abusive parents and was forced into a loveless marriage. Do you think these factors made her the person she was in your play? That she found purpose and fulfillment as a Protestant leader/ queen and then as a martyr-to-be?

I think those could be factors, yes. She turns the trauma and the sense of isolation that comes with that, and funnels that pain into a cause and extreme stance I think that she's starting to realise she's powerful in her own right - I did read that she stood up to her parents about marrying Guildford (thus why it was said that her parents hit her to make her agree), and then it wasn't a happy marriage, so I think she was able to protest as much as she could before then but not really with a voice. I think these traits maybe were already there and then the trauma

of being sentenced to death and locked up has been added on. Of course, her very strong religious faith was another huge factor in her decisions here too (as well as Mary's!) which can make you believe and do things that you might not do or aren't the best for you, and make your stance, even though it results in harm (either to oneself or to others). I also think there's a teenager's non-understanding of the finality of death in a way too, and a sense maybe that it's a game that will be okay in the end and Mary won't kill her really – whereas Mary and Elizabeth have actually seen/experienced things not working out in the end personally, I think Jane has been insulated from that – she's not a person of the people either, so I think there is a sense of it's not going to really happen to me.

Queen Mary comes off as both sympathetic and unsympathetic in your play. She appears willing to save her young cousin Jane Grey from the block, but at the same time, she conspires at ruining Elizabeth's reputation. Do you see Mary as a person with internal struggles?

Yes, most definitely! I found her fascinating to write, especially as there's not been much really written on Mary, and there's not much creative fiction out there trying to think about her internal life. I think this is mainly because of Elizabeth, and of course because Mary did put a lot of people to death later on in her regime, and again, the Protestant/English Nationalist thought and thinking, and the anti-European movement.

I think Mary's life had made her hard and it must have been so frustrating, especially being at the whim of her father about whom she would marry, and just this huge want to be allied to Spain and be Catholic. Then there's also this love she had for Elizabeth, but also having this struggle to deal with her sister as competition. So there's sibling rivalry at play, and then on top of that, to think that Elizabeth was the child of the woman accused of ruining and killing your mother. And then there was the question of religion; wanting to bring Catholicism back, but then suspecting that your closest relative (your sister) is only pretending to be a Catholic!

Additionally, being England's first queen-regnant had its own set of demands, having to be both hard and soft. One thing that might have crossed Mary's mind was do you abide by your religion that says you must follow men and are lesser than them, or do you make your own mark? Although Mary would have had an example in her valiant grandmother, Isabella of Castile, her mother, Katherine of Aragon, was largely subservient to Henry VIII (even though she did prove herself as regent during the Battle of Flodden field). Thus Mary had been brought up to listen to her advisers, but not really to have been allowed to feel that she was in control. I think she's pulled in so many directions – wanting to make her mark but unsure, wanting to not kill – but following a course that would tell her to put down any that threat to her the Catholicism, which Mary held dear to her and defined her identity. I think that there is that washing of the hands with her – but there is also that streak in her that will do it too.

It was very interesting to have Reginald Pole as a character in Three Queens. His back story, as you have it, where he was a rich kid who got shuffled off to boarding school and got picked on by, reminds one of a



Yaiza Freire-Bernet as Jane and Edina Hadley as Elizabeth in rehearsal (photo by Rosamund Gravelle)

young Prince Charles at Gordonstoun. Tell us about your conception of Pole.

Pole is an interesting character and for me, because a lot of the play is about extremes of ideology (some religions are prescriptive in how you must be or believe and behave, and can lead people to do awful things) – so I needed a character that was a gentler outlier of religion.Also, to show that suffering need not, necessary end with people visiting that pain on each other in a harmful way. I had also read about the Plantagenets/War of the Roses and the ending of the dynasty really with Reginald Pole, so it was nice to have that in the mix in a bit of Tudor!

It was also interesting to have this character, who had a claim on the throne as well, decide not to pursue it (even after attacking Henry VIII in a book of his, which resulted in the execution of his innocent mother afterwards) – though of course this could be in lieu of another crown. So Pole was a character that added to the mix of things that were at play between them all. When I read

about how he was given as a child to the Church (which a lot of families had done), it reminded me of my mother's experience of going to a sanatorium for TB when she was a young teenager.She had a terrible time to begin with until she made friends – so I transposed that feeling into Pole's potential character. I suppose I wanted to show that not all bad experiences make people hard and nasty! And I wanted to balance the 'good mother' themes with a 'good dad' within the play too, as both good and bad mothers and fathers are ghosts for all of them in this play, and also having a person as seen on the surface as a 'good dad'. Of course, Pole's not all good either, he has his motivations as well

for wanting Jane to recant and potentially helping out Mary!

And tell us about Kat Ashley and Robert Dudley. Kat is a good mother figure to Elizabeth, while Dudley is prepared to do what he must to protect his interests and has no qualms about his actions. Are these fair assessments?

Yes and no, I think! I've written it so there is some question about whose interests Robert is really serving. On the surface it seems to be his and he's doing everything he can to survive and for himself, however, potentially he's doing this as an act of love for something else. Also, Robert is a way of showing a character whose chief motivation is ambition. He's not ashamed to show that – even though all of the characters have that too – and again there is a question about whose ambition's he's ultimately serving, even if the initial one we think is himself. Robert's objective and his cunning to that is also, I suppose, showing that it's been fine for men to show that shamelessness – that they can play the game of power politics, fine for them to do anything to get that, but however, you may not get your ultimate prize that you really want.

With Kat, yes, she is a good mother figure for Elizabeth – I wanted to show a good heart in the play (especially with the subject matter of a young life at stake), and have a mirror to the 'good father' of Pole. Also, the presence of Kat was to provide Elizabeth with a constant female mother presence in her life. But at the same time, Kat is trying to get rid of Robert from Elizabeth's life, so she has motivations as well – she's not all sweetness and light! I also think that the Kat/Elizabeth relationship is a slightly inverted 'good mother' relationship too – Kat is after all a servant to Elizabeth, and can be dismissed or overruled by Elizabeth, so it's a strange mother/daughter relationship they have. Of course, she isn't really Elizabeth's mother, so it may ask questions about what a good mother really is. There's a genuine affection between Elizabeth and Kate which also brings to mind something that Jane hasn't had, and Mary has lost, and of course Elizabeth has never really had in her whole life that she can remember.

Your Elizabeth is fascinating. Unlike her cousin Jane who views the world in black and white, Elizabeth looks through a different lens with shades of gray. Do you think this was the key to her survival?

Thank you for complement! Absolutely! I think that to be able to see permeations is the key to be able to, for Elizabeth, to survive. She can shift how to act and how to act for people – remember she doesn't have anyone to really depend on that can save her from death. This was not only a current threat; she would have seen danger growing up, for instance knowing her mother was killed). Elizabeth has never really had true security in her emotional or physical life, so she's had to do this from a young age. Historically, Elizabeth was extremely intelligent, and to be able to survive such a world as her father's court, and then her brother's and her sister's, you have to be amazingly perceptive and be the consummate actor, and spot the power and play those games to not only live but then to thrive and win the throne for yourself against great odds!



Playwright Rosamund Gravelle and Director Harry Fitzpatrick (photo by Charlie Catton)

You recently had a preview and public rehearsal of Three Queens at Queen's Theatre Hornchurch in October. How did that go, and how did you like the theatre as a performance space?

It was fantastic, thank you! We had such good feedback from the audience! Edina Hadley and Yaiza Freire-Bernet as Elizabeth and Jane respectively, were fierce and incredible, and Temporal Horizons Theatre, who put on the extract and directed it, were brilliant! And of course, thanks to all at Queen's Theatre, Hornchurch for running the Scratch Night. Kudos to their production team and the wonderful Douglas Rintoul, who is the Artistic Director there! It was the first time my work has been put in front of a live audience and it was a joy! The theatre itself was great –the Scratch Night was put on the Other Stage, and it was a great space!

How has it been in working with your director and with your performers in having your play being fleshed out?

It's been wonderful! Harry Fitzpatrick, who is the Director, and Charlie Catton who is the assistant director, and of course the actors doing their amazing thing, allowed me on the ride to see it go from text to stage! They welcomed my input, so it's just been such a privilege and a joy. They put me at ease and lifted me up when I had my moments of feeling extremely unconfident in my work and very shy, when I felt I couldn't write and all I should do is hide and run away!

Writing a play and then staging it are obviously hard work. What particular changes did you/do you come across, and how were/are these challenges met/being met?

The pandemic has been a hard one, but restrictions are easing somewhat –

Zoom has been helpful in allowing me to have early draft readthroughs so I can hear it and make changes. One of the biggest challengers at the moment I'm having is to care for my mother who's ill, although

I'm privileged to have help. Day-to-day, I'm looking after the house, and helping my dad and my husband and taking care of the cat. You just deal and fit everything around those demands.

Temporal Horizons Theatre and all the actors who have already been involved, have been such help and been very understanding when things were very stressful at home and had an impact on my writing time/ability. They were also very sympathetic when I wasn't able to come for workshops or rehearsals because of family commitments. I also have to deal with a personal chronic illness, which brings with it a lot of physical issues and challenges. Therefore, I try to avoid stress, and I keep as healthy and calm as I can, and I pace myself as much as I can! Temporal Horizons Theatre and all those involved so far have done so much to make this as stress free as possible, and they all help me with my ego when I'm feeling very down and unconfident!

