

A Future Queen Briefly Stays at Dover Castle

— Tim Boyton-Adams —

On 11 July 1540, a husband wrote to his wife the following words (the spelling has been modernised): 'You shall find us a perfect friend, content to repute you as our dearest sister. We shall, within five or six days...determine your state, minding to endow you with £4000 of yearly revenue...your loving brother and friend.'

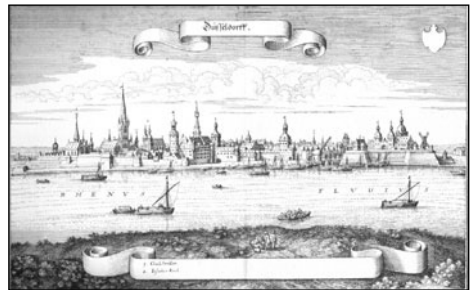
Strange words you may think from a husband to his wife; but the husband was none other than Henry VIII. The wife was the king's fourth, the so-called 'Flander's Mare' (incidentally a 17th Century name for her), Anne of Cleves (1515-1557). However the date is significant: the 11 July 1540 was the very day that Henry's marriage to Anne of Cleves was annulled after barely seven months of marriage.

Henry's third wife, his beloved Jane Seymour, had died as a result of complications following the birth of his only legitimate son, the future Edward VI, on 24 October 1537, in the royal lodgings at Hampton Court. Her heart was interred before the altar of the Chapel Royal there, while her body was conveyed in state, in a chariot draped in black velvet, to St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle, where '...there was a solemne masse of requiem sunge by the Archbischopp of Canterburie...' The following three years saw Henry's chief minister, Thomas Cromwell, scouring the courts of Europe for a suitable replacement, eventually settling upon the little-known Anne of Cleves. At first, Henry was reluctant even to think about remarrying after Jane Seymour's death, but Cromwell, consummate royal servant that he was, managed to persuade the king that remarrying was essential. Not all those approached by Cromwell and others welcomed the thought of marrying Henry VIII. Christina of

Denmark, Duchess of Milan (1521-1590), a celebrated beauty of the day, famously declared: 'If I had two heads, one would be at the disposal of the king of England!'

Anne of Cleves was the daughter of Duke Johann III of Julich-Cleves-Berge, an influential nobleman and a member of the Schmalkaldic Bund (League), a confederation of German states keen on independence and reform, free from the influence of Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor. Hans Holbein the Younger's portrait of Anne is a beautiful image of noble innocence, but with a touch of determination and confidence, traits that came to the fore later in Anne's life. It can now be seen in the Louvre, Paris.

Cromwell wanted an alliance with the Schmalkaldic League and Anne was part of the deal. Negotiations extended from March to October 1539, and Henry's envoys reported favourably of Anne during this time. When, finally, the deal was done, Anne departed Cleves on the 26 November 1539 and travelled overland with a considerable entourage. It made its way very slowly, due to the winter weather, through Antwerp, Bruges and on to Dunkirk. On the 11 December Anne reached English territory, Calais, but foul



Duesseldorf 'Kupferstich Merian 1647'. Birthplace of Anne of Cleves

weather kept her there for sixteen days. She eventually managed to cross the Straits of Dover on the 27 December 1539.

However, the crossing did not go well. Due to a heavy northerly wind and strong tide, the ships were driven onto the beach at Deal. Anne had never been to England before and her English was very poor. The king's new castle at Deal, still under construction, offered some shelter to Anne and her retinue for a few hours before the party moved on in the darkness to Dover Castle and the royal lodgings in the Great Tower there. The Spanish ambassador, Eustace Chapuys, recorded a slightly different account in a letter to his master, Charles V (the spelling has been modernised): '...This year on St. John's Day, 27 December, Lady Anne, daughter of the Duke of Cleves in Germany, landed at Dover at 5 o'clock at night, and there was honourably received by the Duke of Suffolk and other great lords, and so lodged in the castle.'

