

**Sir Hugh Paulet and the Christening of Prince Edward, Monday 15 October 1537**

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*This article explores the moment that Henry VIII's son, the future Edward VI was christened at Hampton Court Palace on Monday 15 October 1537. It addresses the event as a moment of magnificent courtly celebration, largely owing to the collective sense of relief at the safe delivery of a healthy, legitimate male heir. As such, we find aspirational families vying for a position at - or an invitation to - court in the name of career progression. Accordingly, the article highlights in particular the presence of one of the guests at the christening, Sir Hugh Paulet (c. 1500-1573), and shows how his invitation and attendance symbolised his enhanced status within his native county of Somerset and confirmed his place among the great and good of the kingdom. The subplot to this event, however, was an outbreak of plague across London and the south of England, leading the King to move away from the city and to keep his family and his court in isolation in the healthier environs of his favourite royal palace. The plague itself offers a crucial context to this ceremony, as it suggests that even in the face of such dangers, Paulet and others like him saw the necessity of attending this ceremony. Indeed, the reverse is also true: the King needed to demonstrate his favour for those who were loyal.*

**Keywords:** nobility; gentry; court; ceremony; ritual; plague; isolation; monarchy; health; proximity; access.

Nearly thirty years after acceding to the English throne, and after a long struggle to provide England with a male heir, Henry VIII had finally produced the legitimate – and healthy – son he craved. At around 2 am on Friday 12 October 1537, Prince Edward, the future Edward VI, was born some thirteen miles outside London, at Hampton Court Palace, on the banks of the River Thames. Henry had only acquired, or perhaps requisitioned, Hampton Court Palace relatively recently in 1525, from Cardinal Thomas Wolsey, his Lord Chancellor between 1515 and 1529.<sup>1</sup> Henry VIII's anticipation in the months leading up to his son's birth were such that, in May 1537, the *Te Deum* was sung at St Paul's Cathedral, intended as a blessing on the royal couple for a successful pregnancy and safe delivery. Henry also commissioned Hans Holbein to paint a fresco in his Privy Chamber at the Palace of Whitehall, displaying his parents and his pregnant wife in the same image: generations past, present and future.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, Henry had begun renovating the Queen's bedchamber at the palace from the summer of 1537.<sup>3</sup> The anticipated heir's lodgings there were also being carefully prepared, with work undertaken at the northern side of 'the inner courte beside the chapel'. The nursery had in fact been created by repurposing space from the tennis court complex at the palace, beginning around June or July 1537. These rooms included a bathroom, a kitchen, a garderobe and a bedchamber.<sup>4</sup>

On the day of Edward's birth, his mother, Jane Seymour (c. 1508-37) wrote to Thomas Cromwell, Henry's chief minister from 1532 to 1540, to inform him of the birth of a son 'conceived in lawful matrimony': a deliberate proclamation of the child's legitimacy.<sup>5</sup> Shortly after Edward's birth, messages of congratulation flowed in, typified by a note from

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Gwyn, *The King's Cardinal: The Rise and Fall of Thomas Wolsey* (London, 1990), p. 28.

<sup>2</sup> Richard L. DeMolen, 'The birth of Edward VI and the death of Queen Jane: the arguments for and against Caesarean section', *Renaissance Studies*, vol. 4, iss. 1 (1990), pp. 359-91 (pp. 366-7).

<sup>3</sup> Simon Thurley, 'Henry VIII and the building of Hampton Court: a reconstruction of the Tudor palace', *Architectural History*, vol. 31 (1988), pp. 1-57 (p. 35).

<sup>4</sup> Thurley, 'Henry VIII and the building of Hampton Court', p. 30.

<sup>5</sup> British Library (hereafter BL), Cotton MS Nero C X, fol. 1 (J. S. Brewer and James Gairdner (eds), *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII* (21 vols, London, 1862-1932) (hereafter *LP*), XII (ii), 889).

Margaret Wotton, marchioness of Dorset (c. 1487-1541), expressing that this was ‘the most joyfull newes, and gladde tydynges, that cam to Englonde this many yeres’.<sup>6</sup> Hugh Latimer, bishop of Worcester, wrote to Cromwell on 19 October, a week after Edward’s birth, to declare that the prince was most welcome, and an arrival for which the kingdom had ‘hungered so long’.<sup>7</sup> For Henry, these expressions of joy were far from hyperbole. As the news of Edward’s birth spread, in a moment of national celebration (and indeed one of substantial relief), the triumphal *Te Deum* could be heard once more: not only from St Paul’s but from parish churches right across the capital. Celebratory bonfires were lit on London’s streets and feasting began throughout the city, while the King himself chose to distribute alms to the poor in an overt act of thanksgiving.<sup>8</sup>

Within this triumphant context, Prince Edward was christened at Hampton Court Palace on Monday 15 October, just three days after his birth, before a congregation of England’s social elite.<sup>9</sup> Although Edward’s christening was a religious ritual, this article explores the event in terms of its courtly celebration, because this was a ceremony which involved the royal court and all the magnificence and opulence that came with it. The following pages show how the ceremony itself was modelled on previous royal christenings in an effort to demonstrate continuity of courtly practices across dynastic change. This was especially important considering the long shadow of the Wars of the Roses (1455-87), a foreboding threat that had fuelled Henry VIII’s need – or desperation – to produce a healthy, legitimate son and heir.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, as David Starkey has suggested, this continuity of ceremony was not significantly disrupted by the English Reformation, partly because the

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<sup>6</sup> The National Archives (hereafter TNA), SP1/571 (*LP*, XII (ii), 905).

<sup>7</sup> Hugh Latimer, *Sermons and Remains of Hugh Latimer, Sometime Bishop of Worcester, Martyr, 1555*, ed. by George Elwes Corrie (Cambridge, 1845), p. 385.

<sup>8</sup> BL, Add. MS. 6113, fol. 81r; Egerton MS. 985, fol. 33r (*LP*, XII (ii), 911).

<sup>9</sup> Fiona Louise Kisby, “‘When the king goeth a procession’: chapel ceremonies and services, the ritual year, and religious reforms at the early Tudor court, 1485-1547”, *Journal of British Studies*, vol. 40, iss. 1 (2001), pp. 44-75 (p. 46).

