

# HISTORY

October – November 2019 Newsletter

On August 23rd the History Group travelled to the National Civil War Museum in Newark. We saw, and marvelled at, many displays of militaria from the civil war period. Some highlights included a very realistic simulation of a cannon bombarding Newark Castle. We also found out what a 'sconce' was. Not an edible item, but an elaborate earthwork, which was dug up and situated in front of castle walls. It was intended to effectively absorb the impact of cannon balls.

We also visited the 'Fake News' exhibition. Apparently 'Fake News' was all the rage in the time of the Civil War. It was very hard to work out which item was true and which false!

A further 'delight' was an encounter with a deranged 'Lady Witch'. She had prophesied the demise of certain important people. Also, that King Charles 1st would lose his head! For her rashness she found herself incarcerated in Bedlam Asylum. She was obviously 'mad as an hatter' but very entertaining.

Many members also found time to visit the historic town centre and had lunch at various eateries.

All in all a very memorable day!

*Jack Chantry.*



At our November meeting we looked at the increasingly turbulent reign of King Charles 1st. Charles, at the beginning of his reign, was fairly popular but, driven by his belief that he was 'elected by God to rule', he became increasingly at odds with his Parliament. For a long time he managed to rule without the aid of Parliament. However, because he needed more money to finance wars against his unruly subjects in Scotland, he had to recall Parliament and beg for more finance. The Scots had rejected his attempts to introduce an Anglican form of service in Scotland and formed a 'Solemn League and Covenant' to oppose Charles. Charles sent two armies to subdue the Scots but he was twice defeated and humiliated. Parliament became increasingly hostile. Charles, possibly urged on by his French Catholic wife Henrietta Maria, attempted to arrest five leading members of Parliament, but failed.

This was to lead to increased hostility and eventually to a vicious Civil War. Charles, after numerous battles, was defeated and captured by Parliamentary forces. Now the Parliamentary Army had become the dominant force in the realm. Led by Oliver Cromwell, they put Charles on trial. Charles refused to accept the validity of the court, but was condemned to death and, on a January winter's morning in 1649, executed, the only English monarch ever to have a public execution.

*Jack Chantry*



Oliver Cromwell

Charles I



## FULKE GREVILLE

Another writer living about the same time as William Shakespeare was **Fulke Greville**. Indeed there is a grandiose monument to him in a Warwickshire Chapel (Collegiate Church of St Mary's, Warwick). He was born on the 3rd October 1554 and murdered by a servant on the 30th September 1628.

Fulke Greville was a renowned scholar, a judge, a soldier, an admiral in the Navy, statesman and spy. His dearest friend was Sir Philip Sydney. He was also Queen Elizabeth's favourite courtier. In his later years, he was Chancellor of the Exchequer under James I. However Greville himself was more concerned that he be remembered/noted for his writing.

Fulke Greville lived in the same street as Shakespeare. They both had the same friends – Christopher Marlowe and Francis Bacon. Many prominent researchers believe that he is the true author of all Shakespearian plays/poems (even though he was ten years older than Shakespeare). They moved in the same literary circles and had the same enemies.

Greville did, in fact, use the pseudonym of William Shakespeare because it was not considered appropriate for a gentleman to write 'common commercial plays'. He did have powerful friends. Indeed, he *cultivated* their friendship. Philip Sidney's father obtained for him a source of income from areas of the Welsh countryside. Influential men such as Sir Francis Walsingham and the Earl of Leicester helped him get a seat in Parliament in 1581 when he was 27. He longed for the excitement of foreign travel and battle but his talent for administration ensured he was kept in Government in England. Queen Elizabeth I always showed him favour and this continued during the accession of James I.

Greville acquired Warwick Castle from the Crown in 1604 and set about turning it from a defensive castle to a comfortable country house. In 1610 he was appointed as the borough recorder and his achievements were recognised in 1621, when he was raised to the peerage.



