



## The Queen as Lady of the Manor: The Economic Agency of the Tudor Queen Consorts in relation to their Manorial Interests

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### Abstract

England's Tudor queen consorts became major landowners following their marriages, with economic agency a potential route to political power for women. This paper examines how the seven Tudor queen consorts administered their lands and the extent to which they took a direct interest in their business and economic affairs. This includes an analysis of the ways in which lands could produce an income, the differences in approach taken by the queens when compared to each other and the significance of the fact that they held only a life interest in the lands, something that impacted how the lands could be commercialized.

**Keywords:** Manor, Landholdings, Jointure, Queenship, Indentures

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## Introduction

One day before his marriage to Catherine of Aragon on June 11, 1509, Henry VIII issued letters patent (subsequently confirmed by Act of Parliament) setting out her jointure, which was a grant of lands from which she was primarily expected to draw her income both during her marriage and following widowhood.<sup>1</sup> Catherine received similar lands to her late mother-in-law, Elizabeth of York, while her grant would be followed a further five times during the reign of her much-married husband, as he made provision to allow his queens to live in a style befitting their newfound rank. In all cases the queens were explicitly granted the English Common Law status of *femme sole* which gave them the right to administer the lands themselves, something that was contrary to the usual position of married women in the period but accorded with the position of their medieval predecessors who were similarly designated *femme sole*. Due to these grants, the seven Tudor queen consorts were amongst the kingdom's most substantial landowners, ruling as ladies of the manor over a diverse range of holdings across England and Wales which were expected to produce a considerable income and required extensive administration. Since the identification of economic agency can be a route to a greater understanding of the political role of the queen consort, it is crucial to consider their landed estates. Can we see evidence of the queen consorts—as *femme sole*—taking direct control over their landholding and, if so, in what ways?

English queens held their landed estates as part of their jointure or dower, terms which were used interchangeably in the sixteenth century, in spite of the fact that they were distinct. These jointures were handed over to their control immediately to be used for the remainder of their lives. It has long been recognized that a queen's power, although ultimately deriving from the king, was linked to her economic revenue and laid the basis for political influence (Attila Bárány 2013, 149; Michele Seah 2025; Seah 2020, 10; Seah and Katia Wright 2020, 9; Retha M. Warnicke 2017, 86). Seah (2025, 3), for example, in her work on England's late fifteenth-century queens, considered that these economic resources were “the practical foundations upon which the queen's role and life rested”, with the queen's lands providing them with the ability to provide patronage to build social and political networks. Recent work on the economic agency of queens in the medieval period and within a wider European context have drawn similar conclusions, demonstrating the extensive and direct role that these women could undertake in relation to their landed interests (for example, Amalie Föbel 2005; John Carmi Parsons 1998; Ana Maria Rodrigues and Manuela Santos Silva 2010, Wright 2022). The Tudor dynasty in England produced seven queen consorts: Elizabeth of York, the wife of Henry VII (married 1486, died 1503) and Henry VIII's six wives: Catherine of Aragon (married 1509, marriage annulled 1533), Anne Boleyn (married 1533, beheaded 1536), Jane Seymour (married 1536, died 1537), Anne of Cleves (married and marriage annulled in 1540), Catherine Howard (married 1540, beheaded 1542) and Catherine Parr (married 1543, died 1548). Seah's work on Elizabeth of York's finances has provided a picture of the queen as an active financial manager, but the activity of her six daughters-in-law in relation to their jointures remains understudied, even when a particular queen has been the subject of a scholarly work.

This may be due to a disinclination in the sixteenth century to assign agency to women, although over the last few decades women's political agency has been increasingly recognized (Susan D. Amussen 1988, 1; 1995, 679-685; Anthony Fletcher 1999; Barbara J. Harris 1990; Christine Peters 2000, 63-96; 2004). Works on the queens' medieval predecessors have similarly

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<sup>1</sup> Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII, 21 vols. 1864-1920. London: HMSO. [hereafter L&P] I 94 (35 and 36).

demonstrated that agency and active involvement in the running of their estates is to be expected, with an individual queens' direct involvement dependent on their own personalities, as well as the circumstances of their time (Anne Crawford 2001; Seah 2020; Wright 2022). The seven Tudor queen consorts were expected to take direct control of their jointure lands, while assisted in the administration (as all landowners were) by a substantial team of officials and servants. As Katia Wright identified in her work on the fourteenth century queen consorts of England, "as the lord of her estates, the queen was expected to exercise all the rights and responsibilities exacted by any other landowner: administering her properties and benefitting from their outgoings and profits" (Wright 2022, 103). That is not to say that they, like other major landowners, were involved in the day to day running of their estates, but the starting point should be an assumption of their active involvement in the administration of their lands.

With the grants of their jointures the seven Tudor queen consorts became ladies of the manor of a vast swathe of lands in England and Wales and, thus, the heads of a considerable income producing business. This paper will consider the way in which this business was administered, looking for evidence of the queens themselves having agency in the administration of their lands. The breadth of this subject, both in terms of the lands and the queens themselves, means that it is something of a survey, with it hoped that it will lead to significant further study, focusing on each queen in greater depth. A study of the queens' economic agency is also hampered by differential survival rates of sources, with Anne Boleyn and Jane Seymour particularly well represented with a very high number of surviving lease indentures, something which allows comparisons to be drawn between the same manors and tenants. Only Elizabeth of York and Anne of Cleves have surviving accounts while, for Catherine Parr, the extensive correspondence of her auditor, Anthony Bouchier survives, as do a high number of her warrants granting venison from her estates as gifts. This, not unnaturally, will skew the conclusions that can be drawn, with Catherine of Aragon particularly poorly represented, with documents relating to her finances and land management highly scattered and sparse. Nonetheless, enough information survives from her reign, and those of her predecessor and successors to make general statements about the ways in which she, and the other Tudor queen consorts were making use of their estates. They should be viewed within the context of considerable landowners and as active ladies of the manor in their own right. This article will discuss the framework of Tudor queens' landownership and administration, reinstating them to their central place at the heart of one of the largest landed businesses in the kingdom.

