Henry Norris and the Boleyn Faction: 1528-1536

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This work details primarily the last nine years of the life of Henry Norris, a British court figure during the reign of Henry VIII. His career in Tudor England developed from and through his role in the Privy Chamber, which was a department of court operating in the king's private suite of rooms. Norris was the most prestigious of the chamber groomsmen who took care of the king's daily needs and personal care. As chief groomsman or Groom of the Stool, Norris also played a significant part in the distribution of offices through patronage and through his influence with the king. Norris had useful connections with Anne Boleyn, and was one of her main supporters. Anne Boleyn's followers managed to keep much of the king's attention (and material blessings) for a number of years in the late 1520s and early 1530s. In May 1536, however, the so-called Boleyn faction ended abruptly when Henry VIII turned away the queen and arrested, tried, then executed several members of the group.

I propose to examine closely Norris' role in the Boleyn faction from 1528-1536 and to learn what about the man himself made him important and illustrative of Tudor society. This study attempts to analyze historical events from two perspectives. First, it will engage in the factional interpretation of Tudor England from a different angle than studies of Cromwell and Anne Boleyn that have already been done. Examination of Norris and his career as

part of this faction may unearth new information about the Boleyns, or about court structure. Second, Norris' role as court figure deserves study as a small slice of British history. Norris as a Tudor England personality deserves study. Who was this individual, whom another person at court termed "all times one manner man," a steadfast friend on whom he could always rely?[1] The events of his life can help present-day persons better understand the Tudor period.

Henry Norris came from a distinguished family. His grandfather, William Norris, became a knight after the battle of Northampton in July 1458. When Richard III accused him of high treason in 1483 for supporting the Duke of Buckingham's rebellion, he fled to Brittany. He returned with the future Henry VII in 1485 and later commanded English forces at the battle of Stoke in 1487. William's son, Edward, also took part in the battle of Stoke and obtained knighthood in its immediate aftermath. Edward's oldest son and Henry's brother, John, was a "squire of the body," meaning that he was an usher to the outer chamber for both Henry VIII and Edward VI. John then became the chief Privy Chamber usher for Queen Mary. John died in 1562.[2]

Henry Norris' exact birth date is unknown, but he likely arrived at the royal court at some time in his youth, and soon was appointed to the king's Privy Chamber as a king's servant, later called "gentleman." He was one of several young men who together became young King Henry's bosom friends.

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[1] Muriel St. Claire Byrne, ed., *The Lisle Letters*, vol. 1 (Chicago: U. Chicago, 1981), p. 43.
[2] Sir Leslie Stephen and Sir Sidney Lee, ed., *Dictionary of National Biography, From the Earliest Times to 1900,* vol. 14 (1917; reprint, Oxford: Oxford U., 1964), p. 566. In subsequent references this work will be abbreviated as DNB.

Staff of the Privy Chamber, including Norris, became the king's intermediaries and confidants, in theory permitting Henry to be independent of any minister.[3] The royal household or court, of which the Privy Chamber was one part, became Norris' life.

There were two sides to life at court. According to most accounts it was a grand existence, always involving luxury and ceremony to some degree. Elaborate masques and feasts took up a good deal of time, as did hunting, cards, and other amusements. Royalty designed these ostentatious trappings to project the wealth and power of the monarchy.[4] There was also a less complimentary view of the court held by men such as Sir Thomas Wyatt, who compared the court to a monster that ate up good men and spewed out a plague of parasites in return.[5] Henry sent Wyatt, who was a member of the royal household, to the Tower of London in 1536 with Anne's faction, and again in 1541 after Cromwell's demise. During his times in prison, he bitterly attacked what he considered duplicity, prostitution, and a lack of integrity necessary for success at court.[6] He sarcastically advised aspiring courtiers to use virtue only for a front and to not let any friendship get in the way of

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[3] Eric William Ives, *Faction in Tudor England*, Appreciations of History no. 6 (London: Historical Association, 1979), p. 9.
[4] Anthony Goodman, *The New Monarchy: England 1471-1534*, Historical Associational Studies, ed. Roger Mettam and James Shields (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), p. 17.
[5] Eric William Ives, *Anne Boleyn* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), p. 8.
[6] Ibid., p. 9.

"advantage."[7] While not everyone at court lived according to these principles, Wyatt's writing showed that there was a dark side to the glamorous court life.

As one in the king's good graces would, Norris began to accumulate various kinds of favors and grants. In 1515, like his father before him, he became keeper of the park of Foley John,[8] where the king owned a lodge that he paid Norris to keep in repair.[9] In 1518 he received an important customs position, as he became weigher of the beams (an official who supervised the weighing of goods for tariff purposes) at Southampton. Around this same time he began handling the privy purse, a position that involved holding large amounts of money and jewels for the king.[10] This account became known as the privy purse, or king's coffers. An annuity, or annually-paid stipend, of 50 marks from the crown came his way in 1519, in addition to his quarterly household wages or 8l. 6s. 8d.;[11] the king renewed this stipend in 1525.[12]

Norris attained honors throughout the 1520s. He attended the Field of the Cloth of Gold ceremony in 1520, in which Henry met and entertained the French king in an elaborate festival.[13] As a member of the royal household, he participated in various occasions of merrymaking that were initiated at the

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7 Ibid., p. 10-11.
8 DNB, p. 567.
9 Great Britain Public Records Office, *Calendar of Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII*, vol. 3 (Washington: Microcard Editions, 1965), p. 1544, no. 2750. In subsequent references the work will be referred to in the following manner: LP, 3: 2750. The page number will only be given if the entry has multiple pages.
10 DNB p. 567; LP, 4: 1863, 1907.
11 DNB, p. 567; LP, 3: p. 408.
12 LP, 4: g. 1298 (26).
13 LP, 3: p. 244; DNB, p. 567.

king's whim. Several documents in 1520 show the acquisition of materials for new clothing, for Norris and the rest of the Privy Chamber to wear at these occasions.[14] Norris became engraver of the dies for gold and silver coinage in the Tower of London in 1523, a sinecure paying 20l. a year.[15] He also accepted lordship or stewardship over a number of manors and parks,[16] along with a wardship.[17] Additionally, he obtained the honor of doing three advowsons[18] and was given the job of verger[19] before the king at the holiday feast of St. George in Windsor castle.[20] An assessment of persons in the Privy Chamber revealed that Norris received 104l. 6s. 8d. per year in March 1527. In comparison, Thomas Cromwell, at that time one of Cardinal Wolsey's servants, only received 50l. per year.[21]

The background of Norris' chief office, Groom of the Stool, reveals how the office progressed from performing bodily service to being one of the more significant figures in court politics. The Groom of the Stool's duties, as detailed by David Starkey, were to keep the king's close stool (their version of the toilet)

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[14] LP, 3: 957, pp. 1551, 1553-1554.
[15] LP, 3: 2976.
[16] These included: Bailiff of the Earl of Huntingdon's former lands (LP, 4: 976) and lease of his park Inglescome (LP, 4: g. 3213 [5]), bailiff and custody of Hunnesdon, Hertsfordshire (LP, 4: g. 3622 [27]), receiver, surveyor, and keeper of the park of Ewelme, Oxford (LP, 3: g. 610, g. 2074 [14]), steward of Barton-upon-Humber (LP, 3: g. 2482 [22]; LP, 4: g. 1377 [12]), a grant of ten manors in 1520 (LP, 3: g. 1035), a grant of 3 manors taken from the Duke of Buckingham in 1522 (LP, 3: 2659), lordship of the manor of Langley Maresse, and keeper of Perlaunte Park (LP, 3: g. 3376 [12]).
[17] This was the wardship of Vincent Power (LP, 4: g. 2599 [5]).
[18] An advowson involved presenting a candidate to a church living. LP, 3: g. 1035, LP, 4: g. 1298 (8).
[19] The verger carried a rod in front of the king in a procession as a symbol of authority.
[20] LP, 4: g. 1298 (23).
[21] LP, 4: p. 1331.

ready for use and to wait on the king while he relieved himself.[22] He was also head of the Privy Chamber. In the 1490s, when Hugh Dennis became Groom of the Stool for Henry VII, this position began to take on additional functions. These duties included handling accounts for the king separate from the treasury.[23] While William Compton was Groom of the Stool, four-figure sums came from the treasury to Compton often labeled "for the king's use".[24] These monies were for day-to-day expenses that did not fit well into the treasury accounts. These expenses included such things as gambling and the purchase of jewelry.[25] State papers began to accumulate in the hands of the Groom of the Stool as well. Because of his intimate position with the king, the Groom of the Stool was able to submit them at moments when the king would most likely agree to look at them. This was important because Henry was a sometimes lazy king who detested signing documents and doing other "official" business; one had to approach him when he was in a good mood.[26] This office's importance came from the rank of the person for whom the job was performed (the king) rather than the nature of the job itself (cleaning the king's commode).

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[22] David R. Starkey, "Representation through Intimacy: A Study in the Symbolism of Monarchy and Court Office in Early Modern England," in I. Lewis, ed., *Symbols and Sentiments: Cross-Cultural Studies in* Symbolism (London, 1977) Referenced in G. W. Bernard, "The Rise of Sir William Compton, Early Tudor Courtier," *English Historical Review* 96 (October 1981): p. 756.

[23] Christopher Coleman and David Starkey, ed. *Revolution Reassessed: Revisions in the History of Tudor Government and Administration* (Oxford: Oxford U., 1986), p. 38.

[24] Ibid., p. 39.

[25] Bernard, "Rise," p. 756.

[26] Coleman, p. 49.

In the chivalric code, service in court was in theory the basis of attaining honor.[27]

Cardinal Thomas Wolsey, the king's minister until 1529, instituted ordinances for the Privy Chamber and Groom of the Stool both in 1519 and in 1526. The reform in 1519 limited the groom's expenditures to 10,000l. per year.[28] Wolsey also made provisions for record-keeping to account for all the money passing through the groom's hands.[29] Contrary to Wolsey's intent, these regulations made the treasurer function more part of the job than ever.[30] William Compton, Groom of the Stool since around 1510, resigned in 1526, presumably because he had tired of the job as a result of Wolsey's tinkering.[31] Norris then became Groom of the Stool, a position he maintained until 1536.

The Eltham ordinances of 1526 depict life in the king's Privy Chamber, including that of the Groom of the Stool. According to the ordinances, Norris was the only man allowed to wait on the king in the bedchamber unless called for by Henry. The regulations delineated exactly who, including Norris, could have rooms in the king's bedroom complex.[32] Wolsey also forbade playing games in the Privy Chamber (apparently playing cards was a favorite way to pass the time), and called for extra servants, hangers-on, etc. to stay outside.[33]

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27 Ives, *Faction*, p. 8.
28 Coleman, p. 39.
29 Ibid., p. 40.
30 Ibid., pp. 35, 40.
31 Bernard, "Rise," p. 776.
32 LP, 4: 1939 (p. 863).
33 LP, 4: p. 862.

An unforeseen effect of this law was that it allowed the Groom of the Stool or other members of the Privy Chamber more leeway in restricting access to the king; Wolsey made it legal and even statutory to exclude most people from the king in his bedroom suite. Wolsey gave himself power to audit the court's observance of his ordinances on a quarterly basis.[34]

Understanding Norris and his role in government involves sketching out some understanding of the era in which he lived. Patronage was a key concept of Tudor government. Although patronage has an unpleasant connotation in today's society, it was the most effective way at the time to select individuals for local or royal service.[35] Under this system influential men promoted clients for offices, lands, and other grants. By successfully doing so, they hoped either to receive a tangible reward for their efforts or to enhance their own positions and reputations.[36] This process worked much as a human pyramid, with the king and those with direct access to him at the top.[37]

In this manner, those in the king's favor could control to a certain extent who received the king's grants and other rewards. Men close to the king could put in a good word for one suitor for the king's favors and ignore or disparage another applicant. A dynamic royal court and a gentry class that desired to move up the social ladder made this system highly competitive.[38] Even high

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[34] Coleman, p. 35.
[35] Ives, *Faction*, p. 3.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid., p. 5.
[38] Ibid., p. 4; S. J. Gunn, *Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk: c. 1484-1545* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), p. 226.

nobility such as Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, could not ignore the patronage system. Men like Suffolk were both client (to the king) and patron (to his tenants). For his followers Brandon begged favors from Henry Norris, Cardinal Thomas Wolsey, Thomas Cromwell, or just about anyone else he thought would help.[39]

The king's ministers such as Wolsey or Cromwell needed to control this flow of grants and positions. The key part to control was limiting access to the king to as few people as possible. When this power began to slip from a minister's hands to other individuals, as happened to Wolsey in 1528 and Cromwell in 1540, his downfall soon followed.[40] The process of obtaining a royal grant illustrates this point. To obtain a grant, first a suitor secured a provisional promise from the king or someone with direct access to the king. Then he worked out specific conditions of the grant with royal advisors until they reached an acceptable agreement. The terms of the agreement appeared as a petition or bill that the king then signed. The grant could then be issued as letters patent, which a Crown official marked with the Great Seal to make official.[41] Therefore, at two points in this process access to the king was necessary. If a minister failed to control access to the king, then his enemies often were able to influence patronage and undermine his authority. In the

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[39] Ibid.
[40] Ives, *Faction*, p. 8.
[41] Ibid., p. 5.

1530s one of Cromwell's largest potential rivals for patronage power was Norris, whose closeness to the king made it unadviseable to alienate him.

At times during Henry's reign, such as the first few years before Wolsey's rise and after his fall, the Privy Chamber primarily directed patronage.[42] Those in the Privy Chamber were the king's companions at mass, at the dining table, or hunting. These people were in a convenient position to influence the distribution of patronage or policies. Sometimes individuals in the Privy Chamber cooperated with other powerful people, as would be the case with Anne Boleyn beginning in 1528. In the case of Norris, those in the Privy Chamber were likely to become caught up in the unceasing game of faction,[43] as will be described.

Factions or cliques were also a key component of government in this time period. Part of the patronage system already detailed involved the question of whom to ally with. The individual's choice determined to a good extent which faction he or she belonged to. A faction is a group of individuals, linked by mutual political interests, that seeks objectives primarily in personal terms.[44] Three key elements of their lobbying effort were: personal connections, patronage power, and ideology.[45] Powerful localism due to relative isolation in the countryside accelerated competition between these factions. Even Wolsey

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[42] Goodman, p. 23.
[43] Ibid., p. 18.
[44] Joseph S. Block, *Factional Politics and the English Reformation: 1520-1540*, Royal Historical Society Studies in History, no. 66 (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell, 1993), p. 2; Ives, *Faction*, p. 1.
[45] Block, p. 2.

and Cromwell at the height of their powers were unable to make much of an impact on local networks and hierarchies.[46] This serious competition in the localities underscored the importance of having good connections at court. Relentless pressure among gentry or nobility to attain higher status added to their desire to get ahead.[47] Politicing and business took place at the court between those in the king's household and powerful local men or their envoys. The Lord Chamberlain, nominal head of the entire household, and the Treasurer of the Chamber, who controlled the Privy Chamber's money, were logical choices to approach and to attempt to influence. However, the Groom of the Stool and others in the Privy Chamber also served as magnets for reward-seekers.[48]

Religion also played an increasingly significant role during this time due to the Reformation. Ideological leaning aided one in "selecting" a faction in which to belong. Granted, religion played a much larger role for some than for others, and political convenience often was the deciding factor in which group to support. Still, historians should not discount the role of religion.[49] For example, Anne Boleyn did have many individuals connected with the Reformation appeal to her for protection and advice.[50] For the most part,

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[46] John A. Guy, *Tudor England* (New York: Oxford, 1988), p. 176.
[47] Ives, *Faction*, p. 4.
[48] Goodman, p. 18.
[49] Block, p. 3.
[50] Ibid., p. 7.

those who supported Anne Boleyn had reformist leanings, despite Retha Warnicke's belief that Anne did not incline to Protestantism herself.[51]

These rival factions, led by such figures as Anne Boleyn, Cardinal Thomas Wolsey, and Thomas Cromwell, sought to persuade the king that their ideas had value. These bands of individuals also used persuasive power to try to monopolize the king's patronage network to the group's hand-picked choices. Logically, factions also sought to limit the influence of other groups as much as possible.[52] Factions were not as stable as modern American or European political parties; these groups only lasted as long as their leader or leaders could gather sufficient access to the king. The game of faction involved the need to be rather perceptive. For example, the king's decision to grant a position or receive someone could determine a fundamental shift in the balance of power at court.[53] Some individuals changed allegiances according to the direction of the winds of favor.[54] As will be shown in the next section, strife related to faction began to escalate in 1528 between Anne Boleyn and Cardinal Wolsey for control of the king's patronage power.

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[51] Ibid., p. 6.
[52] Ives, *Faction*, p. 1.
[53] Goodman, p. 18.
[54] Block, p. 3.

Chapter 2: The Decline of Wolsey and Rise of Anne Boleyn

Norris had by 1528 risen to a place of importance in Henry's royal household. He had been in the Privy Chamber for some time, and was now the Groom of the Stool. He had amassed some minor offices and annuities, which gave him income. Also, as Groom of the Stool he had been able to gain influence through patronage, as he began to promote supplicants for offices to be given out by the king. He did not join in a faction, apparently, until the rise of Anne Boleyn, one of Queen Catherine's ladies at court with whom King Henry fell in love. Overall, at the beginning of 1528 Norris was a perfect example of someone who had made a name for himself at court.

Norris' role between 1528-30 expanded. Anne and her faction, including Norris, gained at Wolsey's expense. When Anne became Henry's "new flame," this affection between Henry and Anne was reflected in the approach Henry took in rewarding Anne's allies, such as Norris. Much of the primary documentation referred to later is included in this paper to illustrate this point; Norris is a specific example of how the Boleyn faction members benefited from Henry's generosity. Anne and her allies received rewards at the king's discretion, and sometimes at Wolsey's. This apparent contradiction can be explained in that desperate men will sometimes make concessions to their opponents, especially when they see gains by the other side to be inevitable. This chapter will demonstrate that Norris' role in government during this time

was as one of the antagonists of Wolsey. However, he was not among the vanguard of this movement but was simply one of the more visible personalities in it, as the head of the Privy Chamber.

England was primarily a loyal Catholic country until Henry began to seek a divorce from his first wife. Heretics, such as John Wycliffe in the fourteenth century and William Tyndale in the 1520s, had little approval among either the populace or government. Until 1528, England had been solidly Catholic. In the last years before the Reformation came to England, Cardinal Thomas Wolsey was Henry's main minister. Wolsey illustrated everything anticlerical individuals would point out as wrong with the English church at this time. He was a consummate politician who had few guiding moral principles.[1] He used his religious offices primarily to gain political power. He assumed multiple church offices (called pluralism) and never visited his archbishopric of York until after his fall from royal favor in October 1529. He was ruthless and arrogant, which made him rather unlike the pious men of God that churchmen were supposed to be. However, he gained the king's favor and became a royal minister. At the height of his powers, he controlled enough of the machinery of England's government that he acted almost as a second king.

Wolsey's fall in 1529 resulted not from his character deficiencies or his religious shortcomings, but ultimately from his failure to successfully secure for Henry a divorce from his first wife, Catherine of Aragon. Henry had come to

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[1] Guy, p. 85.

believe Catherine would never provide him the male heir to the throne he wanted. He had also fallen in love with a young woman at court, Anne Boleyn. Wolsey needed to get the pope, Clement VII, to recognize Henry's marriage as invalid. This recognition was termed an annulment, and was clearly necessary for a loyal ruler to obtain, before he could marry another. Bigamy, the keeping of two wives, was unequivocally opposed by the church.

For two reasons Wolsey's task was nearly impossible. First, Catherine was Charles V's aunt (Charles was the Holy Roman Emperor), and Charles V at this time militarily had control of Italy. Because Charles V opposed the divorce, the pope felt it would be unwise to defy him. Second, Henry insisted on bringing about the divorce in a way that would make the papacy acknowledge it had been wrong. Henry wanted Clement to proclaim that Julius II, an earlier pope, had wrongly issued a dispensation, or papal decree, allowing Henry to marry Catherine. Catherine had married Henry's brother, Arthur, although the union was likely never consummated. Now Henry was maintaining that the marriage between Arthur and Catherine had in fact been consummated. Although Wolsey's task was nearly impossible, this reality still did not prevent Henry from holding Wolsey responsible for failure.

Anne and Wolsey became fierce rivals. Anne thought Wolsey was not wholeheartedly trying to secure the divorce. When it became apparent Wolsey was stalling for time and he was getting nowhere, Anne began to feel that the country would be better off without Wolsey as its leader. She also knew that as

long as he had the king's favor she would not be able to dislodge Wolsey's control of patronage. She wished to control patronage so she could gain a broader base of support among the nobility and gentry surrounding the court. By the end of 1528, influential people began to turn on Wolsey. Norris was among their number. Norris and others followed Anne's lead, in 1529, by treating Wolsey with contempt whenever the occasion would allow it.

The Dictionary of National Biography[2] gives a slightly different description of what Norris did in 1528-30 that does not seem entirely correct. According to this article, written by William A. J. Archbold, Norris "early took the side against Wolsey, and was one of the main instruments in bringing about his fall." Also, according to Archbold, Norris "became one of [Anne's] intimate friends and a leader of the faction that supported her proud pretensions to control the state."[3] This second statement is more correct than the first. Little evidence unequivocally supports the position that he was one of the main influences in Wolsey's fall. By the end of 1528, Norris' leadership of the Boleyn faction in the Privy Chamber put him at variance with Cardinal

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[2] The Dictionary of National Biography was a twenty-two volume set written in England over a multiple-year period in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by some of the same scholars who began serious modern academic study of England's history. The people who contributed to the sixteenth-century entries included A. F. Pollard and James Gairdner; there are well over a hundred contributors in all. The purpose of this massive undertaking was to explain how England became great, by describing "notable statesmen and politicians" of British history up to that point. The contributing authors, often being gentlemen themselves, belonged to a school of historical thought which linked progress in England to successful struggle against monarchical power. In their eyes, history showed that life improved as the struggle over who would control the workings of government was resolved in Parliament's (i.e. powerful gentlemen's) favor. They thus wished to give biographical information on these individuals to help others understand Britain's history. This interpretation is sometimes referred to as the "Whig interpretation" of British history.

