

Hi All!

Claire Ridgway23:57

Hello Tim!

Lorna Wanstall23:58

Yes indeed poor old Dinosaur is going to spend most of his weekend pottering up to the tip and back.

Elizabeth Clayton23:58

Yes Claire. It's so lovely to have Monday off!

Claire Ridgway23:59

We have Monday off too. Here in Spain, 1st May is a holiday whichever day of the week it is, so it's nice it falls on a Monday this year.

Lorna Wanstall23:59

We are having a major clear out and not before time, either. My back garden was starting to look like steptoes scrap yard

Claire Ridgway23:59

Gareth is just logging in so will be here soon. Welcome everyone to tonight's live chat!

Gareth Russell23:59

Good evening, everybody!

Elizabeth Clayton23:59

Will you do anything special?

Lorna Wanstall23:59

Hiya Gareth

Claire Ridgway23:59

Hello Gareth! Thank you for joining us!

Claire Ridgway00:00

@Elizabeth, chill out I think and perhaps a board game or two.

Elizabeth Clayton00:00

Hello Gareth!

Teri Fitzgerald00:00

Hi Gareth!

Anthony Hillman00:00

Hi Gareth

Claire Ridgway00:00

Ok, tonight's topic is Catherine Howard or Gareth's work, or writing a biography.... Whatever!

Elizabeth Clayton00:01

That sounds lovely Claire.

Claire Ridgway00:00

@Elizabeth, chill out I think and perhaps a board game or two.

Elizabeth Clayton00:00

Hello Gareth!

Teri Fitzgerald00:00

Hi Gareth!

Anthony Hillman00:00

Hi Gareth

Claire Ridgway00:00

Ok, tonight's topic is Catherine Howard or Gareth's work, or writing a biography.... Whatever!

Elizabeth Clayton00:01

That sounds lovely Claire.

Gareth what attracted you to Catherine howard?

Roland Hui00:01

Congrats on the success of the book!

Lorna Wanstall00:01

Hi Roland

Gareth Russell00:01

Thank you so much, Roland. i suppose, Lorna, it was a process of accidents.

Lorna Wanstall00:02

Accidents?

Gareth Russell00:03

My thesis supervisor had suggested focusing on the queen's household through the medium of a queen's reign who had not been queen for a long time - allowing for depth in my study of it. So, I suggested Catherine Howard and as I did more and more research for the postgraduate degree, I realised that the arc of Catherine's career was remarkably different to the traditional narrative.

Gareth Russell00:04

This was in 2011. And so a college professor suggested that there might be a biography in it. It was the summer that my first novel, "Popular", was released and I was thinking of moving into non-fiction eventually. So, in that sense, I've been thinking about writing a study of Catherine's life, era, and queenship for several years!

Lorna Wanstall00:05

I feel that K.H had some attributes to be a good queen. She comes across to me at least as a woman who wears her heart on her sleeve

ADMIN Tim00:05

What was the highlight of your American book tour?

ADMIN Tim00:05

What was the highlight of your American book tour?

Elizabeth Clayton00:05

It is such a good idea to focus on the queen's household...an interesting perspective.

Gareth Russell00:06

I had a wonderful time throughout. The Broward County fair, including speaking to young people in an American high school, was a wonderful experience. Seeing the ways in which Catherine's story can engage so many people was fantastic.

Gareth Russell00:06

Thank you, Elizabeth. I found it, and the women who staffed it, truly fascinating.

Claire Ridgway00:06

Was there anything that really surprised you as you researched Catherine?

Roland Hui00:07

Where there source materials that used in your research that might be unfamiliar to other or most historians?

Gareth Russell00:08

I suppose the traits in her personality that I identified, Claire, including her elegance and her extraordinarily adverse reaction to humiliation.

Lorna Wanstall00:08

Why did Mary Lasselles feel the need to confess K.H's daring deeds in the duchesses household, and more to the point what did she gain from opening her mouth

Lorna Wanstall00:09

Hi Laurie

Bill Wolff00:09

Hey, this is my first time here...new member. It seems to me KH was a bit immature. Any truth?

Lorna Wanstall00:09

And Sharon

Claire Ridgway00:09

Hi Bill and welcome!

Laurie00:09

Hi Lorna, and everyone! Hi Gareth!

