

Students' podcast transcript: Henry VIII on tour

[In Studio]

Phoebe: Hello everyone and welcome to our podcast for the Historical Association resources for teachers. I am Phoebe and I'm here with Jane and Shona [each person says "hello" after their name]

Jane: Our podcast today will look at the recent research carried out by Historic Royal Palaces on the tours of Henry VIII and how they link to his methods of regional control. We will be referring to the 'Henry on Tour' blog created by this project as a resource.

Shona: The Henry on Tour project examines some of the different places in England his tours led him to, including Petworth House in West Sussex and Christchurch Priory in Dorset. By talking about this incredible research, we hope that the blog could offer a simple yet exciting new resource to add into lessons and revision on Henry's authority and domestic policies. This podcast will focus on the example of Henry's progress to King's Manor in York and how it can be used to implement control after the Pilgrimage of Grace.

Phoebe: Luckily enough, we have Kirsten and Sophie coming to us from King's Manor. Hi guys, can you tell us a bit about Henry's visit to York?

[switch to Kings Manor]

Kirsten: Thank you Phoebe! Hey there, a warm welcome from me, Kirsten, and Sophie [Sophie says hi], here at King's Manor, recording live at the very location at the heart of our podcast - that explains why its so echoey!

Sophie: We are here in these very four walls where they settled and we will discuss Henry VIII and Katherine Howard's appearance in York, more about the blog's discussion on King's Manor, and what this all meant for the display of royal authority.

Kirsten: In 1541 Henry and four to five thousand retainers ventured north with the intention of meeting with James V. However, this was not made public knowledge after James never turned up. Along the progression, they had brought extravagant accessories with them, such as elaborate tents and 'the richest tapestry, plate and dress' from London, to furnish the renovated King's Manor as a royal court.

Sophie: When deciding upon their residency at York, Henry ordered renovations for the Abbot's house to make an establishment fit for a king. £400 was spent 'repairing and beautifying' the house. Henry and Katherine themselves stayed in St Mary's Abbey, which

was surrendered two years earlier as part of the dissolution of the monasteries, but paid great attention to the Abbot's house.

Kirsten: These examples display the culture around progresses and how the court was paraded around the country as a display of power. The more expensive and lavish the commodities and accessories, the more soft power and influence Henry had to display. John Cooper, the theme lead of the project, explained how this combined the elements of state and propaganda.

Sophie: so, Cooper goes on to explain "The purpose of these tours was to promote the monarchy through ritual and display, in times of conflict and show strength and force." Cooper argues that investigation is needed into the itinerary of Henry VIII's progresses and how local people would have interacted with their monarch; this is being achieved through the project's research into pageantry's role in Renaissance monarchy. Professor Cooper summarised what the progress symbolised, what it meant for Henry's use of power and what the project itself desired to do by observing progress to King's Manor and other locations.

Kirsten: Overall, it meant using subtle means to remind those in the north of the country of the imposing nature of their king by putting on a display of wealth and court culture. It reminded the general public who had the power to run the country. The wealth of the monarchy was a reminder of the ordinary person's position in society - that they should remember their place and to not repeat the disobedience shown in the Pilgrimage of Grace. To some extent, Henry's journey to York in 1541 was all about re-establishing hierarchy.

Kirsten: Let's see what this means for studying Henry's methods of control, back to the studio!

[switch back to the studio]

Phoebe: Thank you Sophie and Kirsten! As Kirsten said, John Cooper also called the project "an opportunity to draw [the relationship between the state and the use of propaganda] together." But how is this useful to the study of Henry VIII?

Shona: Well, looking at A level history specifications for Tudor modules, what is important to gain from this project is the idea that royal progresses were a vital method of asserting royal sovereignty by Henry, often in reaction to perceived threat.

Jane: Methods of regional control during Henry's reign is a hot topic on many of the specifications, and these progresses provide a perfect example of this. Whilst much of the past historiography on Henry VIII presents him as a monarch who ruled primarily by fear, the royal progresses present an alternative argument. Whilst Henry often did use violent force, the employment and impact of these non-violent methods of control should not be undersold.

Phoebe: Kirsten mentioned how the progresses gave Henry the ability to wield 'soft' power. But what is 'soft' power?

Shona: 'Soft' power was not about dominating Henry's subjects, but instead endearing them to him. Interacting with foreign diplomats and the local society in a lighthearted manner could be as powerful as traditional methods of control, such as use of violence or the military. The tours were an opportunity to promote the monarchy, allowing the people to express their grievances, as well as giving Henry the chance to present himself as the sovereign on a public stage.

Phoebe: For example, when Henry went on a progress to Petworth House in 1526, he even turned away letters from Wolsey one morning! He chose instead to focus on a planned hunt with landowners and courtiers, showing just how important this method of establishing control was from his perspective.

Jane: At their core royal progresses were a performance, a precisely choreographed visual for maximised impact. They often demanded immense spectacle with civic processions, music and gift-giving... **sounds like the place to be!**
Portable palaces would even be erected for Henry VIII on these tours.