[3] DNB, p. 567.

Thomas Wolsey to some degree. However, the documents included in the last chapter do not provide evidence for an early (pre-1528), concentrated political effort against Wolsey by Norris.

The larger picture of court life in 1528 showed growing tension between Wolsey and his enemies. Wolsey had felt himself distanced from the king and royal favor as early as 1527. In September of that year he went to France as an envoy, and stayed for several months. Even after his return he could not confer with the king, as Henry was habitually in the countryside with royal favorites and Wolsey usually was in London. Wolsey kept tabs on the king and Anne, who by this time had achieved the king's affections, by agents (i.e., supporters) such as Thomas Heneage and Sir William FitzWilliam.[4] The king habitually surrounded himself with men such as Sir William Compton, Francis Bryan, Henry Norris, and George Boleyn, Anne's brother, and also with nobles such as the Dukes of Norfolk and Suffolk. These people could loosely be considered a lineup of Wolsey's enemies; they constantly gave the king negative images of Wolsey.

The court played a large role during the king's hunting expeditions, or "progresses," for a portion of the court traveled with him throughout England while the Privy Council and other ministers stayed in the area around London. In this way the court had continual direct access to the king and influence upon him while the ministers had to resort to correspondence that the king

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[4] Block, p. 17.

usually did not wish to read. The size of the court itself varied during progresses, which took place during the late summer months. Many houses where the king stayed during his summer progresses (some belonging to favorite courtiers; he stayed with Norris in 1526) could not hold the hundreds of retainers that composed the court in the much bigger palaces near London. At all times, notwithstanding, key members of the household, such as the Groom of the Stool, were with the king[5] except for extraordinary circumstances such as the sweating sickness outbreak in 1528. In a later incident that must have pleased Norris greatly, on July 16, 1530, John Portinary accepted 11s. 8d. for conveying money (for the king) that someone had stolen from Norris but had been recovered.[6] This money was likely for the king's ready use to spend on the members of his court or himself during one of these progresses.

Norris had a large part to play in entertaining the king with "sport" during these progresses. Each afternoon the king rode out hawking or hunting, then either went for walks in the park or played cards until late evening.[7] Norris received 10l. in quarterly wages at Christmas in 1528 for being master of the hawks, a job that probably involved keeping them fed and ready for hunting.[8] Most Englishmen would have loved to make 40l. a year taking care of hawks.

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[5] David R. Starkey, *The Reign of Henry VIII: Personalities and Politics* (New York: Watts, 1986), p. 18.
[6] LP, 4: 6541.
[7] LP, 4: 4005.
[8] LP, 5: p. 305.

As Anne's influence with the king grew, she seized on opportunities to challenge Wolsey at the heart of his influence with the king, and his control over patronage power. In a letter from Heneage to Wolsey on March 3, 1528, Heneage excuses himself for not coming to Wolsey. He states that the king only had himself and Norris to attend on him at the moment. Anne had approached Heneage and commented that she feared the cardinal had forgotten her, and requested some fine food as a sign of goodwill. Wolsey obliged her with a gift of seafood.[9] On March 16, Anne requested Wolsey restore Sir Thomas Cheyney, one of her relatives, whom Wolsey had put out of the court. She said that Cheyney was "very sorry in his heart" for offending the cardinal, but Wolsey ignored her request. Anne, much annoyed, brought Cheyney back to court herself and used "very rude words of Wolsey."[10]

The conflict between Anne and Wolsey continued throughout 1528. In April a serious patronage issue emerged. The abbess of Wilton died, and a rush of patrons came forward to try to secure her position for their clients. Wolsey pushed one candidate, Isabel Jordan, and Anne another, Dame Eleanor Carey, her brother-in-law's sister.[11] Wolsey disobeyed the king, who had ordered Wolsey to appoint a third candidate, when he appointed Jordan anyway.[12] Arguments between Henry and his minister had blown over before,

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[9] Block, p. 16.
[10] Ibid., p. 17.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid., p. 18.

but this dispute generated more friction than perhaps the situation merited.[13] The mere fact that Anne challenged this powerful old cardinal says a good deal about how political this former lady-in-waiting for Henry's first wife had become.[14]

Anne, the king, and Wolsey also clashed over Wolsey's role in securing for the king a divorce from Catherine of Aragon. At times Wolsey seemed to the king too susceptible to papal authority. The king himself was unwilling as of yet to oppose openly the Catholic church,[15] but he began to be uneasy about the prospects of a quick resolution to his "great matter." On one occasion in August 1528, Henry swore at Wolsey because he felt Wolsey was not working hard enough and was too lukewarm toward the divorce.[16] The divorce issue also gave the king another reason to rethink his keeping Wolsey as the king's chief minister. He decided that unless Wolsey secured the divorce, he would look to alternatives such as the Duke of Norfolk[17] and the Boleyn family[18] to the cardinal's "rule."

Meanwhile, in 1528 Norris experienced ups and downs. The year began well when on New Year's Day Henry presented gifts of fine plates to Norris and his wife.[19] In November, Norris received stewardship of the large manor of

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[13] J. J. Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII* (Berkeley: U. California, 1968), p. 230.
[14] Ives, *Anne Boleyn*, p. 121.
[15] Starkey, *Reign of Henry VIII*, p. 30.
[16] Scarisbrick, p. 230.
[17] From this point the dukes of Norfolk and Suffolk will be referred to as Norfolk and Suffolk.
[18] Gunn, p. 227.
[19] LP, 4: 3748.

Pleasaunce in Eastgreenwich, Kent, and that of the Eastgreenwich park and tower.[20] In between, he almost lost his life due to "the sweat." A physician named Guillaume du Bellay wrote a description of the sweating sickness, as Englishmen also called the disease. "One has a little pain in the head and heart. Suddenly a sweat breaks out, and a physician is useless."[21] The sickness also involved abdominal pain, shaking, a headache, feverish heat, and excessive thirst; it was probably a viral infection.[22] The disease killed a number of prominent people in the summer of 1528, including William Compton and William Carey, husband of Mary Boleyn.[23] Many members of the Privy Chamber including Norris caught the disease and recovered. Sir John Russell, another member of the Privy Chamber, lists Norris as rejuvenated on June 26. During this outbreak and other bouts of plague or sickness, the king fled from town to town with a reduced staff, hoping to avoid contracting the disease.[24]

In 1528-29, a noticeable pattern emerged, that as Anne became more political, so did Norris. Norris had survived the Eltham ordinances in 1526, which supposedly depoliticized the Privy Chamber, so he probably did not involve himself in factional warfare before this time.[25] After his appointment

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[20] LP, 4: g. 4993 (6) This grant, renewed yearly beginning in November 1529 (LP, 4: g. 6072 (24.2]), also included being keeper of the grounds, "little garden," and orchard of Pleasaunce, with relevant fees.
[21] Byrne, vol. 2, p. 503.
[22] Ibid.; LP, 4: 4440.
[23] Ibid.
[24] LP, 4: 4422.
[25] Starkey, *Reign of Henry VIII*, p. 89.

as Groom of the Stool, he leaned in Anne's direction politically without becoming entirely partisan either.[26] Still, he would not avoid becoming involved in matters between Anne and Wolsey. Apparently neither Norris nor the king wanted to involve himself in a treaty (of unknown nature) Wolsey wanted to arbitrate in June 1528. Brian Tuke, one of the king's bureaucrats, tried to get the king to sign a treaty with Spain, the home country of Queen Catherine. Norris told Tuke, who here acted upon Wolsey's orders, that the king would speak with Tuke after dinner.[27] Anne Boleyn's family was decidedly pro-French in its advocacy of foreign policy; Norris thus delayed the treaty's signing, and at this time no interview took place. In a separate matter, the question of who would be the next abbess of Wilton dragged out from April until at least September. In that month a pair of letters to Wolsey record how Norris was doing business with a priest from Wilton, who was the suitor for a preferment (church-paid position) for Dame Carey.[28] These documents indicated that Norris was for the first time clearly taking part in activities to further the interests of Anne Boleyn's faction.

Norris was not the only one who turned his back on Wolsey in 1528. Many others did not especially like Wolsey. Upon the death of Compton, who was no friend of Wolsey's, the cardinal exacted a price of 1,000 marks, an extraordinary amount of money, for confirming Compton's will.[29] This greedy

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[26] Ibid., p. 100.
[27] LP, 4: 4409.
[28] LP, 4: 4703.
[29] A. F. Pollard, *Wolsey* (1929. Reprinted Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1978), p. 194.

action disgusted many clergy and laity, and eventually led to reform, so no more than half a crown, or 4s. 8d., could be given for processing a will.[30] Wolsey recommended Heneage and Norris for Compton's offices, but he likely only put Norris' name forward because he was Groom of the Stool and was currently in the king's good graces.[31] A letter from Heneage to Wolsey on September 25 reveals that, "The king is favorable to Norris, as you will see by his letter."[32] Wolsey likely wished to curry favor with Norris by recommending him for Compton's offices.

By the end of 1528, Wolsey had begun to lose respect for Norris and others when he discovered they were working against him. On December 23, John Cooke wrote Wolsey a letter in which he thanked him for protection against those who were "repressing" him for executing Wolsey's commands. He claimed the main perpetrators were Norris, Allen Wellis (a former servant of Wolsey, and now one of the Lord of Exeter's servants), and unspecified others, who allegedly had done all they could to bring Cooke into Wolsey's displeasure. He confided that on one occasion after Norris stood before Wolsey, the Groom of the Stool said he would not kneel before the cardinal for an office of 2 pence a day. Wellis refused to serve Wolsey and persuaded other servants of Wolsey to act the same way.[33] Norris also could not find the time to show a communication from Wolsey to the king that concerned a disputed stewardship

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30 Ibid., p. 338.
31 LP, 4: 4468.
32 LP, 4: 4773.
33 LP, 4: 5060.

between Bacon and Norris.[34] Apparently Norris saw no need now to worry about the cardinal's approval.

In 1529 the situation turned more ominous for Wolsey. Many of his colleagues, including Norris, had turned away from him. However, these same people who now disliked him were in the king's favor. For example, on New Year's Day, 1529, even Norris' family servants received rewards from the king.[35] On September 4, 1529, Wolsey was absent from court.[36] By the end of that year, the new imperial ambassador Eustace Chapuys[37] reported that Wolsey's standing was sinking. Norfolk, Suffolk, and Thomas Boleyn[38] now handled state affairs, and the king denied foreign ambassadors access to Wolsey. Gardiner, the new secretary, negatively answered Wolsey's requests for personal time with the king. Soon his last chance to see the king, it appeared, was to ask to accompany the papal delegate Campeggio as he took leave of the king before going back to Rome.[39]

Wolsey's "last chance" was a mixed bag of opportunity and humiliation. In the second week of September 1529 Wolsey (again) asked for an audience

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[34] LP, 4: 4702.
[35] LP, 5: p. 307-308.
[36] Block, p. 19.
[37] Retha M. Warnicke, "Anne Boleyn Revisited," *Historical Journal* 34 (December 1991), pp. 953-954. Chapuys wrote a number of letters, used widely in works of this time period, to Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor. Historians value his writings to different degrees, as some suspect he received untrue source information. For example, he took much of what Cromwell told him at face value when the minister may have had reason to be less than honest with Charles V. He obtained other information through bribery. Warnicke attacked Ives in this article for relying on Chapuys to a degree not justified by his source quality. He also tended to slant material to support his viewpoint. He disliked Anne and referred to her constantly as "the Concubine."
[38] Anne's father.
[39] Scarisbrick, p. 233.

with the king. He received it, to take place at Grafton, one of the king's hunting lodges. However, when Wolsey arrived on September 19, he discovered there was room in these cramped quarters only for Campeggio. Never before had the king refused to provide Wolsey lodging. Norris, however, offered a stunned Wolsey his room to change the clothes he had worn on the journey, which Wolsey accepted.[40] As Norris said, "For sir, I assure you, there is very little room in this house, scantly [sic] sufficient for the king; therefore I beseech your Grace to accept mine."[41] While this may seem to be a nice gesture, Norris probably did it with the intention of demeaning him. While in Norris' room, many individuals visited Wolsey and welcomed him to court.[42] Many at court used this occasion to lay wagers as to whether the king would speak with Wolsey.[43] The king received Wolsey with apparent goodwill, and so those who bet against Wolsey lost.[44]

The episode at Grafton, as Thomas Alvard (a chronicler) stated, appeared to be a victory to Wolsey, although it proved to be short-lived.[45] Henry wished to resume hunting and to rid himself of Wolsey, so he ordered him to accompany Cardinal Campeggio to London on his way out of the country.[46]

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[40] Block, p. 148; George Cavendish, *The Life and Death of Cardinal Wolsey,* In *Two Early Tudor Lives*, edited by Richard S. Sylvestor and David P. Harding (New Haven: Yale U., 1962), p. 96.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid., p. 95.
[44] Ibid., p. 97.
[45] Ives, *Anne Boleyn*, p. 150.
[46] Sir Henry Ellis, ed., *Hall's Chronicle: Containing the History of England during the Reign of Henry the Fourth and the Succeeding Monarchs to the End of the Reign of Henry VIII* (London, 1809; reprint New York: AMS, 1965), p. 759.

On October 9, 1529, after Campeggio had gone back to Italy, Wolsey was traveling near Putney when Norris brought him a message from the king. According to this message, Wolsey apparently had returned to as good graces with the king as ever. For example, as a token of the king's goodwill, Norris gave Wolsey a gold ring with a precious stone, symbolizing the fact that Wolsey should not lack anything.

> And though the king hath dealt with you unkindly as ye suppose, he saith that it is for no displeasure . . . only to satisfy more the minds of some (which he knoweth be not your friends) . . . . And also [the king is] able to recompense you with twice as much as your goods amounted to. All this he bade me that I should show you. Therefore sir take patience. And for my part I trust to see you in better estate than ever ye were.[47]

Wolsey's reaction to this, as it turned out, misleading message of comfort[48] was to kneel in the dirt and thank God, much to Norris' and everyone else's surprise.[49]

What happened next revealed something of Norris' humanity and of the intensity of this moment where two individuals at opposite ends of the factional spectrum came together. Norris knelt with the cardinal, who hugged him. They talked some time, got up, and then rode together on Putney heath. Norris

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[47] Cavendish, p. 105.
[48] LP, 4: 6026 (p. 2683). Chapuys stated that the king gave Wolsey this ring and message for fear that the Cardinal would die and the king's officials would not find all his goods. This argument makes sense in light of the king's other treatment of Wolsey in late 1529.
[49] Cavendish, p. 105.

would have left, but Wolsey persuaded him to stay longer and gave him a chain of gold, with a vial that supposedly held a piece of the Holy Cross. According to the cardinal it was the only item of value he had left.[50] Norris then left for court, with the chain and Wolsey's jester who Wolsey insisted should go to the king as a token of thanks.[51] The cardinal's fallen condition appeared to have made some impression on Norris.

Wolsey's surrender of the Great Seal on October 18, 1529, illustrated how his downfall was complete; definitely Anne (with Norris following her lead) had some hand in causing the king's wrath to come on Wolsey. Perhaps the reduced condition of the cardinal triggered some soft spot in Norris' heart when he delivered the king's message to Wolsey at Putney. If so, then he hardened his heart again when he accompanied the king, Anne, and Anne's mother to see Wolsey's "effects." These goods given up by Wolsey turned out to be more substantial than expected,[52] which surely put the king in a good mood. On October 22, Du Bellay reported that the king had put Wolsey out of his London house and had granted Wolsey's Durham house to Anne's father, Thomas Boleyn.[53] According to Chapuys, by October 25 the cardinal had no good options left, while people said horrendous things about him.

The king and Anne's supporters together finished off Wolsey. Even if Norris and others wished to feel sorry for Wolsey, they could not let him recover

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[50] Ibid., p. 106.
[51] Ibid., p. 107.
[52] LP, 4: 6026 (p. 2683).
[53] Block, p. 20.

his standing, for fear he would come back to power and dispose of them.[54] Wolsey's accusers wrote down all the allegations they could possibly think of against Wolsey and presented them to the king. After the king reviewed the material he said that it did not surprise him.[55] The week after the king sent his conciliatory message to Wolsey through Norris, the King's Bench (part of the legal system) charged Wolsey with praemunire, or valuing the pope's authority over the king's.[56] After the King's Bench convicted him, Henry pardoned Wolsey, leaving him somewhere between retirement and disgrace.[57] The Roman church could not annul the marriage as Henry wished, due to an explosive political situation in the Vatican,[58] and so Wolsey had no chance.

Some historians, including J. J. Scarisbrick, state that an aristocratic party led by Norfolk and Suffolk had hoped to catch Wolsey for some time and strip him of his power. They thought of Wolsey as a usurper of power who should give back government control to nobles such as themselves. To Norfolk and Suffolk, Anne Boleyn was a weapon they could exploit to bring down Wolsey.[59] Gunn blamed Wolsey's fall primarily on Norfolk and Suffolk, citing as evidence the fact that Wolsey in 1530 petitioned seemingly everyone except Norfolk and Suffolk for help, including (or even) Norris.[60] However, Gunn

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[54] LP, 4: 6026 (p. 2683); Scarisbrick, p. 235.
[55] Ellis, *Hall's Chronicle*, p. 759.
[56] Retha M. Warnicke, *The Rise and Fall of Anne Boleyn: Court Politics in the Reign of Henry VIII*, (Cambridge: Cambridge, 1989), p. 91.
[57] Scarisbrick, p. 235.
[58] At this time the pope was under the influence of Charles V, Catherine's nephew. There was no way Henry would get his divorce while a power hostile to the divorce dominated the Vatican.
[59] Scarisbrick, p. 229.
[60] Gunn, p. 116.

apparently did not take into account a letter in which Wolsey stated that he sought to make a satisfactory arrangement with Gardiner, Norfolk, and Suffolk.[61] Thomas Cromwell, Wolsey's servant who was trying to save his master's life and goods, pulled strings so that Norris would have his annuity doubled from 100l. to 200l., and so John Russell (of the privy chamber), Lord Sands, and "Mr. Comptroller" would also receive raises.[62] Wolsey hoped in return to receive favorable intervention by Norris or the others,[63] so Wolsey could "make a convenient portion for the entertainment of his house."[64]

Wolsey never seems to have entirely given up on the chance of acquiring Norris' help. He likely hoped Norris, as one of Anne's supporters, could persuade Anne to moderate her feelings toward Wolsey. In a series of 1530 letters, Wolsey told Cromwell that he trusted Norris would show his old love towards him,[65] and that he had always loved Norris for his service to the king.[66] In another letter Wolsey asked Cromwell to speak to Norris about Anne Boleyn's feelings toward him. This effort was so "the displeasure of my lady Anne be somewhat assuaged, for this is my only help and remedy. All possible means must be used for attaining of her favor."[67] Norris alone could not have

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61 LP, 4: 6098.
62 LP, 4: g. 5510 (undated); LP, 4: 6204; LP, 4: 6098; LP, 4: 6181.
63 Byrne, vol. 2, p. 336.
64 LP, 4: 6182.
65 LP, 4: 6098.
66 LP, 4: 6182.
67 LP, 4: 6114.

saved Wolsey by this point; Anne's help was the only way. This example illustrates how hopeless at this point Wolsey's case had become.

Norris played an important if ambiguous role in working out details concerning the Cardinal's College at Oxford. This was a place of higher learning which had been set up by Wolsey. Norris aided John Higdon and Robert Carter, two priests who wished to speak to the king. He told them to wait until the king came to mass, then the priests could speak with the king. Norris apparently worked out with the king a time at which the two priests could deliver letters from Wolsey's college at Oxford to Henry.[68] However, William Tresham also expressed the hope that Norris would help them by getting the king to give a patent for the college. If Norris would not help, then "he only slenderly does his duty."[69] Norris also took a trip to Oxford on the king's behalf.[70]

After Wolsey's decline, the Crown gave more patronage power and gifts to Anne and her supporters. Henry conferred on Anne the title Marchioness of Pembroke. Sir William FitzWilliam, Anne's cousin, became Treasurer of the Household. Stephen Gardiner, who deserted Wolsey when the cardinal left London in disgrace, became Henry's Secretary.[71] Norris gained a sizable portion of properties and sources of revenue. Norris accepted a large number

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[68] LP, 4: 6579.
[69] LP, 4: 6666.
[70] LP, 4: 6788.
[71] Block, p. 24-25.

of grants, including a number of manors.[72] He received two advowsons, in March of 1529 at Northorsbe, Lincolnshire,[73] and that of Thoresway church in March 1530.[74] Norris also accepted other positions unconnected with manors or the church, among them being bailiff of Chadlington, ranger, "launder," and the paid offices of four bailiffs in Wichewood forest, keeper of Chadworth woods, Gloucester, and keeper of Conebury park.[75] Norris also took in two potentially profitable wardships.[76]

Norris also continued, as had his predecessor William Compton, as bearer of the privy purse. This task involved handling large amounts of money for the king's ready use. Norris, on December 2, 1528, received 2,000l. from the Treasurer of the Chamber (Brian Tuke) for the king's affairs.[77] On February 20, 1529, John Williams of the treasury department paid Norris 1,000l.[78] On April 30, 1529, Norris received 500l. for the king's use,[79] in May 2,000l.,[80] and on June 29, 1,000l.[81] As a *coup de grace*, sometime in 1529

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[72] These were: the manors Honnesdon and Eastwick, Hertsford, with the old and new parks of Honnesdon, and keepership of a park called Goodman Hyde belonging to the king (LP, 4: g. 5336 [10]); three tenements in "le Westend" Greenwich, Kent, and land in Greenwich marsh, called Bendish, and lands called the queen's lands in East and West Greenwich, and Deptford, Lovesham, Kedbroke, Charlton, Wobirch, Beknam, and Chuflest, Kent (LP, 4: g. 5624 [1]); to be keeper of manor and park of Langley, and to be steward of the manor of Mynsterlovell, Oxon.(LP, 4: 6072 [24 bis.]; steward of the manors Boreford, Shipton, Langley, and Spillisbury (Ibid.), and grant by entail of the manors of Thoresway, Baymont, Bayons, and Tevelly, Lincolnshire, and the manors of Barton-upon-Humber, Stewton, and Winterton, Lincolnshire (LP, 4: g. 6301 [22]). All but the last reference were properties held by William Compton.

