**2. Progresses and Personal Monarchy in the Reign of Henry VIII**

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**Abstract**

Henry VIII’s progresses played a vital role in presenting the king to his people and displaying his sovereignty on a public stage. Despite their importance to the king’s political agenda, they remain a significantly under-appreciated feature of his reign. In particular there has been no attempt thus far to consolidate existing sources and historiography into a single complete itinerary of Henry’s progresses. Studying the nuances of his progresses provides new insights into personal monarchy, modes of government, and representations of royal authority. Theoretically, travelling beyond his standing houses in the south-east of England enabled Henry to strengthen his authority in the localities, to project the power of the crown and to nurture relationships with county and urban elites. But were royal progresses always the success story historians tend to assume? Assessing two progresses in detail, this chapter teases out their unique motivations and distinctive features within an overall political strategy of taking the majesty of kingship on tour. Progresses were individual and flexible, responsive to the religious and political contexts of the moment. As such they were a more complex and varied phenomenon than recognised in the past, capable of inspiring fear as well as celebration in the English shires.

*Everyone here knows that the King today commences his progress, which extends as far as York…. As the thing is new, nothing else is talked of. More than 200 tents are carried, artillery is sent by sea and river to within 10 miles of York, and the great horses are taken as if it were a question of war; all because the King, during his reign, has never visited these places, where, for his first entry and for the danger of the daily rebellions, he wishes to be well accompanied by men of these parts in whom he has more trust.*[[1]](#endnote-1)

Henry VIII’s status as arguably the most famous, if not the most loved, king in English history owes a lot to his skill in projecting an image of majesty. As implied in this despatch by French ambassador Charles de Marillac, the summer progresses undertaken by Henry VIII and his retinue were a motive force in that process, enabling the king to command the allegiance of his people and display his sovereignty on a moving public stage. Keeping pace with Henry, but also sometimes breaking away to conduct business on their own account, were his successive queens consort and their households, turning progresses into vehicles of queenship as well as kingship. Add in the many attendant councillors and courtiers, plus the clerks of the royal seals and the riding chapel and every other accoutrement necessary to government and majesty on the move, and a sixteenth-century progress was a sophisticated undertaking, evidently deemed to be worth the huge investment of effort, time and money. If each of Henry’s progresses was distinct in tone and tailored to particular objectives, taken collectively they offer a cross-section of the early Tudor regime.

And yet Henry VIII’s progresses remain an under-appreciated feature of his rule; often cited in general terms as a means of cultivating allegiance, occasionally examined more closely for their relevance to broader political or religious contexts, but never until now studied in all their elements – political, religious, ceremonial, architectural – as one of the repeating rhythms of the reign.[[2]](#endnote-2) Nor has there been a sustained effort to consolidate all the known or identifiable evidence – manuscripts in the State Papers and numerous other record classes, letters and chronicles, architectural and antiquarian evidence, borough and county archives, local memory – into a single itinerary of Henry’s progresses. That work is now under way, drawing on a network of researchers brought together by an AHRC-funded project, as a means of reviewing what is known and what may yet be discovered about this potent point of contact between court and country under Henry VIII.[[3]](#endnote-3) The current chapter is literally a work in progress, aiming to define key problems in the study of royal journeys and to comment on approaches and sources. But it also seeks clearer definitions of what made a progress, the range of political and religious considerations propelling Henry to travel beyond London, and above all the significance of going on progress within a system of personal monarchy. We also question the assumption that royal progresses were necessarily well-received by the communities who hosted the king. If Henry VIII was sometimes met by uncertainty or even fear in the localities, then that needs to be factored into the history of a ruler whom not a few of his own subjects, as well as later generations of scholars, came to regard as a tyrant.[[4]](#endnote-4)

**Defining a Royal Progress**

What constituted a progress in Henry VIII’s England? The location and composition of the sixteenth-century court varied with the time of year. Between autumn and spring, the full court of up to 1,500 personnel transited between the standing houses (those with a permanent collection of furniture, as distinct from properties fitted out in advance of a royal visit) as need dictated, according to the wishes of the king. The contemporary term for this was ‘removing’; historians have also characterised this as the ‘itinerant’ court. In the summer the court shrank to perhaps half that size, a slimmed-down body more suited to ‘riding journeys and progresses’ (as described in the Eltham ordinances of 1526) and less likely to overwhelm the resources of the places where the king chose to stay.[[5]](#endnote-5)