Over the decades, there have been many Tudor dramas in cinema and on stage? Were you inspired by any of them? Do you any favorites?

Great question! I loved Elizabeth with Cate Blanchett, especially that moment of vulnerability she has with Geoffrey Rush's Sir Francis Walsingham near the end of the film where she decides to adopt the iconography of the Virgin Queen after looking at a statue of the Virgin Mary and being told she has to give that all up to become a figurehead. Also, Judy Dench in *Shakespeare in Love* for showing Elizabeth's perception when she tells Colin Firth's Lord Wessex that he's a fool to have Viola de Lesseps (although I know it's a bit of a device to push the narrative onward!).

Elizabeth I, in particular, has been a staple onscreen and has been played by a number of remarkable actresses (Bette Davis, Glenda Jackson, Helen Mirren, Cate Blanchett, etc.);any favorites?

It's so difficult to choose! Can I say all of them (laughs)?! They're all such great actors and in such great movies/series and all bring something to this role! However, if pushed I might now actually say Margot Robbie from the 2018 *Mary Queen of Scots* – loved her intelligence and sexiness… but it's too hard really, have such affection for them all!

How can our readers find out more about Three Queens and its upcoming performances?

I'll be posting on my social media pages about any upcoming performances, as will Temporal Horizons Theatre on their platforms too about updates! Both Temporal Horizons Theatre and I, also have websites where we'll put information on too.

Thank you so much for interviewing me! It's been such a pleasure! Do get in touch thorough one of these websites:

www.rosamundgravelle.com
www.temporalhorizonstheatre.com
https://twitter.com/rosgwriter
www.instagram.com/rosamund_gravelle/
www.facebook.com/rosamund.gravell

INTERVIEW BY ROLAND HUI

December's Guest Expert is Johanna Strong

Remembering Mary I

Elizabethan and Stuart Reinterpretations
















Susan Abernethy talks about...

Ten Lords a Leaping – Notable Peers of the Tudor Era

THE TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS SONG mentions 'ten lords a leaping'. So, what constituted a lord in Tudor England? In Debrett's Peerage we find there are five ranks. In descending order, they are duke, marquess, earl (count), viscount, and baron. Let's take a look at some of these lords from the reign of Henry VII through Queen Elizabeth I. These are totally random choices and are not in any particular order.

Thomas Howard, 2nd Duke of Norfolk (1443-1524) was a magnate and soldier who entered royal service as a henchman to Edward IV. Thomas fought on the side of Richard III at Bosworth and survived to serve Henry VII, although he was attainted and demoted to the title of Earl of Surrey. He served in various diplomatic roles and as an executor of the will of Henry VII. Married twice to Elizabeth Tilney and her cousin Agnes, he had a total of five sons and 6 daughters and through marriages, was related to most of the leading families of the realm. He is best known as the commander of the English victory at Flodden for which he was rewarded by elevation back to the title of Duke of Norfolk.

Thomas Howard, 3rd Duke of Norfolk (1473-1554) was the highest-ranking nobleman during the reign of Henry VIII and a crafty politician. He quickly rose through the ranks during Henry's reign serving as a solider, diplomat and councilor. He was ambitious, had a violent temper and quick to take offence. Whenever he crossed the king, he always managed to gain his way back into favor until the king became fatally ill and was dominated by the Protestant Edward Seymour and William Paget. They managed to get Howard and his eldest son Henry arrested and imprisoned in the Tower. Henry Howard was executed but Thomas lived to be released from the Tower upon the accession of Mary I, whom he served until his death.

Charles Brandon, 1st Duke of Suffolk (1484-1545) was a magnate, soldier and courtier and is best known as the close friend of Henry VIII. He had a checkered marital history and is best known for his secret marriage to Henry's sister Mary, dowager Queen of France. Henry elevated Charles to his title of Duke of Suffolk in 1514, endowing him with many properties. He built several notable houses, fought Henry's wars in France and worked as one of the king's councilors. His title would be passed on to his son-in-law, Henry Grey, 3rd Marquess of Dorset, husband of his daughter Frances.

Henry Fitzroy, Duke of Richmond and Somerset (1519-1536) was the illegitimate son of Henry VIII by Bessie Blount. He was elevated to the two ducal titles in June 1525. It was the first time since the twelfth century a king had elevated a natural-born son to a peerage. The title of Earl of Richmond was held by Henry VII's father, Edmund Tudor. The title of Earl of Somerset had been given to Henry VIII's great-great grandfather John Beaufort in 1397. These titles endowed Fitzroy with lands, most of which belonged to his great-grandmother Margaret Beaufort, making him wealthy and the premier magnate of the realm.

Edward Seymour, 1st Duke of Somerset (c. 1500-1552) was the elder brother of Henry VIII's third wife Jane Seymour. Henry gave him the titles of Viscount Beauchamp of Hache in 1536 and Earl of Hertford in 1537. He became Lord Protector of England on the accession of Edward VI. In 1547, with the approval of the Privy Council, he made himself Duke of Somerset. Due to a mixture of idealism and arrogance, he lost his position as Protector and was executed in 1552 and was replaced by John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland.

John Dudley, 1st Duke of Northumberland (1504-1553) was an English general, admiral and politician. His father, Edmund Dudley, who served Henry VII, was attainted and executed for high treason upon the accession of Henry VIII as a scapegoat for his father's unpopular financial policies. In 1512, the attainder was lifted and John was restored to his father's patrimony. He would be an intimate friend of Henry VIII until his death and served on the council during the regency of Edward VI, with the title of Earl of Warwick. He would lead the council from 1550 to 1553 and with the approval of the council, was made Duke of Northumberland in October 1551. He tried unsuccessfully to install Lady Jane Grey on the throne after Edward's death. Mary Tudor raised an army and took the throne with little shedding of blood and Northumberland was executed in August 1553.

Margaret Pole, Countess of Salisbury (1473-1541), along with Anne Boleyn as Marquess of Pembroke, were the only women in sixteenth-century England to hold a peerage title in her own right. Margaret's father, George, Duke of Clarence had been executed for treason during the reign of his brother Edward IV and her brother was imprisoned for many years as he was considered a threat to Henry VII's new dynasty. He would be executed in 1499. Margaret survived the family's downfall and was married to man of the gentry.

Margaret's fortunes improved with the accession of Henry VIII, becoming a member of Katherine of Aragon's household. Significantly, in 1512, King Henry restored to her the earldom of Salisbury. Paying Henry five thousand marks for her restoration, this meant she was now in possession of all the lands her brother held at the time of his execution. Henry most likely did this as a tacit recognition of the injustice of her brother's death. With this title and property, Margaret was one of the wealthiest and most powerful and influential women in England.

Ferdinando Stanley, Fifth Earl of Derby (1560-1594) was the son of Margaret Clifford, a great-granddaughter of Henry VII as a descendant of Mary Tudor, Duchess of Suffolk. Margaret married Henry Stanley, Lord Strange, the heir to the Earl of Derby. Ferdinando was

a college graduate and took the courtesy title of Lord Strange when his father became 4th Earl of Derby. He went to the court of Queen Elizabeth I to learn courtly ways. From 1570, he was known for his patronage of his own troop of actors, Strange's Men, who performed and presented the plays of William Shakespeare and other playwrights at court and in theaters.

When his father died in September 1593, Ferdinando succeeded him as fifth Earl of Derby and he assumed his father's duties governing the Derby patrimony. He unwittingly became involved in a Catholic plot to place him on the throne. Ferdinando prudently turned the plotters over to Queen Elizabeth's officials. Although Elizabeth did not pursue any charges against Ferdinando, his power and influence began to be curtailed. He became violently ill in April 1594 and died after eleven days. There were rumors of poisoning as there usually was when someone died unexpectedly. But the actual cause of death was most likely a burst appendix which led to acute peritonitis.

Robert Dudley, 1st Earl of Leicester (1532-1588) was an English stateman and is known to be Elizabeth I's premier favorite from her accession until his death. He would be a suitor for the Queen's hand for many years but as we know, Elizabeth had vowed never to marry. Robert's family was in complete disgrace (see Duke of Northumberland above) and Robert himself was condemned to death until Mary I released him. His reputation was fully rehabilitated by Elizabeth's accession. Elevated to Earl of Leicester in 1564, he became one of the largest landowners of the realm.

Robert Devereux, 2nd Earl of Essex (1565-1601) was the stepson of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester. A college graduate, he was handsome, a poet and skilled in the ways of courtly love. The Earl of Leicester actively promoted Essex at court as a part of his own political agenda and Essex became a favorite companion of the Queen, playing cards with her until the wee hours of the morning.

He became famous for quarrelling with his perceived rivals at court, such as Sir Walter Raleigh. After the death of his step-father, he didn't have enough experience to cultivate allies. Essex didn't see much of a future at the court of an aging queen and began a political rivalry with William and Robert Cecil that didn't go well. Showing signs of depression and resenting the restrictions at court, he longed for a career in military service. The Queen agreed to send him to Ireland with the results being nearly disastrous.