### **The Queen's Agency in Relation to her Manors**

Female landowners have, historically, been considered to have had little agency in the management of their own affairs, although this position has begun to change in recent decades, including work carried out by Barbara J. Harris (2002) in relation to aristocratic widows as landowners and the work of Seah (2025) on the finances of England's late medieval queens. While a queen's direct involvement in the running of her estates obviously depended on her own personality, the starting point should be that she was likely to have held at least a supervisory role over her financial management. Indeed, Henry VIII's English queens, who were themselves the daughters of English landowners, would have been raised to run estates of their own and can be expected to have considerable understanding of landownership. In line with other major landowners the queens could, and did, take an interest in their landed estates and in some cases, they exhibited very considerable power. Recent works on England's queen consorts have moved away from earlier assumptions of passivity which were reflective of attitudes to women, despite the fact that a considerable body of evidence exists for upper class women from the medieval

period playing an active role in land administration (Rowena E. Archer 1997, 169; Harris 2002; Seah 2025; Seah 2020, 30-32).

One way in which this is evidenced is in relation to manorial appointments, which, given their considerable number, were an important source of patronage for the queen (Michelle Beer 2019; Seah 2025; Wright 2022). As John Husee, London agent to the Calais-based Lord Lisle noted on the day of Anne Boleyn's execution, "the most part of the late Queen's servants be set at liberty to seek service at pleasure", something which indicates that there was no automatic right of transfer in service from one queen to that of her successor and that, as such, these appointments were usually the new queen's to grant, although the king might expect some input (Muriel St Clare Byrne 1981, vol III, 366). This does not mean that they entirely swept away their predecessor's officials, with it clear from surviving records that queens were prepared to retain many of their predecessor's officers and servants, something that is particularly observable in the queenship of Anne of Cleves, for whom the administration of her jointure began even before she had first arrived in England, with Anne making no recorded manorial appointments during her brief queenship (James Taffe 2026, 21, 68). Other queens also retained officials. For example, Henry Criche remained as bailiff of Hitchin in Hertfordshire following Anne Boleyn's execution, although he was removed from the same role at Weston beside Baldock in Hertfordshire.<sup>2</sup> He was evidently in some favor with Jane Seymour, since he served as her clerk of the wardrobe, just as he had done for her predecessor, with it understandable that queens would wish to retain the services of competent officials, at least for the time being.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, we can see this in the case of John Uvedale, who had served as secretary to Anne Boleyn and was retained by Jane Seymour on a temporary basis in the same role until her chosen secretary, George Cotton, who was a close associate of her brother's, was free to take up the role some months later.<sup>4</sup> Uvedale's appointment to manorial office by Jane may have been his compensation for the loss of his employment.

In some cases manorial officers who were retained were local men whom the queen may have considered it expedient to keep in office, something which was a very common practice amongst large landowners. John Verney, who came from a locally prominent family, served both Anne Boleyn and Jane Seymour as Steward and Keeper of the Parks of Berkhamsted and King's Langley in Hertfordshire, for example.<sup>5</sup> While there was continuity, there are also clear examples of queens making their own appointments. Catherine of Aragon's chamberlain was Lord Mountjoy, who had married one of her Spanish attendants. Anne Boleyn's uncle, James Boleyn, served as his niece's chancellor, while Catherine Parr's brother, William Parr, brother-in-law, William Herbert and relative Robert Tyrwhit all served on her council.<sup>6</sup> Jane Seymour, too, appointed her associates to manorial office or her council. In 1537 her brother, Edward Seymour, became steward of her manor of Gillingham in Dorset.<sup>7</sup> Her brother, Henry, received considerable career advancement under his sister, including becoming Jane's Receiver at the manors of Berkhamsted and King's Langley, Steward of Whaddon in Buckinghamshire and Bailiff of Hampstead Marshall in Berkshire.<sup>8</sup> He would be removed by the king from his stewardship of the manor and park of Langley Marish in Buckinghamshire in June 1538, indicating his reliance on

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<sup>2</sup> The National Archives [hereafter TNA] SP 1/126 f.8.

<sup>3</sup> L&P XII ii 1343; L&P X 913.

<sup>4</sup> TNA SP1/127 f.37; BL Cotton Titus B/I f.498.

<sup>5</sup> TNA E 298/28; TNA E 211/306; TNA E 326/12203.

<sup>6</sup> TNA E 298/52.

<sup>7</sup> TNA E 329/329.

<sup>8</sup> L&P XII, pt II 975.

his sister's patronage.<sup>9</sup> Henry Seymour would serve subsequent queens to a limited extent, but the manorial office he attained under his sister was a high point in a somewhat undistinguished career.<sup>10</sup>

That queens were also prepared to remove servants from office suggests that they paid close attention to their estates. Jane Seymour removed Thomas Partridge, who was a local man with strong connections, from his role as collector of rents at King's Langley by late 1536, perhaps because he then owed her over 19 shillings in rent, which was still outstanding at her death.<sup>11</sup> Catherine of Aragon similarly had to deal with a case in 1516 where her appointee to manorial office at Grafton attempted to sell the office he had received, causing the queen to confiscate the 12 oak trees that had been given to him as his fee, as well as a further two trees that the man who had attempted to buy the office had felled. In a letter addressed to Catherine's Chancellor, her officers at Grafton were concerned that "in the Queen's ground here every man is for himself and none for the Queen".<sup>12</sup> It was not always easy for the queen, as an absentee landlord, to select loyal and competent officers, particularly given the sometimes competing pulls of patronage and familial obligations.

There were, of course, some manorial or council officers who served multiple queens, such as Sir Edward Baynton, who was vice chamberlain to Anne Boleyn and all subsequent queens up to his death in 1544, while Anne Boleyn's receiver general, George Taylor, also served Jane Seymour for a time and Thomas Manners, Earl of Rutland served as Lord Chamberlain to Jane Seymour, Anne of Cleves and Catherine Howard. The continuation of these officers obscures the fact that queens did have choice over the appointments. Wymond Carew, for example, served as Receiver General to Jane Seymour, Anne of Cleves and Catherine Parr, but there was a gap in his service between 1540 and 1542, when Catherine Howard declined to appoint him. He was also a German speaker, making his appointment with Anne of Cleves highly likely and, indeed, welcomed by her since it was probably through him that she was able to understand her surviving account book, which was signed by her on multiple pages (Taffe 2026, 31). John Smith served as surveyor to Anne Boleyn and all subsequent queens until his death in 1545. Within weeks of the grant of Jane Seymour's jointure in 1536 he undertook a survey of her lands in the West Country.<sup>13</sup> While he wrote from Wiltshire to report to the king's chief minister, Thomas Cromwell, it is clear that he viewed himself as being ultimately answerable to Jane, speaking in his letter of returning to Jane once the survey was completed. John Smith was the brother of Jane's sister's husband, although she does not appear to have held him in particular favor. Although he remained her Surveyor up until her death, she removed him from his position as bailiff of Hitchin, an appointment which had been made by Anne Boleyn.<sup>14</sup> He found favor again during Catherine Howard's brief queenship, being appointed as her Receiver General.<sup>15</sup>

The surviving correspondence of Catherine Parr's Auditor, Anthony Bouchier, is particularly illuminating about the day to day running of her estates, with it clear that Bouchier was believed to have considerable power to grant patronage in his own right. In a letter addressed to him from William Boys in February 1546, for example, his correspondent requested that Bouchier "be good lord unto my sonne and to accept hym in to your service whereof he is much

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<sup>9</sup> L&P 13 pt I 1309 (37).