Henry VIII’s itinerary was significantly different from those of his royal predecessors, by dint of the greater stability of the English regions and the growing pull of a metropolitan court. The removing of the royal household or *domus* from one of the king’s houses to another was a fundamental feature of the medieval English monarchy, consistent with a crown estate centred on the royal duchies of Cornwall and Lancaster and the earldom of Chester in addition to its power base at Westminster. Making a regular circuit of their estates to gather rents and preside over manorial courts was a familiar practice for any later medieval magnate. In summer 1353, for instance, Edward the Black Prince responded to reports of unrest in Cheshire with a personal visit to redress grievances and grant a new charter, culminating in a banquet at Chester castle in honour of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The following year Edward received the homage of his tenants in Cornwall, and he travelled there again with his wife Joan in 1362-3, holding court at Restormel castle and gathering troops for his campaigns in France.[[6]](#endnote-6)

The language of royal removing was still current two centuries later, as when the young Edward VI noted in his chronicle that he was ‘Removing to Woking’.[[7]](#endnote-7) Similarly the inventory of Henry VIII’s goods lists the contents of the ‘Removing Guarderobe’ attendant on the king’s person ‘where the same for the tyme shall happen to be’, including cloths of estate with the royal arms and tapestries featuring Hercules and Charlemagne – the portable backdrop of Tudor kingship.[[8]](#endnote-8) What was implied by ‘removing’, however, had changed a good deal as a genuinely peripatetic medieval monarchy had become more focused on its principal residences at Westminster and around London. By Henry VIII’s day the tenor of court life had settled to a seasonal relocation between the standing houses along the route of the Thames including Windsor, Hampton Court and Oatlands, Richmond, Greenwich and Eltham, plus New Hall in Essex (renamed Beaulieu following its purchase from the Boleyns in 1516) and Woodstock Hall in Oxfordshire.[[9]](#endnote-9) Several of these were remodelled by Henry VIII, and all feature in his itinerary. The reason why one house was preferred over another is not easy to detect in the records; Simon Thurley describes the process as ‘random’.[[10]](#endnote-10) But it seems likely that the liturgical year, and especially the great feasts of Easter, Christmas and Epiphany, influenced the king in choosing where to keep his court. Christmas 1515, for instance, was spent at Eltham, perhaps the origin of the Saxon Kings painted panels now in the collection of the Society of Antiquaries.[[11]](#endnote-11) The architectural history of properties owned by the king may be read as an index to their comparative significance at any given point in the reign. The ‘newe buyldings and reparacons’ undertaken at Eltham between 1519 and 1522, including a rebuilt chapel ‘with comely wyndowes most chapellyke’ and a new withdrawing chamber for the queen, created a space suitable for numerous further royal visits including another stay at Christmas 1525/6: the occasion of Wolsey’s Eltham ordinances regulating the behaviour of the court, ostensibly on grounds of economy although a political motive has also been detected.

What of ‘progresses’ proper? The Oxford English Dictionary gives a date of c.1450 as the earliest usage of the word in the context of an official tour by a monarch or person of high office; by extension, as cited in one of Archbishop Cranmer’s letters, a ‘progress’ in Tudor English could also mean a procession.[[12]](#endnote-12) The language of royal progresses may be traced in Edward Hall’s *Chronicle*, first published in 1548*.* Beginning with a reference to Henry VI’s progress into Warwickshire ‘for his health & recreacion… Hawkyng and Huntynge’ – according to Hall, a distraction manoeuvre contrived by Queen Margaret for political reasons of her own – Hall describes several of the longer journeys made by Henry VII and Henry VIII, including the 1486 progress to York to ‘wede, extirpate and purdge the myndes of men spotted & contaminate with the contagious smoke of dissencion, & prevy faccions’.[[13]](#endnote-13) Henry VIII’s early progresses were different in tone, an opportunity for the new king to put some distance between his own regime and the unpopular government of his father. Hall characterises a young and vigorous Henry passing the summer of 1510 ‘exercisyng hym self dayly in shotyng, singyng, daunsyng, wrastelyng, casting of the barre, plaiyng at the recorders, flute, virginals and in setting of songes’, a pageant of feasts and festivities to contrast with the rule of the winter king. The progress reached Shaftesbury and Corfe Castle in Dorset before concluding with jousts and tourneys at Woking, where Henry VII had built a new hall.[[14]](#endnote-14) Not everything was as carefree as this might suggest: Henry took advantage of the court’s absence from London to execute his father’s former ministers Richard Empson and Edmund Dudley. But Hall was careful to make clear that the king was acting in response to petitions received on progress.

