



An Examination of Henry VIII's 1535 Progress to Bristol

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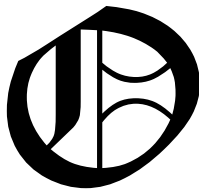
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Abstract: In the summer of 1535, Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn travelled to Bristol on an exceptional progress. The *gestes*, an itinerary for the king's summer progress published each year, were crafted to display Henry as the new head of the Church of England, and present Anne as his new queen. Alongside the royal progress route, Cromwell's men travelled on their own "parallel progress," auditing monastic holdings and keeping in close contact with the king. Often dismissed as simply magnificent vehicles for Henry's more recreational pursuits, this paper argues that progresses were, instead, vital means through which the king exercised and reinforced monarchical power in the localities of England. Not always splendid, but often subtle and personal, progresses provided vital and intimate access to the king and Cromwell away from the court's traps. Using the Eltham Ordinances, state papers, warrants, household accounts, and a close examination of the king's itinerary, this paper will explore the 1535 progress to Bristol in detail for the first time, ultimately arguing that it was vital in consolidating the Reformation in England and beyond, by displaying Henry as he wished to be seen on the public stage.

Keywords: Personal monarchy; Progress; Reformation; Henry VIII; Thomas Cromwell; Patronage; Dissolution; Bristol; Gloucester.





On 9 July 1535, Henry VIII and his second wife, Anne Boleyn, departed Windsor for Reading Abbey, four days later than the *gestes* published on 5 July suggested.¹ England was in a state of diplomatic and religious instability, poised on the brink of unrest. In 1534, Thomas More and John Fisher had both refused to sign the Act of Succession, and had been taken to the Tower. In early May 1534, Lord William Dacre, 3rd Baron Gisland, Steward of Penrith and Warden of the West Marches, was arrested and fined £10,000 for plotting against Henry and supporting Catherine of Aragon over Anne as queen.² In Ireland, an uprising led by Lord Offaly laid siege to Dublin Castle.³ In August 1535, seven people were brought before a court in Newcastle by the Duke of Northumberland on charges of treason committed in earlier in March of that year, while Sir Humphrey Lisle of Felton and an "Alex." Shaftowe of Skremerston were indicted for plotting treason in Durham and the Middle Marches.⁴ Meanwhile, England's diplomatic efforts abroad in France and in the Holy Roman Empire were also rapidly destabilised—a potential alliance between Henry and François I against Charles V looked increasingly unlikely as diplomatic efforts broke down.⁵

One may thus wonder how progresses could offer an antidote for such instability in England and abroad? Historians have provided an almost unanimous answer to this question: progresses were large, splendid, so much that they overawed the population of England and subdued them in times of unrest. Neil Samman, for example, has described progresses as "an important instrument of Tudor government," leveraging the intimacy of personal monarchy and the projection of royal power to leave "a lasting impression upon contemporaries."⁶ Historians such as David Starkey, Geoffrey Elton, John Guy, Sydney Anglo, and Diarmaid MacCulloch have all examined the nature of Henry's personal

¹ SP 1/93 f.194.

² LP VII 1013; Spelman, *The Reports of Sir John Spelman*, 54–55.

³ Calendar of State Papers, Spain (CSPSp hereafter) V, i, 70, 86–87; Ellis, "The Kildare Rebellion," 807–830.

⁴ SP 1/95 f.1; SP1/95 f.3: Lisle and Shaftowe escaped arrest in August 1535 and fled to Newcastle. The Earl of Northumberland, Henry Percy, left the progress retinue to travel to Newcastle to arraign them.

⁵ *Calendar of State Papers Milan* (CSPM hereafter) 961, 966, 967; Byrne, *Lisle Letters*, II, 169; CSPSp, V I 22, 90, 102, 111–112, 114, 118, 127; B.L, Cotton MS Vespasian F XIII, fol. 197.

⁶ Samman, "The Progresses of Henry VIII, 1509–1529," 59. See also, Thornton, "Henry VIII's Progress Through Yorkshire," 232; Dickens, "The Yorkshire Submissions to Henry VIII, 1541," 271. There have also been some notable examinations of the 1541 progress to York as a military campaign in response to rebellion: Hoyle and Ramsdale, "The Royal Progress of 1541"; Sansom, "The Wakefield Conspiracy of 1541," 217–238.

monarchy at length.⁷ They showed that being in close proximity to the king, in a literal sense, meant access to power and political influence for members of his court. Progresses offered an opportunity for the king to bring the presence and physical power of the court usually settled in London to the localities of England, offering a "proportionate and necessary response" to rebellion.⁸ Despite these assertions, there is little evidence that the 1535 progress had any effect on the population along the route, nor that Henry had this particular goal in mind. If the goal was not to change the hearts and minds of those in the localities of England, why did the king go on progress in 1535 at all?

On the whole, there has been a general reluctance to define a progress, whether considering only one, or for Henry VIII's reign as a whole. Although the annual progresses are broadly similar on the surface, each of them was designed to fulfil a different need. The king's itinerary varied year on year, sometimes in the extreme. The 1534 progress for example was a leisurely tour of Surrey for Henry and Anne, where they lodged in a small number of familiar houses, often frequented by the king on his progresses.⁹ Conversely, the 1541 progress—the longest by far, from June until November—was a large and military affair in response to pockets of rebellion in the north of England, among which the Pilgrimage of Grace.¹⁰ Hayes-Davies and Cooper have previously defined a progress as "a summer journey beyond the king's standing houses, mixing business with pleasure in varying proportions according to circumstance."¹¹ This article refines this definition of an Henrician progress by demonstrating that, in addition to travel in the summer that required a number of hosts outside of the king's own portfolio of properties, a progress also

⁷ Starkey, "Intimacy and innovation," 226; Ives, "Henry VIII: the Political Perspective," 13.