The Queen forbid Essex to return to England, but he did so anyway, surprising her in her bedchamber at Nonsuch Palace before she had donned her wig and makeup. A furious Elizabeth had him confined to his rooms and interrogated by the Privy Council. Eventually, he tried to start a rebellion against the Queen, was declared a traitor, tried by his peers and found guilty. He was beheaded and his earldom was forfeit until it was restored to his son by James I.

SUSAN ABERNETHY

Further reading:

- "Debrett's Peerage, Baronetage, Knightage, and Companionage", Oxford Dictionary of National Biography



Vine Cottages

Tudor Shere

By Ian Mulcahy

Shere is a small Surrey village of a little over 1,000 inhabitants located 5 miles to the south-east of Guildford in the Surrey Hills, a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Shere is recorded in the Domesday Book of 1086 as Essire and consisted of 31 households, 19 of villagers, 6 smallholders and 6 slaves. Prior to the Norman Conquest, the manor was owned by Queen Edith of Wessex, wife of Edward the Confessor, but by 1086 the area was under the control of William the Conqueror.

Due to its archetypal English village appearance and an abundance of Tudor architecture, Shere has been used as a location for numerous films, the most recent being *The Holiday* of 2006 which grossed over $200m worldwide and starred such cinematic luminaries as Cameron Diaz, Kate Winslet, Jude Law and Jack Black.

Parking the car in the recreation ground to the north of the village to start our tour, we can immediately view the timber framed rear of **Vine Cottages**, an early


Post & Office Mumfords


Manor Cottage


Elm Cottage


Tudor Cottages

16th century hall house with a western cross wing added in the mid-16th century. The front of the house is, disappointingly, clad in brick and rubble. Opposite, and on the eastern corner of the T-junction of Upper Street and Middle Street, is the delightful **Post Office & Mumfords**, a 15th century house with a mid-16th century cross wing addition which contributes to a quirky design with jetties-a-plenty. On the western side of the T-junction is **Manor Cottage**, a large late Tudor era cottage with wattle and daub infilling visible in the gable end and brick filled timber framing to the front which, until relatively recently, was hidden behind a rough render.

Heading westwards from the junction along Upper Street we traverse a short stretch of road, no more than a quarter of a mile in length, that is rich in Tudor architecture and we soon reach **Elm Cottage**, a late Tudor cottage whose timber framing is infilled with whitewashed brick and rubble. Almost opposite are the appropriately named **Tudor Cottages**, a divided timber framed house of the mid-16th century whose western wall slopes alarmingly inwards. Heading further west up the hill along Upper Street is **East & West Burdens**, a particularly wide 16th century timber framed house, now divided, which was sadly refaced in whitewashed brick during the 19th century. Next door is **Anchor Cottage**, a late Tudor timber framed cottage whose timbers remain visible only on the upper floor of the eastern cross wing, the rest hidden behind a brick refacing of the mid-19th century.

Denmarke is an early 16th century house whose jetty is still partially visible,



East & West Burdens



Anchor Cottage

despite the layers of rendering that have been applied and **Lime Cottage** is a quaint little 16th century cottage whose brick infilling of the timbers has been washed in yellow. The taller bay to the left is a 19th century extension. Next door is the 16th century **Denton** where the exposed timbers of the upper floor sit on a sturdy brick plinth. Completing this run of Tudor buildings is **Knapps Cottage and Waitlands**, a mid-16th century house which has now been split into two. To the left the square whitewashed panels remain visible between the timbers and to the right is a 17th century crosswing where the framing is infilled with flint.

Turning south and walking downhill along the narrow Rectory Lane, we soon cross an ancient ford across the River Tillingbourne before turning left into Lower Street. After just 60 yards is the late Tudor **Delmont and Wayside** a timber framed building that was originally jettied to the left, but has now been underbuilt in whitewashed brick. The bay to the right is a late 19th century extension, evidenced by its perfectly straight timbers. A further 25 yards along Lower Street is **The Old Prison**, a late 16th century structure whose timber frames have been infilled or refaced with a mosaic of flint rubble and brick. **Willow Cottage and Ash Cottage**, towards the eastern end of Lower Street, are a divided 15th century Wealden Hall House, now sadly rendered leaving few timbers visible externally.

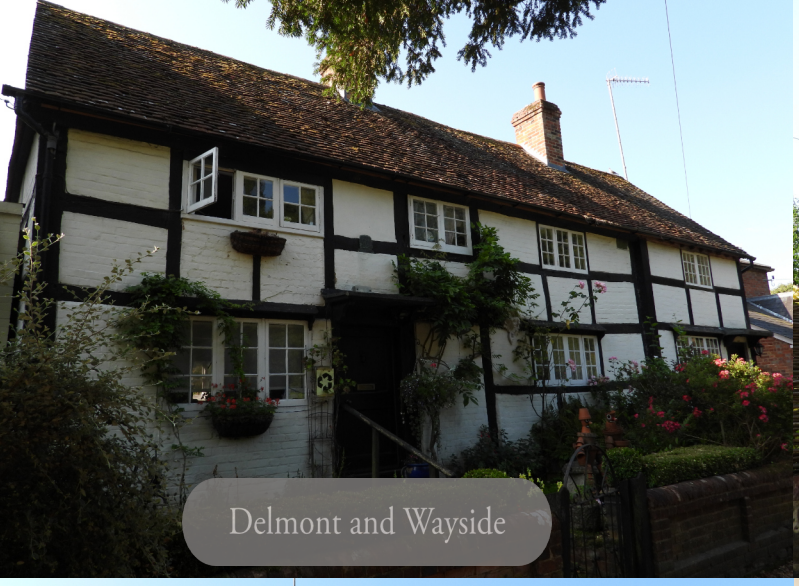
At the end of Lower Street is a staggered crossroads that forms the centre of the village and on the corner is **The White Horse Public House**, a building that started life in the 15th century as a crosswing to a much older, now lost, hall


Denmaeke


Denton


Lime Cottage


Knaps Cottage


Delmont and Wayside


The Old Prison


Willow Cottage and Ash Cottage


The White Horse Public House

House known as *Cripps*. The building has accrued many additions over the subsequent 550 years including the central section and southern (left) crosswing, which were added in the mid and late 16th century respectively. The shallow crosswing to the right and single storey projection to the left are 19th and 20th century extensions. This building has been an inn since the late 1600s. **Dial Cottage**, a little way to the south on the western side of Shere Lane, is a cottage of 1622 and, whilst not of the era, is heavily influenced by Tudor architecture and well worth admiring.

Returning to The Square in the centre of the village, **Rookery Nook**, a rendered Wealden Hall House of the early 16th century is sited on the southern side, with its timbers only visible in the gable of the crosswing. The conjoined and picturesque late Tudor **Grove Cottage, Old Way Cottage & Pantylla Stream** Cottage are


Dial Cottage


Rookery Nook


Grobe Cottage


Bodryn Cottage & Forge Cottage

opposite, and their timbers are proudly on display.

To the east of the square is the lychgate to the churchyard and the **Church Of St James**. A Saxon church is recorded in the Domesday Book, but the structure we see now was probably starting to take shape in the late 12th century. The oldest surviving parts of the church are the Tower and northern wall of the nave which are said to date from this period, though some sources speculate that the nave could be 100 years or more older. The rest of the church dates mainly to the 13th and 14th centuries and was restored in 1895. Walking back through The Square and turning north into Middle Street, our final building in the village itself is **Bodryn Cottage & Forge Cottage**, a late 15th century hall house with a late Tudor jettied crosswing.

As well as being a village in its own right, Shere is also a wider civil parish with a total over 3,000 residents dispersed across smaller villages, hamlets and isolated farms in an area of approximately 6500 acres. Whilst I was in the area I also visited some of these and although the intrepid walker would find enjoyment in using shanks pony to navigate between them I elected to drive between the areas and then walk locally.

First on the list, located a mile to the east of Shere on the busy A25, is the village of Gomshall. *Gumesele* was originally a Saxon manor and is recorded in the Domesday Book as *Gomeselle*. The village plays host to five structures of interest to Tudor aficionados and these are to be found on a convenient circular walk of approximately one mile. Having parked close to the firestation I walked south along Goose Green until I came to the railway bridge across Tower Hill. Opposite the bridge are **Malthouse Cottages**, a range of 4 cottages formed of a mid-16th century hall house with an early 17th century cross wing at each end. Just south of the railway is **Tower Hill Manor**, a


The northern wall of the nave (closest) at The Church of St James


Malthouse Cottages

grand 16th century Tudor Manor House, now thoroughly modernised and refronted in brick.

Turning back under the arch of the railway bridge and heading westwards, and then northwards along Queen Street we soon reach **9-12 Queen Street**, a mid-16th century house that was extended in each of the 17th, 18th & 20th centuries, though plenty of original timber framing is visible at the front of the property. Continuing north, on the corner of the main road is **The King John House**. This large and imposing brick building dates mainly to the 16th century, though it has undergone major restoration, and served as the manor house of the ancient manor of Gomshall Netley until about 1640. It is thought to have been built on the same site as the original Saxon era *Aula*, or centre of administration. A quick about turn from here, and a left turn along a public footpath will bring you to the Packhorse Bridge, a three arched 15th century sandstone bridge across the River Tillingbourne. **Packhorse bridges** were designed with particularly low side walls so as not to interfere with the side bags (packs) of a fully laden packhorse and are typically wide enough to carry a single horse.

