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Progressing to Petworth: the Lives and Afterlives of Henry VIII's Progress Sites

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Abstract: Henry VIII first visited Henry Percy, Sixth Earl of Northumberland's house at Petworth (Sussex) on 27 July 1526. On 18 January 1535/6, Percy granted Petworth, together with eight of his other estates, to the king. Over four weeks, in June and July 1536, Henry rebuilt its gatehouse and added new lodgings to the site. It was not until 27 July 1538, however, that Henry visited Petworth again. Further visits followed in 1539 and again in 1545, when Petworth formed part of an itinerary dominated by the threat from France and the tragic loss of the Mary Rose at the Battle of the Solent. Today, visitors are intrigued by the portrait of Henry VIII which dominates the Carved Hall of this apparently late seventeenth-century National Trust Discovery House. Although the painting was also a seventeenth-century addition to Petworth, traces of the earlier house Henry visited still survive within its walls and under its lawns. The multidisciplinary and collaborative approach developed by the Arts and Humanities Research Council-funded "Henry on Tour" project enables us to bring this lost Tudor building back to life. It invites us to explore how provincial progress sites such as Petworth could be adapted to meet the changing needs of the Royal household on tour. It also encourages us to think about the legacy of progress for residents, visitors, volunteers, and curators of these sites today.

Keywords: Henry VIII; Tudor; progress; architecture; Petworth.



In June and July 1536,¹ workmen were busy at Petworth in Sussex working upon the making framing and new setting up not only the front new made over the gate for lodgings leading into the place but likewise making and framing ready to set up the fore front of the lodgings upon the right hand of the same gate with also facing and undersetting the gate house for the time of raising the said lodging over the same.²

This four-week building project started only a month after the execution of Anne Boleyn (19 May), and just over two weeks after Henry’s marriage to Jane Seymour (30 June). The accounts reveal plans to create new lodgings at Petworth, a site Henry had acquired on 18 January from its former owner, Henry Percy, Sixth Earl of Northumberland (c. 1502–1537).³ These works are typical of preparations preceding a Royal visit—the rapid construction of a suite of suitable accommodation for the king’s and queen’s respective households. Henry did not actually visit the new buildings at Petworth until 26 July 1538, when he travelled from Woking to Farnham Castle and stayed for just over a week, before journeying on to Cowdray House and Stansted Park. A year later, he followed exactly the same itinerary, staying at Petworth between 26 and 30 July 1539.⁴ The king’s last visit in 1545 reversed this sequence. Returning from Portsmouth, where he had witnessed the loss of the Mary Rose at the Battle of the Solent, he travelled via Titchfield Abbey, Stansted Park, and Cowdray to Petworth before returning to Windsor via Guildford Friary, Woking Palace, Oatlands, and Chobham.⁵

A full-length portrait of Henry VIII, based on Holbein’s famous Whitehall mural of 1537, bestrides Petworth’s Carved Room (Figure 1).⁶ Although the painting was probably executed in Holbein’s workshop, it only arrived at the house in the late seventeenth century.

¹ The date of 18 January 1535/6 mentioned in the abstract corresponds to 1536 in modern dating.

² BL, MS Facs d.99.

³ TNA E40/4104.

⁴ The details here are drawn from a range of sources researched as part of the creation of an Itinerary Tool which available via the project website <https://henryontour.uk/>.

⁵ The research presented in this article is part of Henry on Tour, an AHRC-funded project, building on a previous AHRC network. See Musson and Cooper, *Royal Journeys*.

⁶ *Henry VIII*, c. 1543–1547. Oil on panel, 237.5 x 120.7cm. Petworth House and Park, West Sussex, NT 486186.



Figure 1. *The Carved Room*, West Sussex, Petworth House and Park, National Trust.
Photograph by Andreas von Einsiedel, © National Trust Images.

For almost half a decade, Petworth passed to and from the Percies to the Crown. Queen Mary restored the estate to the family in 1557, but the involvement of the Seventh Earl of Northumberland in the Northern Rising of 1569 led to the title being held in abeyance and the estate being held once more by the Crown.⁷ It was not until the 1570s that the lands were restored to the Eighth Earl. From this date onwards, the house and parkland were rebuilt.⁸ In 1682, the wealthy heiress to the Northumberland estates, Elizabeth Percy (1667–1722), married Charles, the Sixth Duke of Somerset (1662–1748). Known as the “Proud Duke” owing to his obsession with rank and nobility, it is not surprising that he acquired the portrait to display his descent from the Seymours and, thus, his dynastic connection to Henry VIII. Between 1688–1696, inspired by European palaces such as Versailles, Charles largely rebuilt Petworth House. In the 1750s and 1760s, the parkland was further transformed by Lancelot “Capability” Brown for George O’Brien Wyndham, Second Earl of Egremont (1751–1857). Earlier buildings, formal terraces, and gardens were swept away to

⁷ Jerrome, *Petworth House*, 62.

⁸ Batho, “The Percies,” 2–3.

create an artificially naturalistic landscape of serpentine lakes and rolling hills. Today, it is the late seventeenth-century house, eighteenth-century parkland, and nationally significant art collection that form the focus of the visitor experience.⁹ Nevertheless, Henry's brooding presence in the Carved Hall seems to demand that Petworth's Tudor story be told.

Approaching Progress

During the Summer months of almost every year of his reign, Henry VIII left the heat, dust, and threat of plague in London to go on "progress" in the provinces.¹⁰ Progresses were different from the normal itinerancy of the Tudor court, which regularly moved between the royal palaces and standing houses of the Thames Valley for most of the year.¹¹ The 1,500 people who regularly attended court was reduced to just a few hundred courtiers and servants attending the king and queen, and their households.¹² Members of the Privy Council and Henry's closest advisors were also part of the progress, although they might be required to travel to and from London to ensure government continued to function smoothly. Progress itineraries were issued in lists or tables of movements known as the "giests" and were eagerly anticipated.¹³ They listed the places Henry intended to visit, the distances between them, and the amount of time the king intended to stay there. Progresses were political, enabling Henry to visit and be seen by his subjects, to hear petitions, dispense justice, and reward loyalty.¹⁴ They were also pleasurable. Summer progresses took advantage of the "grass season" when the hay had been cut and other

⁹ Petworth House was gifted to the nation by the third Lord Leconfield in 1947, and his nephew, John Wyndham (first Lord Egremont) later gifted the extensive art collection to the National Trust. See *Petworth. A Souvenir Guide*.

¹⁰ For a definition and overview of progress, see Thurley, "The Court on the Move," 12–14; Cooper and Hayes-Davies, "Progresses and Personal Monarchy," 22–25. A partial progress itinerary was compiled by the Public Record Office in the mid twentieth century (TNA OBS 1/1419). Key works include Samman, "Progresses."

¹¹ Samman, "Progresses," 62; Thurley, *Royal Palaces*, 67. The Eltham Ordinances of 1526 list Beaulieu, Eltham, Hampton Court, Richmond, Windsor, and Woodstock as places where the king's "hall was kept", providing accommodation and resources sufficient for the 1,500 people who constituted the Tudor court. In the summer, this number was halved, with several hundred courtiers expected to join the king on progress.

¹² Samman, "Progresses," 63.

¹³ The "giests" of Henry's 1526 progress only survive for its second part, from 18 August onwards. TNA SP 1/39.