⁸ Thornton, "Henry VIII's Progress Through Yorkshire," 232.

⁹ For example, in June 1534, the court lodged at Chertsey Abbey, Grafton, and Woodstock, frequent stops on Henry's slower, reduced progresses that were designed more for leisure than politicking: TNA, E101 421/6 35, 38, 40–47.

¹⁰ Charles de Marillac, the French ambassador to England, wrote that the king's "company" included "5,000 or 6,000 horse, whereas ordinarily he takes only 1,000," and that they carried with them 200 tents ordinarily used for military campaigns: *Correspondance politique de mm. de Castillon et de Marillac, ambassadeurs de France en Angleterre (1537-1542)*, ed. Fèlix Alcan, 334; Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole 862, 231–232; Bodleian Library MS Top. Gen. c. 69/2, fols. 258–259. See also: Fletcher and MacCulloch, *Tudor Rebellions*, 50; and Dickens, "The Yorkshire Submissions to Henry VIII, 1541," 271.

¹¹ Cooper and Hayes-Davies, "Progresses and Personal Monarchy in the Reign of Henry VIII," 7.

required the court to restructure itself into a smaller, itinerant "summer" court, more suited for travelling.¹²

This being considered, this article presents an alternative position to the argument so far prevailing in the scholarship. Progresses were a flexible vehicle of personal monarchy, increasingly adaptable and individually tailored to suit the political and diplomatic needs of any given year. They were not, in themselves, *instruments* of Tudor government; they were a mean through which the Tudor government—and the king at its head—could move to wherever it was needed. Progresses brought an access to the intimacy of personal monarchy into the localities of England for specific, tactical interventions, with each location in the itinerary serving a purpose to advance specific political and personal aims. The English nobility—particularly those furthest away from London—founding the footholds of their power stronger in the localities where they lived, progresses were a mean by which the king could remind them that it was he they answered to. The royal court in London displayed through its ritual ceremony a superficial unity that was fragile unless reinforced by the king's presence. To Henry VIII it was not enough that they would perform this unity in London: he wished to enshrine it in the localities, thanks to his physical presence.

Constructing an itinerary for the progress is, therefore, instrumental to unpicking the primary aim of the 1535 progress, and the overarching goal of royal progresses more generally.¹³ Outside of the *Henry on Tour* project, there is only one compiled itinerary for Henry's reign. TNA OBS 1419 is a handwritten itinerary, contained in a notebook. No author is listed for the itinerary, though there is considerable evidence to suggest it was compiled by R. H. Brodie, an editor of *Letters and Papers*. Filed under the State Papers' Miscellanea at the National Archives, it lists the general location of the king each month of every year. No references are provided for these locations, nor is there any indication of the sources behind this itinerary. Some effort has been made to provide the political context of any given year by listing relevant political contexts—such as acts passed by Parliament—on the

¹² Mary Hill Cole defines Elizabeth I's progresses in a similar manner: "lengthy trips away from London that required, over a number of days or weeks, a series of hosts in several counties to provide hospitality for an itinerant court" in Cole, *The Portable Queen*, 22.

¹³ A full itinerary for the reign of Henry VIII will be compiled as part of the author's PhD thesis, and will be published thereafter. The itinerary compiled by the *Henry on Tour* project can be found here: <https://henryontour.uk/>.

page opposite the itinerary, though these, too, are incomplete. The challenge of building an itinerary is that the sources are scattered across many record classes and locations.

The examination of each stop along the 1535 progress route shows that the primary aim of this progress was not to impress any particular agenda upon the local population, nor to broadly change public opinion in response to the Reformation. Instead, the itinerary of this progress published in May 1535 was tailored with two main aims in mind. The first was to reward those who had supported Henry during the Reformation in the west of England, notably in Gloucestershire and Bristol, giving rise to a new bloc of courtiers like Nicholas Poyntz of Acton Court—ambitious men with connections, who were keen to put themselves forward for promotion and capitalise on the redistribution of land that followed the dissolution. The second was to allow Thomas Cromwell and a small team of commissioners access to monastic institutions along the way. While Cromwell travelled with the king and his court, John ap Rhys, Thomas Leigh, and their teams of surveyors embarked on a *parallel progress* checking in often with Cromwell to “ascertain the king’s wishes” as they seized various artefacts and relics, and collected information about suspected abuses.¹⁴

As the political situation in France developed, the progress took on a third aim, *security*. By July 1535, war with both France and the Holy Roman Empire was a strong possibility. In response, Henry modified his itinerary *en route* and paid personal visits to the diplomats he wished to send to François I’s court, most notably Stephen Gardiner, bishop of Winchester, and John Veysey, the bishop of Exeter. The progress also diverted to Portsmouth and Southampton, where Henry personally inspected the defences as well as several warships, including the *Harry Grace Dieu*.¹⁵ Such a dramatic change to the itinerary highlights how progresses were an adaptable vehicle of personal monarchy, allowing Henry to personally intervene in the diplomatic process in a way more direct and intimate than otherwise would have been possible through letters or by proxy. Furthermore, these deviations give substantial insight into the flexible nature of progresses in the sixteenth century; they could change dramatically to suit the political and diplomatic needs of any given moment, a feature that has been substantially undervalued in the scholarship so far. By examining the itinerary in detail, this article will therefore assert that progresses

¹⁴ LP IX 163; City of Bristol Archives, *Mayor’s Audit Book 2 1535–1536, 1540–1541*; see also: Latimer, *Annals of Bristol in the Sixteenth Century*.

¹⁵ LP IX 954.

allowed Henry to personally intervene in political and diplomatic issues in a way that would not have been possible otherwise.