Although he died in London, Greville's body was brought back to Warwick to be buried in the Collegiate Church of St Mary. His massive tomb takes up most of the Church's Chapter House. The tomb's magnificence indicates that he was not short of money, or of self-importance and bears an epitaph:-

*'Folke Greville  
Servant to Queen Elizabeth  
Counsellor to King James  
Friend to Sir Philip Sidney  
Trophaeum Peccati'*

Against the idea that Greville wrote Shakespeare plays however, was that he had an extremely busy life. The two plays that Greville most definitely wrote were 'Mustapha' and 'Alaham'. Copies still exist. They bear no similarities to those written by Shakespeare and Greville specified that they were not to be performed in public, but to be read in private.

Researchers and scholars all say that the plays are a far cry from the plays written by Shakespeare.

*Jean Graville-King*

*April – May 2018 Newsletter*

## **THE VIRGIN QUEEN**

On Wednesday, 21<sup>st</sup> February 2018 the History group met to explore and discuss "Elizabeth I's love life. Was she really a 'Virgin Queen?'"

Over many years countless books, novels, plays and films have depicted Elizabeth I's relationships with figures such as Robert Dudley, Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex and the Duke of Anjou. Rumours about her love life circulated throughout her reign. Some hostile (foreign/Catholic) observers named her 'the whore of Europe'.

Within days of her accession, rumours spread about her relationship with Robert Dudley. He was appointed 'Master of the Horse' which guaranteed daily contact with Elizabeth. The Spanish ambassador reported to the King of Spain that 'Lord Robert is in such favour he does whatever he likes and her Majesty visits him in his chamber day *and night*'. When Dudley's wife, Amy Robsart, was found at the bottom of a staircase with a broken neck, speculation was rife as to what involvement the Queen and Dudley had in her death. Nevertheless, their relationship continued but the possibility of marriage was ruled out.

Meanwhile, her councillors determined to secure a favourable marriage as a means of consolidating England's position in Europe and to provide an heir to succeed her. Suitors included Phillip II of Spain, Erik XIV of Sweden, Archduke Ferdinand and Charles of Austria. None found favour with Elizabeth. Meanwhile, whilst foreign negotiations continued, Elizabeth enjoyed the attention of many young male courtiers, all of whom flirted their way into her favour. But Robert Dudley remained the first and arguably her only love. Councillors still attempted to form a match for Elizabeth.



In the autumn of 1578, Elizabeth welcomed at court Francois, the Duke of Anjou, brother of the king of France. He was considered a possible, suitable husband for her. However, the match was not ideal. Anjou was 26, whilst Elizabeth was in her early forties. He was a Catholic, heavily pock-marked and rumoured to be a transvestite. Elizabeth called him her 'little frog'. After a few weeks Anjou returned to France and negotiations appeared to falter in the face of public opposition to the match. But Elizabeth declared, in public, that she did intend to marry him. But overnight she announced that she had had second thoughts and would not marry him. With the failure of the French match, hopes that Elizabeth would marry came to an end.

As she grew older she continued to seek the attention of her male courtiers. Her last flirtation was with Robert Devereux, the young Earl of Essex. He too soon became 'Master of the Horse' and moved into the palace. Elizabeth was never swept away by her emotions and she never lost a keen sense of political reality. In 1601, there appeared to be an attempted coup against her by Robert Devereux and others. Elizabeth ordered his and other conspirator's execution.



*Robert Dudley*



*Francois, Duke of Anjou*



*Robert Devereux*

In 1603, almost 70 and unmarried, Elizabeth died. Her death served only to continue speculation as to her private life. There was a growing sense that her private feelings and affairs had compromised the integrity of her rule. Nevertheless, most historians look beyond her private liaisons and agree that her reign heralded in 'a golden age' for England.

## RENAISSANCE MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

Members of the History group were royally entertained by Andrea and Roger Offord regarding the Doncaster Waites musical group. The group play renaissance musical instruments. These are a far cry from today's instruments. Many originated during the renaissance period, being variations or improvements on previous instruments.

As in modern times, instruments were classified as brass, string, percussion and woodwind.

As early as the 13th century there was a division of instruments into **haut** (loud/ shrill outdoor instruments) and **bas** (quieter more intimate instruments).

However, only two groups of instruments could play freely in both types of ensembles – the cornet and sackbut and the tabor and tambourine.