Gareth Russell00:10

Great question, Roland. I consulted sources which are neither published nor translated and currently housed in the Bodleian Library in Oxford. They were portfolio of handwritten documents from the Tudor court, including score cards from a joust that Catherine's father Edmund had competed at in 1511. You can read about how I used those sources in chapter 3, because I had found out so much about Edmund's life in the course of research - and I don't think he'll ever get a biography of his own - that I gave him his own chapter.

Sharon Conrad00:10

Hi Lorna and everyone.

Lorna Wanstall00:10

Welcome Bill, I think K.H was perhaps naive rather than immature.

Wow, it much have been fascinating to see and read those rare sources!

Gareth Russell00:11

I also published in full Queen Catherine's first confession, which hasn't been widely published in full since the 18th century. It's almost forgotten ever since Bishop Burnet transcribed it and what it reveals about Catherine and her early relationships was, to me, remarkable.

Elizabeth Clayton00:11

All those traits are reflected brilliantly in the title of the book. I love the title!

HI everyone. I've seen some very good reviews of the book, Gareth.

Lorna Wanstall00:12

What are your feelings about the Culpepper letter? My personal opinion is that the letter seems to be cobbled together from other letters and seems very didhointed.

Lorna Wanstall00:12

"Disjointed"

Gareth Russell00:12

Yes, Laurie, it really was. Certainly, like when I translated all of the interrogation records which are now housed in the National Archives, it could be exhausting and exhaustive work, but it was absolutely and completely worth it. And thank you, Elizabeth - I'm so glad you like the title. Thank you, Ceri. People have been very supportive and kind.

Gareth Russell00:12

Well Lorna, I've seen the original and there's absolutely no doubt in my mind that it's genuine.

Gareth Russell00:13

It's on one sheet of paper, so it would be very difficult to forge and if they had been trying to stitch her up, they could and would have forged something much more inflammatory. The letter to Culpepper is actually quite tame - after all, all it expresses is intense emotion; it doesn't mention sexuality at all.

Gareth Russell00:14

I do argue in the book that what happened to Queen Catherine was utterly monstrous and heartbreaking. However, there is absolutely no evidence that any evidence was forged or that the Henrician government was attempting to frame, or depose, her in the way it quite clearly had with Anne Boleyn five years earlier.

Gareth Russell00:14

That being said, the fact that she did write a foolish letter doesn't - to me - diminish the heart-rending tragedy of her downfall.

Laurie00:14

It is good to know that about the letter. Basically you would consider it the innocent ramblings of a teenage girl?

Claire Ridgway00:14

I think Bill asked whether Catherine was immature, just in case you didn't see it.

Lorna Wanstall00:15

Yes I think K.H was very foolish to write such a letter.

Gareth Russell00:16

The disjointed feel, however, could partly answer Bill's question, by suggesting that she was immature. In fact, what I would say with Catherine is that everything I read and understood would support the idea that she was a very poised, present, elegant young woman, whose more illogical behaviour - like the relationship with Culpepper - can be explained by the fact that when one falls in love, it can make us behave in ways which are illogical, surprising, or shocking. I think most of us have been in that situation; we simply haven't fallen in love in a situation as fraught and horrible as Catherine's.

Lorna Wanstall00:17

Do you think that K.H and Culpepper had sex

Gareth Russell00:17

I agree, Lorna. It was foolish - very, very foolish - but foolish actions aren't always committed by foolish people. She did something unbelievably stupid, but for me I think she was an 18 or 19-year-old woman who was utterly besotted had the worst possible time and moment.

Claire Ridgway00:17

Good point!

Lorna Wanstall00:17

Personally I think not

Gareth Russell00:17

I go into that in the book, in great detail. I don't know, is the simple answer. That being said, my own conclusion is that no, they didn't. But it wasn't an illogical conclusion to assume, like Henry and his advisers did, that they had.

Sharon Conrad00:18

Culpeper was a fool for not burning that letter.

Lorna Wanstall00:18

I think the letter was used to imply that they had had some form of sexual contract

Gareth Russell00:18

Yes, Sharon, that was something that stunned me. He may have wanted to keep it as proof of their relationship if Catherine ever became a wealthy widowed dowager queen, which I think was a big part of his motivation in their relationship. Maybe he was stupid or maybe he was so smitten he wanted a memento. Either way, incredibly stupid to keep it!

Laurie00:19

Do you think that Culpepper considered her as just a young foolish girl, as opposed to a real love interest?