The Progress Itinerary

The original *gestes* published for this progress in May 1535 indicate that the court intended to depart for Reading Abbey on 5 July, then onwards to Eweleme, Abingdon Abbey, and Sudeley Castle. From there, they would tour Gloucester and the Severn Estuary at a leisurely pace until 17 August, where they would lodge at Bristol before turning back towards London by travelling southwards to Winchester, where three of Anne's most ardent supporters were to be consecrated as Bishops.¹⁶ In reality, they would not leave Windsor until 9 July, four days later than originally planned, while Henry executed notable opposition to the Act of Supremacy.¹⁷ He began with the execution of Carthusian priors John Houghton and Richard Reynolds, convening a special court in Westminster Hall to "hear and determine [their] damnable treasons."¹⁸

The progress was further delayed by the execution of Thomas More on 6 July. The timing of this execution is significant as More was a notable critic of the Act of Supremacy, and of Henry's position as the head of the Church of England in particular.¹⁹ More, along with John Fisher, who was executed for similar treasons on 22 June, had strong reputations outside of England. Being fervent Catholics, their executions would cause Henry diplomatic issues with France and the Holy Roman Empire throughout the progress.²⁰ More disruption to the itinerary came in June, when an outbreak of the plague swept through Bristol. On 30 June, the mayor Roger Coke received word from the privy council that the king would not visit Bristol on 17 August, as previously noted in the *gestes*. Writing in reply, Coke noted that the news was "doleful." He and the civic council in Bristol had likely been in the middle of preparing an elaborate entry for Henry not unlike the one put on for his father, Henry VII in 1486.²¹

¹⁶ LP VIII 989.

¹⁷ TNA, E101/422/1, fols. 23v, 24v.

¹⁸ TNA, KB 8/7 1.

¹⁹ Byrne, *Lisle Letters*, ii, nos. 168, 171, 183, 195, 215; LP VII 530, 841; MacCulloch, *Thomas Cromwell*, 248–251.

²⁰ B.L., Add. MS. 4622, fol. 133.

²¹ B.L., Cotton MS Julius B XII, fol. 17.

When Henry left Windsor for Reading Abbey, he kept much of the same itinerary as published in the *gestes*.²² He moved from Reading Abbey to Ewelme Manor, which was soon to come into his possession after the duke of Suffolk, Charles Brandon, exchanged it for lands elsewhere. It's likely Henry wished to survey the property to determine its suitability as a royal residence capable of housing the court in the adjacent towns and villages. Although Starkey claims Henry and Anne were unimpressed with the manor, the king took it into his possession and used it as a royal residence for himself, preferring it as a "private house to which he could retreat or use as a base for hunting."²³ It is important to note, however, that in as much as the suitability of adjacent land was an important factor in the acquisition of new properties by the crown, so too was it in the construction of the progress routes. For example, when commissioners reported on the manor of Writtle, acquired by Henry after Buckingham's fall, the neighbouring eponym town was an important consideration. They noted that it would be a "convieient hous," as it was near Newhall and "insomych as the toune of Writtle, even by the said maner, is a good large toune for lodging and within a myle or litle moor of the same is the toune of Chewmesforth."²⁴ Despite this, there is no evidence that Henry ever stayed at the manor there, suggesting that it was used to house members of the court while Henry himself removed to Newhall on progress. Such considerations are important when planning the *gestes*, as finding suitable lodgings was difficult for members of the court, especially if they joined the progress retinue mid-way. This was especially true of the 1535 progress as it experienced many disruptions along the route.

After lodging at Ewelme, the court moved to Abingdon Abbey on 14 July, then to the hunting lodge at Langley, where Henry and Anne hunted from the 16 until the 21.²⁵ From there, court moved to Sudeley Castle until the 24.²⁶ It was here, on or around 23 July, that Thomas Cromwell joined the king's retinue, and he travelled with the court to Winchcombe, where the court lodged in the Benedictine abbey for two nights.²⁷ From Winchcombe, the court travelled 10 miles to Tewksbury Abbey before moving on to

²² The court lodged at Reading on 9–11 July (TNA, E 101/422/1, fol. 24v), and Eweleme on 12–13 July, (TNA, E 101/422/1, fol. 25).

²³ Starkey, *Six Wives*, 529.

²⁴ TNA, E 36 150, fol. 29.

²⁵ TNA, E 101/422/1, fol. 25.

²⁶ TNA, OBS 1419.

²⁷ *ibid*; TNA, E 101/422/1, fol. 25; E 101/422/1, fol. 25v; E 101/422/1, fol. 26; LP VIII 1130; LP IX 4, 41, 68, 119, 163.

Gloucester Abbey on 31 July.²⁸ They briefly visited Painswick, hosted for an afternoon by Sir John Dudley, earl of Northumberland. The purpose of this diversion is made clear in a letter from Dudley to the king later in August: on 28 July, Dudley had directed a warden to arrest six men who had committed treason in March 1535, but they had fled without capture. During his visit to Painswick on 2 July, the king demanded he returned to Northumberland himself to handle the issue and correct the failure.²⁹ Here, we can clearly see how Henry leveraged the intimacy of access provided by the progress to further his own ends; a personal visit reminded Northumberland of his duties in his home county, of which he had been neglectful.³⁰

From 3 to 7 August, the court lodged at Miserden Castle, an estate that had been granted to Henry's mother Elizabeth of York in 1496, and had formed part of Anne's marriage dowry.³¹ From Miserden, the court moved to lodge in St Leonard's Priory at Leonard Stanley for one night on 7 August, then to Berkeley Castle from 8 to 14 August. From there, they lodged at Henry VIII's own property at Thornbury Castle, where Henry and Anne met with the Mayor of Bristol, Roger Coke. The king received the gift of "ten fatte oxen" and forty "sheepe towards his moost honourable household" in lieu of an official civic entry into Bristol.³²

The court departed from Thornbury on 23 August, and travelled 8 miles to Iron Acton, near Yate, where they were hosted by Henry's cousin, Sir Nicholas Poyntz.³³ There, Henry knighted Poyntz for his services to the crown. Poyntz had previously fought for the king in Ireland, and had accompanied him to Calais in 1532.³⁴ He went to great lengths to secure the king's favour and visit, most notably by constructing the east range of his manor,

²⁸ TNA, E 101 422/1, fols. 25v–26; OBS 1419; LP VIII 1130, 1158; LP IX 4, 68, 119, 236, 504; "Transcripts of the visit to Gloucester of the Princess Mary., 1525, of Henry VIII and Queen Anne, 1535, and other extracts from Council books, 1660–1674", in *Historical Manuscripts Commission, twelfth report*, Appendix, part IX; GBR/L6/29/A/2.

