

This is a letter in Latin, dated 24 July 1520, from a French monk who was travelling through France at the time of the Field of the Cloth of Gold, and provides an eyewitness account for his correspondent. Text from Vatican Library Reg. Lat. 1502, translated by Prof. Stephen Bamforth and reproduced with his permission.

Of the French court and camp at the Field of the Cloth of Gold, I could not say anything magnificent about it, other perhaps than on the subject of the royal pavilion, made in its entirety of the most precious cloth of gold; those who have seen it – for we did not see it ourselves, given that shortly before it had fallen to the ground beaten by the force of the wind and the rain – indeed praise, celebrate and admire it, but it is as nothing compared to the [English temporary] palace at Guines, as even the French witnesses admit... Whosoever has seen it can do nothing other than admire and adulate its builder.

From nearby towns, and indeed from far-flung lands an innumerable throng has been drawn by the report of such a magnificent palace to contemplate in it the wisdom of the King of England. Add to this the ‘dishes of his table’ and the silence and order of the kitchens, for I myself stepped within the kitchens and inspected every detail, without anyone warning me off or saying a word. Add further, I say, ‘the accommodation for the servants, the cup-bearers and the ranks of the attendants and the beauty of their livery’, the huge cups and other silver and gold vessels of this kind. Add, as a third [element to single out] the infinitely beautiful and incredibly rich chapel, in which you could find nothing wanting, silver organ, no less than twenty chaplains, chanting the daily services with care and in a respectful manner, the two oratories of the King and the Queen, and in each of them, dear God! So much silver and gold, so many jewels, so many riches and such opulence, such great magnificence as never before now seen by human eye:...

In the English camp everything was arranged with perfect order and peace, no one other than well dressed, no quarrelling, no prostitutes, to sum up you could see nothing disordered or anything which might have shocked your eyes. Our court on the other hand – everyone knows what it is like. But, so as not to make it seem as if I pay all the tributes to the English, leaving us without any glory, I am sure that we showed ourselves to be superior in the ostentation of our clothing, the number of men, the jousting and the glory of other games; but in truth that [little] glory is totally obscured, swallowed and extinguished by the magnificence of this palace, even temporary [as it is]; this we report with a heavy heart, but the truth comes first. Nor was it difficult – unlike on our side – to be admitted into it. It was open all the time to all. For anybody entering the English were always present and at hand, priests, nobles, men of all rank, who accompanied visitors according to their status and rank. They took them round each and every part of the palace, pointing out even the most private rooms, and as was befitting of this royal magnificence, no visitor left without having drunk, and then of the very best wine. One priest-courtier who had shown me round, and others who were with me, at the end of the visit, took us into the wine cellar, where from the cask itself he offered us to drink the finest wine from a great golden cup filled to the brim... I had the chance to see with my own eyes, right before me, the King of England himself, and next to him, riding on his right, his Cardinal, with his robes reaching to his ankles and his cap on his head.

**A list of members of the Chapel Royal of Henry VIII
who attended the Field of the Cloth of Gold**

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June-July

Members of the Chapel present at the 'enterview w^t the frenche
king' [The Field of the Cloth of Gold]:

The Chapel

Sir Roger Norton, sub-dean

Sir Willm. Toft
Sir John Cole
Sir John Muldre
Sir Andrew Young

Sir Thoms. Hal
Sir Willm. Blakeden
Sir Richard Elys

Robert Fairefax
John Lloid
John Sudborow
Willm. Cornysh
Robert Penne
John Wen
John Fisher
Willm. Daubeney
Thoms. Farthing
Henry Stevinson