Teri Fitzgerald00:19

It is strange that Culpepper kept the letter.

Lorna Wanstall00:19

or rather the wording was used to imply

Gareth Russell00:19

Well, yes, Lorna, it certainly convinced many councillors that the Queen was an adulteress.

Ceri Creffield00:20

What do you think Culpepper's feelings towards KH were?

Gareth Russell00:20

I don't know, Laurie. It's hard to see in his testimonies any proof that he felt as strongly about her as she did about him. However, no, he didn't see her as foolish. Because she wasn't naive or foolish. Their conversations suggest that there was a matching of intellects. They were both very witty, with similar senses of humour. They really enjoyed each other's company and humour.

Gareth Russell00:20

That may also answer Ceri's question. I go into Culpepper's possible motivation in chapters 14, 16, and 17 in the book. Trying to make sense of it.

Lorna Wanstall00:20

What do you think by K.H's means by "meddling with a man "

Claire Ridgway00:21

It would have been logical for them both to think that they didn't have long to wait to be together, with the king's health being bad.

Bill Wolff00:21

I'm continually amazed that a Queen would so emotionally walk on the wild side!

Gareth Russell00:21

Sexual contact. There really isn't any other logical conclusion in terms of sixteenth century syntax.

Roland Hui00:22

I appreciate how you mention that KH had nothing to do with providing the old Countess of Salisbury with clothing when she was imprisoned in the Tower. That's a misunderstanding that's been repeated over and over. Were there other misconceptions, usually accepted as fact about KH, that you address in your book?

Sharon Conrad00:22

Yes, that was a revelation for me, too.

Gareth Russell00:23

Yes, Claire, I do think Culpepper knew the king was unwell. I also argue that with the examples of previous dowager queens, like Adeliza of Louvain who married a court officer, William d'Aubigny,

that it wasn't an unrealistic plan to have. After all, look at Thomas Seymour's coup in being a pre-marital beau who ended up marrying Katherine Parr after Henry VIII's death. Looked at in hindsight, Seymour and Parr's finale wasn't too different to one that Culpepper might have hoped for with Catherine Howard!

Claire Ridgway00:23

Very true.

Gareth Russell00:24

Yes, Roland. It's a beautiful, touching piece of nonsense, isn't it? It reinforced my image of Catherine as a pragmatic queen. She helped where she could, but she would never, ever have intervened in a case where someone had been condemned of treason, like Salisbury had, because it was too great a risk for her to do so.

Lorna Wanstall00:24

Taking Derham and Joan Bulmer back into her household was another mistake, but perhaps she felt she had no other choice

Claire Ridgway00:25

Gareth talks about Joan in his book...

Gareth Russell00:25

She didn't take Joan Bulmer back into her household. I disproved that in the book. Joan was never appointed to Catherine's service. Dereham was appointed very late on, in 1541, and I argue about the process that led to it.

Gareth Russell00:26

I do think the Howards had tried to keep him quiet, for as long as they could.

Claire Ridgway00:26

There's the letter from Joan, isn't there? But then no record of her being appointed.

Lorna Wanstall00:27

Thank you Gareth so where does Joan Bulmer figure in K.H's story? if indeed she does?

Elizabeth Clayton00:27

It must have been so terrible for Catherine when she realised the tragic inevitability of what was happening to her.

Gareth Russell00:27

Yes, the letter asks for an appointment. Dated on 12th July 1540, just over two weeks before Catherine's wedding. She was questioned during Catherine's downfall, but only about Catherine's pre-marital life. She was never a lady in waiting.

Lorna Wanstall00:28

Thank you Gareth.

Gareth Russell00:28

Elizabeth, I don't know if it ever really hit her, until the very, very end. Her mood, understandably, was erratic. There were moments where she seemed to hope that she'd escape with her life.

Gareth Russell00:28

My pleasure, Lorna!

Roland Hui00:29

After KH's arrest, did the gov't make an effort to interrogate Henry MannoX as well?

Sharon Conrad00:29

Did she realize Dereham was a danger when she hired him?

Lorna Wanstall00:29

If K.H had admitted she was pre contacted to Derham before her marriage to the King, would she have escaped with her life?

Gareth Russell00:29

Yes, they did, Roland. He was one of the first to be investigated. The Archbishop of Canterbury headed a duo that interrogated him at his home in Lambeth, by November 5th 1541.