[73] LP, 4: g. 5406 [25].

[74] LP, 4: g. 6301 [22].

[75] LP, 4: g. 6072.

[76] He acquired the wardship of Dorothy, daughter and heir of Gregory Bassett (LP, 4: g. 5748 [5]), and the wardship of Richard, son and heir of Edward Fynes (LP, 4: g. 6248 [24]).

[77] LP, 5: p. 307.

[78] LP, 5: p. 309.

[79] LP, 4: 5516 (1).

[80] LP, 5: p. 311.

Norris received from the king and Thomas Alford (another government worker) a sum of 2,284l. 2s. 4d., of which he had at the time of the writing delivered to Tuke 1,743l. 8s.[82] Even if the 500l. for the king's use in April 1529 came out of this sum, Norris still pocketed roughly 40l. on the transaction.

Wolsey's end was instructive to some and profitable to others. He was one of many whom Henry raised up, then later destroyed. Anne, fearing that her factional enemies at court could bring Wolsey back to power, persuaded the king to have Wolsey arrested. Wolsey died on November 29, 1530, while journeying to the Tower of London where Henry would have imprisoned him. His still-grieving servant Cavendish arrived at the king's lodgings on December 6. After Cavendish waited the afternoon and part of the night, Norris "commanded" him to come to the king, who was in his nightgown. For an hour or more they discussed Wolsey's finances, in particular where a sum of 1500l. was kept. On revealing this information Cavendish received a reward of a full year's wages (10l.) and the same office he had under Wolsey.[83] This scene illustrates the king's greed for money and symbolizes Norris' share in the spoils of Wolsey's factional fall. Wolsey's fall demonstrates how Henry's enthusiasm for favorites could turn destructive.[84] Doubtless both Norris and Thomas Cromwell, who saw his master disgraced and on the path to execution (had Wolsey lived long enough), noticed this fact. The goal from this point onward,

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[81] LP, 5: p. 312.
[82] LP, 4: 5516 (3).
[83] Cavendish, p. 188.
[84] Starkey, *Reign of Henry VIII*, p. 74.

for any faction, would be to preserve itself and eliminate opposing groups from power.

Chapter 3: The Faction War Continues

Norris, in 1528-30, had proven himself as a successful faction man. Wolsey, the powerful old cardinal, had been removed from power completely. Norris was prudent enough not to put himself in the forefront of the faction fight against Wolsey until Wolsey's prospects had already begun to lose some steam. Wolsey's failure to obtain the divorce from Henry brought him down, but a faction which disparaged Wolsey to Henry did not help the cardinal's case. Norris financially benefited from Wolsey's collapse, in the form of grants and favors that Henry handed out to favorite Boleyn faction members. Norris' participation, if not his leadership, in Wolsey's fall demonstrated that he had cast his lot with the Boleyn faction.

Wolsey's decline brought not peace as it might seem but intensification of factional struggle within English government. These court factions were in suspense as to whether the king would succeed in obtaining his divorce. The factions observed with more than a little self-interest in mind, as their authority and power depended on whether the king would marry Anne Boleyn or stay with Catherine. Norris continued his pursuit of the king's favor, and as usual seems to have maintained it. Thomas Cromwell began to appear often in the records, no longer as a servant to Wolsey but as a man who forced himself into the business of government. Cromwell, of middle-class rather than noble background, was as much an upstart as those in the Privy Chamber such as

Norris who rose in power by doing the king's menial service. Cromwell, at this time, did not yet wield the influence to help bring down whole factions as he did in 1536. Meanwhile, Anne's relationship with Henry grew stronger but also had difficult moments that allowed Anne's rivals to criticize her. A key to understanding this two-year period and Norris' involvement in it is that none of these factions would admit defeat; earlier many individuals had abandoned Wolsey, but now the different groups "stuck to their guns." This chapter is concerned with Norris and his efforts as part of the Boleyn faction to secure Anne's marriage to Henry and the faction's preeminence in court politics. It should also be noted, however, that although Norris was a supporter of Anne, he never completely ceased to look out for his own interests.

After Wolsey's fall, Henry's annulment campaign for the pope to dissolve the marriage between Catherine and himself stayed in a quagmire. Catherine remained the formally recognized queen in England. As might be expected, she expressed a mixture of complaint and martyrdom to the king because Henry openly wished to put her away. Anne wisely allowed Catherine's grousing to drive the king toward Anne.[1] As the stalemate between Rome and England continued, Henry gradually began to show himself open to more radical ideas concerning his achievement of the divorce he wanted. Part of this willingness to look for new options came from the king himself and his own soul-searching. Henry believed that God would not give him any male children while he

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[1] Ives, *Anne Boleyn*, p. 154.

remained with Catherine, and cited as proof Leviticus 20:21, which stated that if a man married his brother's wife, he would remain childless. Henry took this verse to mean that only having female children was essentially remaining childless, as he felt a male was needed to secure the dynasty. He could not have a male child because he had married his brother Arthur's wife. If the pope would not or could not give him what he wanted, then he needed to look at other options. This concept of needing a new option developed slowly, however, over a period of several years. Henry in his arrogance did not want to concede that his pet verse in Leviticus could not convince the pope.

Anne and her supporters had defeated Wolsey, but now they needed a way to solve the divorce issue. Part of her faction's strength had been in its opposition to the high-handed Wolsey rather than in direct support for the divorce. Her core of devoted supporters was much smaller now that Wolsey was gone. The rise of Thomas Cranmer, however, aided their cause. In a dinner discussion in August 1529 with Stephen Gardiner and Edward Fox, the provost of King's College at Cambridge, Cranmer observed that the king's divorce problem was not primarily canonical, based on the body of church law created over centuries, but theological. Theologians should thus decide the case. Fox informed Henry of the conversation, and Henry became interested in Cranmer's ideas. He recruited Cranmer to write a thesis on the divorce issue, and Cranmer in effect joined the Boleyn clique.[2] Anne's faction now had an

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[2] Ibid., pp. 159-160.

articulated idea of its own, that the English king, not a church council under the pope's influence, could determine the validity of the divorce issue. The faction in effect played on the king's pride by promoting the king's sovereignty over the pope's.

Cranmer tried to enlist scholarly opinion on the king's side to persuade the pope. On March 30, 1531, Brian Tuke carried out Cranmer's proposal to read decisions of the twelve colleges at Oxford, as to whether the marriage of Catherine and Henry was valid. Cranmer had thought that the weight of scholarly opinion might be convincing to Rome. Predictably, these English colleges decided, after weighing their options carefully, that the marriage was never valid.[3] The pope was not impressed, however. The failure of this option provided the impetus for a stubborn king to seek yet another way.

Meanwhile, the relationship between Henry and Anne continued to develop. On one occasion in April 1531 that probably gave Anne's rivals ammunition, Henry complained to Norfolk about the arrogant way she had spoken to Henry during an argument over Princess Mary. Still, despite fallings-out such as this one and the continuing uncertainty of the divorce situation, the couple's love seemed even stronger than before.[4] On July 11, 1531, Henry made his final break with Catherine, by sneaking away from their lodging early that morning with his court and leaving her.[5] From this point on, Henry

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[3] Ellis, p. 775.
[4] Ives, *Anne Boleyn*, p. 178.
[5] Henry Ansgar Kelly, *The Matrimonial Trials of Henry VIII* (Stanford: Stanford U., 1976), p. 192.

banished Catherine to a place in the countryside and never saw her again. Pope Clement threatened Henry with excommunication on two occasions in 1532, the first time in January for cohabiting with Anne and showing her marital affection, and the second time in November for not leaving Anne and returning to Catherine. Fortunately for Anne and her faction, these two threats failed to change Henry's behavior.[6]

Henry wished to proceed with a divorce trial in England while ignoring the pope's jurisdiction, but he needed an archbishop who would be willing to deny papal authority and give him what he wanted. Attempts to persuade Warham, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Sir Thomas More, Henry's friend whom he appointed Chancellor, and Edward Lee (who later changed his mind after Henry had appointed him as Archbishop of York so he could approve the divorce), failed. Henry found another opportunity when Warham died in August 1532.[7] He appointed Cranmer to the vacant position in March 1533, a move that soon allowed the king to accomplish his immediate purposes and later the radicals' goals in the next decade. Great changes in the English system of religion and, arguably, in government were about to take place.

Where does the system of faction fit into this framework of events? Decisions made by Henry did not occur in a vacuum; he always had people around him to advocate courses of action. Although there were at least three

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[6] Ibid., p. 149.
[7] Ibid., pp. 194-195.

factions operating between 1531 and the marriage of Anne and Henry in 1533, the one Henry chose to take advice from the most often was the Boleyn faction. This is what made the Boleyn faction dominant. Titles and other grants, as given out in the form of letters patent, eventually began to reflect the favor in which the king held individuals such as Norris. Those who were getting the "stuff" from the king immediately became popular, both as wealthy individuals and as patrons to advocate others' causes. This in part explains why the Boleyn faction's numbers increased as it became clear that for the time being it would come out on top.

Three main factions were working against each other before Henry's final split with Rome in 1533: Anne's supporters which included radicals, supporters of Catherine of Aragon, and conservative nobility. The Boleyn faction was supported by radicals, who wished to correct abuses in the English church and government, hoped to gain a divorce by England's actions alone, thus bypassing the pope and in effect denying papal authority. By furthering Anne's cause they were also advancing their own reformist leanings. Catherine's supporters opposed the divorce and were likely to be conservative. The nobility did not have a precise policy of their own, but comprised a stubborn political force who hoped to maintain the status quo.[8]

Each faction had adherents both inside and outside court. Catherine of Aragon's "party" included a group of House of Commons members called the

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[8] Guy, p. 124.

Queen's Head, composed of conservatives. Her open supporters also included Thomas More, the Earl of Shrewsbury, Bishop John Fisher, William Peto (Franciscan head of Observants of Greenwich), Bishop Cuthbert Tunstall, the archdeacon of Oxford Nicolas Wilson, and three other bishops named West, Clerk, and Standish. These people learned of government reform proposals and countered them with public sermons and anti-radical propaganda.[9] Anne's supporters included, in addition to the number of faction members at court, Cranmer, Fox, Cromwell, and Thomas Audeley (Speaker of the House of Commons and later Chancellor). These people wished to solve the divorce crisis by promoting radical ideas[10] and were not afraid to strengthen royal power in both church and state at the clergy's expense.[11] The final group, conservative nobility, involved Norfolk, Suffolk and other hereditary nobles, as opposed to newly created nobility, who had no strong evangelical[12] religious motivations. Not all, as Gunn stated in Suffolk's case, would work consistently with others in a faction. Suffolk actively worked to undermine Anne's case as part of a personal vendetta, as his wife, Mary, who was Henry's sister, felt rejected slighted by the king upon Anne's rise to preeminence.[13] Some nobility directly advocated polities to the king, although this could be a risky business if the king rejected this advice. Most nobles disliked Anne Boleyn and other

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9 Ibid., pp. 124-125.
10 Ibid., p. 125.
11 Ibid., p. 126.
12 At this point, it would be imprecise to call a major faction in England Protestant. Some scholars prefer the term evangelical or radical, which denotes advocacy of change in the religious system.

individuals such as Cromwell, both for their unsettling religious ideas and for their middle-class or gentry standing, which made these people the nobles' social inferiors.[14]

A regulation published on April 10, 1532, detailed the schedule and status of those in the Privy Chamber attending on the king. The regulation was probably made to ensure compliance with the system, although its purpose to the historian is to reveal how this system was supposed to work. Two shifts of people, serving terms of six weeks each, were to wait on the king. The first included the Marquis of Dorset, Norris, Sir Nicholas Carew (Master of the Horse), Sir Anthony Brown, Sir Thomas Cheyney, Sir Richard Page, and Francis Weston. The other shift included Lord Rochford, Thomas Heneage (apparently he was the second gentleman, who controlled the Privy Chamber in the absence of Norris), Sir Francis Bryan, Russell (substituted with Sir Edward Neville's name on a second list), John Welsborne, and Henry Knevet. Apparently it was Heneage and his shift's turn, for that same day Dorset and Norris both left court. Several members of Anne's faction appear on the two lists of gentlemen: Norris, Cheyney, Page, Rochford, and Francis Bryan. According to this document, no one could have more than five rooms except for Dorset, Rochford, Norris, and Heneage, an allowance that declared the relatively high status of these four above the rest of the gentlemen. With a

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[13] Ives, *Anne Boleyn*, p. 171.
[14] Gunn, pp. 227-228.

reasonable excuse such as illness, a gentleman could find a substitute, so the king would always have a lord and six gentlemen to serve him.[15] Payment for this job, apart from all other grants, patronage power and other perks, was 8l. 6s. 8d. quarterly, or 33l. 6s. 8d. per year.[16] This payment was likely only a small portion of what Privy Chamber members would receive in grants, favors, et cetera, from the Crown, especially for Boleyn faction members.

Norris, as a result of being part of a successful faction, continued to gain important positions. These appointments and land grants showed that he was possibly more than ever in the king's preference. The most significant of these was his assignment in October 1531 as a Chamberlain of North Wales to work with Sir Gilbert Talbott, Sir Richard Pole, and Sir William Griffith. Although North Wales at this point was not easy to govern, it was still an important honor to be named to the position. The king approved this grant at the monastery of Waltham,[17] which was one of the king's stopping places. Waltham would later become the last monastery to surrender itself to the crown in what historians call the dissolution of the monasteries. In May 1531, Norris also received appointment as Justice of the Peace in the shire of Kent.[18] These positions, fifty-six in Kent that year, were typically renewed annually, preferably with a new oath, if the individual did a satisfactory job. The duties included finding law-breakers and delivering them to court or jail, as well as

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[15] LP, 5: 927.
[16] Byrne, vol. 1, p. 188.
[17] LP, 5: g. 506 (25).
[18] LP, 5: g. 278 (31).

arbitrating and settling disputes. Whether or not Norris was in Kent enough to do his duty, the Commissions of the Peace included him again in 1532.[19]

Norris enriched himself further through accepting additional grants, which had resulted from forfeiture of lands. He acquired the manor of Langham, Ruthford, which had belonged to the Duke of Buckingham and later to his wife Eleanor. Amazingly for our time but perhaps not so unusual then, this grant originally received the king's approval on January 25, 1530, but Norris did not actually obtain the letters patent (which would officially confer ownership or stewardship) until June 11, 1531.[20] Processing time was slightly better for the grants of the manor of Levinge, also called Perlaunte, in Buckshire, Perlaunte park in Langley, and an advowson of the Colbroke chantry in Colbroke, Bucks, with issues of that long-time vacant position since 1512. This endowment received the king's approval on June 27, 1531, at Hampton court, but was not made official until August 6 at Chelsea.[21] Usually processing royal grants only took a few days. Sometimes, however, a proposal could become buried under piles of other "stuff" that people were willing pay bribes to see through the system. Even more likely, the fallible transmission process from oral agreement to written document may have gotten the grants temporarily lost.[22]

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[19] LP, 5: 694 (ii).
[20] LP, 5: 318 (10).
[21] LP, 5: g. 392 (4).
[22] Throughout the story of Norris and court faction, there are holes in the narrative which secondary materials must fill. Over the expanse of more than 450 years, many of the

Norris' favor with the king as part of the Boleyn faction was reflected in the New Year's gifts of 1532. As part of the king's gifts that year, the gentlemen of the chamber received either a gilded bowl or a gilded cross, with the weights of gifts given out to the gentlemen varying from 7.25 to 86.87 (eighty-six and three and a half quarters) ounces.[23] Given that Norris is the first name on the list,[24] it is probable that he got one of if not the largest and most costly gifts. In recompense, Norris gave the king a gilded cup with a cover weighing 49.37 ounces.[25] If he could afford this present, the king had treated him well.

Two events in 1532 concerned Norris and the Great Seal. Norris had a personal interest in seeing the transfer of the Great Seal in May 1532, from Thomas More to Thomas Audeley at the king's manor (of which Norris was steward) of Pleasaunce.[26] Audeley was a supporter of Anne Boleyn; More at this point was an obstruction to Henry's divorce plans. The first item of business done by Audeley as keeper of the seal was to endorse letters patent for renewing Norris' stewardship of the manors of Lewesham and East Greenwich.[27] On September 6, 1532, Norris saw Henry order this seal destroyed, "because the letters were much worn away." Henry then gave Audeley a new one. This new seal had on one side the king on his throne

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documents have been lost. As the reign of Henry VIII continued, the *Letters and Papers* become a good deal more "complete" in the sense of leaving fewer lengthy gaps in Norris' career.

23 LP, 5: 686.

24 The order of names on lists sometimes had significance that might seem odd to modern-day readers. In the Tudor period, individuals' relative position on lists reflected status in governmental favor or trust, lineage, and title.

25 LP, 5: 686.

26 Also known as East Greenwich.

27 LP, 5: 1075.

(holding a scepter in one hand and a cross in the other) and on the reverse the king with a sword, seated on a horse with a hunting dog at his feet.[28] Norris, as engraver of dies at the Tower of London, may have ordered this new one made.

Norris apparently commanded enough respect for people to use him as a character witness. For example, in a matter brought before Thomas Cromwell in 1532, Dr. John London denied the rumor that he opposed the king's divorce at Oxford. According to Dr. London, he had supported the praemunire[29] movement against Wolsey from the beginning, thus supporting supremacy of the king over the pope. He also took care of a widow tenant at Oxford. Norris, "Mr. Long," and others testified to his proper actions. Who brought up this accusation? Dr. London suspected that it was Sir Jonys whom the university had recently removed for heretical reading of "books of unlawful study."[30] This episode shows that those who knew Norris believed they could rely on him to help deliver them from trouble.

The influence Norris held was evident through the fact that other people writing during this time asked for Norris to remember them when offices or grants became vacant. This dependence on Norris must have been a sore spot with Cromwell, if indeed he already desired to control government patronage. On October 13, 1532, Robert Norwich of the King's Bench mentioned to

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[28] LP, 5: 1295.
[29] There was a law in England which forbade valuing the pope's jurisdiction in law over the king's. This argument was used against Wolsey as a political weapon.
[30] LP, 5: 1366.

Cromwell that he had written Norris to put Cromwell in remembrance.[31] Thomas Alvard, in separate letters to Cromwell, asked Norris and others in the Privy Chamber to remember him, and made a point to say he was sorry Norris was sick.[32] Ingratiating oneself to powerful men like Norris was a time-honored way to get ahead.

Remaining in favor with the king, faction or no faction, required that Norris assist the king in whatever matter the king wished. One example of this principle is in an unfair land-grab in the town of Calais, which at this point was an English possession. Norris and others of the king's servants (William Poulet, Comptroller of the Household, Cromwell, Heneage, and Robert Fowler, Vice-Treasurer of Calais) went about acquiring property for Henry in late November and early December 1532. In a series of forced "grants," a number of Calais citizens sold their tenements to these servants of the king. These sales allowed the king to obtain for himself and likely for his court an area near or adjoining St. Nicholas Street in that town. Alice Lacy, widow of Henry Lacy, a late alderman of Calais, along with Richard Blount, who appears to be their heir, sold their "great tenement" to the king's servants in the parish of St. Nicolas.[33] The other tenements which the king's servants bought "for the king's use" all appear to be on the north side of St. Nicolas Street.[34] These

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[31] LP, 5: 1319.
[32] LP, 5: 1473, 1509.
[33] LP, 5: 1537, 1571.
[34] These tenements were: that of William Lord Sands, captain of the castle and town of Guisnes (LP, 5: 1580); a "grant" by Edward Jenkins, soldier of Calais and Joan his wife, for four tenements and a dwelling named Wolhouse (LP, 5: 1607); one belonging to John Hubbard,

transactions left a line of tenements in possession of the king, with a large tenement (the one formerly owned by Lacy and Blount) somewhere in the near vicinity.[35] As would be expected, nothing in the documents mentions that these people lost their homes to "the king's pleasure." Norris was a willing accomplice in this inequitable system.

Despite Cromwell's position as Master of the Jewels, Norris handled both a part of the king's jewels, which were personal *objets d'art* and other treasures of the monarch, and also other financial accounts during this time. For example, Norris had the authority to order Fowler, the Vice-Treasurer of Calais, to come to the king as soon as possible and bring with him the king's money in October 1531.[36] Norris in September 1532 sent, from Greenwich to Hampton Court, jewelry to the king that included seven crosses of gold garnished with diamonds, a dragon decorated with diamonds and a pearl, and a gold chain "Spanish fashion" painted with white, red, and black enamel.[37] The next month, Norris delivered to Cromwell rings containing thirty-eight diamonds,

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status unknown, which was by this time recently sold to the king (Ibid.); a "grant" by James Wading, brewer of Calais, and Sir Robert Whitehall, who seemed to hold some joint interest in a tenement (LP, 5: 1581, 1606); and a deed by Thomas Jackson, soldier of Calais, and Henry Montney along with his wife, who apparently jointly owned a tenement in "Sholane" (LP, 5: 1611, 1615).

[35] Actually the *Letters and Papers* detail that the "great tenement" is between Exchequer Street on the east and Cowlane Street on the West. However, it is still unclear where this is in relation to the other tenements, except that it was in the same parish of St. Nicolas.

[36] LP, 5: 487.