At the start of the 16th century, instruments were considered to be less important than voices. They were used for dances and to accompany vocal music.

### BRASS

Brass instruments in the renaissance period were traditionally played by professionals. Some of the more common brass instruments were:-

**Slide trumpet** - Similar to today's trombone except that, instead of a section of the body sliding, only a small part of the body near the mouth-piece slid, and the mouthpiece itself was stationary. Also, the body was S-shaped and rather unwieldy and only suitable for slow dance music for which it was commonly used.

**Cornett** - Made of wood in several sizes – the largest called the serpent.

**Trumpet** - Made in different sizes. Commonly used by the military and the announcement of royalty.



Serpent



Hurdy Gurdy



Reed pipe



Horn pipes

## STRINGS

**Viol** - 15<sup>th</sup> century with 6 strings. Usually played with a bow

**Lyre** - Similar to a small harp. Used with a plectrum. Various number of strings from 4, 7 or 10. Played with the right hand. The left hand silenced the notes that were not desired. Newer lyres were modified to be played with a bow.

**Lute** - This generally refers to any stringed instrument specifically from the family of European lutes.

**Irish Harp** - also named Clarsach in Scottish Gaelic. Since the Middle Ages to this day it is Ireland's national symbol. Played by plucking. Its size can vary from one that can be played on one's lap to a full size harp that has to be placed on the floor.

**Hurdy Gurdy** (also known as the wheel fiddle) in which the strings are sounded by a wheel which the strings pass over. It has a distinctive sound mainly because its 'drone strings' provide a constant pitch similar to the sound of bagpipes.

## PERCUSSION

Some renaissance percussion instruments include the triangle, the Jew's harp, the tambourine, recorder and various types of drums.

## WOODWIND

These instruments produce sounds by means of a vibrating column of air within the pipes. Holes along the pipe allow the player to control the column of air, and pitch.

Woodwind instruments include the reed pipe, hornpipe, bagpipes and transverse flute among others.

The session was greatly enhanced since Andrea and Roger allowed the group to handle the instruments, and they gave a short musical demonstration of the sounds of all the various instruments.

*Jean Graville-King*

*December 2017 – January 2018 Newsletter*

### Leeds Armouries

Members of the DU3A History group visited Leeds Armouries on 20<sup>th</sup> September. This is an extensive collection of arms, armour, with innovative design and fine examples of fine craftsmanship. Even the horses had armour, though one is bemused as to how the beasts managed to gallop around with such armour on themselves and on their riders.

One of the finest decorated pieces of armour has gold embossing with a lion's head, although the helmet is marked with sword cuts, possibly received during tournaments.

There is an ugly horned helmet made for Henry VIII for use when fighting against the French. There are also examples (sadly) of armour made for the children of rich noblemen who reared their children to expect to have to engage in battles once they were older.



In the Oriental Gallery is armour made for an Elephant. It weighs 118 kg and is entered in the Guinness book of world records as the largest and heaviest armour in the world.

There are over eleven types of helmets, since head injuries were seen to be more likely than other injuries.

There are many examples of Longbows, mostly made of Yew wood. English archers were famous in the victories over French forces such as at Agincourt, during the Hundred Year's battles and during the Wars of the Roses. The iron heads of the arrows were forged by specialist blacksmiths and the fletchings were made from the flight feathers of geese.

There are innumerable examples of guns, rifles and machine guns. By the end of the seventeenth century the first bayonet appeared as well as awesome pikes. Not all guns were made for men. There is the Tula Garniture which belonged to Elizabeth Petrovna, daughter of Peter the Great and Catherine the 1<sup>st</sup> of Russia in 1741. Elizabeth led a military coup and declared herself Empress of Russia. During her reign she encouraged Russian arts and founded the Academy of Fine Arts in St Petersburg and the University of Moscow.

There are five extensive galleries and many places to eat at a reasonable cost. It was impossible to visit all of them in the time we had there. Hopefully we can return and visit parts of the exhibitions we were unable to see on this first visit. Like so many of our museums and galleries, it is absolutely free and well worth a visit.

