



## The King in All His Magnificence: Tapestry as a Stage Set for the Performance of Progress

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DOI: 10.21039/rsj.543

**Abstract:** At the time of his death, Henry VIII owned around seventy properties, many of which he used whilst on progress. Some were favourites for a while, meriting investment in bespoke tapestries and lavish costumes for entertainments for the king before their appeal waned, and their contents were dispersed. One example is New Hall in Essex, which Henry renamed “Beaulieu” after acquiring it from Sir Thomas Boleyn, father of Anne Boleyn, in 1518. For a while it was one of his favourite residences, and he spent lavishly on 108 tapestries for its walls and on costumes for an elaborate masque, which was staged when Henry visited on progress in 1519. By the later 1530s, however, Beaulieu’s star had waned as a progress venue, and by Henry’s death its rich furnishings were elsewhere. This paper discusses the logistics of “set dressing” a palace which was not a permanent residence (or “standing house”) to make it fit for a king, and what happened to these items when Henry or his interest moved on. It explores which items were considered “disposable” after a single event or visit and which were relocated or repurposed. Using the 1547 Inventory of textiles and furnishings taken around six months after Henry’s death and evidence from accounts during Henry’s reign, it examines how—and more particularly why—the colour and magnificence of the court was brought to life, and what its afterlife was.

**Keywords:** masque; magnificence; Beaulieu New Hall; inventory; tapestry.



In the spring of 1519, almost a year's worth of travel, careful measurements, negotiations, and considerable expense by James Chapell came to fruition when 108 new tapestries were installed at New Hall (later styled Beaulieu New Hall), Henry VIII's latest palace acquisition. Chapell, a clerk in the office of The Great Wardrobe under the control of Sir John Heron, must have breathed a huge sigh of relief that the tapestries had survived their perilous sea voyage and tricky overland journey from the Low Countries and were now safely in their individually specified places in the palace. A lot was riding on this success. Henry was about to set off on a glittering, politically-motivated progress which would culminate in an astonishingly sumptuous masque at New Hall. The plans for the progress' entertainment were elaborate and costly, with the masque element alone costing some £207.<sup>1</sup> The tapestries James Chapell was commissioned to acquire were part of the luxurious refit of New Hall, acquired for £1000 from Thomas Boleyn and renamed Beaulieu New Hall by Henry, probably on its elevation to an honour in 1521–1522.<sup>2</sup> All this expense was very carefully designed to impress the four French nobles who were here as "surety" that the French king would pay the 600,000 crowns agreed at the Treaty of London the year before as the price for the city of Tournai.<sup>3</sup> The whole orchestration of the progress was crafted to convey the magnificence of the young king, and to show his rival, Francis I, that the Tudors knew how to "do" kingship on a grand scale. In this regard, as Schroder has discussed in relation to the acquisition and display of plate and jewels, Henry was following the conventions of his contemporaries and seeking to match or exceed their levels of display.<sup>4</sup> What this paper seeks to explore, through the lens of the 1519 progress which culminated at New Hall, is the specific role that tapestries played in the creation of this magnificence in concert with other textiles, and how this might have been maintained when on the move.

### **The Court on the Move**

The court had been itinerant for centuries. Within that tradition there had been a number of regular progresses, which were conceived and managed differently mostly in terms of the duration of stay expected at any one venue. The distinction between the two

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<sup>1</sup> Hayward, "On Display," 73.

<sup>2</sup> Thurley, *Houses of Power*, 111. It is, however, noteworthy that the name Beaulieu was used in connection with New Hall earlier and in accounting records from 1519.

<sup>3</sup> Samman, "The Progresses of Henry VIII," 61.

<sup>4</sup> Schroder, "Magnificence on the Move," especially 148–150.

identities—progress or itinerant journey—was however somewhat blurred, as a “progress” could be part of a longer planned movement and be undertaken for a variety of purposes. These ranged from the highly political showing of a monarch to their subjects and dispensing justice (increasingly more commonly associated with a formal progress) to the somewhat more prosaic need to spread the considerable load of accommodating and feeding hundreds of people throughout the year whilst working round the need to clean and maintain the buildings in question. The latter was a key set of drivers for the court being itinerant between houses which were permanently furnished.<sup>5</sup> There was also the monarch’s desire to leave London or other cities at times of plague and pestilence to escape the risk of infection, typically (but not exclusively) in the summer months. Contemporaries noted that Henry VIII had a particular fear of disease, particularly the “sweating sickness,” describing him as “the most timid person in such matters you could meet with.”<sup>6</sup> Earlier monarchs had been almost continuously on the move, but by the fifteenth century the court was becoming more settled. Progresses were mostly summer events with a slimmed-down court which combined politics with pleasure.<sup>7</sup> As Samman has noted, “the most spectacular progresses were organised for diplomatic occasions,” and so the highly performative nature of Tudor diplomacy, in which appearance was everything, necessitated that the splendour of the court was conveyed no matter where it was physically located.<sup>8</sup> The most extravagant example was the much-discussed Field of the Cloth of Gold, when the entire court decamped in 1520 to Guînes for a fortnight of sporting competition with the French court. For this excursion a fabulous tented city was created with elaborate “stage sets” of cloth and timber castles as well as accommodation tents of considerable luxury, all captured in the painting now at Hampton Court (see Figure 1). This followed hot on the heels of the 1519 progress and was in turn closely followed in 1522 by a lavish joint progress with Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor, around the south of England.

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<sup>5</sup> Samman, “The Progresses of Henry VIII,” 60.

<sup>6</sup> Roger, ““To Be Shut Up,”” 1077–1096.

<sup>7</sup> Cooper and Hayes-Davies, “Progresses,” 21–27.

<sup>8</sup> Samman, “The Progresses of Henry VIII,” 60.



**Figure 1. British School, *The Field of the Cloth of Gold*, c. 1545, oil on canvas, 168.9 x 347.3 cm. Hampton Court Palace, Royal Collection Trust, RCIN 405794. © His Majesty King Charles III 2025.**

The many thousands of pounds spent by Henry in these four years had one key objective: to convey to his rivals and contemporaries that Henry was a Renaissance prince who understood the power of magnificence and who could perform at the highest level on the diplomatic stage. He was not simply a young king with access to funds to spend: he was a sophisticated, cultured monarch who understood the subtle nuances of imagery and context. An essential component of creating that narrative was the physical spaces in which Henry would be seen and receive the rulers, diplomats, and power brokers, and the distinctive feature of those spaces was how they were dressed for the occasion.<sup>9</sup> This crucially included interior spaces. Sir John Fortescue (d. 1476?) had set out in his rules for kingship, *The Governance of England*, the importance of magnificence, and had specifically cited the need to “buy rich hangings” for houses as part of maintaining this impression.<sup>10</sup> It is the contention of this paper that in the specific example of the acquisition of hangings for Beaulieu New Hall, we can see in microcosm the role that tapestries played in building the “stage set” of royal presentation, and that this was a complex balance of factors beyond simply spending a lot of money. The quality, quantity, and, crucially, the *imagery* of the

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<sup>9</sup> Thurley, *Houses of Power*, 107–115.