¹⁴ Flannigan, "Justice on Progress."

crops harvested, offering free access to hunting grounds and drawing on the fruits of fields and orchards for the royal table. Entertainment was also a profoundly important aspect of progress. On tour, Henry was accompanied by a slimmed down version of the Chapel Royal, known as the Riding Chapel, providing him with high quality sacred and secular music wherever he went.¹⁵

Henry's preference on progress was to stay in his own houses but, in the early years of his reign, these were supplemented by an extensive monastic network capable of accommodating the court, which also afforded opportunities for royal pilgrimage and the public performance of piety. Other favourite progress venues included bishops' palaces and elite residences which could provide sufficient accommodation and draw on the resources of local manors, markets, orchards, and fishponds to meet the requirements of hospitality in the king's hall. The royal offices sought to ensure that wherever Henry went, he could be comfortable. The baggage train transported tents and pavilions, beds, furniture, painted cloths, table wares, and the extensive wardrobes required by the king and queen for riding, hunting, dancing, and feasting. Nevertheless, the business of government continued: portable writing desks and other accoutrements of the Privy Council thus had to be transported, too.¹⁶ The logistics of progress were challenging. Bad weather could delay and hinder the progress as sixteenth-century roads quickly became impassable, especially for the carts and wagons which were required to travel the seventeen miles or so between most progress venues.¹⁷ Hosting Henry was a considerable personal expense, even though the king made a contribution to the cost of his entertainment. Going on progress also came at a cost, but might well lead to royal favour and preferment. The impact on local communities of progress was also significant—a once-in-a-lifetime experience of the magnificence of the monarchy on the move, which may have brought valuable trade to some but inevitably also exhausted local supplies and resources.¹⁸

How did places like Petworth host progress? In general, it is assumed that the adaptation and alteration of these sites followed the fashions set in royal palaces. Henry was a remarkable acquirer of properties throughout his reign, owning, exchanging, or confiscating houses and estates that brought the royal property portfolio to an astonishing

¹⁵ Local talent could also be identified on the road, and progress may have provided an important opportunity for the Master of the King's music to identify and recruit singers to the Chapel Royal. One of the outcomes of Henry on Tour has been to recreate this soundtrack as a collaboration between early music specialist, project team member Magnus Williamson, and Ensemble Pro Victoria:
<https://www.delphianrecords.com/products/henry-viii-on-tour-music-from-tudor-royal-progresses>.

¹⁶ Edwards, "Preparing to Progress," 58–65; Hayward, "Repositories of Splendour," 72–76.

¹⁷ Samman, "Progresses," 63. This figure is supported by the more detailed itineraries from Henry on Tour.

¹⁸ Schroder, "Magnificence on the Move," 139–154.

seventy sites by the time of his death.¹⁹ The fall of Cardinal Wolsey in 1529, and Henry's acquisition of his properties, marked a turning point in royal building works. Simon Thurley charts several key developments at Hampton Court which set the expectations not only for other palaces, but also royal accommodation at provincial progress sites like Petworth. Up to around 1533, royal accommodation was provided in a stacked lodging, with the queen's chamber placed above that of the king. From the mid-1530s onwards, Henry's preference was for a suite of evermore private rooms for both himself and the queen.²⁰ These expectations are reflected in the account of the gentleman usher, John Norris, who recorded that new lodgings for the king should include at least four rooms,

And the Quene shall have as many Chambers as the kinge hathe or moo if thei maie be hadd and where the kinge and the Quene be in one house the kinge[s] pleasure is that the Quene shall have the fayreste and the Largeste romes for the kinge will alwaie resorte unto the Quenes Chamber for his Comforte, pastime, solas and disporte.²¹

These rooms included the dedicated provision within the king's lodgings of a distinctive space for the Privy Council, which was expanded under Thomas Cromwell.²² The Privy Chamber, as it became known, was separated from the more public Presence Chamber, which was closely guarded or monitored by the Watching Chamber. These changes also had an impact on the Great Hall, which, from the 1530s and 1540s onwards, only remained a major focus of investment at ceremonial sites such as Hampton Court, Whitehall, Windsor, and Greenwich. Newly acquired properties might have had their halls converted or adapted, whilst new houses were designed without them.²³

Progress hosts could meet the expectations for these royal lodgings in several ways. The creation of parallel sets of lodgings for the king and queen was a longstanding tradition of medieval English palace design.²⁴ Lodging ranges were also a prominent feature of late medieval elite houses and castles, created to accommodate the groups of elite young men or retainers, who played such an active role in the armed conflicts of the late fifteenth and

¹⁹ Thurley, *The Royal Palaces*; 52–56; *Whitehall Palace*; *Hampton Court Palace*; Colvin, *History of the Kings Works*.

²⁰ Thurley, *Royal Palaces*, 52–56. An unexecuted design for a house in Waltham Forest (Essex), reflects the provision of parallel suites of accommodation for both the king and queen, leading from the "Watching Chamber" to the "Presence Chamber," "Privy Chamber," "Withdrawing Chamber," and ultimately, the bedroom itself. Colvin, *History of King's Works*, 14–15. Clark's article on attitudes to privacy and space in the trial of Katherine Howard raises important questions about the nature of privacy in this period, especially as it related to the bodies of the queen—and the king. Clark, "Queen Katherine Howard," 89–103.

²¹ BL, Add MS 71009, fols. 19v–20r. Edwards, "Preparing to Progress," 58.

²² Thurley, *Royal Palaces*, 137; *Houses of Power*, 210–217; Starkey, "Intimacy and Innovation," 71–118.

²³ Thurley, *Houses of Power*, 207–208.

²⁴ Richardson, "Gender and space."

early sixteenth centuries.²⁵ Monasteries also provided extensive lodgings for guests, as well as the resources to entertain them. Adaptations of monastic buildings after the Dissolution often embraced these qualities, creating new suites of accommodation above their western ranges or claustral complexes.²⁶ The active investment by both secular and ecclesiastical elites in elaborate gatehouses, courtyards, and suites of domestic accommodation in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century made these sites particularly well-suited to hosting progress.²⁷ One of the most interesting questions for sites such as Petworth is therefore the extent to which they could be adapted and enhanced to meet the changing needs of progress and expectations of the king and his court over time.

Many of Henry's courtiers and their contemporaries embraced the opportunities for building and rebuilding that the changing political, religious, and economic fortunes of the early sixteenth century presented.²⁸ Men newly enriched by royal service or mercantile profit sought to establish new seats of power, where they warmly welcomed the king on progress. The survival of architectural plans, views, and maps from this period, alongside building accounts, inventories, and other documentary sources, offers us a particularly rich and detailed insight, not only into the materials, methods, and costs of construction, but also their decoration, fittings, fixtures, use, and meaning, including new schemes of decoration created specifically for progress visits.²⁹

Recent research by Historic Royal Palaces has highlighted the significance of temporary lodgings, tents, and pavilions, which were also an important feature of progress.³⁰ Tents had long been a feature of military campaigning. A sense of these architecturally innovative, elaborately painted, gilded, and decorated structures can be gained from the famous painting of the Field of Cloth of Gold.³¹ It shows a fascinating range of temporary constructions, including triumphal arches, pavilions, banqueting houses, and fountains, as well as tents used for ceremonial and more everyday purposes. A particularly elaborate design for a series of interconnected crimson tents embroidered in gold thread

²⁵ Kerr, *Late Medieval Lodging Ranges*.

²⁶ Howard, *Early Tudor Country House*, 24–42; Howard, "Monastic Lodgings." See also Clark, *The Dissolution*, 379–529; Willmott, *The Dissolution*.

²⁷ Airs and Barnwell, *The Medieval Great House*, especially Howard, "The Courtyard House"; Goodall, *The English Castle*, 365–400. On bishops' houses, see Thompson, *Medieval Bishops' Houses*, and Rollason, *Princes of the Church*.

²⁸ Howard, *The Early Tudor Country House*; Howard, *The Building*, 121–164.

²⁹ Airs, *The Tudor & Jacobean Country House*; Platt, *The Great Rebuildings*, 1–28.

³⁰ Gregory, "The Timber Lodgings," and related webpage for the project, "Portable Palaces," which concluded in January 2019, <https://www.hrp.org.uk/about-us/research/research-projects-and-networks/portable-palaces>. Gregory has also suggested that tents may have provided an important function for daytime entertainment, with the king and queen retreating to more secular lodgings at night.

