

Hello, and welcome to the Renaissance English History Podcast. I'm your host, Heather Teysko, and I'm a storyteller who makes history accessible because I believe it's a pathway to understanding who we are, our place in the universe, and being in touch with our own humanity. This is episode 61, and it's an episode for Hannah, who is one of this podcast's most loyal listeners, and she leaves lovely comments on my Tudor Minute YouTube segments, and she requested that I tell the story of Anne of Cleves. So Hannah, this one is for you. Thank you for being awesome.

But before I get started, a few reminders. Firstly, please check out the Agora Podcast Network, of which this podcast is a proud member. The Agora podcast of the month is The History of Islam. You can learn more about it at historyofislampodcast.blogspot.com.

So there's a lot going on right now in Englandcast World, and I want to make you aware of some of the goodness that's going on. First, the Tudor Digital Advent Calendar was really popular last year, so I'm going to do it again. You'll get a lovely Advent Calendar with a window that opens up each day to some kind of Tudor Holiday Goodness - a recipe for Wassail, a Christmas playlist, or decoration ideas. Everyone on the mailing list will get it, and I'll be sending it out at the end of November - so just make sure you're signed up. And if you sign up after December 1, no big deal, you'll still get it, but sign up asap so you can start right away on the first. Second, the Tudor Planner is selling really well, and I'm only printing 500 of them, so be sure to order yours if you want to spend 2017 with the Tudors. Also, remember we're taking a trip to England in late April, early May 2017, to experience both the history and music of southern England, with stops in Cambridge, Oxford, Ely, Bath, Winchester, and Windsor. So if you're interested in that, be sure to check out the full itinerary and costs. All of this is at Englandcast.com, so check it out.

Okay, now on to Anne of Cleves. We all remember the rhyme - Divorced, Beheaded, Died, Divorced, Beheaded, Survived, right? Anne of Cleves was the fourth in there - the divorced one. And she outlived all the others, including Henry's Widow Katherine Parr.

But with that said, there's a lot more to her than simply being the ugly discarded wife, which is often how she is remembered today. She was universally beloved, even by Henry after they divorced. She was considered quite pretty, even prettier than Henry's last wife, Katherine Parr. She was smart, she stuck up for what she thought was right, and she fought to keep her position at court. She also navigated a foreign, and very scary place at court with grace and dignity. So I personally have really grown to love Anne.

She was born in Cleves, which was a small principality in the German states. Through her ancestors she was related to most of the great princes of Europe, especially Charles V, the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. Anne's father was one of the noblemen who went with Charles when he visited England in May 1522, taking the same route to London that his daughter would take 18 years later.

Here's a random fun fact: Anne's grandfather, John II, Duke of Cleves, was nicknamed The Babymaker because he had 63 illegitimate children, all fathered before he married Anne's grandmother at the age of 31. He was a very busy man. Anne's own father was much less ostentatious and was nicknamed the Simple. He had extravagant clothing, but not a lot of intelligence, hence the nickname.

John made a brilliant marriage to Maria, the only child of the Duke of Juliers-Berg, with over 4000 square miles of land, and together the territories combined to create an important base of power on both sides of the Rhine. Maria brought up and educated her daughters. She taught them everything they would need to know as the wives of German princes, but not a lot more. She was able to read and write, but didn't speak any other languages besides German. It's often mentioned that Henry didn't like Anne in part because she wasn't very clever, but Jane Seymore, his third wife, had had an education as limited as Anne's. She did learn English quite quickly, and so it was evident that she was intelligent enough. In short, her education would have been perfect as the wife of a German duke or prince, but as the Queen of England, it was inadequate.

One thing they would have had in common was religion. Her father John's religious viewpoints were very similar to Henry's; neither Cleves or England recognized the pope's authority. But like England, the country was by no means Protestant in the 1530's.

The alliance with England was not something new when Anne married Henry. Throughout her childhood there had been some attempts at building a relationship with Henry. In 1514 he had supplied troops for the emperor's war with Guelders, another German principality, but by the 1530's they were opposed again. The Duke of Saxony sent ambassadors to Henry in 1529 and Henry had already received other attempts at friendship that year. The Schmalkadic League, a league of German states, made early attempts to build a relationship with England, and in 1531 they sent ambassadors to the king. Henry was particularly interested in a relationship with Cleves as it had three of the most powerful states, and two earldoms, and many towns that were strong and populous. If England was in danger, Cleves would be able to raise an army. This idea of an alliance early on was meant to be between Henry's daughter Princess Mary marrying Anne's brother.