<sup>10</sup> Fortescue, *Governance*, 251.

textiles which clothed the royal interiors, whether permanent or temporary, conveyed a subtle but important message. They built a multi-layered environment in which the viewer would understand where they were in relation to the presence of the king, and who, or rather what, that king was.

### **The range of textiles available and their uses**

Textiles were a vital component of medieval and early modern interiors. Portable, colourful, and decorative, hangings of all kinds served a range of purposes: from excluding draught or light and sound damping; through designating or indicating the status or function of a room; to the highest-level diplomatic display which will be discussed below. The range of terms for the different qualities, composition, and origins of cloths are used somewhat interchangeably in this period, but they can be broadly categorised as follows:

1. "Hangings" is a generic term which could be applied to functional textiles such as bed curtains as well as textiles intended to be used on walls or in front of windows. The quality and appearance of the cloth could vary from the richest woven tapestries and brocades through to plain linens and woollen weaves.
2. "Textiles" is not a frequently used term, a more common one being "cloths," but is a generic term applied to more functional items, such as bedlinen, towels, napery etc. These are frequently also classified as "linens," with the term "textile" or "cloths" being used when a variety of functional fabrics are being described.
3. "Painted cloths" were, as the term suggests, pieces of plain cloth painted with imagery or decorative designs. Although these could be high quality, they were often used as a cheaper alternative to woven tapestries. Lighter weight and (usually) less expensive, painted cloths were used both in domestic settings and in more temporary installations (see discussion of the Field of the Cloth of Gold below).
4. "Tapestry" describes woven cloth, the imagery of which was created through the precise use of coloured threads in the weave. It is sometimes used interchangeably as a term for embroidered cloths (most famously in the case of the Bayeux Tapestry, which is in fact largely an embroidery). England had a long tradition of tapestry weaving, but the workshops of the Low Countries had achieved a pre-eminence in high-quality production of large-scale pictorial tapestries. The different qualities of tapestry had their own terms, including "verdure," which was typically a lighter-weight fabric with an overall design, rather than pictorial image, woven through it.

5. “Arras” was a term used for high-quality, heavier-weight woollen tapestry, often with imagery woven into it. Named for the town of Arras in modern-day France, from whence it originated and which was the principal supplier, by the early modern period it had become a descriptive term for a certain type and quality of tapestry, just as denim has become in the modern day.

### **The role of tapestries in image management**

The role of tapestries in the creation of that narrative of magnificence in the Renaissance period is extensively discussed in Thomas P. Campbell’s edited volume produced for the exhibition “Tapestry in the Renaissance: Art and Magnificence” held at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York in 2002.<sup>11</sup> In this, Campbell draws particular attention to the tapestry collection of Henry VIII as detailed in the 1547 Inventory, and sets this in the broad European context of tapestry as a vehicle for conveying magnificence and cultural sophistication between 1380 and 1560. Whilst he acknowledges that “the ubiquitous presence of tapestry in [Henry’s] palaces was typical of the age,” he draws attention to Henry’s collection, “extraordinary in size because it had been swelled by the appropriations he made from courtiers, ecclesiastics and religious institutions that fell out of royal favour during the English Reformation.”<sup>12</sup> Henry was by no means alone in understanding the importance of this medium for creating interior spaces which conveyed a variety of meanings. Tapestry was also “the pre-eminent figurative art form at the courts of these [French, Spanish, Holy Roman] monarchs,” but Henry’s almost obsessive collecting of tapestry speaks to a desire to maximise their role in his image creation and projection within this group of his contemporaries and rivals.<sup>13</sup> Campbell explores this topic further in his richly-illustrated volume, *Henry VIII and the Art of Majesty: Tapestries at the Tudor Court*, in which the acquisition and usage of tapestry by Henry VIII is compared to that of his father.<sup>14</sup>

These studies explore the wider court use of tapestry across a range of purposes and players, but several questions remain about how these dynamics played out on progress. Campbell introduces the idea, for example, that by the early years of the sixteenth century the quality of the tapestry, as well as its subject matter, denoted an incremental progression

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<sup>11</sup> Campbell, *Tapestry*, 3–13.

<sup>12</sup> Campbell, *Tapestry*, 3.

<sup>13</sup> Campbell, *Tapestry*, 3.

<sup>14</sup> Campbell, *Henry VIII*, 67–126.

as the viewer drew closer to the aristocratic or royal presence.<sup>15</sup> This was an idea which Henry VIII took up and developed to hitherto unseen levels of acquisition and display, and which grew in tandem with developments in the architectural arrangements of the palaces around access to the monarch, as discussed most recently by Thurley.<sup>16</sup> Tapestries of all qualities also provided a visual and literal warmth to rooms which could be draughty, cold, or less splendid architecturally than the occasion required. However, less attention has been paid to how this carefully managed court choreography of access was translated to the practicalities of progress when, arguably, some of the pressures to be on display were more acute. This creation of a "set" could be planned for more easily when progress venues were crown properties, such as New Hall as discussed below. But there must also have been a strategy for when the king was in a house which was not built to that specification, or when an unplanned-for event required an increase in the levels of magnificence and image management. Packing lists do survive for some progress years, but much of the practical detail does not survive to a level which allows us to identify individual pieces.

When Henry VIII was crowned king in 1509, he inherited from his father Henry VII a stable, solvent crown with a modest number (perhaps around twenty) of royal palaces. Henry VII's acquisition of these palaces contrasted with the pious frugality of Henry VI, whose unwillingness to look like a king was expressed in reputedly wearing the same blue robe for days at a time (to the bewilderment and derision of the court) and whose spring 1470/1471 progress was, according to the Great Chronicle, "more like a play." The politically astute Henry VII understood the role of display in power, and built Richmond palace as a symbol of Tudor supremacy.<sup>17</sup> His own son, Henry VIII, would leave an astonishing number of palaces (around seventy) to his successor. Both Henry VII and Henry VIII understood that the art of kingship was as much about the image you projected as what you actually did. For Henry VII, this was focused on consolidating power at home, securing the somewhat shaky Tudor claim to the throne, and projecting authority, permanence, and stability after the chaotic Wars of the Roses. His infamous parsimony and ruthless taxation were part of the fiscal machinery which filled the Tudor coffers, laying a foundation on which his ambitious second son then built.<sup>18</sup> Henry VIII was a prince of the Renaissance, keen to demonstrate his cultural credentials as well as his wealth, and part of his

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<sup>15</sup> Campbell, *Henry VIII*, 95.

<sup>16</sup> Thurley, *Houses of Power*.

<sup>17</sup> Colvin, *The King's Works* 4(2):78; entry for 1471 in Thornley, *The Great Chronicle of London*, 215.

<sup>18</sup> Gunn, *Henry VII's New Men*, 67–87.

mechanism for doing that was to become the most prolific builder and acquirer of palaces of any English monarch. Some of these palaces remained beautifully furnished favourites throughout his reign: Greenwich palace was fitted out with tapestry sets in 1517 which were still in place when Henry died in 1547.<sup>19</sup> Others waxed and waned in popularity, their purpose fulfilled or other factors such a distance from London or less happy associations contributing to their decline. All of them, however, needed furnishing to a suitable standard when the king was in residence, so how was this achieved? What was required to convey "magnificence," and what happened when the royal gaze moved on?

