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**Court Politics and Government in England,
1509 - 1515.**

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Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to provide an overview of the period 1509-1515 in England, this being the first six years of the reign of Henry VIII. Within this timespan it is possible to witness the rise of Thomas Wolsey and also to examine the political situation before his ascendancy. Reaction to the new king will be examined on a number of fronts. His succession and the expectations placed on him will be looked at, expectations not only from his own people but also from those abroad. The highly visual nature of Henry VIII's court heightened this sense of expectancy and set the boundaries for the succeeding years.

That group of men which attached itself to the king at work and play provides the starting point for this thesis. These were the middling courtiers, the men who sought favours and provided services. The desire for promotion at court provided a common bond for this diverse group. Young courtiers on the up, seasoned campaigners seeking rejuvenation and men of service, all sought promotion, through patronage, pedigree, personal ability or the grace of the king. Many men continued in positions of responsibility as held under Henry VII, creating a certain amount of continuity in administration.

Edmund Dudley and Richard Empson felt the wrath of a monarch anxious to clear the air at the start of the reign and stamp his own brand of kingship on the court. Their associate Thomas Lovell continued and prospered under a king with no

intention of embarking on a purge. William Compton rose from humble beginnings to become one of the king's closest confidants, recognised by many as the man to befriend. Opportunities were available for the ambitious courtier.

Aristocratic reaction was limited to murmurings at court, mainly born out of rumour and gossip. War provided a time-consuming and unifying diversion for the nobility. Opportunities existed for advancement on the battlefield, particularly in front of a young king enthusiastic for the fight while the court provided chances for promotion at home. Access to the king became easier and the entourage around the throne grew. The threat of reaction will be studied alongside the rehabilitation of certain members of the nobility class. Case studies of four diverse figures, William Blount, lord Mountjoy, Charles Somerset, earl of Worcester, George Talbot, earl of Shrewsbury and Thomas lord Darcy, will allow one to take an objective look at Henry VIII's personal attitude to the nobility.

A further dimension will be added to this study with an examination of ambassadorial activity. Foreign attitudes and perceptions of Henry's kingship and his aims reflected a desire on the English king's part to present a highly visual and persistently conspicuous court. Foreign ambassadors in England identified and attached themselves to the prominent men of the day, allowing one to consider a fresh and unprejudiced view of men of importance. English militarism, a dominating force in this period, will be examined, the

Scottish dimension providing a case study. Differing viewpoints of Henry VIII's intentions will be considered and assessed.

Thomas Wolsey's career began to take shape during Henry VIII's early years. His position at court and in the government was secure by the end of the scope of this study. His accelerated rise would have caused jealousy among some but not those whom he displaced. Richard Fox and William Warham retired from court of their own accord, with no pressure exerted from the rising cardinal. Richard Fox continued to offer his advice to the crown and to Wolsey with whom he remained on the best of terms. A study of the three most important churchmen of this period, William Warham, Richard Fox and Thomas Ruthal, will be conducted. Their career development at this time was naturally linked with the rise of Thomas Wolsey.

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Bibliography

ABBREVIATIONS

<u>BL</u>	British Library
<u>CIPM, Henry VII</u>	Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem, Henry VII, 2 volumes.
<u>CFR, Henry VII, 1485-1509</u>	Calendar of Fine Rolls, Henry VII, volume XXII.
<u>CPR, Henry VII, 1494-1509</u>	Calendar of Patent Rolls Henry VII, volume II.
<u>CSP, Milan, 1385-1618</u>	Calendar of State Papers and Manuscripts, existing in the archives and collections of Milan, volume I.
<u>CSP, Spanish, 1509-1525</u>	Calendar of Letters, Despatches and State Papers Relating to the Negotiations Between England and Spain, Henry VIII, volume II.
<u>CSP, Venetian, 1509-1519</u>	Calendar of State Papers and Manuscripts, Relating to English Affairs, Existing in the Archives and Collections of Venice, volume II.
<u>DNB</u>	Dictionary of National Biography, 63 volumes, edited by Leslie Stephen, Sydney Lee <u>et al.</u>
<u>ERASMUS</u>	The Complete Works of Erasmus (1974-) (Toronto: Univeristy Press).
<u>GC</u>	The Great Chronicle of London, edited by AH Thomas & ID Thornley.
<u>Hall</u>	Henry VIII by Edward Hall, 2

volumes (London, 1904).

Holinshed

Holinshed's Chronicle of England, Scotland and Ireland, 6 volumes, (London, 1807).

List of Sheriffs

Lists and Indexes No.IX - List of Sheriffs for England and Wales, from the earliest times to AD 1831.

LP

Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the reign of Henry VIII, 1509-47, 21 volumes (1862-1920).

LP Addenda

Letters and Papers....., Addenda, 2 volumes (1929-32).

LP Richard III/Henry VII

Letters and Papers Illustrative of the Reigns of Richard III and Henry VII, 2 volumes (1861).

PRO

Public Record Office

PV

The Anglica Historia of Polydore Vergil, AD 1485-1537, edited by D Hay, Camden Society 3rd Series, 74 (London, 1950).

Introduction

When the young Henry came to the throne in 1509, the nobility of England could justifiably expect something resembling a fresh start. In many ways that is what they got; a king executing two of his ministers too closely associated with a hated form of money-raising; opening up new channels of diplomacy and preparing for military ventures abroad; adopting a more relaxed attitude to government, not only through practices like cancelling many recognizances but through a readily accessible court. The new monarch was a young and energetic man who enjoyed jousting, feasting and hunting.

This was a time for manipulation, for a jockeying for position among those seeking advancement. The quest for patronage was a frantic one. In times of crisis, a man's career could be saved through whom he knew. For example, Thomas Lovell's career, and possibly life, could be said to have been on the line in 1509. This was a man closely associated with the often punitive recognizance system fostered by Henry VII. He was perhaps saved through his political alignment although this can only be guessed at. Chamber men now became patronage brokers. A man like William Compton found himself with increased

prestige in the localities through advancement at court. Debates over factions seem to become irrelevant when dealing with a man like William Compton. Not a member of a recognisable faction, Compton merely served Compton. He served at court, received grants, deputed offices, built his own private wealth and became a focus for access to the king and his favours. Yet in all of this he remained a highly independent figure.

By 1519, however, the king had developed a suspicious mind, verging on the paranoid, when he wrote to Wolsey telling him to ,

*"make good wache on the duke of Suffolke, on the duke of Bukyngham, on my lord off Northcomberland, on my lord off Darby, on my lord off Wylshere and on others whyche yow thynke suspecte."*¹

This all encompassing remit for Wolsey paints Henry in a dark light, echoing Shakespeare's Richard III. The appearance of Buckingham and Northumberland in this list is possibly not surprising but was he justified in including the likes of Henry Stafford, earl of Wiltshire?

The most recent and significant work on Tudor government has been conducted by David Starkey and Steven Gunn. Starkey has chosen to examine the role of the household, seeking to study the rise of the privy chamber and the

¹ BL, Add MS., 19398, f644.

institutions of government.² Gunn, tracing the historiographical problems related to studies of this period, highlights the weakness associated with approaching Tudor government from the point of view of men of self-interest.³ He believes the influence of ideas on individuals has been overlooked, his own study choosing to concentrate on the relationship between government and society in four areas - lordship, justice, livelihood and empire. By way of contrast, this thesis aims to cover the early years of the reign of Henry VIII from the point of view of the individual, whether a courtier, nobleman, ambassador and churchman. The foundation of this study will be an assessment of advancement at court, this being available to men in a number of ways. The dividing line between courtier and friend was, on occasions, difficult to discern. There were certainly opportunities for an ambitious man to make ground at court as the king became more accessible.

The early years of Henry VIII's reign have been overlooked by historians, the over-riding reason for this being the imposing presence of Thomas Wolsey. A glance at works by Scarisbrick, Guy or Gwyn leaves one with little understanding of the period 1509-1515, with often just a

² D Starkey, 'Intimacy and innovation: the rise of the Privy Chamber, 1485-1547' pp71-118 in The English court from the Wars of the Roses to the Civil War, edited by D Starkey et al.

³ SJ Gunn, Early Tudor government, 1485-1558, passim.

cursory nod afforded this period.⁴ Such an attitude is not one which would have been shared by many at the time. With reference to the very beginning of Henry VIII's reign, Vergil made a point of making clear the liberal nature of the new government. This formed a part of Vergil's tapestry promoting the reign as a break from the past, as the coming of a king great in mind and in generosity. The decision to arrest Richard Empson and Edmund Dudley was taken only after the king's view coincided with that of his councillors. Shortly after, Thomas Ruthal was promoted to the bishopric of Durham, "*due not only to the king's desire but on the advice of the whole council.*"⁵ Certainly, with the accession of so young a king, Henry would have relied heavily on experienced councillors.

Such men were naturally a remnant of Henry VII's days. However, from the nobility group there emerged a number of men whose careers received timely impetus in 1509. Further to an analysis of the reaction to the accession of the new king, four case studies of such men will be considered, namely, William Blount, lord Mountjoy, Charles Somerset, earl of Worcester, George Talbot, earl of Shrewsbury and Thomas lord Darcy.

⁴ JJ Scarisbrick, Henry VIII; JA Guy, Tudor England; P Gwyn, The king's cardinal: the rise and fall of Thomas Wolsey.

⁵ PV, pp151, 153.

Access to the king and to men of influence at court was also of concern to ambassadors. Tirelessly searching for new sources and up-to-date news, these men were often astute judges of those courtiers worth cultivating. As outsiders their fresh perspective on events is particularly welcome, although their evidence can be desultory, flitting from the transitory to the precious. Ambassadors adapted to ever-changing circumstances, moving in accordance with the latest pact or feud. It must always be borne in mind when using the evidence of ambassadors that they had specific paymasters and also that they did not have automatic access to the centre of government. Ties were made and friendships cultivated which ambassadors felt would aid their pursuit of inside information, of what the king was really planning. In short, an ambassador should be regarded as only being as reliable as his most trustworthy contact.

The leading churchmen at this time were in a sense not churchmen at all. The time bishops spent in their dioceses varied. Warham did get involved in some diocesan activities, while Fox, at least in these early years, did not. Their importance lay in the sphere of politics, and it is in this context that they will be examined.⁶ Where religious practices have been looked at, for example, in the context of probate jurisdiction or cardinal elections, it is as a result of

⁶ For a full examination of ecclesiastical activities in this period see, JAF Thomson, The early Tudor church and society, 1485-1529.

their procedural background and wider political significance. The main players at this time were Richard Fox, William Warham and Thomas Ruthal and to a lesser extent, Christopher Bainbridge, Richard Nykke and John Fisher. The early influence of Thomas Wolsey is evident in his dealings with these men. He appears in the guise of a churchman and begins his long career in a series of interactions with the old brigade, that core group of Henry VII's councillors which included Fox, Ruthal and Warham. The official withdrawal from court life of Richard Fox and William Warham left the way clear for Wolsey's continued advancement.

Chapter I

King and Court

(i) succession and image

*"Astrea, justice hight,
That from the starry sky
Shall now com and do right"*

Thus the poet John Skelton saw the succession of Henry VIII.¹ He had been tutor to the young Prince Henry until 1502 when Henry VII had sent him from the court. His coronation poem, 'A Lawde and Prayse Made for Our Sovereigne Lord the Kyng' was an attempt to re-establish himself at court and as such it must be expected to be a piece of panegyric prose. However, the sentiment contained within its lines was sincere and managed to capture the zeitgeist prevailing at the time. Cavendish refers to England becoming a golden world as a "*grace of plenty Raygned.*"² Erasmus was beckoned to England by William Blount, lord Mountjoy, with promises of a scholarly king anxious for learned men at

¹ John Skelton, the complete English poems, edited by John Scattergood, pp110-112; Beate Lusse, 'Panegyric poetry on the coronation of King Henry VIII: the king's praise and the poet's self presentation', in Henry VIII in history, historiography and literature, edited by Uwe Baumann, pp49-75.

² Cavendish, Life of Wolsey, p11.

his court.³ Thomas More composed a vigorous salute to the new king on his coronation ⁴,

"This day is the limit of our slavery, the beginning of our freedom, the end of sadness, the source of joy."

More continued by heaping praise on the young king, moving from the deferential to simply obsequious, declaring that the people of England were so enraptured by Henry that all they could utter was *"The King."*

Thomas More's reaction to the succession of Henry VIII must be viewed in the light of his attitude to Henry VII. More and that king had not enjoyed a friendly relationship.⁵ Indeed, More had angered the king on several occasions, most notably in 1504 when Henry VII was looking to raise his rightful dues through parliament for the knighting of his late son Arthur and for the marriage of his daughter. With More presenting a strong argument against such claims, the king was forced to accept around half of what he was seeking. More's father John paid the price for his son's actions with time in the Tower. So it can be expected that More's appreciation of the new king would be heightened by his bad experiences with the father.

Patronage was being sought by most men and scholars were no exception. The coronation was an excellent opportunity for the scholar to produce work aimed at promoting his own

³ Erasmus, II, p148.

⁴ More's complete works, vol 3, part II, pp100-113.

⁵ Life of Sir Thomas More, William Roper in Two early Tudor lives, p199; RW Chambers, Thomas More, p81.

cause at court through an exaggerated pandering to the new king. More, while indulging a little in flowery meanderings, gives the impression of a man of sincerity genuinely overcome at Henry's accession. His prose is a lively combination of proud deference and joyful celebration: "*This king, than whom Nature has created nothing more deserving of love.*"

An insight into Henry's view of his own succession can be gleaned from the alterations he made to his coronation oath.⁶ While this revision was never used, its existence allows the historian a glimpse into how far Henry was willing to take his own notion of kingship from the standard declaration of previous coronations. Henry personally made several changes to the oath but the most forward looking of these was the idea of the king existing to further the unity of his people, through war if necessary. The preservation of peace in England was to be brought about through unity in church and people.⁷ The coronation oath, as it stood, declared that the king would "*kepe the peax of the holie churche and of the clergie and of the people*" while the amended version read, "*he shall Indevore hymselfe to kepe vnite in hys clergie and temporell subiec[ts].*" Certain minor adjustments were made which appear to have limited, or at least made accountable, the king's power. The phrase "*he shall graunte to hold laws and customs*" became "*he shall graunte to hold lawes and*

⁶ English coronation records, edited by LGW Legg, pp240-241.

⁷ PE Schramm, A history of the English coronation, pp214-217; Schramm sees this oath, although unused, as heralding the close of the Middle Ages as the king used his full powers to pull the country together into a nationalistic unit.

approvyd customes." Justice was to be administered, in the amended version, "*according to hys conscience.*" The laws of the land "*which the folk and people haue made and chosen*" was changed to read "*which the noblys and people haue chosen with hys consent.*" Henry clearly wished to name the nobility class in some form in this oath and also to introduce himself as one part of the law-making process. The concept of the nation as a recognisable unit was clearly in his mind. Henry did, though, provide covering clauses, namely, "*nott preiudiciall to hys Jurysdiction*", and also "*in that whych honour and equite do require.*"⁸ These 'escape' clauses, which would have allowed Henry to revert to whichever style of kingship he chose, coupled with the fact that this amended coronation oath was not used, must cast some doubt on the king's convictions.

It must always be borne in mind that Prince Henry was only seventeen years of age when his father died. Can he be blamed for preferring hunting, feasting, jousting and enjoying the company of women to dealing with the intricacies of government? Henry was just a boy, even by sixteenth century standards when a young man was expected to have a maturity beyond his years. The assumption cannot be made that when he became king he suddenly acquired the attributes of an adult monarch. Ideas of turning-points in history and the ending of the Middle Ages would not have been in his mind in 1509. The Middle Ages could only be an invention

⁸ LGW Legg, *op cit*, makes this important point.

of later people and for Henry everyday practicalities rather than searching policies would have filled his thoughts.

Did Henry VIII have a vision of what he wanted to achieve when he came to the throne in 1509? Is it fair to heap such a burden on the shoulders of a seventeen year old? Care has to be taken when analysing Henry's attitude to kingship. It is too easy to criticise some of his early actions and accuse him of making false promises. While espousing the benefits of learning on one hand, he did little to encourage the patronage of one of the greatest scholars in Europe, Desiderius Erasmus. This man was living on Henry's doorstep and yet spent much of his time writing begging letters to men such as William Warham and William Blount, lord Mountjoy. When Mountjoy wrote to Erasmus from Greenwich on 27th May, 1509, he recalled a conversation he had had with the king.⁹ The king, it is said, talked of his longing to be a more accomplished scholar to which Mountjoy replied that it was not expected of a king, only that he should foster and encourage those who were scholars. Henry replied, "*Of course, for without them we could scarcely exist.*" The point has been made that Mountjoy exaggerated the amount of patronage Erasmus could expect.¹⁰ This is certainly true in purely financial terms. However, it is highly unlikely that Mountjoy was seriously fabricating the position. He most likely believed Henry's claim and the king himself probably believed it.

⁹ Erasmus, II, p148.

¹⁰ Ibid, introduction to letter 215.

This exchange among king, friend and scholar has a greater significance than the matter of financial support. What we have here is a microcosm of the significance of kingship, and people's views of kingship. Whether or not Henry intended to act as Erasmus's patron and steep himself in learning probably had little relevance to the viewing subject. What was relevant was the image of kingship. The front of intellectualism was enough, although Henry certainly had pretensions towards scholarship. One can hardly imagine Edward IV producing the 'Seven Sacraments', more likely, perhaps, an experienced record of the seven deadly sins.¹¹ In short, the king gave the people what they wanted to see - conspicuous consumption, an elaborate court, perhaps a little debauchery. This was the appropriate image of a monarch. Shortcomings, and in the case of Erasmus and the promises of pecuniary recompense these were not hard to find, could be ignored.

An important aspect of this very visual image of kingship was how it was perceived by those in power abroad.¹² The portrayal of this image was facilitated by Henry's early military activities and the showpiece tournaments which accompanied them. Foreign ambassadors were constant companions for the king, whether at home or abroad, and they

¹¹ JJ Scarisbrick, Henry VIII, pp110-113 looks at Henry's 'Assertio Septem Sacramentorum' and examines the king's participation in its compilation, providing possible authors or co-authors.

¹² SJ Gunn, Early Tudor government, 1485-1558, pp8-11, outlines some contemporary thoughts on foreign courts and comparisons with the court in England. Princes, patronage and the nobility: the court at the beginning of the modern age, c.1450-1650, edited by RG Asch & AM Birke, provides an examination of several European courts over a longer period.

dispatched in letters their own personal view of the crown. As part of the English entourage in France in 1513, Paulo da Laude, Milanese ambassador to the emperor, wrote to Massimiliano Sforza, duke of Milan, describing the king of England's entry into Lille.¹³ He wrote of the great pomp, of the two hundred accompanying men-at-arms and guards, of the horses' trappings of solid silver, with cloths of gold and black velvet. He concluded by stating that the king dined and danced, "*in this he does wonders and leaps like a stag.*" The full image was presented for the duke of Milan to envisage.

The new king was beginning to develop a reputation for magnanimity and honour. With a number of Scottish pirates in his charge, Henry, showing "*his bountevous largesse*", gave them money to travel home safely.¹⁴ It is perhaps significant that this event was sufficiently publicised to be recorded in a city chronicle. This episode began with the Scots being "*cast Into sundry prysonys*" but soon saw them "*by the kyngis Commandement brough unto the archbysshoppys place by side westmynster and there kept at the kingis cost.*"¹⁵ Henry may have been making peace moves towards Scotland at this time, his largesse being employed with an eye to the pacification of James IV prior to an invasion of France.

¹³ CSP, Milan, 1385-1618, 654.

¹⁴ GC, p378.

¹⁵ Ibid, p377.

War was in the new king's mind from an early date. While payments to William Pawne in June and July, 1509 for the fortification of Berwick most likely constituted repair work, the scene was set for a structured programme of defence preparation.¹⁶ By May, 1510, 10,000 bows had been ordered from craftsmen in London followed by several tonnes of stone, delivered to Calais in June; £762 worth of bowstaves purchased in October; stone for Kent in February, 1511.¹⁷ The month of June in that year saw several significant expenditures: money to Sir Edward Poynings for repairs to the castle at Dover; to Sir Edward Howard for the rigging of ships; and again to William Pawne for the establishing of posts between London and Berwick, a post being a fixed place or stage on a road for the forwarding of letters and changing of horses.¹⁸ Such an open and efficient line of communication would have been essential in any conflict with Scotland when instructions and information to and from London would have required to have been transferred at speed. Henry was taking offensive precautions as well as securing his defensive position on his northern border and southern coast.¹⁹

¹⁶ LP, II, ii, p1441 (King's Book of Payments).

¹⁷ Ibid, pp1446, 1448, 1449.

¹⁸ Ibid, p1451.

¹⁹ S Anglo, Spectacle, pageantry and early Tudor policy, pp108-109 sees Henry VIII's early years as marked by 'adolescent belligerence.' Steven Gunn, 'The French wars of Henry VIII', in The origins of war in early modern Europe, edited by Jeremy Black, pp28-29, further describes Henry's early preparations for war. By the end of 1509 he had, among other things, upgraded the king's spears, begun an expansion of the navy and started negotiations with France's neighbours with a view to an alliance against that country. Gunn makes the point that France was generally unlikely to invade England, preferring acquiescence though the payment of pensions.

In March, 1513, Nicholas West, in his conversations with Margaret Tudor at the Scottish court, pointed out that her brother was no longer just spending his time in masques and joustings but that he was now concerning himself more with the serious business of government.²⁰ The personal character of the king was developing as he increasingly stamped his own personality on the idea of kingship. Henry was making the running in Europe and to be in such a position must have been intoxicating for a young man. Certainly he had been raised in royal ways but there could have been no comparable feeling for the power which accompanied the succession to the throne. The death of Henry's grandmother, Margaret Beaufort, countess of Richmond, in June, 1509, was a significant event in the development of the young king. Little can be understood about Henry's true emotions surrounding the deaths of his father and grandmother. There does not seem to have been any sort of grieving process for the young prince for either of these deaths. Both Henry VII and Margaret Beaufort appear to have been quite strict as regards Henry's upbringing and he may have felt a certain amount of freedom with the passing of these two guardians. Margaret's death especially represented a timely break with the past. Although the new king had, of course, his council and circle of friends to turn to, he was now very much his own man.

²⁰ BL, Cotton MS., Caligula B. vi, ff63r-70v (LP, I, i, 1735). This letter from West to Henry covers the events of several days, with the ambassador including a survey of a lengthy conversation which he had had with Queen Margaret. They discussed, among other things, Henry's preparations for the impending invasion of France.

If the king could look forward to a honeymoon period after his coronation then, according to Erasmus, it was a lengthy one. A decade after Blount's reflection, Erasmus was still praising the monarch, the intervening years seemingly having done little to dampen his spirits. In a letter to Sir Henry Guildford, Master of the Horse, sent from Antwerp on 15th May, 1519, Erasmus commented on Henry VIII: "*who more skilful in war, more intelligent in legislation, more far-seeing in counsel, in the repression of crime more active, in the choice of magistrates and officers more painstaking, more successful in concluding alliances with other kings?*"²¹ This highly flattering picture of the monarch must be seen, in part, as a product of Erasmus's literary imaginings. However, this letter does not stand alone and is consistent with other similar epistles sent to various friends from Erasmus while domiciled on the continent.

A theme which Erasmus pursued at this time, and one which would no doubt have delighted Henry, was that of the high place allocated to the English court in many continental minds. In a second letter addressed to Sir Henry Guildford, written from Louvain on 18th October, 1519, Erasmus wrote, "*so it is that the honourable reputation of the English court spreads everywhere like a sweet savour the news that besides a king notably gifted with all the endowments of an absolute prince, and a queen of equal merit, it is well supplied with so many upright, well-read, serious, intelligent men.*"²² This

²¹ Erasmus, VI, p364.

²² Ibid, VII, pp107-108.

image of Henry VIII's court as a place fostering learning was being portrayed effectively by Erasmus.

At this time, Erasmus found himself writing to several men, including Richard Pace, dean of St Paul's, Thomas Wolsey and William Blount, lord Mountjoy, recommending to them Antoon van Grimbergen, son of the lord of Bergen.²³ This young man was being sent to the court in England because his father, as Erasmus explained to Wolsey, "*is convinced that there is no court where the tone is higher, for besides a king whose standard of honour is the best of our time, you have so many men of outstanding accomplishments.*"²⁴ The men Erasmus was referring to included Mountjoy, Thomas Linacre, Pace, John Colet, Hugh Latimer, Thomas More and William Grocyn. In a letter to Ulrich von Hutten, written from Antwerp on 23rd July, 1519, Erasmus commented that a man such as Albert of Brandenburg, cardinal and archbishop of Mainz, should gather such men into his household and hope that other princes would follow suit with their courts.²⁵ Clearly the reputation which Henry VIII had been promoting was having an effect on the intelligentsia and in the courts on the continent. The lord of Bergen had heard from many sources of the honourable nature of Henry's court. Whether through tiltyard displays of valour and munificence in front of

²³ Ibid, pp97-98, 100, 105-106.

²⁴ Ibid, pp105-106. Erasmus, while portraying the advantages of the court in England, was keeping an eye on his own position, declaring to Richard Pace (pp97-98) that the father of the young scholar being sent was 'of great and well-deserved influence here [Erasmus was writing from Louvain]. It will do me no harm if he learns that his son and I have common friends in your part of the world.'

²⁵ Ibid, p24.

foreign dignitaries or through the reputations of a group of scholarly individuals, the image which Henry wished to be conveyed abroad was being so.

The young Prince Henry was fortunate in the respect that he grew up with his father already on the throne. This may seem a rather vacuous statement but there is a vital point to be made. As a youth, Henry was introduced to, and would have been comfortable with, the trappings of kingship. He would have formed his own notions of what was expected of a monarch. An understanding of the court system would have been an integral part of being raised as a king's son and, from 1502 and the death of the eldest son Arthur, heir. It is somewhat ironic then that the son should graduate into a king whose characteristics differed from the father in many ways.

Fortunately, or unfortunately, few of the more sombre aspects of Henry VII's personality seemed to have rubbed off on the son. Perhaps this analysis may seem a little one-dimensional but the father could be described as a man in a grey suit when compared to his second son. In this sense, Henry VII was the odd man out in any study of later medieval kings. Whether he did not fully appreciate the idea of kingship or whether it did not interest him, Henry VII represented an anomaly. The first Tudor king did, though, have some sense of the importance of the ceremonial side to kingship; he established the Yeomen of the Guard.²⁶ However, Henry VII had not grown up with the expectation of succession. He had lived as

²⁶ JAF Thomson, The transformation of medieval England, 1370-1529, p232.

an exile, on his wits, with one eye fixed on the Breton court lest he be returned to England and an uncertain fate. The son, though, had ideas of kingship and a reasonable amount of time and freedom to develop them.

A vital component of kingship was image, that is the facade presented to the outside world. An interesting example of how not to present the monarchy occurred in April, 1471. With Edward IV touring the north of England, Henry VI began a progress in London to rally support: "*The which was more lyker a play then the shewyng of a prynce to wynne mennys hertys, ffor by this mean he lost many & wan noon or Rygth ffewe, and evyr he was shewid In a long blew goune of velvet as thowth he hadd noo moo to chaunge.*"²⁷ This procession proved counter-productive, according to the chronicler, with the king simply not representing the flamboyant image expected of a monarch. His appearance can be contrasted with that of Edward IV who, when he finally arrived in the capital, "*Rode wyth grete pompe thorwth the Cyte.*"²⁸ Henry VIII understood the importance of this highly public facade, although in his case the difference between the image and the reality was most likely very slight. The new king possessed a playboy streak, a combination of the many characteristics often associated with a renaissance monarch: a flamboyant personality; a sociable, womanising persona; and an appreciation of life and how to live it.

²⁷ GC, p215. This chronicle's author was a London merchant and would have been well placed to gauge the reaction of the people in that city.

²⁸ Ibid, p216.

(ii) the display of court

"A Prince then ought to have no other ayme, nor other thought, nor take any thing else for his proper arte but warr, and the orders and discipline thereof; for that is the sole arte which belongs to him that commands, and is of so great excellency, that not only those that are borne Princes, it maintains so, but many times rayses men from a private fortune to that dignity." ²⁹

War provided an outlet through which men could channel their aggressions. That foreign ventures so quickly followed Henry VIII's accession should not be seen as coincidence. War was a useful tool of subjugation and social control and the new king certainly knew how to use it. Suddenly England had become the centre of attention in Europe, a state of affairs which Henry relished. Tournaments provided the finest horsemen with practice runs for impending battle and Henry's court sprang to life with jousts and feasts amid an influx of fresh blood. Henry VII was also a patron of tournaments, holding the same number, thirteen, in the final seven and a half years of his reign as in the corresponding period at the beginning of the son's reign. The difference between the two

²⁹ Niccolò Machiavelli, The prince, p65, edited by WEC Baynes.

Tudor monarchs was that the son actively participated in these events.³⁰

Jousting tournaments were a vitally important part of court life in Tudor England, particularly so with Henry VIII, in 1509 a young and vibrant youth with a passion for this sport. Such tournaments can often be used as a yardstick with which to judge not only the social standing of a courtier at court but also his potential. Tournaments also allowed the nobility to display their magnificence. It can indeed be argued that performance at a joust took second place to display. The extensive celebrations which followed the birth of the king's first son in February, 1511, included several days jousting. The tilting which occurred on the 13th of that month was described as excellent, "*Not ffor the more valiant actis that daye doon of armys, But ffor the Inestymable Rycchesse & costious apparayll which that day was worn.*"³¹ Tournaments such as this were an opportunity for many to be seen, to impress and to influence. Here were gathered together men from the king, through the nobility to the knights and squires. For those fighting, the opportunities for ostentation were obvious, and for those not taking part directly in the action, the benefits of attendance were equally clear. While the court provided a focus for munificence, it was a fluid institution. It could not be guaranteed that those a man wished to impress would be present, or perhaps he could

³⁰ S Gunn (1991), 'Tournaments and early Tudor chivalry', History Today, 41: pp16-17, for these figures and the important point of Henry VIII actively jousting.

³¹ GC, p370.

not gain access to those parts of the court which he desired. A tournament, however, constituted an open market, a parading ground for all.

One of Henry's first jousts took place in January, 1510, when he participated in a private fight in Richmond park in disguise. The man he chose to accompany him on this occasion was William Compton and that courtier's subsequent rewards and promotions are indicative of the close nature of his friendship with the king.³² Compton was nearly killed in this encounter, a fact which would have endeared him even further to the king. The joust for him had been a success. He had been seen with Henry.

A look at any of the organised tournaments of the early years of the reign of Henry VIII will throw up the names of a number of men destined for success. The tournament held to celebrate the birth of the prince in February, 1511, for example, had Thomas Howard, Henry Stafford, Thomas Boleyn, Charles Brandon and Henry Guildford all running on the second day.³³ The four challengers were named as the king, Edward Neville, William, earl of Devonshire, and Thomas Knevet. This group was a mixture of new men on the rise, established men and those being rehabilitated.

A narrative account of this event leaves no doubt about the impression made upon the author of the wealth and riches on

³² Hall, vol i, pp14-15 .

³³ LP, I, i, 698.

display.³⁴ The company of knights rode in the procession, among whom was Sir Edward Guildford, marshal and organiser of the field, "*Rygh goodly & Rycchely apparaylid*"; he was followed by Sir Morris Berkley and Sir Francis Cheyny, their coats of red and green velvet overlain with silver and gold thread. On the second day they wore different outfits. There then followed the barons and lords, "*ecch of theym more Rycchely apparaylid than othir.*" The dress of George Neville and Robert Radcliffe warranted special note for their incredible cost. Sir Henry Boleyn rode by "*in purpyll velvet garnysshid wyth platis of gold of excedyng valu*"; then Sir Nicholas Vaux "*in a gown of Goldsmyth werk to the knees*" and Henry Stafford in a gown of magnificent needlework. The author of this account was so engrossed in these sights that he could "*make noo memory of the lusty lepyng, bounsyng & mountyng & fflyngyng of the Joly & lusty ffore Riders.*"

Edward Hall's version of events places a similar emphasis on setting rather than on actual action. He indulges in a lengthy examination of the participants' outfits, filling his narrative with descriptive phrases such as "*golde and russet tynsell*", and "*a goodly plume set full of musers of trimblyng spangles of golde.*"³⁵ The point has been made that, for the most part, one has to surmise what is said or done from the elaborate descriptions of scenery.³⁶ This is certainly the impression

³⁴ GC, pp368-372.

³⁵ Hall, vol i, pp23-24.

³⁶ Jurgen Beer, 'The image of a king', p138, in Henry VIII in history, historiography and literature, edited by Uwe Baumann.

with which one is left after reading Hall and the Great Chronicle of London. However, this in itself reveals much about the culture of the time. It reinforces the notion of chivalric feats as display while also placing emphasis on court hierarchy through a man's costume.³⁷

A point worth remembering here is that if the author of the Great Chronicle of London was Robert Fabyan, then he was a member of the Drapers' Company. He may have been more concerned than most with the details of processional garments. His view of court was one taken by a merchant and not a nobleman and yet his view was of that precise conspicuous display which was taken to symbolise the role of the monarch. Being a London-centred chronicler, the author would also have had the knowledge and opportunity to provide meticulous accounts of ceremonial occasions. However, his in-depth discussions of this display would seem to have a deeper significance than merely a professional interest. Edward Hall was from a non-mercantile background and, as has been seen, he laid a similar stress on the visible attributes of kingship. What emerges from this is an almost childlike view of a king needing to be seen wearing a crown. He also had to be seen to be something different, something more and something flamboyant.

³⁷ Steven Gunn, 'The early Tudor tournament', p48, in Henry VIII: a European court in England, edited by David Starkey, makes the point that Charles Brandon's rise at court can be gauged by his place in tournaments and 'the increasing similarity between his outfits and the King's.'

One of Henry's first main tournaments took place at the end of May and beginning of June, 1510.³⁸ There were seven sessions of fighting, 23rd May, morning and afternoon, 27th, morning and afternoon, 1st June, afternoon only and 3rd June, morning and afternoon. Of these seven sessions, Charles Brandon was present at six, Sir Thomas Knevet at five, the Howards, lord Howard, Sir Edward and Edmund, were represented in some form at six; other participants included Sir Thomas Boleyn, who ran against the king on the first morning, Sir Francis Cheyny, Edward Hungerford, Ralph Eggerton, Edward Neville and Henry Stafford. Again we find here an interesting collection of men, the majority of whom would, in the following years, benefit greatly from their friendships with the king. For example, the celebrations which took place on May Day, 1511, saw the king giving gifts to deserving participants. Some of those were, "*ffor theyr well doynge bothe In shotyng & wrastelyng admyttid unto the kyngis servyce, as soom to the Rummys of yomen of the croune & soom ffor yomen of the chambyr.*"³⁹ Here is evidence of the direct benefit for those participating and excelling in an organised tournament.

These tournaments allowed men to practise and hone their fighting skills so that they would be fully prepared for war; "*This may be a great myrror to al prynces, how that they advenyer them selves in such a battaill.*"⁴⁰ Clearly

³⁸ LP, I, ii, Appendix 9.

³⁹ GC, p375.

⁴⁰ Hall, vol i, p109.

impressing foreign dignitaries, and in many cases ambassadors were present, was a highly effective way of flexing the royal muscle. These tournaments were also taken abroad, to events such as the Field of Cloth of Gold and to cities like Tournai. In October, 1513, royal jousts were held in that city, organised with help from Sir Edward Guildford.⁴¹ Present with the king were the Emperor Maximilian and the Prince of Castile.⁴² The influence of such a display was wide ranging. Letters describing the event reached Rome and Paolo da Laude, Milanese ambassador to the emperor, wrote to the duke of Milan telling him of the king at the tilting.⁴³ Da Laude described the sumptuous dress of the king and his companion Charles Brandon and how the king ran the best courses. Taking into account a certain amount of artistic licence, it would still seem that this ambassador was highly impressed by the day, describing Henry as "*fresher after this awful exertion then before. I do not know how he can stand it. He is never still or quiet, he is so vivacious and pleasant.*" This was exactly the impression Henry was wishing to create and send to the powerful of Europe. These jousts were acting as a showcase for England's military prowess. They were used as a frontispiece for what was hoped would be victories in battle, as well as in celebration of victories already won.

⁴¹ BL, Stowe MS. 146, f101; LP, I, ii, 2359.

⁴² LP, I, ii, 2347, 2391 (p1061).

⁴³ Ibid, 2389, 2359; CSP, Milan, 1385-1618, 669.

The munificence associated with the new king's court was partly the result of the extensive accumulation of cloths and jewels. From the beginning of his reign, Henry VIII made steady purchases of colourful and extravagant cloths from foreign merchants. Silks and materials of gold were purchased from men like Ludovico de la Fava, of a merchant family from Bologna, and Charles de Florence. Some of these items were for robes at disguisings and many of the plates of gold which were purchased were for distribution at such events. Henry spared no expense when it came to the holding of jousts. Those held in honour of the birth of Prince Henry on 12th and 13th February, 1511, were no exception with John Daunce being paid £4,371 to cover outlays on these days.⁴⁴ Such expenditure was just one aspect of the wider liberality which pervaded Henry's court in these early years. A glance through his Book of Payments reveals many typically generous entries and many ostentatious purchases, from the 20s given to the woman bringing the king a pomander and the large amounts spent on the king's new year's gifts for his subjects to the numerous loans, monetary gifts and accumulation of jewels.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ LP, II, ii, p1450 (King's Book of Payments).

⁴⁵ Ibid, pp1441-1480.

(iii) council and counsel

The king's council met only during term time, that is during the law terms which lasted for just sixteen weeks, and was chosen by the king.⁴⁶ Outside of these weeks, the king's council consisted of those trusted men whom the monarch surrounded himself with at court, the attendant council. Again these men were chosen by the king. Membership of the king's council did not guarantee membership of this inner ring; many members would have had their own estates or vocations to attend to. Two points about the relationship between these two councils are worth noting. Firstly, the attendant council was in the king's presence for a far longer period of time and secondly, it consisted specifically of those men whom the king wanted around him for this length of time. As Erasmus commented to his friend Ulrich von Hutten of Henry's close companions, "*these are the continual spectators and witnesses of the way he lives.....these are the companions of his journeys. He rejoices to have them round him.*"⁴⁷

Henry would need in this mobile council administrators or civil servants, men who would carry out the business of government. These men would not have been close to Henry

⁴⁶ GR Elton, The Tudor constitution: documents and commentary, p89.

⁴⁷ Erasmus, VII, p24. Hutten, through his dialogue, 'Aula', was an enemy of court life. Erasmus, however, felt that had he lived at the court of Henry VIII, he would have rewritten his theories.

simply by virtue of their membership of the attendant council. Further to the administrators was an inner ring. If the attendant council could be called a cabinet, then this inner ring was a club. These were Henry's friends, often his contemporaries, men whose company he could not only tolerate for several months of the year but with whom he enjoyed socialising. William Compton, for example, was a court favourite and one of Henry's best friends. This was a man who had little to do with the administration of the country. He was a court man and any advice he had for the king would have been offered at court, wherever the king happened to have his court at that time. Consequently, we find his first day in Henry's council not until 15th May, 1526, and this was his last day also. Compton's attendance can be contrasted with that of Thomas Lovell. Lovell's first day was 14th November, 1509, and his last was 6th November, 1522, a total of twenty-five days in attendance.⁴⁸ This was the highest attendance among the knights and the seventh highest of all the councillors for the first half of Henry's reign. This difference can be attributed to Lovell's usefulness in council, that is, his particular administrative skills as treasurer of the household and chancellor of the exchequer.

Some degree of continuity would have been forced on the new king. His father's chief councillors would have been needed to aid the young king in the business of government. Henry VIII would, however, have had to do without several

⁴⁸ WH Dunham jnr (1944), 'The members of Henry VIII's whole council, 1509-1527', *EHR*, lix: p209.

men of standing who died during the last decade of his father's rule. Reginald Bray, mainly noted for his abilities in the field of finance, died in 1503; Giles Daubeney, involved in military ventures, died in 1508; Richard Guildford died in 1506. Daubeney and Guildford had been with Henry VII in exile in 1483 and Bray had served with him at Bosworth.⁴⁹ These three men formed part of Henry VII's inner ring.⁵⁰ John Morton, bishop of Ely, archbishop of Canterbury and chancellor, had died in 1500; Sir Richard Nanfan, governor of Calais died in 1507. These were all talented men and while Morton was around eighty years of age when he died, the others would have been a loss to any future government.

The young king was advised by his grandmother, the countess of Richmond, and chose "*the most wise and graue personages to be of his priuie councell, namelie such as he knew to be of his father's right deere and familiar freends.*"⁵¹ Nine men are specifically mentioned as being of Henry VII's council and close to that king who were now a part of Henry VIII's. These men were William Warham, Richard Fox, Thomas Howard, George Talbot, Charles Somerset, Thomas Lovell, Henry Wyatt, Thomas Ruthal and Edward

⁴⁹ SB Chrimes, Henry VII, pp109-112.

⁵⁰ CSP Milan, 1385-1618, 490, a letter from Giovanni de Bebulcho to Bartolomeo Chalco, secretary to the duke of Milan notes 'I asked him who ruled him [Henry VII] and had control over him. He said there was only one who can do anything, and he is named Master Bray, who controls the king's treasure.' Bray was a powerful figure and would have had much to contribute to Henry VIII's administration had he survived to see it. He may also have been dismayed to witness the spiralling expenses of that king's early years.

⁵¹ Holinshed, vol iii, p544.

Poynings.⁵² Within this group one can distinguish men with different duties. Warham, Fox and Ruthal were statesmen figures as well as churchmen while Howard, Talbot, Somerset and Lovell were men of the household. Poynings was heavily involved in ambassadorial duties. This core group of advisers are described as travelling with the king so that he could, day by day, be taught the way of politics.⁵³ These men clearly formed an attendant council with the household men necessarily having to be permanently at court. It is noticeable with the benefit of hindsight that the nine named did not form an inner ring. It cannot be said that any of them were particularly close to the young king. There is no William Compton, no Edward Howard or Charles Brandon or Thomas Knevet. But then these four, and similar others of this type, could not have been trusted with the charge and governance of the affairs of the whole realm.

One can contrast the nine men mentioned as forming the main body of Henry VIII's first council with those whom the king chose for company at court. Five years after his coronation several new men had emerged through "*ordinaunces and appoymentes made and stabled by the king.*"⁵⁴ Present at the king's side in his court at Greenwich were Thomas Howard, earl of Surrey, Charles Somerset, earl of Worcester and lord chamberlain, and Thomas Grey, marquis of Dorset; then there were the lower order men like Henry Marney,

⁵² Grafton, vol ii, p235; Holinshed, vol iii, p544; PV, p149.

⁵³ Grafton, vol ii, p235.

⁵⁴ HMC, 12th Report, Appendix, Part IV, Rutland, vol i, pp21-22.

Thomas Boleyn, William Compton, Henry Norris and Nicholas Carew, as well as a full array of servants, grooms, chaplains, physicians, pages and others. The queen had her ladies and gentlewomen-in-waiting, many of whom were present in their capacity as wives; the ladies Boleyn, Compton, Parre, Guildford senior and junior, mistress Carew, and also Lady Mountjoy, although her husband William, lord Mountjoy, was not present on this occasion. It is difficult to establish whether or not the composition of the queen's entourage carried any special significance. It would seem natural for the wives of the prominent men of the time to be present at court in the entourage of the queen. It is unlikely that the king intended to keep his wife surrounded by women whose husbands depended on him so that she could not develop a political role of her own. Unlike Anne of Cleves, whose later marriage to Henry was intended to have political connotations, Catherine was not expected to perform any duties in this regard. Edward IV and Richard III had both married English wives, while Edward V had been too young to wed. With Arthur, then Henry, marrying Catherine, the monarch, or potential monarch, had taken a foreign wife for the first time in fifty years. Perhaps Catherine faced a court quite unsure as to how to deal with her.

While the exact composition of the king's council would change as men carried out their state and private duties, Henry's circle of close advisers remained fairly static and relatively small. The majority of this group which emerged during the first decade or so of the king's reign had their

origins in Henry VII's time.⁵⁵ What is immediately noticeable about these men is that they were the king's friends in a general sense and not necessarily those with political clout. This is particularly evident in the lack of representation in this circle from the nobility, or more accurately the old landed classes, as one can witness the rise of new men like Charles Brandon to the dukedom of Suffolk. Henry VIII made many of his associations on the tilting ground as his reign saw the resurrection of the cult of chivalry. He felt the need to play a more prominent public role than his father and this facilitated the rise of new blood, especially young, energetic contemporaries.

The number of men attached to the court in one form or another was quite considerable.⁵⁶ For the first five years of Henry VIII's reign it is possible to identify in excess of 35 grooms of the chamber, that body of men close to the king of which William Compton was a member. Of yeomen or gentlemen ushers of the chamber there were approaching 65. Records show these men to be more anonymous than the grooms. Esquires of the body numbered around 40, while knights of the body neared 50. These groups are just some of the many which comprised the body of the court. Outside of the household there were several departments to which men

⁵⁵ P Gwyn, *The king's cardinal*, p204, isolates a group of men numbering thirteen on whom the king relied, the two Norfolks (father and son), duke of Suffolk, Thomas Ruthal, Cuthbert Tunstall, Sir William Fitzwilliam, Thomas Lovell, Thomas More, Robert Wingfield, Richard Pace, Henry Marney, Thomas Boleyn and Henry Wyatt. Although from a slightly later period than the scope of this thesis, Gwyn's group provides an excellent synopsis of the situation.

⁵⁶ *LP*, I, i & ii, *passim*.

could be attached, including the stables, great wardrobe, ordnance and jewel house. Within the household there were more opportunities for advancement aside from those already highlighted, including pages, physicians, wardrobe staff and guards.⁵⁷ The queen too had her entourage, her ladies-in-waiting and gentlemen-ushers, and this was another possible avenue for promotion. William Blount, lord Mountjoy, for example, married one of Catherine of Aragon's ladies-in-waiting, helping to unite Spanish and English families.

With so many men having access to the court, the rise of an individual from these ranks is all the more remarkable and, on occasions, inexplicable. William Compton's rise was exceptional but there were men like William Gower and John Sharp who clearly benefited from their positions as grooms of the chamber. Equally, there were those who remained in the background, men like Watkyn Vaughan and Nicholas Yoo.

How then can the contrasting experiences of, for example, William Compton and William Thomas, both grooms of the chamber, be explained? Neither man would have had any outstanding prospects prior to the accession of Henry VIII. William Compton's father was a farmer and on his death the son became a ward of the crown.⁵⁸ To describe him as appearing from nowhere is valid comment in the sense that

⁵⁷ David Loades, The Tudor court, (Historical Association, 1989), Appendix, pp30-31 outlines the structure of the court and gives an idea of its depth.

⁵⁸ GW Bernard (1981), 'The rise of Sir William Compton, early Tudor courtier', EHR, xcvi: p754 and note, quotes Dugdale and Thomas, The antiquities of Warwickshire who saw Compton as one of Prince Henry's pages.

his career had an explosive beginning. William Thomas was also a man of limited resources in 1509. He may have made his way at court through his father, a clerk at Westminster.⁵⁹ His death occurred in 1530, while his date of birth cannot be determined. He may have been of a different generation to the king.⁶⁰ While it is not possible to read too much into his relative absence from pre-1509 records, this may suggest that he was a younger courtier. Both Thomas and Compton were present at Henry VII's funeral and Henry VIII's coronation as grooms of the chamber.⁶¹ Compton's career took off while Thomas's did not. Grants to the latter in the first five years of the new king's reign were few and insignificant; to be keeper of Ockeley park in Shropshire, to be troner and peiser (a task involving the use of weights and measures) in the port of London, and to be the keeper of Netherwood park in Herefordshire.⁶² Thomas was present at the war with France in 1513 but his conduct did not demand special mention and was not rewarded.⁶³

⁵⁹ PRO, PROB 11/23, ff192r, 192v, is the will of a William Thomas of Kent and London. Thomas was a very common surname and there were several men called William Thomas with wills dating from the 1520s until the 1550s (Prerogative court of Canterbury, vol II, p523). It would seem that the William Thomas quoted here is the most likely candidate. A William Thomas submitted depositions in favour of Queen Catherine and this could well have been the same man, one year before his death (BL, Cotton MS., Vitellius B. xii, ff109r-115v).

⁶⁰ *LP*, IV, iii, 5774(5, ii). In a deposition regarding Catherine of Aragon's divorce, Thomas's age is placed at around fifty in 1529. If this is correct then he would have been approximately thirty years of age in 1509. He is further described as being a groom of the privy chamber to Prince Arthur for the three years before his death in 1502.

⁶¹ *Ibid*, I, i, 20(p13), 82(p42).

⁶² *Ibid*, 54(18,19), 447(21). *LP Index* distinguishes two men named William Thomas. One, not this groom, is assigned grant 1602(34) of January, 1513, the transfer of the position of keeper of Netherwood park from a William Thomas to Walter Devereux, lord Ferrers. *LP Index* has assigned the keepership to both men.

⁶³ *Ibid*, I, ii, 2480.

A comparison of the careers of these two men during the early years of Henry VIII's reign must be qualified. It is clear why Compton attracted the king's eye; he was possibly a servant to him as a prince, was of a similar age, participated enthusiastically in jousts and was willing, on at least one occasion, to procure a bedpartner for the king. The theme of intimacy was an important one in explaining this courtier's rise. Yet it would appear that having physical access to the king was not in itself enough to attract substantial rewards. There seems to have been a certain avenue, distinct from the tilting ground displays and influential patronage, through which a man could attract and foster grace.

The basis of this method can be briefly summarised as a combination of luck and personal charisma. A man may have attracted the king's eye over another through knowing when to hold his silence, having a similar or complementary sense of humour or personality or being present or absent from court at the appropriate time. It is difficult to determine why some men rose while others did not. Factors such as those listed do not lend themselves to record and there are instances when it may never be known what sparked the relationship between king and courtier. For better or worse, Henry VIII had charisma which could work for or against the courtier. It often meant that the king was unpredictable which would further increase the element of chance for a man hungry for favours.

Promotions or favours were forthcoming from the monarch yet a courtier had to have something to offer as well. New men, with a determination to be upwardly mobile, were benevolently disposed to the young Henry. What became of the king in his later years often overshadows the vigour and vibrancy which he possessed at the start of his reign. A new and young generation could easily identify with such a person offering a forward-looking approach to kingship. Important as it is to emphasise personal contact at court, there was a significant downside attached to this. The king could take a simple dislike to a courtier for no other reason than he seemed ingratiating, aloof, humourless, too scholarly, uncommunicative or numerous other characteristics and their opposites. This was not an exact science. The keywords here should be unpredictability and chance. The 'new men' had limited power bases and relied heavily on the continuing goodwill of the king.

It would be profitable at this point to consider briefly the role of parliament during the early years of Henry VIII. The regularity of parliaments summoned in the first six years of this king's reign hides the true figures regarding Henry's consistency in calling this institution. No parliament sat between the end of 1515 and 1523. This period coincides not only with the emergence and pre-eminence of Thomas Wolsey but also with a young king beginning to establish his own style of kingship. The flurry of military activity at the start of Henry's reign had drawn to a close and one of the main functions of parliament, as a body which could set lay

taxation, was temporarily obsolete. The crown could rely on royal proclamations until the need for the next parliament became too great.

In Tudor times the combination of king and parliament was acknowledged as of a higher authority than the crown alone.⁶⁴ Writing in the previous century, the lawyer Sir John Fortescue, in his 'De Laudibus Legum Anglie' stated that the king needed parliament for taxation and for passing statutes, and that the king could not "*by himself or by his ministers, impose tallages, subsidies, or any other burdens whatever on his subjects, nor change their laws, nor make new ones, without the concession or assent of his whole realm expressed in his parliament.*"⁶⁵ While a blueprint for a Yorkist government, this notion of Fortescue's was equally applicable to the England of Henry VIII. The important point to note is that the king's powers of law-making were not arbitrary.

A Tudor perspective on the significance of parliament is given by Vergil. Commenting on the parliament of 1515, he noticed that the king "*greatly anxious for the review, arrangement and regulation of all aspects of the state, summoned a parliament with the concurrence of his council in which many things were decreed affecting the government of the realm.*"⁶⁶ This was no exaggeration on Vergil's part.

⁶⁴ GR Elton, The Tudor constitution: documents and commentary, p14.

⁶⁵ Sir John Fortescue De Laudibus Legum Anglie, edited by SB Chrimes, pp41, 87; GR Elton, Studies in Tudor and Stuart politics and government, volume 2, pp28-29.

⁶⁶ PV, p233.

A look at some of the acts passed by the parliament called for 21st January, 1510, highlights the variety of subjects covered by that institution. Acts were concerned with the making of woollen clothes, against wearing expensive apparels, against carrying plates or jewels out of the realm, with fishing rights and other such diverse matters.⁶⁷ Such variety of legislation certainly added colour to the statute books but parliament had more important subjects to deal with. One such matter, which took up so much time during Henry's first three parliaments, was war. This was dealt with extensively, both from a financial point of view and also from a military one. The king needed money to pursue a belligerent foreign policy and it was through parliament that he could raise sufficient funds.

Three parliaments were summoned between the accession of Henry VIII and the end of 1515. The first was called for 21st January, 1510, and lasted for just over one month; the second for 4th February, 1512, being dissolved on 4th March, 1514, its three sessions having lasted for approximately twenty weeks; and finally a parliament was summoned for 5th February, 1515, its two sessions totalling around three and a half months before its dissolution on 22nd December, 1515.⁶⁸ The speakers at these three parliaments were respectively, Sir Thomas Englefield, Sir Robert Sheffield and Thomas Neville.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Statutes of the Realm, III, ppv-vi.

⁶⁸ The History of Parliament. The House of Commons, 1509-1558, edited by ST Bindoff, volume i, Appendix I.