³¹ *The Field of Cloth of Gold*, Royal Collection Trust.

and topped with heraldic beasts is preserved in British Library Cotton MS Augustus III 18.³² These could be combined with temporary timber lodgings covered in wainscot or canvas and painted to look like brickwork.³³ Surviving images suggest that, both on the battlefield and on tour, tents could create sophisticated suites of royal accommodation supplementing the more permanent buildings of progress venues.³⁴ A consideration of these wider trends in royal accommodation provides an important context for considering the specific affordances of Petworth itself.



Figure 2. *Petworth House*. The remains of the medieval house are located in the northern section of the house (to the left of this image). Photograph © Alamy.

Understanding Petworth

Petworth is a market town located in the rolling South Downs of West Sussex. The parish church and the medieval manor house were constructed on a north-west to south-east ridge raised slightly above the rest of the settlement, which slopes away both to the south-west and the north-east (Figure 2). Petworth probably had pre-Conquest origins as a

³² Schroder, "Magnificence on the Move," 150–151, argues that although this has been assumed to be a design for The Field of Cloth of Gold, its details may point to a slightly later date, possibly Henry VIII's progress to York in 1541.

³³ Gregory, "Timber Lodgings," 311.

³⁴ Gregory, "Timber Lodgings," Figure 4.

minster site and as a meeting and marketplace for the centre for the Hundred of Rotherbridge.³⁵ By the thirteenth century, it was in the possession of the Percy family. In 1279, Eleanor Percy claimed that the market had not only been held by her husband, Sir Henry Percy, but also by his ancestors, from time beyond memory.³⁶ Petworth flourished throughout the Middle Ages, and in 1524 it was still the fourth wealthiest town in Sussex.³⁷ Its premodern topography and morphology can be reconstructed from a close analysis of surviving cartographic sources and standing buildings. The medieval settlement was more gridded than it is today, while the medieval marketplace has been greatly reduced by infill. The main difference in Petworth's layout is the alignment of Church Street (formerly known as West Street and, further west, Court Ditch). Ralph Tresswell's plan of c. 1610 shows the road passing just fifty feet from the present southern end of the main range of the house (Figure 3). Apart from Petworth House and St. Mary's Church, which preserves evidence of major investment in the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, at least nine other buildings in Petworth can be dated to before 1500 and a further ten to the sixteenth century. Although many of these buildings have now been refronted, originally, they would have been timber-framed.³⁸

³⁵ Harris, *Petworth*, 13.

³⁶ Letters, "Online Gazetteer of Markets and Fairs in England and Wales to 1516," last updated 16 December 2013, <https://archives.history.ac.uk/gazetteer/gazweb2.html>.

³⁷ Harris, *Petworth*, 14, excluding the Cinque Ports.

³⁸ Harris, *Petworth*, 20–22.



Figure 3. Ralph Tresswell, “Survey” of Petworth (detailed view), 1610, manuscript map. Chichester, West Sussex Record Office, Petworth House Archives, PHA 3574. Reproduced by kind permission of Lord Egremont and with acknowledgments to the County Archivist.

Our current understanding of the construction and development of Petworth House comes from a range of original sources as well as more recent historical and archaeological reports. Useful syntheses of earlier sources include the desk-based assessment carried out

by Dig Ventures in advance of excavations at Petworth for Henry on Tour.³⁹ This includes overviews of the findings from historic landscape and geophysical surveys of Petworth Park carried out by Tom Dommett in 2013,⁴⁰ and excavations of the lost North Wing carried out in 2013 by Archaeology South East⁴¹ and of the Banqueting House site in 2014 by Chris Butler Archaeological Services.⁴² The building sequence of Petworth House was studied in detail by Waters in 1997 and reviewed by Mayes in 1998.⁴³ Important primary sources for the analysis of the sixteenth-century building include royal building accounts, a “View of Petworth House” taken for the Eighth Earl of Northumberland in 1574, and a *Survey* made in 1576.⁴⁴ These sources reflect a building granted by Henry Percy to Henry VIII in 1535, and invested in over the following decade, but then little altered until it was re-granted to the Percies in the 1570s. The analysis which follows draws on the key findings from these existing studies and sources to consider the house which Henry visited in 1526, 1538, 1539, and 1545.

1526 Henry Percy’s Manor House

It is likely that a medieval manor house or castle existed at Petworth from at least the mid-eleventh century onwards.⁴⁵ Treswell’s map of 1610 indicates that the house was approached from both the south and west, via Church Street and the Tillington Road, respectively. It is probable that the medieval manor house had some form of outer court, with a gatehouse and service buildings giving access to an inner court further east.⁴⁶ The oldest surviving building at the site dates to the thirteenth century and is a two-aisled,

³⁹ *Archaeological Desk Based Assessment; Community Excavation.*

⁴⁰ Dommett, *Historic Landscape Survey; Petworth Park; Petworth Park’s Hidden Past*, 83–112. See also Jordan, *Petworth Park*.

⁴¹ Stevens, *Festival of British Archaeology; The ‘Big Dig’ 2015.*

⁴² Cruse and Klemenic, *Petworth Park*.

⁴³ Waters, *Petworth House*; Mayes, *Chapel Zone Project*.

⁴⁴ Alnwick Castle Letters & Papers MSS, fols. 32–37. The “View of Petworth House” was published by The Royal Historical Society; Batho, “The Percies.” A further survey dated 1632 (Alnwick Castle, Syon MSS H. II, 1b) and proposals for a new house entitled *A Booke of Computations for Buildings* (Alnwick Castle, Leconfield MSS 116) were also published by Batho, “Notes and Documents,” 108–134. I am hugely grateful to Henry Wakeford for highlighting the significance of this source.

⁴⁵ It has been suggested that there was an earlier castle at Petworth, possibly on the site of Lawn Hill. Turner, “Petworth,” 5–6; Salzman, “On the early history”; Waters, *Petworth House*, 24–25. Excavations at Lawn Hill indicate the presence of a building or midden site here, as well as the later sixteenth-century Banqueting House. Cruse and Klemenic, *Petworth Park*; Dig Ventures, *Henry on Tour*, 2. Harris, *Petworth*, 24, however, suggests that the house has always been in its present location, on the edge of an early minster precinct.

⁴⁶ The survival of the local street name “Court Ditch” further supports this hypothesis.

four-bay, vaulted undercroft, as well as the remains of a room above it, preserved in the area of the building known today as the Carved Room (Figure 4 and Figure 1 above). A stone spiral staircase in the corner of the building also appears to have given access to a further upper floor. The building could have been a first-floor hall (or more likely a chamber or solar block) originally associated with a detached—and probably timber-framed—hall.⁴⁷



Figure 4. The vaulted undercroft of Henry Percy's medieval manor house, c. thirteenth century, West Sussex, Petworth House, National Trust.

The second, and most visible, surviving medieval component of Percy's manor house is the Chapel (Figure 5). Although it has previously been dated variously to the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century, more recent analysis suggests a slightly earlier date, c. 1260–1275.⁴⁸ A further, two-storey wing projecting eastwards from the southern end of this chamber block created a southern range parallel with the chapel, forming a

⁴⁷ Waters, *Petworth House*, 18–19, suggests it was a first-floor hall, but there is increasing evidence that some of the buildings previously identified as this type of building were actually first-floor chambers or solar blocks. For a balanced summary of the debate, see Quiney, “Hall or Chamber,” 24–26.

⁴⁸ National Heritage Register, *Petworth House*; Waters, *Petworth House*, 11, suggests a very late thirteenth or fourteenth-century date, but Harris, *Petworth*, 20, suggests a more likely date of c. 1260–1270.

courtyard arrangement described in the “View” of 1574 as the “Chapel Ward.” This building is now hard to discern within the present structure but is largely in the area known today as the Oak Stairs. A blocked window discovered in its north wall suggests it was constructed in the late thirteenth century and was of two storeys.⁴⁹ In the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century, a fortified tower was also built between the end of the chamber block and the Chapel, preserved today by the footprint of The Red Room.⁵⁰



Figure 5. *Petworth House Chapel*, West Sussex, Petworth House, National Trust.
Photograph by John Hammond, © National Trust Images.