As Thurley and Campbell respectively have extensively explored, conveying magnificence was closely bound up with art and architecture, as well as an almost theatrical level of interior furnishing in which textiles were a vital component.<sup>20</sup> As Howarth has noted, palaces were "theatres of kingship," elaborate constructs against which the performative nature of kingship could be displayed.<sup>21</sup> The role of tapestries in building Henry's continental profile is explored by Campbell, who shows extensive expenditure with merchants and makers in the Low Countries in the early years of the reign.<sup>22</sup> It is clear that this was not done without Henry's personal involvement—in some cases very close involvement—in the choice of furnishings generally: Henry VIII was a great lover of tapestries, spending hundreds of pounds in the early years of his reign on tapestries rich with gold thread. He had, perhaps, acquired this love from his one-time mentor, Cardinal Wolsey. Wolsey was also a great collector of tapestries, as evidenced in two of his inventories, the second being taken at his arrest at Cawood in 1530.<sup>23</sup> It is very likely that Henry acquired much, if not all, of Wolsey's collection after his arrest, property confiscation, and death. At the time of his own death, Henry owned as many pieces of tapestry as pieces of plate.<sup>24</sup> The description of the reception of the new Venetian ambassador Sebastian Giustiniani (1460–1543) in April 1515 shows us how Henry used textiles and tapestries, alongside rich clothing and attendants, to create magnificence and effectively create a stage set for how he wanted to be perceived. Giustiniani's visit was at

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<sup>19</sup> Campbell, *Henry VIII*, 117.

<sup>20</sup> Campbell, *Tapestry*, 263–267; Thurley, *The Royal Palaces*, 207–246.

<sup>21</sup> Howarth, *Images of Rule*, 12. This includes an exploration of a Renaissance manual about displaying "magnificence" in which palaces were "theatres of kingship."

<sup>22</sup> Campbell, *Henry VIII*, 117.

<sup>23</sup> An inventory of Cardinal Wolsey's possessions from the 1520s is preserved in British Library, Harley MS 599; the 1530 inventory is TNA, E36/171.

<sup>24</sup> Starkey, *The Inventory of King Henry VIII*, vol. 1, x.



the start of his deployment to Henry's court (1515–1519), so it was important that the right impression was created to ensure the reports back to the Doge of Venice were suitably glowing.<sup>25</sup> Giustiniani was already fifty-five years old when he came to the court, so he was no easily-dazzled young courtier, but a mature and urbane aristocrat with a lifetime of experience against which to assess Henry's efforts. Tapestries provided both a tangible expression of and a display of magnificence, and their subject matter could place Henry in a wider frame of cultural reference. By displaying David as an image of Biblical kingship, by extension this placed Henry in that company and the viewer would understand that Henry was on a par with (or at least modelled himself upon) the Biblical monarchs David and Solomon, who had at the very least enjoyed divine favour, or by implication, owed their position to divine choice—a literal depiction of the divine right to rule. Giustiniani describes approaching the royal presence "through sundry chambers all hung with the most beautiful tapestry."<sup>26</sup> He goes on to describe seeing Henry standing under a "canopy of gold embroidered at Florence, the most costly thing I ever witnessed."<sup>27</sup> The description is detailed and describes the various objects displayed, as well as how the different elements of the overall display were disposed along the access route. The layering of richness, with more and more items being displayed, became a hallmark of the English interpretation of regal magnificence. Sir Thomas Elyot, building on Fortescue's earlier instructions, laid out in his 1531 *Boke Named The Gouernor* what Howarth has described as the "authentic aspects of a Renaissance prince."<sup>28</sup> The staging of this image, which included the large gold sword of state laid on a gold brocade cushion, was clearly intended to dazzle (both literally and metaphorically); and in this staging textiles played a major role. Crucially it shows how textiles, especially tapestries, were central to the portrayal and projection of majesty: architecture mattered, but the interior decor was what got noticed and reported back.

This display for the Venetian ambassador was a foretaste of the extravagant fabrics to be deployed in the 1520 expedition to France, where the opulence of the textiles gave rise to the name "Field of the Cloth of Gold." This two-week extravaganza was accommodated in a series of temporary structures, in which textiles were the key to the impression conveyed: it was to all intents and purposes built as a stage set, a theatrical,

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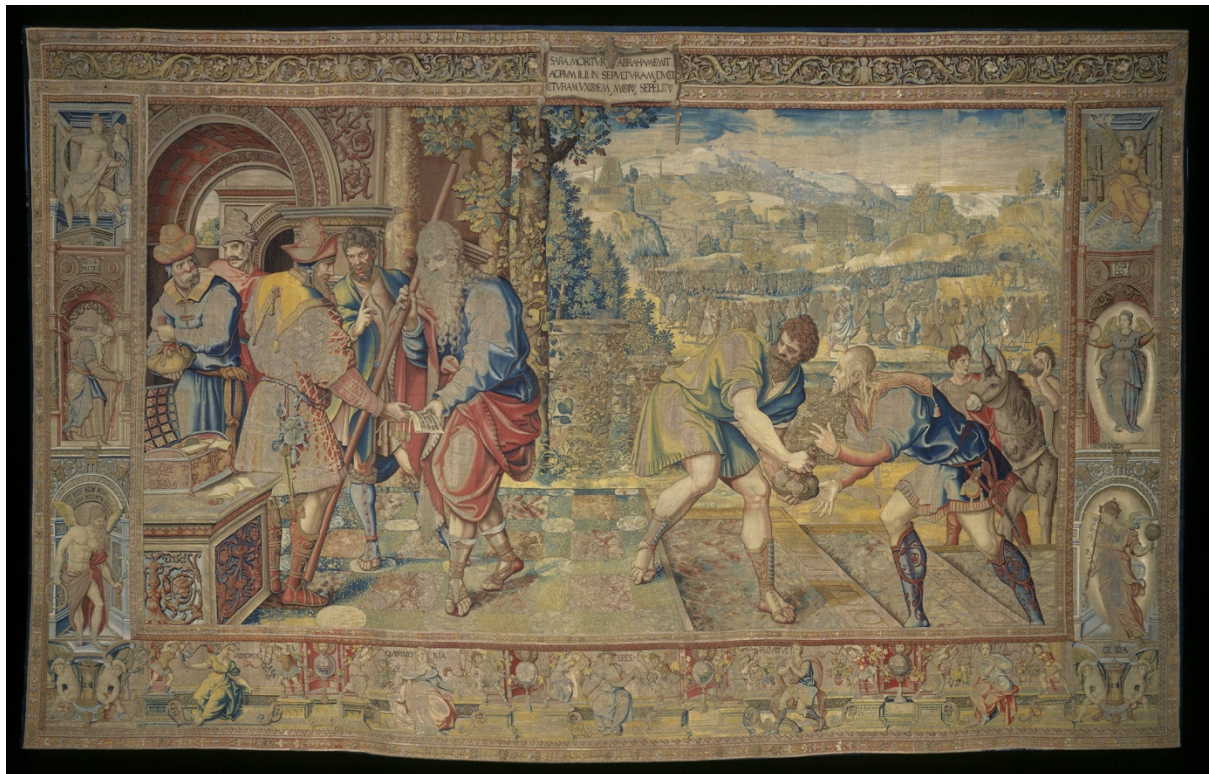
<sup>25</sup> Brown, *Four Years at the Court of Henry VIII*, 85.