Gareth Russell00:31

It's unlikely. They had proved the pre-contract. The real issue was that Catherine had him in her service, which raised suspicions, as did her incredibly clumsy attempts to lie about it. They were convinced that she was lying about more.

Lorna Wanstall00:32

So when all came to a head then, she was really in a damned if I admit it or not situation

Bill Wolff00:32

Thx Gareth, I'm downloading the book to my iPad. Gotta go, but loved the info!!

Claire Ridgway00:33

Do you think if she'd been completely honest then she could have saved herself?

Claire Ridgway00:33

Bye Bill!

Elizabeth Clayton00:33

She was totally trapped.

Gareth Russell 00:33

Thank you, Bill, and I hope you enjoy it!

Gareth Russell 00:33

Yes, Lorna, that's a very fair way to describe it.

Lorna Wanstall 00:34

How did MannoX manage to escape Henry's chopping block?

Gareth Russell 00:34



Yes, he did. There was no proof of pre-contract and he wasn't in her service, so they couldn't suggest he'd attempted to pursue his relationship with Catherine after she married into the royal family.

Elizabeth Clayton 00:35

Do you think that Henry was so furious that she preferred another man to him that nothing could save her from his wrath?

Gareth Russell 00:36

Yes, I think the idea of her having been "spoiled goods" infuriated him, as did his suspicions that she had been planning adultery with Dereham and/or Culpepper.

Lorna Wanstall 00:37

Elizabeth he would have been purple with rage, in fact given that he was so fat he would have looked like an over ripe very large grape.. LOL

Ceri Creffield 00:37

I think we was more heartbroken than furious, wasn't he - at least at first.

Gareth Russell00:37

I don't really buy that. He threatened to torture her to death himself very early on.

Gareth Russell00:37

He was an incredibly vindictive human.

Gareth Russell00:38

But his heart was certainly wounded!

Lorna Wanstall00:38

Yes some sources stated that Henry burst in to tears

Ceri Creffield00:38

I hadn't heard that before - but yes, he was very vindictive.

Roland Hui00:38

About KH warning Culpepper not to disclose their close relationship (or at least their secret meetings) at confession - do you take that to mean that a priest who heard Culpepper's confession might tell the King (despite the Church's stance that what was said in the confessional, stayed in the confessional) or was KH afraid that Henry VIII being so omnipotent and Head of the Church would somehow, almost 'magically' learn of it?

Claire Ridgway00:38

I know you talk about Manox in your book, but what are your thoughts on the relationship?

Lorna Wanstall00:40

I think Manno was more of a groper than a lover Claire. He was happy just touching K.H secret parts

Claire Ridgway00:40

I don't see him as an abuser though.

Gareth Russell00:41

I think it was inappropriate and he was keen to progress to full intimacy, but from what I could tell Catherine was strong and confident enough to end the relationship the minute he began talking about her behind her back. It was a very teenage affair, full of high feelings and "he said, she said".

Gareth Russell00:41

I didn't see any issue of abuse. He wasn't old enough and she ended it, with full agency and control. Not to say that it wasn't inappropriate, given their differences in class!

Lorna Wanstall00:43

What exactly did the duchess know about Katherine and Derham's relationship, did she just think it was an innocent enough affair

Elizabeth Clayton00:44

I suppose the tragic thing is that at that point they could never have imagined what was going to happen in the future.

Gareth Russell00:44

Well, she certainly knew they were infatuated and I argue very strongly on evidence in the book that she certainly came to understand that it had been serious enough to warrant a cover-up.

Gareth Russell00:45

Of course, Elizabeth, that's completely right. Haven't we all done things when we were young with no thought for tomorrow? And who on earth could have imagined that her future would entail a crown?

Lorna Wanstall00:45

Why did the Duchess give Derham a glowing recommendation which ended with him being in K.H household

Gareth Russell00:46

She didn't.

Gareth Russell00:46

He left her service after a row.

Lorna Wanstall00:47

Surely she must have known the dangers she was putting K.H in? Did Derham blackmail the duchess into writing it?

Gareth Russell00:47

There was no reference.

Gareth Russell 00:47

So, he left the Dowager's service on several occasions between 1539 and 1541, and on the final time he went north independently to join the royal household during his visit to Pontefract.