This all predated 1537, though, when Henry began searching for a fourth wife. Within days of Jane Seymore's death in October 1537, there was already talk of who Henry would marry next. This sounds cold, and it was, but it was also dynastic politics. Henry finally had his male heir, but England couldn't be secure with just one infant son. This was the first time in Henry's marriage career where he didn't know his wife, or have her lined up, before marrying. In fact, when he married two english women, it caused a stir on the Continent, as it just wasn't done. A King's marriageability was too important of a foreign policy tool to be spent in England.

Thomas Cromwell, Henry's chief minister, initially wrote to the French, thinking that the French king's daughter, or one of his relatives might be a good choice. By the end of 1537

ambassadors throughout Europe had been told to search the courts for a bride. One early report from John Hutton, Henry's ambassador to the Netherlands, provided a report of the ladies in that area. He talks about different people waiting on the queen, different widows, and then there is a sentence that the duke of Cleves has a daughter but there is no great praise either of her personage or beauty. Huh. This was also the time during which Henry considered marrying Christina of Denmark, the Duchess of Milan, who was just 15. There is the famous story of her responding that if she had but two heads, she would be happy to give one to Henry, but this is likely apocryphal, as Christina actually kept the marriage game going on for a year. She received ambassadors, sent a portrait of herself to Henry, and sat for Hans Holbein, Henry's portrait artist. When Henry received the portrait he ordered musicians to play, and for the first time since Jane's death a year before the court seemed festive.

Things fell apart as foreign policy changed between France and the Emperor, and the French king decided to make an alliance with the emperor. This both upset and frightened England, and Henry increased his suit of Christina, who would be a stabilizing figure as she was related to the emperor. But things began to turn cold for Henry, and by January 1539 it was obvious that there was not going to be a marriage between Henry and Christina. In January of 1539 Francis and Charles V, France and the Empire, signed the treaty of Toledo, in which they promised to each make no new agreements with England unless the other consented. Just a month before the original bull of Excommunication against Henry, which had been frozen since it had been issued in 1535, would be brought into force after Christmas, and the pope sent Henry's cousin, Cardinal Pole, who had been living in exile, to France in order to persuade them to start a holy war against Henry. Then Henry got word that the emperor and the french king were going to withdraw their ambassadors in England.

This was all very frightening for Henry and England, and they began looking elsewhere for a new marriage. And their eyes landed on Cleves. And so, the marriage game began. Ambassadors were sent to the court in Cleves, and while they were received favorably, they reported that they were unable to get a clear view of either Anne or any of her sisters. When they complained about this, the response was sarcastic - "What, would you want to see them naked?"

In the summer of 1539 Henry sent Hans Holbein, who was racking up air miles on painting gigs by this point, to Cleves to paint Anne. Anne's portrait, which now is so famous since everyone thinks it was embellished to make Anne look better, was actually well received in Cleves and by the English ambassadors, with everyone responding that it was a good representation. One thing about the portrait is that it was painted with Anne looking right at the painter, and as such, it didn't show what may have been a rather large nose. So that's one thing.

Protestants who had initially cheered the marriage, both in England and Germany, would be disappointed, as Henry showed that he still wasn't going to embrace reforms. In June 1539 he passed through the Act of the Six Articles that outlined what everyone in England should believe. It was clear that Henry was trying to protect traditional religious worship, and it affirmed

things like the miracle of transubstantiation, where the communion bread literally becomes Jesus' flesh. It also laid out the penalties for disobedience, and some Protestants would call it the "whip with six strings".

By early autumn, the alliance with Cleves was moving on, and ambassadors from Cleves arrived in England. They laid out the terms of the marriage in Windsor over a couple of weeks, agreeing to such things as the number of attendants that Anne would have, and the preparations for her journey. Provisions for her widowhood were also laid out.

Anne made preparations to leave Cleves, and Henry wanted her to come as quickly as possible. That would mean a winter journey, which would be difficult even for the best travelers going on their own. With a train of royalty it was going to be a Herculean feat. There weren't even good directions for people sailing across the North Sea, which might have been necessary if a land route was unavailable. Even before the marriage treaty was signed, Henry sent pilots to navigate the journey by boat, and create a log. It's one of the earliest surviving documents like this. With that said, the idea of a sea journey was terrifying for Anne, who had never even seen the sea, and so they pursued the land option.

All during this time, Henry was anxiously awaiting his bride, convinced that he was already in love, and feeling very romantic. Call it a midlife crisis. He was suddenly a prince courting his princess, and he had convinced himself that he was already in love. He spent a lot of time ensuring that Anne would be comfortable on her journey, which is touching considering his reputation. Henry ordered ten of his finest ships to be fit out to transport her from Calais, and he began renovating the Queen's apartments in all of his palaces. He also made sure that every town where Anne would pass on her way to London was ready. The most important, of course, was Calais, Anne's first taste of English soil.