⁴⁹ Harris, *Petworth*, 21, suggests a date of the late thirteenth century, although Waters and Mayes suggest it may be early fourteenth century.

⁵⁰ Only the quoins of this building survive, making precise dating difficult. Harris, *Petworth*, 21 suggests it is contemporary with the parlour block and may pre-date the chapel, but Waters and Mayes suggest it is a defensive addition of the early fourteenth century. It is possible that it reflects the grant of the licence to crenellate Petworth in 1309. See Blaauw, “Royal Licences,” 109.

The latest component of the medieval manor house to be constructed appears to be the Great Hall, built up against the west side of this fortified tower, extending northwards to form one of the buildings of the inner court in 1574.⁵¹ The Great Hall was rebuilt in 1577, following the restoration of the Percy title and investment in Petworth by the earls of Northumberland. It appears on Tresswell’s 1610 *Survey*.⁵² It was further expanded by the Ninth Earl in the early seventeenth century, before being demolished in 1692.⁵³ Geophysical surveys and excavations of this lost North Wing in 2013 revealed evidence of the earlier building, with strong dating evidence from building materials and finds for construction dates in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.⁵⁴ Dig Ventures’s excavations in 2024 also revealed evidence of an earlier building beneath the early modern structure.⁵⁵ All of this previous research allows us to gain a clear sense of the medieval courtyard house which Henry VIII visited in 1526 (Figure 6).

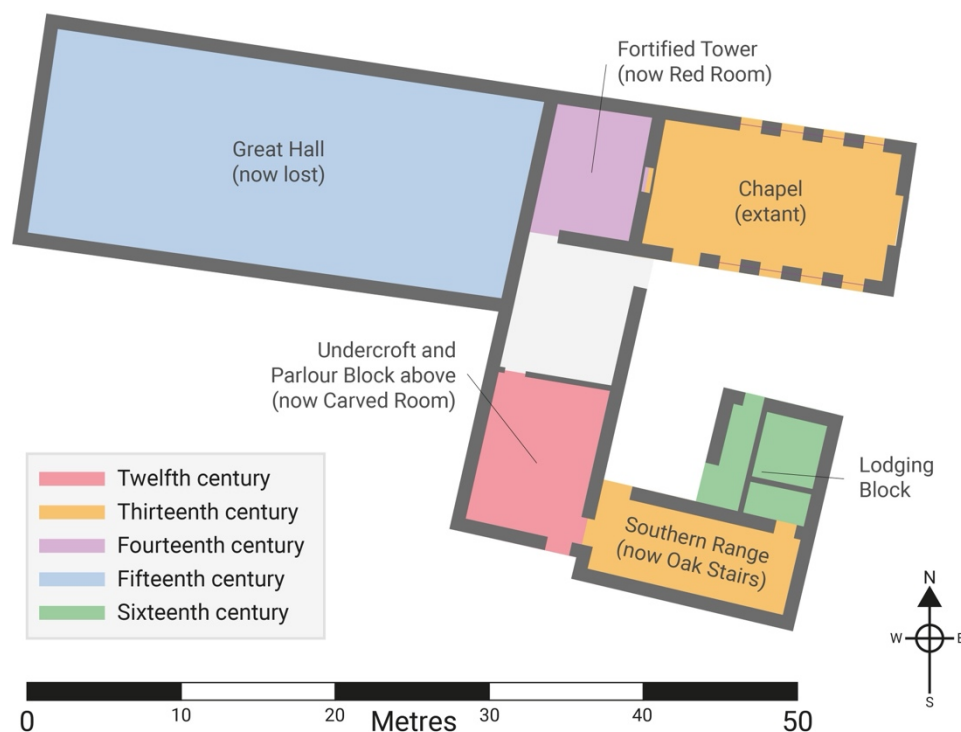


Figure 6. Plan of Henry Percy’s Courtyard House (after Waters, 1997), c. 1526.

⁵¹ Waters, *Petworth House*, 26.

⁵² Turner, “Petworth,” 7.

⁵³ Waters, *Petworth House*, 26. Detailed proposals were made to rebuild the house in 1615, as recorded in the ninth Earl’s *Book of Computations* but never fully realised. The building appears in Leonard Knyff’s 1685 painting of Petworth House. It was further impacted by the landscaping of 1763.

⁵⁴ Stevens, *Festival of British Archaeology*, 17, 21. *Petworth Park’s Hidden Past*, 13.

⁵⁵ *Archaeological Community Excavation*, 28.

The progress of 1526 was one of the most extensive of the reign. From Surrey, Henry made his way through Sussex, Hampshire, Wiltshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, and Bedfordshire. Samman argues that its primary focus was enabling the king to meet prominent local nobles and citizens, and on "making good cheer."⁵⁶ When he arrived in Sussex on the 27 July, the king was met by William FitzAlan, Eleventh Earl of Arundel; Thomas West, Baron De La Warr; Thomas Fiennes, Ninth Baron Dacre; and Sir David Owen. They escorted him to Petworth, where he was presented with a "goodly present" of six oxen and forty wethers from the estate.⁵⁷ On the morning after his arrival, the king was approached with some letters from Wolsey, but he postponed looking at them until the evening after he had tried taking a shot at one of the local stags. On 3 August, William Fitzwilliam (1490–1542) wrote to Wolsey from Arundel that

The kings highness (our Lord bee thanked) is mery and in good helth ... entertayning such gentilmen of the coutrey as reasorted unto his persone in right famyllier maner and with good words, and also rewarded theym with venison accordingly.⁵⁸

Given the significant opportunities and honour afforded by hosting the king on progress, the absence of Henry Percy, Sixth Earl of Northumberland from Petworth in 1526 is telling. Percy was a complex character. Although he had been educated in Wolsey's household, his lack of financial acumen created lifelong tensions with both the cardinal and his own father.⁵⁹ These tensions were exacerbated by rumours that Percy had formed a romantic attachment to Anne Boleyn following her return to England in 1521.⁶⁰ This threatened Wolsey's plans for him to marry Mary Talbot, daughter of the Earl of Shrewsbury. Wolsey called on Percy's father, the Earl of Northumberland, to intervene, and in 1524 or 1525, what was to prove a mutually disastrous marriage took place. Percy's absence from Petworth in 1526 might be explained by his responsibilities as deputy warden of the East March and membership of the Council of the North. However, it may also reflect a strategic decision to keep his distance from the king, whose attentions by the Summer of 1526 had also turned towards Anne Boleyn.

⁵⁶ Samman, "Progresses," 64. See also Adams, "Henry VIII in West Sussex."

⁵⁷ *Letters & Papers*, Henry VIII, IV, ii, no. 2368. The account is from a letter written to Wolsey by William Fitzwilliam (1490–1542).

⁵⁸ TNA SP 1/39, fol. 26r–v; Samman, "Progresses," 66.

⁵⁹ Hoyle, "Percy, Henry Algernon." Percy was involved in the arrest of Wolsey at the palace at Cawood in November 1530.

⁶⁰ When examined by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York in 1532, Percy denied on oath that this had amounted to a pre-contract of marriage. He repeated this in 1536 in a letter to Cromwell. Hoyle, "Percy."



Figure 7. Mullion and transom window of sixteenth-century lodging block. West Sussex, Petworth House, National Trust. Photograph © National Trust Images.

Despite his absence, Henry Percy evidently sought to ensure that his house and household were ready to receive their royal guests. This may have included building new accommodation for the king and queen. Remnants of a sixteenth-century lodging range, built on the north side of the south range of the Chapel Ward, are preserved in the upper roof space of the house (Figure 7). The “View” of 1574 describes the configuration of the rooms beyond the upper end of the Great Hall.⁶¹ A “fair rowme” with a set of wooden stairs provided access to the thirteenth-century Parlour block.⁶² This solid building, with wine

⁶¹ Batho, “The Percies,” 4, locates the low end of the hall towards the east. However, this seems unlikely, as it would require visitors to walk around the entire complex to enter the Great Hall. It is also contradicted by the order in which the “View” of 1574 moves through the Hall into the Parlour, Little Lodging and King’s and Queen’s chambers, ending with the statement, “these be the rowmes and lodgings below standing at the upper end of the Hall which are the best repaired and before menconed.” RHS, “A View,” 104. Waters, “Petworth House,” 24, also argues that the low end of the hall was to the west of the lost North Wing.

