

Tudor Norfolk 1485-1603



During the Tudor period, Norwich was the second largest city in England, after London, and one of its most important. Norfolk's wool industry was the basis of a great deal of England's wealth at the time.

Thomas Howard, 2nd Duke of Norfolk

Best known as the grandfather to two of Henry VIII's wives and great grandfather to Queen Elizabeth I, Howard was actually imprisoned at the beginning of the Tudor reign for taking Richard III's side at the Battle of Bosworth, but he later proved his loyalty to Henry VII by not escaping when opportunity arose during the rebellion of the Earl of Lincoln in 1487.

While Henry VIII was away in France, it was Howard who crushed the invasion of James IV of Scotland at the Battle of Flodden. Due to this he was restored to the title of Duke of Norfolk. He was granted the estate of Kenninghall, where he tore down the existing structure and built Kenninghall Place.

The Boleyns of Blickling

Thomas Howard's daughter, Elizabeth Howard, married Thomas Boleyn of Blickling in 1499 and they had 5 children. Thomas Boleyn inherited Hever Castle in Kent in 1505 and moved his family there. The exact year of Anne Boleyn's birth is unknown, mainly due to her execution and burial in an unmarked grave. It is generally accepted by historians that she was born in 1501, which would place her birth at Blickling in Norfolk, however some historians believe she was born

in 1507 and therefore at Hever. There is a Norfolk legend that has been told for many generations that Anne Boleyn's remains were secretly dug up from the Tower of London churchyard and reburied at St Peter & St Paul Church in Salle near Blickling, the ancient burial ground of the Boleyn family. They say she was buried at midnight under a plain black marble stone, with a holy service which she was denied in the circumstance of her death.

The current Blickling Hall was rebuilt in the 17th Century, but is host to a lot Tudor period information and portraits. St. Andrew's Church, at the end of the drive, has many links to the Boleyn family.

Thomas Howard, 3rd Duke of Norfolk

Thomas Howard succeeded his father as Duke of Norfolk in 1524 during the reign of Henry VIII. He assisted Henry VIII with efforts to have his marriage to Catherine of Aragon annulled. This was due to Henry VIII being keen to marry Howard's niece Anne Boleyn, which restored the duke's political fortunes. His loyalty led him to great fortune in lands and status, and he presided over the trial of his niece as Lord High Steward, pronouncing her death sentence with tears in his eyes. Four years later, he took advantage of his political enemies' mistake in arranging a marriage with Anne of Cleves, whose appearance the King took a dislike to, and set up Henry VIII's next marriage to his niece Catherine Howard.

Thomas Howard survived the fallout of Catherine's indiscretions and execution, and was made a general. In 1543 he declared war on France, but fell from favour after a failed siege and retreat. In later years differences emerged between Henry VIII's protestant reformism and the Duke of Norfolk's conservative Catholicism. He was arrested in December 1546 on charges of treason, to which he confessed, and his son was executed. He was condemned to die, but saved by the death of Henry VIII and pardoned and released by the Catholic Queen Mary.

Kenninghall

Thomas Howard and his family resided at Kenninghall, in Norfolk. Only one wing of this estate remains, but records of goods seized and inventoried by the King's men after the arrest of Howard are

among the most complete documents of the time, giving a clear indication of the way the family lived and their wealth. Upon the death of Henry VIII, Kenninghall was passed to his eldest daughter Mary.

Queen Mary, or Bloody Mary as she became known, fled to Kenninghall when she heard her brother was dying, fearing she would be captured and denied the throne. She surrounded Kenninghall with armed supporters and declared herself Queen of England. Thomas Howard was released from prison and restored to the title of Earl Marshall and was present at the coronation of Mary I. After her coronation she returned Kenninghall to the Duke of Norfolk and it was passed to his grandson, also called Thomas Howard, the 4th Duke of Norfolk.

Under Elizabeth I, the catholic Howard family had several run-ins with the protestant Queen. Howard was arrested for scheming to free Mary, Queen of Scots and marry her. After his release, he joined a plot by King Philip II of Spain to help make Mary Queen of England and for this he was executed. Queen Elizabeth took control of Kenninghall and visited frequently until her death, upon which Kenninghall was dismantled and parts sold off for profit.

Our Lady of Walsingham Shrine

Henry VIII visited the shrine twice in his time, as almost all Kings and Queens had since its inception in 1061. He first visited as an 18 year old with his first wife, Catherine of Aragon. They stayed at East Barsham Manor, and Henry VIII is said to have walked barefoot to the shrine from there. He is said to have prayed for a male heir. Shortly after their return, Catherine fell pregnant, and did give birth to a male heir, Prince Henry. Henry VIII returned to Walsingham shrine in deep gratitude and paid to have windows installed at the shrine due to his chilly experience in January. Upon his return from the shrine, Prince Henry fell very ill and passed away in infancy. Catherine and Henry failed to produce a male heir and Henry petitioned the Pope to annul his marriage, but the Pope refused and this led to a split from the catholic faith and the beginnings of the English Reformation.

Between 1535 & 1540, Henry's chief minister, Thomas Cromwell,

led the dissolution of the monasteries, where he took legal steps to disband monasteries, priories, convents and friaries. The Crown took their income and sold their assets. Walsingham's shrine survived the first round of dissolutions, but Cromwell returned in 1538 after eleven men linked to the shrine were executed for their part in a treasonous plot. The shrine was dismantled and the image of Our Lady of Walsingham was taken to London and burned. Pilgrims returned to the site in 1897 and it remains a popular pilgrimage to this day.

Baconsthorpe Castle

John Heydon began building Baconsthorpe Castle in the middle of the 15th Century. He was a lawyer who worked for the Duke of Suffolk. His son completed the castle and extended it in his lifetime. He was knighted at the coronation of Henry VII, and held several positions of responsibility in Henry's court until his death. During the Tudor period, the estate was producing vast amounts of wool and the castle included a processing factory where spinners turned the wool into textiles that were sold throughout England and abroad. Records show that there were, at one time, 30 head shepherds and approximately 25,000 sheep on the estate.

The Heydons spent lavish amounts on the castle, including the ornamental mere and formal gardens which put them in debt and eventually led to insolvency, at which point the Heydons demolished parts of the castle and sold off assets to pay their debts. The remains are cared for by English Heritage and open to viewing.

Sources

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Printed Apr-21