⁶⁹ Ibid, Appendix II.

The total number of names of attenders known for each parliament represents around one fifth of the three hundred seats available at each of the parliaments. For 1510, 53 names are known; for 1512, 63; and for 1515, 59.⁷⁰ The problems arising from such figures are clear. A study of the constituencies reveals time and time again 'not known.' There seems to be little geographical consistency among the constituency figures of attendance. No names are known for Cumberland for the three parliaments and only three for all the constituencies in Cornwall. Among others, Derbyshire, Hampshire, Hertfordshire, Lancashire, Leicestershire Northumberland and Oxfordshire yield nothing. No official Commons' records exist for this period, indeed there is nothing until 1547. The Lords' Journal has only survived for the parliament of 1515. The Statutes of the Realm are complete. The general sparsity of parliamentary records for this period limits their usefulness for any wider study.

⁷⁰ Ibid, Appendix IV.

Chapter II

Courtiers and Friends

Promotion could be achieved in a number of ways: through the mere grace of the king; through a reliance on family history, pedigree and general background; through a proven ability in a specific field; and through contacts. These categories are in no way fixed and a man could benefit by being associated with more than one. The first of these possible avenues is the most difficult to define, involving a certain amount of personal chemistry and chance. It also involved catching the king's eye, whether on the tiltyard, the battlefield or on ceremonial occasions. The second category involves men who could draw on status and standing created by previous generations and included rewards for loyalty shown under Henry VII. Promotion through ability led to a certain amount of continuity among the main office-holders and included men with proven track records in certain fields, be it finance, administration or the military. The last category, advancement through contacts, can be extended to cover patronage in general, whether it took the form of support for scholars, help in disputes or arranged marriages, or the naming of executors.

It must be emphasised that these groupings have no fixed perimeters and it was not necessary for a man to follow one particular route into the court. Some men were forced to work hard to achieve their promotions while for others success came fairly easily. Catching the king's eye was the quickest way to achieve advancement. Indeed, it could be said that the favour of the king dominated the court and spawned the other routes to promotion. Only through this favour could a man climb the courtly ladder. Ability, pedigree and patronage would count for nothing if the king were crossed.

(i) advancement through grace

*"What yes man perdie right many haue bene sene,
Which in poore houses borne and brought vp haue bene,
That from lowe rowmes and carefull pouertie
Be nowe exalted to greatest dignitie." ¹*

The king had his courtiers and he had his friends and sometimes these two groups became one. There were those who wished to belong to both camps and many who claimed to. Friendship was not often sought for friendship's sake. Becoming friends with the king was a route to influence and

¹ The Eclogues of Alexander Barclay, edited by Beatrice White, p25.

power. The king knew this and so did the courtier but both parties were happy, the monarch gaining a hunting companion or a loyal soldier, and the courtier acquiring status and access to avenues of promotion and wealth. How far a man felt genuine companionship to the king is extremely difficult to estimate. This was a world of favour and privilege and mutual rancour. Sentiment had little part to play. To have benefited from a friendship with the king does not necessarily point to a man lacking a feeling of warmth towards his master. What one is left with, though, is a picture of a man fully aware of the advantage to be gained in fostering such a relationship. The majority of men, engaged at court or elsewhere, were on the make, either for themselves or their retainers or families. It is from this position of enforced cynicism that a study of a selection of Henry's companions may be made.

One courtier who was certainly close to the new king was William Compton and a study of his early career will reveal much about the workings of the court system. Here is a man who rose at court through an astonishing series of grants and whose close proximity to the king's person facilitated this rise. Compton was a man whose success and elevation were almost entirely linked to his accumulation of wealth. This was no career civil servant; the groom of the stool from at least 1510 he remained so until 1526. It would be a mistake, however, to underestimate the importance of the office of groom. The Eltham Ordinances, drawn up to regularise the household, make it clear that the groom of the stool would

not only take care of the king's lavatorial needs but also should attend to him 'in his bedchamber and other privy places as shall stand with his pleasure.'² Compton was therefore spending his time in close attendance with the king and intimacy brought political clout. It was Compton's occupation which allowed him to accumulate the wealth which brought him his status.

Compton's rise was nothing short of meteoric and his career began with the new regime of Henry VIII. He received no grant of any consequence under Henry VII even though he was, by 1509, approximately twenty-seven years old and was certainly of an age to have been establishing himself.³ It would seem that Compton grew up in the royal household having become a ward of the crown.⁴ A friendship with the young Prince Henry would prove to be advantageous in later life. Present at both Henry VII's funeral and Henry VIII's coronation, Compton was described as a groom of the chamber.⁵ He was also referred to, in 1510, as the 'late King's butler'.⁶

Compton's grants from the new king came quickly, the first in June, 1509, when he was awarded during pleasure the office of customer of the petty customs of London with

² PRO, SP2/Folio B(12), ff182-4.

³ DNB, vol xi, pp452-3.

⁴ GW Bernard (1981), 'The rise of Sir William Compton, early Tudor courtier,' EHR, xcvi: pp754-5.

⁵ LP, I, i, 20 (p13), 82 (p42).

⁶ Ibid, 474.

profits.⁷ This grant was the first of many in a long and wealthy career. November of the same year saw the grant to Compton of the bailiff and keepership of Bareswell park, Warwickshire, for life.⁸ Here, a mere five months into Henry's reign, is a grant of some significance for the young courtier, and the first of several in the county of Warwickshire which would become the home of the Compton family's ancestral seat.

In the first six years of Henry VIII's reign, Compton built a power base for himself in the southern midlands of England. In Warwickshire he became bailiff and keeper of Berkswell park, bailiff and warrener of the lordship of Brailes, steward of Brailes, bailiff and reeve of Morton Bagot with Edward Belknap, bailiff of the lordship of Berkswell, keeper of Hastley park and of Grome park. He was also granted the keeping of Warwick Castle with a house and tavern in that town.⁹ His grants included land in the counties of Oxfordshire, Hertfordshire, Essex, Berkshire, Gloucestershire, Lincolnshire, Surrey, Dorset, Hampshire, Cornwall, Shropshire and Kent.¹⁰ These extensive grants not only brought Compton considerable wealth but they

⁷ Ibid, 94(27). While this office is listed in LP as being that of 'customer', more accurately it may have been either 'controller' or 'collector' (see The overseas trade of London exchequer customs accounts, 1480-1, edited by HS Cobb, ppxiv-xxiv. Cobb, ppxv-xvi makes the point that this office was becoming more associated with royal servants during the reign of Henry VII and that the customs service in general was becoming more professional.

⁸ LP, I, i, 257(30).

⁹ Ibid, 257(30), 604(13); I, ii 2055(129).

¹⁰ Ibid, I, i, 682(8), 749(7), 447(18), 546(16), 804(39), 969(34,10), 1123(26); I, ii, 2055(129), 2422(17), 2684(6), 2861(14); II, i, 232; II, ii, 3483, 4294.

increased his local standing as his ability to farm out his minor offices grew.

The more important of his grants included the constabulary of Sudeley Castle in December, 1510, and of Gloucester Castle in February, 1512, and the same of Corfe Castle in March, 1512 with Sir John Carew, and of Tattershall Castle in November, 1511 with Philip Tyndale.¹¹ He was granted the lease of Le Lytle park near Tattershall Castle for 40 years.¹² In November, 1515, Sir John Carre had been granted in tail the manors of Scotton and Brereton in Yorkshire, with the remainder to Simon Conyers for life, at the annual rent of a red rose, that is grants in tail and for life at a nominal rent, yet they had to be surrendered in favour of Compton a mere seven years later. This was a man in consistently high favour for a number of years. These are just some of his grants but they are sufficient to show the considerable wealth and influence that Compton was building. The constabulary of Sudeley Castle itself brought him £30 a year, a sum which on its own would have left its recipient well-off by contemporary standards. He was also in possession of a pension from the French king, a stipulation laid down on 1st December, 1514, as a result of Compton's services to Henry VIII in concluding the peace treaty with France.¹³ This paid to Compton 700 livres a year, payable in half-yearly instalments. He seemed to have

¹¹ Ibid, I, i, 651(19), 969(34), 1083(18), 1123(26).

¹² Ibid, II, i, 1166.

¹³ CSP, Spanish, 1509-1525, 199.

been receiving this regularly up until at least May, 1521.¹⁴ Added to the regular income from his grants of offices and land it is possible to see how wealthy Compton was becoming.

His will details ready money and gold in his London house amounting to over £3,200.¹⁵ It has been suggested that much of Compton's money and jewels had been stolen from the king.¹⁶ If true this tells us something of the nature of Henry's government when a man as close to the monarch as Compton did not arouse suspicion. This was very much a hands-off kingship in its early years. Indeed, neither Wolsey nor Henry knew exactly what offices Compton held.¹⁷ That he could embezzle such amounts of money, an inventory of his goods suggests plate gilt to the value of £579 2s 6d at least,¹⁸ also says something about the amount of money that was going through his hands. The Hanaper account for September, 1510, stated that money was to be delivered into Compton's hands in the chamber to the king's use totalling £2387 for the following fourteen months.¹⁹ Another account, in March, 1514, saw £645 3s 4d being given to Compton for the king at Greenwich.²⁰

¹⁴ Ibid, 251, 255, 262, 265, 270, 273, 277, 305, 331.

¹⁵ LP, IV, ii, 4442(4).

¹⁶ GW Bernard (1981), 'The rise of Sir William Compton, early Tudor courtier', EHR, xcvi: pp772-3.

¹⁷ Ibid, pp761-2.

¹⁸ LP, IV, ii, 4442, 4443.

¹⁹ Ibid, I, i, 579.

²⁰ Ibid, I, ii, p1503, 3608; see also M Horowitz (1981), 'An early-Tudor teller's book', EHR, xcvi: p112 & n.

This accusation of theft is, though, difficult to prove beyond doubt. What is certain about Compton is that on his death he was a wealthy man, his fortune having been acquired rapidly through his close association with Henry VIII. His rise and rewards would undoubtedly have made him enemies. His will states that his executors should recompense all those against whom Compton had trespassed, although this is very much typical probate fare.²¹ What is apparent from a study of Compton's last will is that he was in possession of a good deal of moveables. His testament is littered with bequests of household goods and in particular plate. Compton's French plate was itemised separately in his will, it remaining in the hands of Sir Henry Guildford. His wife was left the goods and moveables at Bettishorne and at his park at Windsor as well as further plate which was for Francis Cheyny. Any son would have all the goods remaining at Compton and, as Sir William outlined, "*all further plate which I had of the gift of the king, which stuff and plate plainly shall appear in a schedule indented thereof made.*" He clearly had some considerable quantity of possessions. His daughters were left £100 in plate on the occasion of their marriage. Outwith his family other bequests included goods to the value of £200 to be distributed to poor households and for the marriages of poor maidens; a friend William Dyngley was bequeathed £40; his wedding gown went to Winchcombe Abbey and the usual chantries were established.

Perhaps most revealing of all was the gift "*to the king's*

²¹ PRO, PROB 11/23, f218v.

highness of whom I have had all my preferment, my little chest of ivory with the lock thereof gilded." Here was a friendship which was more than that of king and courtier. While Compton also left the king gifts of some financial worth, here is a personal token of gratitude and remembrance from one friend to another. Compton certainly had acquired some amount of influence during his years at court. Listed among his executors were such luminaries as Sir Henry Marney, Sir Henry Guildford, Sir Richard Broke as well as the bishop of Exeter. His will, stretching to some thirteen folios, has at its end an impressive list of the contents of his house at Compton. With around forty rooms, his dwelling was laid out like a palace, rooms including a white chamber, nursery and inner nursery, woman's chamber, buttery, pantry, tower chamber and many more.

Between 1509 and 1514, Compton served on commissions of the peace in seven counties, Dorset, Hertfordshire, Leicestershire, Northamptonshire, Somerset, Warwickshire and Worcestershire.²² He was pricked sheriff for Hampshire in November, 1512, and Somerset and Dorset in November, 1513.²³ He also became Chancellor of Ireland that same month.²⁴ It is worth noting that the majority of Compton's grants were only for life, signifying that on his death no male heir, if one existed, would benefit from any

²² *LP*, I, ii, pp1536, 1538, 1539, 1541, 1543, 1545, 1546.

²³ *Ibid*, I, i, 1494(9); I, ii, 2484(9).

²⁴ *Ibid*, I, ii, 2484(7).

of them. If none of the grants for life was converted to tail male, then this courtier would stand and fall by his master, Henry. A made-man, the majority of his offices and land would revert on his death to the crown. This demonstrates the intrinsic fragility of a man like Compton's social mobility. Regardless of what did actually happen to his legacy, in fact his son Peter became a ward²⁵, it is clear, and it would have been to Compton himself, that his inheritance was transient. Perhaps this is why he seemed so keen to complete his house at Compton Wynyates in Warwickshire. It was to be a permanent reminder of the achievement of one man. In the process of its building he cannibalized the castle at Fulbrook of which he was keeper.²⁶ It has been suggested that Compton was desiring, with his house, to recreate the magnificence of Henry and Wolsey's palaces.²⁷ With Compton Wynyates he certainly succeeded; as an extant brick building it is the most important of its age. Standing on the southern edge of Warwickshire, Compton Wynyates represented the endeavours of a money-minded courtier. It is quite remarkable that a house such as this, completed by around 1520, should have been inspired and financed by a man of such humble origins, a man who little more than a decade earlier had been a mere chamber servant.

It is significant that Compton's grants were generally ones of offices rather than of land. This tells us something of the

²⁵ GW Bernard (1981), 'The rise of Sir William Compton, early Tudor courtier', *EHR*, xcvi: p777.

²⁶ Leland, *Itinerary*, p467.

²⁷ M Howard, *The early Tudor country house*, p171.

man's service to the crown and his acquisition of status. It also displays a reluctance on the king's part to deplete his own resources on any long-term basis. The king had greater control over grantees of offices than grantees of land. A person could be dismissed from office through charges, legitimate or otherwise. Office-holding required a good deal of submission to the crown. Land, however, was much more difficult to recover than an office; it had a certain amount of permanency about it. The king would have required some form of criminal prosecution to secure a right of forfeiture. It is arguable, therefore, that a small piece of land is worth more than an office, even when an office had been granted in tail. An office could certainly raise monies for its holder through farming out or through its own revenue raising powers but there was always an air of transiency surrounding it. A man who could build-up a block of land grew increasingly independent of the king and less reliant on his favours and notions. He could then survive any change in dynasty and loyalty and secure his heir's inheritance.

From an unknown, Compton's standing at court developed most rapidly. By May, 1510, he had become involved in Henry's intrigues with the duke of Buckingham's sisters.²⁸ The letter of 28th May, 1510, from Luiz Caroz, an ambassador from Spain in London, to Miguel Perez de Almazan, King Ferdinand's secretary, recounts the episode

²⁸ LP, I, i, 474; GW Bernard (1981), 'The rise of Sir William Compton, early Tudor courtier', EHR, xcvi: p757.

involving the king and queen and the duke of Buckingham, with Buckingham's sisters caught temporarily in the middle. Compton is said to have been carrying on the intrigue at the behest of the king. The plan was uncovered when one of the sisters informed her brother who then confronted Compton. The king rebuked Buckingham for having challenged his groom and the duke stormed out of the palace. This letter is interesting for two reasons. Firstly, it indicates the importance of Compton's position at court when he could be employed by the king on such a delicate mission. While this was not a high level diplomatic meeting it was important to Henry. He needed a competent, confidential friend and he chose Compton ahead of men like Edward Guildford, Henry Stafford or Peter Carew. This says much for his standing not only at court in general but in particular in the eyes of the king.

Compton was in fact acting as a pimp. It is possible to see parallels with the position of Hastings under Edward IV. Both men come across strongly as drinking and wenching companions to their respective masters. Compton did not have the political clout of William, lord Hastings but both shared a hatred from their kings' queens. Thomas More's observation that Edward IV's queen, Elizabeth Woodville, especially grudged Hastings, "*for y great fauoure the kyng bare hym, and also for that shee thoughte hym secretelye familyer with the kynge in wanton coumpanye*", could equally be applied to the acrimonious relationship between

Compton and Catherine of Aragon.²⁹ It should come as no surprise to find these kings seeking solace in male companionship. In a male-dominated culture, rich with the ostentatious displays of manhood evident in pursuits such as jousting, hunting and wrestling, it is easy to understand the actions of a monarch retreating to confide in his close male friends the torments created by a woman. Such a relationship, between king and confidant, would easily anger a queen who realised the difficulties in penetrating this bond.

The second point which this letter makes clear is that in the heated exchanges which followed the scuppering of the plan, the king sided not with his queen, or the duke of Buckingham but with Compton. Such was the exchange between Henry and Buckingham that the duke saw fit to leave the palace for several days, and this because he had quarrelled with Compton. The queen also crossed her husband by "*showing ill-will*" to Compton.³⁰ The two husbands of the sisters involved, Robert Ratcliffe and George Hastings, who afterwards became respectively lord Fitzwalter and the earl of Huntingdon, fared no better. One was forced to take his wife from the palace to a convent and the other, with his wife, was ejected by Henry. It would seem that the king valued the friendship of Compton over a queen, duke and, in time, a lord and earl. How much of

²⁹ Thomas More, The History of King Richard III, pp10-11; Crowland Chronicle Continuations, 1459-1486, edited by Nicholas Pronay and John Cox, pp154-5; Charles Ross, Edward IV, pp73-4, 314-5.

³⁰ LP, I, i, 474.

Henry's ire can be attributed to his missing an opportunity to satisfy his carnal cravings is difficult to assess. He certainly seems to have lost his temper and Caroz noted that he wanted to eject other women "*suspected of tale-bearing, but he thought the scandal too great.*" The king had clearly made waves.

Compton's position at court was clear by as early as 1511 as a letter of 8th April of that year shows.³¹ Here D'Arizolles, a French ambassador in England, writing in London to Florimond Robertet, treasurer of France, commented on Compton and the importance of seeking favour with this courtier. The letter is an important one and it is worth noting its translation at some length:

"Wrote in his last [letter] about one Conton's credit with the King of England. Is advised that a pension of 400cr. or 500cr. would be well bestowed upon Conton. Is sure Robertet would pay it himself if he knew how much the man can do for the maintenance of the amity. It should be done as soon as possible and the letters sent to the writer, as was done in the case of the Great Treasurer and the Great Master [Thomas Howard, Lord Treasurer and Charles Somerset, Lord Chamberlain of the Household]. Some who have the King's pension here are very old and the pensions will cease when they die."

Later in the letter D'Arizolles recalled Pope Julius II attempting to bring Henry on to his side in the power struggle against French influence in northern Italy. The

³¹ Ibid, 734.

English bishops were seen as being in a position to harry the king on this matter and D'Arizolles wrote,

"These bishops and others who want to serve the Pope try to gain Conton [Compton]. The archbishop of York [Christopher Bainbridge] deals wholly with him because he thinks all the others who have influence are pensioners of the King."

This extract lays bare the extent to which the court of the king was dominated by interlocking circles of influence and how politically expedient it was to foster contacts within these circles. In April, 1509, William Compton was a butler and in April, 1511, he was being courted by bishops. Compton was not the chief butler, that post was held by Sir Robert Southwell at this time, and eventually by Thomas Cromwell. However, the post of butler was not a menial office. This man would have been a major court functionary.

These letters were written by men at the centre of court life and the fact that they come from two different sources must lend weight to their common thread - the influence of Compton. The ambassadors from Spain and France, Caroz and D'Arizolles, were men in occupations which demanded a knowledge of court and courtiers, of which men were to be cultivated and which were out of favour. This was also the world of rumour and counter-rumour, where a persistent ambassador could be fobbed off with gossip and inaccuracies. However, these two letters refer to the influence of Compton through separate incidents occurring

at different times.

A third letter, written by Richard Fox and sent to Wolsey in June, 1513, further emphasises the argument.³² Here Fox had received letters from Wolsey which he wrote would be "*directed to Mr Compton to get them signed of the king's grace.*" Considering the king's general reluctance to sign letters, Compton must have been in possession of particularly persuasive talents. Furthermore, it appears that the letters to be signed were of an urgent nature - Fox mentions that he sat up in his bed until six in the morning to complete the documents for posting. He must have known that Compton was the man to approach to gain speedy access to the king. This was Compton's strength - his position at court in relation to the body of the king. A sentence of Vergil's reveals much:

*"There came third also to the same place of struggle [the court] William Compton, the chief servant of the King's chamber, but he gave no cause for mistrust since his concerns were rather with the duties of a household man than with power."*³³ The chief servant at this point in the reign would be no exaggeration and that the man could be trusted because he was solely concerned with his duties as a household man rather than with the power attached to offices of state is certainly true. This would help to explain not only why he escaped the jealous attentions of Wolsey at this time but also perhaps why that almoner managed to rise

³² Ibid, I, ii, 1960.

³³ PV, p153.

at the rate he did. An ambitious Compton would surely have proved an obstacle to a hungry Wolsey. In May, 1516, Compton and Wolsey were being referred to as "*marvellous great*" with the king, that is in high favour.³⁴ It says a great deal for a courtier like Compton that he could be described as such in the same breath as the mighty cardinal.

By 1523, however, if we are to believe the account of the anti-Wolsey Vergil, that cardinal was trying to have Compton ejected and excluded from the royal household.³⁵ Vergil explained this by claiming that the king liked Compton, perhaps Vergil taking his prejudice a little too far, and by stating that Wolsey could not gain Compton's friendship "*on account of the difference in their character: for William disliked Wolsey's ruthless nature, who to excel all in power always snatched a little more from the authority of the king to add to his own.*" Whatever the state of hostilities between Wolsey and Compton in 1523, there seems to have been no sign of early antagonism. Perhaps this can be attributed to Wolsey not yet having risen to a position of prominence and not having developed any notions of superiority. Compton may also have felt naturally protective of his close friend the king and may have been suspicious of anyone who seemed to be garnering too much power.

To describe Compton as a 'chief servant' would seem most

³⁴ LP, II, i, 1959.

³⁵ PV, p309.

apt. Here was a man who was not seen as a politician, either by himself or others. Compton was not attempting to gain political clout; he was more a channel for favours. This was a man on the make, making profit out of his association with Henry VIII. He found grants and opportunities placed in his path and took full advantage of a king generous to those whom he trusted.

The letters of Caroz and D'Arizolles are particularly enlightening on the workings of ambassadors at court, their contacts and influence, and the manipulation of their sources of information.³⁶ The beginning of Caroz's letter is given over to his complaints of the friar Diego Fernandez, a confidant of Queen Catherine, who was providing Caroz with information on the royal household. This information was then relayed back to King Ferdinand. Caroz felt that the friar was not being as helpful as he could have been in providing this information, "*I cannot make use of him in anything*", and that he, Caroz, was thus not serving his master Ferdinand properly; "*it is clear that he [the friar] greatly injures the service of his Highness [Ferdinand], inasmuch as he keeps the Queen engaged, so that I cannot make use of her in anything.*" Caroz attempted to work his way around this reluctant intermediary by enlisting Ferdinand to write letters of recommendation to the queen, promoting to her service a servant by the name of Francisca de Caceres. Caroz felt that this servant, "*the most attached person in the world to the service of her Highness*" would,

³⁶ LP, I, i, 474, 734; CSP, Spanish, Supplement to volumes I and II, pp36-44.

having recovered her place in the palace, render "*the greatest services*", that is provide him with all the inside information he desired. Caroz had been let down by the friar over the duke of Buckingham episode, having heard of the intrigue first through general court rumour: "*almost all the court knew that the Queen had been vexed with the King, and the King with her, and thus this storm went on between them.*"

An ambassador like Caroz seemed to operate on the periphery of court life, with much of his information being gleaned from intermediaries and third parties. The influence of Ferdinand in these affairs cannot be discounted. Caroz was in his employ and would have been anxious to satisfy his master. He advised Almazan to inform Ferdinand of the affairs at court in England, "*if you think it advisable, and if not, conceal it and order me likewise not to speak any more of it, and not to lose my time in such things, unless I obtain some advantage thereby.*"³⁷ Caroz was clearly hoping for some good news to send to Queen Catherine's father. Henry's advisers were no doubt aware of unduly alienating the Spanish king. When a rumour of pregnancy turned out to be false, Caroz, in the same letter, warned Almazan, "*it must not be known here that I have written ought of these affairs, because I have said that I do not write of them.*" The king's circle did not want Ferdinand to know of this incident as he would no doubt have worried about possible reprisals against his daughter. The sense of disappointment

³⁷ CSP, Spanish, Supplement to volumes I and II, pp36-44.

at this phantom pregnancy among the court circle is evident in the ambassador's letter, the privy councillors being "*very vexed and angry*" at the false news.

It is clear that William Compton was highly thought of by Henry. In 1524, he was still being referred to as in high standing with the king by a foreign ambassador.³⁸ He had managed to elevate himself into a high social circle. George Talbot, earl of Shrewsbury was given the custody and marriage of Peter Compton, son and heir of Sir William.³⁹ It is difficult to assess the extent of Talbot's influence on Compton's early rise. Little can be surmised from their joint membership of commissions of the peace for Leicestershire and Worcestershire. As household men, they would, however, have most certainly crossed paths at court and it must be assumed, with the earl possessing the wardship of Peter Compton, that the two men were friends. Edward Hall, describing his death from sweating sickness in 1528, referred to him as one of those whom the king highly favoured.⁴⁰ On hearing the news of Compton's death, Henry retired to Wolsey's manor house at Tittenhanger in Herefordshire where he remained for several weeks in private.⁴¹ The loss of any close friend would have heralded a period of contemplation but the relationship between Compton and his king was clearly particularly special.

³⁸ Ibid, Further Supplement, p305.

³⁹ PRO, PROB 11/26, ff95r-97v.

⁴⁰ Hall, vol ii, p137; Grafton, vol ii, p412.

⁴¹ Memoir of Henry Fitzroy, Duke of Richmond and Somerset. Camden Miscellany, (1855), 3: pplv-lvi.

William Compton stepped in to aid Shrewsbury on one occasion which further highlights this courtier's social standing at court. Thomas Alen, a servant of the earl, in attempting to contact Wolsey with certain letters and examinations from his master in November, 1517, failed to secure an immediate response from the cardinal.⁴² He followed Wolsey to the court and park at Hampton with little success. Alen was eventually moved to suggest that he would rather be sent to Rome and await a reply there than be dispatched to Wolsey. Alen also had in his possession a letter from one Ralph Leech with instructions to deliver it to the cardinal but he failed to elicit a response to this as well. Leech had planned to travel directly to the king at Farnham when William Compton stepped in to promise a reply to Alen's requests. Compton would seem to have been a personable individual with enough standing to make profitable approaches to Wolsey while still retaining a degree of accessibility for the lower orders. Alen requested money from the earl of Shrewsbury, obviously having incurred expenses whilst following Wolsey around. Shrewsbury's absence from the centres of activity carried the obvious problem of diminishing influence for his servants. As Alen's problems show, it was difficult to retain immediate political clout from a distance. Compton was at the heart of matters and was recognised as being so.

A significant episode in Compton's early career happened in January, 1510. The king chose him to take part in a surprise

⁴² LP, II, ii, 3807.

joust in Richmond park at which "*there wer broken many staves, and greate praise geven to the twoo straungers.*"⁴³ Naturally in this account the king took most of the adulation while Compton managed to almost get himself killed at the hands of the fellow jouster Sir Edward Neville. The nurturing of the court favourite can be said to be complete. It was a particularly high honour for Compton to be chosen to partner the king in this escapade and he must have endeared himself to his master in this act of bravery. In a court dominated by codes and ritual, the king's choice of companion would have had special significance.

This was a proclamation to those present, to those wishing access to the king's ear: the lubrication of Compton would facilitate this access. This episode would most likely have resulted in Compton making much on the side from courtiers anxious for a friendly word in the direction of the king from a trusted and close confidant like Compton. Any monetary gain such as this would have been welcomed by Compton but such access to the king meant something much more. Compton would have enjoyed attending jousts and feasts, accompanying the king, simply being in attendance at court knowing that eyes would be on him as such a close courtier of the king. Compton had made his mark on a court dominated by displays of social status, of mobility through patronage, of shallow friendships and promotion through backhanders.

⁴³ Hall, vol i, pp14-15.

Another man who could be described as a close friend of the king was Thomas Boleyn.⁴⁴ In January, 1510, he took part in celebrations in honour of Catherine of Aragon, dressing up with the king and other chosen men as Robin Hood figures.⁴⁵ At a tournament at the end of May, 1510, he was the king's opponent on the opening day of jousting.⁴⁶ Other men involved in these feats of arms included Sir Edward Howard, Charles Brandon and Sir Thomas Knevet; these men with others made up that circle of young courtiers that spent so much time making merry with the king.⁴⁷ He was also present at the tournament held the next February to celebrate the birth of Henry's son, and when the child died shortly afterwards he found himself chosen to help carry the corpse into Westminster Abbey.⁴⁸

William Compton had left the king in his will certain items to the value of £1000 which he had received from Sir Thomas Boleyn for money lent to him, Boleyn.⁴⁹ Instructions were left for the executors to obtain further sums of money due from Boleyn for the use of the king. This is a more conventional pledge to the king. What stands

⁴⁴ See also this thesis, p105 for a further examination of Boleyn.

⁴⁵ WH Dean (1987) Sir Thomas Boleyn: the courtier diplomat, 1477-1539, Unpublished PhD thesis, University of West Virginia, p34; LP, II, ii, p1490.

⁴⁶ LP, I, ii, Appendix 9.

⁴⁷ David Starkey in Henry VIII: a European court in England, p49, makes the point that Brandon's resemblance to Henry, his youth and similar build, allowed him to compete against the king in jousts. This reinforces the notion of chance playing a part in a courtier's progress. Brandon and others were fortunate in that they lived at a time when a king like Henry was on the throne. It is questionable whether the same opportunities would have existed for such men in 1485 for example.

⁴⁸ LP, I, i, 698, 707.

⁴⁹ PRO, PROB 11/23, f219r.

out here is the fact that a man like Boleyn was borrowing such a large amount of money from Compton. Boleyn came from well-connected stock and was by no means a poor man. He was, however, heavily involved in foreign diplomacy and military activities, occupations which demanded heavy resourcing and meant he was absent from the court and its sources of patronage for lengths of time. It is possible that he borrowed money to finance his foreign ventures. War was an expensive business. Not only did the king incur great expenses but so too did his captains. Thomas Darcy, for example, declared that in the space of three and a half years his expeditions to Spain and France had cost him in the region of £4,000.⁵⁰ Typically, he added that he still desired to serve the king abroad. It is easy to imagine how quickly a man like Boleyn could accumulate his expenses.

There is a secondary and more subliminal significance associated with this loan. Compton was a man close to the king and Boleyn's standing would have been increased somewhat by being connected with him, even through a burdensome loan. This may seem a contrivance to a cynical eye but it must be remembered that this was a world of contacts, of spurious connections and hyped associations, where a name dropped could mean much and a career could be built through second, third or fourth hand access to those in power. The benefit of connections to the Boleyn family will be seen later.

⁵⁰ LP, I, ii, 2576.

William Sandys was another who could be described as in the king's favour and he was certainly made by that king.⁵¹ He had a history under Henry VII but it was under the second Tudor that Sandys was given the opportunity to excel himself in service. It was Henry VIII who turned him into a powerful baron. Sandys was pardoned by Henry and many of his debts were written off.⁵² In the first two years of the reign, recognizances of Sandys to the value of £3600 were cancelled, £100 of this total held jointly with Richard Weston.⁵³ This was a considerable amount of money and clearly marked out Sandys as one of the royal favourites.⁵⁴

In addition to the remittance of debts, the king also delivered to Sandys several valuable grants. In October, 1509, he became keeper of the manor of Sherbourne St. John in Hampshire.⁵⁵ This was followed in January, 1510, by the constabulary of the castle in Southampton, and the next month the keepership of Freemantle park in Hampshire.⁵⁶ Hampshire proved to be a county of rich pickings for Sandys. His home county, he also received within its

⁵¹ See also this thesis, p82, 109 and 117.

⁵² LP, I, i, 438(2m.21).

⁵³ Ibid, 158(77), 448(6), 731(52), 784(30).

⁵⁴ John Guy, Tudor England, p81, states that 'a few of Henry VII's bonds were cancelled', describing the process of the cancellation of recognizances as part of a 'charade.' William Sandys may have had a different view. Thomas Lovell, a man closely associated with this financial system during Henry VII's later years, saw, in the first two years of Henry VIII's reign, the cancellation of 59 recognizances in which he had been involved. Guy makes the valid point that the execution of Empson and Dudley formed part of a ploy to take advantage of the stability established by Henry VII 'without incurring any of its attendant stigma.' The cancellation of recognizances, however, was not a superficial policy and had significant effects.

⁵⁵ LP, I, i, 218(26).

⁵⁶ Ibid, 357(9), 381(32).

boundaries the stewardship and surveyorship of the lordships of Ringwood and Christchurch, the constabulary of the castle and bailiff of the lordship of Christchurch, and keepership of the deer in the bailiwick of Stourfield.⁵⁷ These, apart from the keepership of the deer, were renewals of grants made under Henry VII in 1499.⁵⁸ He also received land in Somerset, Devon and Berkshire, as well as benefiting from the forfeiture of Edmund de la Pole's scattered possessions.⁵⁹ He did also add to his landed wealth through purchase. For example, in 1512 he purchased all lands, tenements, reversions and services in East Sherborne and elsewhere belonging to Barnarde Messante of Romsey.⁶⁰ Increased wealth through royal grants necessarily meant that a man like Sandys would be in a better position to help himself to further pockets of land in any chosen county, in this case Hampshire.

A grant of particular interest occurred in October, 1510, and gave Sandys by renewal, for life, from the first day of the reign, the manors or lordships of Periton in Somerset and West Raddon in Devon, forfeited by James Tuchet, late lord Audley, by service of one red rose.⁶¹ This last phrase, 'by service of one red rose', translates as a grant of lands at a nominal rent with the awareness that the lands were the king's. This is a substantial grant of forfeited lands for a

⁵⁷ Ibid, 604(43).

⁵⁸ CPR, Henry VII, 1494-1509, p187.

⁵⁹ LP, I, i, 604(42), 1732(24).

⁶⁰ Hampshire Record Office, Chute Papers, 31 M57/80.

⁶¹ LP, I, i, 604(42); CPR, Henry VII, 1494-1509, p354.

nominal payment which suggests that Sandys was highly in favour.

While William Sandys seems to have caught Henry VIII's eye, he did have a certain amount of military ability which would have aided his career. Prowess in any field was likely to draw attention but ability in the field of war, or on the tiltyard, would have been of particular interest to this young monarch. A man could quite easily emerge from obscurity through military prowess. One such man was a soldier by the name of Newbolt who was described as being in the king's "*synguler ffavour, ffor that he was a specyall archour of alle othyr.*"⁶² This soldier was charged with murder and Henry allowed him to be hanged, "*ffor which Jugement, The kyng Wan grete honour & ffavour of his comons.*" The parallels can be drawn here with the reign of Henry VII and the execution of Empson and Dudley in 1509 at Henry VIII's orders. Although the image created in this episode may perhaps have been exaggerated by the chronicler, the underlying message and its implications are clear. This was an honourable king who had the popular love of his people. Henry VIII was being promoted as a contrast to his father, a king willing to stand sentinel for his people's welfare.

Chance played a part in the comings and goings of some courtiers, particularly when they were relying on the grace of the king for advancement. Henry VIII could not be expected to achieve a rapport with all those men who served

⁶² GC, p379.

his father, especially when it came to choosing personal servants. Continuity could exist among the administration, among the offices of state, and in the general household, but intimates were a different matter. A man like Sir Roland de Veleville, for example, was someone whose career relied on the particular needs of the new monarch. He was a member of Henry VII's inner circle, one of those who likely followed that king from Brittany in 1485.⁶³ He was a professional courtier, living off the annuity granted to him by the king in 1496,⁶⁴ playing his part at official functions and giving a good account of himself at royal jousting tournaments. At the jousts following the creation of Henry, duke of York in 1494, he gave "*good strypis*", breaking spears and tiring out his horse.⁶⁵ De Veleville, although a servant close to Henry VII, did not feature at the court of the son. He played a part in the king's army in France in 1513 but then drifted from the scene, retiring to his charge at Beaumaris Castle. The king's grace could, and did, make and break careers.

⁶³ SJ Gunn (1993), 'The courtiers of Henry VII', *EHR*, cviii: pp36, 43.

⁶⁴ *CPR, Henry VII, 1494-1509*, p47.

⁶⁵ *LP Richard III/Henry VII*, vol ii, p88; vol i, pp395, 397-401.

(ii) advancement through pedigree

A courtier whose career contrasts with William Compton's is Piers Edgecombe. This is a man with a family history to support his cause and, more importantly, with a family history of loyalty. While William Compton was a self-made man, Piers Edgecombe could enjoy the support of a background of service to the Tudor line. Much as a younger brother or sister could learn and gain from the experience of those who have trodden the path before them, Edgecombe the son could benefit from the attainments of his father.

Here then is a man at work in the court of Henry VII and already well established by 1509. His name appears as one of those chosen to ride to meet the French at the signing of the peace treaty in 1492.⁶⁶ Two years later on October 30th, 1494, he was present at the creation of Henry, duke of York and at the feast following.⁶⁷ He was also most likely present at the accompanying tournament. Edgecombe was involved in the Ceremony of the Bath at this creation. Piers's father Richard had been with Henry during his exile in Brittany after the autumn rising of 1483.⁶⁸ He had been pardoned after the rebellion of 1483 but seems to have been involved in the troubles in the south-west of England in 1484.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Ibid, vol ii, p291.

⁶⁷ Ibid, vol i, pp390, 403.

⁶⁸ PV, pp5-6.

⁶⁹ C Ross, Richard III, p123; BL Harleian Manuscript 433, edited by Horrox and Hammond, vol i, p110.

Richard Edgecombe's opposition to Richard III and flight from his men has given rise to the heroic story that he slipped his pursuers by either swimming the River Tamar, or throwing his cap into the water to give the impression that he had perished under the current. He built a chapel on the spot beside the river and the inside of this monument was adorned with a painting of the original building.⁷⁰ This loyal servant was rewarded when Henry was crowned in 1485; he was knighted at Bosworth, becoming a Chamberlain of the Exchequer and sheriff of Devon before his death in 1489.⁷¹ Richard Edgecombe served Henry VII loyally on diplomatic missions to Scotland after the battle of Stoke in 1487, and the next year to Ireland and Brittany.⁷² The son Piers would most likely have been introduced to the courtly life at an early age and would have been well-placed in 1489 to utilise his father's trustworthiness at court.

Richard Edgecombe was sent as an ambassador to Scotland in 1487 along with Richard Fox who had just been created bishop of Exeter. Edgecombe was the comptroller of Fox's household and would have made an excellent companion for

⁷⁰ Lake's Parochial History of the County of Cornwall, edited by J Polsue, vol i, pp177-178.

⁷¹ SB Chrimes, Henry VII, pp259-260n, gives his date of death as 1489 while on a mission to Brittany. Lake's Parochial History, pp177-178, favours September 8th, 1499, specifying that he had been sent on a public embassy to France and had died on his way home at Morlaix in Brittany where he was buried in the conventual church. It would seem that Chrimes' date is the accurate one. CPR, Henry VII, 1494-1509, p43, describes him as being deceased by 1495. Testamenta Vetusta, vol i, pp393-394, opts for September 8th, 1489, while PRO, PROB 11/9, f81v, 82r has the date 1492.

⁷² AL Rowse, Tudor Cornwall, pp114-116.

the bishop as well as being a negotiator in his own right.⁷³ The Edgecombes were clearly a leading west country family. They were country gentry and as such could be described as part of a ruling mass.⁷⁴ They were one of hundreds of other similar families across the counties of England who provided the localities with their administrative nerve-centres. They provided little threat to either the major landholders or the king, being under the influence of both. This often allowed them to survive successive dynastic changes relatively unscathed.

Piers Edgecombe's interests seem to have been heavily concentrated in Cornwall. In December, 1502, he received, jointly with Roger Holand, the offices of escheator and feodary of the duchy of Cornwall.⁷⁵ Two years later he became constable of the castle of Launceston, also in Cornwall.⁷⁶ He was commissioned to inquire of the escapes of felons in Cornwall and Devon and to inquire of concealed lands in Cornwall, in 1504 and 1505 respectively.⁷⁷ Here is a man who spent very little of his time, so far as it is possible to trace his movements, in the court in London. He appeared to busy himself in his home county much more than a man like Compton. It is a matter of geography that led areas such as Cornwall to be historically rebellious. The further a place was from the royal eye the more likelihood

⁷³ Grafton, vol ii, p170.

⁷⁴ AL Rowse, Tudor Cornwall, p77.

⁷⁵ CPR, Henry VII, 1494-1509, p300.

⁷⁶ Ibid, p354.

⁷⁷ Ibid, pp357, 421.

of trouble. Concerned with little outside his own county, Edgecombe seemed content to serve the king in the west country. He was part of Henry VII's force which faced Perkin Warbeck's rebellion in Cornwall in 1497, and was on the subsequent commission which was instructed to seize the lands and goods of those involved in this uprising, receiving the rents for these lands.⁷⁸

With the death of Prince Arthur in 1502, it was decided that Prince Henry should succeed to the Duchy of Cornwall as 'filius primogenitus existens.'⁷⁹ It was Edward III's charter of 1337 which allowed the king's eldest son to succeed to the title Duke of Cornwall. With the accession of the Duke to the throne the Duchy would revert to the crown and enter a period of dormancy. However, with Prince Henry as Duke of Cornwall, Edgecombe could bring himself into close contact with the future king. The Duchy of Cornwall consisted of land in several counties but with a concentration in Cornwall including Launceston Castle, the constabulary of which was held by Richard and Piers Edgecombe. Indeed, Piers Edgecombe seems to have slipped smoothly into the position of trust held by his father. He successfully served Arthur and then Henry within the Duchy. He appeared in April, 1500, on a jury condemning several accused murderers to death.⁸⁰ As has been seen, in December, 1502, he was granted, with Roger Holand, the offices of

⁷⁸ Hist MSS Comm, Appendix to the Second Report, p20.

⁷⁹ AL Rowse, Tudor Cornwall, p78.

⁸⁰ CPR, Henry VII, 1494-1509, p197.

escheator and feodary of the Duchy.⁸¹ His father had also been granted this escheatorship and both men were awarded the keepership of Kerybullok.⁸² The constabulary of Launceston Castle, the escheatorship of the Duchy and keepership of Kerybullok all came within the ownership of the Duke of Cornwall and all three were at some time held by father and son.

As a leading gentleman in Cornwall, Edgecombe, with Sir John Arundell and Edward Willoughby, was instructed to prepare men for an expected invasion from France in 1513.⁸³ This followed a commission to muster men-at-arms under the command of Thomas lord Darcy, captain of Berwick.⁸⁴ Edgecombe then crossed to Brittany in May, 1513, with a retinue of 100 men.⁸⁵ That summer was spent abroad and Edgecombe distinguished himself sufficiently to be created a knight-banneret after the battle of Spurs in August.⁸⁶ Back home he continued to increase his influence in the west country. June, 1509, saw him receive the keepership of the park of Kerybullok, Cornwall.⁸⁷ A sheriff in his native Cornwall, he served on all fourteen commissions of the peace in that county between July, 1509, and November, 1514, and ten of the twelve commissions in

⁸¹ Ibid, p300.

⁸² LP, I, i, 94(85).

⁸³ Ibid, 1602(38).

⁸⁴ Ibid, 731(44).

⁸⁵ Ibid, I, ii, 1869.

⁸⁶ DNB, vol xvi, pp375-6.

⁸⁷ LP, I, i, 94(85).

Devon during November, 1509, and July, 1514.⁸⁸ He also found himself on a commission in September, 1514, to inquire into the riots which had occurred in Devon. This part of the country was historically the scene of much unrest and it was thus particularly important for the king to have trustworthy and able men here. The Edgecombe family had shown their loyalty to the Tudor dynasty. Piers Edgecombe was now in a position of seniority as regards local administration.

The year 1515 saw him on another six commissions of the peace, three in Cornwall and three in Devon. The majority of his land-holding was not acquired through any royal grants, a significant feature of Henry VIII's early years being promotion through grants of offices and not land. Edgecombe's lands were acquired through inheritance, purchase and marriage. He had received, in June, 1515, a licence to impark lands in Westonehouse and Cremele, Devon and Cotehele, Cornwall, and to enclose and fortify his manor of Estonehouse, Devon.⁸⁹ These lands in East and West Stonehouse had been absorbed by the Edgecombe family through the marriage of Piers and Jane Durnford, daughter and heiress of Stephen Durnford.⁹⁰ By Jane he had three sons, Richard, John and James and three daughters, Elizabeth, Jane and Agnes. Elizabeth married John Arundel of Lanherne, Cornwall and Jane married Sir Thomas

⁸⁸ *Ibid*, 1494(9); I, ii, pp1534-5.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, II, i, 642.

⁹⁰ *DNB*, vol xvi, pp375-6.

Pomeroy of Sandridge, Devon, both extending the Edgecombe connection within the west country.⁹¹ A second marriage was childless. He left in his will over £330 to the parish churches of Plymouth, Calstock and Bodmin to pray for his soul; his household servants all received one year's wages; he left to several men his tin works in Devon and Cornwall to pay his debts, the works then reverting to his sons John and James⁹²; the residue of all his goods he left to his second wife Catherine and on her death to his son and heir Richard.⁹³

Piers Edgecombe does not appear to have been a particularly wealthy man. His lands were localised as was his influence. Available evidence suggests that he was rarely in attendance at court or in London. His career contrasts with that of his father, a Chamberlain of the Exchequer who served on several diplomatic missions. The family house, Cotehele in Cornwall, was expanded upon by Sir Richard and his son Piers but it did not resemble the size of Compton Wynyates, for example.⁹⁴ Piers Edgecombe could be considered wealthy in a local sense but he was not in the financial bracket of a man like William Compton. He had, however, sufficient financial resources to make a rather generous bequest in his will: "*Also I bequeath to every of my*

⁹¹ Testamenta Vetusta, vol i, p648n; see Lake's Parochial History, vol i, p181 for a full pedigree of the family of Edgcumbe of Cothele in Calstock and Mount Edgcumbe in Maker.

⁹² Somerset Medieval Wills, 1531-1558, Somerset Record Society, vol 21, pp149-150 has Edgecombe's wife's will stating that some of the family tinworks in Cornwall were still in her possession.

⁹³ PRO, PROB 11/27, f243r & v; Testamenta Vetusta, vol i, pp647-650.

⁹⁴ M Howard, The early Tudor country house, pp76, 81.

household servants being in my wages at my death a whole year's wages after the rate that they had and received of me by my life time." ⁹⁵ He was nothing more or less than a dependable local administrator. Perhaps he was satisfied to remain in such a position, but he certainly did not catch the eye of the young king and he had had the opportunity to do so, having been a servant of the Duchy of Cornwall.

Men, like Edgecombe, who had served under Henry VII, had the experience needed to run certain offices in the first few years of the new king's reign. A continuity of sorts would have been forced on Henry VIII in the sense that he inherited a collection of men with a background and knowledge in specific areas. That the majority of his father's men continued to receive advancement would seem to be a natural and practical reaction.

A man like Richard Weston, for example, would expect to have been involved in the new administration in a manner which befitted his social standing. Weston had served as a groom of the chamber under Henry VII and during that monarch's later years he had accumulated an interesting collection of offices. In March, 1504, he was awarded for life the keepership of Sunninghill park in Windsor forest

⁹⁵ PRO, PROB 11/27, f243r. This bequest shows some financial standing although it was a fairly common one among gentlemen of, and above, Edgecombe's standing. PW Fleming, 'Household servants of the Yorkist and early Tudor gentry', p23, in Early Tudor England, edited by D Williams, notes that 'servants were generally indentured to serve for one year', hence the typical entry in wills to pay the household staff one year's wage. Such a payment would of course have had more significance for a man like Thomas Lovell's estate. He had approaching 100 servants in his households at Enfield and Haliwell.

and made riding forester there also; later that same year he received during pleasure the office of steward of the lordship of Marlow in Buckingham; in February, 1505, he was awarded for life the office of ranger in the king's forest of Knaresbrough on the Isle of Wight and in June, also for life, the office of keeper of the new park called Mote, another forester office and the keeping of a lodge in Windsor forest; he also picked up a place on a commission de walliis et fossatis in Surrey, and of a gaol delivery for New Windsor, stewardships of lordships in Berkshire and Yorkshire.⁹⁶ Several of these grants gave Weston posts on crown estates. They represented a most typical collection for a courtier of Weston's standing, clearly a man in favour at court but very much a run-of-the-mill servant.⁹⁷

Richard Weston would have been approximately forty-three years of age when Henry VIII came to the throne.⁹⁸ At this age he would appear to have been a little too old to have progressed with any rapidity up the court ladder. His grants, however, showed no signs of drying up. In the first year of the new king's reign a recognizance he had made with William Sandys worth 100s was cancelled.⁹⁹ The majority of his grants were of offices rather than land, the more important being the keepership of a park in Middlesex, stewardship of a lordship in Hertfordshire, lieutenancy of the castle and forest of Windsor and the captaincy,

⁹⁶ CPR, Henry VII, 1494-1509, pp309, 343, 412, 413, 416, 456, 560, 525, 585.

⁹⁷ P Gwyn, The king's cardinal, p559.

⁹⁸ DNB, vol lx, p363.

⁹⁹ LP, I, i, 448(6).

keepership and governorship of Guernsey, the castle of Cornett and the isles of Alderney, Sark, Herm and Jethou. This last grant was for life and was filled by Weston personally.¹⁰⁰ It may have been that Weston, realising that he was not going to be given a permanent place at court and not having any degree of intimacy with the king, decided to take up one of the posts he had been awarded. Clearly there was a responsibility resting on his shoulders after he had been given the clutch of awards in the Channel Islands and rather than farm them out he decided to move there and occupy them himself. Weston was one of those men who benefited from the fall from grace of the duke of Buckingham. He secured from the king part of this man's estate in Surrey, building a house at Sutton Place.¹⁰¹

Henry Wyatt was another man whose career was rooted in previous reigns and he too would have expected to have remained in favour with the new monarch. When he died in 1536, Wyatt had experienced life under three monarchs, Richard III, Henry VII and Henry VIII. He served two years in the Tower of London for opposing Richard III during which time he was allegedly tortured.¹⁰² The question of Wyatt being tortured by Richard III in the Tower of London is in some doubt. There is no

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 54(69,71), 94(104), 804(3).

¹⁰¹ M Howard, The early Tudor country house, p31, 129-130, 133, 135, 216. Weston may have been influenced by the houses of French courtiers when he visited the Loire valley in 1518, taking ideas back to England to use on his own house. Parts of the exterior of his house remain today, with plinths visible carrying 'RW' inscriptions.

¹⁰² DNB, vol lxiii, pp183-4.

contemporary source for this, the story being attributed to tradition.¹⁰³ Another story relates that it was while Wyatt was on business for the earl of Richmond in Scotland that he was captured by a Scottish baron and subjected to torture; Henry Wyatt's son Thomas wrote to his son, also Thomas, in 1538, that his grandfather had at one time been locked in irons and stocks in Scotland for over two years.¹⁰⁴ It is not inconceivable to conclude that it is here that the origin of the story of the torture at the hands of Richard III lies. Scottish Yorkist sympathisers would have acted in similar ways as Richard III towards a courtier such as Wyatt, loyal to the earl of Richmond, the future Henry VII. Perhaps Wyatt was transferred to the Tower of London and any ransom raised given over to the Scots by Richard III. What seems almost certain is that Henry Wyatt suffered some form of incarceration and upon his release was received into court by a grateful Henry VII.

Wyatt would no doubt have been expecting his freedom when Henry VII came to the throne. He received this and was immediately admitted to the new king's council.¹⁰⁵ His grants under that king were minimal; an annuity of £20, a presentation to a vacant canonry, appointment to commissions of the peace in Essex, Middlesex and Surrey, grazing rights in the park of Conisbrough, York and two

¹⁰³ Ibid, p183.

¹⁰⁴ A Conway, Henry VII's relations with Scotland and Ireland, 1485-98, pp7-8; The papers of George Wyatt Esquire, edited by DM Loades (1968), Camden Fourth Series, vol v, p5.

¹⁰⁵ pV, p6.

appointments to commissions to inquire of the lands of traitors.¹⁰⁶ In April, 1495, he received the office of keeper of the change and assayer of the money and coinage in the Tower of London and it was in the field of finance that Wyatt was to spend much of his time. This appointment of Wyatt's occurred after the passing of Edward Poyning's acts in the Irish parliament from December, 1494, to April, 1495, acts which dealt with, among other things, financial and legal matters and defence.¹⁰⁷ On April 27th, 1495, the day after Henry VII had sent troops to Ireland to quell rebels, Wyatt received an appointment with William Hatchlyff to inspect and review these soldiers.¹⁰⁸ These two men were to audit and receive the money held by Sir Hugh Conwey, treasurer of Ireland, and then pay the troops.

Henry Wyatt was present at the funeral of Henry VII, listed as a squire of the body and master of the king's jewelhouse.¹⁰⁹ He also attended the coronation of Henry VIII on 24th June, 1509, and was knighted two days later.¹¹⁰ His transition from a councillor of the father to one of the son had been seamless.¹¹¹ Although present at the renewal of the treaty with Scotland on 29th August, 1509, Wyatt's main duties were in the household and it is here that

¹⁰⁶ CPR, Henry VII, 1494-1509, pp367, 591, 639, 650, 661, 219, 29, 53.

¹⁰⁷ SB Chrimes, Henry VII, pp264-5.

¹⁰⁸ LP Richard III/Henry VII, vol ii, p375.

¹⁰⁹ LP, I, i, 20.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, 81, 82.