<sup>10</sup> J. R. Lander, *The Wars of the Roses* (Stroud, 1992), pp. 220-221.

ceremony itself was simply following inherited guidelines and therefore escaped wholesale reform.<sup>11</sup> This article also integrates into the discussion the important contextual factor of the seemingly ever-present threat of plague and contagion across England, as well as how the Crown handled an event of such significance for the King - and the country - by removing itself to a setting of isolation and limited access. What this discussion also adds to the narrative is that courtiers were actively concerned about - and demonstrated an awareness of - becoming ill themselves or bringing the virus with them to the christening.

### **Context**

Prince Edward's christening was indeed a moment of great promise and, as far as Henry VIII was concerned, the point at which he could finally confirm his family's dynastic security. Indeed, Henry had endured a long struggle in his pursuit of a healthy son.<sup>12</sup> This period included the trials of his protracted divorce proceedings from Catherine of Aragon (1485-1536), the execution of his second wife, Anne Boleyn (c. 1501-36), and a string of deaths of infant sons, as well as the death of his illegitimate son, Henry Fitzroy, duke of Richmond and Somerset (1519-36), just a year before Edward's birth. The backdrop to Edward's birth, then, helps to explain the perhaps heightened level of concern Henry had for his new-born son's health. Indeed, by Christmas 1537, owing to the cold weather, 'an account describes measures to keep the draughts off the child', including the creation of new furniture and furnishings for Edward, while in February the following year, the King paid the clerk and groom of the wardrobe to supply the child with 'wardrobe stuff' in an effort to keep the boy warm and healthy.<sup>13</sup> When we consider that there was a wave of plague spreading across

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<sup>11</sup> David Starkey, 'Henry VI's old blue gown', *The Court Historian*, vol. 4, iss. 1 (1999), pp. 1-28 (p. 2).

<sup>12</sup> Jennifer Loach, *Edward VI*, ed. by George W. Bernard and Penry Williams (New Haven and London, 1999), p. 8.

<sup>13</sup> Thurley, 'Henry VIII and the building of Hampton Court', pp. 30-31.

London immediately prior to Edward's arrival,<sup>14</sup> we begin to understand Henry's apprehension and the measures undertaken to obviate a similar outcome to those that had come before.

For such a moment, given the requisite exclusivity in the name of good health, the guest list itself can tell us a great deal about the esteem in which those who were invited were held. Amongst the guests listed, we find that Sir Hugh Paulet (c. 1500-73), a prominent knight from Hinton St George, Somerset, was present at the ceremony as one of the King's esteemed guests. His presence signifies the importance placed on attendance at courtly ceremonies by figures on the rise. This article uses the example of Hugh Paulet therefore to explore the social importance of courtly celebration and its role in asserting and confirming status. In particular, it highlights how the court provided a platform for career progression for aspirational families, through an individual's proximity - and access - to those in power, even in times of heightened emotional stress or crisis.<sup>15</sup> Hugh Paulet's appearance at the christening was a sign of his advancing into a closer orbit around the King. Attendance at this event was therefore not only a very important occasion for the King, but a marker of one of his courtiers' professional achievements. Ultimately, then, this article is about a courtier on the rise, in attendance at a highly significant national and dynastic occasion.

This article also adds to the discussion about 'new men' in Tudor England<sup>16</sup> and reinforces ideas about the importance of court ceremony in solidifying bonds between crown and elites, notably in the next generation, when Hugh's son, Sir Amias Paulet (1532-88), would have achieved sufficient royal trust to act as jailor for Mary, Queen of Scots.

Moreover, despite the dangers of plague, Hugh Paulet's willingness to endanger his life at

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<sup>14</sup> J. F. D. Shrewsbury, *A History of Bubonic Plague in the British Isles* (Cambridge, 1970), pp. 170-1.

<sup>15</sup> Dries Raeymaekers and Sebastiaan Derks, 'Repertoires of Access in Princely Courts, 1400-1700; in Harm Kaal and Daniëlle Sloopjes (eds), *New Perspectives on Power and Political Representation from Ancient History to the Present Day* (Leiden, 2019), pp. 78-93.

<sup>16</sup> Steven Gunn, *Henry VII's New Men and the Making of Tudor England* (Oxford, 2016), pp. 9-15, 46-50.

this time demonstrates the importance he placed on proximity to the King in establishing his family's ascent into the inner circles of the Tudor court. The reverse is also true: the King was evidently willing to risk his son's health by inviting a man from the provinces, as a demonstration of his support for men who were loyal.

### **Sir Hugh Paulet**

Sir Hugh Paulet's family had been prominent in their native county of Somerset since the beginning of the fifteenth century, at which time the family relocated from the small village of Pawlett, Somerset, to Hinton St George, a substantial property which had been obtained through the marriage of Elizabeth Denebaud and Sir William Paulet (Hugh's grandfather) after the death of Elizabeth's father, John Denebaud, in 1429.<sup>17</sup> Both Hugh and his father, Sir Amias (c. 1457-1538), had appeared at Westminster as members of Parliament over several decades before the events focused on in this article, with Amias appearing in 1495<sup>18</sup> and Hugh in 1529 and 1536.<sup>19</sup> Yet, Hugh's invitation to Prince Edward's christening marked the beginning of a new era for the fortunes of his family and was perhaps the point at which the family were set on the gradual path to ennoblement, with his descendant, John Poulett, being elevated to the peerage as the first Baron Poulett just a few generations later in 1627.<sup>20</sup> It is perhaps worth noting here that the more prominent member of the broader Paulet family, William Paulet, marquis of Winchester (c. 1485-1572), was Hugh Paulet's cousin. William was the eldest son of Sir John Paulet (1460-1525) of Basing, Hampshire, the head of the

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<sup>17</sup> C. A. H. Franklyn, *A Genealogical History of the Families of Paulet (or Pawlett), Berewe (or Barrow), Lawrence and Parker* (Bedford, 1963), p. 60.

<sup>18</sup> Josiah Clement Wedgwood, *History of Parliament: Biographies of the Members of the Commons House 1439-1509* (2 vols, London, 1936-38), I, pp. 667-8; S. W. B. Harbin, *Members of Parliament for the County of Somerset* (Taunton, 1939), pp. 112-113.