²⁹ LP VIII 882; LP VIX 1, a letter to Cromwell, suggests that the six men fled arrest in early August.

³⁰ LP IX 1–2.

³¹ *Rot. Parl.* vi. 462.

³² *The Marie of Bristowe is Kalendar*, CC/2/7.

³³ Poyntz' great-grandfather was Anthony Woodville, the brother of Henry VIII's grandmother, Elizabeth Woodville: *The Visitation of the County of Gloucester Taken in the Year 1623 by Henry Chitty and John Phillipot as Deputies to William Camden Clarenceux King of Arms, etc.*, eds. Sir John Maclean and W. C. Heane, 129.

³⁴ TNA, OBS 1418; Bell, "A Royal Visit to Acton Court in 1535," 120. Poyntz was also a close, personal friend of Richard Rich and Richard Cromwell.

Acton Court, in only a few months.³⁵ On 25 August, the court moved to Little Sodbury, still close to Yate, where they were hosted by Poyntz's uncle, Sir John Walshe, a strong reformer who had employed William Tyndale as a chaplain to tutor his grandchildren.³⁶ From Little Sodbury, the court lodged at Bromham House on 27 August, hosted by Edward Baynton, a courtier and Vice-Chamberlain to Anne Boleyn. There, the king was attended by Edward Foxe, his almoner.³⁷ Foxe had just been nominated as the bishop of Hereford on 20 August and elected on 25 August, though he would not be ordained until 26 September.³⁸ The court left Bromham House for Wolfhall on 3 September, where they lodged with John Seymour for six days.³⁹ Henry, Anne, and Cromwell hunted in and around Wolfhall, including in Lord Henry Daubeney's park of "Mursshe," where there was "no good game" to content them.⁴⁰

From Wolfhall, the court travelled to Thruxton Castle, the home of Lord Thomas Lisle. They lodged there for one night, after what Lady Lisle joined the progress until late September, a last-minute addition to the king's retinue that meant they could find no lodgings along the route.⁴¹ From Thruxton, the court moved to Hurstbourne Priors, owned by the bishops of Winchester since 1285.⁴² When Robert Oxenbridge purchased it in 1558, "there was in the park a lodge and a fayre Manor House."⁴³ Meanwhile, Cromwell met with his commissioners who had been shadowing the progress, John ap Rhys and Thomas Legh, at Wherwell Abbey, 5 miles away.⁴⁴ On 13 September, the court lodged at Winchester Cathedral, where they stayed for five days. There, Sir Richard Graynfeld noted in a letter to Lord Lisle that, "it is said the king and the queen is merry and hawks daily, and likes Winchester and that quarter and praises it much."⁴⁵ From there, they lodged at Bishop's Waltham with Bishop Gardiner at the Bishop's Palace, until 28 September.

³⁵ For a detailed archaeological report on the construction of Acton Court's East Range, see: Rodwell and Bell, *Acton Court*.

³⁶ Cooke, *Westcountry Houses*, 34–38.

³⁷ LP IX 212.

³⁸ Horn, *Fasti Ecclesiae Anglicanae*, ii, 1–3.

³⁹ LP IX 242.

⁴⁰ LP IX 316. The hunting park formed part of Henry Daubney's lands in Somerset, Cornwall, and Devon, acquired from Sir John Bassett in 1504, and later alienated to Edward Seymour in 1536: Byrne, *Lisle Letters*, i, 312–313; iv, 1–11; v, 167–169, 176, 183, 187–189, 216–217, 239.

⁴¹ LP IX 467.

⁴² LP IX 460.

⁴³ *A History of the County of Hampshire*, Vol. IV, ed. William Page, 289.

⁴⁴ LP IX 344.

⁴⁵ LP IX 525.

It is there that Henry called the duke of Norfolk to the progress, to which he wrote to Cromwell that "having good company with me and beginning to hunt in Frammyngnam, [it was] not pleasant" for him nor "those who were with me to know that I should be with the king on Sunday next." To add insult to injury he also noted that the news contained in "Mr Wallop's letter was not to my contentment."⁴⁶ Sir John Wallop was Henry's ambassador to Paris and did not approve of Henry's marriage to Anne and his divorce of Catherine of Aragon. In 1535 however, he was primarily engaged in persuading Philipp Schwarzerter, a respected Lutheran reformer in Germany, come to England, though he had little success.⁴⁷ Norfolk's letter is interesting in that it tells us two things seldom seen anywhere else. First, the letter suggests that there was an ebb and flow of courtiers around the king on progress.⁴⁸ But Norfolk's letter is perhaps more significant in that it is a rare example of how those involved in the progresses perceived them. Henry's summons were clearly disruptive not only for Norfolk himself, who would have to arrange to travel to the king at short notice. Although progresses were flexible on paper, the practical logistics for the courtiers who accompanied the king were often not as easily arranged.