¹¹¹ WH Dunham jnr (1944), 'The members of Henry VIII's whole council, 1509-1527', EHR, lix: p209.

he spent much of his time.¹¹² One month after this signing his name appears in the Mint accounts as having received fees and wages as campsor and assayer of the Mint and coinage in the Tower and elsewhere in England.¹¹³ This position he received in May, 1509, and it gave his career a definite direction.¹¹⁴

Grants of offices and land were not particularly forthcoming for Wyatt. He was granted, with Sir John Cutte, in June, 1509, the power to issue licences, for one year, to merchants to buy tin within England and to export it from Cornwall and Devon.¹¹⁵ March, 1511, saw two grants of gaol delivery at Newgate and Surrey, and in November he received a commission to inspect sewers in Middlesex.¹¹⁶ Wyatt did not receive any grants of land from Henry VIII until 1511 and even then they were not of any great significance. In May he received Baryns in Surrey; July brought him a message in Watling Street, London, some land in Northamptonshire which had been forfeited by Sir Richard Empson, and custody of lands called Maidencote, Berkshire.¹¹⁷ In February, 1512, he became, with Sir Thomas Boleyn, constable and keeper of the castle and gaol in Norwich.¹¹⁸ This was his first major material grant from Henry VIII and the only one within the first six years of

112 LP, I, i, 153.

113 Ibid, 185.

114 Ibid, 54(59).

115 Ibid, 94(58).

116 Ibid, 731(27, 28), 969(45).

117 Ibid, 784(20), 833(70).

118 Ibid, 1083(26).

that king's reign. Wyatt's career provides a contrast to that of William Compton. It would have seemed more natural for the king to trust and promote a courtier with a track record of loyalty, yet the opposite is the case with the fledgling Compton preferred over the ageing Wyatt.

While a man's own history of achievements, service or loyalty were a factor in his promotion under future monarchs, the record of his wider family was also of significance. Men from established families clearly held an advantage over the 'new men.' A family history of loyalty was a commodity recognised and often rewarded. One man who found his career kick-started by Henry VIII was William Sandys.¹¹⁹ A William Sandys was present at the conclusion of the peace with France in 1492.¹²⁰ It is likely that the courtier who took part in this and the knighting of Prince Henry in 1494 was the father of the William Sandys of interest here. It is unlikely that the son would have taken part in such a lofty ceremony while the father was still alive. The father died in 1497.¹²¹ The son was described as a young man in 1521.¹²² Assuming he was around twenty years of age when the knighting ceremony took place, this would make him forty-seven in 1521, hardly a young man. This also assumes, of course, that the description of him being a young man in 1521 is accurate.

¹¹⁹ See also this thesis, p65, 109 and 117.

¹²⁰ LP Richard III/Henry VII, vol ii, pp290-1.

¹²¹ DNB, vol L, p295.

¹²² Ibid, op cit.

Sandys was involved in the preparations for meeting with the Princess Catherine on her arrival from France in the autumn of 1501. A ten man committee was organised to "*debate and commune from time to time for the ordering of the receiving of the said princess off the water, for the first meeting on land for her conveying, lodging and dislodging of her and of her company as thereunto it shall appertain.*"¹²³ This group, acting as a reception committee, was entrusted with the safeguarding of and provisioning for the princess. Sandys was clearly moving in circles close to the king.

Nothing much more is heard of Sandys until the reign of Henry VIII when it is clear that he was a favourite of the king who gave his career fresh life. Present at the funeral of Henry VII, he soon became accustomed to the grace of the new king.¹²⁴ He received numerous grants in the first few years of Henry VIII's reign, some involving his home county of Hampshire although they were generally quite well spread. Sandys' brother, Richard, was returned to the parliament of 1529 by Hampshire, with a little help from the king as well as his brother.¹²⁵

With the benefit of hindsight it is possible see that Sir William Sandys was Henry VIII's man. It was under that

¹²³ LP Richard III/Henry VII, vol ii, 104.

¹²⁴ LP, I, i, 20(p13).

¹²⁵ The History of Parliament. The House of Commons, 1509-1558, edited by ST Bindoff, vol iii, pp268-269. Bindoff notes that Richard Sandys seems to have lived with his brother, accompanying him on the expedition to France in 1513 and possibly linking up with him at Calais from 1517.

king that he received his main grants and that his career took some form of direction. His career under Henry VII can be traced to some extent but it lacks any character or impetus. There were some minor grants, such as that, with Thomas Hasilwode, in May, 1495, of the keeping of the lands and heir of John Doyly during the minority of Thomas Doyly, with the marriage of the son. This would in time generate some money for Sandys through the issuing of licences to marry and inherit. In 1502 he received a grant for life of the office of ranger of Shute forest in the counties of Wiltshire and Hampshire.¹²⁶ 1504 saw him receive the manors of Periton in Somerset and West Raddon in Devon, forfeited by James Tuchet, lord Audley who had been executed for leading the south-western rebellion of 1497.¹²⁷ In October, 1508, he was granted for life the offices of keeper of the park of Stratfield Mortimer in Berkshire, and of the royal park of Esthampstede, also in Berkshire.¹²⁸ Sandys was on a commission of oyer and terminer for the town of Southampton in March, 1502, and also served on commissions of the peace for Southampton and Wiltshire from 1498 to 1504 and February, 1501 respectively.¹²⁹

Sandys made several recognizances to the king, totalling, in the period 1502 to 1508, approximately £4000.¹³⁰ Many of these recognizances were shared with other men. It is

¹²⁶ CPR, Henry VII, 1494-1509, p265.

¹²⁷ Ibid, p354.

¹²⁸ Ibid, p624.

¹²⁹ Ibid, pp287, 658, 665.

¹³⁰ CCR, Henry VII, vol ii, pp44, 110, 133, 170, 191, 255, 256, 287, 310, 357, 360.

evident that during the latter stages of Henry VII's reign, and in particular from 1502 onwards, recognizances were in heavy use to subjugate the landed classes. Possible reasons for this could have been the threat to the stability of the crown threatened by the death of Prince Arthur, the heir to the throne, and the persistent pretensions of Edmund de la Pole and his Yorkist sympathisers.¹³¹ Henry may have decided at this point in his reign that a firm hold on the nobility was essential to suppress any rebellious instincts. The burden faced by Sandys was not an unusual one at this time. He was not ever likely to have to find the sums involved in these recognizances. They were mainly instruments of suppression not vehicles to raise finance. However, the axe over his head could theoretically have fallen at any time.

Henry VIII, in his early years, was a king willing to show loyalty to those men who had in turn shown loyalty to the Tudor line. Thomas Lovell was a man who had stayed true to Henry VII. He joined the duke of Buckingham's rebellion in 1483 and found himself in exile following an attainder.¹³² He returned to England in the retinue of the future Henry VII and so began a new chapter in his career.¹³³ The next twenty-four years would bring Lovell a series of grants and preferments which made his services to the crown of the utmost importance. He was elevated by Henry VII to a

¹³¹ JAF Thomson, The transformation of medieval England, p234.

¹³² Rotuli Parliamentorum, vi, 246, 247. See also this thesis, p122.

¹³³ DNB, vol xxxiv, pp175-6; SB Chrimes, Henry VII, p111.

position which almost made him indispensable to Henry VIII. His attainder was reversed in the parliament of 1485.¹³⁴ He took his place in Henry VII's council and became chancellor of the exchequer for life in October, 1485, followed quickly by the office of esquire of the body and in 1487, knight of the body.¹³⁵ Clearly Lovell had grown close to the king and such a swift promotion can be attributed to a king rewarding loyalty after Lovell had joined him in exile. He most likely also acquitted himself well at the battle of Bosworth although Lovell was certainly an able man, having had some twenty years experience as a common lawyer. He was almost an exact contemporary of Henry, Lovell being born in 1453, the king in 1457. These factors all contributed to Lovell's early promotion and continued rewards.

A revolt in the west of England involving around 20,000 men had occurred in the summer of 1497. Working their way to within 20 miles of London, these men then demanded the surrender of five men, John Morton, archbishop of Canterbury, Reginald Bray, Richard Fox, keeper of the privy seal, Thomas Lovell and an unknown fifth man.¹³⁶ Here is an early indication of the central position Lovell held in the government.

Lovell took part in the feasts that followed the creation of

¹³⁴ Rotuli Parliamentorum, vi, 273, 274.

¹³⁵ PV, p6; DNB, op cit.

¹³⁶ CSP, Venetian, 1202-1509, 743.

Henry, duke of York in November, 1494, and was in charge of the trumpets and minstrels at the reception of Catherine of Aragon in October, 1501, being described as a yeoman usher of the king's chamber. He also accompanied the king when he met with the Archduke Philip of Austria in 1500.¹³⁷ It was, though, primarily in an administrative role that Lovell was used by the king. What is clear is that he worked in the field of finance, raising funds for Henry VII through the often punitive recognizance system.

In the first two years of the reign of Henry VIII there were 59 cancellations of recognizances which had been made with the involvement of Lovell.¹³⁸ The amount due to the crown which was cancelled totalled around £20,000. Almost every one of these recognizances was made by Lovell with the assistance of Richard Empson or Edmund Dudley or both. Also, they were all made, with the exception of one, in the last years of Henry VII's reign, from 1503 to 1509. Several points of interest emerge from these figures. Lovell was clearly working with Empson and Dudley, as well as with others like Reginald Bray, William Hussey, chief justice of the king's bench, John Ernley, the king's attorney and Thomas Lucas, to extract the maximum financial gain from the realm. Henry VII was securing a considerable amount of money during his last few years. A quantity of this income had been secured illegally, almost £8,000 of which

¹³⁷ LP Richard III/Henry VII, vol i, pp403, 413-4; vol ii, p88.

¹³⁸ LP, I, i, 54(3), 94(99), 132(18, 34), 218(24, 59), 257(80), 289(6, 44), 357(10), 381(108), 414(46), 449(18), 485(42), 651(7, 32), 682(3), 749(24), 784(56), 804(6, 49); I, ii, 3499(41).

was cancelled in the first two years of Henry VIII's reign having been unjustly obtained according to Henry VII's executors.¹³⁹ As well as this amount which had to be written off, the new king followed a definite policy of appeasement. That he was prepared to cancel so many recognizances, and only the ones involving Lovell have been highlighted, shows his acknowledgement of the unjust and prohibitive practices of his father's time. Of course, in some instances a bond had simply been paid off and was being cancelled as a matter of course.¹⁴⁰ This, however, does not affect the sheer volume of recognizances enacted in Henry VII's latter years or Lovell's part in them.

The question must then be asked, how did Lovell manage to escape prosecution? Why had Empson and Dudley been singled out for execution while Lovell not only escaped but continued to serve in Henry VIII's government? The first point to note is that Henry was not embarking on a purge. Empson and Dudley were the only two men executed by Henry VIII at the beginning of his reign and these executions did represent an effort on the king's part to break with the past. The accusations laid against them may have been for treason but there was no doubt that their part in the financial policy of Henry VII had brought about their downfall. Dudley protested against the accusation which he called false and his attempt to escape from the Tower suggests he

¹³⁹ Ibid, I, i, 749(24), 804(6, 49).

¹⁴⁰ DM Brodie (1932), 'Edmund Dudley: minister of Henry VII', TRHS, xv (4th Series): p149.

himself knew what the verdict would be.¹⁴¹ Dudley and Empson had certainly incurred the wrath of several groups, most notably the merchants.¹⁴² Lovell does not appear to have been involved in a hands-on capacity as regards financial bonds. He was treasurer of the household as well as chancellor of the exchequer and his duties were as an administrator in London. The bottom line was that Lovell's was not a face that would have been widely known in the localities.

The main point of difference between Thomas Lovell and Empson and Dudley would seem to be that the former was clearly and closely connected with several men at the heart of Henry VII's government who survived through 1509, men like the earl of Oxford and Richard Fox. Lovell was not as high-profile as either Empson or Dudley, having established himself patiently over a period of years. Although Lovell was named in some recognizances which were later deemed to have been raised unlawfully, his less disruptive stance, in local and central politics, allowed his reputation to remain intact. By contrast Dudley, a solitary individual among his contemporaries, had built himself an unpopular following in the capital.¹⁴³ Here was a man who had increased his lot in a rapid and aggressive fashion.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴¹ LP, I, i, 559.

¹⁴² DM Brodie (1932), 'Edmund Dudley: minister of Henry VII', TRHS, xv (4th Series): p152.

¹⁴³ SJ Gunn (1994), personal communication.

¹⁴⁴ SJ Gunn (1991), 'The accession of Henry VIII', HR, lxiv: pp284-5.

An interesting example of Lovell's less disruptive stance on a local matter which highlights his amenable nature occurred in 1513 to 1514. Lovell had a claim to rent from the city of York which the aldermen of that place felt was causing them a serious financial burden.¹⁴⁵ It was decided to send the two members of parliament for York, William Nelson and the mayor, Thomas Drawsword, to London to petition Lovell during the parliament which had assembled in February, 1512. This was judged to be a suitable occasion at which to approach Lovell. He was informed that the fee, which he was entitled to through an inheritance of lord Roos, was causing the city much hardship. An amended payment scheme was worked out, due to Lovell's "*charitable and luffyng mynde that he berith to the said Citie and to the inhabitawnts therein.*" Naturally the aldermen would now be well disposed towards Lovell and gracious in their praise, but this does not deflect from the main thrust of the argument. One can hardly imagine an Empson or Dudley offering to take a reduced fee from a legal right with such grace.

Something of the depth of the animosity felt towards Empson and Dudley can be understood from a letter from Elizabeth de Pole to Sir Robert Plumpton, as early as 1501, in which one half of this duo was strongly chastised.¹⁴⁶ Elizabeth wrote, wishing the Lord's strength to Plumpton, "*to resist and withstand the utter and malicious enmity, and*

¹⁴⁵ York Civic Records, vol iii, pp42-44.

¹⁴⁶ Plumpton Correspondence, pp162-163.

false craft of Mr. Empson, and such others your adversaries; whiche, as all the great parte of England knoweth, hath done to you and yours the most iniury and wrong, that ever was done, or wrought, to any man of worship in this land of peace." Empson and Dudley had operated freely, causing much hardship for many, gaining advancement under a king generally seen as a harsh ruler. Lovell, a figure associated with the household, managed to advance his reputation in the provinces with a little negotiation and flexibility.

Lovell was not a man who could have been easily sacrificed by Henry VIII. He had shown long-standing loyalty to Henry's father and his career had been an illustrious one. He was one of Henry VII's most important councillors, working alongside his friend Reginald Bray.¹⁴⁷ By 1499, he was being described by the Venetian ambassador as the king's chief financier while the previous year his Spanish colleague had named him as one of the most influential men in England.¹⁴⁸ He is a most typical example of a man being rewarded for a history of loyalty which stretched back into the previous reign. This pedigree of service to the Tudor crown left him in an ideal position for advancement in 1509.

¹⁴⁷ WC Richardson, Tudor chamber administration, p111.

¹⁴⁸ CSP, Venetian, 1202-1509, 799; CSP, Spanish, 1485-1509, 204.

(iii) advancement through patronage

Patronage was a vital component of court life. Piers Edgecombe may have suffered from a lack of influential contacts at the nobility level to make a serious impression at court. One man who did have such connections was Richard Tempest. Like Edgecombe, he was born of a provincial family, albeit a more prominent one. His most important patron would have been Thomas lord Darcy. Darcy's second marriage was to Dowsabel, daughter and heir of Sir Richard.¹⁴⁹ As well as Darcy, Tempest enjoyed the support of Henry Clifford, earl of Cumberland. This earl helped him to be returned as a member of parliament, representing Appleby at the parliament of 1529.¹⁵⁰ Towards the end of Henry VIII's reign, Tempest took possession of lands in Yorkshire which belonged to his uncle, Thomas Tempest, brother of his father Nicholas. Inquisitions found some of these tenements to be held of Henry Percy, earl of Northumberland and of Henry Clifford, in both cases the services owed were unknown; some were held of the king, of the duchy of Lancaster.¹⁵¹ It may be assumed that Tempest was advanced at court with some help from his influential son-in-law, Thomas Darcy.

¹⁴⁹ Complete Peerage, vol iv, pp71, 73, 74; DNB, vol xiv, pp49-53 states incorrectly that this marriage was Darcy's first. His first marriage was to Edith, widow of Ralph lord Neville.

¹⁵⁰ The History of Parliament. The House of Commons, 1509-1558, edited by ST Bindoff, vol iii, pp430-431.

¹⁵¹ CIPM, Henry VII, vol iii, pp221-222, 299. Tempest's age is placed at either 26 or more in 1506 or 30 years or more in 1507 or 1508.

An esquire for the body in 1509, Tempest was knighted in 1513 when it would seem he fought in France. His retinue amounted to 137 men which was a sizeable number for a man of his standing and background.¹⁵² He found himself in a position to report court murmurings to Darcy which he had heard when in London¹⁵³, a friendship which would last for several decades. Darcy was executed for his involvement in the rebellion of 1537, being beheaded on Tower Hill on 30th June. Tempest, a friend to the end, caught typhus and died in Fleet Prison in August of the same year. Tempest declared that he would take Darcy's side against any other lord in England.¹⁵⁴

Tempest signed to take part in the jousts which were held at Westminster in February, 1511, although it appears that he did not participate in the proceedings. Although from a provincial family, Tempest was at least a face in London unlike, for example, Piers Edgecombe who was also from a provincial family yet did not feature at court. How far Tempest benefited from his association with his son-in-law Darcy is difficult to establish. He certainly enjoyed some

¹⁵² LP, I, ii, 2053(2), 2480(28); The History of Parliament. The House of Commons, 1509-1558, edited by ST Bindoff, vol iii, pp430-431 states that Tempest apparently fought in France and possibly also at Flodden earlier in September, 1513. The available evidence would point to Tempest being in France. Protection of his possessions was given while he was abroad. Robert Knollys, his servant, was given similar protection while in his master's retinue. Another of his servants, Ralph Askew, was paid war expenses. Tempest was named in a list for the dismissal of the army which had been in France. This evidence (LP, I, i, 1804(23); I, ii, 2055(78), 1836(12), p1518, 2480(28)), is circumstantial but would suffice to allow one to say with some degree of certainty that Tempest was abroad in September, 1513.

¹⁵³ LP, I, i, 157.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid, XII, i, 849(1, (9)).

royal favour during the early years of Henry VIII's reign, most of his grants pertaining to his native Yorkshire. He was appointed to several commissions of array and peace for that county. In May, 1514, he was granted the lease, for forty years, of the farm of the town of Wakefield in Yorkshire, including the office of bailiff and part of the lordship of that town. A more burdensome office came his way in December of the same year when he was appointed as feodary of all the lands of the crown in Yorkshire with a remit to deliver all under age heirs into the hands of Sir Thomas Lovell, then treasurer of the household.¹⁵⁵ While Tempest was benefiting from his association with Darcy, he in turn was prepared to offer favours to relatives. His influence and office holding in Yorkshire allowed his son-in-law, John Lacy, to procure the stewardship of Wakefield and also to become bailiff of Halifax under Sir Richard himself.¹⁵⁶

Tempest became embroiled in an argument with Henry Savile, a Yorkshire gentleman and a servant to cardinal Thomas Wolsey. Savile brought several cases before the star chamber, accusing Tempest of various irregularities and offences in relation to his office-holdings. He accused Tempest of irregularities in the discharge of the office of steward of the lordship of Wakefield. These two men also became involved in several disputes over land in

¹⁵⁵ Ibid, I, i, 804(29, vi, xi), 833(50, iii, iv), 1365(3); I, ii, p1547, 2964(31), 3582(15).

¹⁵⁶ Ibid, XII, ii, 369(3); XII, i, 784.

Yorkshire.¹⁵⁷ Tempest, though, was not to be outdone, bringing his own cases against Savile, accusing him of offences against the inhabitants of Wakefield and other places. The king became involved in their dispute, with a similar charge made against Tempest of irregularities in his discharge of the office of steward of Wakefield.¹⁵⁸ The situation was not black and white. There seems to have been a history of tension between the Tempest and Savile families, with both sides being named in various suits; Tempest and others were accused of the murder of one John Jepson of Wakefield by his widow, with Savile also charging him with an involvement in this man's death; and another Tempest, this time Thomas, accusing Savile of sundry misdemeanors in the county of Yorkshire.¹⁵⁹

Richard Lister, the king's solicitor, wrote to Thomas Darcy in April, 1523, informing him that Henry Savile had been in London recently.¹⁶⁰ He commented that he should have ordered Savile to visit Darcy but did not. Savile for his part wished 'to have Darcy for his good lord', offering to be at the lord's command, after the king and his own master Thomas Wolsey. This may have been an attempt at a reconciliation between the Savile and Tempest families, with Darcy acting as a peace-broker. However, later that same year, Thomas Howard, earl of Surrey, wrote to Wolsey,

¹⁵⁷ Star Chamber Proceedings, 1485-1558, vol i, pp90, 93, 95, 135, 140.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid*, pp79, 167, 172.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid*, pp149, 193, 142, 176.

¹⁶⁰ LP, III, ii, 2982.

with an update on events in York.¹⁶¹ He described how he had been with the justices, hearing endless complaints from the "*poor people.*" The greatest dissensions, though, he found to be among the gentlemen class, "*who would have fought together if they had met.*" Surrey isolated three specific factions which were causing much of the trouble, one of which was Sir Richard Tempest against Henry Savile.

As far as the typical Tudor man was concerned, the gentry in the shires were the government. Of course he would occasionally be roused by a king on one of his progresses but the court was such a remote concept as to be almost unimportant. The local gentleman, in his guise as justice of the peace or sheriff, acted as law enforcer and in many cases, having added to his patrimony and improved on his ancestral home, he was the king in the county. The court, ambassadors, scholars, jousts, feasts, law chambers, London and parliament: these were all distant concepts for a peasant wishing a decision on a neighbour cutting down a tree on his land. The gentry were the roots of government.

Much emphasis has been placed on the importance of the court to a man's career, that it was the centre of activity and influence.¹⁶² It was here that a courtier could use his contacts to ensure maximum exposure to the right people and the right events. The court provided a focus for men

¹⁶¹ Ibid, 3240.

¹⁶² Most recently and fully in David Starkey, 'Intimacy and innovation: the rise of the Privy Chamber, 1485-1547', pp71-118, in The English court from the Wars of the Roses to the Civil War, edited by David Starkey.

and as such held a special importance. Expectations were placed on certain men to present themselves at court at important times.

The spring of 1516 saw George Talbot, earl of Shrewsbury confined to his bed as the plague spread through his household. Cardinal Wolsey at first acknowledged that Shrewsbury was genuinely unwell.¹⁶³ On 28th April Thomas Alen wrote a letter, most likely to the earl, stating that he had been informed by Wolsey that the king wanted Shrewsbury back at court for the impending arrival of the Queen of Scots as he was the great officer of the king's household. Alen responded that the plague still had too firm a grip on the staff at the earl's quarters to allow him to travel to London.¹⁶⁴ By June, 1516, it was clear that Wolsey was beginning to lose patience with Talbot and his situation. Alen wrote a premonitory letter to the earl, stating that, "*The king's pleasure is to have my lord here, and nigh about him; and I would advise my lord also, if he may labor, to come up [to London].*"¹⁶⁵ Alen further cautioned Shrewsbury that if it were not his intention to travel to court then it would be in his best interest to write offering his excuses to the king and Wolsey, among others, concluding that he feared the cardinal would not make "*the best excuse for him, he is so desirous of his company.*" Alen is suggesting that Wolsey's impatience had reached such a

163 LP, II, i, 1815.

164 Ibid, 1832.

165 Ibid, 2018.

level that he possibly would have told the king that Shrewsbury was avoiding his duties at court. It would seem that Wolsey's attitude was not borne out of any malice towards George Talbot but was more a sign of his increasing frustration at the earl's absence. Shrewsbury was not just being summoned to court because a man of his title was needed with the impending arrival of the Queen of Scots. From the attitude of Wolsey it is clear that he served a greater purpose. It is a timely reminder that the cardinal's dominant position did not preclude his reliance on others.

There may have been, though, a secret agenda attached to Wolsey's demands for the return to court of the earl of Shrewsbury and that is the cardinal's dispute with Henry Marney. As Thomas Alen was reporting Wolsey's ire to his master, the earl, he also informed him that there was "*a great snarling among divers of them [the council] insomuch my lord Cardinal said unto Sir Henry Marney that the same Sir Henry had done more displeasure unto the King's grace, by the reason of his cruelty against the great estates of the realm, than any man living.*"¹⁶⁶ Alen continued that it was necessary for the chief officers of the household, and the earl was one, to be near the king as so many things at court were out of order. He concluded with a word of warning for the distant earl, "*I fear me some there be would take a thorn out of their own foot and put it in yours.*" Henry Marney was the chancellor of the duchy of Lancaster from 1509 until 1523 and it is possible that Wolsey was referring

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, 1959.

to his governance of this region when he described Marney's alleged cruelty towards great estates. It is also possible, however, that 'estates' in this context referred to people rather than land. The charge, as summarised by Alen, is similar to the one levelled at Richard Empson and Edmund Dudley and it may be that this type of allegation carried with it a certain fearful stigma. It may have been used as a stick with which to beat a recalcitrant courtier. Alen's thorn metaphor is another reminder of the perils of avoiding the court and the dangers of gossip. In short, a man could not defend his name when absent from the source of rumour.

The earl of Shrewsbury's absence from court has been interpreted in a number of ways, with the various explanations being offered including marriage negotiations with the Percy family to attend to, misunderstandings over a secretive foreign policy, trouble over illegal retaining and the absence being a coded message to Henry VIII signifying the earl's dislike of Wolsey's running of affairs.¹⁶⁷ There is also the possibility that, initially at least, there was a genuine sickness gripping the earl and his household. The plague was still a feature of life in England in the sixteenth century. Erasmus, for example, had written to his friend Andrea Ammonius from Cambridge in October, 1511, enquiring of the ferocity of the plague in London which he had heard was raging.¹⁶⁸ He vowed to visit the capital that winter if the

¹⁶⁷ P Gwyn, The king's cardinal, pp188-189; GW Bernard, Early Tudor nobility, pp16-18.

¹⁶⁸ LP, I, i, 891, 905.

frost had cleared the plague away. It is possible that there was some form of plague gripping the earl of Shrewsbury's household and any movement could have spread the sickness or debilitated the already weak.¹⁶⁹

Genuine or not, this certainly seemed an appropriate time to be absent from London. Alen portrayed a tense court, "*for there are some things come not so well to pass (wherein few were of counsel) as the beginners of the same thought.*"¹⁷⁰

The precise meaning of such an expression is not entirely clear. Alen may have been referring to the heated argument over illegal retaining which had recently taken place at court. Thomas Grey, marquis of Dorset, Thomas Howard, earl of Surrey and George Neville, lord of Bergavenny had already been put out of the council over this matter.¹⁷¹ More likely, Alen is referring to, or assuming the existence of, unrest among certain elements of the council, possibly over Wolsey's pre-eminence and increasing influence over a secret foreign agenda. Nothing can be stated with any great confidence. The evidence does not lend itself well to interpretation, for as Alen himself put it, "*I hear some things which are not to be written.*"¹⁷² This was cautious and wise on Alen's part but hardly conducive to detailed analysis. A lack of evidence for the historian today often mirrors the situation of that time. From facts grew

¹⁶⁹ Hall, vol i, p14 noted that in December, 1509 'the plague was greate, and reigned in diverse parts of the realme.' The king thus spent his Christmas at Richmond. George Talbot's story is perfectly feasible.

¹⁷⁰ LP, II, i, 2018.

¹⁷¹ Ibid, 1959; H Miller, Henry VIII and the English nobility, pp108-109.

¹⁷² LP, II, i, 2018.

knowledge and from ignorance, and fear, grew rumour.

Certain men were expected to attend to their duties in London. Major office-holders and councillors needed to be near the king. George Talbot, earl of Shrewsbury was told, in no uncertain terms, to bring himself to London. Yet it was possible to build a very successful career outside the capital. It is possible to differentiate here between those men who rarely attended court and those who left the capital for spells, either on royal missions, to take up postings or to attend to their own affairs in the counties. Figures emerged from the crowd that comprised what can be loosely described as the royal entourage yet who did not spend the majority of their time at court.

The nobility, by the very nature of their social standing, spent time away from the king. Major landowners had duties to fulfil in the country. Postings to Tournai or Berwick, while often unpopular, did not necessarily impede a man's career. Isolation from the favours of court was not an ideal situation but a tolerable one in the short term. Men like William Brereton and Piers Edgecombe created for themselves pockets of influence in the counties. It is difficult to assess just how often men such as these came to London or to court. Visits would not necessarily show up in any records or journals. Edgecombe, for example, was not a member of the king's council and would have had little cause to travel outside his native Cornwall except when on official business.

The point to be made here is that a man domiciled in the localities need not have been excluded from the king's favours. It was possible to come to the king's attention and enjoy his patronage without being in his physical presence or in his royal entourage for great lengths of time, although, clearly, the advantage lay with the man based at court. Piers Edgecombe was the recipient of several royal grants although perhaps not as many as he would have wished for. His father's services had been used extensively by Henry VII while the son was relatively isolated from court. Had he moved to London and emphasised his pedigree and used his duchy of Cornwall connections more freely, he might well have enjoyed the influence and popularity of men like Edward Howard and William Compton.

An interesting episode which lays bare the nuances and detail of court life occurred in June, 1509. A commission was set up to examine cases of 'all persons claiming the privilege of performing particular services near the persons of the King and Queen at their coronation.'¹⁷³ Such was the importance of physical proximity to the monarch. Henry Wyatt submitted a petition to this commission, staking his claim to be allowed to perform the office of Grand Serjeantry of the Table Linen. This simply entailed Wyatt setting the linen on the banquet table and being allowed to keep such cloths after the event for his own use. This right he claimed as the tenant of the manor of Ashill in Norfolk. He found himself subject to two counter claims, from Robert le Strange and

¹⁷³ Ibid, 120.

Richard, earl of Kent. The latter's claim was dismissed by Wyatt who produced an indenture dated 1st November, 1507, by which the earl had sold him the manor.¹⁷⁴ The dispute was resolved by the commission in Wyatt's favour.

This battle over the right to lay the king's table is a most typical example of the jockeying for prestige which occurred at court. The victor could expect to gain social standing and would be seen by many as privileged, being allowed access to the king's table and at such an early point in his reign as well. A list of claims exists for rights at the coronation of Queen Mary in 1553 which emphasises how seriously this matter was taken.¹⁷⁵ Although this example is from a markedly later period, it shows the continuing importance of minor privileges and reflects the situation of forty years earlier. Several claims were made including the mayor of London claiming the right to serve the queen a cup of wine after her course of meat and to be able to keep the cup of gold for his labours. Also, William Clopton, esquire, claimed the right to make wafers for Mary and to serve them at the queen's table. Such privileges, while appearing frivolous, were clearly important.

Wyatt seemed to have a special friendship with Elizabeth, countess of Kent. An indenture of December, 1513, has Wyatt making a grant *"for the kyndes and favour that I have founde in the right noble lady Elsabeth Countes of Kent and*

¹⁷⁴ GW Bernard (1982), 'The fortunes of the Greys, earls of Kent, in the early sixteenth century', Historical Journal, xxv: p673.

¹⁷⁵ Rutland Papers, pp118-120.

for that she shall contynew good lady unto me", out of his manor of Dame Elynsbury of £6.¹⁷⁶ Wyatt had been involved with Richard Grey, Elizabeth's husband since the early 1500s when the earl had succeeded in wasting away much of his territory and Wyatt and others including Charles Somerset, John Hussey, Richard Empson and Giles, lord Daubney had benefited greatly. Wyatt bought from the earl lands in Bedfordshire, Norfolk and Northamptonshire.¹⁷⁷

The Kent connection is prevalent in the Wyatt's family history. The Boleyn residency at Hever in Kent was twenty miles from Allington Castle. Henry Wyatt's son, Thomas, wrote poetry for his love, Anne Boleyn, and his great grandson George wrote a life of this queen.¹⁷⁸ Richard, earl of Kent and Lady Elizabeth, countess of Kent, his wife, granted to Wyatt, in November, 1513, manors and advowsons in the counties of Bedford, Norfolk and Northampton.¹⁷⁹ Wyatt seemed to have pockets of land in several counties, judging by the sparse evidence of indentures, enfeoffments, quitclaims and other land transfer contracts. He made a small grant of land in Essex to a London gentleman called George Emerson and to a couple in 1509, received 500 marks from a knight named William Gascoigne of Cardington, Bedford regarding lands in that

¹⁷⁶ PRO, E40/13,568.

¹⁷⁷ GW Bernard (1982), 'The fortunes of the Greys, earls of Kent, in the early sixteenth century', Historical Journal, xxv: pp672-3.

¹⁷⁸ Eric Ives, Anne Boleyn, pp63-4, 83-4.

¹⁷⁹ PRO, E41/365.

county and made several other transactions involving his land in Kent.¹⁸⁰ He received from Henry in 1519, while he was master of the king's jewels, the manors of Allington, Overhill, Randall, Okyngton, Milton, Aylesford, Boxley and Shorne, all in Kent.¹⁸¹ This is by no means a comprehensive review of Henry Wyatt's land holdings. It is an attempt to show the piecemeal nature of his patrimony. His power-base was in Kent and he had enough financial resources to move in the social circle frequented by the Boleyns. Yet it seems that he held little of any consequence outside of that county. Again there is little in the way of land grants from the crown, with Wyatt relying mainly on purchase, and this often at the expense of Richard Grey.

Kent's proximity to London and the king made it an ideal base for an ambitious man like Wyatt. It also proved to be such for Thomas Boleyn when he moved there in 1505 to Hever Castle, built by his grandfather, Sir Geoffrey.¹⁸² Thomas was originally from Blickling in Norfolk and was born in 1477.¹⁸³ The family were very well connected; Boleyn's father William, a justice of the peace, had married Margaret, daughter and co-heiress of Thomas Butler, earl of Ormonde and Anne, daughter of John Montagu, earl of Salisbury. William's parents were Geoffrey Boleyn, an alderman who had married Anne, daughter and co-heir of

¹⁸⁰ PRO, E210/1058, E326/7876/7885/11,214.

¹⁸¹ PRO, E326/12,541; LP, II, ii, 4391.

¹⁸² WH Dean (1987) Sir Thomas Boleyn: the courtier diplomat, 1477-1539, Unpublished PhD thesis, University of West Virginia, p30; E Ives, Anne Boleyn, p3. See also this thesis, p63.

¹⁸³ DNB, vol v, pp321-3.

Thomas Hoo, lord Hoo.¹⁸⁴ Thomas married Elizabeth, daughter of Thomas Howard, duke of Norfolk.

It was only with Thomas Boleyn's grandfather's marriage that the family's fortunes took an upturn. His great-grandfather, also Geoffrey, and his father, Thomas, were small holding farmers. Neither had the finances to provide for a lavish memorial; Thomas had a window inlay placed in the church at Salle, Norfolk, and Geoffrey was buried under a plain brass inscription.¹⁸⁵ Salle was a wealthy church and enjoyed rich patronage but not from the early Boleyns. It was the later generations which were to transform the family into wealthy gentry and eventually nobility, with Thomas Boleyn's creation as earl of Wiltshire.

It was with the accession of Henry VIII that Sir Thomas Boleyn's career took off. This is perhaps a natural consequence of a young king coming to the throne. Boleyn would have been thirty-two in 1509, a relatively young man. He was one of a number of young men who came to the fore at the court of Henry VIII, men like Charles Brandon, William Compton and Edward Neville. Under Henry VII he received little of any importance. He was keeper of the port of Lynn for ten years from 1507 and he was a squire for the body which would at least have taken him into the court, but that was all. Present at Henry VII's funeral, Boleyn was summoned with twenty-five others to serve the king dinner

¹⁸⁴ E Ives, Anne Boleyn, pxvii.

¹⁸⁵ The Cambridge guide to the arts in Britain, vol 2, 'The middle ages', edited by Boris Ford, pp194-197.

on 22nd June, 1509, "*in token that they shall never bear none after that day.*"¹⁸⁶ The following day at the Tower of London these men were made Knights of the Bath, and the day after, 24th June, Henry was crowned king.

Boleyn's rise had begun and like many others at this time he rose from relative obscurity to a position of authority rapidly. His move to Hever would have allowed him to play a more active role in court politics. He had been given, in February, 1506, licence of entry, without proof of age, as son and heir, to all his father's lands in England, Wales, Calais and Ireland thus securing his financial position.¹⁸⁷ His connection with the Howard family perhaps explains Boleyn's rise. From 1485, John, earl of Oxford, had taken over from the Howard family as the leading figure in Norfolk and Suffolk, and it was not until the late 1490s that Thomas Howard began on the slow road to recovery which resulted in his creation as duke of Norfolk in 1514.¹⁸⁸ Boleyn was married to Thomas Howard's daughter. With Howard's ever increasing influence in the 1500s, he would have been in a position to promote his son-in-law at court. Certainly after 1509, Howard's influence can be seen in Thomas Boleyn's appearance in sheriff rolls for Norfolk and Suffolk in 1509 and 1510 and in every commission of the peace for those counties from November, 1510, to

¹⁸⁶ LP, I, i, 20(p13), 81.

¹⁸⁷ CPR, Henry VII, 1494-1509,p445.

¹⁸⁸ R Virgoe, 'The recovery of the Howards in East Anglia, 1485-1529', pp1-20, in Wealth and power in Tudor England, edited by Ives, Knecht & Scarisbrick.

November, 1514, and November, 1510, to October, 1514, respectively.¹⁸⁹

On 4th May, 1509, a mere ten days after Henry VIII's coronation, Boleyn was granted a pardon.¹⁹⁰ He could now work for the new king unburdened by worries of debts or fines, with past behaviour forgotten. July, 1509, saw him being granted, during pleasure, the keepership of the exchange in Calais and of the foreign exchange in England.¹⁹¹ As has been mentioned, Boleyn received appointments to commissions of the peace for Norfolk and Suffolk and also appeared on sheriff rolls for these counties, possibly through the influence of Thomas Howard. He also received similar grants in Kent. He appeared on three commissions of the peace in Kent between December, 1509, and October, 1514, and was on the sheriff roll for that county in November, 1511.¹⁹² Grants of offices to Boleyn up to 1514 were the keepership of the park of Beskwode, Nottinghamshire, in reversion, then held by James Savage and the office of constable and keeper of the castle and gaol of Norwich with Henry Wyatt.¹⁹³ These two grants were not particularly significant and it is noticeable that Boleyn did not hold very many offices, only three in total at this time.

¹⁸⁹ *LP*, I, i, 257(49), 632(26); I, ii, pp1541, 1544.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid*, I, i, 438(3m.7).

¹⁹¹ *Ibid*, 132(92).

¹⁹² *Ibid*, I, ii, pp1538-9; I, i, 969(23).

¹⁹³ *Ibid*, I, i, 709(19), 1083(26).

In contrast to men of a similar status, he received a good deal of land. He benefited from a grant of land forfeited by Francis, viscount Lovell who was attainted under Henry VII. By this he received, in July, 1511, the reversion of the manors of Boreham, Walkesare and Powers in Little Waltham, Essex, and the manor or lordship of Bushey, Hertfordshire on the death, without heir, of John de Vere, earl of Oxford who held both these manors in tail male.¹⁹⁴ He also received in that month the lordships or manors of Purbright, Surrey and Henden, Kent, with the park of Henden, for life, on the surrender of the patent granting these to Sir Thomas Bouchier.¹⁹⁵ In May, 1512, he received, with John Sharp, custody of the lands, wardship and marriage of John, son and heir of Sir George Hastings.¹⁹⁶ He was further granted, with his wife, in September, 1512, the manor of Wickmere, Norfolk, with profits from the previous Michaelmas.¹⁹⁷ His next grant of land was not until May, 1514, after he had returned from his mission to Maximilian, when he received, for life, the manors or lordships of Saham Toney, Necton, Panworth Hall and Cressingham Parva, and the hundreds of Waylond and Grynneshowe in Norfolk at an annual rent of £71 6s 8d.¹⁹⁸

William Sandys was a man who also benefited from his

¹⁹⁴ Ibid, 833(14).

¹⁹⁵ Ibid, 833(60).

¹⁹⁶ Ibid, 1221(27).

¹⁹⁷ Ibid, 1415(4).

¹⁹⁸ Ibid, I, ii, 2964(63).

connections.¹⁹⁹ His wealth was inherited not from his father but mainly through his wife Margery. She was the daughter of John Bray and niece of Sir Reginald Bray, Henry VII's influential councillor who died in 1503.²⁰⁰ Sandys was named by Bray as his heir before he left to face the Cornish rising of 1497 and when he died a dispute arose between Sandys and Sir Reginald's nephew over the estate.²⁰¹ Eventually the estate was divided between the two men and it was from these lands that Sandys acquired his fortune. May and July, 1504 saw Sandys and Margery his wife being granted licence of entry to several of the late Reginald's manors in Northamptonshire and Warwickshire.²⁰²

It was not just with the death of Reginald Bray that Sandys inherited much of his estates. With the marriage to Margery he would certainly have received a good deal from her family. It has been suggested that Reginald Bray helped architecturally with Sandys' improvements of The Vyne, his ancestral home near Basingstoke, Hampshire.²⁰³ The Vyne had been recovered by Sandys' father from Bernard Brocas in 1488 but it was the son who turned it into "*one of the most important houses for good architecture in the whole of Hampshire.*"²⁰⁴ The burial chapel at The Vyne depicted the Passion of Christ with Henry VIII, Catherine of Aragon and Henry's sister, Queen Margaret of Scotland in deference

¹⁹⁹ See also this thesis, p65, 82 and 117.

²⁰⁰ DNB, vol L, p295.

²⁰¹ Leland, Itinerary, pp210-211.

²⁰² CPR, Henry VII, 1494-1509, pp370-371.

²⁰³ DNB, op cit.

²⁰⁴ Leland, op cit; DNB, op cit.

below Him in prayer, a typical Tudor display of spiritual and royal devotion.²⁰⁵ Henry VIII visited The Vyne on at least three occasions, once in 1510, in August, 1531, and in October, 1535, with Anne Boleyn.²⁰⁶ Sandys' career clearly owed something to the money and influence of Reginald Bray. He was also associated with John Cheyne, a prominent courtier of Henry VII and a good friend to have at court.²⁰⁷

Having influential friends at court was clearly an advantage. Thomas Lovell was a man who was able to cultivate his connections. He was named by the mother of Edward IV, Cecily, duchess of York, as an executor of her will, likewise by Margaret, countess of Richmond, Sir Thomas Brandon, uncle of Charles Brandon, later duke of Suffolk and a supervisor to the executors of the will of Sir Robert Sheffield.²⁰⁸ Ann, lady Scrope, wife of John, lord Scrope, left him a garter of gold and Henry VII bequeathed him £100 as one of his executors; and he was loosely related to George lord Roos who was the father of his nephew by marriage.²⁰⁹ John de Vere, earl of Oxford referred to Lovell in his will as "*myn olde frende.*"²¹⁰ Lovell's own executors would include the knights William Paston and Richard Broke.²¹¹ The main beneficiary of his will was

²⁰⁵ M Howard, The early Tudor country house, p115.

²⁰⁶ Ibid, p206; DNB, op cit.

²⁰⁷ DAS Lockett (1992) Local government and political control in Berkshire, Dorset, Hampshire, Oxfordshire, Somerset and Wiltshire, 1485-1509, Unpublished DPhil thesis, University of Oxford, p183.

²⁰⁸ Testamenta Vetusta, vol i, pp423, 523, 497, 557.

²⁰⁹ Ibid, pp436, 35, 528-9.

²¹⁰ PRO, PROB 11/17, f83r.

²¹¹ BL, Add MS. 12,462, 1v; HMC, 9 Salisbury (Cecil) xiii, Addenda, p10.

Thomas Maners, lord Roos, followed by his two brothers, Oliver and Richard. Lovell's cousin Francis Lovell also benefited from extensive bequests, collecting land in many counties. Lord Roos was granted Lovell's manor place at Enfield in Essex and Francis the mansion at Haliwell. The household serving him at Enfield and at Haliwell are listed in his will and received bequests. They numbered around one hundred and it is easy to imagine the wealth of this man.²¹² As well as houses at Enfield and Haliwell, Lovell had built a house at East Harling in Norfolk, of which nothing remains.²¹³

It is difficult to assess the impact of an influential friend on any one man's career. While it is possible to identify those men with influence, either at court or in the country, and it is possible to identify the lower order friends of such men, linking the latter's rewards to the input of the former is a difficult task. One man with a coterie of dependants, as will be seen in the next chapter, was William Blount, lord Mountjoy. There were several men who could claim to be close to this lord and others who benefited from an association of some form with him. Sir William Uvedale is an interesting example of a man who may have used his links

²¹² PRO, PROB 11/23, 212v-215r; HMC, Rutland, vol iv, pp260-265 contains extracts from Lovell's household accounts for 1522-1523. His household staff at Enfield alone included 3 chaplains, an organplayer, a carpetmaker, 3 bakers, a brewer and a shepherd. Lovell clearly had developed a sizeable operation at Enfield. Servants' wages were one part of the bill for running a household like Lovell's. These accounts show numerous other expenses including payments for cloth for the liveries of his servants, and for outfits for his wards, for repairs to the chapel at Haliwell and payment made to the vicar at Enfield for tithes at that place.

²¹³ M Howard, The early Tudor country house, pp210-211.

with Mountjoy to further his own career.

The origins of Uvedale's service to the Tudor crown can be traced to the early years of the reign of Henry VII. The month of November, 1486, saw him named as sheriff in Hampshire while still an esquire.²¹⁴ Hampshire was the home county of this branch of the Uvedale line and in his will William expressed a desire to be buried in the parish church of Wickham, south of Winchester.²¹⁵ He was a knight by at least 1492 and for the remaining years of Henry VII's reign, Uvedale enjoyed appointments to many commissions, including to muster and array the men of Southampton, to deliver the gaol of Winchester, Shrewsbury, Worcester and Hereford Castles, and of oyer and terminer for numerous counties.²¹⁶ He also appeared on commissions of the peace for Cornwall, Gloucestershire, Hereford, Shropshire, Southampton and Worcestershire.²¹⁷ Uvedale was operating mainly in the southern counties, in Hampshire, Wiltshire and Surrey, to the south west in Cornwall, Devon and Dorset and occasionally in the Gloucestershire, Shropshire and Hereford area.

Here then is a man of some social standing by 1509 who saw his grants continuing under the new king. He once more found himself on numerous commissions, of array, of oyer

²¹⁴ CFR, Henry VII, 1485-1509, 128.

²¹⁵ PRO, PROB 11/23, f25v.

²¹⁶ CFR, Henry VII, 1485-1509, 462; CPR, Henry VII, 1494-1509, pp68, 70, 80, 86, 115, 118, 119, 145, 146, 288, 295, 390, 407, 438, 488, 489, 592.

²¹⁷ CPR, Henry VII, 1494-1509, pp633, 640, 642, 656, 658, 666.

and terminer and of the peace for several counties with a concentration in the Shropshire and Hereford area as well as his native Hampshire. ²¹⁸ Further to these commissions, Uvedale began to receive grants of offices from the king, again within a fairly well defined area. In November, 1509, he became, during pleasure, steward of four lordships in Worcestershire and master of the hunts in these lordships as well as in the park of Netherwood in Hereford; in May, 1512, he became keeper of the chase of Brengewood in the lordship of Wigmore in the Welsh marches, for life; and in November that same year he gained a further office in that lordship.²¹⁹ Typically for this period, Uvedale's grants were of offices and not of land, his increased prominence being kept in check to a certain degree. However, he was gaining a higher profile under Henry VIII and this at a time when a resurgence in the career of William Blount is discernible. Blount, who also had his base in Hampshire, was clearly in a position to help Uvedale and it should not be seen as a coincidence that Uvedale was particularly prominent in this county. What is certain is that William Uvedale was Blount's servant and that he married Jane Dansey, a gentlewoman of Lady Blount.²²⁰

As a knight of the body, Uvedale was sworn to attend in the king's chamber²²¹ and began to use his influence to advance

²¹⁸ LP, I, i, 414(52), 833(58, ii), 1123(20), 1316(9); I, ii, 2055(42), pp1537, 1538, 1542, 1546.

²¹⁹ Ibid., I, i, 257(86), 1221(50), 1494(34).

²²⁰ BL, Stowe MS. 141, f16.

²²¹ LP, II, i, 2735.

the cause of his younger brother, Henry. This Henry had been sheriff of Somerset and Dorset for one year from November, 1503.²²² While William Uvedale was granted the office of bailiff of two ports in the Isle of Purbeck in Dorset²²³, Henry, having held this office, had become embroiled in an extortion claim here in 1498.²²⁴ Described as Henry Uvedale of Corfe Castle, he was charged, with William Rawlins, with a quite remarkable series of offences. The charge list is such that had it been levelled at these two men in 1509, then they might have suffered the same fate as Empson and Dudley. Numerous offences were listed, including purloining treasure trove and the cargoes of shipwrecks, failing to help save ships in distress in order to acquire their cargo when holed, robbing prisoners in jail, exporting wool without the payment of duty, making false accusations in order to extort money. Uvedale was also charged with extorting bribes for hunting rights in the Isle of Purbeck, receiving from men money, oxen, sheep and wheat.

One man, John Clavyle, a gentleman of the Isle of Purbeck, constructed a bill regarding these bribes and extortions three years previously, *"and delyvered it to Morgan Kydwelle, justice of the pease; which byll he promysed the said John Clavyle to delyver to the kyngis counsell for the reformacion of Harry Uvedale and William Rawlyns*

²²² List of Sheriffs, p124.

²²³ LP, II, i, 989.

²²⁴ LP Richard III/Henry VII, vol ii, pp75-84.

extortionous demenor; which byll the seyde Morgan Kydwelle incontynent delyverd to Harry Uvedale, enbesylyng hit fro the kyngis counsell." Such was the extent of Uvedale's influence in this area that he could intercept a justice of the peace, no doubt with some form of financial reward passed his way.²²⁵

Any irregularities which Uvedale may have committed in this area had little effect on the progress of his career and certainly did not influence the king in any future appointments. Henry Uvedale had been one of the king's stewards in 1490 but soon found himself with an amount of localised power. Through his offices he was playing the part of oppressive landlord. He may have believed that his offices were not as permanent as grants of land and acted accordingly, making quick and relatively easy financial gains through extortions and bribes. He would also have been a little intoxicated with his new positions, having moved from relative obscurity at court to what amounted to local baron, albeit in a geographically limited sense. That he continued to secure appointments points to a distinct lack of concern on Henry VII's part, assuming that he was aware of Uvedale's

²²⁵ DS Lockett (1992) Local government and political control in Berkshire, Dorset, Hampshire, Oxfordshire, Somerset and Wiltshire, 1485-1509, Unpublished DPhil thesis, University of Oxford, pp181-182 makes the point that a man like Henry Uvedale would have felt gratitude to the king, having risen through the household ranks and having little landed interests of his own. It is also worth noting that this lack of a power base not only left Uvedale under the control of the king but also left him open to the inevitable temptations of illegal financial gains which could accompany the types of offices which he had been granted. Uvedale clearly saw the gains to be made around the peninsula area of Purbeck as witnessed by the number of extortions which he had running associated with shipping, seafarers and exports.

schemes in the first place.

Three years after the accusations, in August, 1501, he was appointed, during pleasure, comptroller of customs in the port of Poole, 'so that he write the rolls with his own hand and continually abide there and do all other things touching the said office in his own person.' The following March he received a pardon and release for all matters connected with this office previous to the 1st of that month.²²⁶ By 1508, Henry Uvedale, being described as a gentleman usher of the chamber, had been granted the office of serjeant of the king's dogs for taking stags, with 7 1/2*d* a day to be paid to him out of the issues of the counties of Somerset and Dorset. He was now in a position to advance his own cause at court once more. It is with no little amount of irony the Uvedale was one of those appointed in December, 1509, to a commission to hear and determine all felonies in the county of Dorset.²²⁷ Unless he had mended his ways over the years, here was another opportunity to illicit backhanders. Uvedale's career would most certainly have been aided by an association with William Blount.

²²⁶ CPR, Henry VII, 1494-1509, pp244-245, 271.

²²⁷ Ibid, pp587, 627.

(iv) advancement through ability

A man could also progress his career at court by offering the crown a particular skill or talent, be it military, administrative or in any other area of expertise. A man who could offer Henry such a skill was William Sandys.²²⁸ Sandys had served in the French campaign of 1492 and was in the army which fought the Cornishmen in 1497.²²⁹ He again found himself in action under Henry VIII. In a list of appointments made in May, 1512, Sandys is named as treasurer of war; his retinue numbered five hundred and included such men as Sir Thomas Lovell, Sir Andrew Windsor and lord Audley.²³⁰ The number of men provided by Sandys himself has been lost. Sandys served in the retinue of the marquis of Dorset during this ill-fated early foray into foreign territory. Henry's troops were to join with Ferdinand of Aragon's in a joint invasion of Guienne but, with Ferdinand being distracted by a new target in Navarre, the English headed for home.²³¹ What this expedition did provide for Sandys though was valuable experience in the field of finance and a term of service in the king's army; he was in charge of the advance at Fuenterrabia with Henry Willoughby.²³² While in charge of the supply and maintenance of the army, large amounts of money would

²²⁸ See also this thesis, pp65, 82 and 109.

²²⁹ PV, pp52, 94.

²³⁰ LP, I, i, 1176(1, 2 & 4).

²³¹ C Cruickshank, Henry VIII and the invasion of France, pp4-5.

²³² LP, I, i, 1286.

have been flowing through Sandys' hands. After making his accounts he found himself left with £34,394 of which £33,500 was sent to John Heron as treasurer of the chamber.²³³

A letter of October 4th, 1512, from William Knight to Thomas Wolsey refers to the Guienne expedition.²³⁴ Knight had himself been involved in this affair and wrote disparagingly of the English leaders. He recalls how the trip had been badly prepared,

"Discipline was so badly kept they might at any time have been crushed. Victuals were untruly served. Heard Sir Henry Willoughby say that of 8,000 bows not 200 were sufficient. It is no use blaming anybody, as it would end in mutual recrimination, which is not expedient at this time."