<sup>10</sup> L&P 19 pt I 610 (33).

<sup>11</sup> L&P XII pt II 974.

<sup>12</sup> TNA SP 1/231 f.310.

<sup>13</sup> TNA SP1/104 f.212.

<sup>14</sup> TNA SP1/127 f.37; L&P VII 352; TNA SP 1/126 f.8.

<sup>15</sup> TNA SP 1/169 f.43.

desyrus".<sup>16</sup> Bouchier's appointment was lucrative, with examples surviving of manorial officers and tenants offering sums of money for preferential treatment.<sup>17</sup> Anthony Bouchier clearly had considerable autonomy in his service to the queen, but the fact that he, along with the rest of Catherine's council, went with her to her dower house of Chelsea following the death of Henry VIII in January 1547, suggests that they had a close working relationship, something that would be expected with the close contact expected between a queen and her council (Crawford 2001).<sup>18</sup> A surviving letter by Catherine to Bouchier from September 1545 also demonstrates her involvement in the management of her estates.<sup>19</sup> In it, she informed Bouchier that she had made John Coke her general receiver and ordered him to inform her manorial officers that the rent due should therefore be paid to Coke.

The Queen's Council, which primarily sat at Westminster, was responsible for the administration of the queen's lands, as is evident from surviving records. For example, an early document relating to Catherine of Aragon's queenship, concerned the park at Whaddon in Buckinghamshire, with interrogatories drafted to discover how many oak trees had been felled and carried out of the park since the death of Thomas Pygott, the queen's tenant there, as well as how much underwood had been sold.<sup>20</sup> Catherine of Aragon's council also took action for rent arrears, as well as mediating in disputes between tenants on her manors.<sup>21</sup>

In the main, the council was capable of functioning without the queen's direct involvement. However, there are examples in the surviving documents of the queen taking a direct interest, which is suggestive of the queen playing at least a supervisory role. A bill of complaint from Anne Boleyn's tenants at Edlogan in Wales concerns attempts being made by her steward to move the manor court to Caerleon, ignoring the fact that the tenants had paid Anne 500 marks to ensure that it remained local to them at Llanfrechfa in Monmouthshire.<sup>22</sup> Any move was "contrary to the Queens commandment and yourselves and contrary to all the other promisses", the tenants considered, suggesting that Anne likely knew about the agreement over Edlogan's court, particularly since she received a substantial payment for it.<sup>23</sup> It is also interesting that the tenants felt that they could have success in a direct appeal to the queen's council, even though it placed them at odds with the queen's own steward.

Direct involvement did vary between queens, something that was likely to be due to their background and personality. Catherine Parr, who had been married previously to the landowner Lord Latimer in whose affairs she had assisted, certainly took a direct interest in the running of her estates. A document drafted by her council to George Norton, a tenant of her manor of Rhyl in Glamorgan states that "we require and comaund you in the Quenes Highness name to appere before us at Chelsey nigh London the tenth daie of May next following and to bring with you the money dew for the ferme of the queens hignes manor of Royle", which was three and a half years overdue.<sup>24</sup> The document is dated to April 23, 1547, when Catherine was living at Chelsea, indicating that her council was with her, presumably so that she could keep a close eye on its business. At around the same time, Catherine also signed a letter complaining that "we be

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<sup>16</sup> TNA SP 1/213 f.224.

<sup>17</sup> For example, TNA SP 1/445 f.70; TNA SP 1/195 f.220.

<sup>18</sup> TNA E 298/52.

<sup>19</sup> L&P 20 pt II 440.

<sup>20</sup> TNA E 298/34.

<sup>21</sup> TNA E 298/25; TNA E 298/29; TNA E 298/26.

<sup>22</sup> TNA E 298/33.

<sup>23</sup> TNA E 298/33.

<sup>24</sup> TNA E 298/52.

enformed howe that in all our fforests and chace generally through owtt all our possessions greate waste and distrupcion have byn heretofore made and don”.<sup>25</sup> Catherine had been informed that the keepers and foresters in her forests had been taking trees without permission as their ‘ffee trees’, something that she had heard was especially prevalent in Gillingham Forest and Park, “to the grete waast and utter decay of our woddes ther except the sooner remedy be provided for the same”. Declaring that she was not willing for this to continue, she wrote to “desire you and also straitly commande you when convenient leisure to repaire to our said fforest and park of Gillingham”, ordering her commissioner to then discharge her keepers and foresters there in her name.<sup>26</sup> She was clearly prepared to take a direct interest in her landed interests if she felt that they were being mismanaged. There was earlier precedent for this. In a letter addressed to Sir William Stoner, which probably dates to 1482, Elizabeth Woodville, queen of Edward IV, had similarly taken direct action after hearing of concerning conduct in one of her forests. She complained that she had heard he was killing her deer, before informing him that she intended to take legal action against him. She commanded him to “shew unto us or our counsell your said comission, if any suche ye have. And in the mean season that ye spare of huntyng withynne our said fforest and chace, as ye wol answere at your perill” (Christine Carpenter 1996, 150-151). The evidence of both Elizabeth Woodville and Catherine Parr, although limited, clearly demonstrated that queens were prepared to take their own action should they perceive their rights or income to be threatened.

There are other small but important hints of queens taking a direct supervisory role in their lands. Elizabeth of York and Anne of Cleves, the only Tudor queen consorts with surviving privy purse accounts, both signed the pages of their account books, indicating that they approved the contents. The surviving privy purse accounts for Princess Mary were similarly signed by her, while she also amended entries and annotated them in her own hand, indicating a high level of oversight. Contemporaries certainly did not consider the queen’s landownership to be a mere cipher, as a letter from John Husee to Lord Lisle of September 1537 hints. He noted that a manor which Lisle was hoping to acquire “is not in the king’s gift, for if it had been your lordship had had it. But the Queen’s Grace is very dangerous and will in manner grant none, so that for so small cause I mind not to attempt her Grace” (St Clare Byrne vol IV, 392). The court-based Husee evidently considered that Jane Seymour played a direct role in her landholdings. While, for the most part, the council operated independently, the queen could, and sometimes, did, direct its proceedings. She was undoubtedly recognized as its head.