In her study of Queen Elizabeth I’s travels, Mary Hill Cole reserves the term ‘progress’ for ‘those 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’.[[15]](#endnote-15) The attempt to define a progress is helpful, though the emphasis on private hosts translates less well to the reign of Henry VIII given the astonishing number of properties that he purchased, exchanged or otherwise acquired over the course of his reign. Henry owned more than sixty houses and hunting lodges by the time he died, more than any king of England and (in the judgement of Howard Colvin and John Summerson) ‘an obvious manifestation of a tyrannical and acquisitive personality’.[[16]](#endnote-16) The pressure that this imposed on the treasury was a major headache for Thomas Cromwell, who nevertheless knew better than to question a policy that was a reflection of the king’s character as much as a manifestation of his magnificence. If the majority of Henry’s property portfolio was concentrated in the south-east, then he also accumulated houses across a wider arc including Petworth in Sussex, Ewelme in Oxfordshire, Grafton in Northamptonshire, and (from 1539) the King’s Manor in York: formerly the Benedictine abbey of St Mary, now ‘the Kinges Pallaice at York’ and headquarters of the reinvigorated Council of the North.[[17]](#endnote-17) Henry VIII’s provincial progresses were different from his daughter’s because he was less dependent on the hospitality of others, though when he did deign to stay with one of his subjects – William Lord Sandys at The Vyne, or Sir Nicholas Carew at Beddington – it was seen to be all the more significant.

Perhaps the simplest definition of a royal progress is also the best: a summer journey beyond the king’s standing houses, mixing business with pleasure in varying proportions according to circumstance (but invariably involving ceremony and display, redress of grievances and dialogue, hunting and gift-giving, religious services and the distribution of alms), and requiring the court to re-order itself into a form appropriate for extended travel. A key difference between the two states of the court was whether the king ‘kept his hall’, enabling his retinue to eat at the crown’s expense in a tradition of hospitality dating back to the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. Another marker was the chapel royal, at its full strength ‘for the administration of dyvyne service as appertayneth’ whenever the king kept his hall but reduced to six men, six children and the master while on progress; indeed Kisby sees this as the key difference between the two states of the court. The usual repertoire of the chapel royal was cut back to a daily Lady Mass with an additional mass and anthem on Sundays and holydays, ‘for whiche purpose no great cariage of either of vestments or bookes shall require’.[[18]](#endnote-18) To our core definition of an Henrician royal progress, then, we should add the administrative and liturgical rearrangements which the court underwent.

In the words of Susan Wabuda, Henry VIII’s progresses ‘displayed his fitness to rule’.[[19]](#endnote-19) In an age when the security of the body politic depended on the wellbeing of the body natural, making a play on the king’s health and strength was an act of state as much as a mark of Henry’s own ebullient personality. Hunting was a core activity on any summer progress: an opportunity for the king to show off his horsemanship, to escape the press of business in the company of his closest friends, and generally to embody a model of monarchy that was already old when it was praised by Bishop Asser in his ninth-century *Life of King Alfred*. Hall’s *Chronicle* for 1515 describes the mix of hunting and other activities typical to Henry VIII’s journeys out of London: ‘This Sommer the kyng tooke his progresse Westward, & visited his tounes & castels there, & harde the complayntes of his poore cominaltie, & ever as he roade, he hunted & liberally departed with venyson’.[[20]](#endnote-20) Royal hunting has received some scholarly discussion, though the subject deserves closer study in terms of its ritual and material history as well the possibilities for access to the king that it provided.[[21]](#endnote-21) The chance to ride with the king for a day granted temporary membership of the court to a wider group than was able to participate in the jousts staged at Westminster or the procession to the chapel royal at Hampton Court, strengthening social ties between the sovereign and the political nation in the localities. Stag hunting yielded rich spoils that could be shared with followers and hosts. Already a high-status food, venison hunted by the king’s party had additional cachet and its distribution evoked ancient ideas of royal liberality. In August 1526 Wolsey’s chamberlain William Fitzwilliam reported to the Cardinal on the king’s progress to Petworth, the Sussex estate still at that point in the ownership of the earl of Northumberland: ‘the kinges highnes (our Lord bee thanked) is mery and in good helth… entertayning such gentilmen of the contrey as reasorted unto his persone in right famyllier maner and with good words, and also rewarded theym with venyson accordingly’.[[22]](#endnote-22) Fitzwilliam’s references to the king’s ‘right good passetyme’ were not as bland as they might sound. If the king’s health was a matter of state, then his mood – as Wolsey knew better than anyone – was a political issue. A petition for a land grant or placement at court was likelier to succeed when Henry was full of the bonhomie of the hunt and a sense of obligation to his hosts.