⁶² The “View” describes the steps having a half pace (landing), which suggests they turned back on themselves within the structure.

cellars below, was heated and lit by three windows. It had been subdivided to create a "withdrawing place, sometimes a little chappell" at its upper (presumably southern) end, lit by a single window, offering the king a place for private devotions. A "little lodging" (presumably the thirteenth-century range projecting parallel to the chapel) then connected the Parlour to a pair of lodgings. The "King's Chamber" was lit by four windows and had direct access to a "house of office" or garderobe, lit by a single window, at the foot of stairs leading up to the "Queen's Chamber."⁶³ These lodgings have previously been argued to date to the visit of Henry and Katherine Parr to Petworth in 1545.⁶⁴ However, its form is far more consistent with the preference for "stacked lodgings" in early Tudor palaces and elite residences.⁶⁵

The hall is likely to have been redecorated for the royal visit, and it is possible that this was a moment of significant rebuilding. The Tudor building materials including brickwork, glazed floor, and roof tiles and window glass, decorative plasterwork, moulded ceiling ribs, pressed leaf and bud designs, and use of red and black paints recovered in recent excavations suggest a major investment in the Great Hall during the early-mid-sixteenth century.⁶⁶ However, without definitive dating or documentary evidence, it is impossible to know whether this was also a rebuilding by Henry Percy in 1526 or if it followed Henry VIII's acquisition of the site after 1535. An earlier date might be supported by the fact that, in the 1520s, Henry was still widely using Great Halls for public feasting and entertainment.⁶⁷ This earlier date is also supported by the evidence of how Percy's neighbours were also preparing their palaces and houses for royal progress.

Although there is no documentary record of Henry visiting Chichester, it seems highly likely that the king visited its cathedral in early August 1526. Anticipating a royal visit, Bishop Sherburne (c. 1554–1536) commissioned the artist Lambert Barnard to create two painted scenes in the south transept, which survive today (Figure 8).⁶⁸ The scene to the left is a representation of the Anglo-Saxon king of the West Saxons, Caedwalla, granting land at Selsey—the original seat of the diocese of Chichester—to St. Wilfrid. The scene to the right depicts Henry VIII, with Henry VII behind him, confirming Caedwalla's grant to Bishop Sherburne. Woolfson and Lush argue convincingly that the painting, together with two large series of medallioned heads depicting the bishops of Chichester and the kings of England, was designed to flatter Henry by alluding to the Tudor's ancestral connection to

⁶³ Batho, "The Percies," 6; RHS, "A View," 103–104.

⁶⁴ Waters, "Petworth House," 26.

⁶⁵ Thurley, *English Royal Palaces*; 52–56.

⁶⁶ Stevens, *Festival of British Archaeology*, 20–22.

⁶⁷ Thurley, *Houses of Power*, 207–208.

⁶⁸ Croft Murray, "Lambert Barnard," 113–125.

Caedwalla but also to communicate a staunch defence of the rights of the See in the face of various financial burdens and encroachments on it in 1526.⁶⁹



Figure 8. Lambert Barnard, paintings on oak panels, 16th century, 14 x 32 ft. Chichester, Chichester Cathedral, south transept.

The vaults of the nave and Lady chapel and a frieze above the choir stalls also appear to be part of this programme of work, as does the decorated ceiling of the Great Hall in the Bishop’s Palace.⁷⁰ This featured red and white Tudor roses, ‘H’ and ‘K’ monograms, and the emblems of Bishop Sherburne, as well as those of the party accompanying the king on the Sussex stage of the 1526 progress, including William FitzAlan, Earl of Arundel, De La Warr, and the Owen family. A letter written on 3 August from Arundel Castle by the Treasurer to the king’s household, William Fitzwilliam, to Cardinal Wolsey at Hampton Court recorded that, on 2 August, Henry had dined with the bishop of Chichester “at his howse” and reflected on the “propre and com[m]odious” way in which the residence was “furnysshed

⁶⁹ Woolfson and Lush, “Lambert Barnard,” 268–270. The medallioned heads of the bishops are now located in the north transept but were originally designed to hang on the north wall of the south transept.

⁷⁰ Tatton Brown, “The Buildings of the Bishop’s Palace.”

and trimmed" with "sundry and diverse devices."⁷¹ This could have been the Bishop's Palace or Sherburn's hunting lodge at nearby Amberley, where Barnard created a series depicting the Nine Worthy Ladies in the room known as the Queen's Lodging.⁷² Whilst Henry was staying at Arundel Castle, De La Warr declared his ambition to offer the king "right greater cheer" at his fortified manor house and 300 acres of imparked land at Halnaker.⁷³ De La Warr remodelled and redecorated his medieval hall ahead of Henry's visit with intricately carved linenfold panelling set under cornices filled with painted badges and monograms, screens featuring the De La Warr coat of arms, and the royal coat of arms above the dais, possibly also by Barnard.⁷⁴ This provides a useful comparative example for Percy's possible investment in Petworth's Great Hall.

Although partial, the archaeological, artistic and historical evidence provides a fascinating glimpse of the part played by Petworth and other non-royal progress venues in a period before Henry had amassed his extensive royal property portfolio. It demonstrates the extensive preparations that hosts made to ensure the king was suitably accommodated and entertained on tour. The creation of the Queen's Lodgings at Petworth and Amberley and the prominent display of Katherine of Aragon's monogram in Chichester reflect the assumption that she would accompany the king at these sites. However, it is not clear that she did, and it is possible that rumours about the king's infatuation with Anne had already created distance between them.⁷⁵ Moreover, although the progress was successful, Percy and De La Warr may have offered the king a little too much good cheer. Henry was to acquire both their houses and hunting estates when they found themselves on the wrong side of the religious reforms and political machinations of the 1530s.

1536, 1538, and 1539 New Lodgings

On 18 January 1535, Henry Percy signed and set his seal to a charter confirming the surrender and grant of the honour of Petworth—and eight other manors—to Henry VIII.⁷⁶ It was one of many documents designed to disinherit his wife, reduce the inheritance of his brothers, and elevate preferred members of his own household in their stead.⁷⁷ Percy was

⁷¹ TNA, SP 1/39, fol. 26r-v.

⁷² Woolfson and Lush, "Lambert Barnard," 271, suggest that Fitzwilliam was referring to Amberley. See also Coke, "The Amberley Castle panels."

⁷³ Samman, "Progresses," 66; TNA, SP 1/39, fol. 31v.

⁷⁴ Andre, "Halnaker House"; Godfrey, "The La Warr Family." Woolfson and Lush "Lambert Barnard," 271, suggest that Barnard may have also been responsible for the Halnaker scheme.

⁷⁵ Various authors assert that the queen was not in Sussex in 1526, including Coke, <https://www.thenovium.org.uk/article/29298/The-Amberley-Panels>; Katherine of Aragon may have remained in or around Farnham castle whilst Henry was at Petworth.

⁷⁶ TNA E 40/4104. 1536 in modern dating.