This can also be seen in relation to the use of the queen’s lands in gift giving, which was an important part of aristocratic culture (Felicity Heal 2014). There is evidence of queens dealing directly with their keepers and other officeholders at their parks, both demonstrating agency in relation to their lands and the importance of this gift giving to them politically. Both Elizabeth of York and Jane Seymour made gifts of bucks to members of the court, for example.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, many of Elizabeth’s bucks were sourced from Jane’s father, Sir John Seymour, who was the hereditary warden of Savernake Forest, which was part of the queens’ jointures. We can assume through this that Jane was familiar with the mechanisms of queenly gift giving even before her own marriage. A number of similar warrants signed by Catherine Parr exist from Henry VIII’s death in January 1547 until her own death in 1548. For example, she ordered the keeper of her park at Hunsdon in Hertfordshire to deliver a buck to Edmund Bull, who was one of Edward VI’s footmen, early in

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<sup>25</sup> TNA E101/426/3 f.22.

<sup>26</sup> TNA E101/426/3 f.22.

<sup>27</sup> The British Library [hereafter BL] Cotton Vespasian F/III.

the reign, while another buck was sent to Sir John Cheke, the king's tutor.<sup>28</sup> Catherine clearly used her parks as a means of shoring up support at court during her widowhood, for example ordering that a buck be delivered from Hunsdon to Dr Ridley, "one of the kings ordynarie chaplayns" on July 30, 1548.<sup>29</sup> She also used these gifts as a means of patronizing her own servants, something that was required of good lordship, for example writing personally to the keeper of Hunsdon for a buck for Mr Cotton, a member of her Privy Chamber.<sup>30</sup> Other warrants requested bucks for "oure friende Master Gylbert" and "oure servant Robert Warrener".<sup>31</sup> Most of these requests were personally signed by Catherine and were written as though from her, including being addressed "to the keeper of our parke", indicating direct oversight.<sup>32</sup> The few warrants not signed by her instead refer to her in the third person, suggesting that a distinction was made between those grants that Catherine was personally involved in and those that she was not.<sup>33</sup> Given the political importance of these gifts, it is likely that Catherine viewed her estates as a resource that she could use to bolster her position. Royal and aristocratic gift exchange is well known as a way in which alliances could be built and maintained, with Catherine's landed wealth as queen of considerable importance to her in this regard.

Queens only had a life interest in their lands, which meant that they reverted to the crown on their deaths, with all of the grants they made similarly lapsing. This will be discussed more fully below, although it should be noted that this form of ownership clearly impacted the ways in which queens were able to raise income from their lands, as well as the leases that they entered into. The specific queen was always named as a party to these leases, with the usual recital "that the said Queen by thadvise of her counsell" had taken the decision to grant the tenancy. As Anne Crawford identified in her work on the queens' council, "each queen was the driving force that kept the administration running. Every writ and order was phrased as if it were her personal command, as indeed it sometimes was" (Crawford 2001, 1195). While queens were distinct from other female landowners from the period due to their married status, it is clear that aristocratic widows could be, and usually were, directly involved in the running of their estates (Harris 2002, 127). There is no reason to presume otherwise for queens. There was a clear change in policy from Anne Boleyn to Jane Seymour in relation to the granting of new tenancies (see below), while Catherine Parr is known to have built a mill in 1546 on her manor of Thorpe Achurch in Northamptonshire, which also provides evidence of the queen directly taking steps to increase the profitability of her landholding (also see below).<sup>34</sup> It should not be a surprise that Tudor queen consorts could be active landowners, with Princesses Mary and Elizabeth similarly active in relation to their own landholdings in the period before their respective accessions, indicating clear evidence of female agency amongst the wider royal family (J.L. McIntosh 2010). Indeed, as J.L. McIntosh considered in her work on the pre-accession households of Mary and Elizabeth, their ability to read Latin placed them at a significant advantage as landowners since they could read the Latin of the conveyancing documents and accounts, a skill which several of the queen consorts, such as Catherine of Aragon and Catherine Parr undoubtedly shared (McIntosh 2010, 122). Cecily Neville, mother of Edward IV has similarly been identified as active in the management of her own estates, working closely with her officials (J.L. Laynesmith 2017, 107-9). While the interest

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<sup>28</sup> TNA E 101/426/3 f.2; f.31.

<sup>29</sup> TNA E101/426/3 f.3.

<sup>30</sup> TNA E101/426/3 f.5.

<sup>31</sup> TNA E101/426/3 f.7; f.14.

<sup>32</sup> TNA E101/426/3 f.2, 3, 5, 6, 15, 16, 17, 20, 23, 25, 25, 27, 28, 31.

<sup>33</sup> TNA E101/426/3 f.4, 18, 44.

<sup>34</sup> TNA SP 1/445 f.149.

shown by the Tudor queen consorts in their landholdings undoubtedly varied, both direct and indirect evidence confirms that their agency must be presumed.

### The Queens Lands as Income Producing Assets

It is, of course, understandable that queens would seek to control their landholdings given the importance of these resources to their political and social role, as well as their jointure's economic centrality to their queenships. Medieval and Tudor Queens were expected to maintain their households and pay their expenses entirely from their own revenues, with such funds also required by them to dispense patronage and to build political relationships (Dakota L. Hamilton 1998, 90; Seah 2025; Seah 2020, 10; Warnicke 2017, 86). By the Tudor period in England, the jointures were the queens' only reliable source of income, with Queen's Gold, which was a ten per cent payment for any voluntary fine paid to the king for charters, pardons and some other privileges, and which had been an important source of income for England's medieval queens, almost negligible by the end of the fifteenth century (William Prynne 1668, 120-122). There is evidence that the queens attempted to claim it, but it cannot have provided much—if any—income. Certainly, in Elizabeth of York's 1502-1503 privy purse accounts the heading for "Aurum Regine" contains no entries at all,<sup>35</sup> although there is some limited evidence of that queen attempting to collect these payments (Seah 2025, 44-46). Given the sparse evidence, it was not likely to have been "a financially valuable resource for Elizabeth of York" (Seah 2025, 46). Medieval queens, although to a lesser extent, had also found the collection of this revenue to be problematic (Louise Tingle 2020, 85).