Two days later, on the feast of St Thomas of Canterbury, 29 December 1539, Anne and her party journeyed on to Canterbury, where they were lodged in the former abbot's house of the dissolved abbey of St. Augustine,



Anne of Cleves by Hans Holbein the Younger

outside the city walls. Again, Eustace Chapuys records: 'And on the following Monday she rode to Canterbury where she was honourably received by the Archbishop of Canterbury and other great men, and lodged at the king's palace at St. Austin's, and there feasted...'

The following day saw Anne and her party travel on to Sittingbourne and thence to Rochester on 31 December. It was at Rochester that King Henry made a surprise visit to Anne who, apparently, did not recognise him, disguised as he was with others in his party in '...mottled cloaks and hoods...'. He tried to kiss her, but she pushed the 'stranger' away. It was that first real glimpse of Anne that apparently did not please the king, he is reported to have declared later: 'I see nothing in this woman as men report of her'

The wedding, however, did go ahead as planned on the 6 January 1540 at the palace of Greenwich, the ceremony performed by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer. But the new queen was never crowned and the relationship quickly soured. Although the couple spent nights together, the marriage was never consummated. By the 16 May 1540, the king's displeasure was widely known, and he began to court the young and vivacious Katherine Howard. On the 24 June, Anne left court and five days later an official enquiry into the marriage began, ultimately ruling that Anne had not been free to marry due to an earlier betrothal to Francis of Lorraine, for which no dispensation from the contract could be found. On 6 July, Anne's agreement was sought. She resisted for several days, but gave in when it was confirmed that England's alliance with Cleves would continue. The marriage was annulled on the 11 July and the king went on to marry his fifth wife, Katherine Howard, on the 28 July 1540.

Anne settled down to a very comfortable life in England. The king granted her a substantial financial allowance and much property, including Anne Boleyn's former home at Hever Castle. As the 'King's Sister', Anne made frequent visits to court and became a favourite with the royal children. When she died in 1557, Queen Mary I, gave her a state funeral at Westminster Abbey. Of all the wives of King Henry VIII, Anne of Cleves was, perhaps, the most successful, managing to outlive the king by ten years and to maintain her independence in the years that followed. As for Thomas Cromwell, he felt the king's displeasure following the breakdown of the Cleves marriage and other issues. Arrested for treason on the 10 June 1540, he was beheaded on Tower Hill in front of a vast crowd on 28 July, the very day the king married Katherine Howard. His final

letter to the king is very telling: '...I am a most woeful prisoner, ready to take the death, when it shall please God and your Majesty: and yet the frail flesh inciteth me continually to call to your Grace for mercy and pardon for mine offences; and thus Christ save, preserve and keep you. Written at the Tower this Wednesday, the last of June, with the heavy heart and trembling hand of your Highness's most heavy and most miserable prisoner and poor slave. Most gracious Prince, I cry for mercy, mercy, mercy!'

The last word must be given to Edward Hall (c1496-c1547), the Tudor historian: Cromwell '...godly and lovingly exhorted them that were about him on the scaffold...patiently suffered the stroke of the axe, by a ragged and butcherly miser, who ungodly (sic) performed the office.'

Dover's Forgotten Commando Raid

Phil Eyden

Remembering Seamen Angus Mackenzie and Cyril Pegg who set out 79 years ago, on the evening of 21st April, onboard Motor Gun Boat 312 "Knight" to tow the Canadian landing party for the Operation Abercrombie coastal raid. After the two Canadian Assault Landing Craft, containing the landing party were released a couple of miles offshore from Hardelot, the MGB awaited their return.

Whilst waiting, MGB 312 was ambushed by a German patrol vessel and a firefright broke out. Angus and Cyril, the gun crew, were killed by flying shell splinters. Angus is buried in Charlton cemetery, Dover.

Telegraphist Hugh McCutcheon was also killed following a hit on the wheelhouse of MGB 316 "King" which had towed Lord

Lovat's craft and the Canadian command craft. All were attached to the 14th Portsmouth MGB flotilla which provided the gun boats.



Angus and his grave at Charlton Cemetery. KIA 22/04/42