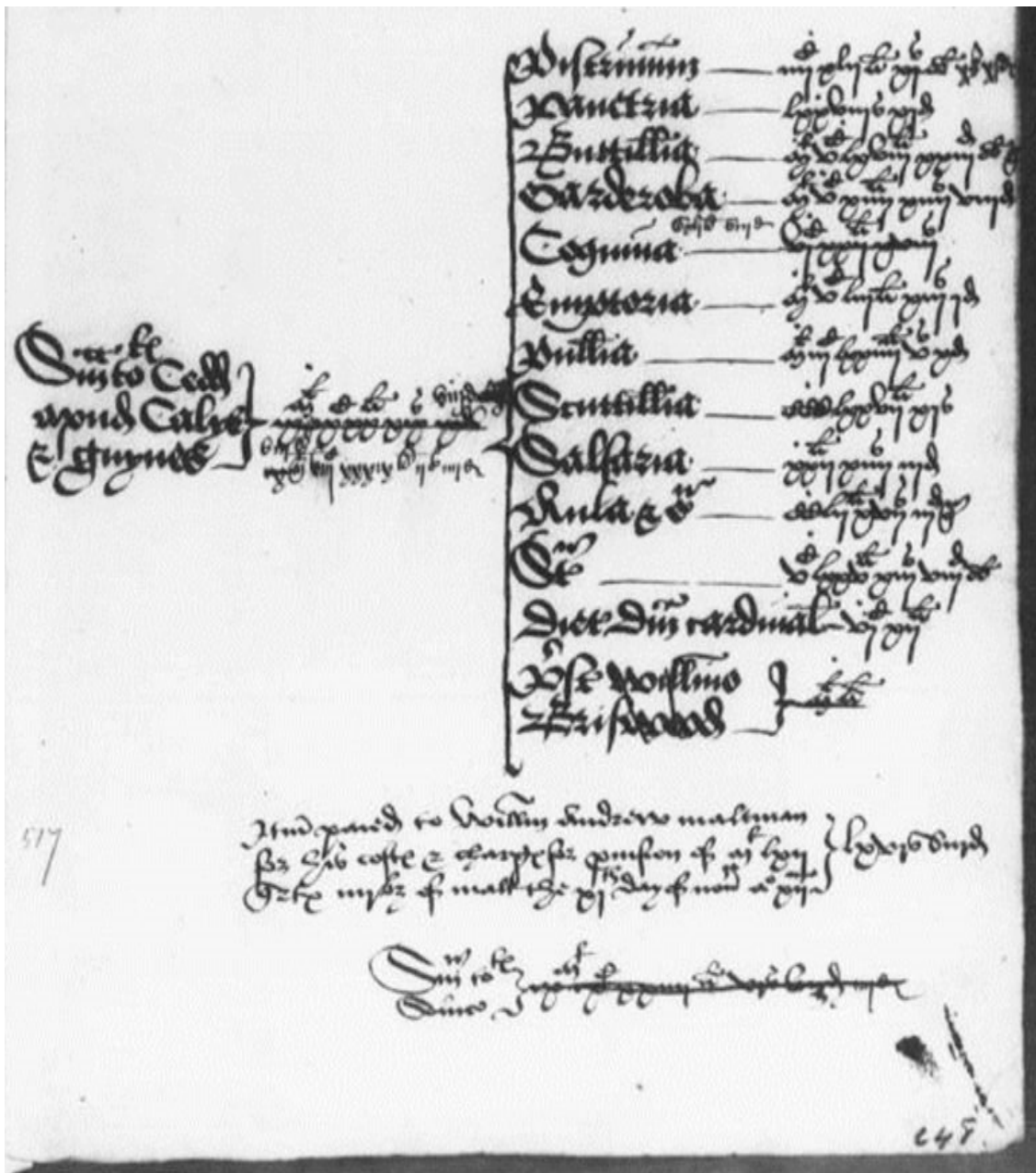
Robert Hawkyns
Davy Burton
John Giles
Thoms, Bury
John Tyl
Willm. Colman
Thoms. Cheyny
Willm. Hogeskyn
Robert Jones
Willm. Crane

Sir Robert Cotes, gopeller
Sir John Whetwood, pisteler
Willm. Rothewel
John Bunting
Nicholas Horneclif
Willm. Lambe
Geoffrey Morice
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From accounts for Henry VIII's household at Calais and Guisnes

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The transcription is also taken from the National Archives.



The costs of provisioning of Henry VIII's household at Calais and Guisnes:

Bakery: £442, Pantry: 78s 11d, Buttery: £1,568, Wardrobe: £1514,
 Kitchen: £541, Actary: £1,554, Poultry: £1,004, Scullery: £377,
 Saucery: £22, Hall: £252, Cardinal's diet: £612

31 May–16 July 1520: £9,920 19s 8d

Image of a knight, possibly Henry VIII, taken from a sixteenth-century manuscript. This may be Henry at the Field of the Cloth of Gold, but this is not certain.

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