Queens could access more informal forms of income, although surviving accounts of queens or royal women in the Tudor period are very limited, making these difficult to identify. Only one year of Elizabeth of York's privy purse accounts survive (for March 1502-March 1503). During that year she secured £500 by borrowing against her plate.<sup>36</sup> She also received substantial payments from her husband in earlier years, including £1314 11s 6d to pay her debts in 1493 (Samuel Bentley 1831, 95). Anne of Cleves' accounts, which survive for her brief marriage to Henry VIII, show no direct payments from the king, suggesting that her jointure lands were sufficient to meet her expenses.<sup>37</sup> After the annulment of her marriage and the surrender of her jointure Henry VIII did make *ad hoc* payments to her, in addition to her financial settlement, which suggests that the king was prepared to augment the income of his female family members when required, something which is also apparent from the surviving privy purse accounts of his daughter, Princess Mary (Frederick Madden 1831).<sup>38</sup> Such irregular payments were difficult to rely on. Catherine of Aragon surrendered her widow's jointure from her first marriage to Arthur, Prince of Wales (d.1502) when she was betrothed to his younger brother, leaving her dependent on payments from her father, Ferdinand II of Aragon and father-in-law, Henry VII. Catherine resorted to taking loans or selling her jewelry and plate to pay her household wages and buy food, with Henry VII informing her (as she complained to her father) "that he is not obliged to give me anything, and that even the food he gives me is of his goodwill" (Mary Anne Everett Wood 1846, 126-154). Catherine, who was then the highest-ranking woman in England was financially vulnerable without a landed settlement.

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<sup>35</sup> TNA E 36/210 f.15, <https://www.tudorchamberbooks.org>.

<sup>36</sup> TNA E 36/210 f.14, <https://www.tudorchamberbooks.org>.

<sup>37</sup> TNA E 101/422/15.

<sup>38</sup> L&P 20 pt II 184 and 516; L&P 21 pt II 407.

A Tudor queen's landed interests therefore provided her only reliable source of funds, something which the queens themselves acknowledged. These varied in value and in the lands that were included in the grants from queen to queen, although many of the manors were invariably included. For example, King's Langley in Hertfordshire was granted to the medieval queens Eleanor of Castile, Isabella of France and Joan of Navarre, before Edward IV granted it to his mother, Cecily Neville. On her death, it was given to Elizabeth of York, with Henry VIII passing it to Catherine of Aragon, whose jointure lands were mostly confiscated with the annulment of her marriage, and then Anne Boleyn and Jane Seymour.<sup>39</sup> Berkhamsted in Hertfordshire had similarly been held by Elizabeth of York, Catherine of Aragon and Anne Boleyn before being granted to Jane Seymour, amongst many other examples.<sup>40</sup> There was, however, no certainty that manors would be included in an individual queen's jointure, with Elizabeth of York's complicated by the survival of her grandmother, Cecily Neville, Duchess of York, who held many of the traditional queens' lands following grants from her son, Edward IV. Elizabeth received a grant of the reversion of Cecily's estates in 1492, adding them to her jointure on her grandmother's death three years later (Seah 2025, 18). During the two-year gap between his third and fourth marriages, Henry VIII leased some of the properties commonly associated with a queen's jointure, rendering them unavailable to his subsequent queens.<sup>41</sup> He was, however, able to include confiscated monastic property in the jointures of his final three queens.

The Tudor queens generally received less than the annual income of some of their medieval predecessors, with Joan of Navarre, Catherine of Valois and Margaret of Anjou receiving the substantial sum of 10,000 marks (£6600) per year and earlier queens around £4500 per year. Elizabeth Woodville (wife of Edward IV) and her successors received a grant of lands without the promise of a guaranteed income, something that can be contrasted with that of earlier queens, such as Margaret of Anjou. As such, their incomes fluctuated, while they were arguably also strongly incentivized to increase the profitability of their estates. James Taffe, in his work on Anne of Cleves' accounts, for example, has calculated that in period from the constitution of her jointure in 1539 until the end of her queenship, she received £3856 11s 6d (Taffe 2026, 24). Catherine Howard's receiver general, John Smith, collected £9324 in rents for the one and a half years of her queenship, while Wymond Carew, receiver general to Jane Seymour and Anne of Cleves accounted for £17,374 in rents for the four and a half years that included Jane's marriage, the period between her death and the arrival of Anne of Cleves and Anne's brief queenship.<sup>42</sup> These figures suggest that queens in this period could hope to collect around £4000 per year in rents, with a potential increase under Catherine Howard.

As is recognized by historians in relation to other English and European queens, there were several ways in which land could be used to provide an income (Susan Broomhall and Clare Davidson 2025). Queen consorts sometimes excluded church and advowson rights (the legal right to nominate a candidate for a vacant church benefice), timber (the right to cut down mature trees) and underwood (the right to collect coppice wood and small trees and shrubs) rights, manor court profits and wardship and marriage fees from leases that were made in relation to their lands, indicating that they were considered to have independent value. For example, in an indenture dating to January 31, 1537 Jane Seymour leased her manor in Buckland, Hertfordshire to John

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<sup>39</sup> BL Add. MS. 6085, fol. 164.

<sup>40</sup> TNA SC 6/HENVII/247.

<sup>41</sup> For example, TNA E 328/99 concerning land in Marlborough in Wiltshire which Henry VIII had leased to John Berkwyke.

<sup>42</sup> TNA SP 1/169, f.43.

Miles, reserving the profits of wards, marriages and courts.<sup>43</sup> Anne Boleyn, too, in an indenture dating to February 3, 1535 concerning land in Chilton Foliat, Wiltshire, expressly reserved the right to woods and underwood, fines to be paid on the marriage of maidens and on the inheritance of minors, as well as all church or advowson rights.<sup>44</sup> These rights, which were tied to manors, could potentially be lucrative. In 1502-3 Elizabeth of York received £25 for selling the wardship and marriage of John, son and heir of Sir William Carew, which was tied to her lands in Essex.<sup>45</sup> Jane Seymour's agent at King's Downe in Kent was holding £28 10s 6d from the sale of timber at her death in October 1537.<sup>46</sup> In rarer cases, the queen could dispose of these rights independently. Jane Seymour leased the profits and fines levied by her manor court in Devizes, Wiltshire, to the burgesses of that town on April 28, 1537, receiving a £20 fine immediately and an annual rent of £5 per year, while also reserving any court profits worth 40s or above.<sup>47</sup> Mills were also commonly let to tenants separately from the manors on which they stood. Specific lands also had the potential to provide a more diverse range of income. Catherine Parr took legal action against men suspected of stealing shipwrecks from her manors of Stokenham and Yealmpton, Devon in 1544.<sup>48</sup> Her mother-in-law, Elizabeth of York exploited the discovery of iron in her manor of Littledean in Gloucestershire in the final year of her life.<sup>49</sup> While the sums involved in these diverse sources of income could be large, they were usually irregular, impacting on their importance for the queens. As such, the main way that queens were able to draw a profit from their lands was either through direct farming by their own servants or by leasing the land out.