From Bishop's Waltham, the court travelled by ship to Portchester Castle for one night, where Henry inspected the *Harry Grace Dieu*: "Not to make so many enemies, the king, being lately at Pourcemeuel [Portsmouth], ordered his great ship to be equipped, and some others also."⁴⁹ Henry wished to inspect the defences there as well as his ships. With war with France and the Holy Roman Empire an increasing possibility as negotiations deteriorated, this was a necessary addition to the progress route during its planning; Henry would undertake similar surveys during times of unrest abroad, most notably during the 1541 progress, where he toured the defences at Hull and the ships stationed there.⁵⁰ This demonstrates how progresses are targeted interventions in times of diplomatic uncertainty, which provided the king with the means to personally visit the places he most needed to visit.

After inspecting the defences at Portsmouth on 28 September, the king and the court travelled back to Winchester by river; Henry and Anne lodged with Bishop Gardiner

⁴⁶ LP IX 398.

⁴⁷ LP IX 54.

⁴⁸ Similarly, Eustace Chapuys sent men to Henry and Cromwell at least three times along the progress route to determine the king's plans for war with France: LP IX 58, 272, 278, 287.

⁴⁹ LP IX 954.

⁵⁰ LP XVI 1173; TNA, E 101/423/2, fol. 29v.

until 2 October.⁵¹ During their stay, Henry made another significant intervention in the diplomatic process with France. Now that he was reassured his ships were ready to sail, he could turn his focus to preventing war with France, in reminding François I that he wished for them to be allies against the Holy Roman Empire. To that end, John Veysey, the bishop of Exeter dined with Henry on the evening of Friday, 1 October.⁵² During the dinner, the king reminded him that, though Veysey had been named ambassador in France, he had not left for Paris yet. Despite the pressure Henry no doubt applied, Cromwell noted the next day that Veysey was "in no great hurry to leave."⁵³

In the original *gestes* published in May, the progress was meant to loop back from Winchester towards London. Instead, they continued south towards Southampton. Cromwell travelled ahead of the king. A letter for instance places him with William Fitzwilliam in Southampton on 30 September.⁵⁴ Henry and Anne joined them both there the following day, and lodged at the castle that John Leland described in 1540 as "both large, fair and very stronge."⁵⁵ Henry met with his "trusty and right welbeloved Counsaillour Mr Barlowe, Clerke, Pryour of the Monastery of Bisham."⁵⁶ Barlowe had not long returned from the Scottish borders, where he had compiled a list of supposed corrupted abbots. Henry now wished him to return to the court of James V of Scotland "for the increase of amity between them."⁵⁷ Here again we see Henry personally intervene in diplomatic matters to increase the security of the realm, as securing the northern border of the realm would be essential in the eventuality of a conflict with France or the Holy Roman Empire. Or, even, in the disastrous but very likely event that Scotland join France in this brewing conflict. Henry thus diverted the progress route to meet with Barlowe in person in order to mitigate this risk. Dutifully, Barlowe left for James V's court not long after.⁵⁸

⁵¹ LP IX 467, 470; TNA, E 101/422/1, fol. 29.

⁵² LP IX 555. Veysey was close to both kings, and a friend to the late Thomas More. He was not especially sympathetic to the Reformation, but he was a seasoned diplomat who had attended the Field of Cloth of Gold in 1520 and worked particularly closely with Henry VIII on his divorce from Catherine of Aragon.

⁵³ LP IX 594.

⁵⁴ LP IX 529, 535.

⁵⁵ Leland, *The Itinerary of John Leland*, vol. III, 107.

⁵⁶ LP VIII 160. See also Page, "Houses of Augustine Canons," 374–375.

⁵⁷ LP IX 527.

⁵⁸ LP IX 527.

After leaving Southampton Castle, the court lodged at Beaulieu Abbey with Bishop Shaxton from 6 to 8 October.⁵⁹ Henry dined at Redlynch in Salisbury with Sir Nicholas Wadham and John Baldwin on the afternoon of 9 October, then lodged with Lord John Audeley at Salisbury, along with the rest of the court.⁶⁰ A letter from Blackewell to Cromwell suggests that the latter remained with the king until "Sarum" (the latin name of Salisbury), and that while there, he dealt with a local case concerning a certain John Hancull.⁶¹ He did not stay long, however. Eustace Chapuys' letters tell us that he set off for London on 10 September, and had returned to meet him at Westminster by 13 September.⁶² There seems to be some confusion about Cromwell's whereabouts in October, for both Nicholas Carew and Lord William Sandys had expected him to have either remained with the court until at least the end of the month, or to have returned to the king's side on 14 October.⁶³

Now without Cromwell, Henry and Anne moved from Salisbury to Clarendon Palace on Sunday 10 October, where they visited Wilton Abbey.⁶⁴ Afterwards, they lodged with William Sandys' at the Vyne. Sir Francis Brian, a courtier travelling in the king's retinue, noted again that the king was "mery."⁶⁵ Sir Francis Bryan was the chief gentleman of the privy chamber in 1535, and cousin to Anne Boleyn. He and his brother-in-law Nicholas Carew were close friends of the king and held a number of high offices during their lifetimes. He was removed from the privy chamber at Cardinal Wolsey's insistence in 1519, and again in 1526.⁶⁶ It was likely Anne's influence that saw him returned to this office in 1528, following the death of Sir William Carey, and he once again found favour with Henry by supporting his marriage to Anne.

⁵⁹TNA OBS 1419; LP IX 467, 568.

⁶⁰ LP IX 579, 655. Audeley writes to Cromwell, hoping the "King and Queen were satisfied with their poor lodging" at his house, as he was in considerable debt. The visit could not have gone well, for his next letter to Cromwell begs him to intervene and stop the king from taking his Lordship of "Llandeury," Llandovery in Carmarthenshire, worth £100 a year, "the woods and bondsmen reserved, and that Audeley should pay him 500 marks a year till his debts are extinguished," and to "loyis erely [lose yearly] the said £100, a ere" (LP IX 580).

⁶¹ LP IX 458.

