

Introduction

On 19 May 1536, a French sword stilled the beating heart of an English queen. Her name was Anne Boleyn and she would become one of the most controversial and iconic queens in English history. In her lifetime, Anne was a force of nature; she captivated the heart and soul of a king, divided a court and ignited the Reformation on English soil, beginning a process that would transform the religious and social landscape of the country.

While after her death her enemies continued to defile her name ‘full sore’, her legacy lived on in her daughter, perhaps the greatest monarch that England has ever known – Elizabeth I. But more than that, in her own right Anne Boleyn was an intelligent, powerful and influential woman, who refused to be intimidated by those who sought her destruction. Her sense of destiny and purpose for religious reform carried her all the way to the scaffold with characteristic temerity, courage and grace.

Almost 500 years later, Anne’s memory burns as brightly as ever. In recent times, the tireless work of historians like the late Professor Eric Ives has done much to rehabilitate the slandered reputation of Anne as the archetypal harlot, whore and home-wrecker. She is now largely recognised as being the victim of court faction, of a deadly power struggle with a man that the Boleyns had once so ardently supported – Thomas Cromwell – and of a powder keg of unfortunate circumstances that made her vulnerable to the machinations of her enemies during the first few months of 1536.

In recent years, both authors have dedicated many hours to researching and writing about Anne’s life and her innocence. Dr Sarah Morris first came to Anne’s story as an eleven-year-old schoolgirl. Her passion for all things Tudor remained largely as a private hobby until she set pen to paper in 2010 and began writing *Le Temps Viendra: a Novel of Anne Boleyn*; the first of two volumes was published in the autumn of 2012. The story is a fictional biography of Anne Boleyn, as seen through the eyes of a modern-day woman who finds herself drawn back in time and into the body of her historical heroine. For Australian-born Natalie Grueninger, it was a visit to the Tower of London on a wintery day in 2000 that ignited her curiosity about Anne and the world in which she lived, and set her on a path of learning that would eventually lead to the creation, in 2009, of *On the Tudor Trail*, a website dedicated to documenting historic sites associated with Anne Boleyn and sharing information about life in Tudor England. Although Natalie’s interest in the Tudors was awakened in her early twenties, as a child she was fascinated with the past and the concept of time. Having been drawn together by our love of Anne Boleyn, we soon realised that we

shared an insatiable curiosity for the buildings and locations associated with her, both of us intrigued by the fact that when we stand in a building or space where someone from the past once stood, it is only time, and not space, which separates us.

During the course of both of these projects, each of us amassed a veritable wealth of information about the great houses, palaces and castles that served as the stage to one of the most dramatic lives and love stories of English history. Little by little, we became beguiled by these locations, growing to appreciate that while Anne and her contemporaries had long since turned to dust, the places which she visited remained behind as stalwart witnesses linking us physically to her extraordinary past.

We found that visiting the locations brought depth, colour and texture to a life so often only accessible through words graven upon a page, the very presence of the buildings, even in ruins, often holding the energy of the ghostly footsteps that had gone before us. In some instances, such as when one stands in the Great Hall at Hampton Court Palace, Anne, Henry and the glittering, dangerous world in which they lived was so tangible that we could easily imagine catching sight of the train of a gown disappearing around a corner. In other places, where Anne's presence was more fleeting, any sense of her remained disappointingly elusive.

However, despite these differences, we soon came to realise that whether we were talking only about earthworks of a long-lost palace or an intact building that had endured the test of time, each location presented to us more than just bricks and mortar. Rather, such structures became interwoven into the very fabric of a life long-lost, revealing more about the story, influences and character of the woman who often remains so elusive.

Our aim in writing this book was primarily to provide a practical guide to places and artefacts associated with Anne Boleyn. However, over and above this, we wanted *In the Footsteps of Anne Boleyn* to be a resource, for the first time, bringing together an extensive record of these locations in one place. Finally, taking a long-term view, we wished to capture an historical snapshot in time, a record of the state of these properties and locations as we stand here at the beginning of the twenty-first century, exactly 500 years on from when Anne first left Hever Castle and set out on her incredible odyssey.