⁷⁷ Hoyle, "Percy."

not a well man. A recurring illness, possibly liver disease, plagued him throughout the early 1530s, and he retreated from public duties to his northern houses. In 1536, as Anne Boleyn fell from favour, rumours of their pre-contract of marriage resurfaced. Percy was called south for the trial where, along with his peers, he gave a verdict against the queen, collapsing after her sentence of death was pronounced. Later that year, Percy found himself reluctantly drawn into the Pilgrimage of Grace. Lying ill in bed at Wressle Castle, he was visited by his former servant, the lawyer Robert Aske. Aske tried to persuade him to reconcile with his brother, Thomas Percy, and to join the rebels.⁷⁸ Although Percy allowed himself to be sworn to the cause, and put Wressle at Aske's disposal, he quickly fled south again. Despite the initial assurances and pardons granted to the rebels, the failed rising of Sir Francis Bigod in early 1537 led to the arrest and execution of both Aske and Thomas in June and July respectively. Henry Percy died in Hackney on 29 June 1537.

Henry VIII started building at Petworth in the early Summer of 1536. From the 21 May to the 18 June, carpenters were

working as well upon the taking down not only of the fore front of the lodging over the gate going into the said manor but also like taking down the outer front of the lodgings upon the right hand of the same gate thereunto adjoining with like making and framing of the same again with new timber.⁷⁹

This was evidently not just a matter of repair but also substantial rebuilding. The gate was underpinned to support the creation of a new lodging above it, with brick bulwarks and puncheons (short upright timbers) suggesting it was a construction of brick and timber. The rebuilding may well have involved the replacement or updating of heraldic ornaments, such as earlier versions of the royal arms, or the lingering presence of the Percy family. As the lodgings were rebuilt, the carpenters also pulled down "the old bakehouse and brewhouse there as also making a new house there to be set up for 60 foot long and 26 foot wide."⁸⁰ Their roofs were removed and replaced by a slater and his team. Labourers cleared the ground of the rubbish the carpenters left behind and carried newly-sawn timbers from the dusty saw pits to the site.

There are two possible locations for these buildings, in either the outer or inner courts, described in the "View" of 1574.⁸¹ The outer courtyard Gatehouse fronting onto West Street had two lodgings on the ground floor and a further three above. Adjoining these buildings was a little garden, whilst the rest of the courtyard was enclosed by three

⁷⁸ Hoyle, *The Pilgrimage of Grace*, 306-307.

⁷⁹ The accounts of BodL, MS Facs d.99 (from Longleat Misc XXIX), are consistent with records at NUL, NE/0/1 and NE/0/2 (unfoliated). I am extremely grateful to my colleague Anthony Musson for sharing these references with me.

⁸⁰ BodL, MS Facs d.99 (from Longleat Misc XIX).

⁸¹ RHS, "A View."

barns, a stable for up to fourteen horses with a lodging at the end for "horsekeepers," and a dovecot. The Gatehouse leading from the outer into the inner court was more substantial, consisting of twelve rooms—seven on the ground floor and five above, only one of which was unheated—and it seems more likely that this was the focus of the construction work in 1536. The principal feature of the inner courtyard was the Great Hall. At its low or nether end were the buttery and pantry "severed with a great entry going out of the Hall into the Great Kitchen."⁸² In his reconstruction of the site based on the 1574 "View," Batho shows the West Street gatehouse and inner gatehouse close to the southern extent of the thirteenth-century parlour block (Figure 9).⁸³

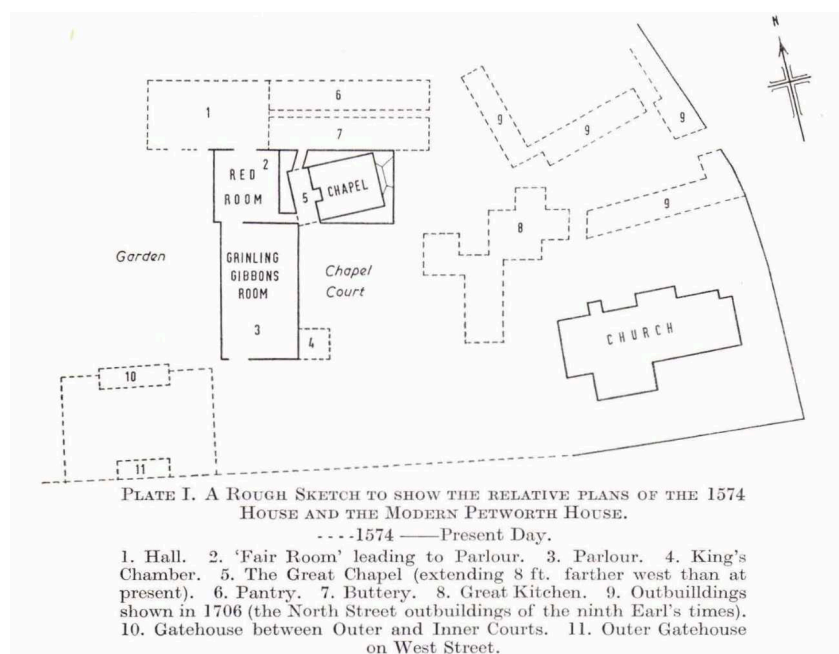


Figure 9. Gordan Batho, *Rough Sketch to Show the Relative Plans of the 1574 House and the Modern Petworth House*. Courtesy of the Sussex Archaeological Society.

This leaves very little room for the buildings in both courtyards described above. It seems more likely that the outer court and Gatehouse were located slightly further west. Their location may be preserved by some of the boundaries shown in Tresswell's *Survey* in 1610. The fact that the extension of West Street was known historically as Court Ditch Lane

⁸² RHS, "View," 105.

⁸³ RHS, "View," 103. Waters, "Petworth House," 24, questions Batho's location of the Gatehouse on West Street and proposes it was located to the east of the site, but the wording of the "View" strongly supports Batho's interpretation.

may also support this hypothesis. The inner court of 1574 may well be that preserved in outline by the boundaries to the east of the Rose Garden (see Figure 2). It may also have been the location for the "new house there to be set up for 60 foot long and 26 foot wide" constructed by the carpenters in 1536.⁸⁴ Other works at Petworth in 1536 confirm Henry's increasing obsession with privacy and security.⁸⁵ Richard Ludder, a local smith, was paid for twenty-one new locks and keys, designed to secure access to the park and churchyard, privy kitchen and pantry, the stairs, the "brode chamber"—including "My Lord Privy Seal's Chamber door"—as well as seven locks for the new lodgings.

The addition of lodgings to a newly acquired house is typical of the changes Henry made to his growing property portfolio. In 1535, Henry undertook a West Country Progress with Anne Boleyn. It involved visits to several provincial progress venues where his hosts created bespoke accommodation for the Royal visit. One of the most impressive was Acton Court (Gloucestershire), where the ambitious young courtier Nicholas Poyntz (c. 1510–1556) built a bespoke two-storey stone lodging, complete with a Presence Chamber, Privy Chamber, and a withdrawing chamber with its own garderobe, overlooking a walled garden.⁸⁶ Another was Wolfhall, where the Seymour family may also have undertaken building works including new private lodgings for the king's (and queen's) visit.⁸⁷ Petworth may well have been intended as a progress venue for 1537.⁸⁸ However, Jane Seymour did not live to visit Petworth's new lodgings. Her pregnancy and confinement limited her movements in the Summer of that year before her death on 24 October. It was not until 1538 that Henry visited Petworth, returning in 1539.

It seems likely that, at some point between 1536 and 1539, Henry had adapted Petworth to create a suite of private lodgings between the second, upper floor of the Parlour Block, and the fourteenth-century defensive tower. The "View" records that they were also accessed through the "fair rowme" at the high end of the Great Hall. A stone staircase gave access to a "Withdrawing Chamber," lit by three glass windows. This may well have been the room known today as the Red Room. It was connected to the "Great Chamber," which was heated and lit by five windows and two glazed roundels, with a further "Little Chamber" beyond it—also heated and lit by two windows. This room feels like a Privy Chamber, located in the upper storey of the thirteenth-century block. A further room, described in 1574 as the "Study," sat above the "Little Chamber" and gave access to

⁸⁴ BodL, MS Facs d.99 (from Longleat Misc XIX).

⁸⁵ Thurley, *Houses of Power*, 194–195.