*Jean Graville-King*





## Henry VIII's 'Other Women' - March 2017

There has been much discussion regarding 'History' written by victors in battle, monks, scholars and those from the upper echelons of society who were literate.

In many cases 'history' was written in Latin, Old English and even French. Therefore, whatever was recorded, whether true or false, is still a matter of translating the texts, which could further muddy the waters of truth.

We now have a plethora of historians spending time researching and trying to glean the truth and we have many inconsistencies and many debateable scenarios.

Thus, during our History sessions, we have interesting debates as we discuss what may or may not have happened in any given circumstance.



In **March** we discussed **Henry VIII's 'Other women'** namely Jane Popincourt, Bessie Blount, Mary Boleyn and Mary Shelton. [There were others]

The history books invariably show Henry as per the Holbein portrait. A rather corpulent man, painted in 1549 when he was in his forties.

Yet for much of his life he was athletic, excellent at many sports. He stood 6'2" and was head and shoulders above most of his courtiers. He was almost 18 when he became King, a skilful linguist, speaking French, Latin and Spanish. He was a talented musician and composer. He spent much of his leisure hours jousting and hunting.

So, earlier in his life, women would indeed be flattered by his attention.

All this changed in 1536 when in his mid-forties he suffered a serious wound to his leg which turned septic and never healed. He also grew very fat and his waist had grown to 52 inches, which meant he had to be winched on to his horse. Possibly because of the extreme pain he suffered during these later years of his life made him grow increasingly paranoid and bad tempered.

The tower of London was crowded with his terrified subjects who had been imprisoned at his orders.

Henry VIII sent more men and women to their deaths than any other monarch.

### **Despite his six marriages he had several mistresses**

#### **Jane Popincourt:**

She was formerly a French maid-of-honour at the court of Louis XI and later Francis I. For around twelve years she held the position of tutor of French to the Princess's Margaret and Mary during the reign of Henry VII.

On the accession of Henry VIII she was appointed maid-of-honour to his wife Catherine of Aragon. Rumours soon circulated that she had been the mistress of Louis Duke of Orleans in France, before becoming the mistress of Henry VIII.

She was in her mid-twenties and single at an age when women were expected to be married. Thus, many rumours began as to her immorality.

She was listed also as an attendant to Princess Mary, her former pupil, who was about to become the wife of Louis. When Louis saw Jane's name, he was said to have proclaimed "I prefer she be incinerated" and because of her immorality would not permit such a woman to attend his new wife.

Jane remained in England until 1516 but she wished to return to her French birthplace. She re-ignited her affair with the Duke of Orleans.

On leaving England she received a parting gift from Henry VIII of a hundred pounds



Jane Popincourt

### **Elizabeth [Betty] Blount:**

Bessie was born in Shropshire about 1500 – making her just a teenager when she arrived at the English court. She was the daughter of Sir John Blount, an emissary of Henry VIII.

At the time, Henry was seven years older than the 15 year old Bessie and their affair lasted over eight years.

She became the maid-of-honour to Catherine of Aragon.

Bessie was supposedly very beautiful. The Dean of Westbury said ‘she is more beautiful than Anne Boleyn’. This was during a period when blondes were idealised and brunettes were regarded with great suspicion.

In 1518 Bessie became pregnant with Henry’s son, Henry Fitzroy. Henry Fitzroy was the King’s only openly acknowledged illegitimate child. Henry stayed nearby during the birth of his son, which would have allowed him to visit Bessie and the new-born child. [if he had a mind to do so].

More importantly, Henry finally having a son also quashed any rumours that a lack of a legitimate male heir was his fault. How Catherine of Aragon felt about the birth is anyone’s guess.

Cardinal Wolsey was godfather and late Henry Fitzroy was made Duke of Somerset and Richmond.

After his birth and subsequent weaning, Bessie was not involved in her son’s upbringing. He was brought up by others at the court.

A marriage was arranged for Bessie to Gilbert Tailboys and in 1522 she retired from court, although she still bore two more children in the early 1520’s. The uncertainty of the exact dates of their births, led to speculation that, although married to Tailboys the children were also Henry’s children.

Henry had also moved on to Mary Boleyn by this time.