<sup>26</sup> Campbell, *Henry VIII*, 113.

<sup>27</sup> Campbell, *Henry VIII*, 113.

<sup>28</sup> Howarth, *Images of Rule*, 14.

highly stylised performance in front of painted backdrops against which elaborate displays of pageantry, prowess, and magnificence were made. Was this idea of a “stage set” something Henry wanted, or on occasion needed, to create when on progress as well? The furnishing of some of his palaces around the south-east suggests this was the case, with “bespoke” sets being bought for some venues alongside apparently more general or lower grade pieces to fulfil more pedestrian functions discussed above. Every aspect of the royal image was managed and controlled, from the carefully increasing gradations of splendour for the visit by Giustiniani to the equally contrived “disguises” of the king in the masques which rendered him “invisible” to a colluding and compliant court. But for these images to have their full effect they needed a backdrop against which to be appreciated and the layering of meaning, allusion and reference built up. Tapestries served a vital role in that layered, almost subliminal, messaging.



**Figure 2. Attributed to Pieter Coeck van Aelst (1502–1550), *The Story of Abraham Series*, 1540–1543, woven wool and silk tapestry with gilt metal-wrapped thread, 482 x 770 cm. Hampton Court Palace, Royal Collection Trust, RCIN 1046. © His Majesty King Charles III 2025.**

### **Paying for Magnificence**

The accounts for the purchase of tapestries are spread across various departments of royal finance, making it difficult to get a complete picture of the total expenditure. For example, the *Book of Payments* (included in a class largely concerned with foreign affairs) records a number of large sums paid for tapestry purchases, such as £1,481 16s for an arras depicting “the story of king David and Saint John the Baptist” in December 1517, possibly intended for Bridewell palace.<sup>29</sup> As Campbell notes, this must have been an exceptionally fine set to cost this much, but individual receipts in both the State Papers and the receipts for the Great Wardrobe also frequently show sums in excess of £500, for example for sets of tapestry purchased by Cornelius van der Strete, the royal arras maker, on a journey to Bruges.<sup>30</sup> These were purchased as part of the trousseau of the king’s sister, Mary, ahead of her marriage to Louise XII, an expense necessary to display the level of magnificence that being perceived as a “great ruler” required. Surviving examples show that some tapestries were bespoke designs, clearly intended to convey the status or identity of the owner by the incorporation of initials or emblems, whilst others were Classical or allegorical scenes no doubt chosen by the purchaser, but possibly not designed exclusively for them. The lack of iconographic detail or description in the surviving accounts makes it difficult if not impossible to say whether some seemingly “stock” designs were in fact created in response to a specific request to make a set showing a particular legend or scene, or whether the way it was presented or its focus was a bespoke order. In any event, all but the lowest grade tapestry work was expensive and represented a significant investment in the furnishing of a palace. This cost was considerable if the pieces concerned were made to measure, as was the case with the tapestries purchased in 1518–1519 to furnish Henry’s latest property acquisition, New Hall in Essex.

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<sup>29</sup> TNA, E36/215, fol. 552.

<sup>30</sup> Campbell, *Henry VIII*, 117.



**Figure 3. James Basire Sr. (after Georges Vertu), *A View of the Front of the Palace of Beaulieu*, 1786, engraving on paper, 324 x 543 mm. Society of Antiquaries of London, *Vetusta Monumenta* vol. 2, plate 2.41. <https://scalar.missouri.edu/vm/vol2plates41-42-palace-of-beaulieu>**

### **“Beaulieu” New Hall: The Beautiful Place**

New Hall, near Chelmsford in Essex, had originally become crown property in the fifteenth century and Edward IV had stayed there, but Henry VII had granted it to the Earl of Ormond. Ormond had entertained Henry VIII there in 1510 and again in 1515, a mere two months before Ormond’s death, at which point the house passed to Ormond’s daughter and her husband, Sir Thomas Boleyn.<sup>31</sup> This same Sir Thomas Boleyn was the father of Henry’s future wife. Henry’s experiences of New Hall had clearly been very favourable as in 1516, only a year after the property was inherited, Henry purchased the house and grounds from Thomas for £1000 and immediately began an ambitious programme of rebuilding and extending.<sup>32</sup> So extensive were the works, which cost in excess of £17,000, that it is clear it was the land (especially the hunting grounds) and not the standing architecture which

<sup>31</sup> Thurley, *Royal Palaces*, 44.

<sup>32</sup> Thurley, *Royal Palaces*, 49.

attracted Henry.<sup>33</sup> This was later confirmed by Henry appointing Sir Francis Bryan as Master of the Hunt for Beaulieu New Hall. One of Henry's closest friends and a member of the privy chamber, the appointment of Bryan indicated the role and status New Hall was to play not just as a private hunting place, but as a venue for the entertaining of important and influential guests.<sup>34</sup> By the time building works were complete enough to host a progress in 1518, Henry was so enamoured of the result that he later (certainly by 1521) renamed New Hall to Beaulieu, "beautiful place." The architectural work was, however, but one part of the story and expenditure: once complete, the house had to be furnished to meet its role and was fitted out on a grand scale. To this end, one James Chapell esquire, a clerk in the office of The Great Wardrobe (overseen by Sir John Heron, the king's chief financial official) was despatched to the continent with a budget of £1000 (the same as the original purchase price of the property) to purchase tapestries and bed hangings for the newly-rebuilt house. Included in his expenses were two trips from London to New Hall to take measurements as the tapestries were to fit specific rooms:

Also he prayeth to be allowed for his costes and expenses in rydyng two tymes from London to Beaulieu as well before hys goyng beyond the See for measure to be taken what hangynges shulde suffyce.<sup>35</sup>

Chapell spent 39 days in Flanders and expended £402 13s 10d on 108 tapestries for the whole house. These varied in size and quality, but crucially included sets specifically purchased to fit particular rooms.<sup>36</sup> It is clear that this was an important point as he made two trips to the house to take measurements before he travelled "across the sea" to purchase them in Flanders. This tells us that the tapestries were more than simple decoration; they were to appear as a set piece and were designed to impress.

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<sup>33</sup> Thurley, *Houses of Power*, 111.

<sup>34</sup> Thurley, *Houses of Power*, 114.

<sup>35</sup> TNA, E101/622/31 membranes 1-3.

<sup>36</sup> Campbell, *Henry VIII*, 116.