[37] LP, 5: 1335.

thirty-four rubies, two emeralds, and eight pearls.[38] Norris also received from the king a gold casket set with eight diamonds and six pearls.[39]

The many surviving financial transactions during these two years involved funding colleges with money taken from religious houses and from the forfeiture of Cardinal Wolsey's lands to the Crown. These transactions symbolize the complete victory of the Boleyn faction, with its reformist leanings, over the old system under Wolsey. The first massive endowment of money and properties was granted on September 23, 1532, to the deans and canons of "King Henry the Eighth's College" at Oxford. Several people assembled this grant: Norris, John Bishop of Lincoln, Thomas Audeley, William FitzWilliam, William Poulet, John FitzJames, Chief Justice of the King's Bench; Robert Norwich; Thomas Cromwell (at that time master of the jewels), Thomas Heneage, and John Russell (Sir Anthony Brown's name is originally on the list but replaced with Russell's). The list of manors, advowsons, and so forth given out by the king through these eleven men consume an entire page.[40] The same list of people gave grants to the board of St. George's Chapel in Windsor on September 27. This list of grants likewise occupies a full page.[41] Wolsey had controlled at one point an incredible amount of land. Wolsey posthumously

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[38] LP, 5: 1376.
[39] LP, 5: 1399.
[40] LP, 5: g. 1370 (23). This list of revenues and revenue sources included: forty-one manors, five priories, eleven annually paid rents, thirty-five advowsons, five tithes, sixty-nine messuages (dwelling houses belonging to religious establishments with outbuildings and land), a prebend, and a watermill.
[41] LP, 5: 1351. This inventory included: twenty-three manors, four annually paid rents, nineteen advowsons, thirty-four tithes, thirty-six messuages, three rectories, a prebend, an abbey, a marsh, and "land," and a watermill.

received what he had wished for in the permanent establishment of new colleges in England, but obviously not in the way he had imagined.

Some business involving Cromwell and Norris concerned religious matters. The reorganization of the Cardinal's College controlled by Wolsey to the "King's College" took some effort. Norris, Cromwell, and others had to combine proceeds of the college with fines of churchmen to finance this reorganization. On December 11, 1531, Sir John Daunce, John Hales, and Thomas Tamworth reported that Norris and Heneage, through the hands of Cromwell, gave them 1,000 marks from the defunct Cardinal's College and 400 marks from the fine of the Bishop of Bangor. Then these men delivered 600 marks of this sum to Robert Carter and Henry Williams, who were fellows and canons of the college in Oxford.[42] Cromwell reported payment on December 11, 1532, of 1,100 marks to Norris and 300 marks to Heneage, of which 1,000 marks was from the proceeds of the Cardinal's College and 400 marks from the Bishop of Bangor's fine.[43] On January 3, 1532, Cromwell paid Norris 533l. 6s. 8d., half of this money coming from payment of a fine by Charles Bishop of Hereford and the other half from revenues from the lands of the Cardinal's College, which were apparently being rented at that time. On February 10, 1532, Cromwell paid 500l. to Norris, 200l. of this sum coming from the last installment of the fine of the Bishop of Dublin for his pardon, 200l. from a

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[42] LP, 5: 577.
[43] LP, 5: 1285 (9, p. 557).

forced loan on Roger Peele, an abbot of Turnes, and 100l. as part of a 200l. debt payment to the king by William FitzWilliam.[44] Norris and Cromwell both handled these money amounts for the king's use; it seems from these documents that their jobs overlapped somewhat.

As illustrated in the last example and earlier in the case of the king's jewels, Cromwell began to make some inroads into positions of influence during this time, but the evidence is unclear as to whether he "opposed" Norris' and other Boleyn members' control over patronage at this point in his career. Only in hindsight is it possible to see ominous conflicts developing between Cromwell and Norris over their overlapping job descriptions. Some historians see Cromwell's goals as including from the beginning the elimination of all rivals in the king's favor. However, he made successful bids to gain cooperation and goodwill of individuals such as Norris, Lord Sandys, and Russell,[45] and at the end of 1532 Anne considered him her ally. In the cases of Norris and Russell, as members of the Privy Chamber, Cromwell knew that they, having unlimited access to the king, could and did influence him.[46] They and others like them were roadblocks to Cromwell's unlimited control of patronage power, assuming that Cromwell had this goal in mind from the beginning. More likely, Cromwell did not know that he would be able to acquire such power in the early stages of his service to the king. Cromwell took

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[44] LP, 5: p. 558.
[45] Byrne, vol. 2, p. 338.
[46] Ibid., p. 339; David M. Loades, *Power in Tudor England* (New York: St. Martin's, 1997), 41.

his gains within Henry's government one step at a time. It is much easier to see a Cromwellian master plan in hindsight (if indeed one existed at this point) than it was at the end of 1532.

Chapter 4: Norris as Patron and Faction Man, 1533-1534

Norris had attained many good things during his career to this point. He was Groom of the Stool, which meant he was head of the Privy Chamber. He was also a powerful patron and a member of a faction that seemed to be on the rise. He was also one of the king's good friends. His career as faction man, of course, devolved from the king's showing favor on the faction with which he aligned himself. As able theologians such as Thomas Cranmer struggled to find a way to secure Henry's divorce from Catherine and thereby secure a total victory for Anne and Henry, Norris collected grants and favors, such as being named Chamberlain of North Wales. These grants reflected the king's approval of both himself and his faction. In Tudor government, the king's approval was the key to one's fortunes as a courtier. By this measure, Norris was doing quite well for himself. Finally, as of the beginning of 1533, a serious rivalry with Anne's faction seemed an unlikely prospect in light of the king's deep affection for Anne. Any attempt to seize control of patronage would logically first involve splitting or weakening the group that already dominated.

In all likelihood, surviving documentation on Norris in 1533-34 reveals him as a major faction and patronage player. This material is to a large extent made up of official government documents. Unfortunately, a lack of thorough documentation makes it difficult to understand exactly what was going on. Even if historians can find them for this time period, official government

documents normally have to be interpreted. The best approach is to search out the available information and to make an educated guess about the remainder, this is what creates secondary material. By using this method, the key events of the life of Norris, one of the key men in Henry VIII's government, will come to light. This chapter will demonstrate ways in which Norris, as part of the Boleyn faction, sought to enrich himself while at the same time to preserve his faction's preeminence in English government.

One factor that makes it possible after 1533 to detail events of Norris' life more thoroughly is the appearance in the *Letters and Papers* of the Lisle Letters, a collection of correspondence between the Lisle family in Calais and friends and agents in England. Lord Lisle, an illegitimate son of Edward IV whose proper name was Arthur Plantagenet, came into conflict with Cromwell over patronage rights and was removed from Henry's court to Calais, where he was appointed as deputy. Because Cromwell had Lisle arrested for treason in 1540, his letters were preserved in official records, so this seizure basically preserved every piece of correspondence he wrote or others wrote to him. Norris was also arrested for treason, but his surviving family was restored under Elizabeth. In contrast to Lisle, any documents seized at the time of Norris' arrest thus went back to the family and later disappeared. There still remain sizable holes in a narrative of Norris' life, but with the Lisle Letters one can at least fill in those gaps that relate to this one particular family. The petty events revealed in this set of letters help reveal Norris' everyday life.

In 1533 and 1534 the political situation became more complicated. Norris and others such as Francis Bryan, another courtier and member of the Privy Chamber who was also part of the Boleyn faction, came into conflict with Cromwell over patronage rights. Meanwhile, Henry finally divorced Catherine and married Anne. This did not provide the degree of triumph that Anne had hoped for, but she had now realized her goal of some six years. Faction in government did not die down either. The conservatives were for the moment beaten, but not destroyed. A fuller explanation of the situation during these two years follows.

In early 1533, Henry forced his Great Matter of the divorce to a striking conclusion, significantly without papal approval. On January 25, 1533, Roland Lee, bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, married Anne and Henry in the West turret of York Palace. Cranmer could not perform the ceremony because he would be called on later that year to judge the validity of both of Henry's marriages. Norris, Thomas Heneage, and Anne Savage, future wife of Thomas Lord Berkeley, supposedly witnessed the wedding, although no one attested to this fact until later. Anne was a few weeks pregnant at this time; she would deliver a child in September, so the need to have her married so Henry's child could be proclaimed legitimate acquired sudden urgency. As he had not officially divorced Catherine, the service took place under such a strict cloak of secrecy that a rumor circulated around England that the marriage had taken

place instead at Blicking Hall, Norfolk, in November 1532.[1] Another rumor, promoted by Catherine's supporters, held that Henry tricked Lee into doing the ceremony by claiming to have papal approval when he really had nothing of the sort.[2]

Cromwell assisted Henry in securing the divorce. Cromwell proposed to Henry that the king could secure his divorce from Catherine by removing papal influence from England and asserting his own supremacy over the church. Cromwell also provided much-needed assistance in steering certain laws through Parliament that would aid in bringing about this state of affairs. In 1532, Cromwell forced a "surrender" of churchmen to the king's political authority by insisting that they recognize a statement to that effect known as the Submission of the Clergy. Another of Cromwell's pieces of legislation, the Statute of Appeals to Rome, approved by Parliament on April 7, 1533, both allowed the divorce issue's settlement in England and prevented Catherine from having the option to appeal to the pope to contest her case. This statute prevented appeals in matrimonial and civil law cases from the archbishops' courts to Rome. These two pieces of legislation helped clear the way for Cranmer to pronounce sentence on the validity of Henry's marriage, without giving Catherine a hope of legal recourse.[3]

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1 Warnicke, *Rise and Fall of Anne Boleyn*, p. 120.
2 Ives, *Anne Boleyn*, p. 210.
3 G. R. Elton, *England Under the Tudors*, (3rd ed., New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 133

Aided by Cromwell's efforts, Anne realized her goal of becoming queen in 1533. Cranmer, whom Henry had appointed as archbishop of Canterbury after William Warham's death vacated the position in August 1532, became the highest official after Henry[4] in the English church, did Henry's bidding by annulling the king's marriage to Catherine on May 23, 1533.[5] Cranmer stated that Henry's first marriage was invalid, and his second marriage was valid, based on the evidence he had before him. This annulment signified a fundamental shift away from the Roman Catholic church, because up to this time the pope was the only one who could annul royal marriages. Although Cranmer had declared the January marriage to be valid, Henry wished to go through a public ceremony to make certain there was no doubt that his second marriage was legal.[6] Henry desperately wanted to have Anne's child (which Henry firmly believed would be a male) recognized as legitimate. England at this time had no positive examples of succession for a female ruler, and Henry had no desire for his and Catherine's child Mary to become regent after his death. He feared the situation would degenerate into bloody civil war.

A four-day ceremony ended with Anne's coronation on June 1. One of the highlights of this multi-day event was Henry's creating some fifteen new knights of the Bath. This title conferred much-desired noble status on ambitious individuals. The Boleyn faction was well represented at the four day

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[4] The 1534 Act of Supremacy passed by Parliament would make Henry the official head of the English church.
[5] Kelly, p. 210.
[6] Ibid., p. 211.

ceremony by Cromwell, Norris, Brereton, and the Earl of Derby.[7] Most of the others were probably there although they were not mentioned specifically.

This seemingly idyllic picture of Anne's coronation contained some difficulties, however. Acting in the divorce and remarriage without the pope's approval made the Catholic church angry. The good attendance was not so remarkable since attendance for the court and other high officials was basically mandatory. Avoiding the occasion required the payment of a fine to the Crown.[8] Even so, Thomas More and the Earl of Shrewsbury, both conservative members of Catherine's faction, refused to come. Many others came to the ceremonies but muttered in corners about the queen's character and history.[9] This dissent shows that Anne did not, even at her moment of triumph, have unified support.

Disapproval of the royal marriage soon came from Rome. On July 11, 1533, Pope Clement condemned Henry's separation from Catherine and his (now public) marriage to Anne. He gave Henry until September of that year to take back his former wife or receive excommunication.[10] The pope was threatening to condemn Henry's soul to hell. Besides the spiritual question of whether the pope had authority from God to excommunicate, the pope underestimated both Henry's affection for Anne and Cromwell's resolve to reform the church. Even if Clement had recognized the danger of England's

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[7] Ives, *Anne Boleyn*, p. 219.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Guy, p. 134.
[10] Scarisbrick, pp. 317-318.

permanently leaving the Catholic church there was nothing he could do, as Charles V and the imperial army still controlled the Vatican. The harsh sentence against the ruler's soul stirred up a good deal of alarm, but Henry stood firm.[11] Clement died in September 1534, without having ever excommunicated Henry. By then it was clear England was not coming back into the fold.[12]

Anne was now queen, but Henry still did not have a legitimate male heir to the throne. Henry had only a bastard by Elizabeth Blount, one of Henry's mistresses. His name was Henry FitzRoy, duke of Richmond. Anne gave birth on September 7, 1533, at Greenwich[13] to a daughter, Elizabeth, not a son as the couple had hoped. Henry had a staff of physicians, astrologers, and sorcerers who had promised the king his child would be a boy.[14] This in part was why he believed so firmly that he would have a son; he had already decided to name the child either Edward or Henry. Chapuys took grim satisfaction in the fact that this girl's birth was a great reproach to those men who had predicted a boy.[15] Elizabeth's birth was one of Henry's biggest disappointments as king. J. J. Scarisbrick, a biographer of Henry VIII, refers to Elizabeth as the most unwelcome royal daughter in English history. Henry did

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[11] Ibid., p. 320.
[12] Ibid., p. 332.
[13] Guy, p. 134.
[14] Scarisbrick, p. 323.
[15] Kelly, p. 242.

not even attend her christening three days later, although he did name Cranmer as her godfather.[16]

An issue related to Elizabeth's birth was that her factional enemies were not destroyed. Although Henry humiliated the Marquis and Marchioness of Exeter and other of Anne's enemies by forcing them to participate in the ceremonies surrounding the birth, they would later be able to rebound.[17] Elizabeth's entering the world weakened Anne's position in England. Hopes had been extremely high throughout the country that she would give Henry a son in 1533. Her claim to the throne was still somewhat insecure, as she had not given Henry the boy that would have made her a permanent solution to the succession issue. Mary and Catherine would have faded into the background had Anne's child been male. Now factional instability from the conservative side was revived. The Boleyn faction had to attempt to stay on top, and base their long-term hopes for success on the presumption that Anne would have a male child.[18]

Anne's immediate problems included maintaining her base of support among the court members. Historians argue about whether Anne's becoming queen reduced her influence she had held as Henry's lover. Joseph Block stated that Anne's becoming queen removed her from an internal spot in the faction battle to an externally established place in the Tudor state. He

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[16] Scarisbrick, p. 323.
[17] Ives, *Anne Boleyn*, p. 231.
[18] Ibid., p. 232.

concluded that this is why Cromwell overshadowed her in 1536. She drifted toward more traditional activities, such as when she traveled to Greenwich in September 1533 to prepare to deliver her baby.[19] Nevertheless, it would make more sense, as Eric Ives stated, to contend that Anne was not isolated as queen; she still maintained the same supporters and gathered new ones after becoming queen.[20] Logic would seem to dictate that Anne as the king's wife would be more powerful than ever. After all, Henry had used and then cast away a number of mistresses by this time, including Mary Boleyn, Anne's sister. It thus would be better for Anne to seek to become a permanent fixture in government.

The latter part of 1533 and 1534 involved some problems with Anne and Henry's attempts to become an integrated royal couple. Anne became pregnant again in February 1534, and Henry's hopes for a boy again climbed. Unfortunately, she miscarried in July. This tragedy temporarily caused Henry to lose confidence in his own potency and ability to have healthy children.[21] This loss of confidence led to difficulty in getting Anne to conceive again. Catherine's daughter Mary was also a problem, and constantly Anne and Mary snipped at each other. Mary did not accept Anne, in spite of several admittedly half-hearted efforts by Anne at conciliation.[22] Mary soon became a figurehead

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[19] Block, p. 60.
[20] Ives, *Anne Boleyn*, p. 260.
[21] Ibid., p. 239.
[22] Ibid., pp. 245-247.

for the conservative faction at court, and her restoration to the succession became one of conservatives' favorite issues to press in the future.

Cromwell had two acts passed through Parliament in 1534 that illustrated the state of affairs in England during this time period. The first Act of Succession made it high treason to maliciously deny or attack Henry's second marriage to Anne either in writing or action. The act also made it an imprisonable offense to attack the marriage by word of mouth.[23] The need to pass this act, however, illustrates that there was a lack of legitimacy for Anne in England, if people were attacking her character in these ways. Secondly, the Act of Supremacy placed on the books the king's claim to sovereignty over the English church as Supreme Head. This act's significance lay in that it formally recognized the complete victory of the king over the independent authority of the church.[24] Henry had dropped any pretenses of submission to Catholic church authority.

In return for his help, however, Cromwell exacted a price. He did not seem content to stay in the background while Anne triumphed, although probably still would have been handsomely rewarded for his efforts. Instead, he worked to place himself in a position to control patronage in English government. This effort involved attempting to displace those who already had a share in the system, such as Anne's faction members. Norris, Bryan, Lisle,

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[23] Elton, *England Under the Tudors*, p. 135.
[24] Ibid., pp. 135-136.

and other members of court exercised independent influence with the king and needed to be brought under control. Cromwell, as his influence grew, began to insist that other courtiers keep him informed on their matters. Several correspondences in the Lisle Letters attest to this fact. Lisle himself was removed completely from court to Calais, where he was at Cromwell's and others' mercies as to whether he would have any influence whatsoever with the king.

An overview of Anne's faction at this time shows that it was far from monolithic. At this time her father was Lord Privy Seal, meaning that he had to stamp the king's correspondence to make it official, Thomas Cromwell, albeit more an ally than a true devotee, was Chancellor of the Exchequer and the king's secretary as of 1534, and Thomas Audeley was Chancellor and kept the Great Seal. Anne's faction, led by Norris and her brother Lord Rochford, had a good deal of influence in the Privy Chamber. As Ives would point out, Sir Thomas Wyatt, one of her associates at court, was reasonably close to Norris and Francis Bryan. However, Wyatt disliked Rochford, and had little or no connection with William Brereton, one of the grooms in the Privy Chamber.[25] Rochford was in conflict with Bryan as well. Thomas Cromwell in the early 1530's was on the Boleyn side, but as events would soon prove, he chose to go his own way.[26] William FitzWilliam, another important member of the Privy

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[25] Brereton is not at the same political level with Norris and other major court figures; he operated mainly in one region, North Wales and the border counties.
[26] Ives, *Faction in Tudor England*, p. 17.

Chamber, may have belonged at some point to this clique.[27] If so, FitzWilliam obviously had changed sides by 1536, as he helped Cromwell move against Anne, Norris, and the others.

Other factions were fighting for ways to challenge Anne's group. Some of the nobility who had helped bring Anne to the throne grew disenchanted with her, such as Norfolk; she was always to them merely a tool to help bring down rivals such as Wolsey. They probably supported her bid to become queen to please the king. An ally of Norfolk, Stephen Gardiner, was on her side, but it was transparent that he remained so only because of her favor with the king. Gardiner had distanced himself from the favored Wolsey when he got in trouble. Princess Mary's Catholic supporters, Nicolas Carew, Henry Neville, Anthony Browne, and the Marquess of Exeter, Henry Courtenay, obviously opposed Anne but also knew that the king's favor lay with her, so they bided their time.[28]

Norris' job as the king's Privy Purse Bearer during this period reflects how he maintained the king's trust during these two years. One grant addressed him as "the King's Purse Bearer, alias keeper of the king's usual monies and jewels."[29] This title leads to the question of whether there was any

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[27] Byrne, vol. 6, p. 52. Because of the nature of the *Lisle Letters*, which include both primary and secondary materials, I have adopted the following method for referencing them. The documents themselves, which are transcriptions of the London Public Records Office papers, are easiest referenced by number. The secondary material linking these documents is best referenced by pagination. With a reference to a primary document, a number alone is used. When the secondary material is used, the volume numbers and page numbers are used. I hope this method will make it clear when I am using secondary or primary material.

[28] Ives, *Anne Boleyn*, p. 260.

[29] LP, 6: 196 (9).

difference between usual jewels and the King's Jewels that Cromwell was keeping. Possibly the two came into conflict in this area. On February 6, 1533, Cromwell was to split 2,000l. between Norris for the king's use and Cranmer, at this time archbishop-elect, for an unspecified purpose.[30] During the first half of 1533, (the document does not specify an exact date) William Bady of the court delivered to Norris a sum of 300l. These amounts serve as a reminder that throughout his service as Groom of the Stool, Norris handled extremely large amounts of money. These two sums add up to about 2% of royal revenue during this time period. He had to be a privileged and trusted person for the king to entrust him with such large sums.[31] Norris came to court on the night of June 11, 1534, after a large amount of money (1,200l.) was stolen from him (that he was keeping for the king), "so that he [was] not pleasantly disposed to be spoken with."[32] Someone recovered the money later that week, and the man who took it, Blechinden, a servant of Sir Edward Neville, went to the Tower. There must have been extenuating circumstances, however, because the Crown pardoned Blechinden.[33] Finally, a mutilated memo from 1534 reveals the delivery of jewels to Norris, Rochford, and Russell.[34] Other trusted members of the Privy Chamber as well as Norris

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30 LP, 6: 131.
31 Byrne, vol. 2, p. 187.
32 LP, 7: 823.
33 LP, 7: 877.
34 LP, 7: 1672 (2).

shared jewel-keeping with Cromwell, a sharing of office Cromwell likely did not relish.

As revealed in mundane accounts in the *Letters and Papers,* Norris was involved somewhat in Henry's building contracts. These continued to mount in expense through the decade. Henry wanted to embark on a massive building program as well as renovate existing residences to enhance the monarchy's image and also to give him luxurious accommodations in multiple locations. This was necessary because the court and king could not stay at one place year-round due to sanitary limitations. Hector Hassheley, Master Surveyor of the King's Works, gave an account of all sums received from the king through the hands of Norris. This list also detailed expenditures on buildings from August 5, 1527, to February 28, 1534. Hassheley signed nineteen separate bills during this period for sums amounting to 2,900l.[35] At the Tower of London, an abstract of work completed reveals workers being paid for plastering four gable ends (the tops of the walls near the roof): one in Norris' chamber, one in the king's "frame" (suite?) and two in the new wardrobe, which was another part of the household separate from the chamber that produced clothing for the king and salaried servants.[36] It was ironic that in a little over two years, Norris would have lodging not as one of Henry's favorites but as a prisoner in the Tower.