Were all interactions with local communities as positive as these examples imply? We should not be too quick to assume that royal journeys were successful simply because they happened. Studies of Tudor royal magnificence need to be alert to questions of audience and reception, as well as aesthetic quality and media of transmission.[[23]](#endnote-23) Provincial progresses might appear to be a Tudor equivalent of the more personal ‘walkabout’ style of royal tours adopted by the British monarchy following the 1970 visit to Australia and New Zealand. But there is a risk in imagining this kind of interaction between sovereign and public in the deeper past. Cliff Davies sounds a note of caution about Henry VIII’s visits to Cambridge, a ‘fairly low-key and incidental’ by-product of the king’s pilgrimages to the pre-Reformation shrine at Walsingham rather than the ‘dynamic exercises in royal theatre’ proposed by Wabuda.[[24]](#endnote-24) At times Thurley also pictures a more private King Henry than has usually been assumed, removing by barge from one set of privy lodgings to another ‘without entering the public domain at all’.[[25]](#endnote-25) The financial implications of entertaining the king and his retinue may also have been a factor. Towns and courtiers welcoming Elizabeth I also fretted about the costs of hosting a queen not known for her largesse, and the same may have been true in Henry VIII’s reign.[[26]](#endnote-26) The impact of progresses on the functioning of government also needs to be considered. The king became accessible to a wider circle of advisors than would have been able to approach him in one of the royal palaces; his repeated visits to Wolf Hall, home of Sir John Seymour (father of Henry’s third wife Jane), are a case in point. When Henry travelled, the privy seal sometimes remained behind.[[27]](#endnote-27) Did this put more emphasis on the signet, the most personal of the instruments of Tudor government?

**Sources and Interpretations**

The sources for Henry VIII’s progresses are surprisingly rich, if also scattered across a number of record classes and repositories. Historians are drawn inevitably to the State Papers and Exchequer records held in The National Archives, a familiar hunting ground for anyone interested in the functioning of the Tudor state. A hand-written itinerary, apparently reliable where it can be compared with other sources, may have been drawn up by the same R.H. Brodie who worked on the *Letters and Papers of Henry VIII* series for the Public Record Office.[[28]](#endnote-28) Major progresses were plotted and circulated in advance in the ‘gests’ that are a key source for the king’s itinerary, though not all have survived and Henry sometimes changed his plans once on the road; a practice also adopted by Elizabeth, one element in her strategy of ‘dislocating the court’ through progress as argued by Cole.[[29]](#endnote-29) Other relevant manuscripts include the records of the Office of the Tents and the Wardrobe, cofferer’s and comptroller’s accounts, and the twin inventories of the king’s possessions in the British Library and the Society of Antiquaries, making it possible to trace categories of material culture and even individual objects. Chronicles and ambassadors’ reports supply details of what actually took place on progress, while civic records show how the king was welcomed with ceremonial entries, religious services, drama and gifts.

Some relevant secondary studies have already been highlighted. Focusing on the first half of Henry VIII’s reign, Samman assembles a plausible case for ‘ritualised splendour’ as a factor in strengthening links between the centre and localities. But his claim that progresses left a ‘lasting impression on contemporaries’ is more difficult to assess: how were royal visits, intense yet ephemeral, remembered by those who witnessed them – and who were those contemporaries?[[30]](#endnote-30) The importance of ritual on progress has been identified, whether the ‘liturgy of monarchy’ which (Thurley argues) was intrinsic to royal houses in this period, or the more precisely sacred liturgy and music performed by the riding chapel. Earlier Tudor progresses are useful points of comparison, especially as a response to regional rebellion and a means of reconciliation between the crown and local communities. Henry VII’s progress to York in 1486 gave the city the chance to sue for the king’s mercy given its former support for Richard III; a second visit the following year readmitted York to royal favour following its stand against the Yorkist pretender Lambert Simnel.[[31]](#endnote-31) Comparatively little is known about the provincial journeys undertaken by Edward VI and Mary I, making it difficult to plot how the culture of Henrician progresses changed on his death. But the rapid disposal of a number of the king’s houses must have had a bearing, as will the mixture of social unrest, sickness and religious persecution that afflicted the middle years of the sixteenth century.

Building on our definition of a royal progress, we can hazard a summary of the purposes that they served and their value within a system of personal monarchy. At a basic level, removings and progresses freed the king and his court to find fresh hunting and a summer at leisure, while escaping the contagion of the city and allowing for the standing houses to be scoured and cleaned. At their most sophisticated, as with the joint manoeuvres with the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V or the 1535 journey westward, Henry VIII’s progresses pursued a more obviously political agenda, whether diplomatic (temporarily successful in 1522, a failure in 1541), religious (his courting of support for church reform in 1535), or focused on a show of power in the localities. Reviewing the fleet at anchor at Portsmouth, or the fortified harbours at Dover and Hull, presented Henry as a defender of his realm and the military equal of his European rivals.[[32]](#endnote-32) Overall progresses were an opportunity for ceremonial dialogue between ruler and ruled; the point being that this was a mutual engagement, with an expectation that once Henry had been alerted to a problem he would then do something about it.