<sup>19</sup> S. T. Bindoff (ed.), *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1509-1558* (3 vols, London, 1982) (hereafter *HP*), III, pp. 71-2.

<sup>20</sup> N. B. the alteration to the spelling of the family name: Thomas G. Barnes, 'Poulett, John, First Baron Poulett (1586-1649)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (ODNB)* (Oxford, 2004) [<https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-22632>].

cadet branch of the Paulet family of Somerset, which had split in the early fifteenth century, around the time that Hugh Paulet's grandfather, William, had relocated to Hinton St George.<sup>21</sup>

At the christening, Hugh Paulet would not only have rubbed shoulders with some of England's leading nobles, including Charles Brandon, duke of Suffolk (c. 1484-1545), and Thomas Howard, duke of Norfolk (1473-1554),<sup>22</sup> but also the infant prince's half-sisters, Mary and Elizabeth, noteworthy at the ceremony because their presence must have 'allowed Henry to emphasise the dynastic security of his family' by parading not just his male heir, but his two female spares as well.<sup>23</sup> Hugh was, of course, not the only Somerset knight in attendance: his neighbour, Sir John St Loe from Sutton Court, was also present at the christening (see Appendix 1). The Paulet family could not claim to be regulars at court or to hold the ear of the King, despite featuring in several other significant events on the national stage, not least their participation in warfare at home and abroad, or Hugh's activities as an agent of the Crown in the south-west as part of the dissolution of the monasteries.<sup>24</sup> They were not regularly to be found away from their native county or keeping company with England's highest social elite.

A recurring, but perhaps unsurprising, feature of this story is Hugh Paulet's ability to build on his father's patrimony. Indeed, much of the Paulet family's fortune and power came from Sir Amias Paulet's post as steward to the bishop of Bath and Wells, a position which was later inherited by Hugh.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, shortly after his father's death on 1 April 1538, just

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<sup>21</sup> J. D. Alsop and D. M. Loades, 'William Paulet, First Marquis of Winchester: a question of age', *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, vol. 18, iss. 3 (1987), pp. 333-342 (p. 336).

<sup>22</sup> Loach, *Edward VI*, pp. 5-6.

<sup>23</sup> Maria Hayward, *Dress at the Court of Henry VIII* (Oxford, 2017), p. 59.

<sup>24</sup> S. E. J. Lambe, 'The dissolution of the monasteries in Somerset: the records of the Court of Augmentations at the National Archives, Kew (E 321)', *Archives*, vol. 54, iss. 1 (2019), pp. 59-73; 'The life and career of Sir Amias Paulet (c. 1457-1538): service, loyalty and rebellion', *The Ricardian*, vol. 32 (2022), pp. 127-145; "'Towards God religious, towards us most faithful": the Paulet family, the Somerset gentry and the early Tudor monarchy, 1485-1547', in Matthew Hefferan and Matthew Ward (eds), *Loyalty to the Monarchy in Late Medieval and Early Modern Britain, c. 1400-1688* (London, 2020), pp. 86-109.

<sup>25</sup> *LP*, XIII (ii), 967 [13].

a few short months after Edward's christening, Hugh Paulet was also appointed to the Somerset bench. But, despite his father's significant role in Somerset, it has been suggested that Hugh's rise to prominence was probably owing in part to his close association with Richard Pollard, a member of the King's Council, through marriage to Richard's sister Philippa in around 1530.<sup>26</sup> It was also from this marriage that Hugh became a father. Hugh had three sons, Amias (named for his grandfather, later to become jailer of Mary Queen of Scots), Nicholas and George, and two daughters, Jane and Anne.<sup>27</sup> Nonetheless, the posts which Hugh inherited from his father were profitable, which could explain why Hugh did not go out of his way to seek patronage at court in the early stages of his career.<sup>28</sup>

Although it has been suggested that it was through his brother-in-law, Richard Pollard, that Paulet first became known to Thomas Cromwell, from around 1534 Cromwell was evidently at least aware of Hugh Paulet. That year, when John Clerk, bishop of Bath and Wells, sought to clear himself of a 'malicious report', it was to Paulet that Cromwell turned for assistance.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, as the MP for Somerset in 1536 (during the Parliamentary sessions of 8 June to 18 July), Hugh Paulet and Cromwell would have been in attendance together at Westminster.<sup>30</sup>

Indeed, Paulet appears in Cromwell's 'remembrances' and accounts throughout the 1530s. For example, in April 1538, again just a few months after Edward's christening, Cromwell made a note that he ought to 'remember Sir Hugh Palet' for unspecified previous

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<sup>26</sup> C. S. L. Davies, 'Paulet, Sir Hugh (*b.* before 1510, *d.* 1573), Soldier and Administrator', *ODNB* (Oxford, 2004) [<https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-21619>]. Richard Pollard appeared on Henry VIII's council fourteen times between 2 May 1516 and 9 May 1525: William Huse Dunham, Jr., 'The Members of Henry VIII's Whole Council, 1509-1527', *English Historical Review*, vol. 59, iss. 234 (1944), pp. 187-210 (p. 210).

<sup>27</sup> 'Paulet, Sir Hugh', in Sidney Lee and Leslie Stephens (eds), *The Dictionary of National Biography: From the Earliest Times to 1900* (22 vols, London, 1973) XV, p. 534.

<sup>28</sup> Eric W. Ives, *Letters and Accounts of William Brereton of Malpas* (Chester, 1978), pp. 11-12.

<sup>29</sup> John Collinson, *The History and Antiquities of the County of Somerset* (3 vols, Bath, 1791), II, p. 167; *HP*, III, pp. 71-2; TNA, SP1/88, fols 42r-43v (*LP*, VII, 1612).

<sup>30</sup> *HP*, I, pp. 1-2; III, pp. 71-2.



dealings.<sup>31</sup> In 1539, Cromwell also noted in his accounts that he had a receipt of a payment to ‘Sir Hugh Pallet’ for one hundred marks in 1537.<sup>32</sup> While disappointingly vague in their detail, these notes suggest at the very least some level of professional interaction and cooperation between Cromwell and Paulet; not just in Parliament, but when the former was at Westminster and the latter was at home in his native county and, crucially, in the run-up to Edward’s birth and christening in October 1537.<sup>33</sup> Ultimately, although there is no evidence of precisely where Hugh Paulet’s invitation came from, his inclusion can reasonably be assumed to have stemmed from his professional connection to Cromwell.