At the start of the Tudor period most manors were divided between the demesne (which would be farmed directly on the queen's behalf) and land which was let on hereditary tenancies, often dating back deep into the medieval period and which were usually subject to a below market rent. There is some evidence of the queens' manors being farmed on their behalf. Catherine Parr, for example, kept sheep in Savernake Forest in Wiltshire, which was part of her jointure, as well as leasing pasturage rights to others, while Anne Boleyn similarly kept sheep at Winterbourne in Wiltshire and Jane Seymour pigs at Erith in Kent.<sup>50</sup> Surviving evidence from the Tudor queen consorts suggests a considerable shift away from direct exploitation of the demesne towards more commercial tenancies, with the queens earning their income primarily through rents, something that has also been observed in studies of earlier queens, such as Wright's work on Philippa of Hainault in the fourteenth century in which she identified an increasing focus on rental yields by the queen in the period following the Black Death (Wright 2022, 129). The advantage was in the guaranteed income that tenanted land could provide, something that was particularly advantageous in periods where agricultural profits were uncertain due to labor shortages, bad weather or other factors.

In relation to the Tudor queens, this can be seen at the manor of Hitchin in Hertfordshire which was included in the landholdings of all of Henry VIII's wives (Bridget Howlett 2000, xxi). When the manor was surveyed in 1269, it contained a substantial demesne of nearly 800 acres of cultivated land and five mills. By 1650, only two mills made up the demesne, with the remainder of the land tenanted. The total manorial income was £154 0s 9d, but less than £29 came from the

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<sup>43</sup> TNA E 315/177.

<sup>44</sup> TNA E 315/177.

<sup>45</sup> TNA E 36/210 f.7, <https://www.tudorchamberbooks.org>.

<sup>46</sup> TNA SP 1/126 f.8.

<sup>47</sup> TNA E 211/316.

<sup>48</sup> TNA E 298/35.

<sup>49</sup> TNA E 36/210 f.49, <https://www.tudorchamberbooks.org>.

<sup>50</sup> Wiltshire and Swindon Archives, 1300/86, f.64; TNA E 315/177; TNA E 211/358.

demesne (Howlett 2000, xxii). The loss of the demesne appears to have been part of a deliberate policy, identified at other crown manors in the sixteenth century, where new tenancies – at market rent – were granted out of the demesne. At Havering in Essex, too, which was frequently included in queens' dowers and had been used as a major residence by medieval queen consorts, the manor was leased at a commercial rent in the sixteenth century (Marjorie Keniston McIntosh 1991, 159). This was not entirely new, since parts of the manor, such as meadows, had been let in the previous century (McIntosh 1986). Indeed, this process can be seen in the manors of the nobility and gentry over the course of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, with inflation impacting the traditional hereditary fixed rent tenancies and leading to lords seeking other means to financially exploit their manors (David Thomas 1992, 62).

This was a policy followed by Catherine of Aragon, who authorized her officers to divide the demesne of one of her jointure manors, Langley Marish in Buckinghamshire, something that generated significant new revenue.<sup>51</sup> The process likely also began earlier since it has been identified in studies of the lands of medieval English queens (Seah 2020, 26). Elizabeth of York's surviving accounts provide evidence that some of her demesne land was tenanted, including Odiham in Hampshire which was rented to Sir Richard Nanfan for £11 2s 8d per year and Worthy Mortimer in Hampshire, which was let to Sir John Fry for £8 13s 4d. Elizabeth had clearly reserved other revenues from Worthy Mortimer, since she also collected £12 6s 8d in profits in that year.<sup>52</sup> Jane Seymour leased Worthy Mortimer, too.<sup>53</sup>

The clearest evidence of Elizabeth of York letting some of her lands on commercial tenancies comes again from her receipts in 1502-3, when Christopher Throckmorton Esquire paid her a fine of £20 “for the ferme of the demaynes belonging to the manor of Marcle in the Countie of Hereford and for the Baillisship of Marcle”, which indicates that a lease had been entered into.<sup>54</sup> Interestingly, when Anne Boleyn leased this manor to John Skidmore Esquire on February 3, 1535 she received only a fine of £10 for a 31 year term.<sup>55</sup> Details of the rent received by either queen do not survive and it may be that this difference is accounted for by Anne focusing on a higher rental yield. However, it is tantalizing to suggest that the value of the land had diminished due to an oversupply (with the increasing readiness of the later queens to rent out entire manors) or due to the rapid turnover of queens in Henry VIII's reign, which limited the value of leases from them, since they lapsed with the death or removal of each queen. The lease for which Skidmore paid Anne Boleyn £10 lasted only fifteen and a half months before it lapsed with her execution on May 19, 1536, although he may have been able to remain in occupation for some months while he negotiated with Anne's successor. A Richard Scudamore, whose similarity of name suggests that he was a relative of Skidmore's, paid Catherine Howard £10 for a 21 year lease of the same manor in late 1540, with this lease lasting only until February 1542 when Catherine was also executed.<sup>56</sup> While tenants would likely have been hopeful that the teenaged Catherine Howard, for example, would live on for several decades, Henry VIII's record as a husband would have made it increasingly apparent that this could not be relied upon. It would be surprising if prospective tenants did not take this uncertainty into account when negotiating their new tenancies.

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<sup>51</sup> TNA E 123/5/155.

<sup>52</sup> TNA E 36/210 f.2, <https://www.tudorchamberbooks.org>.

<sup>53</sup> TNA E 321/42/157.

<sup>54</sup> TNA E 36/210 f.12, <https://www.tudorchamberbooks.org>.

<sup>55</sup> TNA E 315/177.

<sup>56</sup> TNA E 312/12/2.

