

Live Chat with Sarah-Beth Watkins on Sir Francis Bryan

Hi Shelley

Shelley Varran23:00

Hi All, HI Sarah

Lorna Wanstall23:00

Hi Shelley

Claire Ridgway23:00

Hi Shelly

Shelley Varran23:00

Sarah-Beth

Shelley Varran23:00

Hi Claire

Lorna Wanstall23:00

Poor Claire I hope she feels better soon.

Sarah-Beth Watkins23:01

Oh poor Claire! Know the feeling. And hello Tim!

Claire Ridgway23:01

Thank you for coming this evening. I am sure more will join us shortly. Thank you Sarah-Beth for your wonderful talk on Francis Bryan, it was amazing. Please feel free to ask any questions you want to.

Sarah-Beth Watkins23:01

Sarah is fine!

Lorna Wanstall23:01

Does she suffer with migraines Tim?

Ceri Creffield23:01

Hi all. Hope Claire feels better soon, Tim.

Sarah-Beth Watkins23:01

Hi Ceri

Lorna Wanstall23:02

Sarah Beth why was Francis called the black pope

Claire Ridgway23:02

Sometimes - not often.

Lorna Wanstall23:02

Hi Ceri

Claire Ridgway23:03

Ok - do you think that Francis deserved his reputation as a ladies' man?

Lorna Wanstall23:03

Migraines can be really nasty things.

Sarah-Beth Watkins23:03

I think the black pope is from the Tudor series! He was called the vicar of hell by HVIII so its probably come from that

Shelley Varran23:03

Wow

Lorna Wanstall23:04

Ok but why was he given that nickname "Vicar of Hell"

Sarah-Beth Watkins23:04

Francis has a real reputation for womanising but there is little evidence of it

Lorna Wanstall23:04

I must admit I like the name Black Pope better.

Laurie Duerr23:04

Hi everyone! Hi Sarah-Beth, thanks so much for joining us!

Lorna Wanstall23:04

Hi Laurie

Shelley Varran23:05

Hi

Sarah-Beth Watkins23:05

Hi Laurie

Sarah-Beth Watkins23:05

'This man was once asked by the king to tell him what sort of a sin it was to ruin the mother and then the child. Bryan replied that it was a sin like that of eating a hen first and its chicken afterwards. The king burst forth into loud laughter, and said to Bryan, "Well, you certainly are my vicar of hell."

Laurie Duerr23:06

Sarah-Beth, what originally interested you in him?

Sarah-Beth Watkins23:06

Laurie - I think he's one of those fascinating characters that is often mentioned in books but not in detail so I wanted to find out more and he certainly packed everything into his life

Lorna Wanstall23:07

Thank you It certainly sounds like Francis was a bit of character

Roland Hui23:07

How exactly is Francis related to the Boleyns?

Lorna Wanstall23:07

Did Francis Marry

Laurie Duerr23:07

Makes sense, thanks! He definitely was involved with a lot of key events!

Sarah-Beth Watkins23:07

Definitely! Soldier, sailor, diplomat - a bit of everything and mystery around some areas of his life

Lorna Wanstall23:08

Hello Roland didn't see you come in..

Ceri Creffield23:08

Sarah-Beth, did he really wear an eye patch?

Roland Hui23:08

Hi Lorna :)

Sarah-Beth Watkins23:09

Hi Roland - I'd have to check the genealogy but it's through his mother Lady Bryan

Claire Ridgway23:09

I find it frustrating that there isn't a portrait of him. I would love to know what he looked like.

Lorna Wanstall23:09

Ceri I think Francis lost his eye in a joust, not to sure though

Sarah-Beth Watkins23:09

Francis married twice but we know little about his first wife. His second marriage was to an Irish lady but he was more or less forced to do that and ended up in Ireland

Lorna Wanstall23:10

Were there any children from either union.

Sarah-Beth Watkins23:11

yep he lost his eye jousting and I'd love to see a portrait of him but he just didn't want one painted - he must have worn a patch because the eye was removed

Sarah-Beth Watkins23:12

Sticky question Lorna! There is no evidence for any children apart from one reference to an illegitimate son and then only once. However many Americans claim descent from him

Roland Hui23:13

I read that Francis' mother is Margaret Bouchier. I've always been curious about the proper pronunciation of 'Bouchier'. Is it like 'Bow-Sir' (bow rhyming with cow) phonetically?

Ceri Creffield23:13

He sounds like a difficult man to pin down!

Claire Ridgway23:14

What do you think Wyatt's poem to him was about? What secrets?

Lorna Wanstall23:15

What was his relationship with his parents like?

Lorna Wanstall23:15

and did he have any siblings

Sarah-Beth Watkins23:15

Bow - shir - I think!

