

A brief note on King Henry VIII at Lackham, and why
Sir Robert Baynard was displeased with Thomas Cromwell

It has long been held that King Henry VIII visited Lackham during his peregrination of 1535. It is certain, from documents published under the king's seal, that he was at the Seymour's house at Wolfhall near Marlborough. At this time Henry was "paying his addresses"¹ to Lady Jane Seymour. Jane was Lady in Waiting to the then Queen, Anne Boleyn but the records indicate that Jane was virtuous and did not encourage the King².

After his sojourn at Wolfhall Henry went on to stay with Sir Edward Bayntun at Bromham Hall

Royalty were frequent visitors to Bromham House which has been described as one of the most famous houses in the country and both King Henry VIII and King James I are known to have stayed there. In August 1535 King Henry VIII stayed there for a week when he was married to Queen Anne Boleyn and again on the 30th September in the same year from where he is said to have dated a letter. Thomas Cromwell, the Chancellor was also with Henry VIII at Bromham

It is likely that if the King stayed at Lackham it was at this time. Direct evidence for a visit is lacking, no records have Lackham as their location but if Henry only visited for a couple of days while his retinue remained at Bromham this is understandable. Strong circumstantial evidence is

¹ Fraser, A (1992) *The Six Wives of Henry VIII* p217

"The King took another of his fancies, this time to Jane Seymour. Most likely the fancy was first taken while the King was under the roof of her father, Sir John Seymour of Wolf's Hall near Marlborough in Wiltshire. He stayed there, with the Court, for about a week in September"

² Jane married Henry on 30 May 1536. Mackie (Mackie JD (1951) *The Oxford History of England: The Earlier Tudors 1485-1558* OUP p308) states that Henry "had already paid addresses [to Jane], modestly repelled". Jane returned gifts and money Henry sent her, which only seems to have made Henry even more interested.....

found - the well known illustration of Lackham made by Dingley ³ clearly shows the Tudor Royal arms beneath the solar window

It is very definitely the case that the Tudors did not allow people to place the royal arms on buildings without good cause. It would seem doubtful that, if Henry VIII just popped in for an afternoon while hunting in Chippenham forest, this would be sufficient - he must have stayed at least overnight for these arms to be permissible. No contemporary source has so far been located that says this happened but further indirect evidence comes from the recollections of one of the last people to live in the old Lackham House, Louisa Crawford, neè Montagu, daughter of George Montagu the Naturalist. Many years after the demolition of the old house, and the building of the current one, she recounted how the

chambers occupied by that Bluebeard of husbands [she is discussing Henry VIII] was not much in request with the young folk of modern times and the old arched door, which conducted (as some rudely carved letters upon it instructed) "to King Henry's apartments" were rarely unclosed after night fall. In one of these chambers stood the antique carved bedstead on which the King reposed, the royal arms and those of the Lackham family were beautifully emblazoned on the dark polished oak at the head of the bed and the curious key which gave entrance to this room was presented by Col. Montagu to the British Museum. ⁴

This does not prove that Henry VIII slept at Lackham; all it shows is that in the early years of the nineteenth century the features described were present, but it does add strength to the suggestion of a visit by King Henry.

Possible confirmation of the association of Henry VIII and a stay at Lackham can be found in a letter from Lackham that dates to before

³ Dingley *History from Marble* vol IV CCCXCVI

⁴ Crawford, Louisa (1835) *Autobiographical sketches connected with Laycock Abbey and Lackham House* Metropolitan Magazine vol unknown pp307-308, interleaved in the Society's copy of WAM III in the Library at WANHS, Devizes

1793-1796. It contains the interesting sentence "*I live in the Room Kg Harry the 8 did*"⁵

Louisa Crawford said that in her time there was still extant

*a very curious old print representing, in various compartments, the preparations for the king's visit to Lackham, with the rats and mice running away from the cleaning-maids, who with mop and broom are making all things clean and trim for the royal guest*⁶

The owner of Lackham at the time was Sir Robert Baynard, whose fine memorial brass is located in the Lackham Aisle in St Cyriac's Lacock. He was an important man in the county; he was High Sheriff of Wiltshire for the year 1534-1535, his term ending just before Henry's first visit to Bromham. He was a friend of Sir Edward Bayton and corresponded with him, indeed he wrote to Sir Edward while the King was at Bromham in September 1535⁷.