In terms of future research, there are several priorities. The role of queens demands to be better understood, particularly where there is evidence of independent action as in the case of Katherine’s progresses during the 1520s. We need to know more about local responses to royal progresses, the building projects that they stimulated and any lasting legacies of royal visits. The material aspect of taking the court on tour is a subject offering a wealth of possibility, both for Henry and his wives. Progresses also offer a window into the religious devotions of a king who began his reign by going on pilgrimage, and ended it by converting monasteries into homes for himself. Public piety had been a dominant motif of Henry VII’s progresses; in 1486 alone he washed the feet of the poor at Lincoln Minster on Maundy Thursday, held a St George’s day Garter service and crown-wearing in York, and took part in religious processions in Worcester, Hereford, Gloucester and Bristol.[[33]](#endnote-33) How did Henry VIII follow or adapt his father’s model, especially once the Reformation had begun? We now briefly review two of Henry’s progresses from the second half of the reign, when both the theory and the practice of English kingship were facing unprecedented change.

**Building Loyalty: The Western Progress of 1535**

On 8 July 1535 – three days later than planned – Henry VIII and his ‘dere and entirely beloved’ wife Anne left Windsor for Reading Abbey.[[34]](#endnote-34) Their departure marked the beginning of one of the longest progresses of the reign. The royal party would travel to Gloucester, Winchester and Southampton before returning to Windsor on 26 October. The 1535 tour highlights recurring themes in Henry VIII’s progresses, including their responsiveness to circumstance – Henry diverted from the itinerary advertised in the gest to avoid plague at Bristol, and to deal with a naval incident at Portsmouth – and the elaborate preparations made by hosts: Nicholas Poyntz built a new east range at his manor of Acton Court in advance of the king’s visit.[[35]](#endnote-35) But an analysis of the king’s itinerary, in particular his choice of host and the presence of Thomas Cromwell, also reveals the specific intent behind the 1535 progress.

Cromwell joined the court at Sudeley Castle, and on 26 July he accompanied the king and queen as they lodged in Tewkesbury. It was here that he met with his auditors, who would travel almost parallel with the progress throughout the summer, reporting their findings on the alleged abuses of monasteries and abbeys in Bath, Keynsham, Maiden Bradley and Glastonbury. The 1535 progress pursued a dual agenda: to gather evidence of monastic vice and ‘abomination of living’ which Henry and Cromwell would then set before Parliament; and to show favour towards gentry and clergy supportive of dissolution – Sir Thomas Seymour at Sudeley, Sir Edward Baynton at Bromham, Lord Sandys at the Vyne, Bishop Nicholas Shaxton at Salisbury, Nicholas Poyntz – or else persuadable, like Stephen Gardiner, bishop of Winchester. Preachers accompanying the progress reinforced the message that Henry’s separation from Katherine and marriage to Anne was blessed by God, though imperial ambassador Eustace Chapuys reckoned that the people would return to the truth ‘when there is any appearance of remedy’.[[36]](#endnote-36)

An inventory of Acton Court in 1532 lists the kind of lavish furnishings welcoming Henry and Anne: tapestries and Turkish carpets, carved oak chairs and chests imported from Flanders, cushions of embroidered velvet, a four-poster bed with hangings. The house was well supplied with salts, goblets and apostle-spoons in silver or silver-gilt. Archaeological excavations have discovered examples of Venetian glass and Italian glazed earthenware, perhaps purchased for the king’s visit and discarded when they got broken. A painted frieze in the ‘antike’ style brought Renaissance motifs familiar from the king’s palaces to the English provinces.[[37]](#endnote-37)

**Diplomacy and Dominance: The Northern Progress, 1541**

Of all Henry VIII’s journeys into the further reaches of his kingdom, the northern progress of 1541 raises the most acute questions about the purpose and impact of taking the royal court on tour. This was certainly an impressive display of power. The French ambassador estimated between four and five thousand horsemen and more than 200 tents leaving London ‘as if it were a question of war’; artillery was sent ahead by sea. Meanwhile the Tower was ‘cleared’ of high-profile prisoners in a swathe of executions.[[38]](#endnote-38) Writing from York on 16 September 1541, Marillac describes the scene at the recently dissolved St Mary’s Abbey, where up to 1,500 workmen were ‘night and day building, painting… and adding tents and pavilions’ to make it ready to receive the king. Meanwhile the ‘richest tapestry, plate, and dress’ had been brought up from London, to recreate the splendour of the royal court in what amounted to a temporary palace.[[39]](#endnote-39) For nine days Henry and Catherine occupied apartments converted from the monastic west range and dorter as they waited – in vain, as it turned out – to receive his nephew James V, King of Scots.[[40]](#endnote-40)