Hugh Paulet was knighted on 18 July 1536 at the time of the dissolution of that year’s Parliamentary session, alongside Anthony Kingston, Richard Cromwell (Thomas Cromwell’s nephew), John Arundell, Ralph Sadler, a prominent member of Cromwell’s household, and Richard Pollard, Hugh Paulet’s brother-in-law.<sup>34</sup> Hugh’s knighthood is assumed to have been awarded as part of Cromwell’s efforts to boost his authority in the localities during the period of the Reformation, when his actions were ruffling feathers. As such, for Paulet, attendance at Prince Edward’s christening signified his growing local and national status and was a recognition of his administrative and political abilities on a national scale. His loyalty to his monarch had thus been recognised publicly within the ‘performative space’ of this courtly spectacle.

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<sup>31</sup> BL, Cotton MS Titus B I, fol. 465r (*LP*, XIII (i), 877).

<sup>32</sup> TNA, SP1/156 (*LP*, XIV (ii), 782).

<sup>33</sup> TNA, SP1/131, fols 193r-194v (*LP*, XIII (i), 878); Stanford E. Lehmborg, *The Reformation Parliament, 1529-1536* (Cambridge, 1970), pp. 217-48.

<sup>34</sup> Collinson, *County of Somerset*, III, p. xxxii; William Arthur Shaw, *The Knights of England: A Complete Record From the Earliest Times to the Present Day of the Knights of All the Orders of Chivalry in England, Scotland and Ireland, and of Knights Bachelor* (2 vols, London, 1906), II, p. 50. David Ashton claims that Hugh Paulet was ‘knighted alongside [Thomas] Cromwell’ but there is no evidence for this. The most obvious explanation is that Ashton has confused Thomas Cromwell with his nephew, Richard, who was knighted at that time: David J. Ashton, ‘The Tudor State and County Politics: the Greater Gentry of Somerset, c. 1509-1558’ (unpublished University of Oxford DPhil thesis, 1998), p. 42.

**The christening**

On the evening of Monday 15 October, Prince Edward was christened in the Chapel Royal at Hampton Court Palace before a congregation of some 400 people.<sup>35</sup> This number is significant as it marks it as a semi-public event; although it did not involve a parade through the city, there were a significant number of people in attendance, in a relatively small space. Indeed, this event maintained the continuity of tradition of royal christenings as semi-public events, given that the King himself, and his daughters, had been christened at the church of the Observant Friars in Greenwich, while Henry's late brother, Prince Arthur (1486-1502), had been christened at Winchester Cathedral and his sister, Margaret, at St Margaret's Church, Westminster.<sup>36</sup> Edward, dressed in a white gown, was collected from his mother's apartments within the palace and was carried to the Chapel Royal by Gertrude Courtenay, marchioness of Exeter (c. 1504-58), Thomas Howard and Charles Brandon. Edward's processional route then continued 'through ye councel chambr to ye gally leading through ye kings greate chamber and so through ye hall', and then on to the chapel.<sup>37</sup>

Within the procession to the chapel, this group would have carried Edward under an elaborate canopy, a cloth of estate, as was the case with all royal christenings.<sup>38</sup> Of course, such a route, and in such an elaborate manner, meant that the prince was effectively – and deliberately – 'paraded through the hall at his christening so that as many of the court as possible could see him', including Sir Hugh Paulet.<sup>39</sup> On his arrival at the chapel, Edward was greeted by the sound of twenty-four trumpeters, having passed under the chapel's porch, which was 'covered with rich Cloth of Gould', before processing down its richly carpeted

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<sup>35</sup> John Husee to Lady Lisle, 16 October 1537 (*LP*, XII (ii), 923).

<sup>36</sup> Fiona Louise Kisby, 'The royal household chapel in early-Tudor London, 1485-1547' (unpublished University of London PhD thesis, 1996), p. 172.

<sup>37</sup> BL, Add. MS. 6113, fol. 81v.

<sup>38</sup> Maria Hayward, 'Symbols of majesty: cloths of estate at the court of Henry VIII', *Furniture History*, vol. 41 (2005), pp. 1-11 (p. 6).

<sup>39</sup> Simon Thurley, 'Henry VIII and the building of Hampton Court', p. 11.

aisle.<sup>40</sup> As he processed through the chapel, Edward would have passed under its famous blue and gold ceiling, completed just the year before.<sup>41</sup> Once inside, at the very moment he was christened with his name read aloud, as well as being proclaimed duke of Cornwall and earl of Chester by Sir Christopher Barker, Garter King at Arms, the congregation lifted candles aloft. Indeed, Edward's obvious importance to the King, and indeed the country, was reflected in his choice of name, given its reference to his ancestor, Edward III (r. 1327-77), being the source of Henry VII's (r. 1485-1509) rather tenuous claim to the English throne over half a century before.<sup>42</sup>

As her son was escorted from her care to his holy ceremony, Jane Seymour was still recuperating in her private apartments from the arduous and lengthy labour, having not yet reached the point of her 'churching' (a ceremony of thanksgiving).<sup>43</sup> Jane was to perish just nine days later from complications from the birth, most likely being caused by a postpartum infection (or septicaemia), although some historians have queried the date of Edward's birth and postulated that Edward was born instead via Caesarean section and that Jane died from surgical complications from this procedure.<sup>44</sup> On the day of Jane's death, 24 October 1537, Henry VIII recorded his profound sense of loss in a sombre letter to Francis I, king of France, in which he declared that 'Divine Providence has mingled my joy with the bitterness of the death of her who brought me this happiness'. Jane was buried in great pomp at St George's

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<sup>40</sup> Hayward, *Dress at the Court of Henry VIII*, pp. 58-9; Kisby, 'The royal household chapel in early-Tudor London', p. 174; John Leland, *De Rebus Britannicis Collectanea*, ed. by T. Hearne (6 vols, London, 1774), II, pp. 671-5.