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[35] LP, 7: 250.
[36] LP, 6: 5 (5).

Norris received few direct grants during this period, but gathered profits for preferring individuals to government posts. The king took away Lisle's disputed stewardship of the castle of Porchester and the forest of Bere, and gave them in turn to Norris, Norfolk, and Russell.[37] Another grant was the ever-present yearly renewal of Lewesham and East Greenwich.[38] Workings of the patronage system are in part revealed by the following example. Edward Lord Stourton wrote Cromwell about the position of prior of Taunton. As the current prior died the night before, now Stourton was recommending a canon from Bruton's house, Richard Hart, for the position. He offered Cromwell 200 marks or 20l. more than anyone else to secure Hart the place. If Cromwell could make Norris favorable to Hart's preferment, Stourton would give Norris 40l. As the letter concludes, "Much effort is being made for it, but my trust is in you."[39] Stourton in this case is both supplicant and lord; the patronage system could have many layers. Also this example illustrates that the system was in some respects ruthless. To get ahead, people had to apply for the positions even before the funeral of the one who held them. This system was not exactly respectful to the family of the recently deceased.

In a sense the grants during 1533-34 that include Norris' name reveal more about Norris' servants and kinsmen than about Norris himself. Cromwell granted Norris' servant, Thomas Lowley, the farm of Okinbold for forty years at

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37 LP, 7: 324.
38 LP, 6: 299; LP 7: 923 (5).
39 LP, 7: 834.

the rent Lowley's father paid.[40] In a letter from Dan S. Bristow to John Lyons, Bristow promised money to Norris' kinsman and Lyons for securing surety for a loan.[41] George Throckmorton wrote Cromwell hoping that Cromwell would take certain lands from Ashfield's wife (Ashfield was Norris' servant) that she currently held (originally of Throckmorton's estate), in return for some sort of office for Ashfield.[42]

The king's New Year's gifts again reveal both affinity between the king and Norris and the ability of Norris to get things done. In 1533, John Freman, a goldsmith, received payment for gilt cups, "etc." Given to Norris. Morgan Wolf delivered this gift package and other parcels to Norris, Sir Ken Wist, Rochford, and Lisle at the Jewel House where the king's treasures were kept.[43] In an incident almost two years later, in late December 1534, John Gough was unable due to illness to deliver Lisle's New Year's present, a cup with the letters H and A engraved on it, to the king. Lisle was by this time posted in Calais, so he obviously could not deliver it himself; he could not abandon his post and even if he could traveling conditions were poor. Lisle's agents believed Gough to have gallstones and strangury, which is a disease of the urinary organs. At any event, Gough gave the gift cup to John Hercules, a servant of Lisle's who happenned to be in England, who then was to give it to the king. A postscript to the letter adds that "Mr. Norris favoreth the man well" and to remember

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[40] LP, 7: 593.
[41] LP, 7: 792.
[42] LP, 7: 838.
[43] LP, 6: 32.

Hercules with a reward.[44] Gough delivered the gift to the king as planned on New Year's Day, in Norris' presence.

The aftermath of this simple act reveals more than just a need to procure someone to take a gift to the king, although this custom during the holidays in itself was important to maintaining the king's favor. As Burke's letter to Lisle the following day reveals, certain people had advised Hercules to make suit through Norris for 8d. of extraordinary expenses "that Mr. Highfeld hath" (this account probably defrayed travel costs). Norris told Burke that he already had written to Lisle two or three times in Gough's and Hercules' favor. Burke felt that it would not be good for him to move Norris for this sum of money as well, as Norris might feel that Lisle did not keep his promise. What promise was this? Likely it was to not bother Norris with suits for what Norris considered minute money amounts. Broke also thanked Lisle for a letter of recommendation to Norris on behalf of the Broke, although he did not use it at this time.[45] There was a hierarchy within the patronage system; Broke did not consider himself on a level to ask Norris directly for this small amount for himself. Norris was a man to approach when an individual wanted something important or profitable; a reimbursement of 8d. was too small a fish for him to fry.

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[44] LP, 7: 1581.
[45] LP, 7: 1587.

Norris continued to exercise patronage power throughout English territory. In one example, Richard Lond, a Spear of Calais (basically a privileged soldier) requested that Cromwell permit the king to sign his bill (of unknown nature) and pass it along to Norris, who presumably would see to this bill's implementation.[46] One of Norris' servants pushed for a warrant to aid three men who were bondsmen until the king had recently freed them.[47] Winter, a businessman, was trying to make sure his interests did not suffer while he was on the continent. Winter at this time, April 1533, was staying at Padua, Italy. He mentioned in a letter to Russell that he desired Russell to commend him to (in this order) Norris, Bryan, Anthony Browne, Edward Neville, Cheyney, Welsborne, Ratcliff, Page, Heneage, and others of the Privy Chamber.[48] Robert Reynold wrote Cromwell requesting to import 100 tons of Gascon wine, to furnish his room (at court?) and to do the king service. Reynold claims this was a reasonable proposition as he had recently lost 40l. of horseflesh, Reynold had demonstrated to Norris the last time he was in England.[49] Reynold was dropping Norris' name in the request to bolster his claim. Miles Willen, in a letter to Norris, wrote that he would like Cromwell to take a new look at his case, but apparently Norris the first time either did not act or failed to persuade Cromwell to review Willen's case. Willen wished to get

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46 LP, 6: 58.
47 LP, 6: 1177.
48 LP, 6: 315.
49 LP, 7: 830.

out of prison,[50] so he was repeatedly appealing to powerful individuals like Norris, to get the attention of other powerful men, like Cromwell.

A letter in which both writer's and addressee's names are no longer legible reveals an effort to employ Norris to mediate a dispute between two of the king's surveyors, individuals who examined lands to determine their worth. The writer had a problem with James Needham, who in his district was acting as paymaster and surveyor both. The writer accused Needham of extreme corruption and paying himself "double wages." Norris told the writer not to meddle with Needham, as Needham had so little of the king's money anyway. The writer's job, according to Norris, was to comptrol (regulate) other surveyors who have more money. Even the king told the writer it was necessary to have paymaster and surveyor together in one individual in some remote locations, but the man was still appealing to yet another individual, possibly Cromwell.[51] This incident reveals how corrupt in today's terms the governmental system was by nature. Norris, by telling the writer to mind his own business, obviously showed that he wished to leave this corrupt system alone.

Petty matters in Norris' life can reveal much about life in Tudor times. Norris asked Cromwell (for the king) to apparel all his minstrels in red chambray cloth, with H. and K. embroidered "after the old sort." He concluded the message "to my most assured good friend, Mr. Cromwell."[52] Despite

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50 LP, 7: 1663.
51 LP, 7: 1012. This letter has a tentative date of July 26 or 27, 1534.
52 LP, 6: 420.

Elton's assertion in the *Tudor Revolution in Government* that Cromwell created an essentially modern government during the 1530s, some affairs that went on between key ministers of the Crown were quite medieval in nature. This lends credence to the David Starkey thesis that the Privy Chamber was an old organization that Cromwell never fully succeeded in eliminating in his efforts to modernize the government. A different letter, from Sir Thomas Palmer to Lord Lisle, told that Norris had ridden to see Princess Mary, so that Palmer could not speak to Norris, presumably about one of Lisle's interests.[53] Lisle felt he had to constantly accost members of the court, asking for them to remember him before the king. Lisle likely feared that the king would forget him, as Lisle was stationed in a relatively remote corner of the kingdom.

Norris, like many other privileged people in that time period, loved animals, including birds. Bishop Roland Lee mentioned in a letter to Cromwell that he had a goshawk for Norris.[54] The king ordered three bird coops built at Norris' house in Greenwich town in 1534, for a peacock and a pelican brought to the king from Newfoundland. Anne, during one of the court's stays at Greenwich, complained to Henry that the birds needed removing from the garden. Anne could not sleep in the morning with the noisy birds' chatter. Norris must have moved the birds, since no other correspondence mentions anything further about the matter.[55]

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[53] LP, 7: 385
[54] LP, 7: 968.
[55] Ives, *Anne Boleyn*, p. 299.

Norris was fond of horses too, as is again revealed in the *Lisle Letters*. Correspondences in April, 1534, involve Norris moving the king for Lisle to get some kind of special harness from the king.[56] The king wished to choose the style himself[57] and insisted on seeing it before messengers sent it,[58] but beyond that the letters reveal nothing about the situation. As of May 5, 1534, a month and three days after a letter on April 2 first mentioned the matter, the king had still not sent the harness.[59] As a reward for Norris' various intercessory efforts on Lisle's behalf, Lisle gave Norris a horse from Flanders.[60] Norris thanked Lisle twice for the horse, the second time on May 1 while it was still in transit.[61] This must have been an excellent horse, since the king's Master of the Horse, Nicolas Carew, said of it he had never known such an animal to come out of Flanders.[62] Lisle apparently wished to reward Norris handsomely, knowing that Norris was key to Lisle's aggrandizing anything from the king's hand.

Norris' position as Chamberlain of North Wales required that he mediate in local disputes in this potentially disorderly area. As John Guy explained, the Crown's authority in border areas of Wales and Scotland, even under Cromwell, barely affected local affairs. He further asserted that the balance of

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56 LP, 7: 428, 522.
57 LP, 7: 502.
58 LP, 7: 614.
59 Ibid.
60 LP, 7: 461, 483.
61 LP, 7: 596.
62 LP, 7: 627.

power throughout England, until the 19th century, remained with landowners who served as sheriffs and justices of the peace.[63] Cromwell's "Revolution" in government changed nothing in terms of taking power from gentry and other local entities.[64]

John Salisbury's letter to Norris on June 12, 1533, provides insights into how the system in North Wales worked before the union with England in 1536. This letter told of a pending indictment against Robert ap Reese for praemunire, or encroachment of the Roman church's authority on royal authority, and extortion. Supposedly after the incarceration of Reese and certain others, the king's subjects of Denbigh (a city in North Wales, near Liverpool) would no longer oppose Anne's becoming queen as they had. Reese used the money he extorted to "procure friends and bear them out," at any rate according to Salisbury. He added that Norris should advise the king to see misrule punished, possibly referring to the disordered condition of that part of Britain. As Salisbury confiscated 5,000 to 6,000 marks from Reese at the time of his arrest, if the king did not want the money, Norris or any other member of the Privy Chamber could have it.[65] Apparently this sweetened the pot for Norris taking action; Norris would like money the king could have. The carrying out of his suggestion incidentally would likely add to Salisbury's power

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[63] Guy, p. 176.
[64] Ibid., p. 177.
[65] LP, 6: 630.

in that area, as he would have the implied backing of "authority." So Salisbury was not being altogether altruistic.

Sir Richard Bulkeley, another royal official in North Wales, wrote identical letters from Beaumaris to Henry VIII and Norris concerning a case of treason that fell in Norris' jurisdiction. On July 5, 1533, Edward ap Rhys came to Bulkeley accusing Sir William ap L'li, a chaplain, of outrageous words spoken against the king. Six of Bulkeley's servants apprehended him, and sent him to the king with the accuser. In a confession from the same source, William ap L'li stated in a group on July 4 that he would like to take the king to the top of a mountain called the Withway or Snowden Hill, and souse the king's ears "until he had his head soft enough." When ap Rhys told Sir William that he would tell Bulkeley, Sir William attacked him, while saying that he would "make him sure enough for telling any tales."[66] This commentary, if proven authentic, would likely have resulted in a bad end for the slanderer.

Bulkeley wrote Norris again on June 26, 1534, a letter that reveals how difficult it often was to carry out the king's orders in Wales. Edward Griffith and Dr. Glyn, two local men, had tried to put Cromwell in displeasure with Bulkeley, although the document does not mention the pretext for this malice. Bulkeley received Norris' letters commanding him to take charge of the Beaumaris castle,[67] view its artillery, and have prisoners safely kept there.

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66 LP, 6: 790.

67 Bulkeley's letter lists Norris as constable of the king's castle of Beaumaris.

However the keepers of the castle, Lady Agnes Velavill and her son-in-law William ap Robert, refused to deliver the castle to Bulkeley's hands until he had obtained a subpoena. Velavill then laid claim to the castle's artillery, which was a bogus claim although the castle was at one time her family's. Her husband, Sir Roland, had murdered a man during Wolsey's time as minister, and so Roland had forfeited his goods to the king in writing, including the artillery.[68]

Lord Lisle's situation, which forms a backdrop to many of the documents involving Norris, deserves explanation in more depth. His relations included the Poles and Courtenays, who were supporters of Catherine of Aragon. Henry Courtenay, Marquess of Exeter, was his nephew.[69] Lisle himself, despite this family relation, stayed out of the Catherine versus Anne factional rift in which his relatives became involved.[70] Lisle was at court until, probably due to Cromwell's influence,[71] he was transferred to Calais as its deputy. The position in Calais involved appointing men to the king's retinue at Calais, and was a significant reward in the fifteenth century. By this time, however, the position was mainly trouble and expense for the one who held it. However,

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[68] LP, 7: 889.
[69] Byrne, vol. 1, p. 4.
[70] Ibid., vol. 2, p. 337.
[71] Ibid. Lisle at one time was an important figure at court. Cromwell, as part of his efforts to remove potential rivals to himself, had Lisle appointed to this post in Calais to reduce his influence in England. Cromwell attacked Lisle's relatives, the Poles and the Courtenays, in 1538 for possibly similar reasons. Lisle's relatives had a distant claim on the throne (although Lisle himself had a rather weak one, being illegitimate). This may have been another reason for Cromwell to see them as a potential threat to the king (who never had more than one legitimate son) and himself.

Lisle was still a patron, and received requests for soldiers' places, for men advocated by Henry Courtenay, Henry Parker, Lord Morley, and the duchess of Suffolk, among others.[72] He also was able to receive the admiral of France in a diplomatic effort in October 1534; Norris obtained the letter from the king to this effect.[73] Lisle's correspondents kept him posted on court matters and also tried to keep Lisle's hand in the grant process. The individuals who worked for Lisle included John Husee. Husee depended a great deal on personal intervention by Norris and Sir Francis Bryan to obtain what he wanted.[74]

A letter written to Lisle by Norris on October 26, 1533, reveals both a squabble between Lisle and a subordinate and the king's request for Lisle's dog. Norris stated that Lisle could calm the matter himself by being a good lord to Mr. Garneys (the document gives no more information about Garneys). Norris does not think that it is a matter that should go before the king.[75] He concluded this part of the note with an assurance, "and if there come any here to sue to the king I shall do well enough."[76] Norris asked on the king's behalf for Lisle's spaniel, which Robert ap Renaltes had. The king had already taken the dog,[77] and Lisle certainly was going to refrain from telling the king he could not keep it.

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72 Helen Miller, *Henry VIII and the English Nobility* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), p. 181.
73 LP, 7: 1224.
74 Byrne, vol. 1, p. 661.
75 LP, 6: 1352.
76 Byrne, 67.
77 LP, 6: 1352.

The status of who would keep the castle of Porchester was another matter that occupied Norris' time during the late part of 1533 and early 1534. Leonard Smith told Lisle on November 22, 1533 that he has spoken with Norris and Bryan as to the status of this office.[78] In a letter written April 1, 1534, Husee told Lisle that if Lisle had a patent or bill signed for the position then he must produce it. Rockwood had told him that the king would take away nothing that he had given by patent or bill, but otherwise was going to take the position away from Lisle.[79] Lisle never produced the patent, for the keepership of the castle was granted to Norris, Norfolk, and Russell.[80] Norris here enriched himself at Lisle's expense, although it is probable that Norris only requested a share of the office after it became clear Lisle would not maintain it.

The acquisition of a deceased man's plate was one issue that occupied Lisle's agents in early 1534. John Worth, one of Lisle's agents, spoke with an official named Hastings as to whether the king held Lord Berner's plate or whether the goods were still in Hastings' hands.[81] Husee wrote a letter around April 1,[82] revealing that Norris had given Smith letters to Lisle concerning the king's pleasure, that Lisle must pay 100l. to obtain the plate and other goods, as they now belonged to the Crown. However, a different agent, Rockwood, hoped to find another solution after Cromwell returned from his mother's

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78 LP, 7: 1461.
79 LP, 7: 386.
80 LP, 7: 324.
81 LP, 7: 350; Byrne, vol. 3, p. 81.
82 Ibid., vol. 2, p. 152.

funeral.[83] Rockwood was unable to do anything more, however, as he became extremely ill.[84] In a letter from April 11, Husee revealed that Norris was doing what he could about obtaining the plate. Husee made clear that if Lisle did not write Cromwell requesting his Cromwell's favor in the matter then Cromwell would put a stop to the transaction.[85] This last comment shows that Cromwell had achieved a good deal of authority by this point, if he could single-handedly put a stop to this matter. On April 17, Husee wrote that he expected Lisle to send a letter to Cromwell, stating what he wished to do about Lord Barnes' plate.[86] A letter on May 5 confirmed that the king was in favor of Lisle having the plate. Husee surmised that Cromwell would thus condescend to it and tell Norris, who would then relay the message to Husee or another of Lisle's agents.[87] After all this entreaty, as of May 8, Husee reported that he could not get Cromwell's answer about the plate. Norris told Husee that the next time Cromwell came to court he would try to get an answer for Husee to dispatch to Lisle.[88] Cromwell had encroached somewhat on Norris' patronage ability if he had to have the deciding say in this matter.

Every man asked for something, and the king was not content for so many men to be at court.[89] This was how Husee summed up what court was

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83 LP, 7: 386.
84 LP, 7: 428.
85 LP, 7: 461.
86 LP, 7: 503.
87 LP, 7: 614.
88 LP, 7: 627.
89 LP, 7: 614.

like; to the effect that the suits of the court seemed to multiply daily. The king's weariness with suits is demonstrated in that when Sir Thomas Palmer asked for a license so Robert Ray could remove two hundred quarters of wheat from the Calais area, the king sent word by Norris that it would not work.[90] One mistake due perhaps to the massive number of people applying for relatively few government jobs was that the king mistakenly gave John Cleget a cavalryman's position in Calais. There was no such position vacant, so Norris had to write Lisle to tell him that Cleget should get a scout's room immediately, and a cavalryman's room when one fell vacant.[91] This last affair shows how there was a rigid procedural system even in an out-of-the-way place such as Calais; even the king would not violate this protocol.

In May and June 1534, Elizabeth Staynings, niece of Lady Lisle, mounted a campaign to get her husband Walter out of prison. She attempted to secure Anne's help through Norris and other men of standing. When she had asked Cromwell, he had always avoided the issue by saying he was too busy.[92] Elizabeth later asked Lady Lisle to thank Norris for asking Cromwell for money to secure Walter's release.[93] On June 15, Smith observed that Norris marveled greatly about Cromwell's not allowing Staynings' delivery from jail, even after the king told him twice to supply the money for the job. As it had been some time since Norris had spoken to Cromwell, Staynings wished

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[90] LP, 7: 510.
[91] LP, 7: 596.
[92] Ives, *Anne Boleyn*, p. 262.
[93] LP, 7: 734.

one of the Lisles to write Cromwell, Norris, or some other great man to speak to Cromwell for them.[94]

The Staynings situation reveals a good bit about factional politics at this time. On one side, Cromwell was employing delaying tactics to make everyone realize that the situation's resolution depended on his person. He also possibly wanted a bribe as incentive to act.[95] On the other side, Norris was trying to get Cromwell to conclude the affair. Staynings was caught in the middle, languishing in an unpleasant prison and spending more than 100l. in rewards to intercessors for trying to secure his own release.[96] The goal of this inclusion is not to attempt to read Cromwell's mind, as others have already done.[97] Rather it is to demonstrate how politics worked during this time.

John Fisher, a priest and the Lisles' chaplain, wrote to Lady Lisle concerning the positions of Bishop of Hanton and the vicarage of Blockley. Fisher pointed out that these offices had historically gone to one individual. He wished to get a letter of recommendation from the Bishop of Winchester and get this correspondence sped to the king by Norris or another member of the Privy Chamber. This way Norris or whoever else could also put in a good word for Fisher. He offered the one who made the effort a garment of satin, since Fisher felt he could not obtain the grant simply through Winchester's support.[98] The

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94 LP, 7: 844.
95 Ives, *Anne Boleyn*, p. 262; Byrne, vol. 2, p. 338.
96 LP, 7: 844.
97 Ives, *Anne Boleyn*, passim.; Warnicke, *Rise and Fall of Anne Boleyn*, passim.
98 LP, 7: 986.

leaders of the Privy Chamber (including Norris) could be the deciding factor in a competitive case.

Two events in September 1534 involved Lisle in personal struggles. First, Lisle got in trouble with the Lord Chamberlain, Thomas Audeley, that required the king's mediation.[99] Perhaps Lisle took Husee's earlier suggestion to make suit for Guisnes, a well-paying sinecure that would be a better job than Calais, "if the Lord Chamberlain die."[100] The word of Lisle's suit may have gotten back to Audeley, who was alive and apparently well. After Norris mentioned that he would speak to the king for Lisle, Cromwell promised Norris to debate the truth of the accusation against Lisle.[101] In another controversy, Lisle threatened to give up his patent and return to England.[102] Lisle had written a letter to this effect to Norris;[103] Norris showed in turn showed the letter to Cromwell. As it turned out, Robert Whethill, whom the king appointed to a position in Calais, had treated Lisle extremely rudely in an encounter in Lisle's garden. After this confrontation, Lisle tried to block the implementation of this appointment by giving the vacant room instead to Richard Windebank.[104] In a letter penned on September 23, Cromwell told Husee that if he had seen the letter sooner he would have taken Lisle at his word and revoked his patent. Lisle should, in

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99 LP, 7: 1165. Information as to what the source of friction was can only be speculation, except that in LP, 7: 1182, Husee reveals that the Chamberlain had used harsh words of Lisle.
100 Ibid.; Byrne, vol. 2, p. 93.
101 Byrne, p. 259; LP, 7: 1165.
102 Miller, p. 181.
103 This letter has not survived.
104 LP, 7: 1167.