The letter recounts trouble in the English camp. It seems that the English leaders wished to return home and decided to send William Knight and William Kingston to Henry to excuse their imminent return. Sandys and a few others were against sending Knight with this message,

"saying Wolsey was the cause of all this mischief, that Knight was in his [Wolsey's] favour, and if he went to England he would so represent matters to the King as to cause their further abiding there."

Sandys clearly saw Wolsey as having influence with the king at this time and Knight as being in the pay of Wolsey. Sandys felt the king would be told that the English

²³³ Ibid, 1495(1, v).

²³⁴ Ibid, 1422.

commanders wished to return home and that they were not willing to stay and fight for the king. Wolsey, "*the cause of all this mischief*" was being accused of stirring. Knight enclosed a letter he had received from Edward Hatclyff which stated that "*the great men of England say that Wolsey is the author of the war, and the ill success of it must be attributed to him.*" At a meeting of the council at Renteria, Knight recalled in the same letter that he told the assembly that a return to England would displease the king and would be contrary to his command. Lord Howard agreed and declared himself willing to endure a winter war. Such was the bad feeling among the council members that Knight found his life threatened and he wrote,

"Things are out of order. The King unlovingly served by certain parties. Great dissimulation is required, for I promise you, in my mind, here be many light men."

He asked Wolsey not to repeat his comments to those he blamed in his letter, clearly fearing recrimination.

There is a case for accusing Knight of stirring trouble. He was after all, if this letter is to be believed, threatened and alienated by the council. He may have been manipulating Wolsey with spurious tales to force the king to push on with the offensive, or to punish certain of the commanders. It would certainly have been a victory for Knight if, against the expedition leaders' collective will, the king took this former course of action. He would then emerge from the episode as a champion of the king in the face of a cowardly mutiny.

Sandys' position in this episode seems to have been one of concerned treasurer. This was a poorly prepared expedition and as the man in charge of the army's accounts, its provisioning and supply, he would have experienced more headaches than the other leaders, and would have taken a proportion of the blame.

There does not seem to have been any serious acrimony between Sandys and Wolsey. In May, 1517, Richard Fox wrote to Wolsey regarding a riot at Southampton, on which Wolsey took Sandys' advice over anyone else's:

"your lordship hath taken a better way for the redresse therof then the governours of Hampton and I cowde haue deuysed or wisshed; and a more propice or mete persoon then is Mr Sandis for thorderynge of that matere, cowde ye not haue found. For beyng amongs theym he is ther Mayre, balif and all the holl ruyller of the town; and with thauctorite that he hath vnder the Kyngis grace, the love and credite that he hath amongis the peple, when he is present, he may more doo with theym then may doo the Mayre and all officeres that bilongith both to the town and to the porte." ²³⁵

Fox wrote that he was glad that Wolsey had such a good opinion of Sandys. Fox himself held Sandys in high esteem, describing him in his will as a "*nobilissimo viro*" and also as "*aulea mea Anglice vocata.*" ²³⁶

²³⁵ Letters of Richard Fox, pp96-99; LP, Addenda, vol I, pt i, 185.

²³⁶ Letters of Richard Fox, Appendix III, pp167-172.

Four years later Wolsey was preparing for an expedition to France and forwarded Sandys as a potential commander.²³⁷ In the face of opposition from the king, who wished for a more senior man, Wolsey repeatedly pushed for Sandys' appointment. Finally no army was sent that year but the incident highlights the depth of respect that Wolsey had for Sandys, built up over many years of acquaintance.

In contrast to a man in his element during a military campaign there is a man like Thomas Lovell whose talents lay in administration and it was through his endeavours in this field that he enjoyed much of his success.²³⁸ When Henry VIII came to the throne, Lovell was fifty-six and probably at the height of his powers. He held on to the offices of treasurer of the household and chancellor of the exchequer and continued to receive favours from the new king. In July, 1509, he became steward, for life, of the manors of Ware and Cheshunt in Hertfordshire and the following month he found himself, with others of the old guard like Richard Fox and Charles Somerset, an executor of the will of Margaret, countess of Richmond.²³⁹ His first major grant of the new reign came in February, 1510, when he became warden and chief justice of the forests south of the Trent.²⁴⁰ He collected numerous minor grants to commissions of gaol delivery, sewers, array, musters, oyer and terminer and of the peace, but there seems to have been

²³⁷ H Miller, Henry VIII and the English nobility, pp144-5.

²³⁸ See also this thesis, p85.

²³⁹ LP, I, i, 132(35), 158(24).

²⁴⁰ Ibid, 381(19).

no continuity about these grants, encompassing as they did several counties including Surrey, Nottinghamshire, Middlesex, Yorkshire, Berkshire, Hertfordshire, Oxfordshire and Staffordshire.²⁴¹

His duties were the typical ones of a chamber administrator, but the king also used him on missions of importance. He found himself dispatched to Calais to escort home the marquis of Dorset and a provision of soldiers in the Tower of London was made over to him in July, 1509.²⁴² In 1514 he was again used in the negotiations for the hand-over of prisoners. In June he wrote to Fox and Wolsey from Calais about the redemption of prisoners from the captain of Boulogne and warned them that Richard de la Pole and the duke of Albany were planning to go to Scotland. A letter the next month to the same two has Lovell co-ordinating the hand-over of de la Pole.²⁴³ He found himself involved in these duties through the grant of constable of the tower which he had received in March, 1513.²⁴⁴

As treasurer and chancellor Lovell would have demanded respect at court but further than this he had earned the trust of the new king. In the summer of 1513 when the king was abroad at war, he left, as his council in England to advise the queen William Warham, Thomas Howard, earl of Surrey,

²⁴¹ Ibid, 731(28), 804(29), 833(50); I, ii, 2222(16), 3408(37, i, iv), pp1533, 1538, 1540, 1541, 1542, 1543, 1544.

²⁴² Ibid, I, i, 104, 118.

²⁴³ Ibid, I, ii, 2974, 3087.

²⁴⁴ Ibid, I, i, 1732(41).

Lovell and Thomas Englefield.²⁴⁵ These four men were highly experienced statesmen and Henry must have felt that they were the most trustworthy. They became entangled in the argument over probate jurisdiction with Richard Fox having the king's ear abroad and Warham the queen's at home. Catherine called Warham, Lovell and Englefield before her to discuss the matter and bring it to a conclusion on the king's instructions.²⁴⁶ This was Lovell's forte; he was an organiser. He was not a man of display and although he held positions of authority he could not be said to have been one of Henry's closest friends.

Lovell was a high-ranking civil servant and immersed himself in the everyday business of government. He does not appear in battle accounts or at jousts, and it can only be assumed that he fought at Bosworth; age perhaps ruled him out. No man of fifty-six years of age would relish the prospect of riding into battle or indeed into a joust against men half his age and less. Where we find Lovell in his element is in the minutiae, dealing with the spoils recovered at Flodden, shipping ordnance to Calais or ordering harnesses for the king's footmen.²⁴⁷

Lovell's appearances in the chronicles of the time are remarkably brief and uninformative for a man of his standing and reinforce the notion that he was someone who

²⁴⁵ CSP, Venetian, 1509-1519, 282; LP, I, ii, 2067.

²⁴⁶ LP, I, ii, 2163, 2269.

²⁴⁷ Ibid, 2325, 3137(16), Appendix 21.

worked in the background or at least did not attract attention. Hall tells of how he was left in England in the summer of 1513 and went with Surrey to Doncaster where they dispatched Sir William Bulmer north to the marches of Scotland to await an attack from the Scots.²⁴⁸ Holinshed has nothing to offer on Lovell or his career. Vergil too is disappointing, informing merely that he was a member of Henry VII and VIII's councils. He does, however, point to a rift developing between Wolsey and Lovell in 1515 over the proposed war with France.²⁴⁹ Wolsey, supported by Thomas Ruthal, bishop of Durham, advocated a war against France because, among other things, King Francis had supported Richard de la Pole and planned to rule Italy. Vergil describes how this proposition was opposed by the "*sober counsellors*" who saw Wolsey acting out of a personal hatred of France and not in the public interest, and that Henry would be seen as the instigator of a war.

Lovell comes across as a workaholic. A household man, he seems to have thrown himself into many different aspects of government, from a role like speaker at Henry VII's first parliament²⁵⁰, to organising the ordnance details for Henry VIII's first French campaign. He was undoubtedly a wealthy man; his will shows extensive land holdings as well as his main houses. The sparseness of comment on his career in the narratives of the time can perhaps be explained in part

²⁴⁸ Hall, vol i, p96.

²⁴⁹ PV, pp6, 149.

²⁵⁰ Rotuli Parliamentorum, vi, 510.

by the fact the Lovell was a household official. His job remit was not as frontline as that of men like Warham or Wolsey. But it also seems that he was a quiet man, a little one dimensional perhaps, yet a conscientious servant. The phrase 'a career civil servant' would seem most suitable to describe this man.

Lovell had effectively retired from public life by the summer of 1516. A letter from Sebastian Giustinian to the signory of July 17th, 1516, noted the "*apparent withdrawal of Sir Thomas Lovel an old servant of the late and present Kings.*"²⁵¹ Giustinian also wrote that the king was absent from London, most likely hunting, and that Wolsey was "*constantly occupied by all the affairs of the kingdom.*" This seems to have been the reason behind Lovell's retiral. Wolsey was now dictating policy to such an extent that Lovell felt unable to work with or for him. Giustinian blamed Fox and Warham's retirals on the anti-French and Venetian direction of the council being followed by Wolsey.

It may have been that as treasurer of the household and chancellor of the exchequer, Lovell was aggrieved to see such a profligate waste of money, in his eyes, money being squandered on foreign wars. It was the financial policy of the father, through support from men like Lovell, that allowed the son to participate in his wars. It is easy to imagine a man so versed in the policies of frugality, to the point of rapacity, and introversion, to be ill at ease with the

²⁵¹ CSP, Venetian, 1509-1519, 750.

way affairs were developing under the new regime. There seems no reason to doubt the words of Giustinian; he had nothing to gain from such a statement.

Vergil is suspiciously quiet on this matter. Always quick to twist the knife in Wolsey's back, he would surely have mentioned the retiral of Lovell had it been as a result of the increasing influence of Thomas Wolsey. A clash of ideas would seem the logical conclusion to draw from the retiral of Lovell from the increasingly Wolsey-dominated council. He does not seem to have gone into retirement after his disagreement with the cardinal. A treaty involving Henry, Maximilian and Charles, prince of Castile of July, 1517, was executed in the presence of, among others, Lovell, Ruthal and Wolsey, but not Warham and Fox.²⁵² Both Lovell and Ruthal continued in the council while Warham and Fox felt it necessary to retire almost completely. Lovell stayed on in council, his last day being November 6th, 1522, two years before his death.²⁵³ However, Sebastian Giustinian, in a letter to the Council of Ten of 17th July, 1516, commented that Lovell, an old servant, was interfering "*but little.*"²⁵⁴ He continued to be in attendance in council but may have had further disagreements with the cardinal.

In April, 1518, John Clerk wrote to Wolsey stating that Lovell would be with him, Wolsey, "*for suche causes as ye*

²⁵² LP, II, ii, 3437.

²⁵³ WH Dunham jnr (1944), 'The members of Henry VIII's whole council, 1509-1527', EHR, lix: p209.

²⁵⁴ LP, II, i, 2183.

know of."²⁵⁵ This is a rather curious and cryptic entry, with no suggestion as to why Lovell was visiting Wolsey. Perhaps Wolsey wished a quiet word with Lovell about a council matter and, of course, Lovell was obliged to obey the cardinal's instructions. More likely is that the two men had had another disagreement over something. It would seem fair to suggest that with Thomas Lovell we have a genuine case of a man being pushed from power not by force but indirectly through the increasing influence of Thomas Wolsey. These two men simply had incompatible outlooks.

It is too easy and convenient to try to continually pigeon-hole the men who were relevant in early Tudor England, to describe everything in terms of faction, of men in specific groups vying with one another for influence and political clout. As can be seen with a man like George Talbot, earl of Shrewsbury, some men were not politically inclined in the sense that each episode in their lives cannot be judged as calculated to enhance their careers. There did exist men who could be described as public servants. This type of officer was somewhat different from a man like William Compton whom it seems was not part of any particular faction but merely served himself. This third type of man, as opposed to the factionalist and the narcissist, was a civil servant pure and simple, perhaps a career civil servant but still a man whose underlying affections lay in service to the crown.

²⁵⁵ BL, Cotton MS., Vespasian C. xiv, ff229r-230r (LP, II, ii, 4124).

Thomas Englefield provides an excellent example of such a man. Born in 1455 of a Berkshire family, Thomas Englefield made his name under the rule of the first Tudor king. By 1509 he formed part of that group of experienced councillors used by Henry VIII in his first steps as king. His death in 1514 at the age of fifty-nine would have deprived the king of a loyal servant with a history of uninterrupted service to the crown. Operating out of Berkshire, it is likely that it was that county which he represented in the parliaments of 1497 and 1510.²⁵⁶ At the latter of these two parliaments, as speaker, Englefield addressed those gathered.

Englefield's time under Henry VII was spent mainly in the field of administration. He was not a soldier, or ambassador, or flamboyant courtier. Englefield was a workhorse. He and men like him formed the bedrock of government. The list of commissions on which he served makes for impressive reading; to deliver the gaol to the cities of Hereford, Wallingford, Shrewsbury and Worcester's Castles; of oyer and terminer for numerous counties including Berkshire and the Welsh marches; to punish or pardon those implicated in the insurrections of 1497; as well as commissions of justice in eyre, of array and of the peace.²⁵⁷ There seems to be a particular geographical pattern to these commissions. They can best be described as

²⁵⁶ The History of Parliament. The House of Commons, 1509-1558, edited by ST Bindoff, vol ii, pp103-4; Chronicles of London, edited by CL Kingsford, (Vitellius AXVI), p212; GC, p366.

²⁵⁷ CPR, Henry VII, 1494-1509, vol ii, pp29, 30, 53, 86, 115, 116, 118, 146, 148, 156, 229, 263, 286, 288, 295, 438, 488, 592, 630, 640, 642, 656, 666.

covering the west and southern midlands. The counties in which he was operating were Berkshire, Oxfordshire, Worcestershire, Staffordshire, Shropshire, Herefordshire and Gloucester as well as into Wales. There was nothing to the north or east, in the south-west or the southern coast. This notion of the concentration of Englefield's duties in the western section of the country is reinforced by noting the five counties in which he served on commissions of the peace between 1509 and 1514. These were Berkshire, Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, Shropshire and Worcestershire.²⁵⁸

Englefield's influence in the Welsh marches is evident. He was a member of Arthur, prince of Wales's council for that country, having been elected one of the quorum for the peace in the marches as well as a justice of oyer and terminer²⁵⁹, a quorum being one of a number of specially named justices of the peace of whom some had to be in attendance before business could proceed. Service to Prince Arthur and then Henry, the future Henry VIII, as princes of Wales, provided men with a recognised route to promotion. This was the case with Englefield and with others; Piers Edgecombe and his father Richard had advanced their cause with service to the king's sons in their capacity as dukes of Cornwall. A man like Englefield could blood himself in the

²⁵⁸ LP, I, ii, pp1533, 1537-8, 1542, 1546.

²⁵⁹ The Commons and their speakers in English parliaments, 1376-1523, edited by JS Roskell, pp305-6, 310-11; CPR, Henry VII, 1485-94, 441. Roskell sees Englefield's election as speaker of the parliament in 1497 as a compliment to Prince Arthur.

administrative activities which were a part of governing provinces like Chester and Flintshire and hope for a move to the capital. Englefield received his promotion in due course with a place in Henry VII's council. Henry VIII kept him on in this capacity and Englefield sat on the son's council between November, 1509, and January, 1512.²⁶⁰ Englefield's skills clearly lay in the field of administration and he seemed fairly content to serve the king here. Certainly his talents enabled him to carve a niche for himself among the household officials.

Another man whose ability took him to the centre of the governing class was Henry Marney. He was a man of around fifty-two years of age when Henry VIII ascended the throne²⁶¹ and had had a lengthy record of loyalty to Henry VII, being a member of his council from 1485, as well as that of his son Arthur.²⁶² He had accumulated a wealth of experience in local administration, serving on various commissions for several counties, although most notably for Essex.²⁶³

He enjoyed an immediate promotion under Henry VIII. On 12th May, 1509, he was appointed as captain of the guard and vice-chamberlain, succeeding the lords Herbert and Darcy.²⁶⁴ These new promotions took him to the heart of

²⁶⁰ WH Dunham jnr (1944), 'The members of Henry VIII's whole council, 1509-1527', *EHR*, lix: p209.

²⁶¹ *Complete Peerage*, vol viii, p523.

²⁶² *PV*, pp6, 122.

²⁶³ *CPR, Henry VII, 1494-1509*, pp30, 32, 53, 87, 180-1, 209, 289, 638.

²⁶⁴ *LP*, I, i, 25, 54(9).

the government, if it may be so called, but failed to secure his election to the Order of the Garter six days later, at which meeting the lords Darcy and Dudley were chosen. He had been nominated by everyone present at this meeting, which popularity makes his failure to gain election all the more surprising. Not until the following April did Marney secure a successful election.²⁶⁵

The suggestion has been made that Marney had replaced Darcy in the king's council, chosen by Margaret, countess of Richmond and a friend of Wolsey.²⁶⁶ It would perhaps seem a little far-fetched to assume of Wolsey such influence at this early stage. Marney was listed as a beneficiary in the will of the countess of Richmond and was also one of her executors, so there was clearly a bond between them.²⁶⁷

Yet again, that important letter from lord Darcy to Richard Fox demands attention.²⁶⁸ Marney is mentioned as allegedly forming part of a group of men whom Fox opposed and wished to isolate from the new king, Fox having apparently failed in such a task. Darcy wrote, "*As I hear I will warn you, my lord of Dorisme [Thomas Ruthal] and Mr Mernye whilst I live.*" He concluded that Fox should or should not show the letter to the king or whomsoever he thought it wise at his discretion. If we are to assume that this letter was a warning from Darcy to Fox about the dangers of gossip,

²⁶⁵ Ibid, 37, 442.

²⁶⁶ Ibid, preface, pxiii.

²⁶⁷ Ibid, 1446, 158(24).

²⁶⁸ Ibid, 157.

then it raises some points of interest as regards Henry Marney.

Firstly, Darcy, although noting that the alleged counter group to Fox consisted of six men, addressed just three in his concluding paragraph, that is, Fox, Ruthal and Marney. It is to these three men that he promised his attention on the matter of damaging hearsay. Perhaps Darcy recognised this triumvirate as forming a distinct group at court. Can they be seen as forming a group of power-brokers or had Darcy singled them out because they appeared to be influential, senior councillors? Richard Fox was keeper of the privy seal, Thomas Ruthal was Henry's secretary while Henry Marney had just been appointed vice-chamberlain. Marney was a member of Henry VIII's council and naturally took part in important consultations.²⁶⁹ He was, however, advanced in years. With no specific age of retiral to adhere to, a Tudor councillor trod a fine line between sagacious and learned elder statesman and unthreatening obsolescent. It may be that Marney was beginning to outstay his welcome in the council.

A second point which is thrown up by this letter concerns the relationship between Marney and Thomas Darcy. Although Marney had replaced Darcy in the office of vice-

²⁶⁹ CSP, Venetian, 1509-1519, 791 lists Wolsey, Ruthal, Nykke, Howard Snr, Lovell and Marney as advising the king, in October, 1516, on the Cardinal of Sion's offer to Henry of the aid of the Switzers against France. Warham and Fox had absented themselves from the council. The composition of the council would often depend upon whoever was available in London, or wherever it was held, at the time.

chamberlain, would this necessarily have led to an acrimonious clash? Darcy does not seem to have fostered any hard feelings towards Marney. It is possible that he was more interested in pursuing his military career and here we have the crux of the situation. Did Margaret Beaufort replace Darcy with the intent of removing from the king's presence a belligerent force? If Wolsey and Fox were to emerge as peace-keepers, and Fox's intentions at least would have been evident by 1509, was Marney promoted as a support to them?

After the upheavals of the Wars of the Roses, the nobility of England were keenly aware of the consequences of choosing the losing side in any conflict. That class of men had more to lose than any other and experience had taught hard lessons. Assuming there were those suitably aggrieved to launch a challenge for the throne, firstly, a leader would need to emerge from the pack. The dangers inherent in this course of action are plain. Failure could prove to be a fatal blow to a man's political aspirations. Carrying such an idea and sounding out potential allies was a hazardous business. A pretender could easily be left in isolation by those around him who had previously offered encouragement or by those he had simply misjudged. A challenge could quickly turn into a suicidal prospect. There seems to be no obvious reason why a challenge to the crown should have emerged in 1509. The nobility had certainly felt the full force of Henry VII's restrictive financial practices, particularly towards the end of his reign, but the whole ethos surrounding the new

king's ascendancy seemed to offer them hope. A safer approach for the nobility to assert their influence was through group action. Pressure could be brought to bear on policy and not on the king himself.

Henry Marney's will, dated 1523, provides for interesting reading and is worth consideration at this point. It contains a lengthy description of the preparations to be made for his death. Most wills would have carried such instructions but Marney's is most thorough and detailed to the point of repetition.²⁷⁰ He leaves his executors in no doubt as to what should happen following his death and lays out for them the almost by-the-way details. Even in death a man had to be seen with the display which was suitable for his rank. This visual association underpinned the civil hierarchy in life and death. Funerary obits provide a striking example of this coupling. Henry Marney's will is typical in the sense that within its pages there exists an uneasy relationship between display and the understanding that such pushiness was not pleasing to God. Men saw little conflict in the abjuration of vanities and a provision for charity which was selfish rather than altruistic.

The possession of money during a man's lifetime allowed him to secure peace of mind in preparation for his death. Instructions for obsequies laid down in probate reveal much about a man's physical wealth but unfortunately very little as to the true nature of his religiosity. To use the will of

²⁷⁰ Complete Peerage, vol viii, p523, footnote (d).

Henry Marney as an example, what can be learned about him using this as a sole piece of evidence?²⁷¹ The first thing which is apparent is the wealth which he had obviously accumulated. There is the not uncommon magnanimity of the bequest of a full year's wages to every one of his household staff. Further, he declared that the chapel which he had begun to build adjoining the chancel of the parish church at Layer Marney should, on the occasion of his death, be completed. It was to have "*a substantial flat roof of timber and that to be covered with lead and also the windows thereof to be glazed with imagery accordingly.*" A tomb of marble was to be set in the wall and cast over with wrought ironwork, with Marney's own image to be made of black marble.

Not content with this impressive sarcophagus, Marney went a step further in an effort for his name to be remembered and his soul, and the souls of his ancestors and descendants, to be venerated. From the profits of his lands, he willed that a new almshouse be built with ground for a garden, enclosed within a brick wall. He then instructed his executors to find five poor men of good and honest name who could not earn their living by labour or any other occupation and to maintain these men. They were to be paid ten pounds each month. This act of charity was intended to benefit Marney as well as these poor men. Every one of the poor was to be instructed to go into the newly constructed chapel to hear mass. From there they were to proceed to the tomb, kneel

²⁷¹ PRO, PROB 11/21, ff67v-69v.

down and say for Marney's soul, and for the souls of numerous relatives, three pater nosters, this to be repeated at home kneeling by their beds before going to sleep at night. Such detailed planning of one's funeral and for the afterlife was standard practice but still Marney's last testament makes for astonishing reading.

The difference between his will and many others of this date would seem to be less in kind than in degree. Marney obviously felt some sense of duty to make provision for prayers for the souls of his relatives, perhaps the duty being heightened on the first member of the family to be in such a financial position. Henry Marney comes across as a fairly devout character. His will has an element of morbidity in it which would suggest much thought by him during his life about his death. While Martin Luther challenged indulgence theology, the endowment of religion remained bound up in the provisions for the souls of the living and the dead. Marney's will is testament to the fact that there still existed a tension between Christian humility and a sense of status and dignity fuelled by an increasingly hierarchical society.

The first few years of Henry VIII's reign were marked by both continuity and change. The content of the king's council represented one continuity from Henry VII's days while a change occurred in the promotion of the young breed of courtier. It would be incorrect to suggest that these two groups worked together as, for the most part, they seemed to form two very distinct entities, although overlaps

in membership were inevitable. The former held power through delegation while the latter were acquiring it through display and royal friendship. It would be fair to say that the king preferred the company of his youthful friends. The king himself was an active teenager, unwilling, at this stage in his life, to be burdened with the administrative activities of government. Many of his councillors had been his father's too and were not of his age group. They had less in common with the young king than their younger colleagues. Any divide at court between old and young was not of a serious nature. For all the influence that this new group were acquiring through their physical prowess and proximity to the king's person, they were not major office-holders or serious advisers. William Compton, Edward Howard and Thomas Knevet were no Warham, Surrey or Wolsey. What they were, though, was a group of men bound together through their youth, love of life and chivalric outlook.

It is possible to distinguish other groups of men, linked through geographical or financial factors, or mutual acquaintances or shared expectations. The success of some groups of men indicates that a career could be carved out of the localities. The Edgecombe family built up influence in the west country, in Cornwall and Devon. Service to the duchy of Cornwall and to the bishop of Exeter allowed Piers and his father Richard to bring themselves to the attention of the crown. Richard Edgecombe in particular enjoyed a career with a cosmopolitan flavour and neither father nor

son could be described as court-orientated. The county of Kent provided a focus for the likes of Henry Wyatt and Thomas Boleyn. Both men moved in similar social circles while it was perhaps Boleyn's association with the Howard family which facilitated his rise. William Blount, lord Mountjoy attempted to secure a place within that strata of society which could be loosely titled the intelligentsia, mainly through his links with his former master Desiderius Erasmus. He met one of his wives through service at court and one of his servants, William Uvedale, enjoyed grants, no doubt through association. Circles of influence developed around men like Blount with a diverse coterie of men feeding off their friendships and ties with this central figure.

There also existed a group of men of the old guard, elder statesman figures like William Warham, Richard Fox, Thomas Englefield and Thomas Lovell. The last two were both men in their mid-50s by 1509 and seemed content to operate as backroom boys in the sense that they were workaholic administrators. Any ambition they possessed was restricted to a desire to fulfil their role in their respective offices. There is little evidence of the type of single-minded drive which was a part of the character of Thomas Wolsey.

As has been seen, advancement was possible in a number of ways. It would be a mistake to assume that a man saw his career as fitting solely into one of these categories. Most men would have sought patronage of some sort, or at least

would have fostered appropriate contacts. Ability of one form or other carried most men into promotion. Certainly there were a number of courtiers who were able to use their pedigree to advantage, this being made easier by the succession of a king from the same dynasty as the deceased monarch. That most elusive of factors, the king's grace, affected a smaller group and is most difficult to isolate. One must still allow for fate and chance when examining the progress of some courtiers, particularly the younger ones and those whose careers were kick-started by Henry VIII. The ability to catch the king's eye is a largely haphazard skill and not conducive to formal analysis.

Chapter III: The Nobility

(i) succession and expectancy

Henry VII understood the part the nobility had to play in central and local government. The battle of Bosworth in 1485 could be adjudged the first step on a path fraught with possible dangers. Not only could Henry VII expect Yorkist pretenders challenging for the throne but he also faced external pressures, most notably from Maximilian, Margaret of Burgundy and, from 1488, a belligerent Scotland in the shape of James IV.¹ Such threats of invasion, like that of 1487, called for something approaching national resistance. There is no greater stimulus to a nation's collective pride and spirit of self-preservation than the challenge of a foreign force. Had French ships been bearing down on the coastline of England, would the nobility's animus need a prodding from the king? Had Maximilian's soldiers landed on the eastern shores and started marching inland, how many landowners would have surrendered their estates without a fight? Unlikely scenarios perhaps but the point remains valid. External threats had a unifying result on the invaded.

¹ DM Loades, Politics and the nation, 1450-1660, pp102-3.

It is here that a contrast can be found with the position of Henry VIII. The son was relatively secure in 1509 and this is not to judge with the benefit of hindsight. William Blount captured the spirit of the moment when he urged Erasmus to hasten to England, where "*Heaven smiles, earth rejoices; all is milk and honey and nectar.*"² This was a country with positive expectations of what the future could offer. From this position of strength, it was now in the king of England's hands to make the running as regards European politics. Henry chose war and to accomplish his ambitions he required two things: money and men. Both of these commodities would be elicited from one source - the nobility. Thus we have the contrast. The father had the safety net of the nobility's fear; their fear of each other, of the diminution of their own interests and of backing the losing side in any conflict. The son, however, had to win the backing of his council and nobility before his venture raised itself from the ground. Wars were treacherous affairs. A man's wealth, and of course his life, could be extinguished through injudicious military strikes. Careers could be made, begun, revived or destroyed in a few fleeting forays.

The noble class would have viewed the accession of Henry VIII as holding possibilities. A tide of positive emotions seems to have swept through the court at this time, with little real substance on which to lay such optimism. A new monarch often held out the chance of a new beginning, with

² Erasmus, ii, pp147-8.

the incoming king keen to set out his own particular agenda. An angry nobility with a point to make would thus have been advised to hold fire to allow the new king time to establish his individuality. Henry was a young and vibrant youth and this was clear for all to see. External appearances alone would suggest the possibility of a ruler with a somewhat different approach to kingship than his father. Groomed for the throne since the death of his brother Arthur in 1502, something of the character of the young prince would have been publicly known before 1509. This was an expectant court. However, there were no certainties that Henry, on his coronation, would have retained the characteristics of his princely days.

(ii) rehabilitation and the threat of reaction

Any look at the place of the nobility, within a wider study of the early years of Henry VIII, must be selective. On Henry VIII's accession, there were 42 noblemen in England.³ A number of these men did not play a significant part in the government of the day. Within the years of this study, only a handful of peers were members of Henry VIII's council, men like Thomas Howard senior, George Talbot, Thomas

³ H Miller, Henry VIII and the English nobility, p7, Appendix pp259-263 lists the English nobility in full.

Docwra, Edward Stafford, Charles Somerset and Thomas Darcy.⁴ The household brought members of the nobility to the fore and the king's military ventures allowed many peers to grab the limelight, albeit temporarily.

One such peer was Thomas Grey, marquis of Dorset, one of Henry's "*hand-picked flower of men in their military prime.*"⁵ He commanded the English force sent by Henry VIII in 1512 to join with Ferdinand of Aragon's men in an invasion of Guienne. The marquis shouldered much of the blame for the events which followed. The Spanish king instructed his ambassador in England, Luis Caroz, and his envoy, Martin de Muxica, to inform the king that the failure of this expedition was a result of Dorset's behaviour.⁶ The other captains of the English force showed little loyalty to their commander when questioned by Henry VIII over this shambolic mission. They attributed their failure to a lack of provisions, a mutiny by the soldiers and finally, the leadership of the marquis.⁷ It would seem that this display by Dorset would have left him out of favour with a king ambitious for foreign success but Henry was forgiving.

Under Henry VII, Thomas Grey had found himself banished into captivity in Calais. Henry VIII was willing to rehabilitate him, dispatching Thomas Lovell, or his

⁴ WH Dunham jnr (1944), 'The members of Henry VIII's whole council, 1509-1527', *EHR*, lix: p208; H Miller, *Henry VIII and the English nobility*, pp102-106 introduces further evidence to supplement Dunham's figures.

⁵ *PV*, p175.

⁶ *CSP, Spanish, 1509-1525*, 68.

⁷ *Ibid*, 72.

appointee, to Calais to take delivery of him from the custody of Sir Gilbert Talbot, the deputy of Calais.⁸ The marquis was being swiftly brought back into the courtly circle, with letters patent for a general pardon being officially offered to him whenever he so wished to sue for them.⁹ Henry VIII held no prejudices against Dorset and he found himself included in an array of activities. He was a recipient of the king's favour almost instantly, receiving his first grant of an office in August, 1509.¹⁰

This type of reconciliation was typical of the generosity which Henry was willing to show in the early years. This was not a king with an axe to grind against any individual or class, except for those who made it impossible for even a monarch of a generous disposition to rehabilitate. On 30th April, 1509, just over one week after the death of Henry VII, a warrant was given to William Warham, archbishop of Canterbury and chancellor, to grant letters patent of general pardon with the exception of around seventy men.¹¹ The more prominent among this list of exceptions included Edmund, William and Richard de la Pole, William Courtenay, Thomas Grey, George Neville, Thomas lord Dacre, Richard Empson and Edmund Dudley. It would have been beyond the magnanimity of most monarchs to

⁸ LP, I, i, 104; HMC, Various Collections, ii, 304. Grey's name was among those excepted from the pardon, as will be seen. From this date, 30th April, it would be a matter of months before he was recalled from Calais, in July.

⁹ LP, I, i, 158(75).

¹⁰ Ibid, 158(49).

¹¹ Ibid, 11(10).

pardon the de la Poles and Empson and Dudley. It is telling that there were only two noblemen by birth in England who gained membership to the privy chamber in the lifetime of Henry VIII¹² and they were both men who had at one time been ostracised by Henry VII: Henry Courtenay and Thomas Grey.

With Henry VIII furthering the careers of a number of 'new' men, primarily young courtiers who could count themselves as friends of the king as well as servants, it may seem feasible to expect a reaction from the aristocracy. Certainly that class of men had suffered under Henry VII. Polydore Vergil was moved to comment that that king had treated his people, "*with more harshness and severity than had been his custom, in order (as he himself asserted) to ensure they remained more thoroughly and entirely in obedience to him.*" Vergil further wrote that the king's subjects were kept obedient through fear and that the king "*considered that whenever they gave him offence they were actuated by their great wealth.*"¹³ The nobility thus had at least two stimuli for a reaction towards the new king in their general subjugation under his father, and a jealousy towards an emerging 'new' establishment.

One man who would seem to have been a possible threat to Henry VIII was Henry Courtenay, earl of Devon. His father William had carried Prince Henry's sword at his creation as

¹² H Miller, Henry VIII and the English nobility, pp84-86.

¹³ PV, p127.

duke of York in October, 1494, feasting with the king and his party afterwards.¹⁴ He accompanied Henry VII with other noblemen on his meeting with the archduke of Austria in 1500 and as late as November, 1501 he was with the future Henry VIII attending the reception of Catherine of Aragon.¹⁵ The events of the year 1503 proved to be a turning point in the fortunes of the family. It was deduced that William was involved in Edmund de la Pole, the earl of Suffolk's revolt. Five or six nights before his flight from England, it was said that de la Pole dined with Thomas Grey, marquis of Dorset and William Courtenay in London. Courtenay met him with "*gret reverence*" and was aware of his impending departure.¹⁶ This association was enough to seal Courtenay's fate. He was imprisoned by Henry VII in the Tower of London following his attainder at the parliament of 1504.¹⁷ Other men attainted along with him included Edmund, earl of Suffolk (Edmund de la Pole), Edward, late earl of Warwick and James Tuchet, late lord Audeley. The threat of Edmund de la Pole was naturally taken very seriously by the crown as he could claim to be a Yorkist heir. His mother, Elizabeth, was a sister of Edward IV and married to John de la Pole, duke of Suffolk who had died in 1491.¹⁸ Edward, earl of Warwick, son of George, duke of Clarence, was the heir to the house of York following the battle of Bosworth, and was clearly regarded

¹⁴ LP Richard III/Henry VII, vol i, Appendix A, p391.

¹⁵ Ibid, vol ii, p87; vol i, p410.

¹⁶ Ibid, vol i, pp225-229.

¹⁷ Rotuli Parliamentorum, vi, 545.

¹⁸ SB Chrimes, Henry VII, p339 for a select pedigree of the House of York.

as such, as is reflected by Lambert Simnel's impersonation of him.¹⁹ He was beheaded on Tower Hill in 1499.

Henry Courtenay certainly had the facility to revolt through his family's pedigree. His father William had married Catherine, sister of Edward V, Richard of York and the wife of Henry VII. Edward IV was his grandfather. Henry VII had thought it expedient to imprison his wife's brother-in-law. The position was fairly straightforward for the young Courtenay in 1509. The new king could have seen fit to let his father languish in the Tower or seek to re-establish his family's presence at court. William had, after all, for a time been a prominent figure at the court of Henry VII and was a possible candidate for reintegration. Vergil noted that William was held at Henry's court "*in magno honore atque gratia.*"²⁰ Fortunately for the young Courtenay, the king opted for a policy of reconciliation. The awareness of his pedigree, though, would have been ever present. In 1519, for example, Wolsey wrote to the ambassador Thomas Spinely regarding the proposed marriage between the earl of Devonshire and the niece of William de Croy, lord Chievres, chamberlain to Prince Charles, later Charles V. Wolsey intimated that he had discussed the matter with the king who saw the benefit of closer ties between Spain and England but before coming to any conclusions, Spinely should secretly find out the real reason behind lord

¹⁹ JAF Thomson, The transformation of medieval England, 1370-1529, p227.

²⁰ PV, p126.

Chievres' proposal.²¹ The concern stated in the letter was, did he, lord Chievres, look to any chance of the earl of Devonshire succeeding to the throne of England? It is clear that Courtenay could never be fully trusted and it was perhaps inevitable that his life should come to an end on Tower Hill.

Courtenay and Dorset were not the only noblemen who faced the possibility of political isolation. Edward Stafford, third duke of Buckingham, was a man young enough in 1509 to benefit fully from the grace of the new king, being just 31 years of age. His father's attainder of 1483, after his remarkable rebellion and subsequent execution, was reversed in 1485 and Edward's lands were granted to Margaret, countess of Richmond.²² Possibly as early as 1503, with the king in poor health, Buckingham was being touted as a "*noble man and woldbe a ryall ruler.*"²³ Ominously enough for him, Edmund de la Pole was being spoken of in a similar manner. The fact that Buckingham was viewed with suspicion is reflected in the lack of power awarded to him by Henry VII. He was appointed to commissions of oyer and terminer for London in 1495 and 1502 and for Middlesex and Kent in 1495; a commission to deliver the gaol of Warwick Castle in 1507; and commissions of the peace for ten counties throughout the reign.²⁴ When Edmund de la Pole forfeited his lands by

²¹ BL, Cotton MS., Vitellius B. xx, f197 (LP, III, i, 386).

²² DNB, vol liii, pp446-7.

²³ LP Richard III/Henry VII, vol i, pp233, 239.

²⁴ CPR, Henry VIII, 1494-1509, vol ii, pp29, 290, 30, 33, 560, 632, 641, 642,

high treason, Buckingham only received a dwelling in the parish of Saint Laurence Pounteney, London and the patronage and advowson of the college there.²⁵ In January, 1509, he was granted the castle and town of Brendles and numerous manors and lordships in south Wales, but these were to be 'held of the crown in chief without rendering anything.'²⁶ All this was very poor reward for one of the highest ranking noblemen in England. Henry VII clearly appreciated his threat to the crown, an awareness which was adopted by his son.

Early in the new king's reign rumours abounded as men began to survey their own position. Buckingham was seen as a possible player in Henry's new regime, or at least in the battle for a place in that regime. A letter from lord Darcy to Richard Fox reported contemporary rumours, emanating from the earl of Northumberland's servants, that Buckingham should be protector of England and Northumberland should rule everything from the Trent north, including Berwick and the marches.²⁷ Darcy carried on to suggest that Fox could "*bolster himself to rule all*" with the help of Edward Stafford and Henry Percy. Whether or not Darcy had correctly gauged political opinion at the time is a separate matter. What is important to notice is that Buckingham was seen as someone who could emerge

645, 656, 657, 659, 661, 663, 667.

²⁵ Ibid, p463.

²⁶ Ibid, p626.

²⁷ LP, I, i, 157; SJ Gunn (1991), 'The accession of Henry VIII', BIHR, lxiv: p284.

to prominence under the new regime.

In June, 1509, when Henry married his queen, Buckingham accompanied him on his journey from Greenwich to the Tower. The duke stood out from the crowd, "*in a Goune of Goldsmythys werk a thyng of grete Rycchesse.*"²⁸ On the 23rd June, the coronation ceremony continued and again Buckingham was given special mention, heading the king's group through the streets of London, "*in a large goune wroughth of nedyll werk Rygth costlew & Rych and Bare a [litill] whyte staff of sylvir In his hand In sygn & tokyn that he was hye & chyeff Steward of that ffeest of fflatt close cheyne of a newe devyse not beffore usid ffret wyth precious grete Rubyys & othir stonys of grete valu.*"²⁹ There can be no doubting Buckingham's presence at state functions. He performed his duties as one of the leading noblemen at the creation of Henry, duke of York, in 1494, at the reception of Catherine of Aragon in 1501, and at the meeting of Henry VII with the Archduke Philip of Austria. This, however, seems to have been the extent of Buckingham's involvement at court.³⁰

Edward Stafford was effectively being shunned by Henry VIII just as he had been by his father. His attempts to have the office of constable restored to his family were unsuccessful, Henry VIII granting him the office for only

²⁸ GC, p339.

²⁹ Ibid, pp339-340.

³⁰ LP Richard III/Henry VII, vol i, pp393-4, 402, 408, 410, 411; vol ii, p87.

the one day preceding the coronation.³¹ He continued, however, to play a full part in the ceremonial side of court. During 1513 he served the king abroad and while there is no account of him distinguishing himself in this campaign, he was again committed by the king to perform on ceremonial occasions.³² Henry was prepared to allow this nobleman to display his finery as this reflected well on both the duke and the king. This seems to have been the lot of Buckingham - important enough to take part in the displays which were a part of court life and which he enjoyed, but too dangerous a man to award any degree of responsibility.

The steady reversal of fortunes of the Howard family which had begun under Henry VII continued under the second Tudor. Three members of this family have relevance within the scope of this study, Thomas Howard, the father, and two of his sons, Edward and Thomas. The father, earl of Surrey and from 1514, duke of Norfolk, had been attainted at Henry VII's first parliament after his allegiance with Richard III at Bosworth. Through loyalty to the crown though, he slowly began to recover his position.³³ Treasurer from 1501, he was also used extensively by Henry VII in the north, checking risings in Yorkshire and from the Scots. At

³¹ LP, I, i, 94(87, 89); C Rawcliffe, The Staffords, earls of Stafford and dukes of Buckingham, 1394-1521, pp37-8.

³² Hall, vol i, pp67, 83, 91; LP, I, ii, 2053(1, 2, 3, 5, 6 i, ii).

³³ DNB, vol xxviii, pp62-4; For a study of Howard's whole career see M Tucker, The life of Thomas Howard, earl of Surrey and 2nd duke of Norfolk, 1443-1524; and for an overview of the recovery of the family after the attainder see R Virgoe, 'The recovery of the Howards in East Anglia, 1485-1529', pp1-20, in Wealth and power in Tudor England, edited by Ives, Knecht and Scarisbrick.

the start of Henry VIII's reign, Howard was a man of much experience. He had been on diplomatic missions in Scotland and recently in Antwerp and his military abilities and tactical knowledge were invaluable. In April, 1509, he could expect, with some justification, to play a formative part in the new king's council.

Surrey became almost a permanent feature in Henry VIII's council, up to the year 1527 attending 49 times, seventeen more than his son and almost double the number of the third placed man, Thomas Grey, marquis of Dorset.³⁴ Surrey formed part of a triumvirate, completed by George Talbot and Charles Somerset, which shouldered much of the council's work. These three men, the lord treasurer, lord steward and lord chamberlain, formed the backbone of the king's household. This group saw their development overtaken by events, and ultimately war, and Wolsey's rise. The figures of Wolsey and his patron Richard Fox dominate the evidence for Surrey's career revival during the first few years of Henry VIII's reign.

The first point to note regarding the political machinations of this period is that the word 'faction' may be used, if only in a clearly defined way.³⁵ It can often be an easy tag to apply to situations but this should not necessarily denigrate its value. To take, for example, the decision to wage war on France, a man either supported or opposed the venture.

³⁴ H Miller, Henry VIII and the English nobility, pp103, 107.

³⁵ EW Ives, Faction in Tudor England, (Historical Association), passim.

This is not to say that there suddenly appeared war and peace factions but certainly there could be little middle ground on such a contentious issue. The mistake is made when the issue becomes polarised. There were no conscientious objectors in this war and a man advocating peace could easily, and did, end up fighting. It must not be assumed that divisions were clear cut. A man like Richard Fox would have had strong views, but these would not have jeopardised his inclination to serve the common good of the country. Factions could be fluid and ephemeral and if this is understood then the terms 'war' and 'peace parties' may be used with caution.

What then of the position of Thomas Howard senior in the new regime? If we are to believe Polydore Vergil's version of events, the situation is straightforward. Vergil saw rivalry between Richard Fox, bishop of Winchester and Howard, the former heading a peace party and the latter a war party, both battling for supremacy at court and control over the king. Fox promoted Wolsey but this backfired on him when he was forced to retire from court. Howard himself retired to his estates and when asked for his advice by the king on Wolsey's proposal in 1515 to check the pretensions of King Francis, he advised caution and restraint.³⁶ The first question which arises from Vergil's narrative is, was Surrey heading a war party?³⁷

³⁶ PV, pp152-3, 194-8, 233, 235.

³⁷ See P Gwyn, The king's cardinal, pp7-18; JJ Scarisbrick, Henry VIII, p42; Gwyn deals extensively with what he sees as the two main pieces of evidence for this episode, LP, I, i, 157, 880.

Lord Darcy wrote to Richard Fox, possibly in August, 1509, informing him of gossip which was being peddled, namely, that Fox was losing his battle for the king's mind at the expense of a group led by Surrey, Shrewsbury and Ruthal.³⁸ This would seem to provide strong evidence for a factional split at court, however Darcy included his own name in that group. He would hardly have informed Fox of the full membership of an 'enemy' party and certainly would have kept his own name out of it.³⁹ It would have made no sense for Darcy to have tipped his hand, and that of this faction, at such an early point in the new king's reign. The theory of this letter being a warning shot across Fox's bow can also be discounted. Had Darcy and Surrey been wishing to blunt the influence of Fox then this was not the way to go about it. Any letter displaying to Fox what sort of combined strength he was up against could quite easily have been taken to the king by the prelate. Any conjecture along these lines is surely made redundant by a reading of Darcy's closing lines, *"My Lord, good it is to have a good eye, though much be but sayings. As I hear, I will warn you, my lord of Dorisme and Mr Mernye whilst I live; and therefore show this as ye think seems good, to the King's Grace or otherwise."* Darcy hoped that the gossip or 'sayings' had been nipped in the bud and he promised that any future information he received he would pass on to Fox. Darcy was leaving it up to Fox to decide how much of this story he

³⁸ LP, I, i, 157.

³⁹ Gwyn, The king's cardinal, pp7-8.

told the king, obviously believing that such loose talk held little weight.

The second letter which can be cited as holding evidence for a Fox-Surrey conflict was written by Wolsey to the bishop of Winchester on 30th September, 1511.⁴⁰ In this Wolsey reported that Surrey had left court discountenanced and had not yet returned. Wolsey wished to see him ousted from the court completely. It is difficult to come to any other conclusion than that Wolsey had a strong dislike of Surrey. This may have been due, in part, to Surrey being treasurer. This office carried a fair amount of political weight, with its holder determining how much money was available to pursue policies. Some of Wolsey's decision-making may have been frustrated by Surrey. Rather than see a conflict between Fox and Surrey, it would seem more logical to assume a conflict between Surrey and Wolsey. Surrey and Fox had managed to work under Henry VII peaceably. Why should this relationship have changed in 1509?⁴¹ Richard Fox was a man of high intellect and morals and what is known about his character would point to him doing what was in the best interests of the young king. Surrey had always shown loyalty to the crown and was perhaps cautious of what he saw as Wolsey's increasing influence.

This letter also mentioned Edward Howard, Surrey's son,

⁴⁰ LP, I, i, 880.

⁴¹ M Tucker, The life of Thomas Howard, earl of Surrey and 2nd duke of Norfolk, 1443-1524, pp68-9.

stirring the king to wage war on the Scots, Wolsey concluding that Fox's presence at court was needed to "*repress this appetite.*" It has been shown that any ill-feeling between Wolsey and Edward Howard was short lived and further that Edward did not get along with his father.⁴² Care, therefore, must be taken not to tag Wolsey's hostility as being directed at 'the Howards' when the Howards themselves seemed far from united. It is perfectly feasible to see Wolsey at odds with the father and at peace with the son.

There is a suggestion in a letter of 5th April, 1513, that Edward Howard was trying to make up with his father.⁴³ In this Howard, writing to Wolsey, asked the almoner to recommend himself to the queen for prayers and concludes "*specially recommend me to my Lord my father, beseeching him of his blessing.*" The tone of this request is one of reconciliation. Howard had already recounted to Wolsey the seriousness of the situation in which he found himself. He had no provisions to ready the ship 'Katharine Fortileza', and victuals in general he described as "*bad and scanty.*" With one hundred French ships approaching and having experienced the worst storms he had ever seen, Edward Howard felt in need of encouragement and prayers from every quarter. He informed Wolsey that he would write to him again, if he survived. Care must be taken not to read

⁴² Gwyn, The king's cardinal, pp10, 11; SJ Gunn, Charles Brandon, duke of Suffolk, p8.

⁴³ LP, I, i, 1748.

too much into the request for his father's blessing, but in the context of his troubles, it would seem a fair assumption to make that Edward Howard was trying to patch up any differences he had with his father before it was too late.

Two further assumptions can be made from this letter. Firstly, Edward can be said to have had an amicable relationship with Wolsey. This is no more than simply an admiral reporting, as was his duty, to Wolsey, who can be loosely referred to as the king's co-ordinator. Howard obviously felt on friendly enough terms with Wolsey to ask him for a recommendation to the queen, to Charles Brandon and Henry Guildford and to others as he saw fit, as well, of course, to his father. Howard also enclosed in this correspondence a letter for his wife which he knew Wolsey would have delivered. The second point which can be made is that Edward Howard obviously felt he could ask Wolsey to approach his father. It is unlikely that Wolsey would have done this personally but nonetheless it would have been a difficult task to perform had he been on non-speaking terms with Surrey. In times of war any personal friction among the leaders would necessarily have been put on hold. Lines of communications had to be kept open and there was little room for personal rivalries.

(iii) individual progress

The following individual case studies have been chosen because the men represent differing points of the court culture. William Blount, lord Mountjoy, Charles Somerset, earl of Worcester, George Talbot, earl of Shrewsbury and Thomas lord Darcy brought particular talents to their fields of expertise. They had different views about their own place within the structure of court. Blount was at his happiest at court. A close friend of Henry VIII, he made worthwhile contributions to the fields of government and learning while retaining a keen interest in furthering the positions of his dependants. Somerset was more comfortable when away from court. A diplomat, he lacked ambition and a professional curiosity which resulted in a sluggish career. Talbot was a heavyweight household figure and had been a close friend of Henry VII. He proves to be an elusive figure, perhaps preferring to remain in the background. Darcy played an important part in Henry VIII's early military ventures. Troubled by debts, he gained honour at home and abroad through the hardships he endured. A study of these four noblemen will throw light on a number of areas: their own views of their duties; Henry VIII's gratitude at the rendering of certain services; their career progression under Henry VII then Henry VIII; and differing abilities to reward members of their own family and other dependants. One factor which links these four men, and many others at court at this time, was their

continued loyalty to the Tudor crown. It is clear that those men who had provided consistent service to Henry VII, and were willing to act as trustworthy servants to the new king, were in line for career advancement and individual rewards.

(a) William Blount, lord Mountjoy

William Blount, 4th lord Mountjoy made his name not only as a statesman but also as a man of learning and a patron of his former master, Desiderius Erasmus. His contribution in the fields of government and learning was significant and he managed to engage himself in both arenas for the duration of his life. Mountjoy's relationship with Erasmus began around 1496 when he was a student of his in Paris.⁴⁴ They clearly enjoyed a close friendship from that point onwards. Erasmus occasionally stayed in Mountjoy's house when in England and was also accommodated by his patron at Hammes Castle when Mountjoy was lieutenant of that place.⁴⁵

Mountjoy does not seem to have been a man of learning himself although he perhaps wished he were. He certainly mixed in the highest intellectual company of the day, with men like Thomas More, William Grocyn and John Colet.⁴⁶ In a letter to Erasmus in May, 1509, Mountjoy told him how the king had commented that he wished he had more learning and how important learned men were.⁴⁷ Here is an indication perhaps that Henry wished to be a little more like Mountjoy as regards socialising with the intelligentsia. This did not amount to jealousy; Mountjoy was a court favourite

⁴⁴ DNB, vol v , pp259-260.

⁴⁵ LP, I, i, 652, 890; I, ii, 3062.

⁴⁶ DNB, op cit.

⁴⁷ Erasmus, ii, p148.

as will be seen. Erasmus recalled that Mountjoy and Prince Henry, the future Henry VIII, studied together, so there may have been developing a sense of the younger boy, the prince, admiring and looking up to the socialite Mountjoy. At this stage Henry was not expected to succeed to the throne, his brother Arthur being alive. Perhaps as the neglected son he sought a role model outside his immediate family. He could have done worse than to choose Mountjoy.

William Blount's status was inherited. He had a highly prestigious family pedigree; his grandfather had married Edward IV's aunt, his step-father was the earl of Ormond, and one of his ancestors, Walter Blount, had been slain at the battle of Shrewsbury wearing Henry IV's armour to confuse the enemy.⁴⁸ He had succeeded to his title on the death of his father in 1485 and was granted a licence of entry to all his father's possessions on January 31st, 1500, having reached the age of twenty-one.⁴⁹ If we can place Mountjoy's date of birth at around 1478 to 1479, then Vergil surely cannot be correct with his statement that he was a member of Henry VII's council in 1486.⁵⁰ Mountjoy was well placed to carry on his family's tradition of loyalty to the crown. His father John had been lieutenant of Hammes Castle, with his other son James, and keeper of Guisnes Castle, while his brother, the aforementioned James, had been with the future Henry VII in exile in Brittany or

⁴⁸ Mary Louise Bruce, The making of Henry VIII, pp90-91.