Sarah-Beth Watkins23:16

She became Lady Bryan through marriage

Sarah-Beth Watkins23:17

Two sisters Margaret and Elizabeth

Lorna Wanstall23:17

So is it possible that Lady Bryan was somehow related to William Parr first wife Anne Bow shir

Sarah-Beth Watkins23:20

His father died when he was early 20s and there doesn't seem to be any references to his connection with him as he went to Sit Thomas Parr for his education. he was close to his mother and especially his sister Elizabeth who married another courtier Nicholas Carew

Lorna Wanstall23:20

what exactly was Francis's Job if any at court?

Sarah-Beth Watkins23:21

Lady Bryan half sister was Anne Boleyns mother

Sarah-Beth Watkins23:23

He did have different roles the first being cupbearer

Claire Ridgway23:24

How do you think he managed to stay so close to Henry VIII and still survived?

Sarah-Beth Watkins23:24

also chief butler - which is a hard role to define

Clare Shepherd23:25

If possible, could we go back to Claire's question: What do you think Wyatt's poem to him was about? What secrets? However, maybe the answer isn't know. Sometimes poems are personal and the real meaning is unknown.

Sarah-Beth Watkins23:25

also master of the henchmen responsible for the young wards at court

Lorna Wanstall23:26

Sounds like he was a jack of all trades, so to speak

Sarah-Beth Watkins23:26

Yes sorry! They were both diplomats/ ambassadors and were abroad together. They both had roles around the time of Henry's divorce so it might be to do with that

Claire Ridgway23:26

Secrets are always fascinating to talk about ...

Ceri Creffield23:27

He must have been very adaptable, not just to do so many jobs but to retain Henry's favour.

Sarah-Beth Watkins23:27

Francis was sent to find the original brief in Rome that Catherine had a copy of but he said he couldn't find it

Lorna Wanstall23:28

Ceri I think in those times you had to be to get on and survive

Sarah-Beth Watkins23:28

Since Wyatt was implicated in Anne's downfall it could be something there as well

Sarah-Beth Watkins23:29

I think Francis was a bit of a yes man when it came to the king. I think he told him what he wanted to hear at times

Roland Hui23:30

Was Francis on good terms with the Seymour family?

Sarah-Beth Watkins23:30

But once he was off on his diplomatic missions he seemed to have a good time of it

Lorna Wanstall23:30

When did Francis leave the court for good?

Clare Shepherd23:31

There must have been a lot of that at court especially in Henry's later life.

Sarah-Beth Watkins23:31

Francis was on good terms with the Seymours. He was the one who told Jane of Anne's execution

Laurie Duerr23:31

So Francis was in favor of Anne B., since they were related?

Lorna Wanstall23:32

Roland, not too sure but since his sister married a Carew, he was related to the Seymours, since Carew was a cousin or something to the Seymours

Sarah-Beth Watkins23:32

Francis left for Ireland after Henry's death and when he was advised to marry Joan Butler

Sarah-Beth Watkins23:32

I think he was in favour of Anne and had a good relationship with her until he saw that the king had had enough and he then switched his allegiance to Jane

Lorna Wanstall23:33

Did he return to England at any point before his death.. I Joan Butler any relation to James Butler who was once mentioned as a possible husband to Anne B

Laurie Duerr23:33

Makes sense, since he seems quite politically savvy!

Claire Ridgway23:34

Do you think his portrayal in The Tudors was close to the real man?

Sarah-Beth Watkins23:34

No he didn't return to England and James Butler was Joan's first husband who it was rumoured was poisoned as it was also rumoured of Francis when he died

Lorna Wanstall23:35

How old was he at the time of his death

Ceri Creffield23:35

A black widow?

Sarah-Beth Watkins23:35

I haven't watched the tudors lately and am pretty sure his portrayal would have been a little off!

Roland Hui23:35

Was Francis a political/religious conservative, or did he lean towards religious reform and the New Faith? Do we know?

Lorna Wanstall23:36

was there any particular reason why he didn't return to England, or is it that he had just had enough of the perils and pitfalls of court

Sarah-Beth Watkins23:37

He was about 60 when he died - took me ages to find where he was buried. Some sources say St Marys church in Tipperary which I visited and talked to the vicar but she said the only thing she had in the crypt was a knight in shining armour!

Sarah-Beth Watkins23:38

He was buried in Waterford - where the best drinkers were - in the cathedral but nothing remains as a new building was plopped on top

Clare Shepherd23:38

If he was pro Anne Boleyn was he in agreement with her religiously?

Sarah-Beth Watkins23:38

Francis and religion is a funny subject. he seemed to go with whatever was the current trend but stangely he's also mentioned as a grand master of thr roscrucian order

Sarah-Beth Watkins23:39

sorry about the spelling - trying to type fast!

Lorna Wanstall23:39

How did he feel about the great divorce?