A further mile eastwards along the A25 is the village of Abinger Hammer, named after the forge which was built here in 1557 to work Sussex produced pig iron. The 400kg (880lb) hammer was powered by the water stored in the hammer pond, created by damming the River Tillingbourne. 180m (590ft) of this dam remains, standing to a height of up to 3 metres (10ft). Just before entering the village you will pass **Old Hatch Farm House**, a large timber framed house, with extensive brick refacing and infill, that is contemporary with the forge. Just south of the village, on Felday Road, is **Fulvens Barn**, a barn of c.1600 that was converted in to a house and extended to the right in the early 20th century. The space previously occupied by the full length cart doors of the barn can be easily spotted.

Our next port of call takes us southwards to the village of Peaslake, a small village boasting a handful of isolated Tudor houses within its confines which are, again, on a convenient circular walk. Of Peaslake, H E Malden observed, in *The Victoria History of the County of Surrey* (1911)," It has been more recently brought into the circle of civilisation, and a road from Ewhurst, practicable for wheels, has been brought into it". Having parked in the area known as Hoe, to the north-east of the village centre, our first building of interest is **Old Well Cottage**, an early 16th century hall house with the rendered brick infill of the timber framing painted a soft yellow. Just around the corner in Hoe Lane



Tower Hill Manor



9-12 Queen Street, in Gomshall



The King Jhon House,
former manor house of Gomshall Netley



Packhorse Bridge



Old Hatch Farm



Fulvens Barn



Old Well Cottage



Hoe Farm, Peaslake



Oak Hill


Keepers Cottage


Sutton Hayes


Tudor Cottage

is **Hoe Farm House**, a beautiful early 16th century farmstead with thick warped black timber framing and whitewashed plaster infill.

A little further south amongst the ancient and narrow lanes Is **Holly Cottage** a late 16th century sandstone clad farmhouse with a traditional timber frame hidden within its fabric. Turning north to complete the circle we find, in a lane known as Franksfield, **Oak Hill**, the surviving portion of a considerably larger 16th century house with an early 20th century extension to the rear. Our final building in Peaslake is **Keepers Cottage**, a 16th century home which, despite its 18th century sandstone and brick refronting, still exudes 'chocolate box' quality.

Our final stop is at the hamlet of Sutton Abinger, or *Sudtone* as it was known at the time of Domesday, in the eastern reaches of the parish. This small settlement is made up almost entirely of late 16th and early 17th century buildings, the first of which can be viewed on the approach to the hamlet. Set back from the Horsham Road, to your left, is **Sutton Hayes**, a large and typical late Tudor timber framed manor house.

A quarter of a mile further along the road you will reach a cluster of four black and white Tudor era houses, three of which front directly onto the road. The fourth is on a small side road, but still completes a Tudor street scene. **The Old Forge** is a large double gabled house and next door is **Sutton Cottage** another large house. Opposite is the smaller **Walnut Tree Cottage** while just a stone's throw away, in Raikes Lane, is **Tudor Cottage**, with a 20th century tiled extension to its right.

After a very long day, all that is left to do now is retire to the nearby The Volunteer public house, who very kindly allowed me to fly my drone from their land in order to capture the aerial photo of the Tudor hamlet of Sutton Abinger, for a pint and a snack before heading home.

IAN MULCAHY

https://britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/
https://opendomesday.org/
https://www.sheredelight.com/
https://www.wealdeniron.org.uk/
https://www.british-history.ac.uk/



The Old Forge



Sutton Cottage



Christmas Quiz Answers

1. You were allowed pottage, but no animal products.
2. Gifts were given on 1st January.
3. The first day of the new year was 25th March.
4. Sewing was permitted but spinning was not.
5. Minced Pyes contained 13 ingredients, to represent the apostles and Jesus too.
6. Tudor Christmas pie was stuffed with pigeon, not quail. Indigestion, anyone?
7. The chocolate yule logs they were burned during the 12 days of Christmas, not advent.
8. 'The Boy Bishop' would do everything except lead the mass.
9. It was infact Plough Monday, not Sunday.

HOW DID YOU DO?



Member Spotlight

THE FROG

by G A McKinley

A poem dedicated to the Tudor Society and Friends

Walsingham Walsingham where have you gone
We woke this morning to Catholic bodies on the lawn
Have you followed your orders rightly
Are the rest locked up tightly
For as you know I preach and pray
But those damnable Catholics will never see the light of day
Not as long as I rule here
So go now, Walsingham, and sow seeds of fear
France, Scotland, Spain and Italy
You know as well as I that we gaze at them bitterly
So do what you can, my swift little frog
Leave our opponents forever in fog.

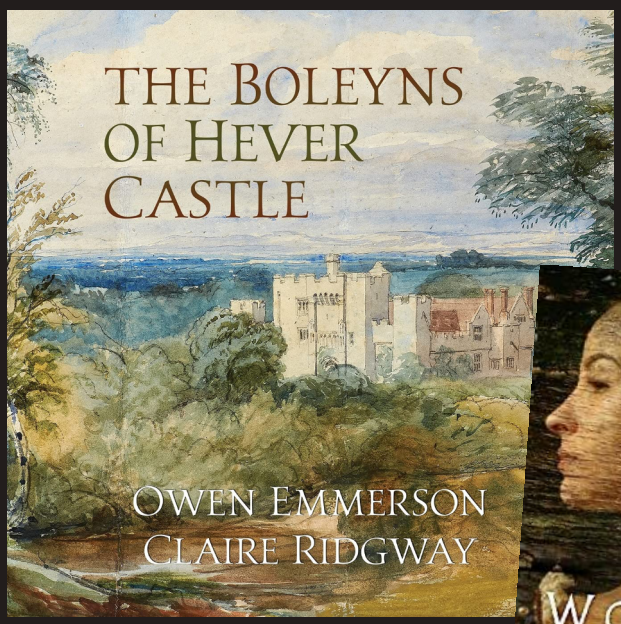


ABOUT GEORGE

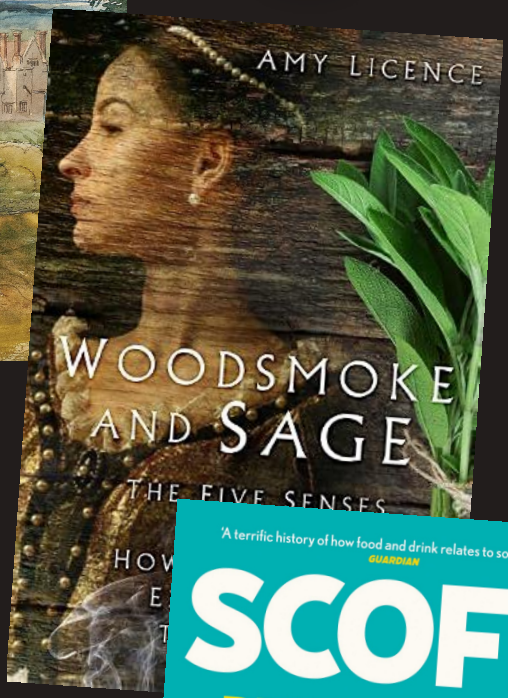
My name is George after my maternal grandfather and I live just outside of Philadelphia in the United States. I was born in the town of Bryn Mawr which translates to big hill in Welsh. I began writing poetry during my downtime while working in 2014 and I usually share my creations with close friends and family if at all. I've happily collected Claire Ridgway's books and have a great interest the dukes of Norfolk, particularly the second, but needless to say my favorite historical figure from Tudor times will always be Sir Francis Walsingham with Sir William Cecil Lord Burghley as a close contender. I actually meant to entitle the poem The Moor but as Walsingham seems to have hopped from place to place at his prince's bidding The Frog seemed an apt title. Thank you kindly for the honor of including me!

GEORGE MCKINLEY













If, like me, you like to curl up, fireside, with a good novel at Christmas, then Margaret George's "The Autobiography of Henry VIII," which has some fantastic scenes imagining Christmases at the Tudor court. The same is true of Rosalind Miles's "I, Elizabeth", imagined as a memoir written by Queen Elizabeth in her later years.

There's a great buzz surrounding Amy Licence's new book "Woodsmoke and Sage," which focuses on how the Tudors experienced their world through the five senses. Pen Vogler's "Scoff," a history of British food, was a bestseller when it came out earlier this year and, like Licence's book, it gives a fantastic window into how the senses shaped our past - and our past celebrations. If you're looking for everyday life in the Tudor era, I can thoroughly recommend "The Boleyns of Hever Castle," by Owen Emmerson and Claire Ridgway, for its thrilling recreation of day-to-day life in a 16th century manor.

GARETH RUSSELL

This Old House

By Angela Dunsby

Diminutive in the shadow of the majestic Tewkesbury Abbey in Gloucestershire stands a row of cottages offering a glimpse into the lives of people from as early as medieval times.

Built by the Benedictine monks as a source of revenue for the abbey, these cottages were constructed using methods that have resulted in a longevity not expected for buildings of this time. Originally thought to have been built in 1480, dendrochronology reports carried out by Oxford scientists in 2015 revealed that the oak trees (green oak) were felled in Shropshire circa 1405, meaning the properties were constructed around 1410. The frames for the cottages would have been prefabricated before delivery and the upper timbers marked with roman numerals to make reconstruction easier, then the frames would have been dismantled. The River Severn runs through the town of Tewkesbury; therefore, it is likely the timbers would have been transported by boat and re-assembled on their current site.