⁶² LP IX 594.

⁶³ LP IX 662–663.

⁶⁴ LP IX 619.

⁶⁵ LP IX 639.

⁶⁶ Weir, *Henry VIII*, 259.

It was at the Vyne that the progress itinerary experienced its third major diversion. The original *gestes* drawn up in May suggest that the court intended to stay at Farnham, the next stop of the itinerary after the Vyne, from 23 to 27 September, before moving to Easthampstead. To accommodate the diversion to Southampton, Henry instead intended to lodge at Farnham on 15 October. However, "for the death [at] Shalford three-quarters of a mile from Guildford, and of four persons at Farnham," a letter from Fitzwilliam to Cromwell shows that Henry decided to forgo the visit altogether for fear of illness:

This evening I received a letter from Mr. Controller, stating that the king had changed his "giestes" for visiting Farnham, and will now proceed as follows:—Tuesday, from the Vine to Basing; Thursday, to Elvetham; Friday, Easthampstead; and Saturday, to Windsor.⁶⁷

This is corroborated by a letter by Sir William Paulet, Marquess of Winchester and a member of the privy council:

The King ... has changed his giests and will be at my poor house of Basing on Tuesday and Wednesday, and on Thursday night at Mr. Seymour's place at Elvetham; at Hertfordbridge on Friday; Saturday and Sunday at Easthampstede, and Monday to Windsor.⁶⁸

As such, Henry and Anne departed the Vyne after an extended stay on the morning of Tuesday, 19 October and arrived at Sir William Paulet's estate, Basing House, that same evening. They stayed there until 21 October. From there, they lodged at "Mr Seymour's place," Bramsell House in Elvetham, for the night of the 21, before moving to Hertfordbridge on the 22, and Easthampstead on the 23.⁶⁹ Cromwell, summoned by the king some days prior, returned to the progress retinue. To accommodate their delay, Henry prorogued Parliament until Candlemas while he waited to hear what France and the Holy Roman Empire's intentions were for war, and if his diplomatic efforts during the progress had borne any fruit.⁷⁰ The court therefore stayed at Easthampstead until 25 October, then returned to Windsor with haste. There, on St. Simon and St. Jude's Day (28 October), the king gifted Lord Leonard Grey with 500 marks and £100 of land, "besides his previous grant of 300 marks land," and a "ship well-trimmed.. Anne gifted Grey a "chain of gold from her

⁶⁷ TNA, SP 1/98 fol. 12.

⁶⁸ TNA, SP 1/98 fol. 13.

⁶⁹ TNA, SP 1/98 fol. 13.

⁷⁰ LP IX 682.

middle, worth 100 marks, and a purse of 20 sovereigns."⁷¹ Importantly, by 25 October, "the death [was] well-stopped in London."⁷²

A "Parallel Progress": Cromwell and the Dissolution

Cromwell's presence for such a large portion of this progress is significant. By 1535, the size and influence of monastic houses was a matter for public discourse. Thomas More's *Utopia* states that the pastureland owned by religious houses "devour[ed] even the people themselves, they despoil and destroy fields, houses, towns...even some abbots (holy men are they) not thinking it sufficient to live idly and comfortably, contribut[e] nothing to the common good unless they also undermine it."⁷³ Many of the local secular buildings paled in comparison to the size and wealth of monastic houses: "Moche parte therof is desolate," said a bill presented to parliament in 1536, "void groundys, with pittys sellers & vautes lying open & uncoveryd very peryllous for people to go by in the night."⁷⁴ Landmarks named "Abbot's Meadow" or "Friar's Walk" referenced the plots named after those who owned them. James Clark emphasises that "[t]he placement of boundaries and the prosecution of trespass, gave the Henrician generation a heightened awareness of monastic domain," which must have seemed far removed from the simple boundaries of religion.⁷⁵ Indeed, in his response to Martin Luther, Henry compared the "ruinous buyding [Luther] reare[d] vpon the false foundation of vnfaithfull faythe", to the failing of the clergy, which were both as conspicuous as "buyldyngs go[ne] to ruyne."⁷⁶

Placed in the context of the dissolution, a close analysis of John ap Rhys, Thomas Legh, and Richard Leighton's itineraries—pieced together by their letters to and from Cromwell—reveal that a team of surveyors were travelling almost parallel to the king's progress route from London, through Gloucester and Bristol, and then finally down towards Southampton.⁷⁷ They were regularly corresponding with Cromwell, taking directions from him and amending their plans at his instruction. Cromwell's continued presence for much of this progress, and his auditor's own parallel progress, has never been

⁷¹ TNA, E 315/455, fol. 8.

⁷² LP IX 700.

⁷³ More, *Utopia*, 22.

⁷⁴ Ludders, *The Statutes of the Realm*, 531.

⁷⁵ Clark, *Dissolution of the Monasteries*, 29.

⁷⁶ Henry VIII, *A copy of the letters*, D, viiii.

⁷⁷ James Clark lays out these itineraries in incredible detail in: Clark, *Dissolution*, 206–264.

examined in any detail. While much has been written on the work done by Cromwell's men in the lead up to the dissolution, most recently by James Clark, the connection between the itinerary of Cromwell's men and Cromwell's own itinerary has hitherto been missed by historians when considering the 1535 progress to Bristol.