Something else Henry did for Anne was anticipate her need to learn English, and so he sent a Mistress Gilmyn to Cleves in order to become one of Anne's ladies, and teach her the language and customs of England. He also enquired about German customs that he could learn in order to make her feel comfortable and at home when she arrived.

All of this makes me have quite a soft spot for Henry.

During this time, Anne was preparing to leave her home, knowing that she likely wouldn't see her parents or siblings again. She received a new wardrobe of clothing, but they were all cut in the German fashion, which Henry wouldn't like so much when she arrived. Things took longer than expected, as things like this often do, and England as a whole was very excited for the Queen to arrive. The women, especially, were looking forward to having a queen to serve. When Anne finally left, it was with a train of 263 people, and given that it was late November, they made slow progress.

She reached Antwerp, where there was a large population of English merchants, on December 3, and Cromwell had ordered them to make a house ready for her, and to provide entertainment. A feast was held in her honor, and it was her first real reception as Queen of England.

On December 10 she reached Calais and there was a huge reception - Henry had ensured that no expense was spared to impress his new bride, and all the gentlemen and ladies were dressed in blue velvet, crimson satin, and cloth of gold.

The early reports of Anne throughout her journey all show a woman who was agreeable, generally very friendly and happy, and no one mentions her being anything other than pretty, and gracious. She was forced to stay in Calais longer than expected because of the weather, and she took it in stride, even asking to be taught a card game that she knew the king liked to play, so that they would have something in common when she arrived. There is no evidence that anyone in Calais noticed anything that would make her anything less than pleasing to the King.

Anne finally arrived in England on the 27th of December, and while she was tired and wanted to rest, she still had to go through the formalities of receptions and official welcomes. She was likely overwhelmed by all the people and foreign customs, none of which she fully understood.

And this is where things start to go sour. The idea of a king visiting a new queen in secret wasn't new. It was a chivalric idea. The thought was that the king would deliver a message, or something, and the new Queen would recognize him immediately since they were in true love. Henry VI did it with his wife Margaret of Anjou, bringing her a message dressed as a squire, and she kept him on his knees the entire time she read the message - not an auspicious beginning. You'd think they would learn that it wasn't a good idea, but Henry didn't. He rode from Greenwich down to surprise Anne, and there are a number of accounts of their first meeting, but apparently she was standing at the window at a bull baiting, and barely paid any attention to him. Even when he came over and tried to kiss her. One would think that she would have thought that only the King would presume to be that friendly with her, but she was also likely tired and overwhelmed, and she just didn't realize.

Of course this embarrassed Henry, and he reacted by saying that she wasn't everything painted out to be either. He said that she was so different from her portrait, he swore that he had been brought a Flanders Mare instead of a woman. Plus, he said she smelled. Now, the problem is, Henry kept Hans Holbein in his service until he died, so one would think that if she had been that different, he would have, you know, fired Holbein. Or something. But he didn't. So the likeness couldn't have been that far off.

Plus, Anne was likely disappointed in her marriage. Henry was 49 by this point, and already overweight and not at all like the handsome prince he had been even a decade before. She

would have been told stories about Henry, but they would likely have been old, and not take into account his changes since Anne Boleyn, and the death of Jane.

But they were in too deep to back out now, and Henry went ahead and married her, saving his anger for Cromwell, and the advisors who pushed him into the marriage. There are famous stories about how Henry couldn't consummate the marriage, and how that was Anne's fault. The truth was that he was likely already dealing with impotence, and this probably embarrassed him even more. Poor Anne was in way over her head with this one.

Henry's logic for getting out of the marriage was to say that she had been precontracted before her betrothal to him, something that hadn't happened. Early on, he went to her bed every other night, and she may not have realized that anything was wrong. There are also stories where she said that she thought they had consummated the marriage, not having been told the birds and the bees, and showing her to be an ignorant farmgirl. She apparently said that he would come into her bed, kiss her, and say good night sweetheart. And in the morning he kisses her and says Farewell Darling. Is that not enough? Erm. No. The problem is, these reports are in the summer, when Henry was trying to find a way out of his marriage, and showing that it hadn't been consummated would be one way. They assume a level of conversational skills in English that she just wouldn't have had this early on. Also, she would have been told by her mother what she needed to do as Queen in order to have an heir.

Anne soon began to realize that something was wrong, and she tried to speak to Cromwell on a number of occasions alone. He refused, always telling the King. He knew he was on thin ice, and he wasn't about to associate with her more. She also started dressing in the French fashion, which pleased him better. She persevered, setting up her household, bringing in ladies in waiting, and learning English. One of the ladies in waiting was Catherine Howard, who had quickly caught Henry's attention.