Why this militarized expedition to the north, ‘a radical departure from the established routines of the Henrician Court’?[[41]](#endnote-41) Three articles in *Northern History* have attempted to disentangle the threads of international diplomacy, regional English politics and Reformation contexts that came together in the 1541 progress. Though they develop different arguments – Richard Hoyle and John Ramsdale focusing on mutual provocation between the rulers of Scotland and England, Tim Thornton emphasising Henry’s ‘unalloyed humiliation’ of the city of York – historians agree that this was not a conventional summer progress, even if the king did manage some hunting along the way.[[42]](#endnote-42) Reports of an intended conspiracy in the Yorkshire town of Wakefield recalled the Lincolnshire and Pilgrimage of Grace uprisings five years earlier, though whether this was (as Christopher Sansom argues) a ‘serious attempt to overthrow [Henry’s] regime’ depends on how much credit is given to Chapuys’s account of the ‘Wakefield conspiracy.’[[43]](#endnote-43) Henry received the homage of each town and wapentake in two groups, according to their loyalty in 1536; at York the corporation and local gentry were compelled to kneel in submission at Fulford cross, a scene memorably fictionalised in Sansom’s detective novel *Sovereign*.[[44]](#endnote-44) For J. J. Scarisbrick, Henry’s entourage ‘resembled an army of occupation… to strike a decent fear, as well as love in the hearts of the querulous northerners’.[[45]](#endnote-45)

Clearly the atmosphere of the 1541 progress was tense. But was Marillac correct in his analysis of the ‘danger of the daily rebellions’? Henry VIII decided not to travel north in 1537, when a military tour of recently rebel territory might have made more sense; it is also worth noting that the Pilgrims of Grace consistently protested their loyalty to the king. Henry rode with a substantial number of soldiers (Sansom estimates between 1,000 and 1,500), as appropriate for one king meeting another in a context of a serious danger of war between their two nations.[[46]](#endnote-46) But the bulk of his retinue was made up of courtiers, officials and servants: the size of a battlefield army perhaps, but not arrayed as one. Henry also took his queen, much of his government, and – for some of the way at least – his daughter Princess Mary. Would this have been wise if the conditions were as ‘hazardous’ as has been claimed?[[47]](#endnote-47) Henry has been depicted as intent on the ‘unconditional surrender’ of the north, which might have matched his temperament but would hardly have been good policy in a region shouldering England’s defence against the Scots.[[48]](#endnote-48) The progress of 1541 may rather have represented a new accommodation with the north of England, where governance had been disrupted by the fall of the Percy family as well as the dissolution of the monasteries and the revolts of 1536. For Henry VIII’s sovereignty to be effective, he needed the cooperation of the local elite. A progress was an opportunity for both confession and absolution, a means for the compromised to be readmitted to royal service along the lines of his father’s visit to York in 1486. The king’s council in the north also acquired new premises at the King’s Manor in York: an administrative, legal and ceremonial complex from which the region continued to be governed for a hundred years.

**Conclusion: Henry VIII on Tour**

In his still authoritative *History of the King’s Works*, the architectural historian Howard Colvin observed dryly that ‘The history of the English court has yet to be written’.[[49]](#endnote-49) During the four decades since Colvin laid down that challenge, historians of Henry VIII’s court have brought to light a great many of the elements that contributed to the practice of his kingship, from the apartments where he lived and the officials who peopled them to the abundance of plate and tapestries, portraits and jewels catalogued by the ‘Inventory of Henry VIII’ project. Animating this image of royal magnificence has been an equally vivid reconstruction of the pageantry and ceremony that proclaimed Henry’s power in his own time, and shape how we remember him today. Less evident, at least until now, has been any sustained effort to survey all of Henry VIII’s progresses. Writing in 1999, Fiona Kisby concluded that ‘knowing *where* the court was at any particular time and *why* it was there, is obviously essential’.[[50]](#endnote-50) As one of those who responded so effectively to Colvin’s call for a new history of the court, Kisby in turn set an agenda that it has taken more than twenty years to follow up. Now that agenda has been set in motion, in the form of a PhD thesis and a research network, and we hope further research to come.

