



Rhif/No. 27

Autumn/Hydref 2018

A Tudor Lady



Our speaker at the September meeting was our very own Irwen. She presented us with a fascinating account of a very important Welsh woman named Blanche Parry. Blanche played an important role in the political history of England and Wales in her role as companion to Queen Elizabeth 1. Historians throughout the centuries seem to have overlooked her despite her name appearing in many court registers. Blanche was born in 1507/8 at Newcourt, Monmouthshire. She was christened at Bacton Church which she supported throughout her lifetime. Blanche was educated by her father's chaplain before being sent to a sort of finishing school run by the Augustinian nuns of Aconbury. Blanche Parry had family connections at the Royal Court through her aunt, Blanche, Lady Troy, and also William Cecil who was a cousin. Lady Troy was the Lady Mistress to Edward VI and his half-sister Elizabeth as children. From the age of about 25 or 26 until

her death, she was a servant of Queen Elizabeth, whom she served from her birth in 1533 onwards, writing in her epitaph in Bacton Church that her "cradle saw I rocked", Thereafter she hardly left Elizabeth and almost certainly attended her during her imprisonment in the Tower of London before she came to the throne. After Elizabeth's accession in 1558, and Kat Ashley's death in 1565, Parry was appointed the Chief Gentlewoman of the Privy Chamber, and was one of those who controlled access to the Queen. She was in charge of the Queen's jewels from before Elizabeth's accession, and of the Great Seal of England for two years, also of the Queen's personal papers, clothes, furs and books, many of which were presented to the Queen as New Year gifts. She received considerable sums of money on behalf of the Queen and she also wrote letters on the Queen's behalf. In addition, she supervised the Queen's linen "and other things belonging to her majesty". Blanche was paid a substantial salary of £33-6s-8d a year plus her livery and board and lodging. She became a wealthy woman as well as receiving

generous gifts from Elizabeth. She was given plots of land as well as jewels and clothes. Blanche in turn was generous to her family and others and supported the poor of the parish of Bacton. In 1918 it was realised that an altar cloth in the church had a similarity with dress designs shown in the rainbow portrait of Elizabeth I, and believed it was a gift from the queen to Blanche, who had subsequently donated it to her parish church. The cloth has recently been identified as of late sixteenth-century origin, and while there is no documentary evidence linking it directly to Queen Elizabeth, curators stated that it is extremely likely to have once belonged to the queen.

Blanche Parry died in 1590, aged 82. She was buried in St. Margaret's Church, Westminster, with the rank of baroness, the queen having paid all her funeral expenses. Two monuments to her memory survive, her tomb monument in St Margaret's, Westminster and the monument in Bacton Church, Herefordshire.



Although Blanche was an important member of the Royal Court she is frequently overlooked. However she does feature in the recently published novel Tombland by C.J.Sansom.

Harvest Supper

In October we gathered for our annual Harvest Supper. As always there was an abundance of food of the usual excellent high standard. Entertainment was provided through conversation as it was a chance to catch up with each other's news.



A gold star for our chief washer upper who always does a great job.

Bring and Buy

Our November meeting was a Bring and Buy sale. Members brought a vast array of items to be sold such as books, pictures, jewellery, china, CDs and DVDs to name but a few categories. The buying was brisk - as soon as the items were placed on the tables they were snapped up by eager shoppers. Members were asked to pay for the items with reasonable donations. We raised an amazing £217-30p which was for a children's charity in Wales



When all the buying was over, Morfydd gave us some thinking challenges to complete. For example, we were asked to make a list of names that also meant something else such as Carol, May, Faith etc. Other categories were place names in alphabetical order, indoor or table top games. Some members managed to produce amazingly long lists. It certainly gave our brains some exercise!



Nadolig Llawen



The December meeting was of course our Natter, Nosh and Noggin meeting. The evening was hosted by Morfydd and Tony who led us through a programme of carols, poems and readings. Ellen on the keyboard provided the accompaniment for our carol singing. Most of the carols were sung in English but we were able to sing alternate verses of a few of the carols in Welsh.



Carwyn had requested that the collection would be for the Welsh School in Patagonia and £146 was raised.



The catering was magnificent as always with the table fully laden with a myriad of culinary creations. When we had completed our feast Carl distributed a Christmas quiz which he had compiled. It was fun and informative.



The Christmas post was distributed and with plenty of Natter and Nosh completed it was time to say "Nadolig Llawen a Blwyddyn Newydd Dda".