Cromwell was deeply involved in the work of his men as they travelled to various monastic sites. Many of the injunctions his commissioners would bring to the monastic communities the visited were drafted by Cromwell himself and his legal clerk, Robert Warmington, while he toured Gloucestershire with the king in early summer.⁷⁸ He met with ap Rhys in person at Tewkesbury when he joined the progress, and they reported their findings on the alleged abuses of monasteries and abbeys in Bath, Keynsham, Maiden Bradley, and Glastonbury.⁷⁹ Cromwell's visit to Tewkesbury with the king was particularly significant. He had a long-standing association with the Abbot John Wakeman, and it was certainly this friendship that encouraged the smooth alignment of Tewkesbury Abbey with the royal regime. In 1536, the monastic congregation there pledged their service to the king with little fuss, Wakeman telling Cromwell that of "my trew hert ya shall always be assured."⁸⁰ Leighton, Legh, and ap Rhys undertook months' long circuits of England in carrying out their duties. Leighton was, for the most part, the most aligned to the 1535 progress route, moving with a team of horses quickly from London through to Gloucester and Somerset, visiting monastic communities along the Thames and the river Avon. By August, he had completed his investigations in Gloucester, and had moved to Bristol despite the sickness there. By September, he had travelled to Berkshire, Hampshire, and Sussex, "swept through Waverly in the space on an afternoon," and set off for Chichester, fifty miles away, before dawn the next morning.⁸¹

At various points along the progress route, Cromwell's commissioners sent him relics or iconography deemed unacceptable, often made of gold, silver or precious stones. In the first part of 1535, Cromwell had "certainly kept monastic treasures in mind," though Clark notes the treasures that "came to Cromwell or the king at the time from the religious

⁷⁸ TNA, E 36/116, fols. 19r–223; SP 6/6 fols. 6r–11v; BL, Cotton MS Cleopatra E IV, fols. 22r–25r; Clarke, *Dissolution*, 576.

⁷⁹ LP IX 42, 45, 160, 168, 280, 344, 444. John ap Rhys was a notary employed by the king and Cromwell at various points in 1535 before Cromwell drafted him to the commission.

⁸⁰ TNA, SP 1/98, fol. 58r.

⁸¹ Clark, *Dissolution*, 230.

houses appears to have been more by chance than by design."⁸² Nevertheless, in August, ap Rhys delivered to him various relics and cloths from Maiden Bradley—including Mary Magdalen's girdle, covered with white, crosses of silver and gold, red silk, and two flowers wrapped in white and black sarcenet, which on "Christmas Even" will spring and "burgen and bear blossoms."⁸³

Cromwell also investigated a supposed fake relic at Hailes Abbey, at Anne's direction, while the court lodged at Winchcombe Abbey from 24 to 26 July. Cromwell's men and Anne's chaplains went to the abbey to "view, search and examine by all possible means" the "abominable abuse" of a relic called "the holy blood of Hailes," ostensibly a phial of Christ's blood which had not congealed since his crucifixion.⁸⁴ The abbey had received the phial in 1268, and the relic became a focus of pilgrimage by at least 1277.⁸⁵ In 1535, pilgrims made offerings to the relic to the total of £10.⁸⁶ Although the relic remained at Hailes Abbey until 1538, it might still be possible that Cromwell did personally intervene in 1535. In 1538, a sermon by John Hilsey suggested a previous interrogation of the relic had occurred "many years before" which had established that the relic was a blasphemous counterfeit made of "duck's blood" or another "gummy" substance coloured with saffron.⁸⁷ The "feigned miracle" of Hailes Abbey would provide not only a convincing argument against pilgrimage but an open-and-shut case that further evidenced the immorality of the monasteries. It proved an effective strategy. One continental observer noted in 1538 that the "imposture of the priests ... is now notorious to every person in England."⁸⁸ As Peter Marshall notes, "a king who had exposed such ungodly trickery could not be regarded as a heretic or schismatic. Indeed, the clear implication was that it was the pope's supremacy over the Church of England which had allowed such idolatry to go unchecked."⁸⁹

⁸² Clark, *Dissolution*, 222.

⁸³ LP IX 168.

⁸⁴ LP VIII 834, 1056.

⁸⁵ Latimer, *Sermons and Remains*, 363–364.

⁸⁶ Baddeley, "The Holy Blood of Hayles," 276–285; Oates, "Richard Pynson and the Holy Blood of Hayles," 269–277.

⁸⁷ Wriothesley, *A Chronicle of England*, 74–76. See also: Nichols, *Narratives of the Days of the Reformation*, 286; Hopper, *London Chronicle*, 11–12; Robinson, *Original Letters Relative to the English Reformation*, Vol. II, 604, 606–607, 609; LP XIII (1), 348.

⁸⁸ *Original letters relative to the English Reformation*, 6.

⁸⁹ Marshall, "The Rood of Boxley," 694.

Indeed, Henry involved himself in the investigation of monastic holdings along the progress route in 1535. At least once along, he directed Cromwell to have his men survey the abbey currently hosting them. On 14–15 July, the court lodged at Abingdon Abbey, and Henry stepped into a long-held deadlock between Cromwell and the abbot, Thomas Rowland.⁹⁰ In the months leading up to the progress, Cromwell had used the impending physical presence of Henry's arrival to unsuccessfully motivate Rowland to turn over the evaluation report he had compiled of the state of his monastic holdings, as he had promised to complete in lieu of a visitation by Cromwell's commissioners to review his accounts earlier that year.⁹¹ Previously, threats attempts ascertain the reason for his tardiness, alongside repeated pressure applied through the threat of numerous visits by commissioners, had been markedly unsuccessful. In early spring, Rowland sent some incomplete accounts to Cromwell and dragged his heels with the rest.⁹² By 14 July, the deadlock had not been broken.