They were all doing this weird diplomatic dance, pretending that it was okay, and making sure that everything looked just fine so that no word of anything amiss reached Germany. Henry talked of his hope that they would have children, and Anne quickly became popular in England.

By the summer, though, Anne could tell something was seriously wrong, and Henry began the divorce proceedings. She must have been terrified, knowing what had happened to Henry's other wives when he wanted rid of them. Cromwell was the first to suffer Henry's wrath, and he was killed after being held in the Tower, and furiously writing anything that Henry wanted him to write about the marriage in an attempt to save his life. His letters about her precontract, and it was enough to start the proceedings. Cromwell still lost his head, and Anne knew she was going to lose her marriage. She was removed to Richmond, ostensibly because of Plague, but she knew the real reason, and she was terrified.

Henry called a team of clergy to examine the validity of his marriage, and they of course ruled it invalid. Anne agreed to the divorce proceedings, knowing that she had no choice, and Henry

was generous with her, partly because he was surprised at how willing she was to go along with it. He may have been expecting a protracted battle like he had with Katherine of Aragon, but instead he got a very pliable situation, and so he rewarded her generously, naming her his sister, and giving her precedence above everyone else at court except his daughters. She made only one request, and that was that Elizabeth could come visit her once in a while, and Henry granted that.

She must have been relieved when she realized she would escape with her head, but she was also forbidden to leave England, effectively being held hostage for her brother's good behaviour in Germany.

Henry also remarried, Catherine Howard, and there's evidence that when Anne came to court at Christmas time she and Catherine got along really well, and they all appeared to be this bizarre happy family. In fact, she and Henry realized they were actually quite fond of each other, now that everything had worked out as it had, and rumors would persist that he was going to take her back. Even Catherine herself got worked up about it. Of course there was nothing to it, but the rumors persisted. Even after Catherine's fall, Anne herself expected to be taken back by Henry, still believing herself to be the true queen. She had thought that Catherine had caught Henry's eye, and now that Catherine was gone, she would be his wife again.

During this time Anne also had to navigate some tricky political situations, one of which was the publication in France of a book that was supposedly authored by Anne, discussing how horribly the King had treated her. Henry asked Francis to suppress it because it painted such a bad portrait of him, and Francis did eventually. Henry looked into the publication, and saw that Anne had nothing to do with it, but it could have gone badly for her if he had suspected she had.

When Henry married Katherine Parr, it was a bigger blow to Anne, and she was very upset about it, realizing that she really wouldn't be the Queen in this lifetime.

After Henry died in 1547 her life got more difficult. She had had a good life in England after her divorce in part because of Henry's generosity to her. But with a new ruler, she was no longer the Queen's sister, but a foreigner. Plus, the economy was suffering, and the costs of keeping her mini court were very high. Edward and his advisors saw no reason to keep her living in such finery, and she had a very difficult time paying her bills. They really just wanted to marry her off so that another man could pay for the cost of keeping her, but she only ever saw herself as Henry's wife, and she did not intend to marry again.

When Mary inherited, things got a bit better for her at first. She and Mary had become friends, and she participated in Mary's coronation. She was held in high esteem at court at first, but after there was a rebellion against Mary's choice of a foreign husband, Anne was viewed suspiciously. Anne had originally spoken of her family as being a place where Mary should marry into, and then when Wyatt's rebellion took place, one of her associates was implicated in the rebellion. So suddenly things were tainted between Mary and Anne. No one ever suspected

Anne of having anything to do with the rebellion, but with that said, there was suspicion nonetheless. When she died in 1557, quietly, and holding the hand of one of her ladies, Mary did give her an appropriate funeral for one of her status, but it was generally up to her household to mourn her.

Something bizarre involving Anne took place a few months later when a woman showed up in Saxony claiming to be Anne, and saying she had been badly mistreated by King Henry. Anne of course was dead, but officials looked into it anyways, and the pretender wound up being imprisoned and dying in 1560.

There are a couple of book recommendations this week, and I'll have them all up on the website with links to purchase. The first is Elizabeth Norton's *Anne of Cleves*, Henry VIII's discarded bride. There's also a very good historical fiction novel called *My Lady of Cleves* by Margaret Campbell Barnes. Remember you can get the show notes, and this transcript, as well as sign up for the newsletter all at the site, or by texting the listener support line at 801 6TEYSKO or tweeting me @teysko. That's also the best way to get in touch, or also through the facebook page at [facebook.com/englandcast](https://www.facebook.com/englandcast). Remember also to sign up for the newsletter to get the digital advent calendar!

Thanks so much for listening everyone. The next episode will be the interview with Tudor Times on their Person of the Month, which will come out in about 2 weeks. Then we're doing the printing and literature edition, followed by a light one on cosmetics. Have a great couple of weeks!