

HENRY VIII TRAIL

The story of Henry's visit with his allegedly adulterous Queen, Catherine Howard in 1541. The King sat nearly 2 weeks, ulcerous, syphilitic and constipated, fuming and waiting for his nephew James V of Scotland to attend a peace conference that never happened. Lavish preparations were made for the King's reception by a City Council so terrified of the King after the Pilgrimage of Grace that they grovelled in the mud to meet him. Henry also closed down all the Monasteries and hospitals in York, even the public lavatories, because of alleged hanky-panky by the monks and nuns.

St Leonards Hospital

This was founded by King Athelstan in 935 AD as the Hospital of St Peter's and may go back even further. It was refounded as the Hospital of St Leonard by King Stephen after the great fire of York in 1137. At its height the Hospital stretched almost the Minster-the Theatre Royal is built on its Undercrofts and the Red House incorporates part of its gatehouse. The Time Team Excavation of 1999 and At its height it had over 200 people in its care ranging from the poor to those who chose to retire there to live out their days. It had 13 Augustinian Canons, 8 Nuns plus Lay Brothers and servants making perhaps 300 people in all. It was surrendered to the Crown in 1539 and all had to leave. It was the last of the great religious house in York to close on 1st Dec 1540. The last Master, Thomas Magnus, got a manor at Beningbrough Grange. Those who had paid to go into the Hospital got compensation, the canons were pensioned off but the poor and infirm went onto the streets,.

During the Reformation and its aftermath the following were closed: 4 Monasteries, 1 Nunnery, 4 Friaries, 3 Minster Colleges of Priests, 16 Hospitals, 14 Maisons Dieu (like almshouses), 16 Chapels, 17 Parish Churches, 41 Minster Buildings, 12 Guilds, 4 Shrines, 6 Hermits' Cells, 123 Altars and 146 chantries. Most of the monks, priests and nuns were pensioned off – usually at £6 per annum-and many found other jobs; but the servants and dependents were turned out onto the street with nothing. This was a major cause of unemployment and vagrancy in Tudor England and effectively deprived the poor of social services, hospitals and schools. The Dissolution also ripped the economic heart out of York as the Monasteries were major traders in wool and their demise hastened York's decline.

Lendal Bridge

Look downstream towards Ouse Bridge. In 1367 the first recorded public convenience was provided in an arch of the old Ouse Bridge (p.3). In 1380 William Graa of St Mary Castlegate left 3s 4d per annum in his will to provide "a light in the common jakes at the end of Use bridge". This led to the saying "bridges are built for wise men to go over and fools to go under". This and all the other public lavatories were closed by Henry VIII as they were associated with pious church endowments. You have all heard of the dissolution of the Monasteries but I bet few have heard of the dissolution of the lavatories!

In 1579 the City Council was concerned at the filthy state of the water in the River Ouse, the source of much of the city's water, and they issued orders for the citizens to stop discharging filth into the river. But at the same time the city councilors were in the habit of nipping out of the Guildhall and peeing in the river in full public view! To conceal this spectacle the Councilors voted 5 shillings "to erect a wainscot around the pissing place"! This was just past where the White Rose boatyard now is, and the Councilors' toilets are still in the same place, though thankfully inside the Guildhall!

Museum Gardens, Hospitium

This may have been a warehouse for wool for the abbey, but is always known as the Hospitium, or Guest House where the monks accommodated travellers and pilgrims. It must have been subject to flooding then as now as there is reference to the monks rescuing guests by boat. Higher status visitors were accommodated in the Gatehouse and really important one in the Abbot's residence.

St Olave's Church

By the gatehouse of the abbey the abbot had a chapel, guesthouse and school for poor boys. Here also was the Almery of the Abbey where bread and ale were doled out to the poor every Wednesday and Saturday and on Sundays 10 poor widows were given a penny each.

St Mary's Abbey West Front

King William Rufus founded the Abbey in 1088, to atone for the many bloody and terrible deeds he and his father had committed in York. It was rebuilt in 1270-1300. It was one of the 10 wealthiest and biggest abbeys of England and was once as big as Fountains or Westminster Abbey.

St Mary's Abbey Crossing-Dissolution

Paradoxically in 1509 Henry VIII issued a charter confirming St Mary's Abbey in all its possessions and liberties-30 year later he was to shut it down!

In Feb 1536 an act went through Parliament dissolving all the Monasteries etc with an income of less than £200 per annum; they were said to be full of 'abominable, vicious and carnal living'! The Kings Commissioners, Legh and Layton, made their northern visitation at the rate of two monasteries a day in the summer of 1536. They accused 6 monks at Holy Trinity Micklegate of sodomy and Richard Stubbs of 'incontinence' with six boys and the same number of women! The charges appear to have been standard ones used to discredit the monasteries

Henry VIII made gay sex, or more specifically sodomy, a criminal offence for the first time ever in 1533 as a way at discrediting the monks. The first person to be punished under the new law was the headmaster of Eton in 1541, though in the event his sentence was reduced and he was not executed.