<sup>41</sup> Simon Thurley, *The Royal Palaces of Tudor England: Architecture and Court Life, 1460-1547* (New Haven and London, 1993), pp. 195-205; 'The Tudor chapel and state apartments at Hampton Court Palace', *The Court Historian*, vol. 2, sup. 1 (1997), pp. 14-15 (p. 14).

<sup>42</sup> Robert Hutchinson, *The Last Days of Henry VIII: Conspiracy, Treason and Heresy at the Court of the Dying Tyrant* (London, 2005), p. 65.

<sup>43</sup> David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford, 1997), pp. 197-232.

<sup>44</sup> DeMolen, 'The birth of Edward VI and the death of Queen Jane', pp. 359-78; J. J. Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1968), p. 353.

Chapel, Windsor Castle, a few weeks later on 12 November, with Henry's daughter, the lady Mary, acting as her chief mourner.<sup>45</sup>

### **The order of service**

Unsurprisingly for an event of this magnitude, Henry VIII had to 'ensure an impressive and well-ordered court', despite the difficulties associated with the public health context.<sup>46</sup> The order for the christening was based on historic household records of ceremonies, including the so-called *Ryalle Book* of Henry VII<sup>47</sup> and the Antis manuscript, both of which recorded 'the ceremonies at the christening of a prince or princesse'.<sup>48</sup> These documents, along with several other copies of the same,<sup>49</sup> recorded the order that the court must follow, very much a continuation of existing practices. Certainly, the *Black Book of Edward IV*, on which Prince Edward's christening ceremonial was partly based, was intended to 'ensure the maximum degree of magnificence by the careful control of expenditure'.<sup>50</sup>

Adhering to this 'traditional pattern', the order of procession to the Chapel Royal began with 'certain gentlemen' entering in pairs, each carrying the torch they would later light at the moment of christening, all while singing *Te Deum*: the very anthem that had been sung earlier both to bless the royal pregnancy in May 1537 and to give thanks for Edward's safe delivery just a few days before.<sup>51</sup> They were then followed by 'the children and ministers of the King's Chappell, and the Deane in their serples and coopes not singing, going

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<sup>45</sup> BN Paris, Fr. 2997, fol. 3r (*LP*, XII (ii), 972).

<sup>46</sup> A. R. Myers (ed.), *The Household of Edward IV: the Black Book and the Ordinance of 1478* (Manchester, 1959), p. 5.

<sup>47</sup> BL, Add. MS 38174, fols 11r-12v and 41r-41v (Thomas Astle and Francis Grose (eds), *The Antiquarian Repertory; a Miscellany Intended to Preserve and Illustrate Several Valuable Remains of Old Times, etc.* (4 vols, London, 1807-9), I, pp. 296-341).

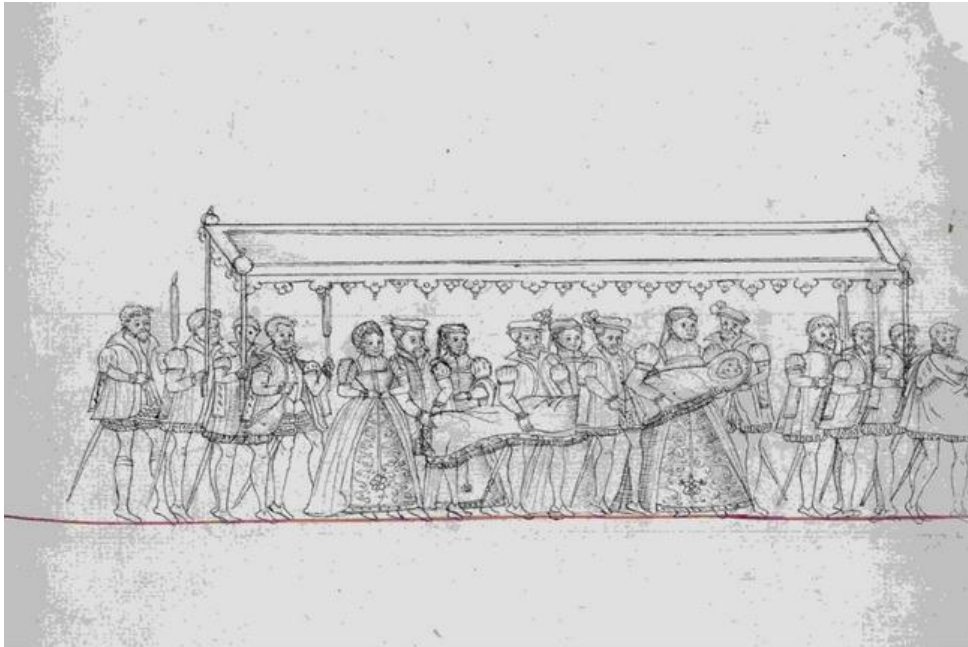
<sup>48</sup> BL, Add. MS 71009, fols 27r-28v.

<sup>49</sup> BL, MS Harley 642, fols 198-217 (printed in Society of Antiquaries of London, *A Collection of Ordinances and Regulations for the Government of the Royal Household Made in Divers Reigns from King Edward III to King William and Queen Mary: Also Receipts in Ancient Cookery* (London, 1790), pp. 109-33).

<sup>50</sup> *The Household of Edward IV*, p. 29.

<sup>51</sup> Thurley, 'Henry VIII and the building of Hampton Court', pp. 1-57.

outward', with an assortment of knights, esquires and gentlemen following in pairs, one of which being Sir Hugh Paulet. We then find a range of senior members of the clergy before, among others, Thomas Cromwell, Lord Privy Seal, Sir Thomas Audley, Lord Chancellor, Thomas Howard, duke of Norfolk, Thomas Cranmer, archbishop of Canterbury, and Thomas Boleyn, earl of Wiltshire. This group was followed by the four-year-old Elizabeth, who was charged with carrying the chrism,<sup>52</sup> while herself being carried by Prince Edward's uncle (and future Lord Protector), Edward Seymour, Viscount Beauchamp.<sup>53</sup>



**Image 1: Detail from a depiction of Prince Edward's christening procession (c. 1560)**

College of Arms, MS M. 6, fols 77v–78r

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After this cluster of personnel came Prince Edward under his canopy with Henry Courtenay, marquess of Exeter, and his wife, Gertude Blount, alongside Charles Brandon (Image 1). Not only were these two men close to the King, being cousin and favourite

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<sup>52</sup> Loach, *Edward VI*, pp. 5-6.