⁴⁹ CPR, Henry VII, 1494-1509, vol ii, p192.

⁵⁰ PV, p6.

France in 1484-5.⁵¹ Indeed, as a reward for his loyalty, Henry dubbed James Blount on landing back in England just prior to the battle of Bosworth.⁵² His grandfather, Sir Walter Blount, had been Edward IV's treasurer. This then was the heritage on which Mountjoy had to build.

As with many other men of distinction at this time, Mountjoy's career was kick-started with the accession of Henry VIII. He certainly looked on it as an exciting time, writing to Erasmus on 27th May, 1509 that, "*All England is in ecstasies. Extortion is put down - liberality is the order of the day.*"⁵³ The new king was not slow to reward his old friend and tutor. In July, 1509, he was made, for life, master and worker of the king's moneys and keeper of the exchange in the Tower of London, and the realm of England, and the town of Calais; this was followed in November of the same year with the lieutenancy of the castle of Hammes in Picardy for 20 years and then during pleasure.⁵⁴ Of more immediate importance to Mountjoy would have been the cancelling of several recognizances which lifted the financial burden which he had been bearing since the time of Henry VII. He was bound to a recognizance for £10,000 for the safe-keeping of Hammes Castle to Henry VIII but all his recognizances for that building made to Henry VII were cancelled.⁵⁵

⁵¹ LP Richard III/Henry VII, vol i, pp15, 47; SB Chrimes, Henry VII, Appendix B.

⁵² BL, Harl MS., 78, f.31b.

⁵³ Erasmus, ii, pp147-8.

⁵⁴ LP, I, i, 132(53), 257(27).

⁵⁵ Ibid, 257(5).

While Mountjoy had been granted the keeping of Hammes Castle at pleasure by Henry VII, the financial contract which was linked to it was particularly exacting. Mountjoy found himself bound to the order of £10,000 and having to find sureties for a further £10,000.⁵⁶ Hammes Castle at this point was in need of repair and fortification. Mountjoy was ordered to pay a fine of £500 and a further £300 to the king towards the repairs which had been begun by Sir John Turberville. As the indenture granting Mountjoy the keepership was sealed, only £100 had been paid to John Heron, the other £700 being organised into seven recognizances of £100 each. The surety for £10,000 Mountjoy made up with a series of recognizances.⁵⁷ Among the men Mountjoy secured were George, earl of Shrewsbury, George Stanley, lord Strange, who was later replaced by Richard, earl of Kent, Edward, viscount Lisle, also later replaced, Thomas Grey, marquis of Dorset and George Neville of Burgavenney who all promised £300 each, as well as lesser men like William Say, who promised £1000, Henry Willoughby, £200 and Thomas Parre, £100. While these recognizances were later cancelled by Henry VIII, they were a serious burden for any man to bear. It says something for the influence of Mountjoy, however, that he could raise such amounts in the first place.

Mountjoy seemed to find the amount of new recognizances outweighed by the cancellation of old ones. In the first

⁵⁶ CCR, Henry VII, vol ii, 226.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 228, 290, 428, 756.

three years of the new king's reign, in addition to the bond already mentioned, Mountjoy was named in a recognizance for 1,000 marks relating to Hammes Castle, and was also bound for £60 to the king.⁵⁸ Cancellations of recognizances made under Henry VII amounted to £1590, some made with others.⁵⁹ The financial pressures on Mountjoy were certainly easing, and this is a reflection of the general policy of Henry VIII. He was attempting to relax the crown's tight hold on the nobility and reverse the harsh and restrictive policies imposed by his father.

Mountjoy married four times,⁶⁰ to Elizabeth, daughter of Sir William Say; to Alice, daughter of the lord mayor of London, Sir Henry Kebel, to whom Mountjoy bequeathed a stone for his grave in his will⁶¹; to Dorothy, daughter of Thomas Grey, marquis of Dorset; and also to Agnes de Venegas. The marriage to Agnes came sometime in 1509, most likely after Henry's accession and before 30th July, for on that date the king sent a letter to his father-in-law Ferdinand announcing the union.⁶² In it he described Mountjoy as a baron whom he held in high esteem. Agnes de Venegas was Spanish and one of the ladies of Queen Catherine. Henry VIII begged Ferdinand to favour her cause in claiming a legacy which Queen Isabella had left to

⁵⁸ LP, I, i, 257(4, 80).

⁵⁹ Ibid, 257(80), 1524(38).

⁶⁰ Both DNB, op cit and Testamenta Vetusta, vol i, pp670-71 incorrectly state that Mountjoy married three times, failing to cite his marriage to Agnes de Venegas.

⁶¹ PRO, PROB 11/25, ff243r, 243v.

⁶² CSP, Spanish, 1509-1525, 20; LP, I, ii, 128.

her, and some of her own property.

Of more interest is Henry's statement that it was "*very desirable that Spanish and English families should be united by family ties.*" This may have been a marriage of convenience, although Mountjoy was clearly an attractive individual as his marriage record was to prove. It certainly looks as if he was marrying beneath himself. De Venegas was little more than a lady-in-waiting, although the importance of this rank could vary and she must have been of sufficiently high standing for Mountjoy to have considered marrying her. Henry at least was pleased by the union, if only for its diplomatic advantages. To have met, courted and eventually married one of the queen's ladies-in-waiting says something for Mountjoy's presence at court. He was clearly a regular in court circles, mixing with the king and queen's entourages.

The next few years Mountjoy spent at Hammes and intermittently back in England. Several letters from Erasmus to Colet and Ammonius testify to his busy itinerary.⁶³ He was an industrious man and Erasmus at times seemed tired of continually having to track down his main source of financial support. There existed a form of look-out system, employed by men like Erasmus and Colet, to communicate to each other when a patron was in town. Erasmus, for example, wrote to Ammonius on 5th October, 1511, asking him what he knew of Mountjoy's arrival back

⁶³ LP, I, i, 890, 891, 905, 933, 948, 958.

in England.⁶⁴ Again, eleven days later, he inquired of Ammonius if Mountjoy had yet returned to London.⁶⁵ Ammonius could report good news to Erasmus on 8th November, "*Your patron, as I have heard (for I have not yet seen him), has been in town for three days.*"⁶⁶ Erasmus may have had trouble tracking down his friend but he did not lose patience. A year later he attributed the appearance of his third edition of the *Adagia* to the kindness of William Warham and Mountjoy.⁶⁷

As has been mentioned, Mountjoy married Elizabeth, daughter of Sir William Say, most likely before 1500. This was the same William Say who was the cousin of Edmund de la Pole, duke of Suffolk. While the link between Mountjoy and the traitor de la Pole was perhaps too distant to adversely affect his career, judging by the obtrusive financial pressures placed on him by Henry VII, and that king's general mistrust of the lord, it may have been causing the crown some anxiety. There is no evidence to suggest subversive tendencies on the part of William Say and Mountjoy certainly at no point made any effort to break off relations with his father-in-law. In 1506, Mountjoy and others were named as feoffees by Say, agreeing to provide payment of a debt due to the king, Say offering up land in Somerset, Cornwall, Devon, Berkshire and Hertfordshire.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ *Erasmus*, ii, p176.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, pp176-7.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, p189.

⁶⁷ *LP*, I, i, 1552.

⁶⁸ PRO, E210/10,759.

In 1508, Say was sufficiently wealthy to pay a total of £600 for numerous parcels of land in Rutland and Hertfordshire.⁶⁹

Mountjoy became embroiled in a dispute with Henry Bouchier, earl of Essex. Bouchier had married another daughter of Say, Mary, and clashed with Mountjoy over their wives' inheritances. The matter eventually went before Wolsey in 1515. In the long term it has been suggested that Bouchier's determination led to his success in this dispute.⁷⁰ Say and Mountjoy seemed close enough. In December, 1512, along with Mountjoy, Say found a recognizance he had made under Henry VII worth 240 marks cancelled.⁷¹ The next year he could offer his son-in-law something when the latter asked him for venison and other provisions for the wedding of his servant William Uvedale and Jane Dansey, Mountjoy's wife's and Say's daughter's gentlewoman.⁷²

Say himself seems to have operated out of Hertfordshire. He was involved in commissions of the peace and to seize the property of Scots in England in that county.⁷³ Lord Mountjoy wrote to him in May, 1513, in preparation for the impending war in France that summer, asking him how

⁶⁹ PRO, E210/1480, 1479.

⁷⁰ PRO, E326/5688, 9012; E210/10,759, 10,125; SJ Gunn, 'Henry Bouchier, earl of Essex', pp145-6, in The Tudor nobility, edited by GW Bernard.

⁷¹ LP, I, i, 1524(38).

⁷² BL, Stowe MS., 141, f16 (LP, I, ii, 1849; a letter from Blount to Say).

⁷³ LP, I, ii, 2222(16), p1538.

many men he could muster out of Hertfordshire.⁷⁴ In his will he stated a desire to be buried in the parish church of Broxbourne in Hertfordshire.⁷⁵ Say was not a peripheral character. Any man who could underwrite one of Mountjoy's recognizances to the value of £1000 was someone of considerable means. He could count among his friends some of the highest ranking gentry in England. On his death, the goods at his houses at Bedwell and in London were to be divided into three equal parts. One part he bequeathed to Henry, marquis of Exeter, who had the choice of all three portions; a second part he left to Henry, earl of Essex and the third to William Blount, lord Mountjoy. In addition, Mountjoy and the earl of Essex were bequeathed one hundred marks each to pray for his, Say's, soul and the marquis of Exeter was named as one of his executors. Say was no ordinary country gentleman.

It is possible to discern developing circles of influence emanating from the central figure of Mountjoy. He was, within a distinct group, the main man at court and attached to him were a wife who was in turn attached to the queen, a father-in-law, a servant who was being rewarded in his own right and who was marrying a gentlewoman of Mountjoy's wife, and the learned scholar Erasmus. All these people fed off Mountjoy, providing him with services and receiving favours in return. He was the lynch-pin around whom this coterie revolved.

⁷⁴ BL, Stowe MS., 141, f16 (LP I, ii, 1849).

⁷⁵ PRO, PROB 11/24, ff44v-46r, also PROB 11/29, f238v.

In May, 1512, Mountjoy was described as chamberlain to Queen Catherine, with an annuity of £66 13s 4d during pleasure.⁷⁶ He was involved in co-ordinating the arrangements for the queen when she was confined to Richmond during her pregnancy in 1510. It is likely that he was employed in some capacity in the household from the beginning of the king's reign. Mountjoy's position as chamberlain was not threatened and his working relationship with the queen was not compromised when news broke of Henry's liaison with Elizabeth Blount, most likely a cousin of his through Sir John Blount, a brother of his father John, 3rd lord Mountjoy. She first came to the attention of the king at the beginning of 1514 when she was a lady-in-waiting of Catherine⁷⁷, a post no doubt acquired for her by her influential cousin. Hall described Elizabeth as a woman who "*in syngyng, daunsyng, and in all goodly pastymes, exceded all other, by the whiche goodly pastymes, she won the kynges haste.*"⁷⁸ In 1519 she gave birth to their son, Henry FitzRoy, the duke of Richmond.

Mountjoy could be regarded as a close friend of Henry VIII although the amount of time he spent abroad would have denied him a certain intimacy which it was possible to cultivate at court. He was given the responsibility of providing the transport for the king's army along with Miles Gerard and William Atclyff on 17th May, 1513.⁷⁹ While

⁷⁶ LP, I, i, 1221(29).

⁷⁷ JJ Scarisbrick, Henry VIII, p147.

⁷⁸ Hall, vol ii, p49; also Grafton, vol ii, p382.

⁷⁹ LP, I, ii, 1948(69, 70).

these three men were overseeing the shipment of the king's soldiers, they were to work with Edward Poynings who was the constable of Dover and warden of the cinque ports. This was a sensible appointment as Mountjoy would have been well aware of the hazards and logistics involved in crossing the Channel, being a frequent navigator of it himself. Included in the accounts of Miles Gerard is a payment of 100s, listed as a reward to Thomas Blount, clerk to William lord Mountjoy⁸⁰ and possibly another relative of Mountjoy gaining employment in his service.

Mountjoy's time was further taken up abroad when he was appointed bailli of the town of Tournai with the emoluments or profits, as held by Sir Edward Poynings, and this at a time when he was already acting lieutenant of that town.⁸¹ Poynings was still available to help Mountjoy settle in at Tournai, writing to Wolsey in February, 1515, that he had remained in that town for longer than he had anticipated because "*Mountjoy wished him to wait till the garrison, which was much disordered, were better established.*"⁸² Mountjoy did in fact experience trouble while in charge at Tournai. He was attempting to strengthen the fortifications and at the same time keep the soldiers in line; the garrison was threatening open rebellion over pay.⁸³ Mountjoy was clearly unsettled at Tournai, stating in a letter to Wolsey on 22nd November, 1516, that he had said that he would not

⁸⁰ Ibid, 2326.

⁸¹ Ibid, 2617(22).

⁸² Ibid, II, i 149.

⁸³ BL, Cotton MS., Vespasian F. xiii, f.22; Caligula E. ii, f.65.

remain in the job after 1st November and that Henry had given him permission to leave for England on All Saint's Day.⁸⁴ He declared that after work on the citadel had been completed he was under the impression that someone else was going to be appointed to the office; also, as no money was forthcoming from Wolsey, he could not keep order in the garrison. Earlier that year the soldiers had demanded a month and a half's wages and Mountjoy was forced to secretly convey the town's marshal, Sir Sampson Norton, away lest he be killed.⁸⁵

The year 1515 proved to be an arduous one for Mountjoy as he faced continual problems. In February he reported that, *"the city cannot be kept without ready money. There are many strangers, much weapon, many cankered stomachs, some stark traitors in it: the soldiers rude, and not to be trusted, poor, and cannot put up with slack payment"* ⁸⁶; two months later his warning of traitors in his midst materialised, with the numbers of rebels so great that they could not all be punished and some who had not been paid were planning to serve Richard de la Pole; in August the rebel Arnold Bewfitz was arrested but Mountjoy feared further riots if any more were apprehended and therefore proposed a general pardon.⁸⁷ After the city had been initially appeased many were executed or banished.⁸⁸

⁸⁴ LP, II, i, 2578.

⁸⁵ Ibid, 147.

⁸⁶ Ibid, 165.

⁸⁷ Ibid, 165, 325, 824.

⁸⁸ Hall, vol i, p149.

There is a suggestion that a posting to the city of Tournai meant, to an extent, drawing the short straw in terms of possible government posts. More than anything this was because the court, and it was generally based in London, was the centre of activity. Any posting outside the capital, even within England, meant a removal for the recipient from the means of patronage and from the physical presence of the king. Although a posting to Tournai would itself have brought opportunities for financial advancement, legally through wages and expenses and illegally through sweeteners and backhanders, what mattered most was presence at court. Personal contact was everything. The phrase 'out of sight, out of mind' would have been particularly apt at the time.

While Henry VIII had the ambition to cut a figure on the larger continental stage, it is doubtful whether he really believed he could recover much of the ground lost by his father's isolationism. We have appearing a picture of a king outwardly expansionistic yet unwilling to invest sufficiently to support his ambitions. Tournai certainly had a poor reputation in the early sixteenth century among men drafted there.⁸⁹ One such officer was Richard Jerningham. He was given and granted money from the king towards the charges and expenses of his household at Tournai, "*where at I had never a penny of that the time I was there*" he complained.⁹⁰ This comment would seem to be a fairly

⁸⁹ C Cruickshank, Henry VIII and the invasion of France, pp145-149.

⁹⁰ PRO, PROB 11/22, ff67v-68r.

standard grievance for those placed in charge of the garrison at Tournai. Mountjoy certainly had unhappy memories of the city.

Tournai could though provide a source of revenue for men stationed there in the form of pensions. Thomas Wolsey eked out a tidy living from such monies, including compensation for the loss of the bishopric there. Men like Richard Jerningham, Charles Somerset and Edward Belknap also benefited financially through indemnities paid by the French king as compensation for the loss of office and rewards for the return of Tournai to Francis I.⁹¹

The officers at the garrison were not the only ones to experience financial hardships at this time. John Stile, a gentleman usher and ambassador with Ferdinand, writing from Valladolid in Spain in 1509, complained about the position in which he found himself, begging his king "*to be good and gracyus lord unto me, and that I may be schortely eftesonys be socurryd wythe money for my dayli chargys here.*"⁹² Stile declared that he would need such money in order to continue to be of service in Valladolid, otherwise he would have to return home. The position at home, however, was little better. His family, he pitifully informed Henry, lived poorly in Portsmouth, "*and have not where wythe for to mayntene my pore howsehold yn myn absence;*

⁹¹ Charles Giry-DeLoison (1993), 'Money and early Tudor diplomacy. The English pensioners of the French Kings (1475-1547)', Medieval History, 3: pp131, 135.

⁹² LP, I, i, 162(p88).

for y have nother offyce nor fee, only excepte fyve schelyngys by the day to me assyned for my dayly exspence here, the whych y do spend here, wythe more many tymeys."

Mountjoy was a colourful character. Essentially a court man he seemed uncomfortable when absent from that institution; he had an unhappy time at Tournai. At court he was in his element and was a man around whom many fluttered. He must have wondered, like many of his type, how many of his friends he could have counted on in times of need. Attention from others was certainly enjoyed by the courtier but it could become obsessive; Erasmus on occasions pestered Mountjoy for favours to the point of distraction. But then this was part and parcel of life at court. There were the mighty and there were the hangers-on.

It is interesting to note that there were men of a similar rank within the nobility class who had different views on their own particular roles. William Blount was a man at his happiest at court. He can be contrasted with Charles Somerset, a man, it would seem, who flourished when engaged on foreign missions.

(b) Charles Somerset, earl of Worcester

Charles Somerset was around fifty years of age when Henry

VIII came to the throne. His pedigree was certainly impressive. An illegitimate son of Henry Beaufort, third duke of Somerset, he was a second cousin of Henry VII and this king took him into his confidence from an early date. He had been a trusted servant to Henry VII and had been granted, among other things, the title Baron Herbert of Chepstow and Gower in 1506 and had become chamberlain of the household two years later.⁹³ Somerset was involved in diplomatic missions throughout his career but especially so during the first twelve years of Henry VIII's reign. This attests to his close relationship with both monarchs, particularly as he was a participant in marriage arrangements, negotiations which needed a light diplomatic touch from a trusted courtier. He was with Henry VII in 1500 when he met Philip of Austria; he met commissioners of Maximilian in 1502; and he was used as a mediator between Henry VII and Louis XII over Henry's proposed marriage with Margaret of Angoulême. Somerset was acting as the king's ambassador in this matter, arranging everything in the build-up to the marriage. This proposal fell through.⁹⁴

Somerset's diplomatic duties continued, indeed increased, under Henry VIII. He was part of a three man commission, with Thomas Docwra and Nicholas West, assigned in 1514 to settle with Louis XII the peace treaty concluded on 7th August and to confirm the marriage contract between that

⁹³ DNB, vol liii, pp230-231.

⁹⁴ LP, Richard III/Henry VII, vol ii, pp88, 106, 125.

king and Henry's sister Mary.⁹⁵ Thomas Docwra, prior of St John of Jerusalem in England and Nicholas West, dean of Windsor had, in June, 1510, been appointed to receive Louis's confirmation of terms agreed at London in March, 1510.⁹⁶ Somerset had been appointed the Princess Mary's proxy and was one of those who escorted her to France.⁹⁷ The procession which left for Dover and then France was an impressive one. Lorenzo Pasqualigo, a merchant from Venice, wrote home to his brothers Alvise and Francesco describing the scene in London at this time.⁹⁸ Mary was accompanied by four main dignitaries, the earl of Surrey, William Warham, lord Stanley and Somerset. Accompanying them were four hundred knights and barons and two hundred gentlemen and other squires. The lords, knights and barons all had their wives with them and they in turn had their ladies-in-waiting. It was a splendid gathering and Somerset was its effective head.

Here was a man at ease with tasks of high importance and at ease moving among the high courtiers of the courts of Europe. Henry VIII treated the well-being of his sister with great seriousness. Somerset had been sent to check on her and especially on how she was being treated by Louis. He wrote to Wolsey telling him that he had done all he could with the French king who had told him that, *"his wife and he be in good and perfect love as ever two creatures can be,*

⁹⁵ Foedera, xiii, 436; LP, I, ii, 3226(21), 3240.

⁹⁶ Foedera, xiii, 278.

⁹⁷ LP, I, ii, 3269, 3294, 3295.

⁹⁸ CSP, Venetian, 1509-1519, 500.

and both of age to rule themselves, and not to have servants that should look to rule him or her." ⁹⁹ Reports from the French court on Somerset's efforts were all laudatory. The duke of Suffolk wrote to both Henry VIII and Wolsey on 14th November, 1514, praising the ambassador and describing his work as bringing honour to the king. Mary confirmed to her brother in letters sent the next day that she was being treated lovingly by her husband.¹⁰⁰

Henry's concern for his sister's safety in the hands of Louis transcended the natural anxieties of the king as alliance seeker. He appeared to have genuine concerns for Mary's welfare. A letter from Rome to the duke of Milan of September 9th, 1514, reported that the princess "*weeps bitterly over her misfortune in being passed from one extreme to another.*" ¹⁰¹ Mary had been part of a recent marriage alliance which had fallen through. It is too easy to disregard basic human emotions when examining this type of match-making. For Henry, the link to the royal family of France was of paramount importance but there are signs that his brotherly instincts were being aroused.

Somerset was used on several more missions to France. What becomes clear is that he was a man with a considerable talent in the diplomatic field. Somerset was the closest servant the king had to a modern-day foreign secretary. Yet

⁹⁹ LP, I, ii, 3416.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 3437, 3438, 3441.

¹⁰¹ CSP, Milan, 1385-1618, 715.

for a man of his wealth, estates and personal standing, he had curiously little control not only over his own direction but that of Henry's policy. There is little evidence of any input from Somerset over foreign matters. When he reported back to either Wolsey or Henry, he simply recalled events with little advice or interpretation offered. He was a particularly subservient courtier which may account for the pattern of his promotions and grants. Lack of ambition is a possible explanation for Somerset's sluggish career advancement at court, although he seemed perfectly happy to serve the king abroad. It must not be forgotten that he was the king's chamberlain and with his creation as earl of Worcester in 1514 he was clearly being rewarded for services rendered. However, the impression with which one is left of Charles Somerset is that of a figure not quite at the centre of affairs.

Somerset had enjoyed a long military career. As early as 1488 he had been admiral of the fleet, although this was a commission which did not prejudice John, earl of Oxford, who held the office for life.¹⁰² He played a major part in the invasion of France in 1513. With the army split into three sections, George Talbot, earl of Shrewsbury, commanded the foreward, or first battalion, Somerset, the second ward and the king, the third.¹⁰³ The size of the three contingents can only be guessed at, possibly around

¹⁰² LP, Richard III/Henry VII, vol ii, Appendix C, p369.

¹⁰³ LP, I, ii, 2051; Foedera, xiii, 367.

15,000 men in each, a total army of 45,000.¹⁰⁴ The king, in a letter to Dr William Knight, an English ambassador to Spain, Flanders and Switzerland, placed Shrewsbury and Somerset's total contingent at 30,000 and his own at 15,000. Antonio Bavarin, working in London at the time the army was gathering, placed Somerset's numbers at 14,000. Polydore Vergil places the initial total number of the king's soldiers at 40,000 but gives no indication of numbers in the individual battalions. Hall describes Somerset as crossing to France with 6,000 men.¹⁰⁵ His contingent did include, however, men under the command of the earls of Northumberland, Wiltshire and Kent.

Somerset does not appear to any great extent in the narratives of the time as regards the French wars. He was, though, a respected military figure. As late as 1521, five years before his death and at the age of around sixty-one, he was being forwarded as an expedition leader. Wolsey, planning a venture into France, was touting the name of William Sandys as commander. Henry told him to choose from Thomas Grey, marquis of Dorset, the lord steward, Shrewsbury or Somerset. Wolsey's comment on Somerset was that he had the 'experience and activeness' to be the captain but he wished Sandys to lead the army. Thus, even eight years later, the earl of Worcester was fit enough in

¹⁰⁴ LP, I, ii, 2037; CSP, Venetian, 1509-1519, 252; Hall, vol i, p61; PV, p209; C Cruickshank in Henry VIII and the invasion of France, p30, places the total number at upwards of 36,000. Precise figures are difficult to determine with the sources offering differing views.

¹⁰⁵ Hall, vol i, p61.

mind and body to take part in a major military manoeuvre.

It is likely, however, that Somerset's role in this war was in the field of logistics through his office of chamberlain. He was used in this regard to fortify Tournai in 1515 and to make arrangements for the Field of Cloth of Gold ceremonies in 1520. Somerset was listed as having 1,067 mounted servants in 1513, twice the number of the nearest captain.¹⁰⁶ This signifies not just his general wealth and social standing but more particularly the number of stewardships of which he was in possession, this title allowing him to levy men in times of war, the so-called *manrede*.¹⁰⁷ Somerset had been granted several stewardships by Henry VII, all in Wales.¹⁰⁸ Henry VIII continued this practice, prior to the French campaign, awarding Somerset eleven stewardships, some being continuations from Henry VII's days.¹⁰⁹ One of these grants was the stewardship of the lordship of Woking in Surrey, granted with William Compton.¹¹⁰ Compton had accumulated many stewardships in a relatively short space of time and as a result managed to raise 578 men for the 1513 crossing. Such was the value of a stewardship grant, and it was one which was defended vigorously; Compton warned his tenants to stay clear of other retainers.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁶ LP, I, ii, 2053(6, ii).

¹⁰⁷ D Starkey, 'Intimacy and innovation', p87, in The English court, edited by D Starkey.

¹⁰⁸ CPR, Henry VII, 1494-1509, 331, 348, 397.

¹⁰⁹ LP, I, i, 54(21, 22, 23, 24, 87), 485(53), 519(51), 969(10).

¹¹⁰ Ibid, 969(10).

¹¹¹ Ibid, I, ii, 2052(2), 1948(73).

Somerset's continued loyalty and service were rewarded by Henry VIII in February, 1514 when he was created earl of Worcester with the assent of parliament.¹¹² While this in no way marked the end of royal rewards, it was a culmination of a flurry of grants from Henry VIII. By 1509, Charles Somerset was already in possession of many offices and much land. He had married Lady Elizabeth Herbert, daughter of William Herbert, earl of Huntingdon, in 1492 and through her was created Baron Herbert of Gower and Chepstow, obtaining lordships in the marches of Wales. The earl of Huntingdon's brother, Walter Herbert, had died on 16th September, 1508. Elizabeth, Charles's wife, was also the heir to Walter, her uncle.¹¹³ Walter's widow, Anne Herbert, was granted the use of the castle and lordship of Ragland in the Welsh marches in January, 1505, as a result of Henry VII's affection for her, his kinswoman,¹¹⁴ but Elizabeth was the main beneficiary and heir.

When Henry VIII came to the throne, Edward Stafford, duke of Buckingham was the greatest marcher lord.¹¹⁵ As a result of the king's suspicions of Buckingham, continued from his father's days, the duke gained no office in Wales and could not build on his holding there. The beneficiary of this situation was Charles Somerset who began to establish himself in Wales through a series of grants from the crown.

¹¹² Ibid, 2684(3).

¹¹³ CIPM, Henry VII, vol iii, 855.

¹¹⁴ CPR, Henry VII, 1494-1509, p601.

¹¹⁵ H Miller, Henry VIII and the English nobility, pp197-8.

As well as the stewardships already mentioned, Somerset received many other grants, the majority of which were related to Wales. In May, 1509, he became, during pleasure, the sheriff of the counties of Glamorgan and Morgannok and constable of the castles of Cardiff, Cowbridge and Neath. The following June these grants became for life, in survivorship. In that same month, May, he also received, for life, the grants of constable of the castles of Ruthin, Payn and Montgomery and master forester and keeper of the forests and parks at Ruthin, all in Wales. These were reconfirmed to him the following June. September, 1510 saw Somerset being granted for life the office of constable and porter of Abergavenny and the corresponding lordship which was in the king's hands after the death of Richard Herbert. Somerset further became constable of the castle of Usk, on the death or surrender of Sir William Morgan, and of Dinas Castle.¹¹⁶

Wales, like the north and the west country, was an area which was prone to popular risings. It would have suited Henry to have had a man like Somerset in control of the marcher lordships. This is not to say that the earl of Worcester spent much time in Wales; in fact it would seem that he only went there on one occasion, in 1512.¹¹⁷ However, Somerset was a dependable courtier. What we

¹¹⁶ LP, I, i, 54(87), 519(51, iv, i, ii, v), 54(21, 22, 23, 24), 587(13); I, ii, 1836(7), 2964(12), 3324(26).

¹¹⁷ WRB Robinson (1964), 'Early Tudor policy towards Wales, Part 2: the Welsh offices held by Henry, earl of Worcester (1526-1549)', Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies, xi, (1): p44n.

have here, with many of Somerset's grants being surrendered and reissued for life, is a young king willing to put his faith in an experienced courtier with an excellent track record of loyalty to the crown. This seems to have been a feature of Henry VIII's early years. He had a more relaxed attitude towards the nobility than his father. Campaigns abroad early in the reign acted as a pressure valve for the country in general and the magnates in particular. The resulting creations and promotions define a king at ease with the nobility and beginning to enjoy a mutual respect with that class of men.

Somerset's time was occupied in service to the crown. From 1509 to 1527 he sat in council on thirteen occasions, the same as Charles Brandon, duke of Suffolk.¹¹⁸ He had been elevated to earl of Worcester at the same time as Brandon had been created duke. It has been suggested that this acted as a balance to the rewards granted to the Howards after Flodden, Henry not wishing to under-emphasise the importance of his French wars.¹¹⁹ It was always possible that as soon as Henry left for France the Scots would attempt an attack on England. This made the outcome of the war in France all the more important. The elevation of Somerset can be attributed to his part in the English victory but also to the delight tinged with relief of the king. His promotion was one of four creations which followed the assembly of parliament on 1st February, 1514. The other three were

¹¹⁸ H Miller, Henry VIII and the English nobility, p103.

¹¹⁹ SJ Gunn, Charles Brandon, duke of Suffolk, p26.

Thomas Howard junior, who became earl of Surrey, his father, who having relinquished the title, became duke of Norfolk, and Charles Brandon, who became duke of Suffolk.

Charles Somerset's promotions under Henry VIII are typical for a man who was showing unconditional loyalty to Henry VIII as he had done to his deceased father. Such a pedigree was commonly rewarded by Henry VIII. The earl was a conscientious servant, his willingness to merely serve appearing at times to represent a lack of ambition. A respected military man, he was particularly at home away from the court, or at least, he was not uncomfortable with foreign postings. His relative isolation from the court for periods of time had little effect on his promotions. He was well rewarded for his endeavours.

(c) George Talbot, earl of Shrewsbury

George Talbot, earl of Shrewsbury, a youth of seventeen years of age in 1485, was close to Henry VII. He had been chosen to carry the duke of York in the procession which accompanied that child's creation ceremony in November, 1494. In the tournaments of celebration afterwards he was described, with Sir John Cheyny, as "*so well horssed and soo richely by seen, that it was a tryhumphant sight to see them.*"¹²⁰ His grants from Henry VII mainly took the form of commissions. He was on commissions of oyer and terminer for sixteen counties during 1495 and on commissions of peace for seven counties throughout Henry VII's reign.¹²¹ These commissions were spread fairly evenly across the country with little discernible concentration in any one area. Also, he was given the task of enquiring of riots and offences in Staffordshire and Shropshire and mustering and arraying men in Worcester, Derby and Stafford.¹²² Work on these commissions would have provided Talbot with a thorough grounding in administrative details and given him a firm base on which to build a career under the next king who often used him in this field. One may wonder, though, how far Talbot actually was present at sessions of the peace. Aristocratic membership was more of a formality while oyer and

¹²⁰ LP Richard III/Henry VII, vol i, Appendix A, pp393-394.

¹²¹ CPR, Henry VII, 1494-1509, pp29, 30, 31, 33, 635, 642, 653, 656, 658, 665, 666, 667, 668.

¹²² Ibid, pp293, 306, 67, 68.

terminer commissions more likely reflect actual activity.¹²³

The first thought with which one is struck when studying George Talbot's early career under Henry VIII is how one-sided it is. This was a man who could be described as a heavyweight figure in government and by government one can include the court and all its trappings. However, he only really surfaced in the early years in connection with the war with France. He was an obvious choice for the position of captain of one of the three main contingents which sailed to France in 1513. An experienced soldier and household man, the earl of Shrewsbury's role in France was double-edged. He was in charge of the vanguard or foreward and a considerable number of men, but further to his military duties he was involved in the administrative and logistical side of events.

While Henry VIII had ventured abroad in 1512, this campaign had proved unsuccessful due largely to the intransigence of Ferdinand. The young king would have to wait until the summer of the following year before he could satisfy his craving for military victories. Henry's foreign policy dominates the time-span of this study and indeed the first two decades of the reign. The 1513 expedition provides an ideal break in this examination of the first six years of Henry's rule. It provides a breathing-space for the historian. The high politics of the court take a back-seat as

¹²³ Proceedings before the Justices of the Peace in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries, Edward III to Richard III, edited by BH Putnam, pp. xiii-cxxxii.

the country's resources were fashioned towards war. The battles against the French and the Scots were testing-grounds. A man could significantly enhance his reputation with an eye-catching performance in battle. Up-and-coming courtiers like Edward Howard and Charles Brandon could ensure the longevity of their careers while the establishment figures like Charles Somerset and Thomas Howard could bolster their positions.

George Talbot, earl of Shrewsbury, steward of the household, was one of the main players in the war of 1513, a natural continuation from his position of dominance under Henry VII. Talbot had been part of that group of men, which included Thomas Howard and Charles Somerset, who had been trusted advisers to the old king. He had experience of diplomatic affairs; for example, he had played a part in the ceremonies which surrounded the peace which was agreed with France in 1492.¹²⁴ His part in the war of 1513 was such that he was one of a number of men to be awarded a French pension. He received 1,000 gold crowns from Louis XII in March, 1510.¹²⁵ This was again the case in December, 1514 and indeed Talbot continued to receive French pensions at half-yearly intervals up until at least May, 1521.¹²⁶ Such pensions cannot be said to represent any payments for pro-French manoeuvrings at court. They formed a fairly standard part of treaty reparations. The

¹²⁴ LP Richard III/Henry VII, vol ii, p291.

¹²⁵ LP, I, i, 399.

¹²⁶ CSP, Spanish, 1509-1525, 203, 255, 262, 265, 270, 273, 277, 305, 331.

king was aware of which of his court were in possession of such a payment and was in a position to disallow any pensions with which he felt uncomfortable.¹²⁷

Pensions payments do, however, provide an interesting angle to the study of court favourites. For instance, William Compton and George Talbot were two of the men making a first appearance on the pensions' list of May, 1510.¹²⁸ The former was one of the king's closest companions and the latter had been a favourite of Henry VII and was to play a prominent part in the war with France in 1513.¹²⁹ George Talbot, earl of Shrewsbury was granted in March, 1510 by Louis XII a pension of 1,000 crowns of gold 'to induce him to assist in maintaining the alliance with England as it existed in Henry VII's time.'¹³⁰ On 10th December, 1514, he further received a pension worth 1,000 gold crowns a year "*for good services rendered him [the king of France] on occasion of the conclusion of the late peace treaty.*"¹³¹ Is it possible that this is something more than a straightforward pension payment? Much of the debate which surrounds the examination of men's pro or anti-French positions at court must necessarily be speculative. A man may not have committed to paper what he felt in his heart, certainly not if he could not be sure in what direction the political wind

¹²⁷ Charles Giry-DeLoison (1993), 'Money and early Tudor Diplomacy: the English pensioners of the French Kings (1475-1547)', Medieval History, 3: p138.

¹²⁸ Ibid, Appendix VII, pp145-146 for a comprehensive table of English pensioners and their pensions, 1475-1547.

¹²⁹ Ibid, p130.

¹³⁰ LP, I, i, 399.

¹³¹ CSP Spanish, 1509-1525, 203.

would be blowing a few months distant. Destiny in politics could turn on a sixpence. Ambitions and outlooks would often be conceived in a time of certain circumstances and if a man were to survive the vagaries of war he would have to adapt to the prevailing conditions. It cannot be assumed that a man of pro-French sympathies in 1500 would be of the same mind in 1514 and vice versa.

The phrases used in connection with the pension payments to George Talbot and indeed to others, may be just that - phrases. Any collusion with Talbot by the French king may have been part of a damage limitation exercise. Of more interest than questions of semantics is the list of people in receipt of pensions. Such a list would not necessarily have to include men who saw action in the wars with France, although clearly soldiers and ambassadors were rewarded. In July, 1513 Thomas Howard senior and Thomas Lovell had stayed behind in England while the king was in France¹³² yet both appeared on the pension list of 1514. This treaty of London of August, 1514, also allowed payments to Charles Brandon, duke of Suffolk, Thomas Wolsey, Richard Fox, Charles Somerset, George Talbot and William Compton. A stronger group of courtiers one would have difficulty compiling. Richard Fox was on the very edges of government by this time but he was still an immense intellectual figure, although service rather than intellect would explain his influence. Worth singling out are Thomas Wolsey and Charles Brandon, and also Somerset,

¹³² LP, I, ii, 2067.

Talbot and Compton. These men were important cogs in Henry's governmental machine and Brandon and Compton in particular formed the backbone of his personal circle.

William Compton was in receipt of 350 livres tournois at this time, double the amount Lovell was receiving, a man theoretically his senior at court and with a longer and greater history of service to the crown, but not as close an associate of the king. Compton's name had been added to the pension list in May, 1510, and it was in the first few years of the reign of Henry VIII that he had come from a position of relative unknown to one of influential courtier. Pensions were carefully targeted by the French king. One has only to look at the incredible rise in the amount of money being received by Thomas Wolsey through the pension system to realise how accurate an indicator they could be for tracking influential men. Increasing in tandem with his powers at court, Wolsey received 1,750 lt in 1514, 14,800 lt in 1519 and 50,000 lt in 1525.¹³³

While the earl of Shrewsbury may have been receiving payments from the French, one does not find with him much involvement in faction or general court machinations.¹³⁴ He is mentioned in the lord Darcy to Richard Fox letter¹³⁵,

¹³³ Charles Giry-DeLoison (1993), 'Money and early Tudor Diplomacy: the English pensioners of the French Kings (1475-1547)', Medieval History, 3: p135.

¹³⁴ SJ Gunn, 'Henry Bouchier, earl of Essex (1472-1540)', p135, in The Tudor nobility, edited by GW Bernard, makes the point that few noble statesmen became involved in the power games of court.

¹³⁵ LP, I, i, 157.

being grouped together with men like the earl of Surrey, Thomas Ruthal and Darcy himself who, rumour had it, were in favour with the king in opposition to Fox. Unfortunately there exists no evidence to support or dispute this claim. This is a major problem for assessing Talbot's influence in general. He has left behind no personal documentation of any significance, nothing which would allow any specific labels to be hung around his neck. This curious state of affairs cannot be through the loss of all correspondence. There are extant documents for so many of the leading characters of this time and thus, had Talbot actually written any letters, some must surely have survived? The conclusion must be drawn that he did not write many letters, although absence of evidence is not evidence of absence.

This peculiar lack of evidence for Talbot goes beyond personal correspondence. The Great Chronicle of London has nothing on this man. This is particularly surprising considering that the earl of Shrewsbury was steward of the household and would have spent a great deal of his time in London. This chronicle provides full evidence for official occasions and for numerous jousts and tournaments and even here the earl's name is not mentioned. Polydore Vergil is a little more forthcoming but not much. He merely informs, for the date 1509 onwards, that Talbot was continued as lord steward by Henry VIII and that he was used in a military capacity, in the French campaign of 1513 and during the May Day riots of 1516.¹³⁶ Hall is equally unhelpful for any

¹³⁶ PV, pp149, 208-214, 244.

detailed study of the earl's career. He also concentrates on military matters, describing the company of men which Talbot captained in 1513 as numbering eight thousand and including the likes of Thomas Stanley, earl of Derby, Robert Radcliffe lord Fitzwalter, George lord Hastings and Thomas lord Cobham. Talbot's involvement in the siege and entering of Tournai are also described.¹³⁷ Again there is no mention of the earl outside of these military parameters.

It must be remembered that he was a relatively young man when Henry VIII came to the throne, only 41 years of age. This was youthful enough for the earl to appear in jousting accounts and especially for a man with such a distinguished military pedigree. But then this is a feature of most other aspects of Talbot's life: where we would expect something, there is nothing. He was no second string nobleman like lord Ogle or lord Willoughby de Eresby. Here we have a major character, a man who was a potent force under Henry VII and then under the son. His lack of representation in the sources of the time allows two conclusions to be drawn. Firstly, little in the way of documentation from him or about him has survived, or secondly, he made little measurable impression on those of the day. As with Charles Somerset and William Blount and others, George Talbot had a history of loyalty to the Tudor crown. It can be no coincidence that so many men with such family pedigrees found themselves receiving promotions under the new king. For his part Talbot appears as a heavyweight figure yet a

¹³⁷ Hall, vol i, pp61, 62, 83, 89, 95, 113.

man quite content to remain in the background. Similar to men like Thomas Lovell or Thomas Englefield, he was a busy administrator at ease serving his master in whatever field the king saw fit to deploy him. Had there been an aristocratic reaction to Henry VIII's accession, it is difficult to imagine George Talbot forming any part of it.

(d) Thomas lord Darcy

Thomas Darcy was a peer who spent most of his time on the European stage. He was a statesman and seemingly a full-time soldier. Like so many of his class, Darcy can be found, throughout his career and through two reigns, involved on military or security duties which demanded his absence from London and the court for so much of the time. In general terms, the nobility had a function to play as representatives of the crown. They were needed as leaders and for display purposes at all sorts of ceremonies and occasions, on embassies, at peace treaty signings, leading troops in war.

Darcy's record of service is continuous and durable. Henry VII rewarded him consistently throughout his career. Many of his grants related to land in the northern areas of England. In June, 1498, he received a grant of the offices of steward, receiver, constable and porter of the castle and

lordship of Bamburgh in Northumberland. Two years later he was granted for life the stewardship of the lordship of Sheriffhutton, Yorkshire as well as the constableness of the castle there. Richard Cholmeley also paid rent for these offices, from 1501, and with Darcy he held the offices of receiver-general of the lordships, castles and manors of Middleham, Richmond, Cottingham, Doncaster, Sandall, Wakefield, Hatfield, Conisborough, Hutton Paynell, receiver-general of the castle and manor of Barnard Castle, all these places being in the county of York. Darcy further received offices relating to Brancepeth and Raby in county Durham and other lands within the bishopric of Durham in 1505, as well as lordships of lands in Yorkshire and Northumberland which Henry VII held by the minority of the earl of Westmoreland.¹³⁸ Darcy's offices were for the most part in Yorkshire, Northumberland and Durham. The commissions of the peace which he held under Henry VII were for Northumberland and Yorkshire (East and West Riding).¹³⁹

His early career under Henry VII involved much time spent in defence of the north of England. He was captain of Berwick from 1498 until 1515 and was involved in the securing of that town and castle.¹⁴⁰ It was in his capacity as captain that he came into frequent contact with Richard Fox, bishop of Durham from 1494 until 1501. The diocese of

¹³⁸ CPR, Henry VII, 1494-1509, pp134, 203, 269, 312, 417.

¹³⁹ Ibid, pp653, 667, 668.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, p327; GEC, vol iv, pp73-74; PV, p99.

Durham was in the province of York, stretching further north than its neighbour Carlisle. Its geographical position made it a prime target for Scottish forays south. Norham was the border castle of the bishops of Durham. Fox fortified it after 1497 as did Cuthbert Tunstall when the Scots took advantage of Henry VIII's absence in France in 1513 to attack it again.¹⁴¹ Correspondence between Darcy and Fox mentioned meetings between the two, at Tweedmouth, and mutual reporting of the situation in the borders. In a letter of August, 1499, Darcy warned Fox that, "*forther, off newes her at Berwike, os I can concev the Scottes hath moch of theyr desire; and sewre I am thay make soich avant.*"¹⁴² The Scots did indeed, at times, have it their own way and this part of the country faced periods of sporadic lawlessness.

The subjugation of this part of the country was an expensive business. The accounts of Edward Belknap and other collectors of the king's charges in the province of York from February, 1514 to January, 1517, attest to this fact¹⁴³; to Thomas Denys, vice-admiral of the north fleet, for wages of the captain and others for one month, £345; for the victualling of the north fleet for one month, 1,051 persons at 18*d* a week; for the wages of crews at Berwick and Norham, £1,290; for the wages of 50 gunners at Berwick, £230; to William Pawne, for the garrison at Berwick, £8,134; and

¹⁴¹ M Howard, *The early Tudor country house*, p212.

¹⁴² *LP Richard III/Henry VII*, vol ii, pp57, 74, Appendix A, pp283-285.

¹⁴³ *LP*, II, ii, 2949.

for wages of 200 horsemen at Norham, 100 at 8*d*, 100 at 6*d* a day, £1,143. Lord Darcy was allowed £436 for the wages of 40 persons in his retinue. These are just some of the king's expenses but they are sufficient to show the cost involved in maintaining a sizeable northern garrison. Darcy himself seems to have experienced trouble in balancing his debits with credit. He owed an unspecified amount to the king by January, 1516 and in June, 1516, Henry had lent him £400. An account of February, 1517 shows another loan of 1,000 marks from Henry to Darcy. By December, 1518, when Wolsey was sent a list of noblemen in England whose lands in Calais had fallen into decay, Thomas Darcy's name was on it.¹⁴⁴

Darcy had been plagued by money problems from the beginning of Henry VIII's reign, while still carrying debts from Henry VII's.¹⁴⁵ Henry lent Darcy 1,000 marks on his departure for Spain in 1511 and it was this expedition, coupled with the one to France two years later, which cost him dearly.¹⁴⁶ Wolsey was keenly aware of the king's expenses. It was not too distant a prospect in 1511 that there could have been a war on three fronts for England, against France, Scotland, and on the side of Ferdinand against the infidels. Wolsey was forced to comment that "*the Kyngis money gothe away in euery korner.*"¹⁴⁷ Darcy himself estimated that his service to Henry VIII in the space of two

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, 2942, 4637, pp1471, 1482.

¹⁴⁵ PRO, SP Henry VIII, 1/1, f100v (LP, I, i, 309).

¹⁴⁶ LP, I, i, 880.

¹⁴⁷ Letters of Richard Fox, pp52-55.

and a half years up to November, 1512, had cost him £2,000 and he felt he had served the king "*marvellously*." Just over one year later money was again the talking point for Darcy, in a letter to Wolsey informing him that his two expeditions to Spain and France had cost him £4,000 in three and a half years.¹⁴⁸ He told Wolsey that he was on the point of selling some of his plate and lands and that "*in my life my purse [was] never so weak*." This was indeed a sorry state for such a loyal and hard-working nobleman to find himself in, yet there seems to have been no bitterness felt on Darcy's part. There was more embarrassment than anger at this stage with Darcy writing that only Wolsey and the king should know of his financial plight.

At the forefront of his mind was his continuing service to the crown and he asked Wolsey not to leave him behind in England if the king journeyed to France. Darcy was again forced to beg for money, this time from Richard Fox, in May, 1514, only four months after he had divulged his circumstances to Wolsey and the king.¹⁴⁹ He sent his servants Laurence Baynes and John Halile to Fox, writing that he was not used to borrowing but had become burdened with numerous debts, including war expenses. This was certainly a particularly sad situation for such a proud man to have found himself in. Darcy was a very loyal servant. When sent to Ferdinand of Aragon in June, 1511, Darcy was keen to prove his worth in battle. He wrote to Ferdinand

¹⁴⁸ PRO, SP Henry VIII, 1/229, ff100r & v (LP, I, i, 1482); I, ii, 2576.

¹⁴⁹ LP, I, ii, 2914.

with several alternative suggestions in the event that this king did not wish to fight in person. He proposed that he serve under any nobleman in a war against the infidels; or an ambassador be sent to the enemy suggesting a straight battle between 1,000 of the best men from either side; or even that he be allowed to serve Ferdinand for one year without pay.¹⁵⁰ Ferdinand suggested to Darcy that he should return home but that his zeal was commendable and that he should feel no blame for not fulfilling his mission.

The natural responsibilities which accompanied any mission apart, Darcy was willing to go beyond the call of duty. Despite the personal cost to himself, he felt that he was serving the king well and that was what mattered to him.¹⁵¹ Darcy did not see himself as a martyr and any complaints about his financial situation were couched in a diffident manner. William Warham had written to Darcy in March, 1511, commenting of his impending journey to Spain that although it was a "*distant and dangerous journey... the more painful the more meritorious.*"¹⁵² This is a suitable leitmotiv for Darcy's actions: honour through self-deprivation and hardship.

Some of the workings of the old-boy network can be seen with Thomas Darcy. He was not only out to further his own position but he was also prepared to aid family and friends.

150 Ibid, I, i, 795.

151 PRO, SP Henry VIII, 1/229, ff100r & v (LP, I, i, 1482).

152 LP, I, i, 725.

His cousin was Sir Ralph Eure, a man with a long record of service to the crown in the north. Under Henry VII he had served on commissions of array and peace for Yorkshire and Northumberland and was a sheriff of York.¹⁵³ Darcy furthered his career under Henry VIII, writing to Thomas Ruthal, bishop of Durham, to ask him to favour Eure to be steward and sheriff of the bishopric.¹⁵⁴ Eure was on the 1511 expedition to Spain and also defended the north of England in 1513, being a deputy of the town and castle of Berwick.¹⁵⁵

With Darcy spending so much time abroad, he attempted to secure proper treatment for the servants he was forced to leave behind. William Warham could not guarantee his servants' reception on Darcy's absence in Spain in 1511. He wrote to him to inform him that no promises could be made considering that his, Darcy's, friends and servants had not been well treated in his presence.¹⁵⁶ It is unclear whether Warham meant by this that Darcy was mistreating his servants and associates or merely that he was too busy to have an interest in their welfare. Warham continued that Darcy needed to secure "*better and more substantial friends than him he writes of.*" Unfortunately the identity of the 'him' of this sentence cannot be determined as Darcy's

¹⁵³ CPR, Henry VII, 1494-1509, pp52, 653, 668, 552.

¹⁵⁴ BL, Cotton MS., Caligula B. vii, f172 (LP, I, i, 290). The original document states that one of Darcy's requests was for Ruthal to 'further my servant Dalton', while the LP entry transcribes this as to favour the servant. The original makes clear the aim and specific strength of request from Darcy.

¹⁵⁵ LP, I, i, 837; I, ii, 2096, 2651.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid, I, i, 725.

original letter to Warham is not extant. It may have been a reference to Richard Fox. Warham and Fox were not the best of friends and this may have been the former attempting to belittle the latter. Darcy and Fox were friends. In a letter of May, 1514, to Fox, Darcy thanked him for favour always shown, especially on his return from Spain.¹⁵⁷ It is possible that Darcy had turned to Fox to keep an eye on his servants while he was abroad.

Darcy could also count Thomas Wolsey among his friends and perhaps Warham was referring to him in the derogatory fashion. Wolsey was, after all, not yet a force by 1511 and Warham had some justification in advising Darcy to find a more substantial friend. Darcy wrote to Wolsey on January 15th, 1514, asking him to have words with the king about discharging an obligation of money that he, Darcy, had to Henry.¹⁵⁸ Darcy reminded Wolsey that,

"when I was in my chief room and office within the Court, ye and I were bedfellows, and each of us brake our minds to other in all our affrays, and every of us was determined and promised to do other pleasure if it should lie in either of us at any time. Sir, lovings to God, now it lieth in your power to help and avaunce such of your friends as ye favor and find fastness with and see any towardness in."

Darcy wrote that now many would wish to be Wolsey's friend due to his elevated position but that he should not forget his old acquaintances:

¹⁵⁷ Letters of Richard Fox, pp77-78.

¹⁵⁸ LP, I, ii, 2576.

"in no wise forget not to cherish such as were your lovers and friends, and desired and was content with your favor and company, for your own sake only, when they reckoned nothing to have you to do for them."

Any relationship which Darcy had with Wolsey deteriorated over the years to the point that Darcy testified against the cardinal in 1529, alleging that he had deprived him of royal offices.¹⁵⁹

Thomas lord Darcy was a loyal servant who, in the course of his duties, sustained financial hardships. He achieved honour through these deprivations and enhanced his reputation at home and abroad as a result. Keenly aware of the necessity of influential friends at court, particularly during his absence abroad, he attempted to enlist the friendship of, among others, Thomas Wolsey. Primarily a military man, he served successive kings well and was appropriately rewarded. This last point was a feature common to many men's careers at this time; loyalty to the Tudor crown was clearly an attribute quite naturally highly thought of by Henry VIII. Those men who were willing to display such long standing devotion were suitably compensated.

There was little aristocratic reaction to the accession of Henry VIII. Through a combination of rehabilitating potential pretenders, kick starting the languishing careers of others, and rewarding loyalty and service, the new king

¹⁵⁹ P Gwyn, The king's cardinal, pp613-614.

brought the nobility on side. He was helped by his natural disposition towards war, a political move which occupied the minds of many. Henry was also a man with a naturally different outlook from his father, a feature of his kingship which was clear to most from an early point in his reign. His court offered opportunities of advancement to many and his magnanimity led to gains for the deserved.

CHAPTER IV - AMBASSADORIAL ACTIVITY
AND PERCEPTIONS OF ENGLISH
INTENTIONS.