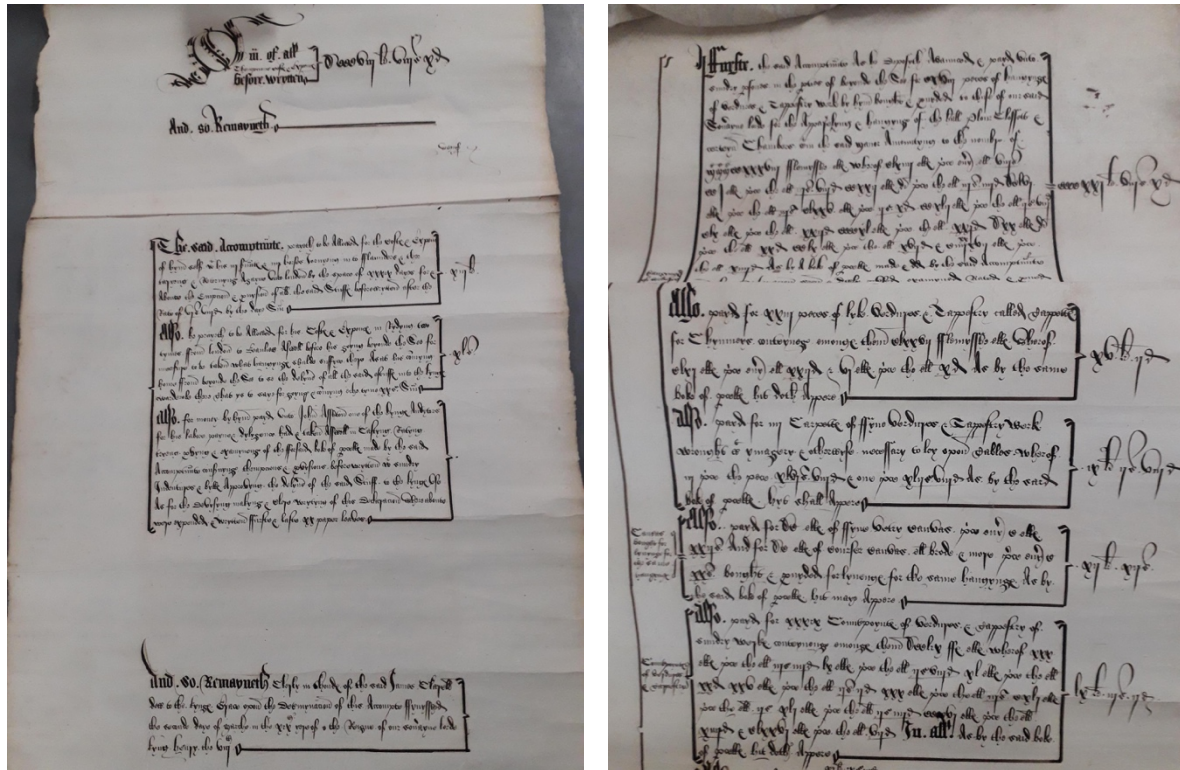


Figure 4. James Chapell, *Accounts to the Great Wardrobe, 1519-1520*. Kew, The National Archives, E101/622/31, membranes 3-4.

The purchases for the furnishing of Beaulieu New Hall were all handled through the accounts of the Great Wardrobe, a department of the exchequer whose outgoings were originally limited to relatively small-scale items of personal expenditure, such as clothing and personal items. The scale of this expenditure, however, was “considerable,” demonstrating a shift in how money was handled in the Henrician court.<sup>37</sup> It is beyond the scope of this article to undertake a detailed study of how the financial management of crown expenditure evolved over the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, but the changes in practice appear to have been a process of evolution in response to the personal demands of the king, rather than a planned and implemented strategy to streamline or rationalise the recording of expenditure. It was a reflection of the personal power of the king and an absence of power in any wider external regulatory control that enabled Henry to move to a position of creating a private fund for his own use, drawing down large sums (£18,000 and more in one lump) from the more regulated offices and then spending it with comparatively little accountability.<sup>38</sup> The money was spent on personal projects or things

<sup>37</sup> TNA, E101/622/31, membranes 3-4.

<sup>38</sup> Campbell, *Henry VIII*, 106-107.

the king just wanted for himself, which increasingly included the paraphernalia necessary to the creation of his image as Renaissance prince and the visual magnificence and projection of power which that identity demanded. In this regard, the class of records for this type of expenditure on New Hall (the Great Wardrobe) can be considered the king's personal account, reflecting his personal tastes and interests. They are preserved in The National Archives in class E101, which has the heading "Kings Remembrancer: accounts various" and covers a range of Exchequer documents and notes, reflecting the wide range of ways in which expenditure was accounted for. In contrast, the expenditure on works to the buildings were handled through the more wide-ranging Office of the King's Works, later records of which are maintained in the parliamentary archive, reflecting that expenditure on the royal estate was viewed as a state expense: the properties acquired by and improved or adapted by Henry were the property of the Crown as an institution, rather than the personal property of the king.<sup>39</sup> Whilst in an age of personal and absolute monarchy such distinctions might seem semantic, the distinction in the nature of the record keeping does speak to a distinction in perception at the time.

It is inevitable that the archival record reflects the administrative needs of the office which created it, not the needs of later historians. Although James Chapell would undoubtedly have been supplied with detailed instructions regarding his tapestry purchasing commission, these were not required in the accounts and sadly any such commissioning document (presumably retained by Chapell himself) does not survive. We therefore have the record of what it cost to prepare for making the purchase (because Chapell was anxious to have his expenses reimbursed!) and the accounts of the items bought, matching the cost per measure (usually a Flemish ell) to the quantity and quality of textiles purchased (so the money spent could be fully accounted for), but no record of what they looked like because that was not relevant to the record being kept. It is possible that the lack of any mention of specific imagery which might identify individual tapestries *may* suggest that the scheme for New Hall was cohesive enough that simply being purchased for New Hall was considered sufficient identification. It is also possible that as these purchases were relatively early in Henry's collecting history, their newness in conjunction with their intended location was identification enough.

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<sup>39</sup> The range and context of the expenditure in this period under the Office of the Kings Works can be seen in Colvin, *The King's Works* 4(2).

It is noteworthy that the tapestries purchased represented a significant proportion of the money given over to the whole enterprise. The original purchase price for the whole property was only £1,000, and most noble families—below the absolute top tier, who had incomes of c. £2,000–4,000—had an income averaging £801 per annum, so the sum expended by James Chapell on tapestries alone for Beaulieu New Hall was very significant.<sup>40</sup> That said, the purchases were clearly not on a par with the great sets of David and Saint John the Baptist, possibly bought for Bridewell, discussed above, which cost in excess of £1,000. So the Beaulieu tapestries were important and chosen specifically for these spaces, but (based on a rough calculation of size and quality) the most expensive tapestry set for New Hall would have been one tenth of the value of the great sets for Bridewell. This likely reflects the difference in size of the two palaces, and probably their expected frequency of use. Bridewell was intended to be the replacement for Westminster, and therefore a place of royal presence year round.<sup>41</sup> Although the accounts divide them into eleven different quality categories, presumably indicating eleven sets, all 108 tapestries were for designated, measured spaces. The total amount of fabric purchased was 1,818 square yards, or 3.238 Flemish ells, which varied in price from 14d to 8s per ell, so very clearly a wide spectrum of quality and presumably complexity of design.<sup>42</sup> What is not recorded in the account was what designs the tapestries should be: in his claim for expenses, Chapell refers to trips to Beaulieu to measure up as to "what hangynges shulde suffice."<sup>43</sup> The claim by Chapell was for the costs he had incurred in undertaking the commission he had been given: the level and nature of detail he provided was what would be sufficient to justify the amounts of, reasons for, and nature of his expenditure, so that they could be assigned to the correct office and approved. This did not require detailed descriptions of the tapestries which he had been instructed to acquire; the claim was for the preparatory trips to measure up. It seems very unlikely that Chapell would have been given free rein simply to choose anything which fitted. Rather, it is most likely that he had clear instructions and had to be sure that he knew exactly the dimensions of each space to ensure that in fulfilling his brief, he did not make costly mistakes by buying tapestries of the correct imagery and quality, but that would not fit the very specific spaces for which they were required. That at least some of the tapestry purchased was figurative is clear from the reference to their being

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<sup>40</sup> Campbell, *Henry VIII*, 122.