When Tailboys died, Bessie married Baron Clinton, a younger man whose land in Lincolnshire adjoined hers. They had three daughters.

She served as Lady-in-waiting to Anne of Cleves for a short while

Bessie died of consumption in 1540.



Bessie Blount

## Mary Boleyn:

In February 1520 Henry attended Mary's wedding to his gentleman of the Privy Chamber, Sir William Carey. William was a distant relation of Henry VII.

Henry VIII gave the couple 6/8d for a wedding present!

When Mary had two children, Catherine and Henry born 1524 and 1526, they were sometimes attributed by some historians as Henry VIII's children. Since Mary was married they were legally considered to be those of her husband, who always treated them as such.

However, by the time of Henry Carey's birth in 1526, Henry VIII's attention had wandered to the enchanted dark-eyed sister, Anne Boleyn.

Sometime between 1533/4 after William Carey's death, Mary remarried secretly to William Stafford, a soldier in the garrison at Calais and later usher to Henry VIII. William Stafford was distantly related to the Duke of Buckingham, who earlier had been beheaded for treason.

By marrying William Stafford, Mary caused quite a scandal. She married without the knowledge and permission of her family, without seeking permission from her sister, who was now Queen of England. She had also married a man who was far beneath her in status, thus inflaming her family further. She was also pregnant at the time of the marriage.

Mary and her husband were banished for their indiscretion and lived the rest of their lives in Essex. [Punishment enough one would think !!]

Mary died in 1543.



Mary Boleyn



## Mary/Madge Shelton:



Mary Shelton

Madge was a distant cousin and Lady-in waiting to Anne Boleyn. Anne was pregnant for the second time and was trying to rest. She was irritated by her ladies in waiting for giggling over some poetry written by Anne's former lover Thomas Wyatt. Anne chastised Madge telling her she should focus more on piety and read scripture.

Anne is also preoccupied with Henry's affair and afraid he will take yet another mistress, as he did when she was pregnant with Princess Elizabeth.

Anne's father, Thomas Boleyn, tells her to actually pick a mistress of her choosing for Henry, a girl who could be trusted by the family.

Anne considers Madge as a candidate, because she had the same Protestant faith, was non-ambitious and was dim-witted to boot. Anne puts the proposition to Madge who was bewildered by her cousin's offer. Nevertheless, she accepts. Anne therefore presents Madge to Henry who was intrigued by the notion.

During the affair with Henry VIII Madge was engaged to one, Henry Norris. The engagement ended when her father died and left her and the family in great financial difficulties. This maybe, according to some historians, another reason why she complied with Anne's request.

Later, Anne is unwell during her pregnancy and suggests Henry take Madge riding as she is unable to go, she nevertheless cries when he does so. Henry and Madge spend the rest of the night together drinking and culminating in a heated affair.

After the affair is ended Madge is sent to a convent for a while.

Madge later becomes engaged to Thomas Clere, who died before they could marry, but he left her money and land so she was independent.

Madge calls for a physician when Anne collapses, and the child is stillborn.

After the miscarriage, Anne's behaviour became ever more erratic making Madge suspect that Anne is unfaithful to Henry. She sees Anne

embracing her brother George Boleyn and friend Mark Smeaton. Perhaps Madge is also jealous of Anne's position or angry for her pushing her to sleeping with Henry. Madge makes friends with an upcoming rival of Ann, Jane Seymour, hoping to spite her.

Henry believes that his marriage to Anne is cursed by God and rumours [spread by whom, I wonder?] abound of her possible infidelity.

Thomas Cromwell interviews Madge, who is afraid of being associated with Anne, having lost all favour with her Henry. Madge gives Cromwell circumstantial evidence of Anne's incest and adultery with George, Mark Smeaton and five others. She is later made to witness Anne's and the other's executions, by Henry VIII, who within days marries Jane Seymour.

Due to her association with the Boleyn's, she herself is spared Henry's wrath, but is banished from court.



Henry VIII aged 22

Henry's love life. however tantalizing it may seem, is based on fragile sources and endless speculation of what did or did not happen. Plus of course, history is often recorded by biased, contemporary individuals.