Clare Shepherd23:40

I think I'm beginning to see why he lasted so long at court. He was certainly quick on his toes.

Ceri Creffield23:40

We're there many Rosicrucians in Tudor England?

Lorna Wanstall23:40

Don't worry about your spelling Sarah beth.. Mine is really pants at times

Sarah-Beth Watkins23:40

with the divorce he sided with henry - he really did just try to save his neck in every situation

Lorna Wanstall23:41

What were his feelings if any about the great divorce.. Did he agree with the reasons given the old bible bit

Sarah-Beth Watkins23:42

the roscrucians didn't really get going in the uk till the 1600s and John Dee is supposed to have been the first master towards the end of his life

Sarah-Beth Watkins23:43

when i spoke to a member of the order he thought that it was too early for francis to have been a grand master but that he could have been involved in circles of mysticism

Ceri Creffield23:43

Wouldn't that have been risky at the time?

Sarah-Beth Watkins23:45

going back to secrets wyatt was in favour of reform and the academic susan brigden believes they discussed it

Lorna Wanstall23:45

How did Francis and Cromwell get on?

Sarah-Beth Watkins23:46

Ceri - very risky but if you look at the sources one minute francis is a reformer, next minute he goes with the old faith, next a die hard protestant and to me that looks like he might have been covering something else up but perhaps I'm reading too much into it

Ceri Creffield23:47

Sounds fascinating, Sarah-Beth.

Sarah-Beth Watkins23:48

did anyone get on with cromwell?! he had to work with him thats for sure but i think he was always wary of him

Clare Shepherd23:48

Perhaps he did or maybe God was just covering his back? It seems to be his default position in all things.

Claire Ridgway23:48

The perfect character for a fast paced historical novel.

Lorna Wanstall23:49

Yes Cromwell is a bit of an enigma.

Clare Shepherd23:49

Oops, god should be he

Sarah-Beth Watkins23:49

I think he survived by always covering his back and always being alert to which way the wind was blowing

Lorna Wanstall23:50

Or you could say (cromwell) is a marmite character

Sarah-Beth Watkins23:50

lorna - definitely!

Lorna Wanstall23:51

How did francis feel about Wolsey's fall?

Sarah-Beth Watkins23:53

I think again he had to work with him but the young bunch of courtiers henry's band of brothers felt the brunt of his displeasure

Sarah-Beth Watkins23:53

I don't think he would have been sorry to see him go

Lorna Wanstall23:55

Just like many other people did.

RealTudorLady23:55

Oops I think I have missed it.

Sarah-Beth Watkins23:55

there was a dark side to Francis too when he tried to assassinate Reginald Pole

Clare Shepherd23:56

Was that at Henry's behest?

Sarah-Beth Watkins23:56

Yes he wanted Pole gone and Francis was charged with getting rid of him

RealTudorLady23:57

Hi Everyone, sorry I am very late. I think of Francis Bryan as a James Bond character with a license to kill and seduce.

Sarah-Beth Watkins23:57

But when it didn't work Henry was as you can imagine not too happy

Lorna Wanstall23:57

What was Henry's mood like when Francis failed.

Clare Shepherd23:57

What a piece of work Henry was. I suppose that was part of the fascination with him.

Ceri Creffield23:57

Hi RTL, nice analogy.

Claire Ridgway23:58

Hi RTL

Sarah-Beth Watkins23:58

One letter read - as there is no likelihood there ye should be able to conduce that matter to his desire, his Majesty mindeth not to advance any money for his said apprehension.

Lorna Wanstall23:58

Yes RTL that is a good one

Sarah-Beth Watkins23:58

Bit miffed then!

RealTudorLady23:59

Hi Sarah Beth can you answer a question. You might have already, but I missed it. Did he really have one child with a wife late in life?

Sarah-Beth Watkins23:59

It also spelled the end of his time as ambassador to France

Lorna Wanstall23:59

Very miffed I would have thought.. I think he would have gone up the all and down the other side, from being miffed

Lorna Wanstall00:00

Was Francis a good ambassador

Sarah-Beth Watkins00:00

Hi RTL I've studied this at some length and contrary to what some genealogy sites believe there were no children from either of his marriages

Claire Ridgway00:00

Well, thank you all for coming along tonight for this live chat. Thank you Sarah for your talk and for answering our questions. Francis Bryan was a fascinating character and one we may never

fully understand. I'd like to congratulate Shelly Varran as the winner of Sarah's book on Francis. I see she has left the chatroom but we'll be in touch with her.

Lorna Wanstall00:00

Nice one Shelley happy reading....

Sarah-Beth Watkins00:01

Lorna - i think he did what he was told but had a whale of a time while he did it!

Sarah-Beth Watkins00:01

Thanks all for coming and thanks to Claire and Tim for inviting me!