

St George's Chapel Archives and Chapter Library



THE TUDORS WORKSHEET

Background notes

These notes provide more detailed information on the aspects of St George's Chapel that date from the Tudor period. They also provide answers to the fact-based questions on the activity sheet. The worksheet that these notes accompany is arranged geographically to allow participants to complete their answers whilst following the set route around the Chapel.

Background information on Tudor decorations in St George's Chapel

The Tudor dynasty ruled England and Wales from 1485 until 1603. Work had commenced on the present Chapel in 1475, under Edward IV, but was to take a long time (over 50 years) and cost a great deal of money. Most of the building was completed by the end of the reign of the first Tudor king (Henry VII), much of it funded by a generous bequest from Henry VII's adviser, Sir Reginald Bray, but the Chapel was not actually finished until 1528, by which time Henry VIII was on the throne. Much of the decoration in St George's Chapel was made on the orders of Tudor rulers.

1. Nave crossing

The decoration of the Nave crossing in 1528 signalled the completion of the construction of St George's Chapel. The roof bosses commemorate Henry VIII and his Garter Knights.

How can you tell that the coat of arms in the middle are the King's?

It is decorated with the royal arms of Henry VIII; these arms feature three golden lions (first used by Richard I 'the lionheart') to show the power and strength of the monarch. It also features fleurs-de-lis to signal that the English monarchs had not yet dropped their claim to the French throne – this claim began in 1340 under Edward III and was not dropped until the reign of George III. The supporters of the arms are a crowned English lion and a Welsh dragon (the dragon was only used by Tudor monarchs – Edward VII's grandfather was Welsh; it was dropped by the Stuarts in favour of a Scottish unicorn).

The motto of the Order of the Garter is also featured in the arms ('honi soit qui mal y pense' – 'shame on him who thinks badly of it') and the whole arms are topped with a crown to further signify its link to the monarchy. Edward III had founded the Order in about 1348, to reward and unite his loyal friends and soldiers.

Who do you think the other smaller badges belong to?

The smaller badges/arms surrounding those of Henry VIII are those of the Knights of the Garter who were living in 1528; all of their arms feature the motto 'honi soit qui mal y pense' to signal their membership of the Order of the Garter.

2. Sir Reginald Bray

Sir Reginald Bray served as principal minister to Henry VII for eighteen years and was a principal negotiator in arranging Henry VII's marriage to Elizabeth of York. When Bray died in 1503 building work on the Chapel had stalled – the Nave had barely risen above ground level. Bray left enough funds to the College in his will to enable the building of the Chapel to be completed and his executors ensured that this occurred. Bray's badge of a hemp brake or bray (a tool used by weavers to crush hemp) was added to many areas of the Chapel as work was completed – in total it features 175 times, on doors, cornices, vault bosses and windows. Sir Reginald Bray also chose to be buried in St George's Chapel and had a chantry chapel set aside for him on the south side of the Church. His tomb is no longer visible but the Bray Chantry Chapel still bears his name and many hemp brake and other badges used by Bray can be seen throughout the Chapel.

3. The West Window (Nave)

The West Window of St George's Chapel is thought to be the third largest window in England – it is 11 metres high and 8.8 metres wide. The majority of the glass was put in place in the years just after 1500 although the window was reconstructed in 1842 by Thomas Willement. During this reconstruction he provided seven complete new figures, twenty one new heads and replaced most of the glass setting for the window and for the figures. The figures were rearranged again when the Chapel was restored between 1920 and 1930.

4. Mystery man

The man portrayed in the bottom right corner of the West Window is thought to be the master mason who was employed to undertake the vaulting of the Quire at St George's Chapel in the early 1500s. His name was William Vertue.

5. Henry VII's coat of arms (Urswick Chantry Chapel, north west end of Nave)

Henry VII is most famous for ending the Wars of the Roses fought between the two opposing factions from the houses of York and Lancaster to gain control the throne of England. Henry was a member of the Lancastrian faction and came to the throne by defeating the Yorkist leader Richard III at the battle of Bosworth Field in 1485. He secured his victory by marrying Edward IV's eldest daughter Elizabeth of York. To symbolise the political stability his victory and marriage brought, the Tudor rose motto was created by combining the white rose of York with the red rose of Lancaster.

What are the two animals on the arms?

Henry VII's arms feature a dragon as a sign of his Welsh heritage (his grandfather was Welsh and he himself was born in Wales) and a greyhound. The portcullis is a symbol which was used widely by his mother's family, the Beauforts. It was through this line that Henry VII was able to make a claim to the throne through the Beauforts' relationship to Edward III via his son John of Gaunt.

6. Katherine of Aragon's window (Quire)

This window is the same basic shape as the one to the left of it and both are part of the Edward IV Chantry Chapel. Henry VIII had the window converted at the beginning of his reign to create a comfortable and eye catching royal pew for Katherine of Aragon and her ladies to watch the Garter ceremonies from.

Why did Katherine have a pomegranate as her badge?

The pomegranate is the symbol of Granada, a city in Southern Spain which was the country of Katherine's birth. Katherine was also a close descendent of the English pre-Tudor royal family while Henry VIII was descended from an illegitimate line - displaying her badge prominently would therefore also have helped to remind people that she was legitimising the Tudor dynasty, which had previously not been recognised in all parts of Europe.

Why didn't Katherine and her ladies sit in the main part of the Chapel?