Stones from a fallen wall at the abbey were used as a base for the timber frame and hold the answer to the long life of these dwellings. Tewkesbury is a town plagued with floods, and I'm sure that this led to the decision to use the stone base, which has preserved the frame. Coupled with the high thresholds and steps leading to the front door, water damage has been avoided, and unlike many medieval properties built directly onto an earth base, which may have only lasted 20-30 years, these homes have stood the test of time, and still provide homes to the people and businesses of Tewkesbury.

The oak frame for these modest dwellings acts as an extremely strong skeleton and the mortice and tenon joints holding them together use wooden pegs as opposed to metal nails. The decision to use wooden pegs is twofold. Firstly, nails were very expensive and secondly, wooden pegs react to weather and temperature changes in the same way as the main frame, this means the pegs will swell and shrink with the wood as it expands with the fluctuating seasonal changes, whereas metal nails would fall out as the wood expanded and shrank.

The infill for the walls is wattle and daub. Wattle is made using strong upright oak sticks interwoven with bendable sticks like willow. The daub consisted of such things as clay, mud, animal dung, straw and even blood. This mixture was "daubed" on the wattle frame, which, once dried, created a strong, durable wall. This would then be limewashed to give a rougher version of today's walls. Although they would be easier to damage than the walls of today, they would also be easier to repair as the materials would be freely available.



Topping the row of twenty-three cottages were handmade clay tiles. Although more expensive than thatching, this decision could potentially save many lives from the risk of fire. Although an expensive choice, the maintenance of a thatch roof of this size would have proved costly in the long term.

Stepping inside number 45, The Merchant's House has been restored to the 1580s, and we find little has changed since the birth of the cottages. The mullion windows are covered with cloth soaked in linseed oil, which makes the material durable against the worst of the weather. Wooden shutters stand open during the day, which helps the sunlight to enter the house through the cloth; these shutters would have been closed at night to hold out the cold, and to provide security at a time when crime was on the rise.

The flooring in the dwellings would have originally been earth, but for maintenance purposes is now concrete. Reeds and rushes would have formed a soft flooring providing comfort for the inhabitants of the property, especially as the family may have spent time

sitting on the floor, since furniture was not as commonplace as today, although wooden benches may have been used.

In the centre of the main living area is the fireplace. The fireplace posed a considerable fire hazard, especially considering the flooring and proximity to anyone walking through the room, particularly the women in their long woollen dresses. Chimneys were only used by the wealthy since bricks were very expensive; a smoke void was the only means of escape for the smoke from the fire. A large area above the main living area of the building, the smoke void allowed smoke to gather until it found its way out of the gaps in the roof.

Unlike many similar properties of this period, the cottage has a steep set of stairs of which the top six risers are original. This is quite unusual for the time, as it was far more common to employ ladders to access the upper floors.

On entering the bedchamber upstairs, the size of the room is noticeable in its somewhat larger proportions when compared to the room below. This is because of the jetty at the front of the room overshadows the pavement below. Having a jetty provided more space without affecting the street below, and as taxes were placed on the ground floor, it allowed extra space without the financial penalties. The longer beams, which support the weight of the jetty, also provide some strength to the main structure of the building.

In this piece, I have described one of the original twenty-three cottages, of which only fourteen now remain. As part of the Abbey Lawn Trust, the cottages were restored in the late 1960s, and number 45 was found to have the most original features intact, such as the top six stairs, smoke void and timber framing. The Merchant's House was opened to the public in the 1970s, and has continued to grow in popularity as the years have gone on. Whilst the museum attracts many visitors who come to experience life as it was, I have only focused on the structure of the building as an insight into the beginnings of these humble but equally magnificent dwellings.

ANGELA DUNSBY





TONI MOUNT

Sutton House

'The Brick Place' and the career of its owner, Ralph Sadleir

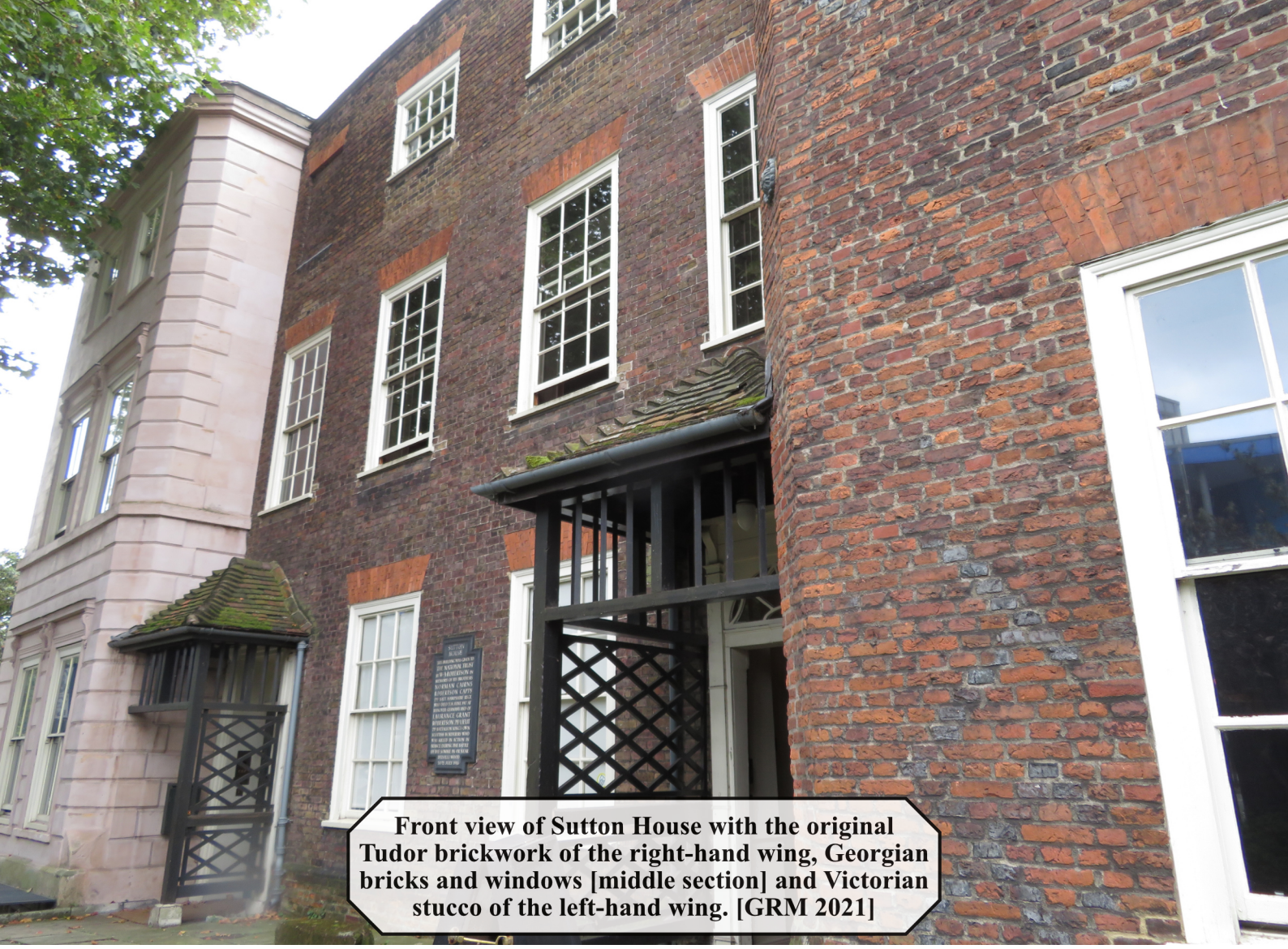
In Tudor times, the London Borough of Hackney was a village in the countryside, three miles from the filth of the city, renowned for its 'healthful air'. As an escape from life at the claustrophobic royal court, the stinks and diseases, Hackney was a popular place where the wealthy built their country mansions. Thomas Cromwell had a 1470s mansion in nearby Clapton [Clopton in those days] which he rebuilt as a double-courtyard house in 1535. It was known as 'the King's Place' though my research hasn't turned up a reason for that name unless it came about because Henry VIII and his estranged daughter, Mary, had a meeting there in 1536. They hadn't seen each other for five years and the purpose of this family reunion wasn't to Mary's advantage because the king bullied her into signing a declaration, admitting her mother, Katherine of Aragon, had never been truly wed to Henry, making Mary illegitimate. This she agreed to do, removing herself from the line of succession to the throne.

While Cromwell was rebuilding the King's Place, his one-time secretary, Ralph Sadleir, was busy constructing a grand three-story house in Hackney, on Homerton Street. He built in brick which was still a novelty in England and rare enough that calling Ralph's mansion 'The Brick Place' was sufficient as an address – no other brick buildings stood in the area.