In September 1535 the King's Chamberlain, Thomas Cromwell, who was travelling with the Court, wrote to Robert Baynard, apparently asking that he did something about the poor condition of the locks and weirs of the county's rivers in his capacity as Sheriff. As Sheriff it was Robert's duty, amongst many others, to make sure that the rivers were as navigable as possible. This was important as the roads, such as they were, tended to be very poorly maintained and of little use - especially for heavy loads, fragile goods or kings who suffered from severe gout.....

Sir Robert replied by writing a letter which he addressed to

⁵ Fragments of a letter from someone staying at Lackham and addressed "*Dear Bill*" no date, interleaved in WANHS copy of WAM 3 (recently - 2007 - rebound thanks to the generosity of Avice Wilson)

⁶ Crawford, Louisa (1835) *ibid* p 307

⁷ I am indebted to Dr. Collins, of Winchester Libraries, who recently visited Lackham and very kindly made me aware of this letter. He provided me with a copy of the excellent transcription he made during his own extensive researches in the Public Record Office, and I gratefully acknowledge his work and his permission to use and discuss it here

*To the Ryght worshipfull
Sir Edward[e] Bayntun[e]
knyght vice Chamberleyn[e]
to the quenes grace / be
this delyuered[e].*

and in it he acknowledged receiving the

*kyng[e]s] gracios letters co[n]sernyng[e] the polyng[e]
downe of locke[s] & weares apon greate Ryuers*

Sir Robert promised to tell those responsible to do something about it. He was somewhat aggrieved, however, that the letters are

*erected[e] to Edwarde Baynerd[e] shreff of Wiltes[hire]
Whyche you knowe is not my name therefore yf hit ~~w~~ woll
please you to move master Secutory of hit that he may put
in Rob[er]te for Edward[e]*

and he closed by saying that he was writing from "*Lach[a]m this
p[re]sente Tewisday beyng the xiiijth day of September*"

The year is not included in this date, but given the facts that September 14th was a Tuesday it is possible to work out in what years this might have been ⁸. For the lifetime of Sir Robert Baynard (1492 - 1537) these turn out to be 1501, 1507, 1512, 1518, 1529 and 1535. As the King is at Bromham in 1535 and Robert writes to Cromwell there it is certain this is the year ⁹. It is not clear why the wrong name was used, it might be that

⁸ White, J (1998) *10,000 Year Calendar* from
<http://www.calendarhome.com/tyc/download.html>

⁹ Being able to find a weekday from the date is not often needed, but many records are dated in the form "*Monday before St Bartholomew 10 Edw II*", an actual example of a date from a charter of Lacock Abbey [Rogers, K (1979) *Lacock Abbey Charters* no. 131 p 39 WRS]. If the date of the feast can be obtained it is then possible to work out the date, thus : -

The tenth year of the reign of Edward II is 1316-1317 [http://www.medievalgenealogy.org.uk/cal/reg10.htm]. The feast of St Batholomew is August 24th [Waters, C (2003) *A Dictionary of Saints Days, Fasts, Feasts and Festivals* Countryside Books, p23]. This was a Tuesday, so that means that the Monday before was the 23rd August, 1316 which is the date given in Rogers).

the secretary writing the letter confused Robert *Baynard* and Edward *Bayntun* and put the wrong forename ¹⁰ but it may also be that he was confusing Robert Baynard with his son Edward, who was a young man of 23 at the time.

There is another problem with this letter; Robert Baynard is very obviously unhappy with the fact the wrong name was used but he does not question his being charged with the Sheriff's duties when he was no longer Sheriff - his term ended in April 1535. By September 1535 Thomas Yorke was High Sheriff.

Unless currently undiscovered records come to light with definite evidence it is unlikely that the question of whether King Henry VIII stayed at Lackham will be resolved one way or the other, but it remains an intriguing possibility.

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Lackham, February 2008

¹⁰ Dr. Collins' valuable suggestion