<sup>53</sup> Kisby, 'The royal household chapel in early-Tudor London', p. 174; Leland, *De Rebus Britannicis Collectanea*, II, pp. 671-5.

respectively, they had also assisted in suppressing the Pilgrimage of Grace the previous year, although Courtenay had not been particularly effective in his role, being slow to arrive and quick to retreat.<sup>54</sup> Prince Edward's train was carried by Henry Fitzalan, earl of Arundel, with support from William Howard, baron Howard of Effingham, with the child's nurse and midwife being in close proximity. The canopy itself was held by Sir Edward Neville, Sir John Wallop, Richard Long, Thomas Seymour, Henry Knyvet and Robert Radcliffe, earl of Sussex. Carrying candles under the canopy were Sir Humphrey Foster, Robert Tyrwhitt, George Harper and Richard Southwell. Perhaps relegated to the rear of the prince's canopy was the boy's half-sister and godmother, the lady Mary, with her train in turn being carried by William Kingston's wife, Elizabeth. This group was then followed by 'all the other ladies of honour in their degrees'.<sup>55</sup>

One of the more critical items for a christening is, of course, the font. A warrant dated the day after the christening, Tuesday 16 October, shows that one Ralph Warren had provided ray cloth, a type of striped cloth, to adorn the base of the baptismal font. On the day of the christening, the officers of the household, Sir John Russell, Sir Francis Bryan, Sir Nicholas Carew and Sir Anthony Browne, wearing aprons and holding towels, were tasked with protecting the font until instructed otherwise by the Lord Steward, George Talbot, earl of Shrewsbury. More fabric and hardware were sourced to furnish the ceremony, with red English say, a type of woollen cloth, and red ribbon being provided, along with some 12,000 gilt nails. Along with the hire of six men and three horses over a four-day period, the total expenditure ran to £31 11s 8d.<sup>56</sup>

A royal christening represented a significant opportunity for favourable interaction with the Crown through the bestowal of both valuable and meaningful items upon the child,

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<sup>54</sup> M. L. Bush, *The Pilgrimage of Grace: a Study of the Rebel Armies of October 1536* (Manchester, 1996), pp. 381-8.

<sup>55</sup> BL, Add. MS. 6113, fol. 81r; part 2, BL, Egerton MS. 985, fol. 33r (*LP*, XII (ii), 911).

<sup>56</sup> Hayward, *Dress at the Court of Henry VIII*, p. 59.

crucially all being exchanged before influential peers. The most significant gifts would have come from the godparents, as they represented and confirmed their holy bond with the child.<sup>57</sup> Edward had three godfathers: Thomas Cranmer, archbishop of Canterbury (1489-1556), Thomas Howard and Charles Brandon. He also had one godmother: the lady Mary.<sup>58</sup> While a typical gift at a royal christening would be plate, we know that Edward's half-sister Mary gave him a gold cup, while Cranmer, Norfolk and Suffolk opted for varied silver gilded bowls and pots which 'were carried ceremonially in procession by other peers'.<sup>59</sup>

Following the ceremony, Edward was returned briefly to his waiting parents in the Queen's private apartments, before being taken by his nurses on the King's orders to be kept in isolation in his own newly built lodgings in Chapel Court, all to protect the boy from possible harm, being the 'realm's most precious jewel'.<sup>60</sup> Thereafter, only those with royal approval, namely his nurses, including the 'rockers' of the royal crib, and his immediate family were allowed near the child to protect him from possible infection, with only select members of the Privy Council being granted permission to see the boy. The celebrations continued into the night, with the great and good of the kingdom left to drink wine, break bread and reflect on the significance of the day.<sup>61</sup> Sir Hugh Paulet was one of this group left to celebrate once Prince Edward had departed, and was no doubt left to reflect on his own involvement in a day of such significance.

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<sup>57</sup> Felicity Heal, *The Power of Gifts: Gift-exchange in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2014), pp. 54, 60; Raeymaekers and Derks, 'Repertoires of Access in Princely Courts', p. 79.

<sup>58</sup> Hutchinson, *The Last Days of Henry VIII*, p. 65.

<sup>59</sup> Heal, *The Power of Gifts*, p. 64; BL, Add. MS 6113, fol. 81r.

<sup>60</sup> '...saving that the taper, salt and basin were left and the gifts of the gossips carried, i.e. Lady Mary, a cup of gold borne by the earl of Essex; the archbishop, 3 great bowls and 2 great pots, silver and gilt, borne by the earl of Wiltshire; Norfolk, ditto, borne by the earl of Sussex; Suffolk, 2 great flagons and 2 great pots, silver and gilt, borne by Viscount Beauchamp. Lady Elizabeth went with her sister Lady Mary and Lady Herbert of Troy to bear the train: BL, Add. MS. 6113, fol. 81r; part 2, BL, Egerton MS. 985, fol. 33r (*LP*, XII (ii), 911).

<sup>61</sup> Hutchinson, *The Last Days of Henry VIII*, p. 66.

**Plague**

That the christening took place at all, let alone so quickly, was no mean feat, given that it took place within the context of a national health crisis: a plague outbreak across southern England. Indeed, Prince Edward's birth and christening effectively took place in quarantine, all to avoid the spread of plague, especially at a moment of such national importance: the birth of a legitimate male heir. Although, as discussed above, it was essentially standard practice to hold christenings in a semi-public space away from the crowds, what stands out about this event was that the venue, Hampton Court, provided both appropriate rooms and a chapel within its confines, meaning the birth and christening could both be delivered within one palatial complex, thereby reducing any potential contagion as far as possible.