Cromwell's eyes, have shown himself a king's deputy by locking both the younger and elder Whethill in jail.[105] This controversy lasted until at least late December, when a letter from Husee to Lisle stated that Cromwell would write to Lisle about Windebank and Whethill. Husee also reveals that Norris "will do what he can;" as it turned out Norris was the court figure who most backed Lisle's interests. Many others such as Bryan would have nothing to do with the dispute.[106] Windebank's keeping the position was a foregone conclusion however, because Cromwell in the end sided with Lisle and the king never found out about the matter.[107] This letter shows perhaps Cromwell's increasing influence since Norris showed him the letter.[108] From another viewpoint, the strong language Lisle used may have surprised Norris. If so, he showed the letter to Cromwell because he did not know quite what to make of it.

Events that seem sinister in hindsight may have signaled what was to come for Anne and her faction. Several years before, in 1527, a woman named Elizabeth Barton claimed to be having strange dreams and visions. She vigorously spoke out against the movement in favor of the king's divorce with Catherine of Aragon, and she threatened the pope with God's curse if he allowed Henry to follow through with it. She also prophesied that the king would cease to be king one month after he married Anne, and that he would

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105 LP, 7: 1182.
106 LP, 7: 1581.
107 Ibid.; LP, 7: 1224.
108 Byrne, vol. 2, p. 257.

die a villein's (ignoble) death. Cromwell and Cranmer had her arrested and kept in the Tower of London. She was hanged with five others on November 23, 1534.[109]

In July 1533, the courts presented accusations against Mrs. Amadas for witchcraft and false prophecy. In one of these prophecies, she predicted that Anne would be burned as a harlot. She also stated that Norris was bawd between the king and her. She furthermore claimed that the king had slept with Thomas Boleyn's wife, and that Thomas Boleyn was bawd to both his daughters Anne and Mary.[110] Later during Anne's arrest, trial, and execution, a rumor surfaced that Norris, not the king, was Elizabeth's father.[111] The Amadas affair may have fueled this later rumor. When a tribunal accused Norris in 1536 of repeated acts of adultery with Anne, the first occasion given for this illicit act was November 1533, shortly after Elizabeth's birth. This in turn led some to suspect the intimacy to have begun earlier, and so the rumor gathered strength.[112]

The factional war was going to become a battle royal in May 1536, but by the end of 1534 seemed to have found a stable holding pattern. Norris and others in the Privy Chamber still exercised influence over the king and over candidates for government jobs. Cromwell was seeking to be preeminent in

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109 Scarisbrick, p. 321.
110 LP, 6: 923.
111 J. A. Froude, *The Divorce of Catherine of Aragon: The Story as Told by the Imperial Ambassadors Resident at the Court of Henry VIII* (2nd ed., New York: AMS, 1970), p. 434.
112 Warnicke, *Rise and Fall of Anne Boleyn*, p. 203; Froude, p. 434.

patronage, but as of this point had only partially achieved it. Some grants now passed through Cromwell's hands instead of the king's; for these Cromwell merely obtained the royal signature at the end of the process. Many in the court, however, probably doubted Cromwell's ability to be the strong minister Wolsey had been several years before. Norris continued to be one of the great men in court, that had to be reckoned with by Cromwell or anyone else seeking to gain influence with the king. The way Cromwell would accomplish moving Norris out of his way, along with other select individuals of Anne's faction, would surprise the nation and turn factional politics on its head.

Chapter 5: The End of the Boleyn Faction

Despite the acceleration of conflict between Cromwell and Anne's supporters in 1533-34, the future did not look that bleak. Norris, although he had conceded to Cromwell some of his independent patronage power, was still a powerful entity who could do things on his own. Furthermore, Cromwell's assistance on the divorce and in bringing about Anne's coronation had proven Cromwell's interests to be in some ways incompatible with those of Norris and other Boleyn faction members. Norris' career had been made from his ability to ride out difficulties in his faction such as Elizabeth's (and not a boy's) birth in September 1533, or the pesky presence of Katherine's daughter Mary and her faction. He, like others in the Boleyn faction, probably assumed that it would only be a matter of time until Anne would give birth to a son, securing the Tudor dynasty and making his faction's hold on English politics all but unassailable.

The last year and a half of Norris' life would involve a coup in April and May 1536, which ended his life and destroyed the Boleyn faction. Even so, up until April, Norris would have had no clear indication that something was wrong. He remained in the king's favor seemingly until almost the very end. During the time of his arrest, trial, and execution, Norris had a few days in the Tower to contemplate his life. What matters he mused over will probably never be known for certain. It is likely he reflected, among other affairs, on the good

times he had as a member of the court and as Henry's good friend, and also the inherent dangers of being involved in a court faction. He was trapped on the wrong side of the faction war, and brought the king's wrath down upon him in May 1536. This chapter will do its best to demonstrate that Norris was an innocent victim of Cromwell's and conservatives' plot against the Boleyn faction.

Key political events of 1535 included the martyrdoms of More, Fisher, and the Carthusian monks. At the end of April, five charterhouse monks were tried and condemned by the new Act of Supremacy. This act made it treason to deny Henry as the head of the English church. These monks had gone to Cromwell and recanted the oath they had sworn to obey the Act of Supremacy.[1] On May 4, they were hanged, drawn, and quartered after being dragged through the streets. One new aspect of these executions was that members of the nobility and court attended the occasion.[2] Norris attended and brought with him forty of the Royal Guard, probably some of the same ones who would be present at Norris' trial a year later. Norris and four others were in costume with coverings over their faces. The mask covering Norfolk's face fell off; this caused much discussion. Normally aristocracy would not attend such events.[3]

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1 Froude, p. 327.
2 Byrne, vol. 3, p. 91.
3 LP, 8: 666 (p. 251); Froude, p. 328.

More's and Fisher's cases were more complex than were those of the monks. They were charged with treason for violating the Act of Supremacy that acknowledged Henry as head of the English church. Many, however, suspected that these two were really on trial for opposing Henry's divorce to Catherine of Aragon. More defended himself extraordinarily well, citing that the Act of Supremacy did not specifically state that any speaking against the king's supremacy in the church was treason, but only malicious opposition to the king's supremacy. More at this trial neither recognized neither the pope nor Henry's jurisdiction. In the end, More was convicted on the testimony of a single untruthful witness, and executed along with Fisher. The trials were really foregone conclusions, as Henry had turned against both of them when they opposed his first divorce and rigged the juries to ensure convictions. The executions of the Carthusians, along with those of Fisher and More, shocked the outside world and damaged Henry's reputation in Europe.[4]

One issue that formed a backdrop to politics and made it easier for Cromwell to turn against Anne was foreign policy. Anne, at least until 1535, was passionately pro-French, while Cromwell favored the Holy Roman Empire.[5] This difference is important because the two main continental European powers were France and the Austrian and Spanish Holy Roman Empire. It was difficult for England to stay completely out of this rivalry if it wished to have

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4 Scarisbrick, p. 332.
5 Starkey, *Reign of Henry* VIII, p. 111.

significant continental influence. Cromwell felt that an alliance with the French would not be as beneficial as one with the emperor Charles V, whom he saw as wielding the greater power. Anne's relations with France soured in 1535. She was shocked when the French ambassador in February 1535 suggested a marriage alliance between the two countries involving Catherine's daughter Mary and the French dauphin. This proposal, seemingly calculated to upset both Anne and Henry, and later deliberate slights of the French ambassador by Anne, cooled Anglo-French relations considerably.[6] These foreign relations problems cannot have helped Anne's cause, as now she had no foreign power that was willing to support her against any rivals in England. Foreign policy disagreements furthermore may have helped Cromwell decide that Anne and her family perhaps were not useful after all to assuage the French while he sought the emperor's favor.

The dissolution of the English monasteries, which was one effect of the break of Henry and England from the Catholic church, began in 1536 with the dissolution of the smaller monasteries. In 1535, Cromwell began making active preparation for the dissolution by sending out surveyors in a program called the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* to estimate the wealth of the English church. Chapuys had reported rumors of this undertaking as early as 1533. Enthusiasm for the Henrican Reformation had not exactly reached a fever pitch, however. This

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6 Ives, *Anne Boleyn*, pp. 254-255

first dissolution and rumors that accompanied it in turn probably contributed to the Pilgrimage of Grace rising in the North in late 1536.[7]

Anne and Cromwell were not opposed to each other in matters of religion, but belonged to the now officially-sanctioned loose group that wanted to reform the church. Anne opposed Cromwell's effort to confiscate and secularize monastic property, however. This resistance to his policy no doubt irritated Cromwell. Furthermore, Cromwell could likely envision Anne's convincing the king of the rightness of her ideas. Once an idea became the king's it would have to be transferred into active policy. This obstacle, as much as the foreign policy disagreement, may have led him to contemplate ways to be rid of her.[8]

It was by no means apparent that by the end of 1535 the king had begun to grow tired of Anne, as some have suggested. Frustrated might be a better word to describe the royal couple's relationship. The pair had argued off and on, but their troubles had up to this point centered on the inability to produce a boy for Henry and for the dynasty. The king continued to show affection for her, and she still had a good deal of influence in advocating government policy and patronage.[9]

At times, it must have appeared to Cromwell as though he would never gain the upper hand over members of the Boleyn faction who became his court rivals. Chapuys told the emperor's advisor Granville in November 1535 that

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[7] Scarisbrick, p. 337.
[8] Eric William Ives, "Anne Boleyn and the Early Reformation in England: The Contemporary Evidence," *Historical Journal* 37 (June 1994), p. 400.
[9] Warnicke, *Rise and Fall of Anne* Boleyn, pp. 186-187.

Secretary Cromwell stood above everybody except Anne.[10] As of early 1536, the Privy Chamber, and in particular Norris, continued to perform an independent role in the exercise of government. Many "experts" in and about court estimated that Henry Norris was still the one to go to. Norris continued throughout this period to put forward bills to obtain the king's signature.[11]

The Privy Chamber seemingly could provide effective resistance to a minister like Cromwell. It was the most politically significant part of the king's court. In theory, the Chamber was organized under the Chamberlain, but it actually enjoyed virtual autonomy under the chief gentleman (Norris).[12] King Henry used his gentlemen to deliver important messages and be envoys both in England and abroad (Lord Rochford of the Privy Chamber served in many different diplomatic capacities in France). The Privy Purse, held by Norris, had expanded from a small account for the king's ready cash into a significant fiscal department, spending tens of thousands of pounds yearly.[13] The Privy Chamber was a tough nut to crack for the power-hungry minister which Cromwell was reputed to be. Not only would the Privy Chamber rival Cromwell in the 1530s, but it would in the future rival the Privy Council set up by Cromwell. The Privy Chamber would regain authority in spite of the heavy hit it took in 1536 with the arrest and execution of several of its members.

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[10] Ives, *Anne Boleyn*, p. 260.
[11] Ibid., p. 355.
[12] Loades, *Power in Tudor England*, p. 40.
[13] Ibid., p. 41.

Documentation from 1535 until the time of Norris' death in May 1536 reveals how dangerous it was to be trapped on the wrong side in one of these factional conflicts. Cromwell managed to pull off an amazing turnaround, when he first erased members of the Boleyn faction, then members of the conservative Aragonese faction (named so after Catherine of Aragon, the original head of the group), many of which had assisted him in bringing about the ruin of the Boleyn faction. The time period near May 1536 illustrates how ruthless and self-damaging court life could be, especially in relation to royal favor.

What exactly happened in April-May 1536, and what was the significance of these events? This issue will receive discussion later in this chapter. A multitude of interpretations exists as to why Cromwell (or Henry) decided to do away with Norris and other longtime servants under charges of treason and adultery that at best seem tenuous. These interpretations reflect the different viewpoints on Tudor government, and show that the events of late April-May 1536 were a microcosm of the greater factional battle. These different viewpoints will receive exposition and explanation at the end of this chapter.

Cromwell's effort, as Vice-Gerent of Spirituals,[14] to control the church, did not have universal success. One example involved securing an episcopal office for Christopher Draper, a servant of Norris, who seemingly wished to

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[14] Henry gave Cromwell this position in 1534, which made him Henry's deputy in matters concerning the church. In effect Cromwell used this position to launch a propaganda campaign against the papacy and to dissolve the monasteries, with Henry's consent.

become a clerk in the church. A letter from Bishop Lee to Cromwell revealed that this request had been fulfilled. However, Draper needed to take orders (have the church ordain him in an official ceremony) as soon as possible.[15] The archbishop of York encouraged Draper to feel greatly indebted to Norris and himself for arranging this office, with its career and profit opportunities. The king, however, delayed the church Convocation gathering where this ordination would have taken place.[16] The end result of this delay was that Peter Vannes took a prebend (conferrence of office, along with fees of the office since it had fallen vacant) from Draper. The archbishop of York originally intended the prebend for Draper, but he could not receive ordination in time to execute it, so Vannes received the privilege instead.[17] It is quite likely that Draper cursed the system's inefficiency while the profit was snatched from his hands. Meanwhile, Cromwell had little to do with the affair, except to be informed of its occurrence.

Other affairs involving the already-described church reform were brought to Norris' attention. For example, Thomas Prior of Michelham appealed to Norris to save the lands of Begham Abbey, that had been under the management of Lord Rochford. The Abbey seems to have been forfeited into Rochford's hands in his capacity of Lord Warden (a supervisory position involving enforcement of royal regulations). Rochford decided to sell the land to

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[15] LP, 8: 2.
[16] LP, 8: 32.
[17] LP, 8: 128.

William Kensley to make a short-term profit. This deal illustrates the corruption prevalent in the government system, in which a person could personally take a religious house for the Crown and sell it for his own profit. The only hope for the Abbey, according to Thomas, was successful litigation, which Thomas asked Norris to push forward.[18]

In 1535, Cromwell wished to examine an unspecified matter between Thomas, abbot of Abingdon, and Audelet. Cromwell stated that he would have the case ready to go to trial by Easter. Norfolk and Norris asked Thomas to give an account to the king of his readiness in the matter. Thomas wished to postpone the matter until after Easter.[19] He obviously got the delay, because in August he wrote another letter to Cromwell, revealing that he hoped Norris would favor his point of view. He had refused to take an oath of cooperation because he wanted to delay the matter until the commission appointed by Cromwell had carefully examined the accounts.[20] John Smyth wrote Cromwell a few days later about difficulty in getting the abbot to swear the oath. Many of the abbot's friends supported the delay including Welborne of the court and Ashfield, Norris' servant.[21] However the situation resolved, this example shows inherent difficulties in the legal system.

Norris and religious orders appear other times in *Letters and Papers* of this period. Cromwell wrote a letter to the Prior of Montagu concerning a land

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[18] LP, 8: 662.
[19] LP, 8: 401.
[20] LP, 9: 111.
[21] LP, 9: 156.

lease. One document reveals individuals petitioning Norris and others for a lease of monastic land.[22] A visitation of the monasteries under Cromwell's direction revealed supposed offenses against God and man committed by the monks. An examination by Cromwell's commissioners revealed cases in many sites of sodomy and incontinence, and many monks requesting release from their vows.[23] Two of these monasteries, Shelford and Rufford, were both founded by Norris. While this list likely reveals little more than fabricated charges, it does reveal some of the pretexts used to bring down the monasteries. Finally, Marmaduke Bradley, Abbot of Fountains, wrote Cromwell asking that a fellow abbot not receive any pension until he makes good his debt accounts. Bradley begged Cromwell to interfere in this situation. Norris' role was to pen the letter confirming the dissolution of their house.[24]

As mentioned before, lands and other grants received reflected royal favor, as those liked by the king were more likely to get substantial gifts. Over his career as court figure Norris accumulated an astonishing amount of offices, annuities, and lands. An account taken after his death by Edmund Ashfield, receiver, for a year's time preceding September 1535, was the last full analysis of Norris' holdings mentioned in the documents. Norris' farms were worth 370l. 10s. each year. His offices netted 395l. 5s. 6d. per year. His annuities totaled 562l. These accounts totaled 1,327l. 15s. 7d.[25] This was a huge amount of

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22 LP, 9: 1127.
23 LP, 10: 364 (p. 364).
24 LP, 10: 424.
25 LP, 11: 878.

money for the early sixteenth century, before England felt the full effects of the price revolution of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The grants given to Norris in the last year and a half of his life reflect no absence of royal favor or other trouble with the king. In January 1535, Norris received a good portion of the land seized from Thomas More after his arrest.[26] In June, Henry through Cromwell's hands made Norris keeper of Beaumaris Castle in North Wales.[27] A grant in November 1535 made Norris constable of Walingford castle, steward of Walingford and St. Wabrie, and keeper of four hundreds (subdivisions of counties) with an annual rent of 50l.[28] December saw the additions of the positions of captain of Beaumaris town, with fees of 40 marks a year, along with an annuity of 500 marks.[29] After Suffolk was forced to give up stewardship of the manor Banbury, the king regranted it but divided profits between Suffolk and Norris.[30] The king also gave Norris an annuity of 200l. per year in February 1536.[31] In March 1536, Norris received the manor and advowsons of a parish church in Minsterlovall, Oxonford.[32] A grant in April 1536 allowed Norris to collect 17l. of back pay in petty customs of the

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[26] LP, 11: g. 149 (16). This included: two manors in Oxonford, an advowson in that area, and four messuage dwellings in Cokethrope, and all other lands granted in a patent of January 16, 1525.
[27] LP, 8: 475, 892 (p. 354).
[28] LP, 9: g. 914 (34)
[29] LP, 9: g. 1063 (11).
[30] Gunn, p. 137.
[31] LP, 10: 337.
[32] LP, 10: g. 597 (27).

port of London.[33] All these grants and favors hardly seem to indicate Norris was out of favor and about to be tried for treason.

Other people as well continued to consider Norris' aid important. Men continued to petition Norris for grants and favors from the king. Norris wrote Cromwell on May 15, 1535, asking him to favor Stourton in his suit for an office.[34] Thomas Broke wrote Cromwell requesting remembrance to his "friends" in the Privy Chamber, especially to Norris, Heneage, and Russell, along with several other names.[35] This was a method of ingratiating oneself for the purpose of gain; it can be inferred that there would be no need to do it unless the men of the Privy Chamber held some importance.

North Wales, in which Norris was a Chamberlain, was a relatively (compared to England) disordered and feudal area of Britain. In this area, punishment of criminals and other aspects of law enforcement were notoriously difficult. Part of the difficulty lay in controlling powerful gentry families, who maintained a level of autonomy from the Crown and killed and stole from each other with reckless abandon.[36] North Wales held several administrative matters for Norris in 1535. Richard Gibbons asked Norris to intervene in a matter concerning two subordinates of John Bishop of Bangor: Robert Oking and Gibbons, Bangor's registrar. Oking suspended Gibbons and caused him to

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33 LP, 10: 879.
34 LP, 8: 718.
35 LP, 9: 172.
36 Elton, *Reform and Reformation*, p. 203.

be put on trial.[37] This was likely a case of personal vendetta being disguised as a legal matter. In another case Richard Bulkeley wrote Cromwell to exonerate himself from accusations made by "my old adversaries." Bulkeley stated that his only trust was in Cromwell and Norris.[38] In a third letter, John Bridges asked Cromwell for favor concerning trouble with his neighbors. Bridges and Hungerford had made an award which Bridges contested in the Council of Marches, which was the (sometimes ineffective) instrument of royal authority for maintaining order in Wales until 1536.[39] Bridges had talked to Norris, and Norris wanted Cromwell's recommendation as to what to do.[40] Great changes would take place in the near future in Wales (as a result of Cromwell's 1536 Act of Union that gave Wales representation in Parliament), but for now administrators would have a rather difficult time maintaining order.