(i) a new beginning

It is the aim of this chapter to assess the perceptions of Henry VIII's intentions in the military theatre. This assessment will be approached from an angle discrete from that of the court circle, thus providing a different base from which to judge Henry and his aims. Two main areas will be concentrated on, firstly ambassadorial activity, particularly through the contribution of Andrea Badoer, Venetian ambassador in England, his remit, reports, influences, financial position and general treatment. Secondly, activity towards and from Scotland shall be examined. This will include the efforts of Nicholas West who was employed on missions to the north and an analysis of the Scottish perceptions of Henry VIII's tactics.

Henry VIII brought with him to the throne a new age of European diplomacy. He also spoiled for war. These two facets of his foreign policy may seem to be strange bed-fellows but they were compatible; war, after all, meant allies as well as enemies. The seven ships Henry had been left by his father became twenty-four a mere five years into his

reign, an expansion explained partly by an interest in exploration, but more so an interest in aggression.¹ The role of the ambassador was resurrected as England once again joined the continental theatre of war and politics.

Henry VIII's vision stretched further than France or even Rome. He had plans for the infidels. The king believed that the time was ripe for making in-roads on the infidels' positions not only in Europe but in Asia, due, Henry figured, to dissensions among that group. Writing to Maximilian, Henry condemned the loss of valiant Christians that year, likely to be 1512, when attentions should have been turning towards the enemies of Christ.² Henry, though, enjoyed rhetoric. It is difficult to see him financing such extravagant dreams. He failed to provide the garrison at Tournai with sufficient monetary support. How can his aspirations for a new crusade be taken seriously? Europe was to be the king's starting-off point.

It was in this arena that Henry began to make a name for himself. If the king enjoyed his own rhetoric, then that emanating from others was also pleasing to him. The inspiration for the military ventures in the first few years of his reign must have come primarily from this strong-willed teenager himself but there is no doubting the influence of

¹ PS Crowson, Tudor foreign policy, pp67-73; C Cruickshank, Henry VIII and the invasion of France, passim. Henry VII took an active interest in exploration (see SB Chrimes, Henry VII, pp228-230, for a summary of his support for the Cabots) but such royal interest faded with the accession of his son.

² LP, I, i, 1215.

external factors, and particularly the encouragement offered by ambassadors. As will be seen, ambassadors' attitudes were conditioned by a sense of self-preservation, that is the protection of the state they represented. War-mongering is a description which will frequently crop up in respect of the actions of this group of men. It will become clear that England was expected to take the lead in the war against France. The Swiss, the Milanese and the Venetians were not keen to take the initiative in such matters.

*"Who wrote this letter? I ask peace of the King of France, who daren't look at me, let alone make war!."*³ This famous quote attributed to Henry VIII in August, 1509, by Andrea Badoer, Venetian ambassador in England, is indicative of the state of events at the time. Henry's outburst is a breathtaking piece of bravado. How confident this petulant teenager was to challenge the experienced veteran. The French king may have been showing his frailties but his pedigree would have been enough to humble most challengers. The precise accuracy of the quote may be questionable considering its source. One can almost sense the suppressed glee in Badoer's delivery. As will become clear, his epistles must always be judged from the point of view of an enemy of everything French. However, Henry had set the tone. He took Catherine of Aragon for his wife and fired a warning across the Channel.

³ Ibid, 156.

(ii) the ambassador's role

What one has with ambassadors is a group of men whose livelihood depended on the gaining of access to information. It would be a mistake to assume that the diplomat of the early sixteenth century had as his main remit the preservation of peace between host and master country. Still evolving as a profession, diplomacy at this time seemed to exist for its own end. If the ambassador had as one of his tasks to diminish the possibility of war then it was only in relation to the best interests of his own country at that time and for no altruistic reason. The typical ambassador was not diplomatic. He had a set agenda of aims and was single-minded in his determination. Acting as a lobbyist, or even a spy, he collected political intelligence through a ruthless pursuit of those in the know and often incited potential allies to aggression. The king was under no obligation to give these men the royal attendance they so desperately craved and on occasions it is clear that Henry VIII tired of them. One can, for example, imagine the king's impatience at hearing the same posturings from the Venetian ambassador day after day.

Part of an ambassador's duties was to represent his country. This could be as a proxy in a marriage, at negotiations for a betrothal or over treaty discussions. But an ambassador was more than this. He was both the mouthpiece and ears of his master in a foreign country. A study of the correspondence

of foreign ambassadors in England in the early sixteenth century leaves one with a picture of a rather over-worked, under-paid and unappreciated group of men. Harangued for accurate up-to-date information from back home and often treated with disdain by those in power in the host country, an ambassador's lot could sometimes be an unpleasant one.

In the sixteenth century, the role of the ambassador was primarily to act as a channel for the dissemination of information. For example, it would be necessary for a Venetian ambassador in England to convey home to the senate all that he saw and heard in that country which he deemed relevant; conversely, he would receive instructions from Venice on what to communicate to the king. The Venetian ambassador in England at this time was Andrea Badoer. His letters are mainly concerned with the state of European politics. He constantly updated the situation regarding pacts, treaties and feuds among the powers of England, France, Spain, the Holy Roman Empire, the Italian States, the Papacy and his own Venice.

This was a period when, with England playing a more prominent role again in the European political arena, ambassadors were coming to the fore. From the arrival of Andrea Badoer in England in 1509, a permanent ambassador was to become a feature of the Tudor court, and indeed until the late eighteenth century.⁴ Since 1498 there had not been a Venetian ambassador in England. Henry VII had kept

⁴ CSP, Venetian, 1509-1519, pvii.

England neutral from the 1508 Treaty of Cambrai which saw several European countries decide to attack and partition the republic of Venice. Henry VIII found himself in a position whereby he was courted by Venetian and other ambassadors. He would no doubt have enjoyed this attention and his heightened position in the European political theatre. England was a major player again, reverting from the somewhat isolationist stance adopted by Henry VII.

(iii) the ambassadorial evidence

Ambassadorial correspondence is a particularly challenging class of document and must be treated with special care. The majority of letters from this period must be viewed with several questions in mind; who was the author's paymaster?; what were the politics of his home and host country?; what were his own political ambitions and background?; and probably most important of all, what were his sources? For this last question it is often quite obvious. One means of detecting an ambassador like Andrea Badoer's sources is to establish which men he sought out for information. He often declared in his letters home which men he had tried to contact and the order in which he decided to seek out men for information. This can reveal much about the hierarchy of his friendships. Clearly some of his contacts were more

forthcoming and knowledgeable than others. To the more obvious sources must be added information gleaned from informal chats and general gossip which makes it impossible to compile a full list of an ambassador's contacts. He would invariably find himself at the important courtly occasions. Information would sometimes come from a man wishing to remain in the background, or from a sentence overheard at dinner, or a fleeting word at a joust. Information gathering of this sort was not an exact science.

One of the difficulties encountered in collating ambassadorial evidence is the time lapse between the document being prepared and sent and ultimately arriving at its intended destination. One has only to make a cursory glance at the calendar of Letters and Papers to gain an appreciation of the jumbled nature of the dispatches. Ambassadors often found themselves overtaken by events rather than being at the cutting-edge of diplomacy. Treaties, pacts, friendships, predatory advances, half-promises, amicable liaisons or probing thrust - all could begin and end with amazing rapidity and one gets the impression that the ambassador could very easily be left out on a limb, battling to tread water on a capricious sea.⁵

⁵ Ibid, 203. Catherine of Aragon's letter to Cardinal Bainbridge, the English ambassador in Rome provides the classic case of the diplomat being appeased with false promises and ultimately being overtaken by events. Nicholas West, ambassador to Scotland had secured James IV of Scotland's promise not to invade England when Henry VIII ventured into battle abroad. The queen noted that West had been with James 'quite recently', although the Scottish invasion could not have come as too much of a surprise for Henry.

Unfortunately Venetian missives often prove to be more of a hindrance than an aid to an understanding of events, particularly when dealing with matters involving the French. Two examples of potentially misleading correspondence will suffice at this stage to show two different dangers. Firstly, there is a letter written on 26th November, 1511, from the doge and senate of Venice to their ambassador in England, Andrea Badoer.⁶ Referring to Henry VIII's recent joining of the 'Holy League' which had as one of its aims the recovery of Bologna, this letter lays bare the excitable anticipation of Leonardo Loredan, doge of Venice:

"Are sure that, now the League is concluded, the King will, as his preparations import, play a glorious part and abase that French pride which, not satisfied with the lordship of Italy, aspires to the monarchy of the world."

While accusations of King Louis' pretensions of global domination can perhaps be put down to a knee-jerk reaction from Henry, the spirited and zealous ruler, the tone of the letter is most typical of Venetian correspondence of this time. With more to fear than the island kingdom of Henry, Venice took every opportunity to warmonger.

The state of Venice was not alone, though, in wishing to see England take decisive action against the French. Caracciolo, the Milanese ambassador at Rome wrote a letter to Massimiliano Sforza, duke of Milan on June 21st, 1513.⁷ In this he recounted how the French, sensing that Ferdinand

⁶ LP, I, i, 960; CSP, Venetian, 1509-1519, 132.

⁷ CSP, Milan, 1385-1618, 641.

and Maximilian were more interested in peace, felt they could deal with the threat posed by England. "*This will not serve our purpose*", declared the Milanese ambassador, with one eye on the security of Milan and her dominions. He urged the duke to induce the Swiss to cross the Alps and join the fray. This he believed "*would help the English, who would not then make peace, except an equitable and just one.*" Caracciolo continued, "*the emperor also should be urged to take advantage of such an opportunity for the recovery of Burgundy and the humiliation of his natural enemy. If he lets it slip, he will never have such another chance, especially as they are warlike and in very little danger of suffering a reverse.*" The Milanese ambassador with the Swiss, Agostino Paravisini, reported that the Swiss would be willing to cross the Alps if Henry would declare himself and 'come into the open.'⁸ Such a cautious approach is understandable. Diplomacy was a balancing act and it would have been unwise for a power like Switzerland to declare full allegiance one way or the other without positive assurances and action from a main player like England. The Milanese ambassador's approach to events appears more sombre than the Venetian's, with the latter often projecting an air of quiet desperation in his anti-French diatribes. However, it is clear that Andrea Badoer was not alone when it came to beating the drum of war.

Following on from this effort to stir Henry into action against the French, we have a second example of enthusiastic

⁸ Ibid, 645.

reporting, this time emanating from the French camp. On 17th September, 1513, Christopher Bainbridge and Silvester de Giglis wrote to Henry VIII describing how the French ambassador had reported to the pope that,

"the Scotch king had entered England with 100,000 men, leaving 100,000 at home; had taken the Lord Treasurer [Thomas Howard senior] prisoner, with 15 other lords of coat armour, and slain 30,000 Englishmen. This was divulged and believed." ⁹

Such talk from the French ambassador was hyped speculation. On 16th September, one week after Flodden, Catherine had written to her husband and to Wolsey, informing them of the news which she had just received from Howard of the rout of the Scots.¹⁰ Allowing time for the news of the French ambassador's conversation with the pope to reach Bainbridge, even though all the men were most likely in Rome, we are apparently expected to assume that this diplomat had news of the battle in Italy before the queen who resided at Woburn. He clearly had no news whatsoever of a battle he would not have known had even taken place. Such tactics of psychological warfare occurred regularly. A serious and deliberate misrepresentation of the facts such as this could not go unchecked. On 12th October, when the dust had settled on the English victory at Flodden and the gains and deaths could be assessed, Henry wrote personally to Leo X, *"that he may not be deceived by false*

⁹ LP, I, ii, 2276.

¹⁰ Ibid, 2268-9.

rumours"¹¹ In this letter he relayed the facts of the victories at Flodden and in France.

(iv) courting the prominent

The very full collection of ambassadorial letters can divulge much about the state of European politics; but they can tell one much more than that. First, it is possible to build-up a picture of those men at court who had influence and how access to them was gained. This area is particularly illuminating when the evidence of a foreigner is used. Here are men, perhaps setting foot in England for the first time, and completely unversed in the ways of English court life, and more importantly, who held sway there. They bring a fresh insight into the workings of the court, not clouded by memories of disputes and factions, of long-standing feuds or favours owed. An ambassador would have attached himself to, or at least made acquaintance with, those he believed were the men of the moment. Certainly he may have been briefed on affairs by the retiring ambassador and by his own master but a new personality would need to cultivate his own friendships. He would have quickly formed impressions of people for himself and his attachments would be based more on instinct than tradition.

It was of paramount importance for an ambassador to discern quickly the political leanings of those men within his

¹¹ Ibid, 2355.

sight. To attempt to court men of an unfavourable stance would have been wasteful of time and money. Ambassadors in this period were operating in a Europe with little sense of cross-border unity or common aims. No monarch could be certain of his allies over any length of time. King Ferdinand had been willing to write to Henry VIII in May, 1509, offering his aid in the event of opposition to his succession; he promised to send Henry a powerful army of artillery, infantry and also ships, being led by Ferdinand himself if necessary.¹² The tone of this letter would suggest that Ferdinand had no particular person in mind when he referred to potential opposition to Henry's succession. One can perhaps speculate that the name de la Pole would not have been far from his thoughts. Such support, consistent as it was with the contents of other correspondence from Ferdinand at this time, could have led Henry to believe he could rely on this king. Within three years, however, Ferdinand had made the first in a series of treacherous moves which led from false promises over an attack on Aquitaine to a complete volte-face and a treaty with France.¹³ Henry, in order to hit back at Ferdinand, performed his own reversal, making proposals in 1514 for an Anglo-French alliance against Spain. The most important lesson to be learnt from the ambassadorial activity and series of treaties which littered this period was to trust no one.

The Venetian ambassador Andrea Badoer was in England

¹² CSP, Spanish, 1509-1525, 4.

¹³ JJ Scarisbrick, Henry VIII, pp29-31, 51-2, 55-6.

from 1509, a letter of 26th April announcing that Henry VII had died and his son was to succeed him.¹⁴ He further commented that the new king was "*magnificent, liberal and a great enemy of the French.*" Perhaps Badoer had heard talk at court regarding the new king's firm anti-French stance which was to manifest itself in an early campaign against that country. This situation clearly delighted Badoer, with its possibilities of an Anglo-Venetian pact against France. It also delighted the doge and senate back in Venice. By 28th April, news had yet to filter back to Italy that Henry VII had died but preparations were being made for when the inevitable happened. Badoer was ordered to "*avail himself of the favour*" of Peter Carmeliano of Brescia, the Latin secretary to Henry VII and "*any of the others he may deem fit, to induce the new King....to act against France.*"¹⁵ To keep the new king "*well affected*", Badoer was given 400 ducats to cover his expenses, an unusually large sum as will be seen. As has been mentioned, the excitement among the Venetians over the accession of Henry VIII is tangible in the exchange of letters with their ambassadors. The Venetians saw the possibilities of a new monarch whom they saw as having access to his father's vast wealth, whose councillors they described as being hostile to the French, and who was the friend of Venice.¹⁶

Andrea Badoer began courting the king, delivering speeches

¹⁴ LP, I, i, 5.

¹⁵ CSP, Venetian, 1202-1509, 941.

¹⁶ Ibid, 942.

to him on behalf of Venice in July, 1509.¹⁷ At this point it becomes clear that Richard Fox, bishop of Winchester was sympathetic to Badoer and the Venetian cause. Badoer describes him as being friendly to himself in July, 1509, and in May, 1510, as a good friend. Winchester would have been in a position to provide the ambassador with useful information about the court and council¹⁸, and this bishop can be counted as a confidant of the ambassador.

The senate of Venice believed that Badoer was in good favour with the new king. By letters sent on February 22nd, 1510, the ambassador had informed his masters that Henry had dined with him and shown him much affection.¹⁹ It is difficult to judge the veracity of such a letter. Badoer had the habit of inflating his own status to show his worth to his masters in Venice. Henry seems to have tolerated him on some occasions and not on others. The most important point to remember here is that the king did not see himself as under any obligation to meet, talk to or even to inform this ambassador. It was for the Venetian to seek out an audience and initiate contact.

Badoer continually complained in his letters of poverty and he was certainly poor enough to have been influenced by a

¹⁷ LP, I, i, 98.

¹⁸ Ibid, I, ii, 3256, a letter, likely from Caracciolo to the duke of Milan in 1514 mentioned the prelates (Wolsey and Fox) who governed in England; this is a standard continental view, held by the Venetian ambassador Badoer, of England being run by those other than the young king.

¹⁹ CSP, Venetian, 1509-1519, 39.

patron.²⁰ He may have been on a salary of around 100-120 ducats a month, this latter being the sum his successor was to receive²¹; a motion in the senate increased this to 130 ducats a month due to the perceived scarcity of everything in England. Curiously, in one letter of 18th February, 1511, Badoer agreed to a salary reduction from 100 to 70 ducats.²² Perhaps his personal ties to Venice were such that he wished to continue serving the Signory even if it meant a salary reduction, or perhaps he knew of other means to finance himself. A man in his position, at times in close proximity to the king and council, would have been worth knowing and this would have brought the usual bribes and backhanders. It is interesting to note that while Badoer continually complained of a shortage of money, a debate had occurred in the senate over his possible recall on account of expense.²³ Clearly the two parties had differing ideas on what constituted a suitable wage.

Badoer's money problems do not seem to have been simple moans. They were serious enough to infringe on his ability to do his work properly. On one instance he is again forced to ask for money from the Signory in order to send a herald as he had "*nothing left to pawn and the said herald will cost 120 ducats.*"²⁴ It would appear to have been the responsibility of the represented state to finance the

²⁰ LP, I, i, 5, 365, 385, 395, 421, 430, 788, 825, 854, 1067, 1126, 1766.

²¹ Ibid, I, ii, 3234.

²² Ibid, I, i, 705.

²³ Ibid, 571.

²⁴ Ibid, 365.

ambassador and not the host²⁵, but, according to Badoer's letters, this was not happening.

A motion was considered by the senate in Venice which advocated recalling Andrea Badoer from England due to the excessive costs which his stay was incurring.²⁶ Although this was amended in case Henry VIII took umbrage, clearly the senate felt that it was not getting value for money by supporting this particular ambassador. Badoer's claims of financial hardship appear to have been legitimate. His pride was dented when Richard Fox, bishop of Winchester, was forced to pay his expenses on one visit, and even his own countrymen, in the shape of the Venetian merchants in London, would not accommodate him.²⁷ Badoer's financial state would have affected his ability to send letters, dress well enough for dignified company (he did in fact, at one point, sell some of his gowns), entertain the appropriate people and travel within England. In short, he would have been severely restricted in the job he could do and the impression he could make at a court dominated by munificence. He was being compromised by a lack of financial resources.²⁸

The Spanish ambassador to Ferdinand in England, Luis Caroz de Villaragut, faced similar problems. He wrote a

²⁵ DE Queller, The office of ambassador in the middle ages, pp165-6.

²⁶ CSP, Venetian, 1509-1519, 84.

²⁷ Ibid, 413, 52.

²⁸ S Gunn (1993), 'The courtiers of Henry VII', EHR, cviii: pp40-41, surveys ambassadorial activity under Henry VII and makes note of the financial pressures faced by diplomats at that time.

letter home to Miguel Perez Almazan, First Secretary of State, outlining his own plight.²⁹ He related how his house, which was in need of repair, was costing him 40 ducats a year, with the furniture he required being extremely expensive to purchase in England. The result of this was that the ambassador found himself unable to entertain guests, an important aspect of any diplomat's social activities. Further to his town house, Caroz took a residence "*in the place where the King holds his court*", which he described as indispensable. He understood the importance of being close to the monarch, the court and the sources of so much vital information. Taking his posting so seriously was causing this ambassador much financial hardship. In line with others in this profession, Caroz was forced into borrowing money to cover his necessary outlays. As he himself pointed out in this letter to Almazan, as the Spanish ambassador he was duty bound to appear at all types of festivities in a style befitting his high position. In short, he had to look the part in order to carry weight and attract the attention of the men who mattered.

Money problems also affected English ambassadors. Nicholas West, dean of Windsor and bishop of Ely from 1515, was used on missions to Scotland and France in the early years of Henry VIII's reign. He experienced financial hardship and, like Badoer, turned on occasion to Richard Fox. West had a special relationship with Fox and was not

²⁹ CSP, Spanish, 1509-1525, 46.

afraid to turn to his mentor for aid.³⁰ On his promotion to the bishopric of Ely, West was considering how he would be able to accept the king's grace, "*For your lordship knoweth my pouertie and also now in myn absence I can make no shyfte.*"³¹ This may have been a reference to West's diplomatic duties which took him away from home for periods of time and incurred expenses which left people in similar circumstances in financial trouble. West also sent his servant to Wolsey to seek help. He was clearly troubled, certainly financially and possibly also spiritually, asking Fox for his "*commaund ementis aduise and counsell in all myn affaires.*" It must be assumed by these numerous plights of financial hardship that the ambassador's role was one which involved a certain amount of outlay. It may also be surmised that his role was not one which was given the highest priority by his home state.

(v) the impact of English ambassadors

As well as receiving ambassadors at court in England, the king sent English ambassadors on missions to the courts of Europe. One such man was Thomas Boleyn. The year 1512

³⁰ Letters of Richard Fox, p78. Allen's note shows that West received the rectory of Eggescliffe in Durham from Fox in 1499 and Witney in 1502. The latter is described as a 'rich picking' although by 1515 West was facing financial trouble.

³¹ Ibid, op cit.

saw his career as a diplomat take off, a career which was to span over twenty years. He found himself in the Low Countries on a mission to treat with Emperor Maximilian against the French, a task which was eventually completed on 5th April, 1513. A 'Holy League' had been formed which saw Henry joined by Maximilian, Pope Julius II and Ferdinand of Spain against the French king Louis XII. Boleyn's diplomatic duties were shared with Sir Edward Poynings, John Young and Sir Richard Wingfield.³² A focus for these negotiations was Margaret of Savoy, regent of the Netherlands and daughter of Maximilian. She made recommendations to the diplomats about when to visit her father and whom it was best to send at the time. She acted as a go-between, receiving letters from the Emperor which were passed to Henry through Boleyn and his colleagues, and vice versa.

Boleyn formed a team of diplomats chosen for their experience, education and sensitivity. He was operating, along with Young, Wingfield and Poynings, in a very time-consuming and testing situation. This was a European arena and men of nerve and intellect were needed. Boleyn spoke French, had been keeper of the exchange at Calais and of the foreign exchange in England since 1509, and was, as an attendant then friend of Henry VIII, versed in the customs and ceremonies of state.³³

³² LP, I, i, 1524(39); PV, p201.

³³ LP, I, i, 1430; DNB, vol v, pp321-3; Foedera, xiii, 258.

Boleyn was in frequent communication with the king, taking orders and relaying information when he had any. By this, Henry could see exactly what progress Boleyn and the others were making and Boleyn could lay out his successes before the king. His letters back to England could be used as a window for his talents, a means of self-promotion. An ambassador was, compared to a local officer like a sheriff, a highly visible servant. His occupation demanded access to the king and could, if he performed successfully, bring high rewards for, and from, the monarch. Boleyn was clearly in a position to ingratiate himself with Henry and also in a position to build contacts and prestige. His negotiating talents were such that he has been described as the 'picklock of princes.'³⁴ Thomas Boleyn was held in greater esteem by his master than Andrea Badoer was by his. This may have been due to his negotiating talents but would have been partly the result of the greater respect offered to him abroad. He was a high profile figure and could make more of an impression at home through his work abroad than other less weighty foreign emissaries.

Boleyn was aided by working with men experienced in foreign affairs. Sir Edward Poyning in particular had a history of service in diplomacy. He had taken part in an insurrection against Richard III and fled abroad, landing back in England with the future Henry VII in August, 1485.³⁵ His loyalty to the Tudor dynasty was duly

³⁴ WH Dean (1987) Sir Thomas Boleyn: the courtier diplomat, 1477-1539, Unpublished PhD thesis, University of West Virginia, p35n.

³⁵ DNB, vol xlvi, pp271-4.

rewarded. Under Henry VII he was involved in missions to the Netherlands, Burgundy and Ireland, as well as being involved with the administration of the cinque ports.

While ambassadors continued to journey to and from the continent, Henry involved himself with diplomacy to the north, with Scotland. Henry VII, with concerns of his own at home, mainly to galvanise the Tudor hold on the throne, had opted for a policy of peace with Scotland. A peace treaty had been signed between the two countries in 1497 and Henry's daughter Margaret had finally married James IV of Scotland in 1503. When Henry VIII came to the throne in 1509, this treaty was renewed.³⁶ Andrew, bishop of Moray, was appointed to seek a personal interview with the new king on 19th July, 1509, the purpose being to treat for perpetual peace.³⁷ With any invasion of France planned, it was clearly in England's best interest to put pressure on the Franco-Scottish Alliance. History shows this policy to have failed with James IV unable to reconcile the treaty with England and his country's closer ties with France. There seems to be no reason to doubt Henry VIII's intentions in reaffirming the treaty of 1497. Whether he truly felt that Scotland would not invade England when he ventured into France is another matter but he seems to have been willing to trust James. Henry's sister Margaret consistently advocated a peaceful settlement to the confrontation, attempting to convince her husband of the folly of an attack

³⁶ *Foedera*, xiii, 261.

³⁷ *Ibid*, 376.

on England.³⁸ James himself made overtures of seeking peace by dispatching the Bishop of Moray on a mission to France. However, the English envoy, Nicholas West, reported back to Henry that he saw little chance of Scotland not supporting her ally across the channel.

Events, though, may be interpreted differently. Could it not be that Henry invaded France with the knowledge that Scotland would attack his country? Was this not a belligerent ruler anxious to stamp his early authority on the country and seeking ways in which to bring Scotland towards a conflict? Certainly Henry steered England on a very deliberate course towards war with France but he was much more conciliatory towards Scotland. How different his attitude to these two countries was in 1509. When Henry discovered, in August, 1509, that letters had been written to Louis XII seeking peace he furiously asked who had written them: "*I ask peace of the King of France, who daren't look at me, let alone make war.*"³⁹ As a contrast, in June, 1509, James IV had written to Henry thanking him for his letters in which he bore him goodwill: "*Efter our mast hartly recommendacion derrest broder and cosyng, we have ressauit zour lovyng lettirs wirtyn with zowr hand, quare throw we onderstand good and kynd hart ze bere on to us,*

³⁸ Patricia Hill Buchanan, Margaret Tudor, Queen of Scots, pp69-71. Buchanan's book is seriously under-referenced and incorporates conjectural statements which cannot be backed up; The Letters of James The Fourth, edited by RL Mackie, letter 543, raises the question of Henry VIII holding back the legacy due to Margaret from their brother, Arthur. Margaret made the point that she realised that it was being withheld on account of her husband, James.

³⁹ LP, I, i, 156.

of the quilk we ar rycht glade consideryng our tendernes of blode." ⁴⁰ Such a situation must have been due in part to the ties which the Tudors felt they had developed with the Stuart kings through the marriage of Margaret and James IV.

A man who became heavily involved in diplomatic negotiations with Scotland was Nicholas West. West, son of a baker from Putney in Surrey, was a self-made man. He enjoyed a number of minor ecclesiastical appointments after his B.A. and M.A. at Cambridge University, graduating Doctor of Law sometime before 1501. Treasurer of Chichester from 1507 until 1515, he was also dean of Windsor, 1509 to 1515, before becoming bishop of Ely in 1515 until his death in 1533.⁴¹ As a Latin-speaking churchman with a developed analytical mind, his talents were often employed in the field of diplomacy. Henry VII used him on missions, for example in 1503 with Sir Thomas Brandon to negotiate with Maximilian and to secure a peace treaty with George, duke of Saxony.⁴² He also formed part of the reception committees assembled to escort foreign dignitaries in England.⁴³ From such beginnings he developed a pedigree which made him one of the most recognised figures on the European diplomatic scene. He was certainly held in high esteem by Henry VIII, judging by the number of missions on which that king sent him, and by

⁴⁰ Ellis, *Original Letters*, 1st Series, I, 63.

⁴¹ *Alumni Cantabrigienses*, pt I, vol IV, p369; *Foedera*, xiii, 510, 515, 516; *LP*, I, i, 257(11); *CPR*, Henry VII, 1494-1509, p538.

⁴² *LP*, Richard III/Henry VII, vol i, p189; *LP*, I, i, 804(14).

⁴³ *LP*, Richard III/Henry VII, vol i, p371.

the important content of these tasks. Ironically, West was later to find himself on the side of Queen Catherine in opposition to Henry by virtue of the very skills which the king had recognised and used. He was one of those chosen to be on the queen's counsel during the divorce issue.⁴⁴

West's two main early missions for Henry VIII were to Scotland and France. France he visited, firstly, in June, 1510, along with Thomas Docwra, prior of St John's, who would accompany West again to that country in the future. West was, at this stage, a second string ambassador, with Docwra leading the expedition. West was being paid 20s a day while Docwra received 40s.⁴⁵ Their mission was to take the oath of Louis XII for observing a treaty made the previous March and to receive money due to Margaret, late countess of Richmond by the French king and also money due through the treaty. Once again the Venetians felt aggrieved and somewhat persecuted by this mission. On July 15th, the doge and senate wrote to their ambassador in England, Andrea Badoer.⁴⁶ Responding to Badoer's letter of 25th June, Venice expressed amazement that Docwra and West had gone to France to confirm the treaty of peace with England, and instructed him to do his utmost with Henry and the nobility to encourage them not to confirm agreement and indeed to break it. Events had, though, overtaken the course of this correspondence. Ratification proceeded and on 23rd

⁴⁴ Hall, vol ii, p149.

⁴⁵ LP, II, ii, p1446 (King's Book of Payments, June, 1510).

⁴⁶ CSP, Venetian, 1509-1519, 71, 74; LP, I, i, 529.

July, Louis XII acknowledged his debts to Henry VIII, Docwra and West both being present at this attestation.⁴⁷ This treaty was, of course, ephemeral but West had executed his duties.

West was employed again in May, 1512, this time being dispatched to Scotland to treat with James IV.⁴⁸ This mission had two main objectives - to settle disputes arising over the death of sailor Andrew Barton, including general injuries done at sea to Scottish merchants, and to clarify James's position as regards a possible invasion of Scotland.⁴⁹ West has been described as "*a man of great wisdom and impeccable character*" who attended to his work with diligence.⁵⁰ Wolsey authorised the payment of £10 to West for the ten weeks which he spent in Scotland and West reported that he and Dacre had had a kind reception in that country.⁵¹ James IV, in a letter to Henry VIII, commended the behaviour of both West and Dacre.⁵² Ten weeks was a relatively lengthy period to spend in the country on a specific mission and the indications are that West conducted himself with the complete professionalism one would expect from an experienced negotiator under very trying

⁴⁷ LP, I, i, 538.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 1147, 1158; Foedera, xiii, 309, 332, 333; Holinshed, vol v, p472.

⁴⁹ Norman MacDougall, James IV, pp238-242, sees the Barton issue as of secondary importance. MacDougall sees Hall (Hall, vol i, pp37-39) as embroidering this story while searching in hindsight for reasons to explain the Anglo-Scottish troubles which culminated in the battle of Flodden. Border disputes also formed part of the disagreements between Scotland and England.

⁵⁰ PV, p185.

⁵¹ PRO, SP Henry VIII, 1/229, f60r (LP, I, i, 1261).

⁵² LP, I, i, 1315.

conditions. The presentation of a facade of co-operation and amity was a feature of diplomatic relations but James IV's comment on West would seem to be a fair one. As would be expected of a man in his position, he was hard-working and patriotic. His diligence paid off when he was rewarded with promotion to the bishopric of Ely in 1515.⁵³

There is much to be learned from Nicholas West's missions to Scotland and his actions and their results are worth studying at some length. There is a two-fold significance attached to this area, namely Henry VIII's efforts at diplomacy and West's progress and determination. What will become clear by the events which surrounded his missions is that there seemed to be a consistent effort on his part and thus on the part of his master, the king, to treat for peace. It is worth remembering that Henry, and indeed West, had many opportunities to retreat from negotiations after confronting intransigence and sophistry.

Nicholas West's attention to the task in hand became apparent when he was sent back to Scotland the following year, 1513.⁵⁴ Vergil summarised his mission by declaring that "*after a few days he returned home and reported there was nothing to fear from the Scottish king because the latter [James] asserted he would in no degree deviate from the treaty.*"⁵⁵ This does not, however, do justice to the efforts

⁵³ Foedera, xiii, 510, 515, 516.

⁵⁴ LP, I, i, 1662(32); Holinshed, vol v, p472.

⁵⁵ PV, p185.

of West on behalf of Henry VIII. Something of his workload and commitment is evident from a letter he sent to Henry VIII from Stirling on Friday 1st April, 1513.⁵⁶ His task would seem straightforward enough, to persuade the Scottish king to commit to paper a promise to keep the peace with England if and when Henry decided to invade France. What followed was a game of cat and mouse, with West doing the chasing. He reported home that he would not see the king until Monday 4th April and that all week James had resided with the Observant friars at Stirling. After an unsatisfactory meeting on Monday, West met members of the Scottish king's council on the next Tuesday. Again West was unhappy with the result, feeling that these men began to "*trifle him forth*". He thus decided to appear uninvited at court. Another meeting with James produced no positive results and again West, feeling patronised, appeared at court and demanded an audience. There followed a meeting with James, deferment, postponement and finally West reached the limit of his patience, declaring that he could spend a year pursuing this hopeless cause. He exclaimed, with no little feeling of isolation, that he would rather have spent this time in Turkey and that the Scottish people were proud, this to be read as arrogant, and ungracious. West had worked tirelessly to obtain a written promise from the Scottish king to no avail.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ LP, I, i, 1735.

⁵⁷ Norman MacDougall, James IV, pp259-261, describes Nicholas West as 'unpleasant', preferring to see him as out to impress his king. This latter point is a fair interpretation of the situation and demonstrates the problem of pinning down West's character. Hard work can be seen as a sign of diligence or of an ingratiating character. West's proven record in

The main thrust of James IV's argument against committing a promise not to invade England to paper was that this document could have fallen into French hands, West informing Henry, "*for you should have no letter of his [James] nor no new bond to show in France, whereby he might lose the French king.*"⁵⁸ James had been promised French assistance to aid his crusade to Jerusalem, telling West, "*now you see wherefore I favour the French King, and wherefore I am loth to lose him; for if I do I shall never able to perform my journey.*"⁵⁹ Events would prove that any promise of James would have been false. Regardless of whether or not the Scottish king was using this excuse to avoid showing his hand, which seems likely, he was justified in not trusting the ambassadorial postal service. There was always the possibility that had a written promise been given, Henry himself would have waved it under the nose of the French king and no doubt James IV was aware of this. This point aside, there was every chance that a letter sent south from Stirling would have spilled its contents at some point on the journey unless West himself accompanied it to its destination. There was no diplomatic immunity, with ambassadors often having to seek safe passage guarantees when travelling through countries. Post in general was sent with little assurance of untampered arrival. On many occasions letters sent between Erasmus and Andrea Ammonius did not arrive, resulting in the sender posting a

this field would suggest the former. He seems to have been willing to go beyond the call of duty on a number of occasions (he was involved in reporting Scottish shipping numbers).

⁵⁸ *LP*, I, i, 1735.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, op cit.

second after a lengthy delay, and often accompanying caskets of wine arrived empty. More seriously, foreign emissaries on occasions found their correspondence interfered with. Charles Brandon, duke of Suffolk, was in Paris when he wrote to Wolsey in November, 1514.⁶⁰ He had learnt that his letters to Wolsey and the king had been opened, letters which both Henry and he knew should not have been seen by others. Brandon relayed that he would await the "*pounnesmynt of thym yt has down*" before sending any more letters. It is unclear if this letter itself was opened but the dangers of sending important information in this way are clear.

Nicholas West, as has been seen, was sent as an ambassador to Scotland in March, 1513, primarily to meet with James IV in an effort to procure from him a written promise that he would not invade England if that country invaded France. In the process of these negotiations, West had meetings with Queen Margaret, the wife of James IV and the sister of Henry VIII. These encounters reveal something of her feelings towards her brother. On April 1st, West wrote to his king from Stirling, informing him that his letters had been delivered to his sister who declared, "*If I were now in my great sicknes again this were enough to make me whole*", trusting now that Henry had not cast her away.⁶¹ West was attempting to persuade Margaret to act as a peace-broker between her husband and her brother. The queen indicated

⁶⁰ Ibid, I, ii, 3411.

⁶¹ Ibid, I, i, 1735.

that although Henry had been unkind to her, she would do her best to obtain a peaceful conclusion to events. Here Margaret is undoubtedly referring, in mentioning her brother's unkindness, to the legacy owed to her through her father, Henry VII's, will, and which the king of England was holding back until James promised to keep the peace.

Any battle for Margaret's mind was quickly defused by James when he declared that, "*the Queen should lose nothing....for he would pay her himself*" as West recounted in the same letter to Henry. Margaret seemed genuinely disheartened by her brother's plans to pass into France and honest in her promises to try to keep the peace between Scotland and England. She fostered a strong interest in her brother, asking West many questions about him, especially of his "*stature and goodly personage.*" Margaret was caught between the two camps of Scotland and England. West's account gives the impression of a woman undecided in her own mind as to where her true loyalty should fall. He wrote that when James came into the room his conversation with Margaret ceased. This may be a straightforward statement or may indicate that there was a secret agenda of sorts to bring the queen on to the English side.⁶² The key words in this whole affair are anxiety and foreboding. Whether in

⁶² Patricia Hill Buchanan, *Margaret Tudor, Queen of Scots*, pp69-71, sees Margaret as being loyal to her husband as well as genuinely wishing for peace between Scotland and England. Buchanan also cites 'personal anxieties.' This is a point worth remembering. Margaret had herself and her son, possible heirs to the English throne, to worry about and she was exhibiting feelings of isolation. In the event of her brother's death in France, she could have found herself in the middle of an aggressive power struggle. It is not possible to discount purely self-centred motivation in her actions.

Venice or Scotland, the early actions of Henry VIII had placed a new complexion on events. While he cannot shoulder all the responsibility for this position (after all, the Italian states were, it seems, in constant turmoil) the new king of England certainly possessed a very forceful and determined personality.

(vi) contrasting perceptions of English militarism

The Scottish chroniclers' views of the intentions of Henry VIII provide an interesting perspective on events. Natural prejudices encountered may be tolerated for the benefits to be gained when bias does not occur. The Scottish chronicler Robert Lindesay was clearly on the side of Henry VIII when it came to loyalty to France or England.⁶³ He wrote that while Bishop Andrew Forman of Moray was passing through England on his way to Rome, he was, "*weill treittit and ressawit be king Harie the aught and that for the king of Scotlandis saik.*"⁶⁴ Other chroniclers, notably George Buchanan and his *Rerum Scoticarum Historia* and John

⁶³ Robert Lindesay of Pitscottie, The Historie and Chronicles of Scotland, edited by Aeneas JG Mackay, passim; see also Ulrike Moret and Sonja Vathjunker, 'Henry VIII in 16th century Scottish chronicles', pp154-155 and passim in Henry VIII in history, historiography and literature, edited by Uwe Baumann. Lindesay's Chronicle was written around 1565 and was anti-Catholic in tone.

⁶⁴ Pitscottie's Chronicle, vol i, pp246-247.

Leslie with his *De Origine, Moribus at Rebus Gestis Scotorum Libri Decem* ⁶⁵, saw Henry as the villain of the peace and an agitator. George Buchanan described Henry VIII as, "*exulting in the flower of his youth, proud of the power of his kingdom, and fond of warlike exercises*", and seeking to find a cause to quarrel with France while James IV was "*determined to remain neuter, yet being inclined to favour his ancient ally.*" ⁶⁶ This is a theme followed by John Leslie, bishop of Ross in his *De Origine*. He saw that the first trouble between James and Henry "*happinit principale becaus King Henry the aucht of Yngland, being ane young man left be his fader with greit welth and riches, wes varray desierous to haif weiris quhairin he mycht exerce his youthed, thinking thairby to [dilate] his diminions.*" ⁶⁷ The problem which the chroniclers faced, as did James IV, was reconciling Henry VIII's attitude to France with his attitude towards Scotland. There was no real reason to suspect Henry of anti-Scottish plotting in 1509 just because he was heading towards a war with France. James IV's invasion of England should be seen as fulfilling an obligation to France, prompted by Louis XII's offer of financial recompense, rather than as a reaction to any serious provocation from Henry.

It is important to make note at this stage of the weaknesses of

⁶⁵ Moret and Vathjunker, op cit, provides a full analysis of the three chroniclers cited here.

⁶⁶ The History of Scotland translated from the Latin of George Buchanan, edited by James Aikman, vol ii, p243.

⁶⁷ John Leslie, De Origine, &c , p83.

the Scottish chroniclers for this period. The main problem facing the historian is the fact that there is little here that is contemporary. John Leslie was born in 1526 and his *De Origine* was published in 1578; Robert Lindesay of Pitscottie was born around 1532 and he wrote his history around 1565; George Buchanan was born slightly earlier, in 1506, and although he had been working on his *Rerum Scoticarum Historia* for many years, it did not appear until 1582. It has been noted that it is likely that only George Buchanan met Henry VIII and then only once, in 1538.⁶⁸ Two more contemporary chroniclers, John Mair and Hector Boece, unfortunately do not carry their histories up to the reign of Henry VIII.⁶⁹

Henry himself, in a letter to Pope Leo X after Flodden, declared that he would have kept peace with James, "*had he not been instigated by the French to begin war, and been deceived by their great promises.*"⁷⁰ Henry was perhaps being conciliatory towards Scotland because it secured his rear when he decided to invade France. James IV's actions, in breaking a treaty with England to support a country facing many European opponents and incurring excommunication, may be seen as a serious miscalculation or indeed crass naivety.⁷¹ The bait from Louis XII had proved

⁶⁸ Moret and Vathjunker, op cit, p154.

⁶⁹ John Mair, *Historia maioris Britanniae tam Angliae quam Scotiae*; Hector Boece, *The chronicles of Scotland*, edited by RW Chambers and EC Batho, The Scottish Text Society, Third Series, 10, 1936.

⁷⁰ *CSP, Spanish, 1509-1525*, 137.

⁷¹ Norman MacDougall, *James IV*, pp258-259, 261. Here the main arguments for the Franco-Scottish alliance are laid out, mainly, the possibility of James's succession to the English throne and the chance

too much - the French king promised James 50,000 francs and that he would equip the Scottish fleet, sending seven French galleys.⁷² Within nine months of this offer, circumstances had changed. Francesco Sforza, a Milanese ambassador at Rome, wrote to the duke of Milan, informing him that, "*The Scots have sent an ambassador to the King of France to offer excuses for taking the side of the King of England, but offering to make war on him if the King of France will give them 1,000 lances, 10,000 foot and a quantity of artillery. But in France they have neither the means nor the power to supply such succour and so it is expected that they will give up all hope from Scotland.*"⁷³ This letter, if its contents can be believed, reveals much about diplomacy during this period. One is left with the impression that, in many instances, treaties were, to put it bluntly, not worth the paper on which they were signed. Half-hearted pacts made for the moment litter the years preceding the Anglo-French and Anglo-Scottish wars of 1513. The papacy, Venice, Milan, France, Spain, England, Scotland and the Holy Roman Empire were all guilty of bobbing and weaving, trimming their sails for the sake of expediency. There was little new in such a flurry of ambassadorial interplay. One can compare these events

that France would support this by sending the Yorkist, Richard de la Pole to Scotland. Henry VIII had Richard's brother Edmund, duke of Suffolk beheaded before he left for France in 1513 (JJ Scarisbrick, Henry VIII, pp32-33).

⁷² Flodden Papers, 79-83. CSP, Venetian, 1509-1519, 316 (CSP, Milan, 1385-1618, 660) describes a note found on a Scot slain at Flodden. It listed those items sent to James IV from Louis XII, to arrive at the port of Dunbar, including 25,000 gold crowns, 6,000 spears, 6,000 maces and 6,000 culverins (a form of cannon).

⁷³ CSP, Milan, 1385-1618, 677.

with, for example, the diplomatic machinations which surrounded the lead-up to the battle of Agincourt in 1415.⁷⁴ However, the natural apprehensions and nervous foreplay that were a part of sixteenth century diplomacy were elevated to a new level of overt promises and covert treachery.

The doge and senate of Venice, always particularly nervous when it came to ensuring that Henry VIII's foreign policy was adequately anti-French, seem reasonably satisfied with the Anglo-Scottish position at the start of the new king's reign. Initially rumours filtered back to Italy from England that Scotland had made peace and a league together against France.⁷⁵ By early, 1510, the senate seemed assured that James and Henry were at peace and that Venice would be included in any league involving England.⁷⁶ Andrea Badoer sent two letters from London on 30th April and 1st May, 1510, in which he reported that James IV had offered to come to Venice and act as the signory's captain general, bringing with him ten thousand men and one hundred and fifty ships.⁷⁷ There would be no expense for the state of Venice and the venture would be disguised as a pilgrimage. Quite how the king of Scotland proposed to move such a force on the pretence of a holy march without arousing suspicion is unclear.

⁷⁴ JAF Thomson, The transformation of medieval England, 1370-1529, pp175-176.

⁷⁵ CSP, Venetian, 1509-1519, 18, 22.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 39, 45.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 66; see also preface, pxiii.

While this idea proved to be short-lived, it would have been interesting to witness just how far James would have been prepared to carry it. If the offer had been genuine, then it is unlikely that Scotland would have invaded England and Flodden would have remained a place and not a battle. Could James have been trying to defuse a potentially explosive situation with Henry VIII? Perhaps he saw the two countries heading inextricably towards war and felt that an approach to Venice, an English ally, would be seen as conciliatory. It would also have been a suitably face-saving option for James, a man driven by his chivalric code.⁷⁸ Working from the premiss that the Scottish king's offer was a genuine one, doubts are raised over James IV's invasion of England and the alliance with France which he felt obliged to uphold. Could he have been seriously concerned with the Auld Alliance if he was prepared to aid Venice? This episode is very curious and has to be taken seriously. It is too easy to dismiss this proposition as rumour or hearsay. It is not unusual for Badoer to paint a brighter picture of the situation in England, as regards Venice's standing, than the reality but the invention of this scenario seems to be beyond even his imagination. Venice most likely declined the offer through suspicion. After all, what reason had an ally of France for helping the doge?

This offer also throws doubt on the extent of Anglo-Scottish hostilities. There can be no doubting the seriousness of the Scottish challenge which ended with the massacre of so many

⁷⁸ Patricia Hill Buchanan, Margaret Tudor, Queen of Scots, p77.

of the nobility at Flodden in 1513, but there seems to have been much peace-seeking inter-play in the preceding years. This was a period of furious ambassadorial activity. Venice appears as one of the most anxious players in the dangerous game of alliance and counter-alliance. That she eventually signed a peace treaty with France is a testament to how far a country was prepared to wheel and deal in the pursuit of allies to aid self-preservation. James IV had himself shown a cool exterior in 1512 when Henry VIII sent Dr Nicholas West, dean of Windsor and Thomas, lord Dacre to confirm the king of Scotland's position regarding the two countries' peace treaty.⁷⁹ It was reported back to Henry that James had verbally declared his resolve to the Tudor king, "*but Henry did not put great reliance in these verbal assurances because, becoming convinced that the Scottish king had been already corrupted by the French king, he thought James would not remain quiescent for very long after news reached him of the start of the war in Aquitaine.*"⁸⁰ Such duplicity was widespread and created a heightened sense of tension among the European power-brokers.

The death toll following Flodden made for dramatic reading: the king of Scotland, one archbishop, two bishops, two abbots, twelve earls and many footsoldiers. One account recounts the toll as 10,000 of the 80,000 Scots killed with English deaths at under 400.⁸¹ Precise figures for the

⁷⁹ Foedera, xiii, 332.

⁸⁰ PV, p185.

⁸¹ State Papers, Henry VIII, vol IV, pt IV, pp1-2.

number of soldiers present and killed at Flodden are difficult to determine.⁸² It was, though, clearly a slaughter, with "*no grete man of Scotland retourned home, but the Chamberlain.*"⁸³ Catherine of Aragon wrote to her husband in France following this rout, sending him the king of the Scots' coat for his banners.⁸⁴ From Tournai, Henry wrote to Maximilian Sforza, duke of Milan on September 16th, 1513, informing him of James IV's death and adding that the Scottish king had "*paid a heavier penalty for his perfidy than we would have wished.*"⁸⁵ It is easy to be magnanimous in victory, yet Henry's sentiment at this point merely echoes his earlier feelings towards Scotland. The Scottish chronicles which chastised Henry and his belligerent policy of deliberately drawing Scotland into war would seem to have got it wrong. Henry, in a letter to Leo X, probably of October, 1513, declared that he had "*done all in his power during the last two years to keep peace with him [James IV]*" and that he was sorry that he had been slain.⁸⁶ Henry seems to have been genuine. By November, the pope authorised, at the asking of Henry, the burial of the body of

⁸² PV, p221, 10,000 Scots casualties, 5,000 English; Hall, vol i, p111, 12,000 Scots killed, 1500 English killed or captured; CSP, Venetian, 1509-1519, 341 states 20,000 killed; LP, I, ii, 2270, 2283 (Thomas Ruthal's account) opts for 10,000 Scottish deaths and 1,000 English.. The number 10,000 Scots casualties would seem to be an exaggeration or, at least, very doubtful. Precise estimates of the population of Scotland at this time are hard to come by, however, a ceiling figure of half a million would seem reasonable. If we can assume that half of this figure were women, and a significant number were too old or young to fight, then we are left with a situation whereby 10,000 killed appears to be far too high when compared with the eligible population. Round figures such as 10,000 must be treated with great caution.

⁸³ State Papers, Henry VIII, vol IV, pt IV, p2.

⁸⁴ LP, I, ii, 2268.

⁸⁵ CSP, Venetian, 1509-1519, 309.

⁸⁶ CSP, Spanish, 1509-1525, 141.

James IV in St Paul's in London even though he had been sentenced to excommunication.⁸⁷ It would have been easy for Henry to gloat on his victory and the carrying of the dead king's body to London could perhaps have been interpreted as the final disgrace. However, this action of Henry's should be seen as a gesture of respect for a man he obviously still had some regard for.

Reports of the defeat of the Scots slowly filtered through to the ambassadors and then their masters. Accounts varied dramatically with the French naturally spreading mendacious statements. One Monsieur de Luçon wrote to the French ambassador in Rome on 7th September, informing him that the viceroy of England, presumably Thomas Howard, had been captured and that his army of 30,000 men had been routed, and that "*this was as true as gospel.*"⁸⁸ The Venetian Paulo da Laude's account was fairly accurate although his figure of 18,000 Scots killed was an over-estimate.⁸⁹ Milanese ambassadors at Rome, writing to the duke of Milan on 16th October, 1513, reported that a merchant had come from Scotland who said that the king of that country was alive and that he had spoken with him.⁹⁰ There were clearly problems with reports and communication, some due to deliberate disinformation, some through the primitive nature of intelligence gathering and dissemination. The myth perpetuated that James IV had

⁸⁷ Foedera, xiii, 385; CSP, Spanish, 1509-1525, 137.

⁸⁸ CSP, Venetian, 1509-1519, 307; LP, I, ii, 2254(iii).

⁸⁹ CSP, Venetian, 1509-1519, 310, 311.

⁹⁰ CSP, Milan, 1385-1618, 672.

survived was reported by Robert Lindesay of Pitscottie, among others. He chose the enduring image of four horsemen who "*raide in the feild and horsed the king and brocht him fourtht of the feild.*" ⁹¹

Lindesay wrote that "*nether In gland nor Scotland mist thair king ffor thair wer tua Inglischmen for ane Scottis man slaine.*" ⁹² Accounts such as this, as well as the tale of the four horsemen, highlight the sense of desolation on the Scottish side, a certain unwillingness to believe that such a slaughter had occurred. Moreover, this whole episode is a further reflection on Pitscottie's unreliability, the fundamental problem when dealing with much of his account being that it is uncertain where he obtained a lot of his material. With the dutiful praises of James IV's kingship, there were also murmurings of discontent over the tactical decisions which he took in the period preceding the battle at Flodden. In his *History*, George Buchanan noted that the king eschewed a safe plan proposed by his nobility for one of direct confrontation with the English, and "*the whole nobility were offended at such a rash reply.*" ⁹³ Archibald Douglas, earl of Angus, made a passionate speech to James, urging him to think carefully about taking his country into a war, prophetically pointing out that the Scottish army's "*number was small, for it contained all who were eminent for valour, authority, or wisdom, in Scotland; and they*

⁹¹ Pitscottie's Chronicle, vol i, p272; Norman MacDougall, James IV, p247.

⁹² Pitscottie's Chronicle, op cit.

⁹³ Buchanan's History, vol ii, p253.

being cut off, the remaining crowd would be an easy prey to the victor." James ordered the earl home if afraid and the other noblemen saw that it was impossible to bring the king over to their opinion.⁹⁴ The reporting of this speech may be attributable more to the style of Buchanan than to his knowledge of the facts. As a humanist writer, he was steeped in the styles of classical literature and it is likely that it is from this source he obtained the idea of elaborating on passages. In a way similar to Thomas More, who, in his *History of Richard III*, attributed eloquent speeches to Buckingham, Buchanan seems to be reading between the lines, and in an attempt to analyse events he has left behind such 'pseudo-speeches.'

Lindesay similarly laid the blame firmly at the king's door, attributing his own death and that of many of his nobility to "*the kingis owin willful misgovernance that wald wse no consall of his wyse nobillis and ageit lordis and speciallie of my lord of angus quha gave him ane vyse cunsall.*"⁹⁵ It is interesting to note here that the folly of James is being blamed for the Scots' defeat. There is no mention now of Henry the tyrant. On the English side, victory was attributed to the will of God. Norham castle had been attacked and all but destroyed by the Scots. Thomas Ruthal, bishop of Durham, was deeply affected by this, feeling that in some way he had incurred God's displeasure.