Henry was understandably worried about the return of the plague to England, partly perhaps because his maternal grandmother, Elizabeth Woodville, had herself in all likelihood died from the plague. Indeed, he had previous form in the prevention of the spread of plague. There had been an attempt by Henry some twenty years before, on 26 September 1517, to avert an outbreak at Windsor Castle. A few months later, on 13 January 1518, Henry subsequently issued a royal proclamation, crafted by Wolsey, outlining initiatives to prevent the spread of the plague, a move considered to have been 'the first set of quarantine measures issued in England'.<sup>62</sup> In the spring of 1537, just months before Jane went into labour; the disease had spread eastwards across southern England, before petering out by the end of October that year. Indeed, Sir Richard Tempest, who was being held in London's Fleet Prison in the summer of 1537 on account of his involvement in the Pilgrimage of Grace the previous year, informed Cromwell that 'the weather is so hot and contagious and the plague so sore in the city'.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Euan C. Roger, "'To be shut up': new evidence for the Development of quarantine regulations in early-Tudor England", *Social History of Medicine*, vol. 33, iss. 4 (2020), pp. 1077-1096 (p. 1077).

<sup>63</sup> *LP*, XII (ii), 179.



On 12 October, the day of Edward's birth, William FitzWilliam, earl of Southampton (c. 1490-1542), and Sir William Paulet (c. 1485-1572), Hugh's cousin, wrote to Cromwell to report the extent of the plague in Croydon, some thirteen miles east of Hampton Court. In their letter, they suggest that they, along with Margaret, marchioness of Dorset, who had originally been elected to carry the prince at his christening, remain at Croydon Palace, the archbishop of Canterbury's residence, to isolate themselves from the other attendees, rather than descending on Hampton Court for the christening and risking carrying the infection with them (or at least risking their own health along the way).<sup>64</sup> Jane Seymour had given birth at the palace the previous Friday so, with the Chapel Royal at hand, and being some distance from the putrid air of London, the obvious (and convenient) choice of location for the christening was Hampton Court Palace, given that it allowed for both events to take place in relative isolation.

Accordingly, on the day Edward was born, a mandate was issued to London's sheriffs 'on account of the plague', placing restrictions on those who could attend court on the day of the christening: at the top of the pecking order, we find that dukes were permitted to bring six servants with them, while knights, including Sir Hugh Paulet, were limited to just two, that is to say half the number of servants each rank would ordinarily be permitted to bring to court in their service.<sup>65</sup> So, as discussed above, the choice of venue was, for the sake of health, entirely more secluded than recent royal christenings. Nonetheless, accounts of all these christening ceremonies, including the *Ryalle Book* and the *Black Book of Edward IV*, record 'a standard plan, containing a description of the decoration of the church where the christening took place and an account of the processions before and after the baptism'.<sup>66</sup> In other words, the location may have changed, but the ceremonial format remained the same.

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<sup>64</sup> *LP*, XII (ii), 891.

<sup>65</sup> BL, Harl. MS. 422, fol. 149r (*LP*, XII (ii), 894).

<sup>66</sup> Kisby, 'The royal household chapel in early-Tudor London', pp. 172-3.

**Aftermath: Sir Hugh Paulet's subsequent career**

It can be no coincidence that it was in the late 1530s, following his appearance at the royal christening, that Hugh Paulet really began to add political feathers to his cap. In addition to his role as Justice of the Peace for Somerset from 1532, he was picked as sheriff of Somerset and Dorset in 1536-7, 1542-3 and 1547-8.<sup>67</sup> From February 1539, Paulet operated as the sole surveyor of coastal defences for Somerset. The reason for this solitary position was because the county's coastline was short, meaning only one surveyor of coastal defences was needed there. Although Hugh's growing collection of Crown offices could be viewed as pluralism, it is unlikely that this post was a mere sinecure and presumably marks growing 'royal favour'.<sup>68</sup> This appointment came at a critical time, with England anticipating an imperial-French invasion in response to the country's on-going religious reform.<sup>69</sup>

Hugh Paulet was subsequently appointed to the Council of the West in 1539, an environment in which he would be not only recognised as probably the most influential member of the Somerset gentry (as the only Somerset representative) but also one in which he would be able to rub shoulders with the elite from his neighbouring counties in an official capacity. The following year, he received two additional posts, the first and most significant being surveyor of Glastonbury's lands and estates and the second as commissioner of the western circuit from 1540 to 1573.<sup>70</sup>

Perhaps most crucially, Sir Hugh Paulet elected to change religious course rather than going against the theological grain, demonstrating the advantages of flexibility in religious outlook, in terms of creating career opportunities and self-promotion. While some were resistant to religious reform and sought to impede its progress, some were more willing to

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<sup>67</sup> Collinson, *County of Somerset*, I, xxxvii; *LP*, XVII, 1154 [75].

<sup>68</sup> Penry Williams, *The Tudor Regime* (Oxford, 1979), p. 82.

<sup>69</sup> Robert C. Braddock, 'The Rewards of Office-Holding in Tudor England'. *Journal of British Studies*, vol. 14, iss. 2 (1975), pp. 29-47 (p. 41).

<sup>70</sup> *HP*, III, 71; Arthur Collins, *The Peerage of England. Genealogical, Biographical and Historical* (9 vols, London, 1812), IV, p. 4; Collinson, *County of Somerset*, II, p. 286; III, p. 318.

further it. Hugh Paulet, for example, was keenly involved in providing valuations for the monastic lands which ultimately led to his acquisition of such property. Although this decision was not original or unique to Paulet, and in fact rather common to other ‘new men’ involved in the dissolution, such as Sir William Cavendish (c. 1505-57), it was perhaps this very decision which was responsible for the development of the Paulet family and punctuated their loyalty to the Tudors, a move which was rewarded by his invitation to court for Edward’s christening and his subsequent collection of Crown offices. His attendance, therefore, was a mark of gratitude for services both already rendered and yet to come. Hugh had demonstrated his value and was acknowledged accordingly for his work; he was included at an exclusive ceremony at court, before being rewarded with further honours in the years to come.

## **Conclusion**

The splendour of Prince Edward’s christening reveals the sense of celebration at his safe arrival, while its setting highlights the palpable anxiety around the welfare of the child, parents and court in the context of a national health crisis amid the outbreak of a highly infectious disease. Yet, no matter how intimate and secluded Edward’s christening might have been, it is tempting to imagine what sort of event Henry VIII would have laid on if he had not been restrained by the circumstances. The exclusive nature of the event and its associated guest list must also suggest the pre-eminence of all those invited to celebrate the christening of Henry’s son and heir, including Sir Hugh Paulet. A few months after the event, in May 1538, Henry was observed at Prince Edward’s new home at Havering Palace, Essex, holding the boy and ‘dallying with him in his arms a long space and so holding him in a window to the sight and great comfort of the people’.<sup>71</sup> To Henry, the future must have

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<sup>71</sup> *LP*, XIII (i), 1011.

seemed bright, having produced three healthy children with, at last, one of them being a legitimate son.