<sup>41</sup> Thurley, *Houses of Power*, 111.

<sup>42</sup> Campbell, *Henry VIII*, 116.

<sup>43</sup> TNA, E101/622/31, membrane 3.



"wrought with ymagerye," but sadly there is no further specification in this expenses' account for what that imagery depicted.<sup>44</sup> In this fairly prosaic account, what the auditor is concerned to do is to check the quantity, nature, and quality of the fabric purchased so it can be tallied with the receipts and the very considerable sums spent.

### Playing the Role

Beaulieu New Hall's intended purpose was realised in the summer of 1519, when it was the culmination of a royal progress designed to demonstrate to the four French "hostages" that Henry was a powerful king and an emerging leader on the European stage, not to be trifled with. The progress visited sites around the south of England, including Guildford Priory, Horsham, Sheffield Park, Eridge, Enfield, Havering, then New Hall (from 24 August 1519 until 12 September 1519), before continuing to Wanstead Hall and then returning to Greenwich on 1 October 1519.<sup>45</sup> The court and their "guests" were treated to lavish displays of hunting and feasting, and a magnificent masque for which elaborate costumes, including goldwork, silks, and elaborate embroidery, were specially made and then given to the participants afterwards.<sup>46</sup>

The meskeller at New Hawll, the 11th year. On 23 Aug. 11 Hen. VIII., the King, Queen and court being at Havering [atte] Bower, he sent for Ric. Gybson, and ordered Sir Wm. Compton to make out letters to Wm. Bottre, mercer, to deliver to Gybson silk according to his previous instructions, for him to make [for the said] meskeller twelve Almain coats with Italian sleeves, [six] of yellow satin, and six of green satin, the latter ... and set with scales like the scales of a dragon or sturgeon, each scale of flat gold of damask fringe fretted; the yellow coats, the same in silver. Also twelve bonnets and twelve pair of hose and shoes, 12 pair of wide shirt sleeves, with "reban semys" [ribbon seams] of fine cloth, and inparell of mantles of sarsenet, buttoned with party gold; also garments for minstrels and drumslads;—all which were to be delivered at New Hall in Essex, 4 Sept. next. Received accordingly, from Bottre, green and yellow satin, and many other articles.<sup>47</sup>

The *Letters and Papers*, the source for this record, are not financial records but a collection of reports, letters, and instructions to crown agents and staff. Here the safe receipt of the garments is being noted, not an account for the expenditure, which was documented in the

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<sup>44</sup> TNA, E101/622/31, membranes 3 and 4.

<sup>45</sup> I am indebted to my colleague, Prof. Anthony Musson, for sharing his research. The majority of references for these sites, particularly New Hall, being on the progress are in The National Archives, E101/418/15.

<sup>46</sup> Hayward, "On Display," 73.

<sup>47</sup> TNA, Letters and Papers (thereafter LP) III, 436. "A Masque at Newhall in 1519."

accounts for the revels, maintained by the Master of the Revels.<sup>48</sup> From further details supplied in just such a financial account, Mr Gibson's account for the revels, it is possible that the masque was an early version of John Heywood's "Play of the Weather," although the use of weather imagery in masques was not uncommon:

Yellow sarcenet, 90 yds. 1½ qr., at 4s., for mantles, gowns for the light bearers, jackets, hose, &c. for the drumbyllslads, garment and bonnet for the child that played the Moon, and 7 girdles for Cornishe's children. Red, black, blue and russet sarcenet of "Genys," 20 yds., at 3s. 4d., for those who played the Sun, Winter, Wind and Rain .... To John Brown, painter, for beating and putting on the scales of gold and silver on the garments, and for the beating, and the gold and silver on the children's garments and bonnets; viz., one, red, powdered with gold suns and clouds; the second, yellow, powdered with moons and clouds; the third, blue, powdered with drops of silver; the fourth, powdered with gold primroses; the fifth, with silver honeysuckles; the sixth, with gold stars, and the seventh, with silver snowflakes, 19l. 13s. 4d.... 7 ells of canvas used for a pattern of a garment of the King's device, and kept by him, 3s. 2½d.<sup>49</sup>

Richard Gibson (d. 1534) was responsible for making the masque costumes and for coordinating the other components, so this record is a detailed account of payments to the various craftsmen who had been subcontracted to undertake particular tasks. The level of detail reflects both Gibson's concerns and the need to ensure such a complex undertaking was properly accounted for and to avoid later disputes or false claims. As Rycroft has discussed, it is not likely that this version had the slightly satirical undertone of Henry's capricious unpredictability (changeable like the weather) which the later iteration had. Rather, this performance would more likely have been intended to suggest that Henry could command the heavens and the weather as courtly hyperbole.<sup>50</sup> This masque and entertainment followed one laid on for Henry and the hostages at the invitation of the queen, Katherine of Aragon (strongly suggesting she was not travelling with the king), at Havering-atte-Bower earlier in the progress.<sup>51</sup> It would have been essential that the king's entertainment was visibly more lavish than the queen's, and there is a sense that the composition of her entertainment and the laying on of a masque may not have been entirely expected by Henry. This may account for the very short time (approximately two weeks) that the Mr. Gibson charged with making the costumes had to deliver a complex

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<sup>48</sup> Streitberger, "Devising the Revels," 56.

<sup>49</sup> TNA, R.O. 1520. 19 February.

<sup>50</sup> Rycroft, "Gender and Status," 348–349.

<sup>51</sup> Samman, "The Progresses of Henry VIII," 61.

and sophisticated set of designs.<sup>52</sup> As discussed by Lesley Mickel in his work on the theatricality of the Tudor court, part of this masque included a section depicting old men in blue robes dancing, interpreted as a reference to Henry replacing his youthful boon companions with older, wiser advisers (an event referred to as The Expulsion of the Minions).<sup>53</sup> These minions were known to be great Francophiles, much feted by Francis I in London in 1518, so their replacement ahead of this masque before the French hostages, and the repeat of this masque in 1520 for Francis I, served to underline Henry's changing political position and contrasted his newly-acquired solemnity with the perceived continuing immaturity of the French king. Evoking the scene in which the masque would have been performed, that of the house itself, the interior decor would have formed a vital part of the overall impression of colour, wealth and magnificence. Much like the dazzling golden tableau created by Henry for the visit by the ambassador Giustiniani in 1515, this spectacle was part of an elaborately choreographed exercise in image management, in which the backdrop to the masque would have played a crucial role. There is no record of the imagery on the Beaulieu New Hall tapestries beyond the 1547 reference to at least two having borders with visual references to signs of the zodiac, so it is at least possible that they depicted the heavens or celestial bodies, which would have made a very significant backdrop to the masque with its costumes of the stars, moon, clouds, and so on.