During the research process, we uncovered over twenty locations not previously known to us, despite our extensive involvement with Anne's story over the years. In many instances, pockets of local knowledge had been preserved, but the link with Anne was largely lost to a wider, global audience. In other cases, the connection of a place or property to Anne Boleyn was unknown even to the guardians or owners of the building. Re-establishing the link proved particularly satisfying, putting in place another piece of the jigsaw so that its rightful heritage could be preserved for future generations to enjoy. We hope that, whether you are learning about Anne for the first time, or are familiar with her story; whether you read about these locations from the comfort of your armchair, or choose to slip this guide book into your backpack and literally follow in the footsteps of Anne Boleyn, there will be something new here for you to discover.

In writing this book, there are several working assumptions about Anne's life that we have adopted in order to set a context for each location, or to trace her movements as part of the itinerant court. We have chosen to incorporate those facts that are held true by the majority of modern-day historians. However, as controversy often follows in Anne's wake,

we appreciate that there may well be those who hold an alternative view. The following section outlines the main assumptions contained in this book.

Anne's Birth Date and the Early Years

We have taken Anne Boleyn's birth date as 1501, making Anne the second-oldest living Boleyn offspring. It is not the place or scope of this book to present an argument for and against the two most commonly cited dates for the year of Anne's birth (1501 versus 1507). Other historical sources have discussed this extensively. However, we concur with the majority that 1501 is probably the most likely date of Anne's birth, and have adopted it throughout this guidebook as a point of reference.

This means that Anne was a young girl of around twelve when she first left English shores to join the court of Margaret of Austria in the Low Countries. Because of Anne's tender age and lowly status at court, precious little is known about her movements during the seven years that she spent in modern-day Belgium and France. However, knowing that the young Anne Boleyn was a maid of honour in both courts, we are assuming (as most historians do) that Anne's movements were closely aligned with those of whichever queen she was serving at the time. This is reflected in the 'The Early Years' entries.

The Courting Years

From a letter penned by the hand of Henry himself, we know that in the summer of 1528 the English king had been 'struck by the dart of love' for over a year. Professor Eric Ives believes that the chronology of events makes it likely that Henry first declared any serious intent toward Anne around Easter 1527, when he began his pursuit of a divorce from his wife, Katharine of Aragon.

From this time until Katharine of Aragon was banished from court in June/July 1531, Anne's whereabouts have not always been explicitly recorded. We can be safely assured of Anne's presence at almost all of Henry's principal residences in London and along the Thames Valley at one point or another between the years 1528 and 1536. But what of the many other locations visited by the king and court during the annual summer progress? From our research, we can summarise the following:

1528 – Anne and Henry were separated from June through to late November/early December, and so she did not accompany the king on progress during the summer months of that year. Anne had taken refuge at Hever following an outbreak of the sweating sickness in June. She fell ill there, probably in July, but later recovered. However, with the arrival of Cardinal Campeggio in the autumn and with the Blackfriars trial imminent, it seems that for the sake of propriety, the couple remained apart for another four months, a period chronicled by a series of passionate letters from a love-sick king, which are now housed in the Vatican library.

1529 – Following the collapse of the Legatine Court on 16 July, a furious Henry and Anne left London on progress. We know that Anne was with the king, for it was at Grafton Regis

in Northamptonshire that, just two months later, the famous final meeting occurred between Henry and the king's first minister, Cardinal Wolsey (see Grafton Regis). Wolsey's chronicler, George Cavendish, definitively places Anne at Henry's side, trying to influence the king to act against his first minister.

1530 – By 1530, Anne and Henry were inseparable. In May of that year, Chapuys commented that

the King shews greater favour to the Lady every day; very recently coming from Windsor, he made her ride behind him on a pillion, a most unusual proceeding, and one that has greatly called forth people's attention here, so much so that two men have been, as I am informed, taken up and sent to prison merely for having mentioned the fact [and commented upon it].

Then, towards the end of August, we hear from the Imperial Ambassador again: 'For nearly one month the King has transacted no business at all, with the exception perhaps of that for which the above-mentioned assembly was convoked; he has given himself up entirely to hunting privately and moving from one place to another'. There is nothing to suggest that Anne was anywhere but at Henry's side. Her influence was growing daily, and we can very safely assume Anne was with Henry throughout July and August 1530, and for the rest of the hunting season.