Shona: In 2018, Historic Royal Palaces created a replica of a portable palace that demonstrated the size and magnificence of these innovations, showing how they added to the appearance of strength by the monarch.

Phoebe: Where Henry chose to go on tour can tell us a lot about where his concerns lay in the country too. In 1497, after the Cornish rebellion Henry VII went on to progress to Exeter but Henry VIII never felt the need to go that far. So, Kirsten and Sophie, why did Henry VIII feel the need to come to York in 1541?

[switch back to King's Manor]

Kirsten: Thank you guys, and welcome back to King's Manor! It's imperative we cover the context of this visit, the Pilgrimage of Grace. By summarising what happened and the outcome of the rebellion we gain a clearer insight into the significance of Henry's appearance at King's Manor in 1541 and why Henry's need to assert royal authority was necessary.

Sophie: The north of England, being detached from the government and court in London, was predominantly Catholic. Cromwell's dissolution of the monasteries evoked dissatisfaction in the northern counties. Robert Aske and other conspirators took action by gathering neighbouring counties for a large-scale rebellion: demanding monastic institutions be restored; Princess Mary be re-legitimised; and corrupt councillors such as Cromwell, Cramner, and Rich to be removed from government.

Kirsten: The rebels marched through cities in the north, seizing Knaresborough and overrunning Pontefract castle. Initially the rebels were reasoned with by the Duke of Norfolk, meeting at Doncaster with their demands, the Pontefract Articles. These demands were asserted and negotiated with, and a pardon was intended to be issued.

Sophie: However, Bigod's rebellion in January 1537 gave Henry the excuse to issue martial law and crack down on the rebels, with 74 hanged. Robert Aske himself was hanged in

chains from Clifford's Tower in York, with his body left dangling as an example of what happens when you rebel against the King.

The outcome of the revolt therefore weighed heavily on the minds of those in York who witnessed Henry's vicious display of power, so his visit in 1541 was impactful for both the King to ensure the northern folk were staying in line and for the people, who were anxious to appeal to the King's goodwill in fear of receiving the same fate as those rebels.

Kirsten: Whilst past historiography on Henry VIII has focused on the themes of revolt and protest in his reign, this podcast aims to offer an alternative study into more passive methods of control. In terms of protest and revolt, J. Edward Taylor argues how the Towneley Plays were used as protest literature for religious grievances which emerged as a result of the Pilgrimage of Grace.

Sophie: This serves as a great example of religious dissatisfaction being demonstrated in more subtle means. The progress also demonstrates a similar theme when it comes to suppressing opposition. The outcome of the Pilgrimage of Grace was often so violent that it's easy to overlook more passive means of both protest and assertion of authority.

Kirsten: Now that we've summarised the context of the Pilgrimage of Grace and highlighted alternative viewpoints on the outcomes, it's time for us to say goodbye from Kings Manor and thanks for listening to us over here. Let's head back to the studio where Phoebe, Shona, and Jane will further look into the research done by the project and how it can be used in the classroom. Over to you guys in the studio!

[switch back to studio]

Phoebe: Thank you again to our King's Manor correspondents, Kirsten and Sophie! I hope it's not too draughty there! The violence and the death toll of the Pilgrimage of Grace can mean historians forget any other methods of control exercised by Henry in response. As highlighted by the Henry on Tour project, the king was almost always on the move. Whether he was travelling to one of his usual standing palaces or setting off on a lengthy progress, it was not unusual to see him leaving London.

Shona: Fundamentally, the progress gave the people a chance to come face-to-face with the monarch. However, they were also an excellent opportunity for propaganda. Though a little further from the English tours, the Field of the Cloth of Gold is a clear example of this.

Phoebe: Henry's diplomatic progress to Calais has gone down in history as one of the most successful moments of his reign and the accompanying propaganda has too. For instance, the famous Field of the Cloth of Gold painting pictured the event in great, glamorous detail. Accounts of progresses helped to emphasise the power and glory of the king, again working on this 'soft' control.

Jane: The Henry on Tour research project is still ongoing! There are some upcoming events to keep an eye out for, such as a National Schools' event on the theme of Henry VIII's progresses at Hampton Court Palace in June 2025, and a major archeological dig at Petworth House in July 2025.

Shona: This resource can provide an exciting new way for students to engage with the curriculum, highlighting previously overlooked and under-studied areas of many A Level History specifications. If you find yourself near one of the sites, this project highlights many locations for a school trip, giving students the chance to see the learning come off the page and into the world around them!

Phoebe: We hope you have enjoyed our podcast, and if you found it interesting be sure to check out the Henry on Tour blog for more information, or even go and have a look at the replica portable palace and Field of the Cloth of Gold painting, both available on the Historic Royal Palaces website. Thank you from me, Phoebe

Shona: Shona

Jane: and Jane

All: Goodbye!