View of Sutton House c.1545

The Sadleirs were a Hertfordshire family with Warwickshire ancestry. Ralph's father, Henry, was involved in the arrangements for Henry VIII's stupendous Field of the Cloth of Gold meeting with the King of France in 1520, being appointed as 'purveyor of all the buckram and canvas' required. Since the entire temporary landscape of palaces, pavilions and banqueting halls was constructed from these textiles, Henry Sadleir must have been working



Front view of Sutton House with the original Tudor brickwork of the right-hand wing, Georgian bricks and windows [middle section] and Victorian stucco of the left-hand wing. [GRM 2021]

hard and was rewarded, though whether adequately so seems unlikely. Perhaps Henry had an inflated self-image or maybe he just wasn't very good with finances. Whatever the case, he purchased a country manor in Hackney but had to ask his friend, Thomas Cromwell, to help him raise the £8 2 shillings required. This is the manor that would later be rebuilt in brick by his son, Ralph.

Ralph was born either in Hertfordshire, at Standon or possibly in Hackney in 1507. Sources disagree on this. When he was fourteen, just after the Cloth of Gold spectacular had brought his father to notice in high places, he joined Thomas Cromwell's London household in Fenchurch Street, in the city. He was taught Latin, French, law and courtly skills – all that was needed to do well socially and politically. Cromwell found Ralph to be a great asset and the young man is mentioned as his master's secretary in 1527 but life was about to change.

In 1533, Ralph married Cromwell's cousin, Helen or Ellen Barre. She lived in Cromwell's home in Fenchurch Street where she had been taken in as a destitute woman, abandoned by her husband and left with two small children. It was thought her husband had died in Ireland and Ralph and Helen were married in 1533 and went to live at the newly rebuilt Brick Place in Hackney. Later that year, their son, Thomas, was baptised in St Augustine's Church in Hackney with Cromwell standing as 'gossip' [the medieval/

Tudor word for a godparent].

Around this time, Ralph also became employed directly by the king and was involved in the Dissolution of the Monasteries. The king also sent him on diplomatic missions to Scotland and France and he became the king's principal secretary. However, Cromwell's fall in 1540 reflected badly on Ralph and he was arrested and sent to the Tower of London, hands tied and guarded by twenty-four men-at-arms. However, unlike Cromwell who was executed, Ralph was soon released and restored to royal favour, receiving a knighthood and serving as a Privy Counsellor to both Henry VIII and Edward VI.



This lovely sketch, dated 1535, by Hans Holbein is possibly of Ralph Sadleir [Royal Collection]

The Brick Place was finished, using the popular 'H' plan with two wings and a central range, designed to impress, the bricks being made from clay dug from Hackney Brook which ran just a few yards away from the house. Despite Ralph's desire for a modern 'look', the house was built with some 'old fashioned' features that surprised me when we visited. Linen-fold wooden panelling was the latest thing to decorate the walls of the more important rooms, providing insulation as well as looking good. However, to begin with, Ralph went for the cheaper option, having a linen-fold design painted directly onto the plastered walls. Although bright colours were used, this wouldn't have helped keep the room warm. The real panelling in the Parlour and the Great Chamber upstairs was put over the painted walls at a later date – only Hampton Court and Westminster Abbey have similar panelled rooms, but little cubbyholes in the Parlour open to reveal Ralph's 'fake' design behind.

Another feature that seems quite medieval was Ralph's staircase to the upper floor. Here is the Great Chamber where important guests would be entertained yet the grand stairway we see today is another later edition. In Ralph's day, upstairs was accessed by a steep stair not much better than a ladder. I can't imagine that impressed people of note if they had to climb a ladder like workmen when they came on a visit. However, there were some beautiful modern features that would have created a 'wow'-factor too. One window, fully glazed, remains from Ralph's original house, the oak frame dendro-dated to the 1534-35.

Many rooms had large ornate fireplaces, bigger than those visible today. This is apparent behind the



The Parlour with its wooden linen-fold panelling and the open cubbyhole showing the painted 'fake' panelling [GRM 2021]

panelling in the Parlour and the Great Chamber where great brick supporting arches can be seen. Fancy brick chimneys still stand proud above the once-gabled roof but the roof line was altered in the Georgian period when the central range was refaced with new, larger bricks and the sash windows put in. One other vital feature still there today is the garderobe or privy in what was the main bedchamber but is now a Victorian study with convenience hidden in a cupboard.

Comfortable in their fine new Hackney mansion, the Sadleir family suffered two shocks. The first occurred in 1544 while Ralph was in Edinburgh as ambassador to Scotland. Ralph didn't like the Scots, describing them as the 'most beastly and unreasonable people'. And it seems the Scots didn't like King Henry's ambassador either because someone shot at him with a musket while he was strolling in the garden. It was a very near miss. Then, in October 1545, Ralph had to rush back to London to deal with a shocking family crisis.

He and Helen had been married for eleven years and had seven children by now. Readers may recall that Helen's first husband ran off to Ireland where he was believed to have died more than twelve years before. Helen and Matthew Barre had wed in 1526, in Dunmow in Essex and they had two daughters. After her husband disappeared, Helen went to great lengths to find him, visiting his family at Sevenoaks in Kent and making enquiries but he couldn't be traced.

Now, with Ralph a man of influence and wealth, who should appear, out of the blue, in London but the 'long-dead' Matthew Barre!

An enquiry was held and Matthew's claim to be Helen's right and lawful husband was upheld. This was a terrible blow because, in effect, it made Ralph an adulterer and all their children illegitimate – hardly good for his reputation and standing at court. The only way out of this difficulty was for Ralph to pay for an Act of



The remaining Tudor window from Ralph's building [GRM 2021]



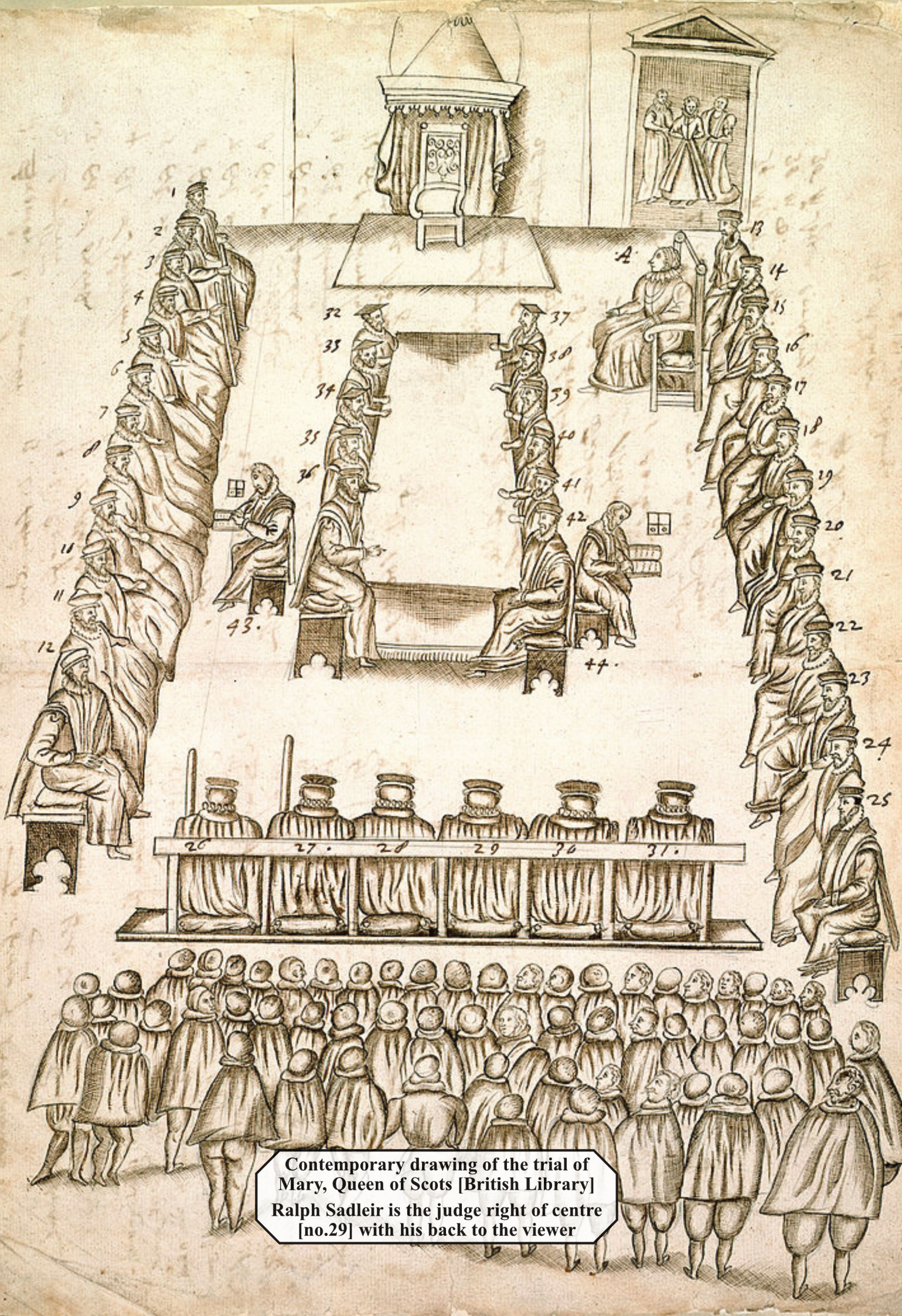
The Great Chamber on the first floor – designed for entertaining [GRM 2021]

Parliament, annulling Helen's marriage to her first husband, as though it had never happened, but this was an expensive business. Fortunately, when Henry VIII drew up his will after Christmas 1546, he left Ralph a bequest of £200 and appointed him to the Regency Council that would rule England while Edward VI was under age. He continued his diplomatic career under Edward and held numerous offices, including Master of the Great Wardrobe which included responsibility for the Crown Jewels.