1531 – In 1531, Katharine was left behind at Windsor, while Anne and Henry headed off on progress together for the summer. In the same year, Chapuys commented that Anne

always accompanies the King at his hunting parties, without any female attendants of her own, while the Queen herself who used formerly to follow him on such expeditions has been ordered to remain at Vinsor [Windsor]; which circumstance, as may be imagined, is exceedingly aggravating to the Queen, not only on account of the King's studied separation, but because she fancies that his object in taking the Lady with him to such hunting parties is that he may accustom the lords and governors of the counties and districts he traverses on such occasions to see her with him, and that he may the better win them over to his party when Parliament meets again.

With Katharine banished from court, Anne now reigned supreme as the most powerful woman in the country in all but name.

1532 – By 1532 it was clear that marriage was imminent. Henry was spending more money on Anne than ever before and Chapuys reported on 29 July that the king had spoken publicly of marrying Anne: 'He [the king] was resolved to celebrate this marriage in the most solemn manner possible, and the necessary preparations must be made.' Preparations were certainly underway at the Tower of London where between June and September workers were employed to renovate the royal lodgings and other buildings in anticipation of Anne's Coronation. As Henry's official consort in waiting, we can be certain that Anne accompanied

Henry throughout the summer. Gilles de la Pommeraie, the French ambassador, was invited to join the royal progress and his correspondence attests to Anne's presence. 'Sometimes,' the ambassador informed the French minister Montmorency, 'he [the king] puts my Lady Anne and me, each with our crossbow, to wait for deer to cross our path.' He went on to report that, at other times, he and Anne are left on their own 'to watch the deer run'. Anne even presented him with a hunting frock and hat, horn and greyhound. At the conclusion of the progress, Anne was created Marquess of Pembroke, and in October 1532 she accompanied Henry to Calais as his intended wife.

And so, in summary, we have assumed that during the entire progresses of 1529–32, Anne was close to Henry's side and accompanied him to the locations included in this guidebook.

1533 – During the summer of 1533, Anne Boleyn was pregnant with the future Elizabeth I. Due to the queen's advanced state of pregnancy there was no usual summer progress. The king did however leave her behind at Windsor Castle in August, when news arrived from France that England was being sidelined during a summit meeting between King Francis I of France and the Pope. Norfolk, who had been sent to the South of France to represent the king, had dispatched George Boleyn back to England with the news and to take instructions from the king on how to proceed. In order to protect Anne from any unnecessary distress that might harm her unborn child, it appears that she was not told of the snub. Instead Henry set out to rendezvous with Lord Rochford at Sutton Place near Guildford. After a mini progress in the Thames Valley that followed, Henry returned to Windsor, shortly before travelling by barge with Anne back to Greenwich, where she was to take to her chambers.

1534 – The summer of 1534 turned out to be even more disastrous for the royal couple. Evidence suggests that Anne was at Hampton Court Palace when she endured a stillbirth of her second child at around seven–eight months' gestation. It seems that Henry left her abruptly, travelling to The More in Hertfordshire and subsequently cancelling the forthcoming trip to Calais. Although Anne's advanced state of pregnancy was given as the reason for the postponement, we find Retha Warnicke's theory on the 1534 stillbirth compelling, given the known facts. We agree that this was in fact most likely an excuse; a face-saving exercise. It seemed Henry was reluctant to admit to his royal brother (who already had three healthy sons) that God had again denied him a male child and heir.

Anne and Henry were to be apart for about one month, reuniting it seems at Guildford in Surrey at the end of July or the beginning of August. There is nothing to suggest that she did anything other than accompany the king on the rest of the summer progress from this point.

1535 – We have chosen to dedicate an entire section to the summer progress of 1535. It was the only complete progress that Anne would undertake as queen – as it turned out, it would also be her last. It has been heralded as the longest and most politically significant of Henry VIII's reign; Cromwell is often found overseeing the visitations made upon lesser monastic houses, marking the beginning of what would eventually become known as the Dissolution of the Monasteries. In addition, the royal progress through the West Country honoured men

who had shown themselves as loyal to Anne and the reformist cause, culminating in the consecration of three reformist bishops in Winchester on 19 September.