In 1539 when St Mary's Abbey surrendered it had 50 monks. The income from its property was £1650 per annum; it had 6 churches in York and 38 in Yorkshire, 25 Manors in Yorkshire alone. The Abbot had a house in London for when he sat in Parliament and it is said he could travel from London to York and stay every night in his own property.

The last Abbot, William Thornton, had been previously upbraided for wearing silk and using gilt spurs, bridle and harness and spending too much time away from his Abbey; the monks had also been told to stop selling wine in the Abbey precincts and running a Tavern there. Thornton was also accused of having a sinful relationship with his housekeeper, Mrs Elizabeth Robinson, at his manor at Overton, and was thus easily persuaded to surrender the Abbey to Henry VIII's commissioners on 9th November 1539! He was rewarded with a pension of over £266 per annum and a manor at Myton on Swale. The Abbot's Residence became the headquarters of the Council of the North. This was set up by Edward IV to govern England North of the Trent in the King's name and met at King's Manor until its dissolution at the start of the Civil War. The Abbey was then pillaged for stone to extend King's Manor and by the citizens of York, until c.1830 when the Museum was built, the gardens created and destruction ceased

King's Manor- Abbot's Loo

Built in 1490 as the Abbot's residence of St .Mary's Abbey, it was converted by Henry VIII into a royal palace. Point out the "smallest window in York", which lit the "Royal Flush", a garderobe used by Henry VIII, when he visited York with wife no. 5, Catherine Howard, in 1541. The garderobe emptied straight into the moat around the city walls at this point.

At this stage he was almost permanently constipated with immobility and high meat diet; also syphilitic and with an ulcerous leg; no wonder Catherine Howard sought consolation with the courtiers Culpeper and Derham, and 7 or 8 persons, if we are to believe her accusers.

Bootham Bar- Pilgrimage of Grace

The Pilgrimage of Grace was sparked in 1536 in Lincolnshire by Henry VIII's Dissolution of the smaller Monasteries. It soon spread in 1536 to Yorkshire and the North where the Dissolution was causing particular hardship and unemployment; there were also many other grievances about Henry's government, especially Thomas Cromwell, Earl of Essex and the Earl of Northumberland. The rebels approached York led by Robert Aske, a member of the North Country gentry. The Lord Mayor was William Harrington, a Grocer, opened gates of City to the rebels; it is said he wished to resist but feared the Commons. In 1540 he was in tenure of the property on Stonegate where another rebel, Guy Fawkes, was born in 1570. The Minster clergy received Aske in state, and Abbot Thornton of St Mary's was compelled to carry his best cross in procession before the rebels, though he slipped away as soon as he could.

The Duke of Norfolk persuaded the rebels to disperse with a promise that their grievances would be addressed and a free Parliament held in York the next year. The rebels dispersed, the grievances were ignored and the Parliament never held. Robert Aske was invited to spend Christmas with the king, which he did. But there was a resurgence of rebellion at Carlisle in 1537 and Henry blamed Aske. So he was hung alive in chains from Clifford's Tower and left to die which took over a week. It is said in the North that 'the trees were seen laden with strange fruit' as a result of Henry's vindictiveness. So much for the promises of Henry VIII! John Pickering, Prior of the Dominican Friary in York was arrested and sent to the Tower on treason charges for which he was hung, drawn and quartered at Tyburn on May 27th 1537. Two Carthusians, John Rochester and James Walworth, were tried in St Mary's Abbey York before the duke of Norfolk and on 11th May were hung in chains outside the walls of York, probably on the Knavesmire, and left to die and fall to pieces on the gibbet.

Before the Tudor period there were public toilets at Monk Bar, by the Merchant Taylors hall on the walls (which we see later), on Ouse Bridge and at Bootham Bar. These, and others, were largely financed by the church, and with Henry VIII's depredations lost their endowments and disappeared. By the 19th c this led to a great deal of "public nuisance", as men were in the habit of relieving themselves in public, particularly in the arches and barbicans of the Bars and Posterns, so that it was said that no lady of respectability could pass in or out for fear of what she might see, tread in or smell!

King's Manor exterior

King Henry VIII and Queen Catherine Howard stayed here for 12 days from 15th Sept 1541.

Henry was only to stay in York a few days –eventually 12 days; was planning a peace summit with James V of Scotland, precipitated by the death of Queen Margaret that year. But James V did not come as he feared for his safety. So Henry left for the south staying the first night of his journey at Home upon Spalding Moor. Henry was furious and started 10 years of war with Scotland at the battle of Solway Moss in November 25th 1542. James V died of grief but on his death bed heard of the birth of a daughter-Mary, Queen of Scots, whose son James VI was to become King of England.