In 1550, Ralph sold The Brick Place for £500 to a rich wool merchant and Sheriff of London, John Machell, preferring his new country seat at Standon, near Ware in Hertfordshire but remaining active at court as well. When young Edward wrote his will in 1553, Ralph was a witness and he also signed the documents making Lady Jane Grey queen. Unsurprisingly, when Mary Tudor took the crown, being an active supporter of Protestantism and Queen Jane, Ralph was not in favour. Having been arrested, briefly, and stripped of all his offices, he retired to Standon and lived there quietly for the rest of Mary's reign.

But Ralph's career wasn't finished yet. When Elizabeth became queen in 1558, Ralph resumed his place at court and on diplomatic missions to Scotland. His knowledge of the Scots and Elizabeth's trust in him meant he was a likely choice for one of Mary, Queen of Scots gaolers during her years of imprisonment in England. From 1584-85, Ralph had charge of Mary, first at Wingfield Manor and then at Tutbury Castle. At Tutbury, Ralph was required to post guards all around the castle and make regular searches of the grounds. However, Francis Walsingham criticised him for taking Mary hawking and giving her too much freedom.

But the Scottish queen's more pleasant treatment during Ralph's time as her gaoler couldn't last. After one plot too many to put her on the English throne, Mary was tried, condemned and executed. Ralph was one of those who sat in judgement at her trial in 1586 but he did not outlive the woman on whom he passed sentence for very long. The following year, aged eighty, Ralph Sadleir died at his manor house at Standon where he has a splendid tomb in the parish church.



Contemporary drawing of the trial of Mary, Queen of Scots [British Library]

Ralph Sadleir is the judge right of centre [no.29] with his back to the viewer



Ralph Sadleir's tomb in Standon Church, Herts

There are a few interesting footnotes to Ralph Sadleir's life:

- He appears as an important character in Hilary Mantel's *Wolf Hall* trilogy of novels.
- There is no certainty as to why the Brick Place became known as Sutton House. In 1605, one Thomas Sutton bought the property next door. It's thought that with more brick buildings going up in the area, the Sadleir property might have been specified as 'the one next to Sutton's house'. The adjoining street is now known as Sutton Place.
- The property is now in the care of the National Trust, unique in that it has never been unoccupied in its long history.
- Regarding Ralph and Helen's marriage: in 1604, an Act of Parliament was passed – which still applies today – that a spouse absent and presumed dead for seven years becomes officially deceased in the eyes of the law. This would have ensured Ralph's marriage to Helen was legal from the beginning, had the act existed in 1544.

TONI MOUNT

THE TUDOR SOCIETY

Members' Bulletin

Hello and a Happy Christmas to you from all here at the Tudor Society.

Looking back over 2021 it's been a busy year for us all, helping people all around the world to enjoy Tudor history and connect with experts and each other. We've made some wonderful connections and friends and have learned so much from the talks and discussions we've had on the website.

None of what we do would be possible without you and your help, so the biggest thank you has to be for you. We now have a lovely group of contributors for the magazine who work month after month to bring you fresh information and research. We have, of course, the experts who provide videos for us week after week, which I'm sure you'll agree is a very hard thing to do. We have the layout and publication team for the magazine, the work maintaining, securing and growing the website, and we have regular experts reading, reviewing and talking about places and books and items and all things … Tudor! It's all thanks to you and your wonderful support. THANK YOU.

We hope you've had a good 2021, despite all that the world has been throwing at us. And we hope that 2022 will be a Tudor-filled happy experience for you. There is SO much in the planner already that I for one know it's going to be an incredible year.

So, from all of us here in the Tudor Society to you, wherever you are reading this message, have a festive and Happy Christmas a wonderful New Year and then, if we're lucky, an even better 2022!

TIM RIDGWAY

Charlie on Books



Sex, Love and Marriage in Elizabethan England

R. E. Pritchard



A book about sex and love in Elizabethan England you would expect to be a riveting read and unable to put down. R. E. Pritchard's book Sex, Love and Marriage in Elizabethan England aims to do this, looking at this from the viewpoints of both well-known figures such as Shakespeare and John Donne, but also reports from the church courts and general historical accounts. It looks at people from different levels of society, trying to provide an overview of that part of life in Elizabethan England, but sadly it struggles from the start.

Throughout the book there is a lot of excerpts from various sources but not much information to accompany it. Pritchard leaves it up to the reader to decide what they mean, which isn't any use to the general reader. For the academic, there does not seem to be any real reference system used, it seems like the author is trying but doesn't know how to. There also doesn't seem to be enough references for the amount of sources quoted either.

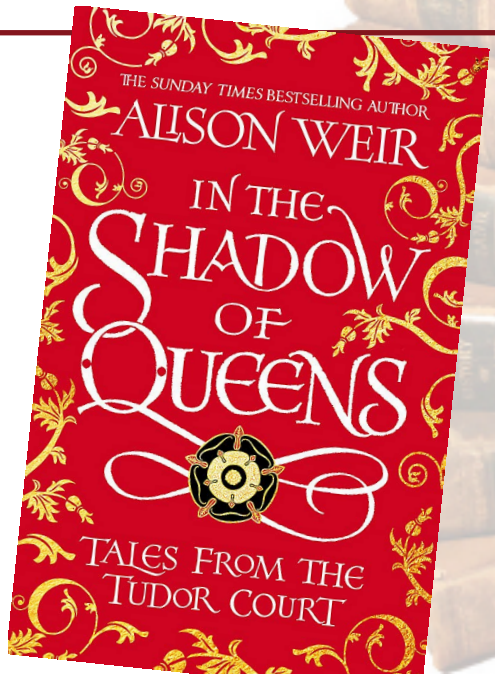
When it comes down to it, despite a title suggesting otherwise, Sex, Love and Marriage in Elizabethan England is just a bit boring. Admittedly, it does get a little better later, but the reader would have to struggle through a fair section of the book first. It is hard to recommend this book to anyone, maybe if they can track down the sources that are in the book and can use them in some way.



In the Shadow of Queens

Alison Weir





Throughout the release of the publication of her six novels on the lives of Henry VIII's wives, Alison Weir also wrote thirteen short stories. These were released alongside the novels but were available only to read digitally until recently, when they were released in a collection under the title In the Shadow of Queens. In this book they are in publication order, with the stories connected to her Katherine of Aragon novel, for instance, being at the beginning, before going back in time for the ones chronologically for the ones connected to Anne Boleyn.

The stories are of mixed quality, like the novels themselves, but you do get to see characters that are often ignored elsewhere. One such example is Anne Boleyn's maternal grandmother, explored in the story The Grandmother's Tale. The story itself is fairly basic and does more telling rather than showing, but seeing the fallout of Anne and George's deaths on the Boleyn family is interesting, if heart-breaking:

'He [Thomas Boleyn] came home a broken man. They were both broken, paralysed with grief and horror. I remember Elizabeth sitting in her chair, rocking in her misery, and her hysterical cries when word came that the dread sentence had been carried out. Thomas uttered no word of protest or sorrow, but you had only to look at him to know that he was suffering. They were never the same afterwards, either of them.'

It is interesting to see more of Thomas Cranmer and his relationship with the Boleyn family but the book repeats the awful myth that Jane Boleyn testified against her husband, which is annoying, if not unexpected based on the characterisation of her in Weir's novels.

It will be a matter of opinion, but my favourite story was The Curse of the Hungerfords, which is on Anne Basset, who served four of Henry VIII's wives. In this story she is said to have been one of his mistresses and a possible contender for his wives. The story goes between that of Anne Basset and of Agnes Hungerford and is an intriguing one, as the reader cannot help but wonder how the two tales are connected for some time. It is also one of the longest stories in the collection.

My least favourite story is The Wicked Wife, which is on Jane Boleyn, the sister-in-law of Anne Boleyn. This is due to how badly Weir has treated Jane and George's marriage and Jane herself, but it wasn't unexpected due to how she has been portrayed in the novels sadly. The myth of her testifying against Anne and George is still perpetuated throughout fiction and doesn't look to be going away anytime soon.

If you liked the series of novels Weir has written over the last six years and want more, than this is an obvious buy, otherwise it depends on what you are looking for. In the Shadow of Queens contains an interesting mixture of short stories and some are better than most, but as is true with most fiction the truth has been stretched in places and it depends on the reader's tolerance for that. Alison Weir is one of those authors that people seem to either or hate, so that will have to factor in to whether you pick this one up!

As this book contains short stories, I will rate them all below, as well as the book as a whole, as I usually do.