⁹⁴ Ibid, pp253-255.

⁹⁵ Pitscottie's Chronicle, vol i, p276.

The English-based chroniclers views of events leading up to the battle of Flodden naturally provide a contrast to the Scottish histories. Vergil's account of negotiations between Henry VIII and James IV is fairly accurate. He encapsulated the feelings of mutual mistrust which existed between the two monarchs, stating that "*Henry did not put great reliance in these verbal assurances*" of the Scottish king that he would not invade England when that country attacked France.⁹⁶ The point is made that Henry's invasion of France had papal backing and this is followed by the recalling of the excommunication of James IV. A herald from James travelled to France after Henry had crossed the Channel to inform him of the king of Scots' intentions.⁹⁷ Henry could smugly, and legitimately, reply that "*he did not consider that James as a Christian prince would wish to attack him against all human and divine injunctions*" with Vergil adding that James now found himself "*at the mercy of his evil destiny.*"⁹⁸ The Scottish king's final folly, his foolhardiness in battle, was "*by the will of God*", as even his own men "*greatly detested*" his naivety.⁹⁹ It is worth noting at this point that one of James IV's chief councillors, William Elphinstone, bishop of Aberdeen, was anti-war. That the Scottish king chose to ignore his advice adds strength to the notion that he felt backed into a corner and as a man of principle, he felt obliged to side with France and invade

⁹⁶ PV, p185.

⁹⁷ CSP, Venetian, 1509-1519, 278 and n; LP, I, ii, 2122; Hall, vol i, pp77-80. The slight variations in the herald's account are laid out in LP.

⁹⁸ PV, p217.

⁹⁹ Ibid, pp219, 221.

England.¹⁰⁰

These are familiar themes and reinforce the ideas conveyed by the Scottish chroniclers which, on their own, would be decidedly lightweight. The notion of subjugation is also introduced.¹⁰¹ The herald sent by James was told by the English king to inform his master, "*I am the very owner of Scotland and that he holdeth it of me by homage*" and that "*with God's help I shal at my returne expulse him.*"¹⁰² Again the reference to divine intervention should be seen as more than the standard proclamation of righteous action. Henry's mission to France and response to the Scots carried the support of the papacy and thus the support of God. Regardless of the pope's motivation, which was entirely worldly, this backing allowed Henry to proceed with confidence. He could declare to James, through his herald, that, predicting his breach of promise, he had prepared his country for a Scottish invasion and had a "*firme trust in our Lord God and the rightwisnes of our cause with thassistence of our confederates and Alies wee shalbee able to resist the malice of all Scismatyques and their adherentes beyng by the genarall counsayll expresselye excommunicate and*

¹⁰⁰ LJ Macfarlane, William Elphinstone and the kingdom of Scotland, 1431-1514: the struggle for order, p429, notes that Elphinstone was shouted down in council by a group of young warmongers. He appears to have been a man with an outlook similar to that of Richard Fox.

¹⁰¹ D Head (1982), 'Henry VIII's Scottish policy: a reassessment', Scottish Historical Review, 61: pp3-4, sees the assertion of English suzerainty as not forming the 'cornerstone' of Henry VIII's policy; mentioned in the statute to raise a subsidy in 1512, it was not mentioned in a second statute in 1513 (Statutes of the Realm, 3HVIII, c.23; 4HVIII, c.19).

¹⁰² Hall, vol i, p76.

interdicted."¹⁰³ Andrea Badoer, the Venetian ambassador in London, wrote home to the senate that Henry VIII, immediately after his coronation, swore to make war on France.¹⁰⁴ Certainly the king had military plans from an early date, but care must be taken not to over-emphasise his position. Henry did not stand alone at this time as a belligerent ruler; others had similar agendas. For example, France had made inroads into Italy, with the papacy heading off Venice, then France; and Ferdinand in Spain had notions towards Navarre. There were several power struggles going on and Henry's formed one part of this. Also, the important issue of legitimacy must not be overlooked. Can Henry VIII be seen as a passionate warmonger after the papacy had stripped James IV and Louis XII of their Christian authority? Within the context of the time, Henry did lead from the front but he also reacted to changing circumstances. He had support for his actions and should not be seen as an isolated, belligerent figure.

The final victory at Flodden was seen as "*wrought by the intercession of St. Cuthbert, who never suffered injury to be done to his Church unrequited.*"¹⁰⁵ This view was certainly the prevalent one at the time among the English. Their cause was seen as right and the outcome simply justice. The pope's actions in excommunicating James IV and stripping Louis XII of the title Most Christian King of France and of

¹⁰³ Ibid, p81.

¹⁰⁴ LP, I, i, 5(ii).

¹⁰⁵ Ibid I, ii, 2279, 2283.

his kingdom, giving both to Henry¹⁰⁶, had lent the Tudor king's cause the character of a crusade. Vergil wrote that when Pope Leo heard of James's intentions to attack England when Henry had sailed for France, *"he at once warned James in writing against embarking on so evil a war, and in order to more effectively deter him, the Pope promulgated and proclaimed that James and his whole kingdom would be anathematised if he ever attacked the English when they were fighting for the Church."*¹⁰⁷

Henry for his part was clearly revelling in his position of what amounted to team leader. From prince to king, albeit from a position of heir to the throne for seven years, was a step heavy with responsibility and Henry made the transition with ease. He would naturally have enjoyed the praise continually heaped upon him by the grateful and sycophantic array of ambassadors which accompanied him at court and abroad in France. Paulo da Laude, Milanese ambassador to the emperor, wrote to Massimiliano Sforza, the duke of Milan, from Lille in September, 1513, where he was with the king of England's party.¹⁰⁸ Flattery was an essential part of diplomacy. He had informed Henry that the duke had placed his state and disposition at the mercy of the king of England. A further statement in this ambassador's letter provides an excellent example of exactly the role men like da Laude fulfilled: *"I said some more, as well adapted to the*

¹⁰⁶ JJ Scarisbrick, Henry VIII, p33.

¹⁰⁷ PV, p203.

¹⁰⁸ CSP, Milan, 1385-1618, 654.

purpose as I could, in order to lead his Majesty on as much as possible, and finally, I begged him to keep your Excellency in his protection as usual, as every good and honour that he does to your lordship will, undoubtedly, redound to his glory." Da Laude displayed a disingenuous pandering combined with wholly selfish motives, typical of many ambassadors at this time.

Yet it is clear, from the writings of this same man, that Henry was creating exactly the image he desired among his foreign contemporaries. Da Laude wrote from Lille on 18th September, 1513, at a time when the English were besieging Tournai. He described a king spending the whole night dancing with ladies, playing cards with Margaret of Austria, daughter of the Emperor Maximilian, shooting with the bow in public and racing horses and playing games with his attendants.¹⁰⁹ This was the image being presented to those foreign dignitaries and ambassadors accompanying the king in France who in turn reported to their masters at home. To a certain degree, Henry himself was to blame for what he saw as a lack of input from his so-called allies in the war with France.¹¹⁰ If the image of the all-powerful renaissance monarch was promoted too often then can one not expect the likes of Sforza and Ferdinand and Leo to take a back-seat

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 657.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, 656, 651. Richard Wingfield let it be known to Paulo da Laude, almost certainly on the instructions of Henry, that the English king was unhappy that he was being left alone to fight the French while still acting in others' interests as well as his own. There were clearly English worries over the contribution of the Spanish. Wingfield suggested that it was not wise to upset Henry. The Milanese ambassador replied that the duke of Milan was not in a position to do much more than what he was doing (he had cited money problems the week before (Ibid, 653)).

when it came to offering their services? Henry's obvious enthusiasm for the fight proved to be a double-edged sword.

Any judgement of Henry's foreign policy in 1513 must be made with the knowledge that his campaign was seen in England as justified. War had been sanctioned by God. The Scottish chroniclers had no option but to blame James who "*reffussit allwayis godlie consall quhilk was to his honour and commone weill of the contrie.*"¹¹¹ With the benefit of hindsight, James's behaviour was seen as a portent for future disaster. His liaison with Lady Heron was condemned, it being "*against godis commandementis and against the order of all goode captanis of weir to begin at huredome and harlotrie befor ony goode succes of battell or wictorie fallin into them.*"¹¹² Whether such a story was apocryphal or not matters little. The point is that Henry VIII need not shoulder all the blame for the events of 1513.

It is worth stressing Pope Julius II's position. It is not surprising that he was anti-French in his outlook as that country was supporting, and supplied, the rebel cardinals and attempted to call a council at Pisa.¹¹³ This council assembled on 1st October, 1511, and Julius countered the move by summoning the Fifth Lateran Council to meet in Rome.¹¹⁴ The pope aligned himself with Venice and Spain in a 'Holy League' to defend the papacy. Julius was certainly

¹¹¹ Pitscottie's Chronicle, vol i, p261.

¹¹² *Ibid*, p263.

¹¹³ Hubert Jedin, A history of the Council of Trent, vol i, pp106-116.

¹¹⁴ Christine Shaw, Julius II the warrior pope, pp279-315.

under a lot of pressure from a group of cardinals who found themselves faced with the perennial problem of what to do with an absolute elected monarch whom they felt was behaving unacceptably. The papacy and Venice's fortunes were closely linked and an awareness of the Venetian position from an Italian point of view explains much surrounding that state's frenzied ambassadorial activities. Venice felt the need to control sea power and faced not only internal strife but much antagonism from several European powers. Through the fifteenth century she had advanced into the mainland of Italy and to Milan, the key duchy in the north. The Italian wars led to a resentment towards Venice who had trodden on so many toes. This made for unlikely alliances, notably the League of Cambrai which united, albeit temporarily, France, Germany, Spain and the Papacy. Julius II, of course, came to an alignment with Venice in order to drive the French out of Italy.¹¹⁵ Henry VIII's advance into Europe may be seen as a spin-off of the Italian wars. With Louis XII trying to assert his claims in Italy, and particularly Milan, Henry could flex his military muscles with a campaign in the north of France.

Papal approval for the invasion of France, regardless of the pope's far from altruistic reasoning, gave Henry credibility. This is not to say that the invasion would not have taken place regardless. As the king of England would show with

¹¹⁵ Erasmus, in his *Praise of Folly*, pp181, 183, chastised Julius II, seeing him as a warrior pope, the connection being made between him and Julius Caesar. Erasmus, through Folly, saw war as 'quite alien to Christ.' The pope also came in for some criticism in Erasmus's *Dialogus Julius exclusus e coelis* (*CWE*, vol xxvii, pp155-197).

devastating results later in his reign, the pope did not always have the last say. However, England saw herself, with justification, as being on the receiving end of double-crossing and treachery. The sheer folly of the Scottish king's attack, a fact acknowledged even by that country's own historians, and the fact that safer plans had been advanced at the time by his nobility and council, confirms the notion that much of the aggression emanated not from Henry but from north of the border.

What conclusions can be drawn from this whole episode of negotiation, treaties and war? It has been the aim of this study of ambassadorial activity with Scotland to show Henry the diplomat and this phrase should not be seen as an oxymoron. A picture begins to emerge of a king engaging one of his most experienced negotiators in a battle for the conscience of the Scottish king; of Nicholas West passing up a stubborn reception from the Scottish court and toiling for a peaceful conclusion to events; of chroniclers from both sides agreeing on the naivety of James IV's actions and in hindsight attacking his decisions; and of a declaration, with no apparent contradiction from north of the border, of papal and divine support for just English intervention.

This should in no way paint an overly optimistic view of Henry VIII's intentions. He was enthusiastic enough about the notion of war; much of the time after his accession was occupied in hunting and jousting and warfare was merely an extension of these activities. War also provided a distraction

for the nobility of the day, and Henry certainly had domestic issues which could have proved troublesome. Any 'side-show' in France would have won him some breathing space.

The succession to the crown should never be underestimated as a problem. Henry VIII's position was more secure than that of his father yet he always had the succession issue hanging over his head. There was the question of who was next in line to the throne. Henry's two sisters, Margaret and Mary were possibilities, however, the nearest case of a precedent was Matilda in the twelfth century and this was hardly encouraging. The duke of Buckingham was continually hovering in the background and the threat posed by him was not extinguished until the 1520s. Added to this were the de la Poles, for many years a source of Tudor paranoia. Henry VII had chosen imprisonment while Henry VIII felt execution to be a safer option to dull their threat. There was a natural and genuine element of fear on the part of the king. This could, and did, lead to those with a blood connection to the throne at best being marginalised politically. If they were really deemed dangerous, imprisonment or death were more likely results.

Giovanni de Bebulcho, writing to Bartolomeo Chalco, secretary to the duke of Milan, in 1496, made the point that Henry VII was *"very powerful in money, but if fortune allowed some lord of the blood royal to rise and he had to take the field, he would fare badly owing to his avarice; his people would abandon him. They would treat him as they*

did King Richard, whom they abandoned." ¹¹⁶ To describe Henry VII as feared and Henry VIII as loved would not be too far from the truth. If history had taught Henry VIII anything then it was never to underestimate the threat of a challenge to the throne. Henry's desire to be seen in a certain light may be equated with his genuine concerns over a trouble-free succession. In short, he made it easy for people to revere and cherish him. A pretender to the throne would necessarily have needed an amount of popular support, and with Henry projecting such a desirable facade of kingship, this would have been difficult to achieve.

That the succession was still a concern was never more clear than at that time prior to the war in France in 1513. With Henry, "*so bent on the war against the French,that he is determined never to rest or desist until their King be utterly destroyed*" ¹¹⁷, it was the responsibility of those advisers around him to rein in his petulance. Henry argued that the ordinary soldiers in the field fought with more heart when led by the king himself. The king won the day, his council conceding "*on account of the confidence he had in his own great valour.*" ¹¹⁸ Henry was determined to assert his individuality at this early stage in the reign, to prove his

¹¹⁶ CSP, Milan, 1385-1618, 490.

¹¹⁷ CSP, Venetian, 1509-1519, 203. This letter was from Catherine of Aragon to Cardinal Bainbridge in Rome and as such does not carry the usual Venetian anti-French bias associated with much of the correspondence of the time relating to Italian affairs. CSP, Milan, 1385-1618, 638, a letter of the Milanese ambassador at Rome noted that Henry VIII was so eager over the invasion of France that 'no one can put it out of his head, unless it be God Almighty.'

¹¹⁸ PV, p199.

valour to "*all men that they would clearly understand that his ambition was not merely to equal but indeed to exceed the glorious deeds of his ancestors.*"¹¹⁹ The execution of Edmund de la Pole prior to the invasion of France closed another door to any pretenders to the throne. Yet the issue of succession was one that would prove to be persistently present with Henry. The many precautions taken in battle to protect the king represented more than the natural safeguards for the royal person. There was available for him a steel 'tent' to fend off the arrow or spear of an enemy soldier; his ward in the army was the largest, to act as a buffer zone; and hundreds of close quarter bodyguards, the so-called 'King's Spears.'¹²⁰ To lose a king in battle was unfortunate, to lose him in the manoeuvres which constituted the campaign of the summer of 1513 would have been folly. The reality would seem to be that Henry was in little actual danger. He accrued the benefits of being seen to lead from the front while still being cosseted by his extensive retinue.

The ambassador in early sixteenth century England was a character with a selfish agenda, with thought for little more than his own country's well-being. Conditioned by his access to information, he assiduously cultivated friendships with those with influence. His impact on the social scene of the day could be curtailed through financial shortcomings,

¹¹⁹ Ibid, p197.

¹²⁰ C Cruickshank, Henry VIII and the invasion of France, pp1, 32, 33, 164, 165; Cruickshank states (p30) that in Henry's ward there were over 2,000 men present to serve the king, which men would not have been there had it not been for the royal presence. In short, if called for, the king had ample protection.

and his impact was further lessened by a lack of intimacy. Often events overtook the passage of ambassadorial information. Henry VIII's ambassadors abroad commanded a greater degree of respect, both from their own king and foreign dignitaries, than their counterparts in England. This was the result of perceptions of the English king. He was seen as the driving force behind European politics, a position which he enjoyed and exploited.

CHAPTER V - THE OLD ORDER AND THE EMERGENCE OF WOLSEY

It is a curious circumstance when a study of churchmen in this period can almost fail to consider their role within the church. This is, of course, to highlight their contribution in the field of politics. It is often possible for churchmen, as a descriptive noun, to be read as foreign secretary, home secretary or chancellor. When a church dispute does arise, for example in the case of probate jurisdiction, it will be considered for its wider political implications. Richard Fox for one was conscious of a personal drift away from the spiritual to the temporal and it was with regret that he admitted to personal failings in regard to his church work. Thus, for the most part, the churchman will be studied as politician.

Three churchmen come to the fore in Henry VIII's pre-Wolsey England; William Warham, archbishop of Canterbury and chancellor, Richard Fox, bishop of Winchester and keeper of the privy seal and Thomas Ruthal, bishop of Durham. Ruthal took over the privy seal keepership from Fox in May, 1516, and Thomas Wolsey succeeded Warham as chancellor on Christmas Eve, 1515. It is the intention of this study to consider this triumvirate,

their place in the politics of the early years of Henry VIII's reign and situation as regards the emergence of Wolsey.

(i) Fox and faction

Richard Fox, sometime bishop of Winchester and keeper of the privy seal, had been a prominent member of society in Henry VII's England and played a part in negotiations with foreign powers, as he did for the majority of his career. He was involved with the treaty between Henry VII and James III of 1487; the treaty of Etaples of 1492; and the so-called 'Intercursus Magnus' with Philip, archduke of Austria and others.¹ He was clearly, though, something more than just an ambassador.

The career of Richard Fox is a long and illustrious one which has been curiously overlooked by modern scholars.² His rise was steady but persistent, beginning at the University of Oxford in the 1460s and officially ending in a political sense with his resignation of the Privy Seal in 1516.

¹ DNB, vol xx, pp150-156.

² There seems to be a dearth of in-depth biographical history relating to Richard Fox. Allen's Letters of Richard Fox contains a brief synopsis of this bishop's career but otherwise little has been written.

In between, the picture is one of successive promotions: several prebends leading to his elevation to bishop of Exeter in 1487, of Bath and Wells in 1492, of Durham in 1494 and of Winchester in 1501, the last he held until his death in 1528.³ It can be argued that Fox's career reached its zenith under Henry VII. He was after all an old man by contemporary standards when Henry VIII came to the throne, being around sixty one years of age.⁴ It is too easy to judge Fox's actions under the new king without realising that he was not a young man. Health problems which culminated in blindness perhaps persuaded the bishop to retire to his diocese. There was, however, no set age at which a man was seen as ready to retire. It was at this time very much a case of, if the man felt fit enough and the king still demanded his services, then a councillor would simply carry on working into old age.

It was under Henry VII that Richard Fox was at his most active administratively. As early as 1489, Fox, as bishop of Exeter, was being referred to, along with John Morton, as all powerful with the king by Giovanni de Giglis, the collector of Peter's Pence in England.⁵ Living off the wealth of the diocesan grants he had been awarded, he was not active in his first two charges, Exeter and Bath and

³ AB Emden, A biographical register of the University of Oxford to AD1500, vol ii, pp715-716.

⁴ Ibid, p715.

⁵ CSP, Venetian, 1202-1509, 550.

Wells.⁶ This was a failing which was to be of great concern to Fox in later life. Writing from retiral in April, 1517, he commented to Wolsey that he had been, "*by the space of xxx yeres so negligent, that of iiij seuerall chathedrall chyrches [Exeter, Bath and Wells, Durham and Winchester] that I haue successiuely had, ther be two, scilicet Excestre and Wellys, that I neuer see, and innumerable sawles wherof I Neuer see the bodyes.*"⁷

Government work took up the majority of his time and even while at Durham, from 1494 until 1501, the bishop was kept busy by the king and could not spend the time in his diocese that he so wished he had later in life. Fox was present at the creation of Henry, duke of York in 1494 and at the following feast.⁸ Much of Fox's time was filled with duties such as acting on commissions to inspect boundaries, or inquire after the king's lands, or to muster and array men; and the every day responsibilities that came with the title bishop. In April, 1506, for example, as bishop of Winchester, he was obliged to deal with a local problem over a mill at Northcory which was causing floods of nearby meadows. Fox was finding the whole issue tiresome and somewhat drawn out when the archdeacon of Wells found his tone rather rough although by the next morning the

⁶ Letters of Richard Fox, pxi.

⁷ Ibid, p93.

⁸ LP, Richard III/Henry VII, vol i, pp392, 403.

bishop was back to his usual self, speaking with kind and gentle words. The archdeacon acknowledged that Fox perhaps had other matters on his mind, writing, "*Ye wolde wondre what causes he hath to do, and therefore we muste abyde hys leysere* [in replying on the subject]." ⁹

His appointment to the see of Durham would have left Fox in a position to be involved closely in the Scottish troubles.¹⁰ He was involved in the politics surrounding the expected invasion by the Scots in the summer of 1497¹¹, with Henry VII, in July of that year, sending Fox instructions regarding what to demand from James IV.¹² Henry was clearly determined to blunt the threat posed by Perkin Warbeck whom the Scottish king had welcomed to his court. Fox was instructed to have the rebel handed over to the English or if this was refused, which it was, then Henry wanted an embassy to be sent from Scotland and then for James to come in person to Newcastle to conclude a peace. Henry also demanded compensation for damage done by the Scots during their invasion and hostages to ensure the full compliance of James to the treaty. The surrender of Warbeck seems to have constituted the quintessence of this proposal. Henry did not underestimate the importance of this pretender and that he entrusted Fox with the

⁹ HMC, Cal of MSS of the Dean and Chapter of Wells, vol ii, p192.

¹⁰ DNB, vol xx, p151.

¹¹ LP, Richard III/Henry VII, vol ii, p376, Appendix C.

¹² Ibid, vol i, pp104-111.

negotiations, all be it with a full and tightly thought out agenda, says much for his standing in the king's eyes.

Fox was named as an executor of the will of Henry VII and was present at his funeral, leading the singing of masses.¹³ He was also in attendance at the new king's coronation on 24th June, 1509.¹⁴ With the ceremonies of kingship over, the celebrations, feasts and jousts, it was back to business for Fox. A first indication of court intrigues under the new administration can be gleaned from a letter from Thomas, lord Darcy to Fox in August, 1509.¹⁵ The question of Fox's rivalry with Thomas Howard, earl of Surrey, is touched on here and is also brought up by Polydore Vergil.¹⁶ How should this situation be interpreted? The first point of note in this letter is Darcy's recalling of how Henry Algernon Percy, earl of Northumberland's servants said that,

"my lord of Buckingham [Edward Stafford] should be protector of England and that their master should rule all from Trent north, and have Berwick and the marches; and that such grant as I [Darcy] had of offices was before the King was crowned and of none effect."

The claim that Darcy's grants under Henry VII were void

¹³ LP, I, i, 20.

¹⁴ Ibid, 82.

¹⁵ Ibid, 157. For a full discussion of this see P Gwyn, The king's cardinal, pp9-10.

¹⁶ PV, pp152-3.

under the new king is legitimate but in general it is likely that these grants would be reaffirmed. Intrigues against a particular man and his offices were always a possibility. Darcy carried on to say that he hoped to identify some of the people who were telling these stories and he called them knaves, craftsmen and beggars. Clearly there was a certain amount of gossip circulating at the time; Darcy goes on to tell Fox of what was being said about him. It has been argued¹⁷ that Darcy could not have been part of the Surrey faction because he was informing Fox about it and its members when he wrote in the second half of the letter,

"that the Lord Privy Seal [Fox], seeing of his own craft and policy he cannot bring himself to rule the King's grace and put out of favour the Earl of Surrey, the Earl of Shrewsbury [George Talbot], the bp. of Durham [Thomas Ruthal], Mr Mernye [Henry Marney], Mr Brandon [Charles Brandon] and the Lord Darcy, now he will prove another way which is to bring in and bolster himself to rule all with the Duke of Buckingham and the Earl of Northumberland. And, doubtless, fast they curse and speak evil of my Lord Privy Seal beyond measure."

Gwyn suggests that Darcy did not believe Fox to be part of any court faction battling for the young king's mind and that he was warning him of dangerous gossip.¹⁸ The latter

¹⁷ P Gwyn, The king's cardinal, pp9-10.

¹⁸ Ibid, p9.

certainly seems the case but could it not be that Darcy stood outside the political machinations and was relaying information to a man whom he saw as an interested party? The impression one gets from reading the letter is of a man warning a friend to watch his back. The whole argument of 'war' and 'peace' factions, fighting for supremacy at court and Fox's part, if any, in all of these manoeuvrings will become clear as his career is further examined.

Richard Fox and Thomas Darcy were not political opponents but friends. In 1514, Darcy thanked the bishop for favours he had always shown to him and asked him for a loan of money¹⁹, hardly the actions of an adversary. Darcy is correct, it would seem, to condemn such talk from the earl of Northumberland's servants as 'sayings' or gossip. He wrote a similar letter to Henry VIII in March, 1514.²⁰ Rumours had been spread about Darcy's behaviour leading up to an expected siege of Berwick. Darcy informed the king that the truth of the situation was that the mayor and corporation of the town had taken flight, adding that Richard Fox knew them and their acts full well. Rumour and gossip could, at times, be the only sources of information immediately available in this age of limited and dilatory communication. Darcy was keenly aware of the damaging potential of gossip and on both the above occasions he made

¹⁹ LP, I, ii, 2914.

²⁰ Ibid, 2740.

efforts to mollify the threat as quickly as possible.

Present at the parliament of 21st January, 1510, where he was a trier of petitions from England, Ireland, Wales and Scotland²¹, Fox was then employed on the diplomatic front. Diplomatic duties were nothing new for Fox. As noted earlier, he had spent many years under Henry VII on service in this field. He was appointed a commissioner to negotiate a peace treaty with France in March, 1510, the treaty being signed on 23rd March by Fox, Ruthal and Surrey on the English side.²² Fox's profile at this stage in his career was clearly quite high. Andrea Badoer, the Venetian ambassador in London, refers to him as "*alter rex*."²³ Badoer was certainly in a position to know. He described Fox as a good friend²⁴, although this is natural considering his reliance on a close relationship with men of state for up-to-date news; Badoer was gaining access to the king's letters through Fox in his capacity as keeper of the privy seal, the ambassador complaining once that this supply of information had temporarily dried up as the bishop had fallen ill.²⁵ Badoer would also have been keen to exaggerate the extent of his friendship with a man like Richard Fox. He took every opportunity available to impress his masters in Venice.

²¹ Ibid, I, i, 341.

²² Foedera, xiii, 270.

²³ LP, I, i, 430.

²⁴ Ibid, 455.

²⁵ Ibid, 434.

Men like Fox were valuable servants to the crown and his services were naturally retained by Henry VIII. He had proved an indispensable figure for Henry VII, experienced in the workings of the establishment machine and, although a senior figure, he was friendly and approachable. With his immense intellectual energy and integrity he would seem well suited to dealing with foreign powers. There was, however, nothing particularly novel in Fox's participation in diplomatic affairs. Clerics were often used as diplomats to negotiate treaties of peace or marriage alliances. They had the common language of Latin and being churchmen they were part of a multi-national organisation. The more influential ones would have contacts in Rome: bishops often felt obliged to visit Rome at periodic intervals. Clearly this medieval old-boys' network could ease the wheels of diplomacy.

Having played such an important part in the government of Henry VII and especially in the diplomatic field, it must have been difficult for Fox, who seems to have been a peaceful man, to be involved in the aggressive foreign policy of the early years of Henry VIII's reign. Henry VII had spent the best part of his reign defusing potentially explosive situations in the cauldron that was European politics. The Tudor crown was shaky in Henry VII's early years. He was the fourth king in a short number of years and, of course, he was not to know that the Tudor dynasty would survive for

over a century. This feeling of insecurity led Henry VII to attempt to detach England from the European political arena. It also led to a paranoia at home with an arbitrary subjugation of vassals and a fervent pursuance of families like the de la Poles. He was not a cowardly king but a sagacious ruler who saw no benefit in antagonising his foreign counterparts, practically striving for peace with a series of treaties with, at numerous times, Brittany, Maximilian, Ferdinand and Louis, and marriage negotiations like the Treaty of Medina del Campo settled with Ferdinand.²⁶ These treaties were a way of ensuring goodwill for his own insecure position. This was the arena in which Fox was moving. It is little wonder that he has been seen as heading the peace faction of Henry VIII's council.

A letter from Luis Caroz to Ferdinand, king of Aragon in May, 1510, provides interesting reading.²⁷ Caroz was the Spanish ambassador in England. This letter was written after an Anglo-French treaty had been signed in March, 1510, and refers to a treaty of closer alliance which was signed by Henry and Ferdinand in May. Caroz described how Henry's councillors were slow in their discussions of a peace treaty between England and Spain and that he, the ambassador, persuaded Thomas Ruthal and Fox onto his side by telling them that Ferdinand could get them elected

²⁶ JAF Thomson, The transformation of medieval England, 1370-1529, pp238-244.

²⁷ LP, I, i, 476; more fully in CSP, Spanish, 1509-1525, 44.

cardinals: "*Endeavoured to gain their goodwill by stratagem, and told each of them separately that they ought to be made cardinals.*" ²⁸ Whether this piece of bargaining was genuine or not is difficult to determine; it seems to be Caroz trying to take credit for the treaty by boasting of his diplomatic skills. Caroz did though make the fair point that the pope was worried that on his death the numerous French cardinals would elect a countryman as pope. Would then the promotion of Fox to cardinal have served the pope's cause, if, as Caroz was keen to point out, he was with the French in spirit? Caroz wrote of,

"the king's warning that only Winchester could be trusted with French affairs. Many other councillors are Frenchmen at heart."

What does he mean by only Fox could be trusted? Is he implying that Fox was adequately anti-French in his dealings for Henry's liking or that he was simply the most able diplomat to deal with the negotiations? The bishop of Winchester was certainly a statesman of some standing and would have performed his duties as dictated by the king.

Fox was from the old school which had cultivated peace with France. Certainly this was a policy which Henry VIII wished to see reversed. Perhaps we can see emerging at court not only 'war' and 'peace' factions, although these terms should be used with care, but also pro-France and pro-

²⁸ JJ Scarisbrick, Henry VIII, p26.

Spain lobbies. This is an over-simplistic view but does serve a purpose; it shows a king in conflict with certain sections of his council, it being no coincidence that those members whom he found opposing his foreign policy were his father's men, Fox and William Warham playing leading parts. Fox was not pushing for a war against Spain, far from it. He simply wished to protect the peaceful legacy left by his old master.

Caroz certainly reinforces the idea of a council split. He makes mention of Henry's most intimate councillors forcing a French treaty on a reluctant king. Fox must certainly have been one of these councillors. Caroz continued with,

"The Duke of Buckingham and many others hate the French" ²⁹

We must remember this letter's audience. Caroz would be conscious of this when he wrote to Ferdinand, his paymaster and would perhaps have laid emphasis on an anti-French feeling in council. Caroz told Ferdinand that when he first approached Henry on the subject of France and the Venetians the king directed him to Fox who in turn said he would reply after Easter, but, the ambassador wrote,

"...Easter has passed without mention of it, and now the writer is ordered not to broach the subject." ³⁰

Had Fox warned Caroz off a touchy subject? This would

²⁹ LP, I, i, 476.

³⁰ Ibid, op cit; CSP, Spanish, 1509-1525, 44.

seem to be the case. Perhaps Caroz was referred to Fox in the first instance because Henry wished to tease a reaction from his privy seal, to put him on the spot. Caroz, as has been mentioned before, wrote of the king only trusting Fox with French affairs but surely Henry could not have been so naive as to not know the bishop's true feelings on the subject.

Caroz was clearly finding the whole episode stressful. In this same letter he wrote of complaints he had made to Henry VIII: "*In affairs which concern the French one scarcely knows to whom to speak, for they get to know it directly.*" Caroz, in an effort to counteract the leaks and rumours which seemed to be an ever-present feature of court life, asked the king to name the most trustworthy of his councillors: "*The King answered, 'Do not speak with any one except the Bishop of Winchester about French affairs.'* Asked him, '*Do you confide in him?*' *The King replied, 'Yes, at my risk. Here in England they think he is a fox, and such is his name.'*" This swipe at Richard Fox has the appearance of a friendly jibe. Henry clearly had confidence in the bishop's abilities and was quick to endorse him to Luis Caroz. It would be wrong to assume from this exchange that Henry had either lost control of Fox, or that he was at odds with his privy seal. More likely is that the king preferred to leave such foreign matters in the hands of a senior statesman like Fox. Vergil is typically cursory on events (Louis' reply refers to a refusal by the French king to make peace on pope

Julius's terms):

"Then all the nobles, roused by the reply of the French king, came round to Henry's point of view, and decided by common consent to make war on the French; for this purpose they authorised taxation of both the clergy and the rest of the people. This done, Henry then concerted with his father-in-law Ferdinand the means of prosecuting the war through the Spanish envoy who was at court, Luis Caroz of Villaragut, a man of knightly rank and shrewd." ³¹

Is 'nobles' a generic term for councillors or did Vergil know more than he was prepared to divulge about the dissatisfied clerics? Vergil was right to describe Caroz as shrewd; shrewd enough to recognise a split among Henry's advisers.

³¹ PV, p163.

(ii) Fox's enduring influence and relationship with Wolsey

What exactly was the relationship between Richard Fox and the emerging Thomas Wolsey? Vergil believed that Fox promoted Wolsey to counter the earl of Surrey's influence at court and that Fox and William Warham eventually resigned because Wolsey's influence had become so great that he was "*conducting all business at his own pleasure.*"³² A school of thought has grown around the Vergil account which saw Fox pushing Wolsey forward in the eyes of the king only to be then thrust to the side by his own 'pupil'.³³ This seems to be far from the reality. What appears clear throughout is that Fox and Wolsey remained close friends. The balance of power within that friendship shifted as time progressed but there are no signs that any animosity developed.

An interesting, if slightly superficial, method of measuring this friendship is to look at the developing terms of

³² Ibid, pp194-200.

³³ AF Pollard, *Wolsey*, p109; GW Bernard, *Early Tudor nobility*, pp21-23; see P Gwyn, *The king's cardinal*, pp8-20 for a full oversight. Pollard, in defending his supposition that Warham and Fox left their respective offices because of Wolsey's increasing pre-eminence and influence over policy, quotes Sebastian Giustinian. This ambassador referred to these two men's retirements as 'of extreme importance' (*CSP, Venetian, 1509-1519*, 750). This is true, but not in the sense Pollard is inferring. Giustinian's concerns were with Venice and that state's efforts to elicit support in council for its cause. Re-direction of petitioning was now called for by the ambassador as Warham and Fox were no longer in possession of direct influence, or so it appeared to the Venetian.

endearment used in the correspondence between the two.³⁴ A letter of September, 1511, from Wolsey to Fox has the former signing off with the phrase, "*with the rude hand of your true and humble priest*"³⁵; while one from Fox to Wolsey in April, 1514 ends, "*with the hand of your loving brother, Ri. Wynton*"³⁶; and finally in May, 1517, with Fox simply pleased to receive a letter at all.³⁷ In this exchange, the bishop recounts receiving two letters from William Sandys, one of which was in Wolsey's hand "*for the which I most humbly thank your good lordship. And much I marvel when you could find the leisure to write it yourself.*" Fox further wrote in this letter of Wolsey's "*special good heart and affection towards me.*" This was hardly an exchange between adversaries. The tone is now one of grateful compliance on Fox's part, as well as an acknowledgement of the workload of Wolsey. This latter point is reinforced by a comment in a letter of May, 1513, from Fox to Wolsey in which the bishop writes if the latter is not soon released from such a heavy workload then he "*shall have a cold stomach, little sleep, pale image and a thin belly cum rara egestione: all which and as deaf as a stock, I had when in your case.*"³⁸ Fox was showing a fatherly concern for Wolsey's health.

³⁴ Letters of Richard Fox, ppxiv-xv puts forward a variant on this notion.

³⁵ LP, I, i, 880; Letters of Richard Fox, p55.

³⁶ LP, I, ii, 2811, Letters of Richard Fox, p76. Wolsey was now bishop of Lincoln so could expect a greater degree of formality from Fox.

³⁷ LP, Addenda, I, i, 185; Letters of Richard Fox, p97.

³⁸ LP, I, ii, 1912; Letters of Richard Fox, p70.

These exchanges allow one to plot a changing relationship, a move from the insouciant to the deferential on Fox's part. Clearly the master had been overtaken by the pupil. This, however, did not lead to any animosity, or at least any that was manifested. Sebastian Giustinian, the Venetian ambassador in England at this time, saw Fox's resignation as being forced by Wolsey. He wrote to Venice regarding English funding of an expedition to Italy and Burgundy, commenting that,

"the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Bishop of Winchester, and the Duke of Suffolk, who usually discussed State affairs, were not present at this conclusion; a fact which had caused universal dissatisfaction, the inference being that the Cardinal of York was the beginning, middle and end of this result." ³⁹

This was written on 1st November, 1516. Seventeen days later he sent another letter to the Signory.⁴⁰ In it he explained that the council had decided to invade Guienne as well as northern France and that the bishop of Winchester *"had absented himself from Court, to avoid taking part in the present violent measures, but had at length returned."* There was certainly friction within the council. Two months later Giustinian found the king *"absent taking his pleasure"*, Wolsey *"more reserved than ever"*, and Fox refusing to see

³⁹ CSP, Venetian, 1509-1519, 801.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 811.

him.⁴¹ This does not necessarily mean that there was any animosity between Fox and Wolsey. Fox was perhaps weary of arguing in council but he was not hounded out of office by the cardinal. His retiral was voluntary.

Sebastian Giustinian misread the situation. The scholar today has access to letters which he clearly had not seen which prove that Wolsey and Fox were still close friends. The cardinal had been asking a mutual acquaintance, William Purde, at what point Fox was intending to return to court, this after he had resigned the Privy Seal. This resignation was, if Giustinian and Vergil are to be believed, on account of that very same cardinal's pressure. Fox made his reply in a letter from Winchester on 23rd April, 1516.⁴² He wrote that had the king not permitted his absence from court, that is his acceptance of the Privy Seal, then he would be acting unkindly, "*consideryng and remembryng your great goodnesse of tyme past.*" The bishop of Winchester was looking fondly on days shared with Wolsey in court. He informed Wolsey that he had the greatest will to serve the king and himself, "*specially sens your good lordship hathe hade the great charge that ye haue in your hand: perceyveng better, straighttar and spedyar wayes of justice, and mor diligence and labour for the Kyngis rightis, duties and profitz to be in you then euer I see in tyme past in any other;*

⁴¹ Ibid, 837.

⁴² Letters of Richard Fox, pp82-4.

and that I my selve hade mor ease in attendance vppon you in the saide maters then euer I hade bifore." This is a very frank and open letter from a man who clearly felt a responsibility to aid the cardinal. While Fox found the spiritual pull of his diocese too strong to resist, he clearly held a certain amount of nostalgia for his political days. He realised that he had left Wolsey in the lurch. His complimentary comments about Wolsey's rule were not being made by a man under duress; there was no threat or blackmail hanging over the bishop's head. He was in quiet retreat, an ageing cleric who was a threat to no one. He saw much of himself in Wolsey and offered him some friendly advice: *"And I require you and hertely praye you, laye a part all such busynesses fro vj of the klok in the evenyng forthward: which, if ye woll vse it, shall after your intollerable labours greatly refresshe you."*

Perhaps Wolsey's influence was not quite as pervasive as Vergil and the school of thought which has grown up around him would have us believe. Was Wolsey the effective ruler of England from 1515, or was he a man under pressure?⁴³ This is not the place to examine the career of Thomas Wolsey but what can be said is that he most definitely missed the intellectual contribution of Fox at court. As late as 1523, a date surmised by Allen from the shaky nature of Fox's handwriting, the bishop was still being consulted by

⁴³ GR Elton, England under the Tudors, p77.

Wolsey.⁴⁴ Fox wrote that he had received the cardinal's letter, "*by the whiche your grace willeth and desyreth me to shewe you the knowlege that I haue.*" While Wolsey was missing the input of Fox, the bishop of Winchester was looking back with some amount of nostalgia to his days at court.

For all his talk of retiral and how it was allowing him the time to pursue his ecclesiastical duties, Fox enjoyed being involved in council decisions, not just to help out an old friend but for its own sake. A letter written in October, 1518, from Marwell, near Winchester, where Fox sometimes resided, has the bishop thanking Wolsey for all the kindness that he had shown him,

"...your grace did noo lesse for me then if ye had deliuered me of an inevitable daunger of my lief. For the which, amongis other your great goodnes and comfortis shewed to me in tyme passed, I reken me bounden not oonly to pray for youre grace but alsoo during my lief to owe you my seruice to the best of my power; and soo I beseche your grace to trust and vse me." ⁴⁵

Fox wished to be, and was, involved in council business.

This letter also confirms the notion that Fox was a peace-loving man. His career had flourished under Henry VII, a

⁴⁴ Letters of Richard Fox, p135; LP, III, ii, 2859.

⁴⁵ Letters of Richard Fox, p112.

king who did his utmost to distance England from foreign wars, and he clearly favoured alliances to conflicts. Of the peace treaty of October 2nd, 1518, he wrote in the same letter,

"And noon Englisshe man gladder then I of this honourable and prouffitable amytye and alyaunce with the royme of Fraunce,....vndoubtedly, my lorde, God contynuyng it, it shall be the best dede that euer was doon for the royme of England; and after the Kingis highnes the lawde and prayse therof shalbe to you a perpetuall memory."

Fox was no pacifist. He had been involved in the French campaign prior to his retiral and for this he claimed to be eternally remorseful; he wrote to Wolsey in April, 1517,

"I haue determyned and, bytwixt God and me, vtterly renouncyed the medlyng with wordly maters, specially concernyng the werre or any thyng to it apperteigneng." ⁴⁶

It was almost as if Fox had discovered religion. He had been so detached from his ecclesiastical duties up to 1515 that the bishop of Winchester experienced a form of rebirth. He continued,

"Wherof for the many intollerable enormytes that I haue seen ensue by the said werre in tyme past, I haue noo littell remorse in my conscience, thynkeng that if I dyd contynuall penance for it all the dayes of my lyfe, though I shuld lyfe xx yeres longar than I may doo, I cowde not yit make

⁴⁶ Ibid, pp92-96.

sufficient recompense therfor."

The bishop's heart was weighing heavily due to a combination of regret for having supported the war in the past and for having neglected his spiritual duties. This sadness of Fox does much to explain his retreat from council. He was not pushed by Wolsey but by his own regrets. His was a struggle of the conscience. He claimed that if he were to die, "*beyng in any such medlyng of the werre, I thynk I shuld dye in dispeyr.*"⁴⁷ He acknowledged his duty to the king and found himself struggling with his two masters, God and king.⁴⁸ Providing Wolsey and Henry with the benefit of his experience is one thing but, Fox wrote, "*it becommeth me noo thyng nowe to medle, neyther by way of counsell nor faict, wyth municions or fortificacions of townes and places of werre.*" The bishop was most reluctant to leave Winchester and travel to London:

"I haue not soo sklenderly buyldyd my selue, nor soo weykly established my house in thies parties, that I can honestely or conueniently so sodenly depart hens, nor incontynent come theder."

He claimed that by leaving he would "*disapoynt many maters and persons.*" This was not Fox playing hard to get, punishing Wolsey for chasing him out of London in the first

⁴⁷ Ibid, p93.

⁴⁸ One can perhaps compare Fox's remarks at this point in his life with Wolsey's deathbed comments, as far as it is possible to discern them from Cavendish's account. P Gwyn, *The king's cardinal*, pp637-639, notes that Wolsey saw his fate as God's judgement and believed he had served his master, Henry, while ignoring his higher duties.

place; the bishop offered much advice in this letter. He clearly had new priorities in his life.

Fox retired to his diocese as his health deteriorated to make up for some of the time he felt he had lost in relation to his pastoral duties, a burden which was to weigh heavily on his shoulders right up until his death.⁴⁹ His opinion, as befits an elder statesman of his stature, was still highly regarded. A year after his resignation from the office of privy seal, Fox's advice was still being sought by Wolsey and the king.⁵⁰ It is not a question of Fox retiring from political life never to be heard of again. He resigned the privy seal of his own volition; he had left the keeping of his privy seal with the king's permission, "*syns the Kyngis grace lycenced me to remaigne in my chyrche and therabowts vppon my cure.*"⁵¹ However, he was still regarded as worthy of consultation not only by Henry and Wolsey, but also by the Venetian ambassador at court, Sebastian Giustinian.

A man like Giustinian relied on information from people at the centre of affairs or at least from people who had contacts there. That he was still referring in his correspondence to Winchester and his counsel post-1516 says much for the

⁴⁹ Letters of Richard Fox, pp150-151. The length of Fox's life after retirement must raise questions about whether his health really was as poor as he made it out to be. It is possible that the bishop was a hypochondriac

⁵⁰ Ibid, p93.

⁵¹ Ibid, op cit.

enduring influence and standing of the bishop and also for the argument that he was not pushed from power but resigned of his own freewill. Had he left court and office in anger then it is improbable that his advice would have been sought on such a regular basis, especially by his supposed overthrowers, and it is also unlikely that he would have retained the contact with court which would have given him the knowledge to offer adequate advice. It is also unlikely that men like Giustinian would have been allowed to have open contact with Fox. A man thrown from power would have been considered a social leper by all but the most brave anti-royalists. In a letter of July, 1517, regarding French claims for damages over the cardinal elections, Giustinian wrote to his master in Venice:

"As the Bishop of Winchester is in his diocese, fifty miles off, I forthwith dispatched my son [Martin Giustinian] to him with the letters of your Highness and of the right reverend Cardinal Adrian, it appearing to me extremely necessary that the Bishop should receive speedy information, to enable him to treat this matter opportunely with the King and the right reverend Cardinal of York." ⁵²

A letter from Leonardo Loredan to Fox, sent in July, 1517, confirms the bishop's continuing influence at court.⁵³ In it Loredan wrote that he was aware of Fox's *"very great authority with the King."* Fox was clearly still involved in

⁵² Four years at the court of Henry VIII, edited by Rawdon Brown, vol ii, pp111-112.

⁵³ CSP, Venetian, 1509-1519, 925.

politics, whether he liked it or not, and there is no reason why he should not have been. Fox would most likely have wished to make a complete break from the work of government with his resignation of the office of privy seal in 1516 but he must surely have realised that his services would have been called upon at regular intervals. He was too important a figure to be allowed to completely retire. One does get the impression, however, of Fox looking back fondly on his days at court and in council with a certain amount of nostalgia. It is perhaps natural for a man who had tasted power at a high level to miss the glamour and importance of a prominent post. As has been seen, references by Richard Fox to his close friendship with Thomas Wolsey are not infrequent occurrences. Post-1516 communications between the two continued to be littered with remarks regarding their mutual respect and fondness. Their relationship, on a business and personal level, flourished long after Fox had left the court scene.

We can contrast the exchanges between Fox and Wolsey with the reaction of the cardinal to a letter from William Warham, archbishop of Canterbury.⁵⁴ Vergil claims the letter was signed "*Brother William of Canterbury*", a phrase similar to those used by Richard Fox in his correspondence with Wolsey. The cardinal felt insulted and "*asserted that he would soon arrange for Canterbury to learn he was not even*

⁵⁴ PV, pp254-257.

his equal let alone his 'brother'". Warham attributed this outburst to Wolsey's success which he saw as having gone to his head. If this episode is true, it strengthens the argument that Fox and Wolsey had a special relationship, that of master and pupil. However, it is difficult to know when Vergil is telling the truth as regards Wolsey.⁵⁵ He clearly disliked Wolsey and took every opportunity possible to sully his character. It is worth noting that Wolsey was reprimanding the archbishop of Canterbury, the highest churchman in the land, higher than Fox, the bishop of Winchester. Also, by the time of this exchange, 1518, Wolsey had secured his place in government, and also his position as cardinal and legate, and clearly felt secure enough to offend the archbishop. He might not have attempted this rebuke five years earlier.

This episode is acknowledged by Holinshed but the similarities between his account and that of Vergil suggest extensive plagiarism.⁵⁶ That chronicler's closing sentence describes Wolsey in a manner also similar to Vergil's,

"And thus the cardinall forgetting to hold the right path of true and laud and praise, sought to be feared rather than beloued of all good men."

Wolsey is again depicted as playing the dragon to Henry VIII's St George, or playing the part of Richard III opposing

⁵⁵ P Gwyn, *The king's cardinal*, ppxix-xx.

⁵⁶ *Holinshed*, vol iii, pp631-632.

Henry VII. The Tudor historians have found and followed a set theme in historical chronicles, that is, of the saviour and the sinner. This is all the more unusual in that by Henry VIII's time, the Tudor dynasty could be said to have been relatively secure although doubts about the future were to colour events in the 1520s. The king's succession was secure and well-founded and was seen as such at the time. One can see how it is possible to argue that after the turmoil of the Wars of the Roses, Henry VII's accession had to be hailed as it was, and contrasted strongly with Richard III's rule, but was this wholly necessary with Henry VIII? Vergil, Hall and Holinshed merely lose the trust of the historian with their dramatically good and evil picture of the England of Henry and Wolsey.

(iii) spiritual politics

Fox became involved in a dispute with William Warham, archbishop of Canterbury, which began in 1510 and lasted for three years, the nub of which was probate jurisdiction. Warham was seen as attempting to extend the jurisdiction of the see of Canterbury and came up against the combined forces of the Bishops Fox, Fitzjames of London, Smith of Lincoln and Oldham of Exeter. Canterbury had authority over probate when the deceased's goods were valued at more than 100s in more than one diocese.⁵⁷ An appeal against Canterbury's increasing powers by Fox found no satisfactory outcome in the papal court and was finally referred to the king. He wrote to Warham on 23rd February, 1513, from Greenwich and declared that his council was taking too long to come to an agreement and at Rome dishonour was being brought upon everyone concerned. Henry decreed that *"neither Warham nor the bishops should meddle with probate for hereditaments or rents not being chatall; nor depute appraisers and if a testator leave in other dioceses, than that he dwelt in, goods and good debts exceeding £10 value, Warham only should take probate, otherwise the said bishops shall take probate."*⁵⁸

⁵⁷ JAF Thomson, The early Tudor church and society, 1485-1529, pp126-127.

⁵⁸ LP, I, i, 1642.

The king had made his pronouncement but this was by no means the end of the matter. Replies had to be made before 15th April and Warham dutifully made his.⁵⁹ His response was a strong one in which he seemed to give a little on some issues and on others he dug deeper: "*as to hereditaments not being chatell he is content to take no probate when the testator may not by law make his testament of them.*" On the question of appraisers, Warham claimed they were made because of fraudulent executors and objectors to appraisers sought to hide the death of men with goods in several dioceses. He also stated that his predecessors took probate for all values but that he, "*for the sake of peace*", granted his adversaries probate for all under £5. Warham accused Fox of stirring men to conspire against him. He further accused Fox of gaining adherents by offering large restitutions of goods of Henry VII to the detriment of poor men and genuine cases. Warham urged Henry to allow this spiritual matter to be judged before the Head of the Spiritual Court in Rome rather than "*charge his own conscience.*" He was clearly angry at the outcome of the king's decision and argued that Fox and his adherents were compliant because they obtained "*by the King's ordinance what neither they nor other moving like causes could obtain against the Church of Canterbury at any time in the Court of Rome.*"

Warham felt he had the right to defend himself against

⁵⁹ Ibid, 1780.

charges laid by Fox and asked the king that in future he may be permitted to come before him personally to refute any claims.⁶⁰ It was at this time that Henry sailed to Calais and Warham clearly felt isolated from him, especially with Fox accompanying the king. On 16th July, 1513, Henry wrote to his queen.⁶¹ He asked her to call together Warham and three or four of her council and show the archbishop that he was not conforming to the ordinances laid down by the king himself. Furthermore, reacting to a tale brought to him by Fox, he told the queen to order Warham to stop pestering the bishop of Winchester's commissary in Hampshire, John Incent. Fox clearly had the king's ear in Calais and Warham became increasingly agitated back in England. His next letter, on 14th August, displays his feeling of isolation.⁶² He accused Fox of lying and declared that none of his men had troubled any of the bishop's officers. He further, " *marvels that Winchester troubles the King beyond sea and the Queen and Council here [London], in a time of so great business [the French wars], with such untrue surmises as this concerning the commissary.*"

Warham was clearly riled and perhaps becoming a little paranoid of Fox's attacks, claiming they were made to take him out of favour. Fox was a man of strong and upright character and it would have been unlike him to resort to lies

⁶⁰ Ibid, I, ii, 1941.

⁶¹ Ibid, 2098.

⁶² Ibid, 2163.

and treachery to force the issue. He asked the king to stand indifferent between them. Catherine of Aragon found Warham unwilling to provide a solution to the problem and she wrote to Wolsey of this.⁶³ Again, on 29th September, the king, writing from Tournai, commanded Warham to obey the ordinances, reminding him that he had already been requested to do so three times.⁶⁴ Warham's reply on 29th October was a clear attempt to end this episode.⁶⁵ He offered to obey all the commandments, but yet again attacked Fox. He claimed the bishop was trying to get him, Warham, to perjure himself, and he asked Henry not to listen to the bishop of Winchester's surmises and to write to him in his own name. This exchange between Warham and Fox, leading a group of unhappy bishops, was a particularly vitriolic one. They clearly had deep feelings of mistrust for each other and were both anxious that the other should not have unlimited access to the king's ear.

This was not the first or last confrontation between William Warham and Richard Fox. The two churchmen had disagreed over the possibility of Prince Arthur's widow marrying Prince Henry.⁶⁶ In 1529, several men delivered depositions outlining what knowledge they had about the marriage of Catherine of Aragon to Prince Arthur in

⁶³ Ibid, 2269.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 2312.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 2405.

⁶⁶ JJ Scarisbrick, Henry VIII, p13 and n; DNB, vol xx, p152.