Nobody-not even his own council or foreign ambassadors knew why he was so long in York; was it because Catherine Howard was pregnant and/or to be crowned Queen in York

The Visit was not a success; the king of Scotland did not come and on return to London Thomas Cramner produced evidence that Catherine Howard had been unfaithful to Henry

(From York civic records; surprisingly nothing is recorded about the actual visit, only the preparations))

July 1541 councillors agree to send £20 to London to buy two goodly silver cups double gold plated and best falcons to give to the King and Queen. The cups were to have £100 of gold in the King's and £40 in the Queen's.

They also ordered that all valiant beggars be expelled from the city and its suburbs.

The parish constables were to see that the streets were paved and cleaned before the King came; also all dunghills and other rubbish be cleared away. The streets were to be strewn with sand, ashes or gravel.

Pigs, sheep and cows were to be kept off the streets 3 days before the visit, and until 2 days after the king

had gone, upon pain of a fine of 3/4d. They were also to be kept out of the Moats of the city walls. No filth was to be tipped in the Ouse either. The wardens of each parish were to report 8 days before the visit what store of beds and *honest* lodgings were to be had in each parish and cause all inns and lodgings to be specially cleaned. *(There was obviously no popular rejoicing as for Richard III and the council obviously had difficulty in persuading the citizens to clear up the city)*

Refectory

(For the King's welcome the Council obviously copied Pontefract and Lincoln, which were also implicated in Pilgrimage of Grace; they decided to grovel as the King could have had them executed)

The council were not sure how to receive the King so they decided to look back to the precedents of Henry VII's visit in 1486 and Richard III in 1483. This was Henry VIII's first visit to York. The Clerk and Recorder were despatched to Cowton to seek advice from the Archbishop as well. Joiners were engaged to make a scaffold at Micklegate Bar for a pageant to welcome the King as they had Henry VII. There was also to be a show of singing and melody on the lead roof of St Williams's Chapel Ouse Bridge and another pageant in Coney St near the Guildhall. The pageants were to include Towers, turrets and battlements of timber and canvass which were to include the King's arms. John Fleming and Richard Graves who undertook to do this work seem to have cheated the Council and were prosecuted.

Some of the Aldermen were sent in late July to see the Duke of Norfolk at Lincoln to plead poverty for the coming Royal Visit, as the city was not what it was.

A special levy was to be exacted from the citizens to pay for the visit.

Special watchmen were to be posted at the bars. 4 Master Beggars (tax collectors) were to be appointed for this with special uniforms with the City arms on their sleeves and birch rods to help them carry out their duties!

When the King arrived he approached unexpectedly from the Selby direction on 15th Sept 1541 and the planned welcome at Micklegate Bar etc had to be abandoned and transferred to Fulford Cross. He was met by the Lord Mayor, Robert Hall, the Recorder William Tankerd, the Aldermen and the 24, plus a multitude of the most prominent citizens-120 in all. The Council wore sad tawny gowns specially made *(so as not to look too flashy after the city's involvement with the Pilgrimage of Grace)*

As the King approached they all fell on their knees and the Recorder made a speech

The Recorder goes on to say that the County and city of York had offended the King's majesty by supporting the Rebellion of the Pilgrimage of Grace through ignorance and poor knowledge of the truth of God's word. They were wretches and had been unnatural and traitorous; their lives, lands and goods were at the king's mercy. They were repentant from the bottom of their stomachs and promised from this time forth to serve, obey, love and dread his Majesty Royal. They and their wives and children would pray continually to the Holy Trinity for the King and his Queen. He then presented the King and queen with their presents. The King arrived with retinue of 8000, plus 1000 soldiers and numerous nobles including the Dukes of Norfolk and Suffolk.

King's Manor Cellars-*said to be built for the food and drink of Henry VIII's court*

Presents were prepared for the king of main bread, six gallons of 'ypocras' made of claret and white wine, a dozen comfits, biscuits and carroways, six big fat pikes, 12 pounds of fine sucketts and 12 pounds of green ginger and a dozen marmalades, six loaves of fine sugar and a lot of sweetmeats. The councillors were each delegated to provide these items. Rewards were also to be given to the King's Cupbearer, Cooks, Butler, Footmen, Heralds and Trumpeters and the Queen's Footmen. These ranged from 40 shillings to the Heralds to 5 shillings to the Officers of the Buttery.

During the visit Thomas Bennett, formerly footman to the Duchess of Richmond stole a silver and a pewter vessel from the King. Isabel Dyer of Moor Monkton came into possession of it and she sold it to Laurence Edmonson, a goldsmith in York, who handed it in when proclamation was made about the theft.