Cromwell's promised hearing before the king during their visit seems not to have borne much fruit, but by afterwards, Henry made himself personally involved. On 7 August, at the king's direction, "Mynne, Smythe, John Note and Hugh Fuller" were dispatched to examine the rest of the accounts and settle a long-running dispute between John Aulett, Chief Steward, and Rowland.⁹³ In response, Rowland wrote to Cromwell asking him to "requyre and commande [the comissioners] to tary here in examynacion of the said accompts untyll suche tyme as they have viewed the hole accompte wherby they may make a trew certifict thereof." Impatient, Cromwell threatened to examine Rowland under oath. So great was the pressure Henry and Cromwell now applied, the men the king had sent wrote to Cromwell, claiming the people in Abingdon "thinke in us moche extremyte to cause thabbate to be sworne" and pursuing him so keenly.⁹⁴ But the pressure had worked. Rowland conceded, going further than he otherwise would have. Clark notes that the visit had "driven the abbot towards a surrender of authority beyond the original obligation" Cromwell had initially asked of him.⁹⁵ He later supplied evidence to the commissioners in

⁹⁰ TNA, E 101/422/1, fol. 25.

⁹¹ TNA, SP 1/91, fol. 89v; SP 1/95, fol. 96v.

⁹² TNA, SP 1/92, fol. 139r; SP 1/93, fol. 194r; SP 1/95 fol. 96r-v; LP VIII 1056.

⁹³ Clark, *Dissolution*, 228.

⁹⁴ TNA, SP 1/95, fol. 96r.

⁹⁵ Clark, *Dissolution*, 230.

August, to the great "disaffection of his priors."⁹⁶ By September, when Richard Leighton arrived at Abingdon carrying the king's writ to impose injunctions upon them, he accepted with little fuss.⁹⁷

A personal visit from the king and Cromwell during the progress presented a uniquely powerful opportunity for Rowland to understand his position; an opportunity Cromwell likely would not have received had the court not lodged at Abingdon in July, and had Henry not subsequently involved himself in the dispute at all. In contrast, when Anne and Cromwell intervened in St Mary's Abbey in York that same journey, Abbot William Thornton and Archbishop Edward Lee were markedly less receptive.⁹⁸ Lee wrote to Cromwell first in the spring, asking to be "lefte ouzt of it."⁹⁹ In late June, he supplied his reports, claiming he had "for [his] parte done the best [he] coulde," but he had "lytle skylle of such things," but entirely neglected to include an evaluation of York Minster, his own church.¹⁰⁰ York was far from London, and although Thomas Legh visited St Mary's Abbey later that year to impose restrictions upon them, Archbishop Lee was still resistant.¹⁰¹ The day after Legh departed York, Archbishop Lee sought to have the injunctions lifted from his diocese.¹⁰² Cromwell had taken steps to invest the commissioners conducting visitations with the necessary authority, but in particularly stubborn cases, as with Rowland and Lee, a personal visit from the king seemed to make a difference in their willingness to obey, and in how far they were willing to go in their submission. Just as progresses brought the expression of the king's power to the nobility on the fringes of the court to demand unity, so too did the 1535 progress apply this same pressure to the ecclesiastical holdouts in Gloucestershire and west of England. In the case of Abbot Rowland and Abingdon Abbey, it was a remarkably successful endeavour.

⁹⁶ LP XIV i. 942; Strype, *Ecclesiastical Memorials*, ii, appendix ii, 291.

⁹⁷ TNA, SP 1/97, fol. 26r.

⁹⁸ TNA, SP1/92, fol. 139r.

⁹⁹ TNA, SP 1/91, fol. 147r.

¹⁰⁰ TNA, SP 1/92, fol. 148r; SP 1/93, fol. 161r; BL, Cotton MS Cleopatra E IV, fol. 369r; Clark, *Dissolution*, 227.

¹⁰¹ The visit seems to have also unstuck York City Council and their mayor, William Wright, who had previously been aligned with Lee and Thornton, since at least the summer of 1534. In the summer of 1535, they sent Cromwell a "power tokyn for a remembrance" alongside their evaluations: TNA, SP 1/93, fol. 185r.

¹⁰² TNA, SP 1/99, fol. 66r.

Conclusions

When Henry and Anne returned to Windsor with Cromwell on 28 October, they had completed one of the most significant progresses of Henry's reign, as well as one of the longest. They visited forty-three unique locations and lodged with thirty-one different hosts over a total of 110 days.¹⁰³ Their progress had taken them through Gloucester to Bristol, then south to Portsmouth and Southampton. After such an undertaking, they might have wondered: were they successful in their endeavours?

The 1535 progress to Bristol was principally conceived with three main aims in mind: to bestow a personal visit upon notable reformers in the west of England, men such as Nicholas Poyntz of Acton Court and Sir John Walshe of Little Sodbury; to facilitate Cromwell and the king's active participation in the survey of monastic land in relation to the dissolution; and to make targeted, personal interventions in the diplomatic efforts to negotiate between England, Scotland, France, and the Holy Roman Empire. In each of these endeavours, the progress was a success. Nicholas Poyntz was rewarded with a personal visit from the king and queen, and a knighthood, displaying to all the possible benefits of supporting the new religion in England. Cromwell was deeply involved in the work of his men as they travelled to various monastic sites. And, most significantly, Henry was able to leverage the access provided by progress to advance his diplomatic agenda abroad, allowing for targeted interventions in this process. Progresses not only provided the localities with access to the king but crucially provided the king access to the localities. If Tudor governance relied on access to the king's person, progress provided the vehicle through which that access could be broadened to the benefit of all. This vital reciprocity is key to the machine of the Tudor governance in the sixteenth century.

By examining the 1535 progress itinerary in detail, this article has shown that progresses allowed Henry to personally intervene in political and diplomatic issues in a way that would not have been possible otherwise. Henry VIII needed to remind not only the people of England, but also the nobility in the localities that the king was not just a distant figure, but a living authority. By bringing the power, ritual and ceremony of the court to the localities, But it has also demonstrated how progresses were a flexible vehicle of personal monarchy in the sixteenth century, individually tailored around targeted interventions that allowed Henry to respond proactively to the changing political and diplomatic landscape in 1535.

¹⁰³ For a full breakdown of Henry itinerary, as compiled by Henry on Tour, see: <https://henryontour.uk/>.

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