Lorna Wanstall 00:48

Oh that explains it then

Sharon Conrad 00:48

So the story that Katherine told about the Duchess recommending Dereham and her hiring him b/c of it , is false?

Gareth Russell 00:48

Yes, it is. It's based on a mistake in dates and conflating his audience at court in 1540 and his arrival in the north in 1541.

Claire Ridgway 00:48

If you had to condense the reasons for Catherine's fall into one sentence, what would you say?

Gareth Russell 00:49

There's a lot in Catherine's traditional story of people getting confused or merging two dates.

Gareth Russell 00:49

Bad luck, Claire.

Lorna Wanstall00:49

How old do you think K.H was?

ADMIN Tim00:49

Just 10 minutes to go in this chat ... keep your questions coming in!

Elizabeth Clayton00:50

Claire,

Gareth Russell00:50

Gossip with more than enough truth to it started in a paranoid environment, where everyone knew each other. The Queen's career collapsed because of poor decisions made in one of the most lethally explosive and punishing environments in English history.

Lorna Wanstall00:50

when she married Henry

Anthony Hillman00:50

Can I say I loved the ending of your book where you talk about portraits and disputed ones of Catherine, Gareth

Gareth Russell00:50

I think she was about 17 or 18 years at the time of her marriage.

Claire Ridgway00:51

I like that, short and snappy!

Lorna Wanstall00:51

I think that poor K.H was thrown into the lions den and devoured

Gareth Russell00:51

Oh, thank you, Anthony! What a lovely thing to hear. I'm very glad. The portraits discussion is actually in chapter 12 in the US version and a closing appendix in the British. I love that you enjoyed it.

Gareth Russell00:52

I don't think she was thrown with no reason, Lorna, but that doesn't dilute the horror of it, in any way.

Gareth Russell00:52

It is a gut wrenchingly sad story.

Elizabeth Clayton00:52

She was so young and when she married Henry all the ingredients were in place

Gareth Russell00:52

Thank you, Claire!

Lorna Wanstall00:52

Yes I believe she was around 19/20 when she was executed, although no doubt you have read that some schools of thought think she was around 15 when she married Henry..

Ceri Creffield00:53

Most biographies of KH paint her as a victim or a juvenile delinquent. It's refreshing to hear her described as a bright, confident and witty individual rather than an archetype.

Claire Ridgway00:53

It is refreshing, I agree.

Anthony Hillman00:54

I think Catherine looks a little like Anne of Cleves from her miniature haha maybe it's the heavy lidded eyes

Gareth Russell00:54

Yes, I deal with all the arguments in my book, and I think it supports a date of birth in 1522 or 1523. I mention a lot of new evidence, surrounding the other maids of honour who made their high society debuts at the same time as Catherine, and utilise information in family wills.

Gareth Russell00:54

Thank you, Ceri. And you know, I agree, because I really came to like her, if that's the right word.

Gareth Russell00:54

Thank you, Ceri. And you know, I agree, because I really came to like her, if that's the right word.

Elizabeth Clayton00:55

I would say that her downfall was caused because she was young and damned and fair! Her youth and her beauty contributed to her becoming his tragic victim.

Gareth Russell00:56

Thank you, Elizabeth! That was a beautiful link, haha. And yes, I hope the title worked in covering the horror of her story - the perfect explosion of a time and a place, merging in together.

ADMIN Tim00:56

Well, tonight's winner (though I see he's now left the chatroom) is ... Bill Wolff. We'll be sending him a paperback version of the book. THANK YOU to everyone who attended tonight, and a huge thank you to GARETH RUSSELL for this talk, chat and also your hard work on the Tudor Life magazine!

Lorna Wanstall 00:57

Thank you Gareth.

Claire Ridgway 00:57

Such a tragedy all round, for the men too and all the families affected.

Gareth Russell 00:57

Thank you so much.

Ceri Creffield 00:57

Thanks Gareth.

Gareth Russell 00:57

Thank you, Lorna! What a pleasure to talk to everyone!

Elizabeth Clayton00:57

Thank you so much, Gareth.

Anthony Hillman00:57

Thank you!

Sharon Conrad00:57

Thank you, Gareth. I enjoyed the chat, and your book.

Teri Fitzgerald00:57

Thank you Gareth, good night everyone!

Claire Ridgway00:57

Thank you, Gareth, as always it's been fun and educational!

Gareth Russell00:57

Thank you, Sharon. And good night, Teri.