### **Beaulieu New Hall's Star Starts to Wane**

Work did not stop on the house after the 1519 event. William Bolton, the Prior of St Bartholomew and one of Cardinal Wolsey's administrators charged with building projects, was paid £200 "for making a new gallery, diverse paintings and other necessities to be done" at New Hall in 1521.<sup>54</sup> Beaulieu New Hall continued to grow in favour if not size or ornament in the next few years, becoming an "honour," the administrative centre for a number of estates, in 1523.<sup>55</sup> However, thereafter Beaulieu New Hall's star began to wane as the king's attention switched from Queen Katherine to Anne Boleyn. A new style of accommodation arrangement, in which the king and queen's lodgings moved from being stacked one on top of the other to a lateral arrangement of separate apartments, began to make Beaulieu New Hall and other houses built in the same period look old-fashioned.

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<sup>52</sup> LP, III, 436.

<sup>53</sup> Mickel, "Performing Power," 202–203.

<sup>54</sup> TNA, E 36/216, fol. 132.

<sup>55</sup> LP, Hen. VIII, iii, no. 1451 (20).

Beaulieu New Hall, like similarly previously-favoured houses such as Bridewell, does not feature in the list of progress venues after 1530 and did not attain the status of a "standing house," like Greenwich or Hampton Court, which were kept permanently furnished for the king's residence.<sup>56</sup> Henry retained the palace, but it was no longer a feature of the progress routes and the starring role as the stage set for royal display and diplomacy transferred to newer projects such as Whitehall and Nonsuch. One use to which it was put was as a place to put Princess Mary, his daughter with Katherine of Aragon. Henry's divorce from Katherine made Mary's position at court more precarious, with her legitimacy in question and her allowances reduced. She was lodged initially at Hampton Court by Wolsey, then at Beaulieu New Hall while the divorce was in progress, but as Thurley notes "following the judgement at Dunstable she had to move into less desirable property."<sup>57</sup> Henry then gave Beaulieu New Hall to Lord Rochford, the brother of Anne Boleyn but after his execution for incest with his sister, Beaulieu New Hall passed back to the crown in 1536.

So, what of the sumptuous furnishings which had so occupied James Chapell in 1519? By the time of the drawing up of the Inventory at Henry's death in 1547, the house was in the care of the Marquis of Northampton, described as "keeper."<sup>58</sup> The keeper was responsible for the house and for ensuring its readiness should the king decide to visit, but between such events the furnishings, particularly the textiles, would be carefully packed away in purpose-built wardrobes (or garderobes) in the outer court of the property.<sup>59</sup> Although smaller houses might have their furnishings provided through the "travelling wardrobe," Beaulieu New Hall had its own garderobe listed in 1547, and it was this, along with the house itself, that the Marquis had charge of. In setting up the houses for use, the grooms of the wardrobe would be charged with bringing in the interior furnishings, of which the arras and Cloth of Estate were the most important, and which would then be hung by the yeoman of the chamber.<sup>60</sup>

From the Beaulieu New Hall wardrobe, it is clear that most of the items like beds and pillows which could be reused had been removed to Hampton Court. Much of what was left was in poor condition, broken, incomplete, or dirty. The beds for which Chapell had procured hangings were described as "meane and sore worne," many of them "yll filled."

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<sup>56</sup> Thurley, *Royal Palaces*, 52–53.

<sup>57</sup> Thurley, *Royal Palaces*, 79.

<sup>58</sup> Starkey, *Inventory of Henry VIII*, vol. 1, 342.

<sup>59</sup> Thurley, *Houses of Power*, 196–197.

<sup>60</sup> Thurley, *Houses of Power*, 197.

Ten of the counterpoint hangings were removed to Hampton Court, but the remaining nineteen were listed with their measurements and a brief description. Most were verdure, but two were tapestries, one of which had the signs of the zodiac in its border. Given that James Chapell had purchased 108 tapestries and only ten had been removed to Hampton Court at the time of the Inventory, leaving nineteen behind at the empty house, the remaining seventy-nine pieces must have been removed or sold in the intervening years.<sup>61</sup> Unfortunately, Chapell's accounts of the purchase of the tapestries for Beaulieu New Hall do not list the subject matter, and the 1547 inventory does not give dimensions, so trying to cross-reference the Beaulieu New Hall purchases with tapestries in other locations in the inventory is impossible. What this does tell us, however, is that even tapestries purchased to fit the rooms of a specific site could and would be moved to other locations and were too valuable for the most part simply to abandon or mothball when the king's interest or preferences moved on. The long list of tapestries stored in the wardrobe of the Tower include one "litle windowe pece of verdours of newehall Stuffe," but it also includes a huge number of hangings depicting Classical and Biblical scenes—might some of these have once hung at Beaulieu New Hall too?<sup>62</sup>

### **The Subject Matter of the Tapestries**

Given the very deliberate political and diplomatic ambition of the 1519 progress and its culmination at Beaulieu New Hall, it is very likely that the tapestry subjects chosen would have been selected to convey Henry's continental sophistication and learning as well as his political stature and wealth. These are likely perhaps therefore to have been a mixture of Classical subjects to display his learning, and Biblical kings such as David or Solomon to underline his divine examples, rather than the more playful allegorical subjects of courtly love. Henry chose to be depicted as King David in his personal prayer book.<sup>63</sup> This manuscript, dated to the 1540s, is the work of the French miniaturist Jean Mallard (a favourite also of Henry's rival and contemporary Francis I) and includes several depictions of the king himself. It was the private prayer book of the king and contains many

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<sup>61</sup> For the tally of tapestries purchased, see discussion by Campbell, *Henry VIII and the Art of Majesty*, 116. The total of one hundred and eight is derived from adding up all the items listed in the accounts at The National Archives, E101/622/31, membranes 1–3. The note that ten had been removed to Hampton Court is at the start of the inventory for the Beaulieu Garderobe: Starkey, *The Inventory of Henry VIII*, vol. 1, 342.

<sup>62</sup> Starkey, *Inventory of Henry VIII*, vol 1, 179–182.

<sup>63</sup> BL, Royal MS 2A XVI.

handwritten notes by him, so the way he was depicted in the manuscript was deliberate and meaningful. Amongst the miniatures are depictions of Henry in a gorgeously appointed bed chamber reading (this?) book of hours, Henry playing the harp in a pose directly imitating the Biblical king David, and Henry as David in the battle with Goliath (in which Goliath is intended to represent Pope Paul III, who had excommunicated Henry).



Figure 5. Jean Mallard, *King Henry VIII reading his psalter*, 1540. British Library, Royal MS 2 A xvi, fol. 3r. © British Library archive.