When complete, the first full itinerary for Henry’s reign will interact with the richly detailed inventories that have already been published in order to produce a new model of Tudor royal magnificence on the move. From our pilot project and research undertaken so far, what is abundantly clear is that royal progresses were taken seriously by all concerned: as a means of bringing the splendour of the court to the country, but also as an assertion of royal agency and an expression of the priorities of Henry VIII and his queens. Personal monarchy still mattered very much in sixteenth-century England, and monarchy was never so personal as in the time of progress.

1. *LP* xvi, 941. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Two important articles were published in the 1990s, taking the subject forward and posing key questions, but neither resulted in the monograph-length study that the subject deserves. See Neil Samman, ‘The Progresses of Henry VIII, 1509-1529’ in D. MacCulloch (ed.), *The Reign of Henry VIII: Politics and Piety* (London, 1995), 59-73; and F. Kisby, ‘Kingship and the Royal Itinerary: A Study of the Peripatetic Household of the Early Tudor Kings, 1485-1547’, *The Court Historian* 4/1 (1999), 29-39. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. The authors would like to acknowledge the research of Dustin Neighbors, whose report for the ‘Henry VIII on Tour’ project and draft itinerary for Henry VIII have made a significant contribution to this chapter. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. George Bernard, for one, is not afraid to admit that ‘more and more I have come to see Henry VIII as a tyrant’: ‘The Tyranny of Henry VIII’ in G. W. Bernard and S. J. Gunn (eds.), *Authority and Consent in Tudor England* (Aldershot, 2002), 113. Marillac’s despatches to Francis I anatomised what he saw as Henry VIII’s growing tyranny: R. J. Knecht, ‘Marillac, Charles de (1510x13-1560)’ in *ODNB*. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. S. J. Thurley, *The Royal Palaces of Tudor England: Architecture and Court Life 1460-1547* (New Haven, CT and London, 1993), 67, 70;Samman, ‘Progresses of Henry VIII’, 62; Kisby, ‘Kingship and the Royal Itinerary’, 32. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. M. Jones, *The Black Prince* (London, 2018), 148, 266-7. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. W. K. Jordan (ed.), *The Chronicle and Political Papers of Edward VI* (Ithaca, NY, 1966), 45. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. D. Starkey and P. Ward (eds.), *The Inventory of King Henry VIII* (London, 1998), 354-5. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. H. M. Colvin, *The History of the King’s Works*,6 vols (London, 1963-82), vol. IV, 28-9. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. Thurley, *Royal Palaces*, 67. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. J. A. Franklin, B. Nurse and P. Tudor-Craig, *Catalogue of Paintings in the Collection of the Society of Antiquaries of London* (London, 2015), 35-8. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. ‘progress, n.’ *OED Online*. Oxford University Press, December 2021. Web. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. E. Hall, *The Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Famelies of Lancastre [and] Yorke* (2nd ed. London, 1548; STC 12722), ‘The trobleous season of Kyng Henry the sixt’, fol. 170; ‘The politique governaunce of Kyng Henry the .vii.’, fol. 4.  [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. Hall, *Union*, ‘The triumphaunt reigne of Kyng Henry the VIII’, fol. 8; Colvin, *King’s Works*, vol. IV, 344-5. [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. Mary Hill Cole, *The Portable Queen: Elizabeth I and the Politics of Ceremony* (Amherst, MA, 1999), 22. [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. Thurley, *Royal Palaces*, 1;Colvin, *King’s Works*, vol. IV, 2. [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. Colvin, *King’s Works*, vol. IV, 356. [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. Kisby, ‘Kingship and the Royal Itinerary’, 32-3, 35. [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. S. Wabuda, ‘Receiving the King: Henry VIII at Cambridge’ in T. Betteridge and S. Lipscomb (eds.), *Henry VIII and the Court: Art, Politics and Performance* (Abingdon, 2016), 164. [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. Hall, *Union*, ‘The triumphaunt reigne of Kyng Henry the VIII’, fol. 