Arthur: Prince of Roses - 3/5 stars
The Blackened Heart - 4/5 stars
The Chateau of Briis - 3/5 stars
The Tower is Full of Ghosts Today - 2/5 stars
The Grandmother's Tale - 3/5 stars
The Unhappiest Lady in Christendom - 3/5 stars
The Curse of the Hungerfords - 5/5 stars
The King's Painter - 3/5 stars
The Princess of Scotland - 3/5 stars
A Man of God - 4/5
The Wicked Wife - 1/5
The Queen's Child - 4/5
In This New Sepulchre - 3/5 stars

LAMBS WOOL

Wassailing – a Tudor Christmastide tradition

By Brigitte Webster



Lamb's wool is a warm spiced drink made from mixing hot cider, ale or sherry, apples, and spices. Lamb's Wool has been used for wassailing for hundreds of years, using either mulled ale or cider. No contemporary recipe appears to have survived.

By the 1590s, if not much earlier, bowls of hot, spiced ale mixed with roasted crab apples were being served as '*Lambswool*', a name suggestive of its warm, soft and comforting nature. There is a debate as to the origin of the name, but when the pulp of baked apple is added to the

drink it thickens the brew and looks like lamb's wool. However, it may be derived from the Irish Gaelic "la mas nbhal" pronounced "lamass-ool", made for the feast of apple gathering known as All Hallows Eve or Lammastide. Each guest would take a piece of apple and eat it, toasting his / her fellows.

The custom of WASSAILING was first described by Peter de Langtoft in the 1320s, where a leader of a gathering cried "wassail" (= old English for your health) The famous eighth century poem BEOWULF mentions wassail as a toast (Anglo Saxon for "be of good health"). It's use with drink was recorded by Geoffrey of Monmouth and by Wace in his Roman de Brut.

From a toast, wassail came to refer to the practice of drinking in revelry, for example, in payments made by the sacrist of Bury St Edmund's Abbey in 1369-70, and 1401-2, for wassail at Christmas and to the drink itself.

The wassail bowl is first mentioned by Matthew Paris in the thirteenth century, as a drink in which one dipped cakes and fine white bread. By the end of the fourteenth century, great families preserved wassail cups of considerable value. Edmund, Earl of March, left a silver one upon his death in 1382. At the court of Henry VII, it was accompanied into the royal presence by chief officers of the household. "A little wassell bole 3d" was kept for Christmas wassail at Speke Hall near Liverpool in 1624.

In more rustic establishments the drink was served in a milking pail, as described in John Bale's play "Kynge John" of around 1550.

"Wassayle, wassayle out of the milking payle
Wassayle, wassayle, as white as my nayle
Wassayle, wassayle, in snow, frost and hayle…
Wassayle, wassayle, that never will fayle."

Most households had a wooden wassail bowl which contained the hot spiced drink and a bite-size chunk of bread (cake) at the bottom. People would pass the bowl crying "wassail" and each recipient would take a drink and pass it on, saying 'Drinkhail'. The bread at the bottom was reserved for the most important person in the room, the origin of the later custom of 'toasting' at celebrations

The wassail bowl is apparently not heard of at the royal court after the time of Henry VIII, but is reported at all other levels of society in the years 1600-1630.

Jonson portrayed it as a brown bowl decorated with ribbons and

rosemary. To the author of Pasquils Palinodia, it was a symbol of peace and communality. It is in this period, that the bowl first features unequivocally as an object carried from door to door by poor people seeking hospitality. This is may have been what is implied in Machyn's mid Tudor account, as well as Nicholas Breton's description of 1602 when he wrote of: "heart welcome fills the wassail bowl". In 1618, George Wither wrote of wealthy people who aid the poor once a year and "entertain their Christmas wassail bowls". John Taylor was quite clear in 1631, when he wrote how "a company of maids would call at a rural household at Christmas calling "*wassell, wassell, jolly wassell*" and bringing cakes and a bowl of drink. In return they would be given white bread, cheese and mince pies. Payments to "wassailers" feature throughout the late Stuart period.

Children would sometimes carry the wassail bowl from house to house to be shared and replenished as Thomas Kirchmaier (1571-63) describes :

"There cities are where boys and girls together still do run
About the streets with like as soon as night begins to come,
And bring abroad their wassail- bowls, who well rewarded be
With cakes, and cheese, and great good cheer, and money plenteously"

On Twelfth Eve in 1555, an especially flamboyant version of the custom was experienced by the Londoner Henry Machyn when he attended a party at Henley on Thames as a guest. He reports "*twelve wessells with maidens singing, with their wessells, and after came the chief wives singing with their vessels, and the gentlewoman had ordained a great table of banquet, desserts of spices and fruit, as marmalade, gingerbread, jelly, comfit, sugar plate and divers others*"

The first description of the wassail drink appears between 1610-1650 when it is being described as a hot spiced ale with apples floating in it. By the 19th century this drink is known by the name of "Lambswool".

On Twelfth Night, farmers would wassail their trees by pouring the drink over the roots to ensure a bountiful harvest. The practice survives even today but it is also mentioned by Robert Herrick (1648):

"Wassail the trees, that they may bear
You many plum and many a pear :
For more or less fruits they will bring,
As you do give them wassailing"

Twelfth Night was celebrated with great ceremony in royal and noble households and each person was served their own wassail cake and cup

of wassail drink. The chapel choir sang in the wassail, followed by carols. A century later, similar ceremonies were recorded in Ben Johnson's Christmas, His Masque of 1616 by Robert Herrick :

This I you tell, is our jolly Wassell,
And for Twelfe-night more meat too…
Next crowne the bowle full
With gentle lambs-wool;
Adde sugar, nutmeg and ginger,
With store of ale too;
And thus ye must doe
To make the wassaile a swinger.

At Sir Robert Wroth's hall at Durants, Enfield, Middlesex: Guests heard:

"The rout of rural folk come thronging in,
(Their rudeness then is thought no sin)
Thy noble spouse affords them welcome grace …
The jolly wassail walks the hall often round,

And in their cups, their cares are drowned" (Johnson, vol VII 100)

Shakespeare's Midsummer Night's Dream confirms that crab apples in lambswool were left whole, rather than beaten in as a pulp :

Sometimes I lurk in gossip's bowl
In very likeness of a roasted crab,
And when she drinks, against her lips I bob,
And down her withered dewlap pours the ale
Or when,
… Marion's nose looks red and raw,
When roasted crabs hiss in the bowl
The nightly sgs the staring owl,
To-whit !

A version of the 19th century carol "Here we come A-wassailing" was also known in the early seventeenth century and included a verse that portrayed the reality of life for many children at Christmas, which shows why wassailing was so popular:

"Good master and mistress,
While you are sitting by the fire,
Pray think of us poor children,
Who are wandering in the mire'

ELIZABETHAN LAMB'S WOOL

Ingredients:

- 4 pints of ale or cider (apple juice for children)
- 6 cored and sliced apples
- 6 tablespoon brown sugar (not necessary when using apple juice)
- 1/4 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/4 teaspoon ginger
- 1/8 teaspoon nutmeg

METHOD :

Roast the apples for around 40 minutes until the pieces turn soft and fluffy.

Heat the ale/cider, dissolving the sugar slowly

Add the spices

Do not boil but simmer for 15-30 minutes

Then pour over the apples in a wassail (punch) bowl and serve individual portions in a looped replica spiced drink cup (see picture)

MEDIEVAL LAMB'S WOOL

Ingredients :

- 3 litres of ale or stout
- 12 small cored and sliced apples
- 3 tablespoons honey
- 1/4 teaspoon cinnamon
- 2 teaspoon freshly grated ginger
- 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground nutmeg

METHOD :

Bake the apples in a hot oven until they begin to split divide the ale between two pots. Each pot will need to be big enough to easily take all the ingredients.

place about three quarters of the ale in one pot and heat very gently until warm.

place the remaining ale in the second pot.

add the apples, honey and spices to this and bring to the boil.

immediately for the warmed ale into this and turn off the heat.

Keep pouring heated ale between the 2 pots until a large amount of froth has accumulated on the top. This is the "Lamb's Wool.

Pour into a heated WASSAIL (punch) bowl and you can ladle out or guests can dip their looped, specially designed historic replica spiced drink cup into the bowl. (See picture above)

17TH CENTURY WASSAIL DRINK
(recipe from "The Accomplisht Cook"; circa 1660 by R May)

Ingredients :

- 4 slices of white bread (2.5 cm thick)
- 600ml muscatel
- 600ml double cream
- 2 cloves
- 2 egg yolks
- 2tbs sugar
- 12g blanched almonds, sliced
- ½ tsp mixed ground cinnamon and ginger

Trim the crusts from the bread, cut into cubes and use to line a deep dish. Pour the muscatel into a pan, cover, and heat gently. Beat the yolks into 6tbs of cream, bring the remaining cream to the boil with the cloves, and leave to simmer for 5 mins. Pour the hot wine over the bread, and sprinkle with half the sugar. Remove the cream from the heat, beat in the yolks, pour over the bread, stick the almonds into its surface, and finally sprinkle on the remaining sugar mixed with the spices. Serve hot.

BRIGITTE WEBSTER

Sources and recommended further reading:

- The Stations of the Sun - A history of the Ritual Year in Britain by Ronald Hutton
- A Tudor Christmas by A Weir & S Clarke
- The Accomplisht Cook – Robert May; 1660
- Cooking & Dining in Tudor & Early Stuart England – Peter Brears
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- C.M. Woolgar, The culture of Food in England 1200-1500, p49-50



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