Henry's self-identification with the Biblical king makes it extremely likely that stories about David would be a prominent feature of any tapestry Henry purchased with the intention of projecting his statecraft and role on the political and cultural stage. Once Beaulieu New Hall had fallen out of favour and ceased to be a feature of the list of progress venues, it is likely that the most valuable and visually significant or important tapestries would have been removed for use elsewhere. Whilst tapestries depicting devotional subjects were in the royal collection and were used in chapels and some were perhaps intended for more intimate spaces in the various palaces, the tapestries used to create a backdrop for political events would all have been carefully chosen to convey very specific visual messages. In an age when imagery and iconography was sophisticated and multi-layered in meanings, the primary form of large-scale communication, the visually dominant and colourful backdrop of a tapestry to any political or diplomatic occasion or meeting would have been chosen with great care. The 1519 progress was no exception, and Beaulieu New Hall had been equipped to meet that need, so it is reasonable to surmise that when Beaulieu New Hall no longer needed those items for that purpose they would have been taken to wherever that need had to be met. The planning document for the 1520 trip to France stipulated that:

The Chamberlain and the ministers of the Wardrobe to provide for the transportation to Calais of Arras tapestry and other necessities for the decoration of the King's house, and to cross the sea forty days before the interview, that all may be ready.<sup>64</sup>

This makes it clear the importance of the tapestry collection in creating the environment in which Henry would be seen and displayed.

### **The 1541 Progress to the North**

Henry's subsequent progresses varied in purpose and scope. Some were more obviously about internal politics, some seemingly more about confirming favourites, whilst the rupture of the Dissolution allowed Henry to acquire more progress venues which could be fitted out as his own rather than having to fit into the accommodation of others, or to be accommodated in part in tents. As the king became older and less fit, his journeys became more confined to houses and palaces in the south-east. The notable exception was the progress of 1541 to York, the furthest north the king ever ventured. On this progress, Henry

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<sup>64</sup> Schroder, "Magnificence on the Move," 150.

sought to achieve a number of objectives. These which included displaying his new bride, Catherine Howard, to whom he attributed a reinvigoration of his health and vigour; reaffirming royal authority in the north in the years after the Pilgrimage of Grace and continuing rebellious unrest; and, somewhat unexpectedly, the possibility of meeting with the Scottish king James V at York. There is considerable scholarly debate as to whether the ultimately unsuccessful plan to meet with James was based on a miscommunication and there never was any real intention to have the meeting, or whether James deliberately snubbed Henry by not coming. But it is certain that Henry was expecting to meet with James when he was in York, although this was not part of the original planning of the progress.

When Henry was at York he lodged at the former abbey of St Mary's, recently dissolved, given over to crown use, and renamed Kings Manor. It is not in the scope of this paper to discuss in detail the king and queen's accommodation arrangements at Kings Manor. However, the need to create spaces of suitable grandeur and political messaging would have been important not only for the local political work—emphatically reinforcing royal authority—to be done, but also as a backdrop to a possible meeting with Henry's geographically nearest royal rival, whose alliances with the Catholic continent in the heat of the Reformation made it essential that Henry project confident control and political dominance. Might this have been an occasion to redeploy some of the tapestries used so effectively to dazzle the French nobles some twenty-two years earlier? The accounts of the Venetian and Mantuan ambassadors at the Field of the Cloth of Gold in 1520 make it very clear the prominent role the tapestries taken there played in creating an extraordinarily rich impression and in indicating the hierarchy of the various chambers.<sup>65</sup>

In contrast, there are no descriptions of tapestries in the French tents, although Francis did become a major patron later in his reign, so in this regard the court of Henry VIII was leading the cultured tastes of the day. Twenty-two years later, when tapestries were firmly established as a measure of status in both courts, would Henry have used that to his advantage in "set-dressing" for his projected meeting with James V?<sup>66</sup> Unfortunately, no packing lists for the 1541 progress survive; we have only the description by the French ambassador that Henry brought his best tapestries and clothing with him.<sup>67</sup> James V had a

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<sup>65</sup> Campbell, *Henry VIII*, 147.

<sup>66</sup> The account of the French ambassador, who referred to the "richest tapestry," is discussed in Cooper and Hayes Davies, "Progresses," 28–29; LP, xvi 941.

<sup>67</sup> Schroder, "Magnificence on the Move," 149.

collection of some 200 tapestries which were moved around his realm with him and hung by a team of specialist tapestry hangers who were on the royal payroll. By comparison, Henry VIII had some 2,000 tapestries, many of which were permanently hung in his numerous palaces.<sup>68</sup> Tapestry as a weapon of political war meant it is inconceivable that Henry would have come to York without sets to create the correct backdrop, and the Beaulieu New Hall sets are a possible contender for playing a part in that role. If, unlike the sets acquired for the standing houses, they had been removed from Beaulieu New Hall and stored, they could conceivably have been considered available. Henry's continuing love of tapestry as a vehicle for image projection is evidenced by the commissioning of two extremely expensive new tapestry sets depicting Abraham and Julius Caesar in the 1540s: as discussed by Brett Dolman, the subject matter provided visual validation of Henry's reign at a time when his health was failing and he was looking to secure the dynastic inheritance of his son.<sup>69</sup> As Edward VI's Privy Council observed, the richness of the interior decor, especially the tapestries, were one reason that Henry's realm was perceived as "riche ad welthie."<sup>70</sup>

### **The Later Years of Henry's Reign**

By the time of Henry's death in 1547, the fruits of his lifetime of collecting were distributed across the many houses he retained. The relatively small number of "standing houses" in the south-east, which were kept permanently furnished and in a state of readiness, were massively overshadowed by the multitude of other properties across the country which had featured on progress routes, been favoured for a while, housed other members of his family, or were simply standing empty. The 1547 Inventory shows what furnishings remained at these houses, and what had been removed from them back to one of the more frequented properties.<sup>71</sup> The entry for Beaulieu New Hall shows a house largely stripped of its bespoke furnishings, retaining only fairly minimal furnishings (much of that old or broken). Items had, at some point not specified, been removed to Hampton Court, and as discussed above there was a significant deficit in the number of tapestries recorded versus the number purchased some thirty years earlier. Beaulieu New Hall had served its kingly purpose, but its glory days were far behind and it was perhaps tainted for Henry by

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<sup>68</sup> Harrison, *Rebirth of a Palace*, 106; Thomas, *Princelie Majestie*, 79–80.

<sup>69</sup> Dolman, "Palaces, Progresses, Panache, and Pictures," 188.

<sup>70</sup> Dasent, *The Acts of the Privy Council*, 21.

<sup>71</sup> Starkey, *The Inventory of Henry VIII*, vol. 1.

association with the Boleyn family. Briefly the place to house Princess Mary while her parents' divorce was finalised, it later became one of the houses Mary used after the death of Jane Seymour (who had encouraged Henry to reinstate Mary and Elizabeth in court life) and was bequeathed to her by Henry in his will. This did not, it would appear, include the tapestries so carefully chosen for their political messaging. They had been needed elsewhere in the intervening years and would likely not have been considered appropriate for Mary's household. Beaulieu New Hall became Mary's home during the reign of her brother Edward, but it was seemingly never again used or occupied by the king after 1527. It is possible that the tapestries were returned during Mary's reign to furnish the house for her use, but there is no evidence to support this hypothesis. Beaulieu New Hall's flame had burned brightly in the early years of Henry's reign, serving as a spectacular stage set for his political triumphs and manoeuvrings on progress with the French in 1519. But once its purpose had been fulfilled the props had been put away for use elsewhere, loaded to the many carts for another show at another venue.

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