There is no reason to assume that the policies outlined above were not approved, overseen and even orchestrated by the queens themselves. Usually, a fine was paid to the queen on the grant of the lease, with an annual rent also due. As such, the queen could expect an immediate (and often substantial) payment, as well as continuing revenue for the rest of her life. The returns were highly variable. In an indenture of February 4, 1535, entered into between Anne Boleyn and Thomas Archer the Younger, Anne leased the manor of Marston Meysey in Wiltshire for a fine of only 13s, but for a reasonably substantial annual rent of £6 13s 4d, suggesting that negotiations had been carried out with an agreement that reflected the tenant's inability to pay a large sum upfront.

Queens were also prepared to rent out small parts of their manors, again indicating that they were seeking to maximize their profits. For example, in an indenture of February 3, 1535 Anne Boleyn granted a lease to Thomas Hall of the corner pasture and summer herbage in Hippenscombe, Wiltshire for the premium of 40s and the same sum, 40s per year, in rent.<sup>57</sup> That there was an increasing policy of granting tenancies on land that had previously been farmed on the queen's behalf seems clear from surviving indentures that refer to animals. In one, between Anne Boleyn and John Brown of Winterbourne, Wiltshire, Anne leased the manor for the substantial fine of £26 13s 4d and an annual rent of £24.<sup>58</sup> The lease was expressed to include the demesne lands, the meadows and pastures and also the sheep that were living on the manor, suggesting that it was being leased as a going concern. By at least the later queens of Henry VIII and probably beginning with Elizabeth of York, a queen's income was largely made up of rents rather than direct farming. As the 1540 accounts of Anne of Cleves show, the rental yield was still primarily the older fixed rate hereditary ('fee farm') tenancies, although there were an increasing number of leases over the demesne land too.<sup>59</sup> The importance of this rental income can be seen in surviving lists of debts owed to Jane Seymour at her death from her manors: the vast majority are unpaid rents.<sup>60</sup> The unique nature of a queen's landownership, compared with that of other substantial landowners did, however, potentially affect the way in which tenancies could be negotiated and granted.

### **The Limits to the Queen's Use of her Lands**

In theory, Tudor queen consorts held their estates both as queen consort and as queen dowager, with the queens' lands intended to be used by them until their deaths, providing that they were not removed as queen as in the case of Catherine of Aragon and Anne of Cleves. Indeed, Catherine Parr, the only queen dowager of the Tudor queens, continued to administer her lands uninhibited after Henry VIII's death in 1547, although this had not always been the case with her medieval predecessors (Elena Woodacre 2026, for example). Although Tudor queen consorts were substantial landowners, they were in the unusual position of possessing only a life interest in their estates, with the reversion held by the crown. Interestingly, this was mostly not actively acknowledged in the leases that they entered into, with almost all surviving indentures for Tudor queen consorts expressing a length of term in years, despite the fact that it was possible that the term would expire earlier with the death of the queen. The wide range of term lengths in surviving indentures indicates that they were bespoke to the individual agreements made between the parties and included in the negotiations. Occasionally attempts were made to guard against inflation where

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<sup>57</sup> TNA E 315/177.

<sup>58</sup> TNA E 315/177.

<sup>59</sup> TNA E 101/422/15.

<sup>60</sup> TNA SP 1/126 f.5

the term was a long one. In an indenture entered into on December 10, 1534 between Anne Boleyn and Henry Bagott of Marlborough, Bagott leased a meadow in Marlborough, as well as fishing rights on the lake there, for 41 years.<sup>61</sup> The rent, which was initially £11 per year was specified to increase by 12d annually. In most cases, however, the rent would remain the same for the entirety of the term, suggesting that the parties acknowledged to some extent that the term would expire earlier than stated. Given the unlikelihood of these leases reaching the ends of their terms, it seems likely that they were negotiated in the hope that it would encourage future queens to grant a new lease on the same terms, although there was no certainty of this.

One of the longest surviving examples of a lease term granted by a Tudor queen consort is in an indenture dated February 4, 1535 between Anne Boleyn and Thomas Archer the Younger for the manor of Marston, Wiltshire, which, with a term of 60 years, would have required Anne to live into her mid-nineties.<sup>62</sup> Archer entered into a new indenture with Jane Seymour on February 2, 1537 for the same property and for a new 60 year term, paying “£11 2s 4d sterling over and besides £15 11s payed to the use of the late Quene Anne”.<sup>63</sup> While the initial fine to secure the lease that he had paid to Anne Boleyn only two years before was taken into account, he was still required to pay an additional fine to Jane of more than two thirds the original amount, despite the fact that 58 years of his original term would have remained if Anne was alive. That a queen’s leases expired on her death was acknowledged in one surviving lease granted by Catherine of Aragon to a clothmaker in Stratford in Suffolk of fishing rights, a meadow and a boat, with the term expressed as being for 21 years “if the queen live so long”.<sup>64</sup> In most cases, the individual indentures made no provision for the term expiring early with the death of the queen, although this was the practical effect of her life interest. In Catherine of Aragon’s case, her leases lapsed when her marriage was annulled in 1533.

A change in queen meant that, in theory, every lease on her jointure estates would need to be renegotiated, granted to someone else, or the land taken back into the new queen’s direct control, something which allows us to observe differences in management style and which provides proof of the queens’ agency. This potential was noted by Michele Seah in her important work on the financial agency of the fifteenth century queens Margaret of Anjou and Elizabeth Woodville, with Seah considering that “they were given the means to be financially independent and, despite contemporary expectations of the ideal queen consort or the fact that they were married women, they were not prevented from exercising their rights and responsibilities in relation to these grants” (Seah 2020, 35). The same can be said for the Tudor queens, with their independent agency most evident in relation to Anne Boleyn and Jane Seymour, for whom the highest amount of administrative material survives, thanks to surviving copies of their lease indentures.

Although the leases lapsed with the death or removal of each queen, a subsequent queen might take a payment made by her predecessor into account when granting a new lease of the same property. In surviving indentures, Anne Boleyn was particularly likely to do this, indicating a deliberate policy which may have related to the controversial circumstances of her queenship. As the correspondent John Graynfeld noted in a letter to Lord Lisle on March 20, 1534, Catherine of Aragon’s queenly jointure had been removed from her and given to Anne Boleyn and “alle leases graunts of offices shalbe voide of these lands, other then suche officers and tenants as can prove

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<sup>61</sup> TNA E 315/177.