The Research Process

The absence of formal references and footnotes does not mean that the book was not rigorously researched. In fact over the last two years we have, wherever possible, worked with the owners, caretakers and/or archivists at each of the locations; we have spoken with historians, local experts and archaeologists at the various historical societies, record offices, museums and universities; drawn on the latest available research and conducted our own research at the National Archives in London. We have read extensively about Anne Boleyn and sixteenth-century England, immersed ourselves in primary sources and, between us, travelled to almost all of the English locations and many of the European sites.

Our quest to follow in Anne's footsteps has not been without its challenges. On many occasions we were confronted with myths about Anne, which had become deeply ingrained over the centuries (and propagated in many popular histories, and even on television...), conflicting sources and, at times, complete silence. There have also been moments of sheer elation, moments like when we rediscovered a contemporary document about Anne and Henry's visit to Gloucester in 1535, which provided precious details about what the royal couple did during their stay, including kneeling in prayer, side by side, at the high altar in Gloucester Cathedral; who they visited; and the gifts they were given.

Gloucester is only one of more than seventy locations featured in this book, all of which were included because Anne Boleyn visited them between 1501 and 1536. Not every location that claimed an association with Anne made it into the book. An important part of the research process involved separating the authentic claims from the spurious ones; only those places where Anne's visit could be verified by a contemporary source, or where her presence could be safely taken for granted, have been included.

At the time of publication there were also a handful of additional sites that we'd recently unearthed that required further research in order to try and verify Anne's presence and pinpoint where the house originally stood. They are not, therefore, included in this edition. And indeed, given our experience to date, we believe that there may well be more locations waiting to be uncovered in the future.

How to Use This Guidebook

The locations have been separated into four categories: Early Life, The Courting Years, Anne the Queen and The 1535 Progress. Each location has a separate entry that has been arranged according to the chronology of Anne's life. This helps us follow in her physical footsteps as her story unfolds, from the cradle at Blickling Hall to her grave in the chapel of St Peter ad Vincula in the Tower. Of course there are some overlaps, such as Anne's presence at the Tower before her Coronation in 1533 and execution in 1536. Nevertheless, where possible we have tried to adhere to a physical timeline.

We have also chosen to include locations like Bridewell Palace and Durham House, where there are no visible remains extant, as well as houses that are today privately owned and not

accessible to the public, like Little Sodbury Manor or Prinknash Abbey. It is our firm belief that all these locations, whether they retain much of their original fabric or have disappeared into the ground, deserve to be acknowledged and recorded for posterity. In some instances, as is the case with the 1535 progress, the locations are like the pieces of a puzzle; they connect to one another, joining up to reveal a picture of Anne's life in what was her final summer on earth. Omit one of the pieces and the image becomes fragmented and more difficult to read.

Each of the entries will provide you with information about Anne's connection to the property, including when she visited and what significant events took place there. As each entry is intended to be able to stand alone, as well as to be read as part of a continuum in time, in certain instances a fact that provides context to the visit may be repeated across several different entries.

The text is accompanied by around 130 images ranging from modern-day photographs to sixteenth-century plans and maps. Any artefacts associated with Anne that are not housed at one of the locations featured in the book are listed separately in the final section of the book, Boleyn Treasures.

For those of you less familiar with English geography, maps have been included as a visual aid to help you organise your trip, making it easier to see which locations lie within easy reach of each other. For more precise identification of each location, a postcode has been included in the visitor information section of each entry. Where they exist, website addresses, contact telephone numbers and email addresses are also provided in order that you can uncover more information for yourself about any particular site before you visit.

Our intention is to help you retrace Anne's steps and see the sites as she would have. Your attention will be drawn to those features that were *in situ* when Anne visited, as well as to any significant Tudor artefacts housed at each of the sites. The book is not intended to be an in-depth history of each of the locations, nor a comprehensive account of every Tudor event or story associated with each of the sites. But our hope is that it will allow you to see these places with Anne's story at the forefront of your mind, and guide you on your own personal and compelling journey in the footsteps of Anne Boleyn.

We are immensely excited and proud to be cataloguing the life of such a remarkable woman, exactly 500 years from when a young Anne Boleyn first left Hever Castle for the Continent. So, let's turn around, leaving the present behind, and begin our journey into the past.

Happy time travelling!

Natalie Grueninger and Sarah Morris

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