⁸⁶ Rodwell, "Nicholas Poyntz and Acton Court"; Rodwell, Bell and Bertram, *Acton Court*. The surviving building at Willington (Beds), built by John Gostwick (c. 1480–1545) appears to be a purpose-built accommodation block and may have been designed to host a meeting of the Privy Council there in 1541.

⁸⁷ Bathe and Holley, "A Re-Appraisal of Wolfhall," <https://realwolfhall.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/architectural-and-historic-significance.pdf>.

⁸⁸ The Summer of 1536 was impacted by plague.

the leads over the "Withdrawing Chamber." The study was also heated, with two timber windows, and lined with wainscot. At its centre was "a round counting house of wainscot with a round table in yt, the counting house having desks and seats round about yt."⁸⁹ A wainscot portal also led directly from the Great Chamber to "a fair lodging" known as the "Quene's Chamber," which was also heated and lit by two windows and had access to a garderobe. Some of these works may have been carried out in 1538 when the king's surveyor, James Nedeham, presented a warrant for £435 towards repairs of the king's manors at Otford, Knowle, and Petworth.⁹⁰

It is perhaps not surprising that Henry did not remodel Petworth entirely in the late 1530s. It was not one of the Thames Valley palaces and houses he expected to remove between regularly and, even as a progress venue, it was something of an outlier, as was nearby Halnaker. Their principal attraction for the king was always their provision of access to hunting (Figure 10). It may therefore also have been during this period that a new hunting lodge was added to the park. Percy's grant of 1535 confirmed the king's title to all the houses, outbuildings, chapels, dovecots, mills, vineyards, woods, heath, and pastures of the estate. Soon afterwards, Henry further extended its hunting grounds, enclosing 120 acres of former common land around Arbor Hill.⁹¹ Following Henry's dramatic tournament injury in January 1536, hunting became Henry's principal outdoor recreation.⁹² This led to an expansion of both royal parks and the use of smaller hunting lodges around London, and, by 1541, there were eighty-five royal parks and forests. Exchanging or acquiring good hunting grounds attached to sites like Petworth and Halnaker enabled the king to indulge his passion for the chase and harness its rewards for hospitality.

Banqueting houses provided shelter and places for refreshment and entertainment, whilst stands enabled the king to shoot at close quarters when his health prevented him from riding. Petworth's 1574 "View" describes a "banqueting house of bricke greatlie decaied" in the middle of the brick wall dividing the inner court from the garden. A tower-like structure, possibly representing this building, is shown on Treswell's map of 1610. Excavations at Lawn Hill in 2013 and 2014 recovered the remains of a later sixteenth-century Banqueting House consisting of sandstone foundations, internal brick walls,

⁸⁹ RHS, "A View," 104.

⁹⁰ *Letters & Papers*, Henry VIII, xiii, ii, no. 1838.

⁹¹ Chichester, West Sussex Record Office 5450, fols. 1r–34r, 135r–6r, 218r. The loss of the Commons was still remembered and recorded in legal depositions in the late sixteenth century. See Dommett, "Petworth Park's Hidden Past," 90; Jerrome, *Cloakbag and Common Purse*, 18. For the wider significance of these depositions, see Wood, "Some banglyng about the customes," 1–14.

⁹² Thurley, *Royal Palaces*, 70. Henry fell from his horse and lay unconscious for two hours. The accident may have caused brain damage, exacerbated already-problematic leg ulcers, and highlighted the dangers of the sport for the aging king.

window glass, and clay roof tiles.⁹³ Finds, including oyster shells and ceramics, suggested the most extensive use of the building was in the mid-later sixteenth century, and that it was constructed on top of an earlier building, possibly an early-sixteenth-century stand or lodge.



Figure 10. Petworth's hunting landscape viewed from the site of the Banqueting House, Lawn Hill.

One of the people overseeing plans for a possible royal visit in the late 1530s would have been Petworth's steward, William Fitzwilliam (c. 1490–1542).⁹⁴ Fitzwilliam came from a comparatively minor gentry family in West Yorkshire. He remained loyal to the king through the turbulent years of the 1530s, acquiring vast lands in both Surrey and Sussex, including several former monastic estates. He raised forces for the crown at Guildford in 1536 and helped Cromwell engineer the fall of Anne Boleyn. Between 1536 and 1540, he served as Lord Admiral, and on 18 October 1537, Henry made him Earl of Southampton. Fitzwilliam rooted out both local and national conspiracies against the king, including the alleged plot involving Sir Geoffrey Pole; his mother, Margaret, Countess of Salisbury (1473–1541); and Henry Courtenay, Marquess of Exeter (c. 1498–1538). Fitzwilliam interrogated Margaret for three days at Cowdray House, just a few miles from Petworth. She remained

⁹³ Cruse and Klemenic, "Petworth Park," 62–65.

⁹⁴ Robison, "Fitzwilliam, William."

there until her attainder in May 1539, when all her lands, including Warblington, where Henry had stayed during the progress of 1526, were confiscated. Fitzwilliam had acquired Cowdray in 1528 and proceeded to rebuild it as a splendid Tudor mansion.⁹⁵ Above its square porch were the royal coat of arms and Fitzwilliam's motto, "LOIAULTE SAPROUERA" (Loyalty is its own proof). When he died in 1542, he left Cowdray to his half-brother, Sir Anthony Browne (c. 1500–1548). It was Browne who welcomed Henry to Cowdray on his way to Petworth in August 1545.

1545 A Memory Palace

Henry's last stay at Petworth was also his longest, between 6 and 14 August 1545. It followed several personal and politically turbulent years for the king. Whilst Jane Seymour had provided Henry with his much-longed-for male heir, her death shortly after Edward's birth was devastating. It led to behaviours such as excessive eating, which impacted profoundly on his health. Henry's search for a new queen led initially to an unsuccessful match with Anne of Cleves (1515–1557) in January 1540. Their unconsummated marriage was annulled a few months later in July, but Anne remained in England, enjoying a generous settlement of southern manors and properties—including Hever Castle, former home of the Boleyns. These events also contributed to the downfall of Thomas Cromwell, who was executed on 28 July 1540, the same day on which Henry married the teenage Katherine Howard (1523–1542). The new queen accompanied Henry on his long-delayed northern progress to York in 1541. However, reports of her indiscretions on tour led to her arrest on their return to London and her execution on 13 February 1542.⁹⁶ Henry's final marriage, to Katherine Parr (1512–1548) on 12 July 1543, provided him with companionship and care as his ulcered legs and vast weight took their toll on his health. The Summer of 1545 saw the last extensive progress of the reign to the southwest of England. Thereafter, the king generally preferred to remain in the vicinity of his comfortable Thames Valley palaces with their easily accessible hunting grounds and parks.

In the early 1540s, Henry also faced major military and naval challenges to the peace of the realm. Despite an initial victory at Solway Moss in 1542 and the Treaty of Greenwich, England's "Rough Wooing" of Scotland rumbled on until 1551. Further south, England had become embroiled in the Italian War (1542–1546), leading to tensions with France. In July 1544, Henry sailed for Calais and laid siege to Boulogne, which fell on 14 September. Henry returned to England in triumph, leaving the dukes of Norfolk and Suffolk behind to consolidate his victory. That winter, Henry's health deteriorated once again, but the

⁹⁵ The house had previously been owned by Sir David Owen, one of the men who welcomed Henry to Sussex in 1526.

⁹⁶ Clark, "Queen Katherine Howard," provides a fascinating analysis of what the records of Katherine and her fellow accused and witnesses reveal about contemporary attitudes to space, privacy, and gender.

appearance of the French off the English coast in July 1545 rallied the king. He left Greenwich Palace on 4 July, making his way to review the fleet at Portsmouth via Nonsuch, West Horsley, Guildford Priory, and Farnham Castle. Watching the "Battle of the Solent" from the battlements of Southsea Castle, Henry witnessed the disastrous sinking of the *Mary Rose* and the loss of six hundred men. Nevertheless, the French were defeated, and the king continued on progress via Titchfield Abbey⁹⁷ and Stansted Park, arriving at Cowdray on 3 August (Figure 11).