**Appendix 1**

‘The names of all estates and gentlemen present at the christening’<sup>72</sup>

Adapted from BL, Add. MS 6,113, fol. 81r; Egerton MS 985, fol. 33r (*LP*, XII (ii), 911)

**Nobility**

Sir Thomas Audley, Lord Chancellor  
 Charles Blount, lord Montjoy  
 Thomas Boleyn, earl of Wiltshire  
 Henry Bouchier, earl of Essex  
 Charles Brandon, duke of Suffolk  
 Edmund Braye, baron Braye  
 George Brooke, baron Cobham  
 James Butler, viscount Thurles  
 Henry Courtenay, marquess of Exeter  
 Thomas Cromwell, Lord Privy Seal (later annotated as ‘treditur’, ‘tryditor’ or ‘traditor’)  
 John De Vere, earl of Oxford  
 Thomas Fiennes, baron Dacre of the South  
 Sir William Fitzalan, earl of Arundel  
 George Hastings, baron Hastings  
 Thomas Howard, duke of Norfolk  
 Thomas Howard, viscount Howard  
 Walter Hungerford, baron Hungerford (later annotated as ‘treditur’, ‘tryditor’ or ‘traditor’)  
 Henry Pole, baron Montague  
 Robert Radcliffe, earl of Sussex  
 William Sandys, baron Sandys  
 Edward Seymour, viscount Beauchamp  
 William Stourton, baron Stourton  
 Thomas West, baron De La Warr

**Gentry**

Sir Giles Alington  
 Sir Thomas Arundell  
 Sir William Barnden (‘ou Baratyn’)  
 Sir Edward Bayntun (later addition)  
 Sir John Bouchier  
 Sir John Briggis  
 Sir John Brown  
 Sir Anthony Browne  
 Sir Francis Bryan  
 Sir Phillip Butler  
 Sir Giles Capell  
 Sir Nicholas Carew  
 Sir Edward Chamberlain  
 Sir Thomas Cheney  
 Sir Thomas Darcy

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<sup>72</sup> Ordered by type and alphabetised.

Sir Walter Denys  
Sir William Drury  
Sir John Dudley  
Sir Griffith Dunne  
Sir William Essex  
Sir Humphrey Forster  
Sir John Gage  
Sir William Goryn  
Sir George Harper  
Sir William Haute  
Sir Thomas Heneage  
Sir Arthur Hopton  
Sir John Horsey  
Sir Anthony Hungerford  
Sir Edward Hutton  
Sir William Kempe  
Sir William Kingston  
Sir Anthony Kingston  
Henry Knyvett  
Sir Anthony Knyvett  
Sir Henry Long  
Sir Richard Long  
Richard Manners  
Thomas Meggis  
Peter Meutas  
Sir Edward Neville  
Sir John Norton  
Sir Richard Page  
Sir Henry Parker  
John Paulet  
Sir Hugh Paulet  
Sir William Paulet  
Robert Payton  
Sir Thomas Poynings  
Sir Nicholas Poyntz  
Sir Humphrey Radcliffe  
Sir John Rainsford  
Roger Ratcliffe  
John Rogers  
Sir Thomas Rotheram  
Sir John Russell  
William Saliard  
Sir Richard Sandys  
Sir Thomas Seymour  
Sir George Somerset  
Sir Richard Southwell  
Sir John St John  
Sir John St Leger  
Sir John St Loe  
Sir Walter Stonor

Sir Giles Strangways  
Sir John Turrell  
Robert Turwytt  
Sir Ralph Verney  
Sir John Walloppe  
John Wellesbourne  
Sir Richard Weston  
John Williams  
Sir Christopher Willoughby  
Sir Anthony Wingfeld  
Thomas Wriothesley

**Clergy**

Robert Aldrich, bishop of Carlisle  
Dr John Bell  
William Benson, abbot of Westminster (struck out)  
Edmund Bonner, bishop of London  
Robert Catton, abbot of St Albans (struck out)  
John Chamber, dean of St Stephen's College  
Thomas Cranmer, archbishop of Canterbury  
Dr George Day  
John Fisher, bishop of Rochester  
William Franklyn, dean of Windsor  
Robert Fuller, abbot of Waltham Holy Cross (struck out)  
Simon Haynes, dean of Exeter  
William Huddleston, abbot Stratford Langthorne (struck out)  
William Knight, archdeacon of Richmond  
Henry More, abbot of St Mary de Graces (Noted as 'Towerhill') (struck out)  
Robert Parfew, bishop of St Asaph  
Richard Pate  
Richard Sampson, bishop of Chichester  
Dr John Skypp  
Dr Thomas Thirlby  
Dr Tyrwhitt  
Peter Vannes, dean of Salisbury  
Thomas Watson, bishop of Lincoln  
Dr Nicholas Wilson

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Dr Simon Lambe is an Associate Fellow of the Institute of Historical Research, University of London, an Associate Fellow of the Royal Historical Society and Course Director for History at London South Bank University. Simon's academic background is in gentry and royal relations in late medieval and early Tudor England. In 2018, Simon was the recipient of the Institute of Historical Research's Scouloudi Research Award; in 2019, he received a Research and Publication Award from The Society for Court Studies; finally, in 2021 Simon received an Early Career Researcher Support Grant from the Society for the Study of French History. In 2020, Simon's chapter "'Towards God religious, towards us most faithful': the Paulet family, the Somerset gentry and the early Tudor monarchy, 1485-1547" was published in Matthew Hefferan and Matthew Ward (eds), *Loyalty to the Monarchy in Late Medieval and Early Modern Britain, c. 1400-1688* (London, 2020). More recently, Simon's article entitled 'The life and career of Sir Amias Paulet (c. 1457-1538): service, loyalty and rebellion' was published in *The Ricardian*.