57. [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. G. Richardson, ‘Hunting at the Courts of Francis I and Henry VIII’, *The Court Historian* 18/2 (2013), 127-41; J. Williams, ‘Hunting and the Royal Image of Henry VIII’, *Sport in History* 25/1 (2005), 41-59. [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. TNA SP 1/39, fol. 31r. For this William Fitzwilliam (as distinct from the more famous courtier of the same name) see G. Richardson, *Wolsey* (Abingdon, 2020), 158. In 1541 Francis I sent Henry VIII a diplomatic gift of game pasties, three of venison and three of wild boar, brought by an officer of the French royal kitchens; their (favourable) reception was watched closely by both the French and Imperial ambassadors. Richardson, ‘Hunting’, 139-40. [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. Examples of this more questioning approach to Tudor royal propaganda include S. Anglo, *Images of Tudor Kingship* (London, 1992); J. P. D. Cooper, *Propaganda and the Tudor State: Political Culture in the Westcountry* (Oxford, 2003); D. Shaw, ‘Nothing but Propaganda? Historians and the Study of Early Modern Ritual’, *Cultural and Social History* 1/2 (2004), 139-58; and T. C. String, *Art and Communication in the Reign of Henry VIII* (Aldershot, 2008). [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. C. S. L. Davies, review of Betteridge and Lipscomb *Henry VIII and the Court*, *EHR*,129 (2014), 1483-4; see also Wabuda, ‘Henry VIII at Cambridge’, 163. [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
25. Thurley, *Royal Palaces*, 77. [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
26. Cole, *Portable Queen*, 72, 85-95. [↑](#endnote-ref-26)
27. Samman, ‘Progresses of Henry VIII’, 63. [↑](#endnote-ref-27)
28. TNA OBS 1/1419. [↑](#endnote-ref-28)
29. Samman, ‘Progresses of Henry VIII’, 62-3 and n. 12; Cole, *Portable Queen*, 40-1. ‘Gest’ (sometimes ‘giest’ or ‘gist’) meant a stopping-place on a journey or progress, a loan word from Old French: ‘gist, n.1.’ *OED Online*. Oxford University Press, December 2021. Web. [↑](#endnote-ref-29)
30. Samman, ‘Progresses of Henry VIII’, 59. By contrast Tim Thornton has argued that the north chose to forget the 1541 progress: ‘Henry VIII’s Progress through Yorkshire in 1541 and its Implications for Northern Identities’, *Northern History* 46/2 (2009), 242. [↑](#endnote-ref-30)
31. S. Anglo, *Spectacle, Pageantry and Early Tudor Policy* (Oxford, 1969), 21-8; N. Murphy, ‘Receiving Royals in Later Medieval York: Civic Ceremony and the Municipal Elite, 1478-1503’, *Northern History* 43/2 (2006), 241-55. [↑](#endnote-ref-31)
32. For Dover and Hull see Colvin, *King’s Works*, vol. IV, 472-5, 729-53. [↑](#endnote-ref-32)
33. E. Cavell, ‘Henry VII, the North of England, and the First Provincial Progress of 1486’, *Northern History* 39/2 (2002), 187-207. [↑](#endnote-ref-33)
34. D. Starkey, *Six Wives: The Queens of Henry VIII,* (London, 2004), 559. [↑](#endnote-ref-34)
35. K. Rodwell and R. Bell, *Acton Court: The Evolution of an Early Tudor Courtier’s House* (London, 2004), 128. [↑](#endnote-ref-35)
36. *LP* ix, 58. [↑](#endnote-ref-36)
37. R. Bell, ‘The Royal Visit to Acton Court in 1535’ in D. Starkey (ed.), *Henry VIII: A European Court in England* (London, 1991), 123-5. [↑](#endnote-ref-37)
38. *LP* xvi, 941. [↑](#endnote-ref-38)
39. *LP* xvi, 1183. [↑](#endnote-ref-39)
40. C. Norton, ‘The Buildings of St Mary’s Abbey, York and their Destruction’, *The Antiquaries Journal* 74 (1994), 267. [↑](#endnote-ref-40)
41. R. W. Hoyle and J. B. Ramsdale, ‘The Royal Progress of 1541, the North of England, and Anglo-Scottish Relations, 1534-42’, *Northern History* 41/2 (2004), 239. [↑](#endnote-ref-41)
42. Thornton, ‘Northern Identities’, 240. [↑](#endnote-ref-42)
43. C. J. Sansom, ‘The Wakefield Conspiracy of 1541 and Henry VIII’s Progress to the North Reconsidered’, *Northern History* 45/2 (2008), 218. [↑](#endnote-ref-43)
44. Thornton, ‘Northern Identities’, 238; C. J. Sansom, *Sovereign* (London, 2006), 213-16. [↑](#endnote-ref-44)
45. J. J. Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII* (London, 1968), 427-8. [↑](#endnote-ref-45)
46. Sansom, ‘Wakefield Conspiracy’, 233. [↑](#endnote-ref-46)
47. Hoyle and Ramsdale, ‘Progress of 1541’, 240. [↑](#endnote-ref-47)
48. Thornton, ‘Northern Identities’, 242. [↑](#endnote-ref-48)
49. Colvin, *King’s Works*, vol. IV, 29. [↑](#endnote-ref-49)
50. Kisby, ‘Kingship and the Royal Itinerary’, 39. [↑](#endnote-ref-50)