The Lisle Letters illustrate how until the eve of Norris' arrest, most people did not suspect he was in any danger from a conspiracy. Husee continually regarded Norris as Lisle's most useful friend at court, and normally relied on Norris first for help.[41] Norris, along with the "vicar of Hell"[42] Sir Francis Bryan, had the king's ear and could be counted on to put in a good word for

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37 LP, 8: 644 (2).
38 LP, 8: 925.
39 Guy, p. 203.
40 LP, 9: 1095.
41 Byrne, vol. 1, p. 596, vol. 2, p. 337.
42 This was Cromwell's sobriquet for Bryan.

the geographically distant Lisle.[43] In light of this description, it is understandable that Husee referred to Norris as "always one manner man," and said that "I find no man good to me indeed in my Lord's suits but Mr. Norris."[44]

Examples abound in the Lisle Letters which detail ways in which Norris in 1535 performed duties for the Lisle family. On January 19, Husee wrote that Pickering had reassurance from Norris that Norris would help Pickering obtain his (unknown) purpose.[45] According to another correspondence by John Grainfield, in another matter, the nunnery of St. Francis in Calais was underfunded. Crown officials, who were looking for excuses to terminate religious houses anyway, seized some of its lands, for which Lisle in turn sued. Apparently Norris' main concern was not whether this move hurt the nunnery but whether the Merchant of the Staple or the king now held it, so he could address his request to the right person. As an aside, Grainfield mentioned that Norris, Bryant, and others have commended Lisle to a large number of people.[46] This should have made the insecure Lisle happy. In April 1535, Norris volunteered to prevent a man named Ringeley from complaining to the king about a dispute with Lisle. As Cromwell, Norfolk, and others were about to come to Calais, this would also be an excellent occasion for Lisle to speak

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43 Ibid., p. 596.
44 LP, 8: 66.
45 LP, 8: 65.
46 LP, 8: 309.

his mind about the matter.[47] Finally, in late May, 1535, Norris helped Lisle in a land dispute with Hyde, who lost the land in question but in turn got the right to collect stray domestic animals in the forest of Balking along with 20s. in yearly wages.[48]

The process of asking for and securing grants is illustrated again in detail by Lisle's obsessive pursuit of Leonard Mell's goods. Mell, a wool-baler, had forfeited his goods, possibly for debt.[49] After Mell's death, Husee visited Norris on May 4, 1535, and got him to talk to the king about the possibility of Lisle having the forfeited goods. The king consented to the proposition under the condition that the wool not be worth more than the amount Lisle specified. Some opposed Lisle's taking the wool on the basis that it should have belonged to the king.[50] Norris' illness around July 1 prevented him from getting the king's signature on a bill concerning these goods.[51] Husee on July 7 did obtain a somewhat vague reassurance from Norfolk stating that he was sorry Lisle did not have the forfeit and that he hoped to prefer Lisle to a better thing.[52]

The suit for these goods dragged on for months. Norris was trying to get the king to sign the bill during one of Henry's progresses. These progresses involved going to different places in England on hunting trips, staying rarely for

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47 LP, 8: 591.
48 LP, 8: 765.
49 LP, 8: 977.
50 LP, 8: 663.
51 LP, 8: 1002, 1027.
52 LP, 8: 1002.

very long in any one place. This particular year, the king was in a particularly good mood, as the hawking and other sport were especially good. The fine sport also meant that Henry did not wish to be bothered with administrative matters.[53] Norris in mid-September said that the king had never signed so few documents as he had done that progress.[54] The king's reluctance to write his signature had reached by this time near legendary status. Husee complained to Norris on October 19 when the king still had not signed the grant.[55] Husee had Norris deliver a "finding" to the king again reiterating why Lisle deserved the goods. The king said that he was satisfied for Lisle to have it, but that he wished to know the value of the gift. This insinuated that the king suspected the gift would be worth far more than the 10l. Husee claimed it was worth.[56]

The king at last gave Lisle what he wanted. On November 19, Husee presented Norris with a letter signed by "Mr. Mayor" and Wingfield, to the effect that Lisle should have the goods. Norris wondered at Lisle putting all this effort into so simple a suit. Lisle gave Norris a bird as thanks for his help in this suit as well as other matters;[57] Norris said that he would not part with the falcon Lisle gave him for 100 marks.[58] Finally, the suit came to a conclusion, and Lisle received Mell's goods. Norris commented that the suit was as much

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53 Ives, *Anne Boleyn*, p. 335.
54 Byrne, p. 451.
55 LP, 9: 642.
56 LP, 9: 682.
57 LP, 9: 1032.
58 LP, 9: 850.

trouble as one worth 500 marks.[59] Norris was probably right, as Husee wrote Lisle eleven surviving letters alone concerning the matter.

Lisle continued to rely on Norris heavily to secure grants and to otherwise be remembered by the king. On November 29, 1535, Husee promised Lisle that he would solicit Norris for the advowsons of Calkwell and Nelle for James Bassett, one of Lisle's clients.[60] In early December, Norris said that he would watch for advowsons for Bassett (implying that Bassett did not get those first two), but he asked Lisle not to request things of little value.[61] On February 20, Norris requested a couple of spaniels as reward for his services.[62] Husee reported on March 26, 1536, that Norris had been absent from court for several days. He added that if Norris had been present then Lisle's matter (of unspecified nature) would have gone farther.[63] On April 8, Thomas Warley asked Lisle to move either Norris or Francis Bryan to take a matter before the king. Warley promised to compensate all parties for any successful efforts. Unfortunately for Warley, both Bryan and Norris had been absent from court for a good length of time.[64] On April 22, Lisle asked Husee to request that Norris try to obtain from the king the priory of Maudelis of Barstaple, along

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59 LP, 9: 950.
60 LP, 9: 897.
61 LP, 9: 924.
62 LP, 10: 332.
63 LP, 10: 558.
64 LP, 10: 635.

with any related advowsons or other financial advantages.[65] This matter came to nothing, possibly due to Norris' arrest on May 1.[66]

A letter written four days before Norris' arrest reveals that Husee knew nothing of the plot against the Boleyn faction. On April 27, Husee reported to Lisle that the king had given him permission to come to England. Lisle was going to send Norris some good wine, and as Husee wrote, "should it not prove excellent I'm shamed forever." According to this letter, the king would be in Dover in eight days, just on the English side of Calais.[67] Lisle had wanted for some time to come to England and speak with the king. The king deliberately pretended to be going on a tour of England while he really was going to be in London to have certain members of the Boleyn faction arrested and executed. Cromwell must have carefully planned his effort for people whose business it was to know what was going on to be unaware of a conspiracy.[68]

After Norris' death, Husee sentimentalized about Norris' character and how he would not find someone as helpful again. On May 24, he stated that Russell of the Privy Chamber was a discreet gentleman, but will never help Lisle to the extend Norris did. He added, "I pray God take Mr. Norris to his mercy, for you have made an unlike change."[69] On May 30, Husee stated that he had delivered a request to Russell and Heneage, telling them the losses

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65 LP, 10: 708.
66 Miller, p. 226.
67 LP, 10: 738.
68 Byrne, vol. 3, p. 342.
69 LP, 10, 952.

Lisle had sustained through Norris' death. He added that Lisle would find Russell to be a good friend, since he supplied Norris' servants after their master's death.[70] On June 18, Husee said that if Lisle's current connections were as eager in Lisle's suits to the king as Norris was, Lisle's matters would not have slept so long. He concluded, "the world is altered and . . . you have lost a friend."[71]

The narrative of the events of late April and early May 1536 go as follows. The week before Norris' arrest on May 1, the king called a special commission of *oyer et terminer*, designed to seek out and judge criminal cases, in this case treason. These commissions took place in the shires of Middlesex and Kent. Included in the commissions were multiple members of the aristocracy: Norfolk, Suffolk, the Earls Wiltshire (Thomas Boleyn), Oxford, Westmoreland, and Lord Sandys were among their number.[72] Several accusers came forward, including Lady Worcester, and Lady Wingfield, who wrote a note to Sir John Spelman of the commissioners, and Marguerita, who was supposedly Anne's intermediary in Anne's affair with Mark Smeaton, the king's organist. This commission ordered Smeaton arrested and tortured on the rack until he confessed. Smeaton's confession incriminated Norris and Brereton, and led to their subsequent arrests.[73]

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[70] LP, 10: 994.
[71] Byrne, p. 729.
[72] Miller, p. 56.
[73] Byrne, vol. 3, p. 378.

The sequence of events of Norris' arrest took place as follows. On May 1, Norris and other members of the court participated in a May Day jousting competition. The king and Anne attended, although they arrived separately.[74] Norris and Rochford jousted against each other.[75] According to a French poem composed in June, Norris presented himself "well armed," but his horse turned away from the joust as though aware of "the coming calamity to his master." The king then loaned Norris his own horse, with which Norris performed his jousting duties. Francis Weston and William Brereton, other grooms of the Privy Chamber, also did great feats of arms.[76] When they had finished, the king suddenly broke up the affair and ordered archers to arrest Norris. He then rode to London, taking Norris with him.[77]

Along the way to London, Henry questioned Norris about an alleged affair with Anne Boleyn. Henry promised Norris a pardon if he would tell the king the truth and confess guilt. Norris refused to confess anything to the king, but instead offered to maintain innocence with anybody and at any place. The king then sent him to the Tower of London.[78] Another possible reason for Norris going to the Tower was that Norris claimed to know nothing improper about Anne's relationship with Smeaton, who was already in the Tower.[79] The king

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74 Warnicke, *Rise and Fall of Anne Boleyn*, p. 225.
75 Thomas Aymot, "Memorial from George Constantine to Thomas, Lord Cromwell," *Archaeologia* 23 (1831), p. 64; Froude, p. 416; LP 10, 784.
76 LP, 10: 1036.
77 Ibid.; Aymot, p. 64.
78 Ibid.; LP, 10: 784, 1036.
79 LP, 10: 782.

could have suspected Norris was concealing something. William FitzWilliam tricked Norris into a confession by falsely telling him he would receive a pardon if he did. Soon after, Norris withdrew the confession.[80] While it does not make sense why Norris would believe FitzWilliam, it is obvious that the king never intended to pardon Norris, since the confession extracted by FitzWilliam changed nothing.

Anne followed Norris to the Tower on May 2; several of her conversations with Sir William Kingston, the Constable of the Tower, are preserved in the *Letters and Papers*. At the time of her arrest Norfolk accused her of sexual relations with Norris, Smeaton, and an unnamed third person.[81] Anne mentioned on May 3 that Norris accused her (by his withdrawn confession) and that he and she would soon die together. Anne had asked Norris to swear to her good name just the week before, after a conversation the two had. She had asked Norris why he did not go through with his marriage with Margaret Shelton, and he gave her an evasive answer. She then said that Norris was looking for "dead men's shoes" and that he would like to have her should anything bad happen to the king. Norris responded that if he ever had such a thought he wished his head were off. Anne replied that she would undo Norris if she could. Then they both left. This was a dangerous conversation for Anne to allude to, especially in the Tower when already in big trouble. Either Anne

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80 Aymot, p. 64; Froude, p. 417.
81 Warnicke, *Rise and Fall of Anne Boleyn*, p. 225.

was being incautious or had suffered a momentary mental collapse. Anne also commented that on another occasion she told Norris he came more often to her chamber than to that of his prospective wife, another damaging revelation in light of the accusations against the two.[82] One comment that perhaps indicated Anne was not totally in her right mind was that she said she would not be convicted of the charges against her.[83] This was after she had said that she and Norris would soon die together. If Henry had decided to destroy her he could easily do so, regardless of any evidence to the contrary. Any trial that took place would be a fraud; Anne of all people should have realized this fact.

A separate letter from Kingston to Cromwell reveals the contempt Norris had for the Henry's system of "justice." The letter, unfortunately, has decayed somewhat, so not all of the section dealing with Norris is legible. What can be deduced goes as follows: Kingston sent Norris his dinner,[84] and then sent him a priest to talk to him and gather information under the guise of "confession." Norris called the priest a knave and refused to tell him anything about the matter between him and Anne. He stated that there was nothing of his confession the priest was worthy to have.[85] Norris, with his long experience in the court, was able to recognize a shoddy attempt to gather more incriminating information and to react vigorously against it.

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82 LP, 10: 793.
83 LP, 10: 799.
84 Prisoners in the Tower who had sufficient goods and lands were required to pay for their own meals. LP, 12: 181 (p. 60).
85 LP, 10: 798.

The trial process went as follows. On May 10, all suspected parties other than the queen were indicted: Norris, Weston, Brereton, Smeaton, and Rochford. They were to be tried and arraigned at Westminster. Anne was accused by the commission at Parliament of incest with Rochford, and adultery with Norris and the others.[86] On May 12, Kingston brought the accused parties to Westminster for trial.[87] The archers of the guard escorted the prisoners to the courtroom holding axes which were turned away from the prisoners.[88] The petit jury for the commoners' trial (this excluded Rochford) came from Middlesex.[89] The charges were carnal knowledge of the queen and conspiring to bring about the king's death. Smeaton pleaded guilty to carnal knowledge of the queen and not guilty to conspiracy, while the others pleaded not guilty on both counts. The jury as expected returned a verdict of guilty, with the penalty to be execution.[90] Originally the execution was to involve being drawn, hanged, and quartered;[91] it was commuted later at the king's order to simple beheading with an axe. In an ominous ceremony, after the verdict of guilty the axes carried by the guards were turned toward the victims.[92] There is no doubt this trial was not a fair one; even Chapuys, who was extremely hostile to Anne's faction, commented that Norris, Weston, and

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86 LP, 10: 837; Miller, p. 58.
87 LP, 10: 848 (4).
88 LP, 10: 1036.
89 LP, 10: 848 (4).
90 LP, 10: 848 (9).
91 LP, 10: 855.
92 LP, 10: 1036.

Brereton were condemned "upon presumption and certain indications, without valid proof or confession."[93] Rochford was convicted at a separate trial.

A letter from Cromwell, and Anne's trial, both reveal more about charges against Norris and the others. Cromwell wrote that the queen's incontinent living was so rank that her chamber ladies could no longer conceal it. Their stories came to certain council members who told the king. Certain Privy Chamber members and others were examined, and another charge surfaced for conspiring for the king's death.[94] The indictment against Anne charged that she procured for herself the king's servants by sexual innuendo, kisses, touching, and gifts. According to the indictment, on October 6, 1533, at Westminster, she persuaded Norris to have sex with her. This date was later changed to November 12. Norris, Rochford, Brereton, Weston, and Smeaton were "inflamed with carnal love of the queen," and became progressively more jealous of each other. The queen and each lover gave pledges, and conspired to kill the king so they could have her. Besides the accusations of adultery Henry also found witnesses to testify to an earlier consummated marriage between Anne and Henry Percy, which in fact had never taken place.[95] The assembled nobles, led by Anne's uncle Norfolk and including her father Wiltshire, convicted Anne and sentenced her to be either burned or beheaded, at the king's pleasure.[96]

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93 LP, 10: 908.
94 LP, 10: 873.
95 Kelly, p. 243.
96 LP, 10: 876.

Henry clearly had decided to put away Anne. Cranmer originally professed Anne's innocence, but then decided to go with the inevitable flow of events.[97] On May 17, Cranmer held a church trial, with the king and Anne represented by proxy, and then decided to annul Henry's second marriage.[98] Wriothesley, a Crown official, produced "evidence" that Anne had an earlier contract with Henry Percy, heir to one of the great Northern families, before her marriage to the king. Another possible ground given for the annulment was Henry's previous relationship with Anne's sister, Mary. A third reason put forward was that of Elizabeth being Norris' daughter.[99] On May 18, Cranmer publicly declared Elizabeth to be Norris' bastard and not the king's daughter, and that the marriage between Henry and Anne was invalid.[100] Henry was now free to go his own way.

The executions of Rochford, Norris, Weston, Brereton, and Smeaton fell on May 17. The sentence had been commuted to beheading from the nastier methods normally used against traitors. The sentence was carried out at Tower Hill (which was right in front of the Tower) instead of Tyburn, the usual place for executing traitors.[101] All the victims confessed in some way except for Norris, who hardly said a word.[102] This is probably because Norris felt the whole process was a travesty. On May 19, the queen was put to death within

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97 Miller, p. 58; Kelly, p. 245.
98 Ibid., p. 244.
99 Ibid., p. 245.
100 LP, 10: 909.
101 LP, 10: 918-920.
102 Aymot, p. 65.

the Tower.[103] All the bodies were buried in the Tower churchyard;[104] Norris was buried in the same grave as Weston.[105]

The reaction to Anne's and the others' executions included treasonable words. George Constantine, one of Norris' servants, stated that there was much muttering after Anne's death. Constantine had written Norris a letter of comfort after his sentence to be executed. He was later arrested and interrogated for questioning the motives of Anne's and the others' executions.[106] In another example, proceedings against John Hill charged him with saying that the king put Norris and the others to death only for pleasure. He also stated that he would like to see the king of Scots as king of England.[107]

Several rumors during this time cast doubts upon the paternity of Elizabeth. One source reporting to the Emperor reported that Elizabeth was taken from poor parents after one of Anne's miscarriages.[108] A letter which ended up in Portugal said that the executive council had declared Elizabeth to be the child of Anne and her brother Rochford. Chapuys stated that Elizabeth had been declared illegitimate because the marriage was illegitimate. What made it illegitimate was the king's affair with Anne's sister. Chapuys thought that the king could have more honorably said that Elizabeth was Norris'

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103 LP, 10: 918.
104 LP, 10: 908.
105 Ives, *Anne Boleyn*, p. 411.
106 Warnicke, *Rise and Fall of Anne* Boleyn, p. 204; Aymot, p. 64.
107 LP, 10: 1205.
108 LP, 11: 1044.

daughter than to admit to his own affair.[109] If the rumor of Elizabeth as Norris' daughter had been true then it would have been impossible to ever recognize her as the king's daughter. Henry believed Elizabeth was his daughter, so the rumor would have been unfounded even if the stories about Anne and Norris were true.[110]

The race to secure Norris' lands and annuities began in earnest well before his execution, and led to sizable gains for a number of individuals. Norris was worth 1,200l. yearly from the Crown, more than any other of the victims besides Anne.[111] Lisle was encouraged by Husee to ask Cromwell for as many of Norris' possessions as possible. This communication a few days after Norris' arrest reveals that nearly everyone assumed he was as good as dead even before the trial.[112] Many of the other court members and Cromwell gained from Norris' misfortune. Cromwell received the stewardship of the University of Oxford, which had been held by Norris.[113] Cromwell also received stewardship of the manor of Langham, Rutland, which Norris had held.[114] Edward Seymour received one of Norris' houses and a garden at Kew.[115] Seymour also, along with Bulkeley, received the office of Chamberlain of North

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109 LP, 11: 41.
110 Froude, p. 434.
111 Ives, *Anne Boleyn*, p. 411.
112 Byrne, vol. 3, p. 354; Miller, p. 225.
113 LP, 10: 804.
114 Miller, p. 236.
115 Ibid., p. 233.

Wales.[116] Francis Bryan received Norris' annuity from the king.[117] Thomas Heneage received the manor of Barton-upon-Humber, Lincolnshire.[118]

A great mass of historical work has been devoted to explaining the events of May 1536. Historians generally tend to take one of two views in dealing with the fall of Anne Boleyn and some of her associates. The first one, championed by Bernard and Warnicke among others, emphasizes the personal role of the king and his loss of affection for Anne. To them, it was Henry's will to destroy Anne and some associates, but Cromwell was the means to this end. This means that Cromwell did the actual work of setting up the trial and putting together the charges, but only after Henry made up his mind and asked Cromwell to do it. The other view, held by Ives, Starkey, and others, concentrates on the role of faction within Henrican government, and also Thomas Cromwell's large role in having Anne and some of her supporters murdered by due process of law. I have tried to capture the essence of several of these interpretations and to decide which of them explains best the above framework of events.

J. J. Scarisbrick, who wrote a biography of Henry, had a king-oriented interpretation of the coup of 1536. According to Scarisbrick, as early as 1534 Henry had started flirting with Jane Seymour, a young lady at court. Anne miscarried a boy in January 1536, due to her shock at Henry's fall from a

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116 LP, 11: g. 385 (16).
117 LP, 11: 29.
118 LP, 11: g. 1217 (1).

horse. Henry spoke to Anne little after the miscarriage, and left her at Greenwich in February. Henry, during the early spring, had Cromwell plan a second divorce.[119] Henry set up the commission of *oyer et terminer* in late April to find a condemning fault in Anne. The best one they could manufacture was alleged treason in the form of adultery. On May 1, 1536, at the joust at Greenwich, Anne revealed her infidelity by dropping a handkerchief to one of her lovers and sending Henry into a rage.[120] This incident led to the end of Anne's alleged lovers.

Joseph Block likewise stated that too much weight has been given to Cromwell's participation in the downfall of Anne Boleyn. He commented that Ives and Starkey, two exponents of the factional thesis, often cite each other rather than primary evidence to support their arguments.[121] Block conceded that the removal of Norris, Weston, and Rochford could possibly be seen as political expediency by Cromwell. However, other victims (Brereton and Smeaton) had little political weight and a plot against them would not have benefited Cromwell. Stephen Gardiner, Norfolk, and others would have been much more obvious targets for Cromwell if he were a true Machiavellian.[122] The concurrent arrest and imprisonment of Thomas Wyatt makes no sense in this scheme either, for Wyatt was a close friend who Cromwell worked long and hard to free. Cromwell was not sorry to see Anne dead, but acted primarily as

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119 Scarisbrick, p. 348.
120 Ibid., p. 349.
121 Block, p. 64.
122 Ibid., p. 65.

the instrument of the king, not in an independent fashion. According to Block, the victims of May 1536 all had in common a lack of solid political support. He cites as evidence the fact that no one came forward to dispute these patently false charges.[123] The reason may be obvious; no one wanted to end up as the Boleyn faction did for opposing Cromwell and the king, but nonetheless Block made his point well.

G. W. Bernard also articulated a position against a factional interpretation of these events. He asserted that a close scrutiny of politics during this event tends to undermine an impression of Cromwell's dominance or of factional manipulation of the king.[124] Anne's miscarriage in January 1536 did not spark the king's disfavor, although many historians such as Warnicke incline toward this as the key event.[125] Rather, until at least April 18 of that year Henry did not have the slightest intention of discarding Anne. He cited as evidence that on that day Henry achieved a significant concession from the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, by obtaining the empire's recognition of Anne as Henry's wife. Another piece of proof was that on April 14 Henry dissolved the Parliament. If he had been planning to pull them back for a trial of Anne, then he would not have let them go home, as it was a great inconvenience for them to come back.[126] Bernard denied the validity of a

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123 Ibid., p. 66.
124 G. W. Bernard, "The Fall of Anne Boleyn: A Rejoinder," *English Historical Review* 107 (July 1992, p. 674.
125 G. W. Bernard, "The Fall of Anne Boleyn." *English Historical Review* 106 (July 1991), p. 585.
126 Ibid., p. 590.

conservative faction helping Cromwell conspire against Anne's associates, stating that there has never been any conclusive evidence to make that connection.[127]

Bernard next attempted to dispel differences Cromwell and Anne may have had and otherwise chip away at a factional interpretation. Their foreign policy was really not so different, as the Boleyn family was now coming to favor the Holy Roman Empire over French interests. Cromwell probably did not see the need to align himself with a conservative faction to pull off his plan, assuming he had one.[128] Also those executed in May 1536 did not form a coherent group, and not even Rochford (he sees Norris as getting along fine with Cromwell) could challenge Cromwell's authority.[129]

Bernard declared that Norris and the others may have been guilty of adultery or other crimes. He cited a French poem written in June of that year as giving evidence that Anne and Norris were sleeping together.[130] Bernard accepted that a quarrel between one of the queen's ladies and her brother led to an accusation against Anne. This, once investigated, led to other accusations of poor conduct that the king could not ignore.[131] The conversations between Anne and Kingston (referred to earlier) gave information which made a liaison between Anne and Norris seem quite plausible.[132]

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127 Ibid., p. 592.
128 Ibid., p. 593.
129 Ibid., p. 594.
130 Ibid., p. 596-597.
131 Ibid., p. 599.
132 Ibid., p. 600.