1501.⁶⁷ These depositions were to be used as evidence to establish the validity of the marriage and the grounds for Henry VIII's divorce from the queen. Nicholas West, bishop of Ely, raised the point that William Warham and Richard Fox had argued over the matter of the legality of Henry's marriage to his brother's widow. The other legible depositions were made by George, earl of Shrewsbury, Thomas, marquis of Dorset, Sir Anthony Willoughby, Anthony Poynes, Sir William Thomas, Sir David Owen, Sir John Hussey, Robert, viscount Fitzwalter, Thomas, lord Darcy, William, lord Mountjoy, Sir Henry Guildford, Thomas, viscount Rochford, and Sir Richard Sacheverell. William Blount, lord Mountjoy stated that he had never heard of "*any great murmur or scandal in consequence of this marriage among either the clergy or laity.*" On the other hand, Sir Richard Sacheverell declared that "*he heard many people say that it was not meet that one brother should marry his brother's wife.*" No other mention of doubts about the marriage were recorded. Any qualms that a man had over this marriage would have been best kept to himself, and it would seem that they were generally confined to slight murmurings among a few of the clergy.

The men making these depositions were being asked to comment on incidents which had occurred, in some cases, over thirty years before. The content of their depositions

⁶⁷ LP, IV, iii, 5773, 5774.

varied, with the lower ranking servants providing the details of personal incidents and the members of the gentry generally unable, or unwilling, to add a perspective. It is often the close servant who can reveal the familiar. In this instance, Anthony Willoughby, who was in Prince Arthur's service, remembered, on the matter of the consummation of the marriage of 1501, his master asking him on the morning after the wedding night to "*bring me a cup of ale, for I have been this night in the midst of Spain*" and further declaring that "*it is good pastime to have a wife.*" ⁶⁸

Two points can be surmised from this episode. Firstly, that any quarrel between William Warham and Richard Fox over the legitimacy of the marriage between Henry and Catherine was of little consequence and unlikely to have been carried on for any length of time. Secondly, that proximity to the king, or in this case the prince, bred a familiarity which may have been lacking in contacts with others outside the immediate royal chamber. Certainly the minutiae of court life were more readily accessed and this would allow a servant to foster very personal links with his master.

The case of testamentary jurisdiction again came to the fore

⁶⁸ Ibid, 5774(3), and 5774(13) recalls a similar version. Nicholas West related a different story in his deposition, doubting the consummation due to words uttered to him by the queen. When exactly Catherine told West this is not certain but clearly, by 1529, she was arguing for her title and may have wished to introduce a different interpretation to events.

in 1519, with the tables turned on Warham.⁶⁹ This time it was his turn to complain of the disturbing actions of officers, in this instance Wolsey's. Again this dispute, not a new one by any means, dragged on for several years. It may in fact be easier to see the probate jurisdiction argument as a constant through a period of years with only the protagonists changing, such was the consistency of complaints from both sides.

⁶⁹ AF Pollard, Wolsey, pp193-198.

(iv) Warham and Wolsey

William Warham would have been a man of approximately fifty-nine years of age when Henry VIII came to the throne⁷⁰ and as archbishop of Canterbury he was the senior churchman in England. With no fixed age of retiral, he was well-placed to work on for some years as an influential member of Henry VIII's government. However, by 1515, the year Wolsey became a cardinal, Warham had resigned the chancellorship and his career as a statesman and churchman was clearly on the wane. How was it that a man who had established a position of trust under Henry VII and had reached the pinnacle of his chosen career could slip so quickly from the public spotlight and the royal favour? Part of the answer to this question will be found in an appreciation of the attitude of the new king. Warham was a victim of association; association with an age which had been declared over by a young and enthusiastic king anxious to stamp his own mark on England and Europe. His political demise was not unique, and the circumstances which brought it about will be found in others.

Like many other clerics, as part of a network of educated Latin-speakers, Warham was involved in ambassadorial duties for much of his life. Trained as a lawyer at Oxford

⁷⁰ DNB, vol lix, p378.

University, he was sent to Antwerp in 1491 to deal with disputes with the Hanse merchants. Henry VII used him in 1493 in Flanders to combat support being given to Perkin Warbeck; in 1496 to negotiate with the Spanish ambassador de Puebla for the marriage of Prince Arthur with Catherine of Aragon; in 1497 in an embassy with Richard Fox, sent to Scotland to secure the surrender of Warbeck from James IV; in numerous disputes with Burgundy in the late 1490s; and on several other diplomatic and ceremonial missions, including ones to Maximilian and Philip, king of Castile.⁷¹ Warham was a diplomat of distinction and clearly highly thought of by Henry VII. His ecclesiastical career gained impetus in 1493 when he was ordained subdeacon by Bishop William Smith at Lichfield and then appointed precentor of Wells. The next year he became master of the rolls. He was consecrated bishop of London in 1502. His mastership of the rolls became the keepership of the great seal and finally the title lord chancellor in 1504. His translation to the archbishopric of Canterbury was completed in the same year. A man of almost sixty when Henry VIII ascended the throne it would seem he still had much to offer. The reasons for his political career ending so abruptly under the new king must be examined, and his relationship with Wolsey provides an important starting-point.

Thomas Wolsey received the cardinal's hat at a ceremony in

⁷¹ Ibid, p378-383.

Westminster Abbey on Sunday 18th November, 1515.⁷² Present were many ecclesiastical dignitaries including the archbishops of Armagh and Dublin, Bishop John Fisher of Rochester and Richard Fox. Warham sang the mass. There followed a dispute over what may be loosely termed 'ecclesiastical precedence': the carrying of the cross and which archbishop could walk in front of the other. It has been argued that this disagreement could only have taken place after Wolsey had been made cardinal.⁷³ Cavendish places it before Wolsey's appointment.⁷⁴ The exact timing of this incident would seem to be of secondary importance for present purposes. Of more concern is the outlook of Wolsey and his attitude towards the archbishop of Canterbury. Rivalry between Canterbury and York can be traced back to the late eleventh century and was not smoothed over until the fourteenth century. This present dispute was complicated by Wolsey's status as a cardinal. There was a fifteenth century parallel in the relations between John Kemp, cardinal archbishop of York and Henry Chichele, archbishop of Canterbury with Eugenius II ruling in favour of the cardinal.⁷⁵

⁷² P Gwyn, The king's cardinal, p56.

⁷³ Ibid, pp265-266 and n.

⁷⁴ Cavendish, The life and death of Cardinal Wolsey, pp15-17.

⁷⁵ W Ullmann, 'Eugenius IV, Cardinal Kemp and Archbishop Chichele', pp359-383 in Medieval studies presented to Aubrey Gwynn, S.J., edited by Watt, Morrall & Martin; JAF Thomson, Popes and princes, 1417-1517, politics and polity in the late medieval church, p64, notes that 'the powers of the cardinals were concerned with the whole Church, but those of an archbishop were limited to one church only.'

Cavendish did not enter Wolsey's service until the 1520s and it is from this time that the life is firmly based on personal experiences.⁷⁶ The 1515 incident may have failings in chronological terms but the tone in which it was written seems genuine enough. As Wolsey's gentleman-usher, Cavendish paints a favourable picture of his master and thus, when we are confronted with tales of the cardinal's desire for supremacy over the archbishop of Canterbury which reveal a single-mindedly grasping man, they are all the more believable. It is when the author adopts a sycophantic tone that the evidence has to be considered very carefully. Cavendish recounts that Wolsey, then bishop of Lincoln, was given the archbishopric of York by the king on the death of Christopher Bainbridge,

"...and he beyng in possession of the Archebisshoprike of yorke and primas Anglie thought hyme sufficient to compare with Caunterburge, and there uppon erected his crosse in the Court and in euery other place as well in the presence of the bysshope of Caunterbury and in the precyncte of his Iurysdiccon as elles where." ⁷⁷

According to Cavendish, Warham reacted to this situation by having words with Wolsey,

"Wherfore Caunterbure beyng moved therwith gave yorke a certyn cheke for his presumcyon by reason wherof there engendred some grudge bytween Caunterburye & yorke And

⁷⁶ Cavendish, The life and death of Cardinal Wolsey, pxix.

⁷⁷ Ibid, p15.

yorke perceyveng the obedyence that Caunterbury claymed to haue of yorke entendyd to provyde some suche means that he wold rather be superiour in dignytie to Caunterbury than to be other obedient or equall to hyme." ⁷⁸

At first sight this would seem like a petty vendetta being pursued by Wolsey but there was much at stake. Warham would clearly have been humiliated by Wolsey taking superiority as archbishop of York in any ceremonies of state, and it was no doubt particularly galling for the elder statesman to be embarrassed by the young Wolsey, just starting out in his career. The "*some suche means*" referred to by Cavendish was Wolsey's attempt to be made "*preest Cardynall and legatus de latere.*" Perhaps Cavendish has the time-frame correct. Could Wolsey have realised that he was in an inferior position to Warham while he was archbishop of York but he thought it worth attempting to displace the archbishop of Canterbury anyway? That his next course of action was to canvass for the title of cardinal suggests that he was well aware of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. Whatever the sequence of events, Wolsey now saw his task near completion and having obtained the position of cardinal, "*...thought hyme self mete to encounter with Caunterbury in his highe Iurysdiccion byfore expressed And that also he was as mete to beare auctoryte among the temporall powers as a*

⁷⁸ Ibid, p16.

mong the sperytuall Iurisdiccions." 79

Wolsey still remembered *"the tauntes & chekkes byfore susteyned of Caunterbury (whiche he entendyd to redresse)."* 80 Redress them he did when he was appointed chancellor, a post previously held by Warham. His mission was now complete,

"Nowe he beyng in possession of the Chauncellourshipe endowed with the promocion of an archebyssshop and Cardynall legatte allso de latere thought hyme self fully furnysshed with suche auctoryties And dygnyties that he was able to surmount Caunterbury in all ecclesiasticall Iurysdiccions." 81

Wolsey had two great crosses of silver, one for his archbishopric and one for his legateship. The allegorical significance of this would not have been lost on William Warham.

The impression this isolated incident leaves is of a jealous old man being pushed from office by a young pretender. How representative is this of the relationship between Thomas Wolsey and William Warham? There certainly does not seem to have been any long-standing, deep-seated hatred between the two men.⁸² There was the on-going problem

⁷⁹ Ibid, p17.

⁸⁰ Ibid, op cit.

⁸¹ Ibid, op cit.

⁸² GW Bernard, War, taxation and rebellion in early Tudor England, pp96-109.

of Wolsey's legatine authority which seemed to put a strain on their relationship but it was not fatal pressure.⁸³ In January, 1523, the pair were on sufficiently good terms for Wolsey to offer the ill Warham "*pleasant lodging at Hampton Court*" until he was well again.⁸⁴

In this same letter Warham thanked Wolsey for ensuring that his nephew, the archdeacon of Canterbury, was treated as fairly as the other archdeacons concerning compositions of jurisdictions. Warham also wrote that he had told his dean of the Court of Arches not to meddle again in matters which may have been to Wolsey's displeasure and he thanked the cardinal for not dealing extremely with him. Even on church matters it seems there was no grudge held between the two men. Some of their later correspondence does not betray any animosity. Warham wrote of how much he valued Wolsey's kind actions towards himself. A letter of August, 1525, has Warham thanking Wolsey for his offer of a lodging while on his way to visit him. The archbishop of Canterbury also thanked him for the "*cheer he showed him at his last visit.*"⁸⁵ The tone is similar to that adopted by Richard Fox in his later letters to the cardinal when he becomes gracious to the point of being sycophantic. Once his own position had been recognised, Wolsey could,

⁸³ P Gwyn, The king's cardinal, pp289-293.

⁸⁴ LP, III, ii, 2767.

⁸⁵ Ibid, IV, i, 1591.

however, afford to be generous towards Warham. Wolsey's tone most certainly became more conciliatory post-1515 and his later correspondence must be viewed in part with this in mind.

The position of Polydore Vergil in all of this is somewhat predictable. Warham, on his promotion to the archbishopric of Canterbury, is seen as a "*modest and worthy man*" who was "*considered by the king as well as his counsellors to be the worthiest of all to administer the office on account of his learning and perspicacity.*"⁸⁶ The promotion of Wolsey is not considered in the same light. His appointment to the archbishopric of York and then to the office of chancellor Vergil saw as good fortune which was,

*"to be reckoned most praiseworthy if it is showered upon sober, moderate and self-controlled men, who are not proud in their power, nor are made arrogant with their money, nor vaunt themselves in other fortunate circumstances. None of these characteristics could be described in Wolsey, who, acquiring so many offices at almost the same time, became so proud that he considered himself the peer of kings."*⁸⁷

⁸⁶ PV, p132.

⁸⁷ Ibid, p230.

(v) forced withdrawal or retreat?

Vergil claims Warham voluntarily withdrew from the office of chancellor but he sees different motives in his decision to leave the court in general. With Wolsey "*conducting all business at his own pleasure*" and becoming indispensable to the king, several leading men withdrew from court, unhappy that one man should be wielding so much power:

"Canterbury [Warham] and Winchester [Richard Fox] were among the first to leave, going into their dioceses. But before they left, like truly responsible statesmen, they earnestly urged the king not to suffer any servant to be greater than his master." ⁸⁸

It is too easy to dismiss Vergil for his black and white view of proceedings. The rumours he reports may have represented popular attitudes at the time. Vergil certainly had personal animosity towards Wolsey but it must be remembered that his account appeared in print after the cardinal had died. It was easy to criticise a man who could not respond and Vergil may have been hoping to commend himself to the king by such actions.

Vergil's anti-Wolsey bias is indisputable but he cannot be completely dismissed as a source of evidence. Can all his complaints of Wolsey's behaviour and his recounting of

⁸⁸ Ibid, op cit.

contemporaries' attitudes to that cardinal be exaggerated and spurious? While writing of opposition to war with France in 1515, Vergil recounted that the king, because the matter warranted serious consideration, decided "*to call to court his old intimates*", including Warham, Fox, the duke of Norfolk and Sir Thomas Lovell.⁸⁹ It is likely that Vergil included himself in this group, that is of the old school. This is not to say that Henry VIII consulted Vergil on matters of national importance but that the golden years of his career had fallen under Henry VII. By this he felt an empathy with men like Warham and Fox, men who had also passed the zenith of their careers. While Wolsey was favoured over Canterbury and Winchester, so a man like Andrea Ammonius was favoured over Vergil. Ammonius was Henry VIII's Latin secretary and had supplanted Vergil at court, possibly with the backing of Wolsey.⁹⁰ Vergil certainly had reasons to look disdainfully on a Wolsey-dominated court but he cannot be written off as a source.

As has been seen, Vergil wrote that Warham, along with Richard Fox, left court and returned to his diocese. Other evidence supports this notion:

"the archbishop of Canterbury was aged, and desired to take his yeese in his diosies, the whiche hadde byn Chaunceler before ix yeres, and right nobully behaued hym, in asmuche

⁸⁹ Ibid, p234.

⁹⁰ P Gwyn, The king's cardinal, pxx.

he was praised of all men for his wisdom and gentleness." ⁹¹

The suggestion here is that Warham was willing to retire to his diocese and allow Wolsey to take centre stage. This idea has support from a number of sources. A letter written from More to Erasmus in February, 1516, read,

"The archbishop of Canterbury, after some years of strenuous effort to secure his liberty, has at last been allowed to resign the office of chancellor and, having secured the privacy he has so long desired, is now enjoying the delights of leisure among his books and the memories of a most successful administration." ⁹²

The reasoning is clear; More felt Warham not only left of his own free will but was positively pleased to retire, with no hint whatsoever of being pushed by Wolsey.

Erasmus received a second letter, this time from John Colet in June, 1516, which described Warham as *"released from all business, and living happily at leisure."* ⁹³ This theme is again picked up on by More in a letter to Warham that same year,

"Always considered Warham's lot a happy one when he was Chancellor, and more so now that he has retired. None but a modest man would choose, and none but an innocent man would dare, to give up such a high office voluntarily,

⁹¹ Kingsford, Chronicles of London, p263.

⁹² Erasmus, III, p233.

⁹³ Ibid, III, p312. LP, II, ii, 2941 dates this letter February, 1517.

thereby exposing himself to calumny. It was with difficulty that he prevailed on the King to allow him to resign. Envies his leisure the more as he is himself so distracted with business that he has hardly time to write this letter." ⁹⁴

The suggestion in a letter from Ammonius to Erasmus in February, 1516, is that Wolsey had to be persuaded to take the office of chancellor, with the conclusion that he had not chased out Warham,

"Your friend the archbishop of Canterbury has resigned his office with the king's leave, and his grace of York after urgent entreaty has succeeded him, and is doing very well." ⁹⁵

The Venetian ambassador at court, Sebastian Giustinian, saw things differently. Writing to the Council of Ten in Venice, he recounted in October, 1516, how the council sat and *"Winchester and Canterbury absented themselves at the commencement of the business."* ⁹⁶ One month later Fox and Warham were joined by the duke of Suffolk and many other lords.⁹⁷ Giustinian attributed their collective absence, as has been seen, to the increasing influence of Wolsey.

Hall's contribution to these events is an interesting combination of the old and the new.⁹⁸ He blames Wolsey's

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, II, ii, Appendix 36.

⁹⁵ *Erasmus*, III, p239.

⁹⁶ *LP*, II, ii, 2464; *CSP, Venetian, 1509-1519*, 791.

⁹⁷ *LP*, II, i, 2500.

⁹⁸ *Hall*, vol i, p148.

meddling in Warham's office of the chancellorship and his general desire to "*beare all the rule, and to have all the whole aucthoritie.*" Hall also attributes Warham's retiral to a consideration of "*his awne great age*", although one has to remember that Warham survived until 1532. A hint then that Warham felt he had approached retirement age but only that. Hall's next few lines cover familiar territory, with Wolsey acting in a manner which "*caused hym greatly to be hated, and by his exsample many cruell officers for malice, evell intreated dyverse of the kynges subjectes.*" This willingness of Hall to criticise Wolsey lends more weight to his argument that Warham left office in part because of his own age. Hall could have left this fact out of his account and simply blamed Wolsey but he clearly saw it as too important a factor in Warham's departure to omit.

Are we to believe Giustinian and Hall who see Fox and Warham as retiring as a result of Wolsey's rise, or men like More and Colet who saw Warham as enjoying a happy retiral, glad to be free of the responsibilities of an office of state? All the available evidence would suggest the latter. Both Fox and Warham remained on friendly terms with the cardinal. Their absence from council must surely have been voluntary. It was perhaps encouraged by the row they had over probate jurisdiction. World-weariness would explain much; although jealousy on the part of Wolsey towards the archbishop of Canterbury over his ecclesiastical supremacy,

and towards Fox for his continued influence and elder statesman qualities, cannot be dismissed, even if it was prompted by specific rather than general issues.

(vi) Thomas Ruthal: survival of an old guard

Thomas Ruthal, bishop of Durham and secretary to Henry VII and VIII, seems to have been far nearer Thomas Wolsey than either William Warham or Richard Fox. He was approximately ten to fifteen years younger than Fox. A councillor by 1504 and keeper of the privy seal from 1516 until his death in 1523, as well as king's secretary, Ruthal followed a similar path to many high-ranking churchmen in obtaining prominent secular posts.⁹⁹ Henry VII had used him on missions to France¹⁰⁰ and the Roman Curia and the new king also used him in the field of diplomacy. Vergil, writing of events in 1506, saw Ruthal as *"a most learned man and who for many years had been and still was Henry's private secretary, on account of his great loyalty, his experience in all types of negotiations, his steadfast attention*

⁹⁹ AB Emden, A biographical register of the University of Oxford to AD 1500, vol iii, pp1612-3.

¹⁰⁰ LP Richard III/Henry VII, vol ii, p338, Appendix B; CSP Venetian, 1202-1509, 795.

to duty and his unremitting attention to affairs of government." ¹⁰¹ He frequently appeared at the signing of treaties as with Scotland in 1509 or with France in 1510; his appointment as ambassador led him to negotiate and conclude a treaty with Spain in May, 1510; and he would often meet foreign dignitaries visiting London, as with Luis Caroz of Aragon. The see of Durham came his way in June, 1509.¹⁰²

Ruthal's was a hectic schedule, filled with the everyday events in the life of a busy administrator. Of all the prominent clerics at this time, Ruthal was the closest to a civil servant. He has been called a 'pen-pusher' which sums up the man well while perhaps slightly ignoring his importance in diplomatic circles.¹⁰³ This descriptive tag does, however, adequately reflect a side of Ruthal's character, that of his ambition. He seems to have been content with his lot. This may seem a curious statement to make to describe a man who had sufficient drive to become keeper of the privy seal and secretary to the first two Tudor kings, as well as to rise within the church. However, an examination of his activities under Henry VIII will clarify the situation. While being closely associated with Henry VII, Ruthal still managed to court the favours of the new king, a

¹⁰¹ PV, pp138-139.

¹⁰² LP, I, i, 153, 406, 461, 468, 476; Foedera, xiii, 256, 270.

¹⁰³ P Gwyn, The king's cardinal, p31.

feat at which Fox and Warham failed. Perhaps the bishop of Durham was a man so clearly lacking the killer political instinct that he was not seen as a threat by Wolsey.

It has been suggested that Henry VIII's council was divided about the notion of peace or war with France, and that the churchmen on the council, mainly Warham, Fox, John Fisher and Ruthal, were in favour of the former.¹⁰⁴ How true is this? An early sign of Ruthal's position at court is indicated in a letter from Lord Darcy to Richard Fox, written around August, 1509.¹⁰⁵ This letter has already been examined in relation to the bishop of Winchester. Does it show the bishop of Durham at one with Fox in wishing peace? Initially it would seem not, with talk at the time suggesting that Fox was at odds with the king and his supporters, including Ruthal. However, Darcy himself goes on to warn of the dangers of gossip.

It is too convenient to section off a group of clerics in council and label them as promoters of peace.¹⁰⁶ Prior to 1514 and the peace made with France, Wolsey's foreign policy, if that phrase may be used, was a belligerent one, or at least an anti-French one.¹⁰⁷ Anti-French sentiment may have been related to Wolsey's wish to stand well with the

¹⁰⁴ J Ridley, Henry VIII, p53; GR Elton, England under the Tudors, p72.

¹⁰⁵ LP, I, i, 157.

¹⁰⁶ AF Pollard, Wolsey, p11.

¹⁰⁷ P Gwyn, The king's cardinal, p12.

Papacy. It is unlikely that at this stage, pre-1514, Wolsey was leading the formation of the king's policy; he was yet to fully emerge as a prominent figure. If Ruthal was on anyone's side then it was Wolsey's. Sebastian Giustinian often wrote of Wolsey and Ruthal as being together, talking over affairs of state.¹⁰⁸ These two men were close to each other and often led negotiations together, meeting with ambassadors from abroad to discuss matters of alliance. A letter of May, 1517, from Giustinian to the Signory recounts how that ambassador went to Wolsey with news from Turkey.¹⁰⁹ When the cardinal was too tired to deal with the news, Giustinian then proceeded to the bishop of Durham whom he described as "*one and the same as the Cardinal.*" In another letter of August that year, Giustinian described Ruthal as the "*Cardinal's confidant in all things.*"¹¹⁰ Could this explain the tenacity of Ruthal while more able men like Warham and Fox retired from the limelight? Was he so clearly Wolsey's man that he need not have feared pressure from the cardinal?

Ruthal had certainly not caught the king's eye although he was an important administrator. Vergil was in no doubt as to where Ruthal's loyalties lay. When Wolsey proposed, in 1515, to arm Maximilian to wage war on Francis, Vergil

¹⁰⁸ CSP Venetian, 1509-1519, 712, 742, 751, 753, 757, 758, 759, 876.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid*, 891.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid*, 951.

described how Ruthal delighted in the plan:

"Wolsey's view was praised above all by Thomas, bishop of Durham, who in approving marvelled at it and extolled it highly this lest he should be soundly lashed for doing otherwise, because for a long time he had devoted himself to Wolsey and therefore depended entirely on the latter's pleasure." ¹¹¹

Vergil is correct to assume that Ruthal may have been reprimanded by Wolsey for not supporting his plan. He was clearly the subordinate. Giustinian sought out the cardinal first when he was relaying or seeking information, and consulted Ruthal afterwards. A letter from Giustinian to the Council of Ten dated 23rd July, 1516, described Ruthal as *"singing treble to the Cardinal's bass."* ¹¹²

Ruthal posed no threat to Wolsey's position. His workhorse nature confirmed his place as an administrative support for the cardinal, and also a spiritual support in council. Again Ruthal was very much on side as Vergil was aware in 1518, relating to the proposed restoration of Tournai to France, *"No one disagreed with the opinion Wolsey advanced and Thomas, bishop of Durham was among the first to concur, as his duty of indebtedness to Wolsey....inclined him. The rest [of the council] followed the bishop of Durham's lead in order not to make much ado over the matter to no*

¹¹¹ PV, p235.

¹¹² CSP Venetian, 1509-1519, 751.

purpose." 113

Ruthal comes across, if we can trust Vergil's slant, as slightly fawning. He does not appear to be some kind of chief whip, spurring on the other council members to back Wolsey. The impression one gets is most definitely of a typically sycophantic council member. By this time, Wolsey's pre-eminence had been well and truly established and Ruthal was simply falling into line behind him. It is difficult to see either Warham or Fox behaving quite so graciously, certainly before 1515. Ruthal had neither the intellectual capacity nor the intense integrity of a man like Richard Fox.

Thomas Ruthal's behaviour towards Wolsey can perhaps be explained to a certain extent, however, by the apparent indebtedness he owed to the cardinal. Ruthal's date of birth cannot be confirmed. He was perhaps ten to fifteen years younger than Richard Fox, born in the mid-1460s. He had been on a fast track promotion but only emerges as a significant figure around 1500.¹¹⁴ Ruthal was a curiously colourless individual with little evident strength of personality, perhaps a result of a lack of extant private correspondence. He comes across as hard-working but slightly dull and passive.

¹¹³ PV, p249.

¹¹⁴ AB Emden, A biographical register of the University of Oxford to AD1500, vol iii, pp1612-1613.

There was clearly not complete harmony among the clerics. The old guard of Warham and Fox had effectively retired from active participation in public affairs, while Wolsey had risen rapidly, overtaking men like Ruthal who slipped into his entourage. It was Wolsey's awareness that Warham held, and showed no signs of giving up, the superior archbishopric of Canterbury which led him to push for his own selection as legate a latere for life.

(vii) Wolsey, Rome and the end of the beginning

The churchmen of England at his time were intrinsically linked with Rome, spiritually and politically. The sees of Canterbury and York had as their spiritual head the pope and Rome and in times of dispute it was here that the church looked for guidance. But Rome was involved in English matters in the much wider political sense. Churchmen became embroiled in affairs, caught between their allegiance to the king and to the pope. These were confused times with European powers jockeying amongst themselves through treaties and pacts in an effort to protect their boundaries and hopefully come clear victorious in any war. The pope, and particularly Julius II, was no different from a secular leader

like Henry VIII or Louis XII in that he would fight for his land.

On 14th July, 1514, Julius, cardinal de Medici, sent a letter to Henry VIII announcing the death of Christopher Bainbridge, the cardinal-archbishop of York.¹¹⁵ Bainbridge was a member of an old and prestigious clerical dynasty. His uncle was Thomas Langton, sometime bishop of Winchester, and his early career in the church was facilitated by the patronage of Langton. While Ruthal was merely an agent of the king, Bainbridge had been given a positive responsibility. He had been sent to Rome in late 1509 as an agent and ambassador, and to arouse in Pope Julius II sufficient anti-French animosity. He was created a cardinal on 10th March, 1511, and shortly after found himself commanding an army at Ferrara.¹¹⁶ Perhaps two features of his time at Rome come to the fore; his anti-French outlook and his staunch loyalty to Henry VIII and support of his rights. Ironically it was while negotiations were in progress for a peace between France and England that Bainbridge died, poisoned by a chaplain in his service who claimed to be working for the bishop of Worcester, Silvester de Giglis. This death by poison has been queried on the grounds of unsatisfactory autopsy reports, Bainbridge's tendency to malaria and perhaps also medical

¹¹⁵ *Foedera*, xiii, 412.

¹¹⁶ *DNB*, vol ii, pp433-434.

shortcomings.¹¹⁷ There are serious doubts as to how Bainbridge actually died. If he died naturally then any suspicion of Wolsey's involvement must fall. Even if he had been poisoned, Wolsey could not be sure that he would get the succession, regardless of the fact that he was very much the man of the moment. This whole episode and its implications must be treated with caution.

The man who benefited the most from Christopher Bainbridge's demise was Thomas Wolsey. By 5th August he was already archbishop elect of York with that see's temporalities.¹¹⁸ While this archbishopric was a highly important office in its own right, Bainbridge's death left vacant the post of cardinal, there now being no English cardinal in the College; there was no necessity of having an English cardinal at Rome.¹¹⁹ Before Bainbridge, there had not been an English cardinal resident in Rome for around a century. Worthy of note is the conferment of the see of Worcester on an Italian with the acknowledgement that he would be an absentee bishop. This reflected a desire on the part of the king to have a spokesman in Rome. It also meant that no-one stood between Wolsey and the office of legate a

¹¹⁷ DS Chambers, Cardinal Bainbridge in the court of Rome, 1509 to 1514, pp132-134. The poisoning story seems highly suspicious. Anyone who died suddenly was automatically suspected of being the victim of foul play.

¹¹⁸ Foedera, xiii, 412.

¹¹⁹ JAF Thomson, The early Tudor church and society, 1485-1529, pp28-30; see also WE Wilkie, The cardinal protectors of England: Rome and the Tudors before the Reformation, pp5-10, 53-80.

latere, although Warham might have hoped for it.

On 18th August, 1514, Wolsey raised a total of around £3400 from bankers to pay for his pall and the expenses of his promotion at Rome.¹²⁰ On 10th September, Richard Pace, Bainbridge's secretary and executor, wrote to Wolsey, outlining his efforts to put his former master's estate in order.¹²¹ Pace paid 4000 ducats of gold into the Grimaldis' bank and left vestments of Bainbridge's worth 500 ducats. He further enclosed letters from the bank and Cardinal Surrentin to testify as to what money Bainbridge had left in Italy. Pace recommended himself to Wolsey for his efforts and also recommended the late cardinal's brothers and kinsfolk, asking Wolsey to protect their legacies. Three days later Pace wrote again to Wolsey, complaining of harassment from the bishop of Worcester who was claiming the sequestration of Bainbridge's goods for Wolsey's use. Pace claimed Worcester was wishing to impoverish him so that he could not defend himself in the case of the cardinal's death. Pace claimed that it was Worcester who instigated the murder, "*as the dead doer [the chaplain Rinaldo de Modena] did confess, and as it is also proved after his death by divers of the best learned men within Rome at it doth appear by their writings in this cause.*"¹²² He continued that he

¹²⁰ LP, I, ii, 3166.

¹²¹ Ibid, 3261.

¹²² Ibid, 3265.

desired no other's judgment but Wolsey's.

Pace was clearly unaware that Wolsey had employed de Giglis to petition the pope on his behalf for the legateship.¹²³ Had he been aware he would not have been quite so open with Wolsey. De Giglis himself would also have benefited from Cardinal Bainbridge's premature death. It has been suggested that he would have gained the goodwill of Wolsey.¹²⁴ More to the point, surely, is that he was in an even better position to demand the goodwill of Wolsey. De Giglis was now a top division player in Wolsey's challenge for the cardinalship. However, as soon as this was achieved, de Giglis could expect to see his bargaining power diminish.

Pace continued the case against the bishop of Worcester while Wolsey continued to campaign to be made cardinal. On 25th September, Pace wrote to the king asking for his decision on the murder.¹²⁵ He explained that judges had decided to torture de Giglis for a confession but that he, Pace, wished the king's consent first. De Giglis is painted in a very poor light by Pace, described as making defamatory statements about the late cardinal and seeking favours through spending money. Pace's next letter to Wolsey, on 25th September, informed him that he could tell him "*what*

¹²³ AF Pollard, Wolsey, p23.

¹²⁴ DS Chambers, Cardinal Bainbridge in the court of Rome, 1509-1514, p139.

¹²⁵ LP, I, ii, 3303.

persons at Rome must be won over not to impede his election" as cardinal.¹²⁶ Meanwhile, de Giglis was working for Wolsey too. A letter from Wolsey to the bishop of Worcester reads, "*I beseech you to [make my h]umble commendations to the Pope's holiness...[hon]orable and diligent solicitation...will to make me cardinal.*"¹²⁷ At the same time, in the same letter, he asked the bishop to sell the clothes of Bainbridge's body which he had managed to recover from the hands of Pace, and to send the altar cloths, vestments and tapestry to himself in England. Pace was being used by Wolsey, or at least Wolsey was not considering the case of Bainbridge's death with much seriousness. De Giglis was also being used but he was a willing participant in the arrangement.

Is it feasible to implicate Wolsey in the murder of Christopher Bainbridge? As has been seen, he clearly had much to gain by the cardinal's death so the motive was certainly there. The possibility of Wolsey being involved has been described as thin, with a lack of evidence cited as the reason.¹²⁸ But then there would be a lack of evidence. An astute politician such as Wolsey was not likely to leave himself open to accusations. Had he been involved in the conspiracy then he would certainly have made sure that his

¹²⁶ Ibid, 3304.

¹²⁷ Ibid, 3495.

¹²⁸ DS Chambers, Cardinal Bainbridge in the court of Rome, 1509-1514, p139.

tracks had been covered. We are unlikely to find any letters between Wolsey and de Giglis laying out the details of a murder plot. A letter sent from de Giglis to Wolsey at the end of August has the bishop of Worcester protesting his innocence, hardly necessary if Wolsey had been part of any plot, although de Giglis would not have sent a letter in any other form.¹²⁹

The only outstanding evidence against Wolsey was a rumour in Rome that, according to William Burbank, a servant to Bainbridge, in a letter of 28th August, "*the poson shuld have been sentt from England by som prelate thare, being enemye unto my said late Lorde, and procuride the same to be mynystrid unto hym by his cooke.*"¹³⁰ Wolsey is not mentioned by name and the rumour had no foundation which has survived, but it would seem an odd allegation to simply pluck from the air. Burbank quickly quashed any semblance of implication, replying, in the same letter, that Bainbridge "*had no suche enymyes in England, ne that Prelates of Englande and English borne wer ever disposed unto ony suche actes.*" But then Burbank was writing to the king. He would not have been aware of how much the king knew of any plot, if anything, and if Wolsey was involved, if Henry was aware of this. A masterless servant was not about to start waving an accusatory finger at the archbishop of York.

¹²⁹ Ellis, Original Letters, 1st series, vol i, p112n.

¹³⁰ Ibid, pp99-106.

Burbank was too interested in finding the bishop of Worcester guilty and his reference to no "*English borne*" prelate acting against the king's archbishop in such a way may have been an aside aimed at the Italian-born de Giglis.

Wolsey's behaviour in this affair was dubious and slightly tasteless. His actions in the immediate weeks after Bainbridge's death were predatory. He pursued Pace to impoverishment with his encouragement of de Giglis' sequestration of Bainbridge's goods.¹³¹ He also supported de Giglis to the point of promising him that he would "*persecute those that thus maliciously hath accused you as though they had semblably laid the same thing to my charge.*"¹³² Wolsey acted like a vulture. As soon as the cardinal died, his campaign of manipulation for the vacant post began. In the same letter as he supported de Giglis he asked him to inquire discreetly if the French king had used his influence with the pope on his behalf in his battle for the title of cardinal.¹³³ De Giglis was told that if he, the bishop of Worcester, managed to persuade the pope to make Wolsey cardinal soon, then he would please the king, "*for I cannot express how desirous the King is to have me advanced to the said honor to the intent that not only men might thereby perceive how much the Pope favoreth the King and such as*

¹³¹ LP, I, ii, 3261, 3265.

¹³² Ibid, 3497; DS Chambers, Cardinal Bainbridge in the court of Rome, 1509-1514, pp139-140.

¹³³ LP, I, ii, 3497.

he entirely loveth, but also that thereby I shall be the more able to do his grace service." Wolsey's disingenuousness is breath-taking.

Cavendish merely notes the death of Bainbridge but Grafton is a little more forthcoming.¹³⁴ He described the dead cardinal as "*a wise man, and of a ioly courage*" , and Wolsey, after receiving the archbishopric of York, was said to have "*studied day and night how to be a Cardinall, and caused the king and the French king to wryte to Rome for him.*" Events certainly proceeded swiftly and for Wolsey everything seemed to be falling neatly into place. It is too much to suspect that he was somehow involved in the murder of Bainbridge. Had there been any suspicion of this, we would certainly have read about it in the accounts of Vergil, Hall or Holinshed. There was also no suspicion at the time from Richard Pace. He was to become Wolsey's secretary and while there was later friction between these two men, this can be put down to Henry's favouritism. Pace was a "*right worthie man, and one that gaue in counsell faithfull aduise*" ; by 1522 he was "*highlie in the king's fauour, and well heard in matters of weight.*"¹³⁵ This popularity led Pace to be disliked by Wolsey who sought a permanent foreign post for him to be kept out of the way: "*the cardinal took the utmost care that the man should be as*

¹³⁴ Cavendish, The life and death of Cardinal Wolsey, p15; Grafton, vol ii, pp285-286.

¹³⁵ Holinshed, vol iii, pp674-675.

far distant as possible from Henry, from his home, from his native land, under the guise of fulfilling such diplomatic tasks." ¹³⁶ There was no such acrimony between the two men in the immediate aftermath of Bainbridge's death.

Thomas Wolsey was linked to this entire episode from start to finish. Bainbridge had written to Henry VIII on 18th June, 1514, less than one month before his death to complain about the treatment of his servants at York by Thomas Dalby, archdeacon of Richmond and in Wolsey's service.¹³⁷ One month earlier, on 20th May, Bainbridge had written to Henry VIII to complain of the behaviour of Silvester de Giglis, Wolsey's promoter at Rome.¹³⁸ This letter provides information on the treasonous activities of the bishop of Worcester. Bainbridge recounted how he saw de Giglis' secretary "*commyng furthe of the Franshe Kings Oratours housse, the Busshop of Marsilia.*" The return route to his master's house lay straight past Bainbridge's gates but the secretary took a secret back lane, the implication being that he did not wish Bainbridge to see where he was going. Bainbridge explained how de Giglis was meeting this bishop who was the enemy of Henry, and that they did "*trihumphe and maike goode chere togedre.*"

¹³⁶ PV, p293.

¹³⁷ LP, I, ii, 3015.

¹³⁸ Ellis, Original Letters, 2nd series, vol i, pp226-232.

The case against Wolsey is clearly flimsy although not completely diminished. De Giglis was seen as the main villain by contemporaries and it was no doubt with glee that Burbank reported to the king on 28th August that the pope had said, "*that many gret men heith offerid them self to kill the said busshop of Worcestr for this actt: and that all Rome be inflamyde ayanste hym for the same, boith spirituall and temporall.*" 139

Created on 10th September, 1515, the cardinal's hat was placed on Thomas Wolsey's head on 18th November in Westminster Abbey. On Christmas Eve that same year, he was appointed lord chancellor, taking the seal in his chapel at Eltham in the presence of his king.¹⁴⁰ The ceremony at Westminster was a colourful occasion.¹⁴¹ The dean of St. Paul's, John Colet, in his sermon, praised the virtues of the new cardinal. His promotion was the result of Pope Leo X's attempts to please Henry in the hope of receiving some form of support against France, that country having invaded northern Italy.¹⁴² The pope stopped short, at this stage, of making Wolsey legate a latere, and he would have had good reason for assuming that the new cardinal had received

139 Ibid, 1st series, vol i, pp106-108.

140 AB Emden, A biographical register of the University of Oxford to 1500, vol iii, pp2077-2080; Foedera, xiii, 529-530.

141 LP, II, i, 1153.

142 JAF Thomson, Popes and princes, 1417-1517, p75; P Gwyn, The king's cardinal, p33.

sufficient promotion in Lincoln, Tournai and York.¹⁴³ Thus ended the first chapter in the career of Thomas Wolsey. He was one man of many who found success under the liberality which surrounded Henry VIII's court. As his career entered a new stage so too did the king's. The early years were now at an end.

¹⁴³ AF Pollard, Wolsey, p23.

Conclusion

The Wars of the Roses had been a time of upheaval, with Henry VII's reign proving to be a period of consolidation then security. By the time his son came to the throne in 1509 the Tudor dynasty was only twenty-four years old and no one knew how long it would survive. Since the turn of the century, Henry VII had obtained his subjects' obedience through treating them with "*harshness and severity.*"¹ They had enjoyed a honeymoon period after 1485 whereby the king had attempted rule by conciliation. When security had been achieved, the monarch ruled by coercion.

Henry VIII made a conscious break from the dictatorial methods employed by his father. This break was most vividly displayed with the execution of Edmund Dudley and Richard Empson, two councillors too closely associated with the previous king and his punitive financial exactions. Henry VIII's attitude to kingship led to an accessible court. It is difficult to imagine his father dressing in disguise and surprising a joust in Richmond park as the son had done with the assistance of William Compton. The new king had youth on his side. His openness developed from his active outlook. Channels developed whereby a man of limited

¹ PV, p127.

resources could gain access to the person of the king and begin to construct a career for himself. The young Edward Guildford, Thomas Knevet and William Compton would have cut a dash in the highly decorative and ostentatious court of Henry VIII. It is not possible to over-estimate the importance laid upon the sheer physical power and demeanour displayed at court when seeking to explain the advancement of certain courtiers.

It can be expected of a new king that he would bring with him to the throne, or quickly establish, his own particular breed of men. A king needed the security hopefully afforded him by close friends and also the intimate companionship of an inner circle. A ruler born of the same dynasty as his predecessor would naturally inherit a group of councillors whom he could generally regard as trustworthy. Henry VIII, advised by his grandmother, Margaret, countess of Richmond, chose men he knew to be "*his father's right deere and familiar freends.*"² Thus his council included such seasoned heavyweight figures as William Warham, Richard Fox, Thomas Howard, George Talbot and Charles Somerset.

Further to established figures, a new breed of men emerged and made quick gains at a court dominated by a magnanimous ruler. Young courtiers on the make and

² Holinshed, vol iii, p544.

revitalised men like William Sandys all found opportunities and avenues for promotion. For men like Charles Brandon or William Compton, openings were simply placed in their way by the king. Compton was a man with no recognisable pedigree and no family history of any consequence yet he found himself as one of the king's most intimate servants. As such he became a highly respected channel to the king at court, with more political clout as a groom of the stool than, for example, Edward Stafford, the duke of Buckingham.

The early years were marked by numerous cancellations of recognizances while grants mainly took the form of offices and not land, thus securing the king's powerbase. Courtiers successfully sought promotion in a number of ways: through patronage, pedigree, the skills they could offer and through the king's grace. These avenues of advancement allowed for the creation of interlocking circles at court, yet circles which did not overlap totally. William Compton was more important in areas of favour and patronage than in high politics while Thomas Lovell was more a household official and not a man to cultivate in order to seek the king's attention.

Careers of a sort could be fashioned away from the court. Postings to Tournai or the Scottish border did not necessarily signal the stagnation of a man's career. The

Edgecombe family carved a niche in the west country while Kent and Hampshire provided a focus for the likes of the Boleyns, Sandys and Uvedales. The court, though, provided a focus and attendance here was seen to be of the utmost importance.

There was no reaction against Henry VIII's courtiers, as had occurred under Richard II. That king possessed the tyrannical streak which was evident in Henry VII's later years and, unlike Henry VIII, he did not keep in sufficient touch with his courtiers.³ The upbeat nature of Henry's early years, the personal participation in tournaments, the amount of money and time spent on jousts, the promises of the patronage of learning, all rested comfortably beside a continuity in the management of public affairs. The backroom boys from the first Tudor's administration slipped gently into the household of the son, content to work and watch the new generation at play. Men like Thomas Lovell, Thomas Englefield, George Talbot and Charles Somerset seemed at ease continuing with their household or diplomatic duties.

Churchmen were particularly influential in determining policy, especially regarding overseas affairs. They were, it

³ MH Keen, England in the later middle ages, pp300-301. Richard II also had an appreciation of the significance of the magnificence of court and the ideals of kingship, with Froissart playing a similar role to Erasmus in commenting on the English court.

appears, not quite so deeply involved in the administration of government. It was often left to men like Thomas Englefield and Thomas Lovell at court and Piers Edgecombe in the provinces to act as the king's agents in carrying out administrative actions. A definite difference can be distinguished between administration and politics. Each man offered his personal element of specialisation to the king.

The threat of reaction from certain sections of the nobility was appeased early in the new king's reign. Thomas Grey, Henry Courtenay and, to a certain degree, Edward Stafford, were rehabilitated while the Howards experienced a reversal in their family's fortunes, although this had begun under Henry VII. The case studies examined, William Blount, Charles Somerset, George Talbot and Thomas Darcy, hint at men willing to fulfil certain roles within the realm. There were those at ease at court while others were happy to serve abroad. Henry VIII's natural inclination towards war clearly helped settle and focus the aristocracy, providing an outlet for both militaristic aggression and chivalric ostentation.

Such wars as Henry engaged himself in were fought with substantial financial backing. He was willing to spend money in order to secure military success. He must not be wholly blamed for the Anglo-Scottish war which

accompanied his campaign in France. Henry certainly spoiled for war in certain areas but he was also seen as a saviour. The Venetians particularly looked towards him for leadership in the war with France. The amount of ambassadorial activity at this time arose not only from the general increase in military activity but also from a heightened awareness abroad of the importance of fostering links with Henry VIII. It is clear from the high profile awarded his ambassadors abroad and the sense of urgency among foreign ambassadors in England that Henry was regarded as an important ally.

By the end of the period under examination here, Thomas Wolsey had emerged to a position of prominence. By contrast, the careers of those two senior statesmen Richard Fox and William Warham were drawing to a close. Thomas Ruthal, a man with neither the intellectual capacity nor integrity of a man like Fox, continued to serve the state, partly perhaps through his subservience to Thomas Wolsey. William Warham remained on friendly terms with the new cardinal. He experienced a certain amount of world-weariness and was reported to be enjoying his retirement. The bishop of Winchester, a high profile figure for many years, also remained close to Wolsey, even through the change in the balance of power which their friendship experienced. Voluntarily retiring to make up for lost time as regards his pastoral duties, Fox remained a figure sought

for advice for many years. Convenient as it is to portray Wolsey, the young upstart, as chasing two elder statesmen out of court, the reality does not support this view. However, as a result of these retirals, Thomas Wolsey found himself in a position which would remain unthreatened for some time to come.

The following appendices have been compiled for the purpose of showing how readily a small group of men could come to dominate court culture. These pensioners, jousts and knights of the garter appear as a result of their influence. They are intended to have naturally occurring overlaps. That they are not mutually exclusive would be the rule rather than the exception.

Appendix I¹

Pensioners of the French kings

Treaty of Etaples - 3rd November, 1492

The following is a list of men who received pensions by the above treaty and who also appear in the Treaty of London in 1514.

Pensioner and term paid	Pension per year in <i>livres tournois</i>
Thomas Benolt Clarenceux King of Arms (May, 1510 - November, 1512)	95
William Compton (May, 1510 - November, 1512)	350
Richard Fox, bishop of Bath and Wells (May, 1493 - November, 1512)	1,050

¹ For a comprehensive list of pensioners see Charles Giry-Deloison (1993) 'Money and early Tudor diplomacy: the English pensioners of the French kings (1475-1547)', Appendices II, III, VII, in Medieval History, vol 3, pp139-141. Giry-Deloison cites as his source for these pension lists Bibliothèque Nationale de France, fr.10377, ff.1-27, PRO 31/8, 137 (1), ff6-18r.

Thomas Howard, earl of Surrey (May, 1510 - November, 1511; May - November, 1512)	1,700 then 1,750
Thomas Lovell (May, 1493 - November, 1512)	350
John Meautis French Secretary to the King (May, 1510 - November, 1512)	95
Charles Somerset, earl of Worcester (October, 1503 - May, 1508; November, 1508 - November, 1512)	875 then 3,500
George Talbot, earl of Shrewsbury (May, 1510 - November, 1511; May - November, 1512)	1,700 1,750

Treaty of London - 7th August, 1514

Pensioner and term paid	Pension per year in <i>livres tournois</i>
Thomas Benolt, (November, 1514 - May, 1521)	175
Charles Brandon, duke of Suffolk (November, 1514 - May, 1521)	1,750
Jacques de Chatillon (May, 1521)	300

William Compton (November, 1514 - May, 1521)	700
Richard Fox, bishop of Winchester (November, 1514 - May, 1521)	1,050
Thomas Grey, marquis of Dorset (November, 1521)	2,000
Thomas Howard, duke of Norfolk (November, 1514 - May, 1521)	1,750
Thomas Lovell (November, 1514 - May, 1521)	350
John Meautis, (November, 1514 - May, 1521)	175
Edward Poynings (November, 1514)	1,050
Charles Somerset (November, 1514 - May, 1521)	3,500
George Talbot (November, 1514 - May, 1521)	1,750
Thomas Wolsey, bishop of York (November, 1514; May, 1515 - May, 1521)	1,750 then 2,800

Appendix II

A sample of tournaments and jousts held between 1509 and 1515 at Greenwich, Richmond and Westminster and abroad at Tournai and St Omers.

Jousts held after the coronation of Henry VIII, June, 1509, Westminster Palace.²

Thomas, lord Howard	Sir John Pechy
Sir Edward Howard	Sir Edward Neville
Sir Edmund Howard	Richard Grey
Sir Edward Guildford	Sir John Carre
Sir Thomas Knevet	Sir William Parre
Charles Brandon	Sir Giles Capell
Sir Roland de Veleville	Sir Griffith Dun

Jousts held in May and June, 1510.
Summary note of challengers and answerers.³

23rd May

The King - Sir Thomas Boleyn
Sir Thomas Knevet - William Kingston
Sir Edward Howard - Christopher Willoughby
Charles Brandon - Wiston Browne

Afternoon

The King - Edward Howard
Sir Thomas Knevet - Henry Stafford
Sir Edward Howard - Edward Neville
Charles Brandon - John Carre
The King - William Parre
Sir Thomas Knevet - William Hussey
Sir Charles Brandon - John Grey

² Hall, vol i, pp10-13; GC, pp341-343. Something of the magnificence of such tournaments can be gleaned from the purchase lists which accompanied them. These included payments for ostrich feathers, felt hats, satins of many colours, pomegranates of gold, silks, pavilion velvets and furs (LP, II, ii, pp1490-1518).

³ LP, I, ii, Appendix 9, for a full list of the contenders.

1st June
The King - Edward Howard
Sir Thomas Knevet - Henry Bouchier
Edward Howard - Sir John Audeley
Sir Charles Brandon - Ralph Eggerton
The King - John Clement
Sir Thomas Knevet - William Courtenay
Edward Howard - Arthur Plantagenet
Sir Charles Brandon - Charles Garneys

Jousts held to entertain the Spanish ambassadors, November, 1510, at Richmond.⁴ At the feast afterwards, 6 disguised men danced with 6 women who then unmasked them. The men were:

The king
Henry Bouchier, earl of Essex
Charles Brandon
Sir Edward Howard
Sir Thomas Knevet
Sir Henry Guildford

Jousts held in honour of the birth of Prince Henry, 12th, 13th February, 1511, Westminster Palace.⁵

Four knights challenged all comers:

The king
Sir Edward Neville
William Courtenay, earl of Devonshire
Sir Thomas Knevet

⁴ Hall, vol i, pp20-21.

⁵ LP, I, i, 698; GC, pp368-374; Hall, vol i, p22. Revels were often held under different themes. For the jousts held in honour of the birth of Prince Henry, a forest was constructed. 26ft long and 9ft high, it was covered with artificial branches, foresters, birds and a castle on the top (LP, II, ii, pp1494-1495). The pageant which accompanied the revels in January, 1513, was called "*the Ryche Mount*" and consisted of a golden mountain set with precious stones, with red and white roses and a burning beacon on top (LP, II, ii, pp1499-1500).

The following signed for the first day:

Richard Grey
Thomas Cheyny
William Par
Robert Morton
Richard Blunt
Thomas Tyrell
Roland de Veleville
Christopher Willoughby

The following signed for the second day:

Thomas Howard
Henry Stafford, earl of Wiltshire
John Grey
Thomas Boleyn
Henry Guildford
Charles Brandon
Edmund Howard
Leonard Gray
Richard Tempest
Thomas Lucy
John Melton
Griffith Dun

Appendix III

Meetings and elections to the Order of the Garter⁶

18th May, 1509

Present - the king
duke of Buckingham
earl of Oxford
earl of Kent
earl of Arundel
earl of Surrey

⁶ LP, I, i, 37, 442, 1807, 2838.

earl of Essex
earl of Northumberland
earl of Shrewsbury
earl of Devon
lord Herbert
Sir Thomas Lovell
Sir Thomas Brandon
Sir Edward Poynings

Elected - lords Darcy and Dudley

April(?), 1510

Present- the king
duke of Buckingham
marquis of Dorset
earl of Oxford
earl of Northumberland
earl of Arundel
earl of Surrey
earl of Essex
earl of Shrewsbury
earl of Wiltshire
lord Herbert
Sir Thomas Lovell
Sir Edward Poynings

Elected - king of Portugal
lord Howard
lord La Warre
Sir Henry Marney

April, 1513 Elected - lord Burgavenny
Sir Edward Howard
Sir Charles Brandon

23rd April, 1514

Present- the king
marquis of Dorset
duke of Norfolk
duke of Suffolk
earl of Surrey

earl of Worcester
Sir Thomas Lovell
Sir Henry Marney

Elected - Julian Medicis
Sir Edward Stanley

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E210 Exchequer, King's Remembrancer, Series D.

E326 Exchequer, Court of Augmentation,
Series B.

(The above Exchequer listings are calendared in
the Catalogue of Ancient Deeds Series).

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