Figure 11. Ruins of Cowdray House, sixteenth century. Cowdray, West Sussex. The house was largely destroyed by fire in 1791.

Sir Anthony Browne (c. 1500–1548) had served the king from an early age as Surveyor and Master of Hunting at Hatfield, Thorne, and Conisborough castles in Yorkshire.⁹⁸ By 1519, he had become a Gentleman of the Privy Chamber. In 1520, he

⁹⁷ Titchfield Abbey was a former Premonstratensian House granted to Thomas Wriothesley (1505–1550) in 1537. Wriothesley built his new house within the church buildings, entered via a magnificent sixteenth-century gatehouse. St. John Hope, "The Making of Place House," 231.

⁹⁸ Robison, "Browne, Sir Anthony."

displayed his prowess at the Field of Cloth of Gold, and, by 1539, he had become a Privy Councillor and Master of the King's Horse. He served in Scotland in 1542 with his half-brother, William Fitzwilliam, and was also at the Siege of Boulogne in 1544, where he worked closely with Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk (c. 1484–1545). Browne's biographical achievements were celebrated by a remarkable series of paintings created on the walls of the Parlour at Cowdray, which were drawn and engraved in the eighteenth century prior to their destruction by fire in 1793.⁹⁹ On the south wall were scenes from the English invasion of France in 1544, including depictions of *The Departure of Henry VIII from Calais*, *The Encampment of the Henry VIII at Marquison*, and *The Siege of Boulogne*. The north wall showed *The Encampment of the English Forces near Portsmouth*, including the sinking of the *Mary Rose* and *The Coronation Procession of Edward VI* in 1547.

The Cowdray paintings have generally been dated to some point between 1545 and 1547. The scenes of Edward's coronation and the sinking of the *Mary Rose* evidently post-date these events, but it is just possible that Browne created the south wall images in advance of the king's visit in August 1545.¹⁰⁰ Cowdray's paintings follow a broader trend of large-scale historical paintings such as *The Field of Cloth of Gold* and *The Embarkation at Dover* commissioned for royal palaces in the 1540s. Such artworks were designed not only to reflect Henry's magnificence but also to explain it. Browne's depiction of *The Siege of Boulogne* would have flattered and pleased the king, reminding him of how active and victorious he had been on campaign. At its centre, Browne showed himself riding alongside the king and fellow Boulogne veteran, Charles Brandon (Figure 12). We can imagine the reminiscences that must have echoed around the dining chamber in early August 1545.

Henry left Cowdray on 6 August and travelled the short distance to Petworth, arriving later that day. In contrast to Cowdray, Petworth must have felt rather old-fashioned. Its thick stone walls, Great Hall, and ingenious—but rather inconvenient—suites of lodgings located up multiple sets of stairs must have proved something of a struggle for the aging and overweight king. Henry may have stayed in the new lodgings on the right of the Gatehouse created in 1536, or in a new set of lodgings described in the "View" of 1574 as "a newe building standing on the east side of the Kichen yerde, having iiij rowmes

⁹⁹ St. John Hope, *Cowdray and Easebourne Priory*. Early descriptions of the paintings were made by James Ayoloffe, "An Account of Some Ancient English Historical Paintings"; *An Historical Description of an Ancient Painting*. Nurse, "The Sherwin Brothers' Copy," provides a detailed discussion of disagreements within the Society of Antiquaries, which accompanied their publication in 1778–1788, and the contemporary watercolours created by the Sherwin brothers.

¹⁰⁰ Nurse, "The Sherwin Brothers," 372. Lloyd and Thurley, *Images of a Tudor King*, 44–56, suggest that other paintings at Cowdray were created by Fitzwilliam. These featured events from earlier in Henry's reign, including English embassies to France in 1518 and 1529. However, it was Browne who was included in the embassy to hand over Tournai to François I in 1518 and was again ambassador in France from 1528.

belowe and iiij lodgings above, the lofts whereof were bourded with inch bourds but most of them are pulled upp and caried awaie."¹⁰¹



Figure 12. *The Encampment of the English Forces at Portsmouth* (detail showing Henry VIII, Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, and Sir Anthony Browne), hand-coloured engraving, 550 x 1770 mm. Portsmouth, the Mary Rose Trust Collections. Courtesy of Kester Keighley and the Mary Rose Trust.

This lodging could have provided the suites of four rooms which John Norris's instructions indicated were a requirement of royal progress. However, their location in the kitchen yard might suggest they were designed to accommodate guests, rather than the king. This could have included members of the Privy Council, who issued a series of letters from Petworth between the 4 and 14 August, presumably making use both of the chamber above the entry to the Great Hall and of the study with its counting house and desks above the Great or Privy Council Chamber.¹⁰² The king could also, of course, have made use of the tents which had accompanied him to Portsmouth.

Whilst Petworth never received the extensive Tudor makeovers which Henry's surveyors oversaw at his Thames Valley houses or converted monasteries, its less-frequent use may have made it something of a "memory palace" for the king. By the 1540s, Henry was no longer concerned with being visible on progress. Rather, he was retreating into private rooms, where his ailing health was a constant concern. Visiting houses like

¹⁰¹ RHS, "View," 106.

¹⁰² *Letters & Papers*, Henry VIII, xx, ii, no. 108, 71, 79, 94, 104, 117, 126.

Petworth must have brought back vivid memories of his earlier and more active self, as well as of summer days filled with pleasure. We cannot know what Henry was thinking or feeling in August 1545, but Petworth may well have provided him with a place of respite and solace following the turmoil of Portsmouth. Henry left Petworth on the 14 August and made his way back to London via Guildford Friary; a popular progress venue where he had built a new lodging or "place of honour" in the early 1530s.¹⁰³ A fellow guest was one of his longest serving and most loyal courtiers, Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk (c. 1484–1485).¹⁰⁴ Despite his recently rude health and success in Boulogne, Brandon was dying. Henry stayed for a week, departing for Woking on the 21 August. Brandon died the following day, true to his motto, *Loyaulte me oblige* (Loyalty Compels Me).

Conclusion

Henry VIII's progresses provide a fascinating lens through which to observe the king, his queens, and courtiers outside the carefully controlled corridors of the royal palaces. However, the stories of provincial progress venues like Petworth are challenging to tell. So little of the house Henry VIII visited is visible today, and so much of what he added to the site is undocumented. However, an interdisciplinary approach, bringing together not just different kinds of sources and evidence, but also different scholars, experts, curators, and volunteers, allows us to share the kind of knowledge or insights into places that only emerges from years of being in a place: puzzling about the alignment of walls, differences in floor levels, architectural fragments hidden behind panelling, mysterious parch marks in pristine lawns, or fragments of oyster shells eroding out of embankments. We are hugely grateful to the volunteers and property team for hosting us on our own progresses to Petworth and for sharing their questions, theories, and ideas with us. Our research has synthesised and clarified some of the phasing of the existing building and the functions of spaces within it. We have raised new questions about the location and configuration of the outer and inner courtyards in relation to West Street, Court Ditch Lane, and the western front of the house, which might be explored through future survey and excavations. We have suggested that Petworth offers a distinctive case study of the ways in which lesser progress sites could be adapted to meet the changing needs of royal accommodation, through the reconfiguration, repurposing, and refurbishing of older spaces and the construction of new lodgings in semi-permanent materials which decayed more quickly once surveyors and craftsmen turned their attention elsewhere. Hopefully, we have brought something of this lost Tudor building back to life, reanimating an older but undoubtedly magnificent spirit of place, within its walls. Henry VIII continues to inhabit

¹⁰³ Colvin, *History of the King's Works*, 123.

¹⁰⁴ Gunn, "Brandon, Charles, First Duke of Suffolk."

Petworth, gazing defiantly out of what was once his Great Chamber, to survey the site of his lost buildings and demand that his chapter in its story be told.

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