Anne's comments in the Tower and the rumors of Norris as Elizabeth's father lead to a strong case as to Norris' guilt.[133]

According to Bernard, the fall of Anne and her associates was attributed to the influence of a monarch deeply involved in the affairs of daily government.[134] Henry's reactions at the breaking scandal were harsh but not irrational; some of the people indicted were probably guilty of what they were charged.[135] Factional interpretations of a plot by Cromwell give too little weight to the letters of Anne's conversations with Kingston in the Tower, and also to the power of a personal monarch who was not the plaything of factions.[136]

Retha Warnicke had an interpretation of Anne's fall that in some ways agreed with that of Bernard. She theorized that the miscarried fetus in January 1536 was the key to understanding why Henry turned against her. Norris was implicated due to the conversation Norris had with her on April 30, in which she said he was looking to replace Henry as her husband. This was no manifestation of courtly love, but a deadly serious argument. The fact that she brought up such a subject indicated that her honor was already under attack from rivals.[137] She would not have insisted on Norris swearing to her honor as a woman unless she had heard that Norris was her lover. Their

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133 Ibid., p. 605.
134 Bernard, "A Rejoinder, " p. 673.
135 Bernard, "Fall of Anne Boleyn," p. 609.
136 Bernard, "A Rejoinder," p. 666.
137 Warnicke, Retha M., "The Fall of Anne Boleyn Revisited," *English Historical Review* 108 (July 1993), p. 657.

argument probably was over what could be done to disprove this assumption.[138]

Warnicke also questioned some of the sources used by Bernard and Ives. The French poem, for one, ought to be seen in terms of poetic license, not fact.[139] Also, according to her, one should be extremely careful in using the letters of Chapuys to confirm the presence of a conservative faction which sought to overthrow Anne and her supporters. None of the people Chapuys cited conspired against Anne before 1536. During the actual events of May 1536, those who played the biggest role (FitzWilliam and the queen's ladies) were not remotely connected with an Aragonese faction.[140]

In Warnicke's opinion, the victims' accusals support elements of witchcraft and eroticism as contributing causes to their demise. The king, as an amateur theologian, honestly believed that Anne's deformed fetus signified that she was a witch.[141] The dates Anne was accused of committing adultery with Norris and the others often correspond to holidays of transvestism and gender reversal in the superstition-laden Tudor society. The locations usually did not correspond with the places the court actually was residing during that time. To get around this flaw in the accusations, it was asserted that Anne flew to the various destinations as only a witch could.[142] Anne's alleged lovers,

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138 Warnicke, *Rise and Fall of Anne Boleyn*, p. 212.
139 Warnicke, "Fall of Anne Boleyn Revisited," pp. 660-661.
140 Warnicke, *Rise and Fall of Anne Boleyn*, pp. 141, 207.
141 Warnicke, "Anne Boleyn Revisited," p. 955.
142 Warnicke, "Fall of Anne Boleyn Revisited," p. 664.

other than Norris, were known for licentious behavior. Furthermore, some of them likely were homosexual; this could have been the first charge brought against Mark Smeaton. He may have been offered the choice by Anne's enemies of either dying as a perverted violator of England's Buggery Statute, or more honorably as a heterosexual adulterer with the queen. The sexual preference of some of the victims also could shed light on scaffold confessions in which the victims declared their need for mercy and offenses to God, without citing specifics.[143]

Warnicke concluded that Cromwell had neither the ability to pull off such a feat as was done in May 1536, nor targeted the correct men even if he had done so. A conspiracy to further Cromwell's own political standing at court would have required participation of families such as the FitzWilliams, who never were linked to Cromwell or an Aragonese faction. Cromwell also could have better directed his efforts against other of Anne's relatives such as Thomas Cheyney or James Boleyn, other men at court, if he truly wanted to destroy a Boleyn faction. According to her, the mystery of Norris' and the others' arrests cannot be explained adequately in a factional interpretation.[144]

The other historical viewpoint, as stated before, holds that Norris' and the others' deaths were the result of factional warfare, which was (depending on the historian) spearheaded by Cromwell. John Guy stated that Anne's

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143 Warnicke, *Rise and Fall of Anne Boleyn*, pp. 214, 220-222.
144 Ibid., p. 223.

miscarriage led Henry to believe his marriage was condemned by God, but that he then gave Cromwell rein to remove Anne as Cromwell best saw fit. Cromwell allied himself with Catherine's former faction (Catherine had died in January 1536) to persuade Henry that Anne had committed incest with her brother Rochford and adultery with certain members of her faction in the Privy Chamber.[145] Thus came the end of the Boleyn faction.

David Loades also had a factional interpretation of the Boleyn faction's demise. He declared that Catherine's death freed Henry up to seek a second divorce from Anne. He had been tiring of her for some time, and was becoming romantically involved with Jane Seymour. Moderation in Cromwell's approach for seeking a divorce soon turned more radical for several reasons. One was that Anne had a strong affinity in court. Another was that Cromwell believed the entire faction to be a hindrance to his plans to reform English government. A third reason was that his conservative supporters felt that it would take more than another divorce to put Mary back in line for the throne.[146]

David Starkey declared that the means to ruin Anne are obvious, but it is much more difficult to determine why Henry turned against intimate friends such as Norris whom he had known for better than twenty years. He de-emphasized Cromwell's role in the affair. Instead he theorized that Henry deliberately put Norris in a situation where he had to declare his allegiance

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145 Guy, p. 142.
146 Loades, *Tudor Court*, p. 155.

ultimately either to the king or to Anne. When Norris refused to confess himself or accuse Anne of any wrongdoing, Henry's affection for Norris turned into hatred.[147] Thus Norris' closeness to the Boleyn faction directly cost him his life.

Muriel St. Claire Byrne, who appeared also to subscribe to a factional interpretation of the events of 1536, also held that Cromwell and faction caused the deaths of Anne, Norris, and the rest of her faction. Cromwell was not moved by personal malice, but he did plot to have Anne killed. The charges were carefully crafted to be legally airtight. She compared the trials in May 1536 to those in a modern dictatorship, where the verdict is a foregone conclusion. Cromwell first defamed Anne's character by accusing her of adultery. Then he provided for her death, by accusing her of a capital crime, conspiring for the death of the king. Cromwell had installed conspiring against the king's life as a cause for capital punishment in the Act of Succession (although this punishment for a plot against the king seemed perfectly obvious before). Ironically, the Act of Succession had also allowed for the children of Anne to be recognized as legitimate.[148]

Byrne argued that the charges against the faction members were false, because Anne's supposed adulterous behavior was entirely out of character for this woman who had waited six years to become Henry's wife. Granted, Anne

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147 Starkey, p. 118.
148 Byrne, vol. 3, p. 237.

was jealous of Henry's attention to other women, namely Jane Seymour, but jealousy is no proof of adultery. She also added that after Elizabeth's birth Henry would have resumed normal sexual relations with his wife,[149] which implies that there was no time then for she and Norris to become involved.

Eric Ives had a fairly comprehensive interpretation that does a good job at considering the various elements of the narrative. After Henry's quarrels with Anne (these grew increasingly frequent during the 1530s) Henry was more vulnerable to the sympathizing of Anne's enemies, the conservative or Aragonese faction. These enemies included a Yorkist element, with Henry Courtenay, Marquess of Exeter, in the forefront, and also Sir Nicholas Carew, who had been in the Privy Chamber since his youth. Anthony Browne of the Privy Chamber also played a part. Also in the game were Jane Seymour's two brothers, Edward and Thomas. It made sense for them to become involved as their family had a good deal to gain from Anne's demise and Henry marrying their sister. Some of Anne's own ladies also participated in the plot.[150] He referred to the ladies Lisle listed: Anne Cobham, Elizabeth Browne (Lady Worchester) and a third unnamed one. Elizabeth Browne was Anthony Browne's brother and FitzWilliam's niece. However, Ives listed Elizabeth Browne as a possible Boleyn supporter who was lukewarm at best to the proceedings but was forced to testify against Anne.[151] Mary's faction knew

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149 Ibid., p. 239.
150 Ives, *Faction*, p. 17.
151 Ives, *Anne Boleyn*, pp. 380-382.

that to remove Anne from Henry's bedroom was no answer in itself. They also had to remove enough of the Boleyn faction to ensure their own dominance. Elizabeth's legitimacy was a huge obstacle to Mary's prospects for the throne; the conservative faction also wished to correct this state of affairs. These people had various reasons for acting as they did, but the main one seems to be a desire to get rid of Anne and to restore Mary to the succession. Cromwell seemed to have been motivated, among other reasons, in a struggle, poorly documented in the *Letters and Papers*, in the Welsh marches with Norris and Brereton, the latter of which had a stranglehold on the area's patronage.[152] Cromwell, compared to Norris and Rochford, was in the second division as concerned personal favor with the king and private influence. Norris and others worked with Cromwell, but knew that they could persuade the king of almost anything themselves.[153]

Cromwell spurred this factional drive to remove Anne's supporters from court. He looked for an occasion when the king's ire might be raised against his wife, and on April 29-30 he received not one, but two of them. The first crisis was Anne's exchange on April 29 with Smeaton. Anne accused Smeaton of trying to compete above his station, implying that Smeaton wished to have Anne. Later when Henry asked Norris about Anne's alleged affair with Smeaton and received a negative reply, he assumed that Norris was hiding

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[152] Ives, *Faction*, pp. 17-18.
[153] Ives, *Anne Boleyn*, p. 354.

something.[154] The second event was Anne's conversation with Norris on April 30, which had begun innocently enough over Norris' future marriage of Mary Shelton, but which became a dangerous argument. Perhaps Anne feared that Norris would desert her as people did Wolsey in 1529, and made the suggestion about dead men's shoes to show she could ruin him if he tried to turn on her.[155] Norris was horrified at the suggestion that he would like to have Anne. Soon the matter was all over the court. Anne had pushed the game of courtly exchange[156] way too far, and had proven to Norris that she could ruin him.

The queen aided Cromwell by supplying him with the two preceding conversations, and also unwillingly aided him in the Tower with other incriminating conversations with William Kingston. The suddenness of Anne's arrest produced a temporary nervous collapse, as evidenced in her fits of uncontrollable weeping and laughter. She spewed forth incriminating material about herself, such as the conversation she had a few days before with Norris; she never would have done this if she had been thoroughly composed.[157] Cromwell, according to Ives, during the trial used Anne's conversations to convict the commoners, then disqualify the convicted men's testimony so the

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154 Ibid., pp. 367-368.
155 Ives, *Anne Boleyn*, pp. 364-365.
156 Ives, *Faction*, p. 16. A good portion of the information against Anne for her trial came from courtly flirtations with the victims. Courtly language, with an aspiring courtier idolizing the unattainable married woman, had been in use throughout Europe for some time. Cromwell took examples of this courtly language out of context and used them to build his case. The instance of Norris' conversation with Anne went beyond the traditional language of courtly love and bordered on treason, because Anne implied that Norris was hoping that something unpleasant would happen to the king and let him obtain her.
157 Ives, *Anne Boleyn*, p. 373.

queen could not cite them in her defense. It was also impossible to acquit Anne after the other convictions as the charges already were "proven."[158]

Ives described how most, but not all, of the victims of the events of May 1536 were involved in the Boleyn faction. Anne was the head of the faction, in which Norris and Rochford were principal players who were close to the king due to their holding prominent places in the Privy Chamber. Brereton, through his influence in North Wales, was a local landowner and official who was caught up with the Boleyns. He depended on Norris a good deal[159] (or so Ives asserts, although in his book *Letters and Accounts of William Brereton* Norris' name appears only twice;[160] if Norris was that important to Brereton there would have been more correspondence and records relating the two). Smeaton apparently was a pawn to first expose the queen to charges of adultery. Weston was not connected with the Boleyns. Anne's remembrance of a conversation she had with him about one of his lovers triggered his arrest.[161] The arrests by Cromwell were thus not entirely faction related, but also designed to help destroy the queen. Ives concluded that to fully understand the events one has to analyze the paradox of Henry's psychology as well as look

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158 Ibid., p. 397.
159 Ibid., p. 394.
160 Eric William Ives, ed., *The Letters and Accounts of William Brereton*, Lancashire and Cheshire Record Society Studies in History, 116 (Old Woking, Surrey: Unwin Bros., 1976), pp. 1, 21.
161 Ives, "Fall of Anne Boleyn Reconsidered," p. 661.

at faction, a statement that to a small degree undermines his original factional thesis.[162]

Ives' and other faction advocates' explanations come the closest of those views examined in this paper toward explaining the events that led to the deaths of Anne, Norris, and the others. Faction explains why a good many of the "accusers" acted as they did; they wished to eliminate rivals to their own power. It also explains the significance of Norris, Rochford, and others such as Browne and Carew within the Privy Chamber; as the king was easily swayed by a contrary word here and there, so went the fortunes of courtiers. As David Starkey hinted at, Henry is ultimately to blame for the death of Norris; he was empowered as king to put a stop to the mess had he seen fit to do so. The king let himself be persuaded by Cromwell and other members of court who supported Mary's ascendancy that Norris and the others were adulterers and traitors. Therefore, the king should share part of the blame for what happened.

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[162] Ibid., p. 664.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Norris had found himself at the losing end of factional politics. He had ultimately chosen the wrong side, and was too closely enmeshed with Anne to prove his innocence against an array of false charges. His great career ended suddenly with the strokes of an executioner's axe. Cromwell feared the Boleyn faction as a competitor for power, and saw it necessary to force their removal. Cromwell arranged a coup in which the primary victims could not escape. Henry willingly consented to this plan; he should take some of the blame as well as Cromwell for the travesty of justice that happened in May 1536.

Norris' career is instructive of how government worked in Tudor England. Henry governed in a personal way, so it made sense that his supporters and friends at court would try to influence his person. This is why faction is such a key concept, because the entire system was based on the ability of individuals or groups of individuals to persuade the king of the worth of their ideas. The Privy Chamber was a powerful arm of government during this period. Wolsey, Cromwell, and others recognized that appointments to the Privy Chamber were political not ceremonial appointments, and at the height of their powers tried to remove people they felt would counter their influence. Norris' life showed the benefits of factional government, while his death illustrated the negatives.

After Anne and her associates were safely dead, Henry persuaded Cranmer to issue a dispensation allowing him to marry Jane Seymour, a

woman at court he had been flirting with for some time. This dispensation was necessary because the pair were related in the third degree of affinity. Jane was a second cousin of one of Henry's mistresses; the Tudor society considered this being related in the third degree of affinity.[1]

Henry's third marriage lasted just over a year. On May 20 Henry and Jane became betrothed, and the pair married in "indecent haste" on May 30.[2] This marriage and the need for Henry to procreate was necessary (besides the fact that Henry loved Jane) because Henry still wanted a male heir. The king's nearest approximation to a male heir, his illegitimate son the Duke of Richmond, died of tuberculosis in July 1536.[3] Jane would be a popular queen during her brief time. She probably is best known for removing what many considered God's curse on Henry. She bore him a son, Edward, in a difficult Cesarean childbirth in October 1537. Jane died of infection about a week and a half later.[4]

Meanwhile, the aftermath of Cromwell's coup in May 1536 was wide-ranging. First, Anne's faction was destroyed. Anne's father, Wiltshire, had only his earldom, after Anne's fall.[5] Any remaining Boleyn faction members, such as Francis Bryan, turned away from the past now that their leader was gone; Bryan himself carried to Jane Seymour news of Anne's conviction.[6]

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1 Kelly, pp. 259-260.
2 Kelly, pp. 259-260; Ives, *Anne Boleyn*, p. 413.
3 Ives, *Faction*, p. 18.
4 Kelly, p. 260; Guy, p. 142.
5 Ives, *Anne Boleyn*, 415.
6 Ibid., 399.

Anne's enemies, however, did not have long to enjoy their victory, but soon received a rude awakening.[7] Cromwell had the extremely difficult task of making sure that the destruction of the Boleyns did not lead to a conservative triumph that would negate his religious and political innovations. The only way he could accomplish this feat was to take over and mastermind the affair himself.[8] Cromwell knew all along he would attempt to exact from Mary an admission of her illegitimacy and acceptance of Henry and Jane's children as heirs to the succession. He achieved this goal on the grounds that her faction had sought to restore her to the succession.[9] Although he began "feeling for the head on his own shoulders" before he completed the second wave of his plan, he succeeded.[10] Mary signed a document of submission to Seymour's offspring, and then her faction submitted to Cromwell's authority.[11]

Conservative members of the royal court suffered at the hands of Cromwell. Many were either excluded from the Privy Council or other government posts, like William FitzWilliam, or were interrogated at length, such as Anthony Browne or some of the court ladies such as Lady Hussey, Jane Grey.[12] The conservatives were defeated, and they had nowhere to go but violence (although Elton disagreed with this interpretation, as it shows that Cromwell took the Tudor Revolution too far). Conservatives provided leadership

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7 Ives, *Faction*, p. 19.
8 Starkey, p. 111.
9 Guy, p. 142.
10 Ives, *Anne Boleyn*, p. 414.
11 Ibid.
12 Ibid., p. 415.

for the Pilgrimage of Grace rebellion in northern England in October-December, 1536. This series of uprisings (primarily the one located in Yorkshire led by Anne's former enemy Lord Darcy and Christopher Aske) came closer than any other rebellion in sixteenth century England to unseating the Tudors from the throne. Many members of the conservative faction, such as the Marquess of Exeter, Lord Montagu, Sir Edward Neville, and Robert Carew, followed their Boleyn enemies to the block in late 1538 or early 1539, partially due to suspicions concerning their lack of loyalty stirred in the aftermath of the Pilgrimage.[13]

Cromwell himself would find himself in difficulty as a result of Henry's rejection of Anne of Cleves, a German noblewoman whose beauty Cromwell exaggerated. Cromwell arranged the marriage as part of a foreign policy maneuver to bring England into the League of Schmalkalden that had vowed to defend Protestantism on the continent. Henry did not find Anne of Cleves attractive; he married "under protest" and never consummated the union.[14] Cromwell's enemies, including Norfolk and Stephen Gardiner, in 1540 rallied against him. He was thrown into the Tower for treason and heresy for taking the Reformation in England too far.[15] He was executed in July 1540.[16] The proverbial axe had swung full circle. But, although Guy and Elton point out

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13 Ibid., p. 416.
14 Guy, p. 184.
15 Ibid., pp. 187-188.
16 Ibid., p. 188.

that Cromwell did not really conduct a reign of terror in the 1530s,[17] that was no comfort to those such as Norris who were executed under Cromwell's direction.

In one way, the actions of Henry in 1536 more than those of Cromwell should lead to righteous anger. Norris, although executed as a traitor, was not the real betrayer of trust; it was Henry. The chance that Norris did any of the things he was accused of in May (aside from have a portentous conversation with Anne) is remote. He, being an experienced courtier, would have realized how very stupid a liaison with Henry's wife would be. Henry should have been less credulous in believing the charges brought against his friend by Norris' political enemies.

Norris was likely no more virtuous than the next person in Tudor government, but he clearly did not deserve the death he received at the hands of Cromwell and the conservative faction. Norris did make a contribution to influencing English governmental policy as part of the Boleyn faction during the decade in which he was Henry's most intimate and trusted servant, the Groom of the Stool. His career involved much more than his end as a victim in a factional bloodbath. Throughout his time as Groom of the Stool he performed important governmental functions such as controlling patronage and access to the king. There is poetic justice in Cromwell's execution, which could have been predicted by the warning "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a

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17 Ibid., p. 143; Elton, *Reform and Reformation*, p. 294.

tooth,"[18] in a book of the Bible that Henry carefully studied, Leviticus. But Cromwell and Henry both, by that standard, came out far ahead. By that same standard, Norris lost out.

Norris' death was not entirely in vain, however. Anne's daughter, Elizabeth, became queen of England in November 1558, following the death of her half-sister Mary. In this sense the Boleyn faction ultimately did triumph. Elizabeth ruled England until 1603, a period of forty-five years. She showed great affection for Norris' son, Henry, born in 1525, who became Baron Norris of Rycote, sat in Parliament's House of Lords, and founded a line of distinguished gentlemen. Elizabeth recognized Norris' father as one who had never deserted her mother Anne, even when it cost him his life.[19] Regardless of the inopportune argument Norris had with Anne a few days before their arrests, history has forever linked their names together, along with the other victims of May 1536. Perhaps it is time that Norris got the recognition he deserved as a faithful and moderate man in the court. Certainly Elizabeth recognized, as Lord Lisle's agent John Husee said, that the elder Norris was "at all times one manner man."

While there is no evidence of Norris being an independent thinker, the weight of the evidence shows that he understood his role in the government and carried it out effectively. While there was no formal description of his

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[18] Lev. 24: 20.
[19] DNB, p. 568.

political duties, only his ceremonial ones,[20] Norris' central task was to be both the king's companion and friend, as well as a political entity. The role as companion and friend can be documented only through a scattering of references that refer to Norris as the king's beloved and so forth. Political aspects of his career often have to be deduced as well. Secondary sources are the only ones that attest to his importance in government; they work through inference. The vast number of letters written to Norris and other ways of petitioning his services demonstrate that people considered Norris an effective patron. Norris' had the ability to restrict access to the king as well, which was another aspect of patronage. Patronage was at the heart of, and was the key to, political power in Henrican government. The king was not absolute, but still had a main part in determining who got what prize in return for faithful service to his country and his ruler. In this age of personal monarchy, stripped of all nonessentials, Norris was a major player in the government from 1528-36.

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20 These were detailed as part of the 1526 Eltham ordinances.

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