Katherine and her ladies were not Knights of the Garter so would not have been able to sit in the Quire. Viewing the ceremonies from this window would give her a much better view than she would have had from the Nave and allowed her privacy.

7. Henry VIII's ledger stone (Quire)

Which of his wives is he buried with?

Henry VIII, as instructed in his will, is buried with his third wife, Jane Seymour who died following the birth of Edward VI.

Why do you think he chose her?

Jane Seymour was the only one of Henry VIII's six wives to bear him a male heir.

Who else is buried in the vault with Henry VIII?

Charles I was buried quickly and secretly at St George's Chapel following his execution. Following the restoration of the monarchy Charles II wanted a grander memorial erected to commemorate his father but this did not occur.

Also in the vault is the body of an infant child of Queen Anne – Queen Anne was pregnant eighteen times, only six of these pregnancies resulted in live births and only one of these children lived past their second birthday.

Why do you think a powerful King like Henry VIII has such a plain burial place?

Henry VIII had planned to have a grand and elaborate tomb for himself in what is now the Albert Memorial Chapel. Unfortunately building work was not completed in his lifetime and, although he left instructions in his will that his body was only temporarily to be placed in the Quire of St George's Chapel while building work continued on his tomb, the work was never finished and his body has remained in a simple vault. The marble slab was added to mark the location of the vault in 1837.

8. Katherine of Aragon's book (South Quire Aisle exhibition)

This book, which forms part of the Chapter Library of the Dean and Canons of Windsor, was once owned by Henry VIII's first wife Katherine of Aragon. It was printed in Antwerp in 1529 and was written by Joannes (or Juan) Ludovicus Vives (1493-1540). Written in Latin, it is titled *De concordia et discordia in humano genere* (On concord and discord in humankind). Vives left his native Spain in 1509 and came to England in 1523 with the aid of Sir Thomas More. While he initially found favour at Henry VIII's court, became tutor to Princess Mary and was appointed a Reader in Humanity at Oxford University by Cardinal Wolsey, he supported Katherine of Aragon when Henry VIII divorced her and was placed under house arrest. On his release he went to Bruges. In *De Concordia* Vives discusses peace in Europe and the war against the Turks. This piece of social criticism emphasised the value of peace and the absurdity of war, advancing the idea of a League of Nations as the only remedy for preventing aggressive wars among nations. In it, Vives asserts that the first aim and object of all governing bodies must be the welfare of their people.

9. Stained glass showing Henry VIII (South Quire Aisle)

These windows are not contemporary with the Tudors that they show – they were designed and made in the 19th century by Thomas Willement, often considered the most important individual in the revival of stained glass since the medieval period. They were installed in 1846 and are noted for their colour, design and research – Willement went to particular efforts to try and ensure that the window represented the figures accurately both in terms of physical detail and in capturing the spirit of the age. From left to right the figures are: Edward VI, Henry VIII, Jane Seymour and Elizabeth I.

How can you tell that the people in the window are rich and powerful?

Thomas Willement carefully researched the physical details of his subjects, therefore the clothing, swords and jewellery of the figures proclaims their royal and wealthy status in the windows as it would have done in life.

How is Henry VIII shown to be the most important person?

In the window Henry VIII is shown in the powerful stance used for his most famous portraits – wide legged, forward facing. In addition to this all the other figures are shown looking towards him.

Why has Henry VIII's other child Mary I, been missed out of the window?

The series of windows designed by Thomas Willement feature some notable absences which seem to reflect his desire to represent only Anglican Orthodoxy and royal legitimacy. Thus Richard III is not included in the series, nor is James II. Mary was therefore likely to have been excluded for her commitment to Catholicism and attempts to return England to this form of Christianity.

10. Degraded knight (South Quire Aisle)

This is the stall plate of Thomas Howard, 4th Duke of Norfolk. He was executed for treason in the reign of Elizabeth I in 1572. In 1569 Thomas Howard had been involved in a plot led by the Roman Catholic nobility of northern England to marry him to Mary Stuart Queen of Scots. When the plot was uncovered he denied any involvement and was not executed but sent to the Tower of London. However, in 1571 he became involved in a similar plot led by Roberto di Ridolfi, an Italian who intended to have Elizabeth I assassinated and replaced with Mary Stuart to restore Roman Catholicism to England. The plot failed and Thomas Howard was executed. He was degraded from the Order of the Garter and the stall plate disappeared. It was returned to the Chapel in 1955 and placed in the South Quire Aisle.

Degradation of Knights

A Knight who was degraded from the Order would be attended on by a number of the Garter Knights who would take from him his Garter, Collar and other regalia of the Order. At the following Garter feast the degradation would be published aloud along with the reasons for it.

The degraded Knight would have his insignia removed from St George's Chapel in a ceremonial fashion (from at least the 16th century, if not earlier). The Garter King of Arms (the chief herald) would read out the Instrument for the Publication of Degradation in St George's Chapel; when he said the words "expelled and put out" a herald (who would be on a ladder at the back of the Knight's stall) threw the crest, mantling, banner and sword into the Quire. The Officer of Arms would then kick the achievements out of the Quire, through the Chapel, out of the door, across the Lower Ward and into the Castle ditch. The last formal degradation was in 1716, although Stranger (Overseas) Knights have been degraded without ceremony in the 20th century, most notably in World War One the German Knights and their Allies had their banners and stall plates removed.