<sup>62</sup> TNA E 315/177.

<sup>63</sup> TNA E 315/177.

<sup>64</sup> TNA SP 1/236 f.388.

that have paide money for thos offices and farmes and those have respite to prove the same before the Chauncellor of Englande tyll Myghelmas next”.<sup>65</sup> Catherine of Aragon’s demotion from queen to Princess Dowager of Wales directly impacted her tenants and manorial office holders, although there was a mechanism for these individuals to claim the continuation of their offices and leases, providing that they could show that they had paid a fine to obtain them. In this, they were actually more fortunate than the usual position that followed the death of a queen, with the decision to take these pre-existing payments into account almost certainly coming directly from Anne Boleyn since there was nothing to compel her to do so. On February 26, 1535, for example, she entered into an indenture with Christopher Robyns of Wotton Bassett, Wiltshire for two pastures, with the indenture confirming “that the said Queen by thadvyse of her counsell without any ffyne taken forasmuch as one John Powell lately payde to the princess dowager [Catherine of Aragon] cvi s 2 d ffyne for the appurtenances after specified for the terme of xxi yeres whereof xix yeres be yet to come”.<sup>66</sup> She effectively agreed to take over the lease granted by her predecessor, without any further payment save the annual rent due. This changed when Jane Seymour received the manor, confirming in an indenture of February 8, 1537 that while she was prepared to honor the fine paid to Catherine of Aragon, she also required 20s from Robyns as a “petty fine”.<sup>67</sup> For this, she increased the term of the lease to 21 years, although, since she would be dead within nine months, this was of limited value.

The change from those leases granted by Anne Boleyn in 1535 to Jane Seymour in 1536 is so obvious that it cannot be explained without recourse to a deliberate policy by Jane to take a different approach to her predecessor. There are many examples of Jane Seymour refusing to honor fines paid to Anne Boleyn, for example, although she acknowledged these payments in her indentures. Where Anne would tend to regrant the lease for no payment, with a continuation of the remaining term, Jane tended to offer an entirely new lease of the same property, in exchange for a new fine. For example, in an indenture from February 1, 1537 Jane Seymour leased to Walter Dobbess and his wife Agnes her manor of West Chelborough in Dorset, “for the ffyne of 50s sterling over and besides the 50s payed unto the use of the late Quene Anne”.<sup>68</sup> These sums could be really significant. On February 3, 1537, Jane required Robert Mandall to pay a further £10 on top of the £10 he had paid to Anne Boleyn to secure a lease of the manor of Rowde in Wiltshire. He was later required to take a new lease for the same manor from either Catherine Howard or Catherine Parr,<sup>69</sup> although the precise terms are not recorded. This change in policy could have been politically motivated as a means of reinforcing the invalidity of Anne’s marriage, but it can also be interpreted as an economic policy, designed to maximize the income produced from the jointure. In either case, it undoubtedly had financial implications for the tenants. In one surviving indenture, Jane’s council carefully itemized the crops already growing on the land to be leased to a man named William Everard, while also referring to an earlier indenture that the same tenant had entered into there with Anne. The value of the crops which had presumably been planted by Everard were taken into account in the negotiations, with Jane requiring a “fyne of thre pounds over and besyd xxs paid to thuse of the lady Anne in hir tyme”.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> TNA SP 3/3 f.136.

<sup>66</sup> TNA E 315/177.

<sup>67</sup> TNA E 315/177.

<sup>68</sup> TNA E 315/177.

<sup>69</sup> TNA C 1/1368/40-41.

<sup>70</sup> TNA E 315/177.

Circumstances such as these owed very much to the particular circumstances of Henry VIII's marital career, but it does indicate that the individual queens took a bespoke approach to their own financial affairs. There is clear evidence that they were expected to direct policy, with a document entitled "Remembrances unto the Queen's grace for divers and sundry matters that be needful for her gracious pleasure to be known in" addressed to Anne Boleyn from her council at the start of her tenure as queen which directly asked her opinion on whether to grant new leases to Catherine of Aragon's tenants and in what circumstances she intended to do so, providing very obvious evidence that it was the queens themselves who directed these changes in policy.<sup>71</sup> The author also noted that he would require Anne's signature once the decision was taken. Clearly Anne's input was required on this key issue. It should also be noted, of course, the impact that the queens' life interests had on their tenants, with it likely that the uncertainty over the length of the term was a factor in negotiations, with tenants – potentially – obtaining more preferable terms due to a new queen's desire to maintain them as tenants. Thomas Archer, who leased the manor of Marston Meysey in Wiltshire from Anne Boleyn received a nearly identical lease from Jane Seymour, save that the queen also granted him the valuable right to collect 12 loads of wood as fuel every year in her forests.<sup>72</sup> With the rent the same for both leases, this looks like an incentive offered by Jane to induce Anne's tenant to take a new lease with her.

While queens were free to administer their lands as they saw fit, including granting leases, this was within the context of their life interests and the fact that the crown continued to hold the reversion (R.W. Hoyle 1992, 8). Catherine of Aragon found the king's reversionary interest asserted in relation to her land in Erith Marshes, London which, by 1529, were noted to be subject to erosion and in need of considerable sums for repairs. In a report addressed to Cardinal Wolsey, the queen's tenant, Mr Walden, intended to make suit for money towards the repairs "upon plea that the land which he hathe in the marsh is the queens and consequently the king's in reversion, and so he wolde drive the king to bere the reparacion of the queen's jointor".<sup>73</sup> Mr Walden was, essentially, intending to go over Catherine's head to seek the king's contribution for repairs, with the king's reversionary interest always a potential point of vulnerability for the queens (Wright 2022, 102). At the same time, the queen's lands could also be subject to prior interests, granted from the reversion, as Taffe has noted in relation to the 40 marks per year payable to Lady Capell since 1496 from the manors of Cookham and Bray in Berkshire, a payment which Anne Boleyn had attempted to resist while she held the manor, but which Anne of Cleves appears to have paid without question (Taffe 2026, 70). A damaged document addressed to Catherine Parr's council which contained the answer of one Edmund Clerk and one Roger Tychebourne to a Bill of Complaint brought by William Wordiche, shows confusion over who controlled the queen's lands.<sup>74</sup> It concerned the manor of Worthy Mortimer which "the moste noble Princess Jane whills she lyved queen of England" had, by her letters patent, let to William Wordiche "for terme of yeres during her lyf". However, as the defendants noted, "by whose deathe the lease of the said manor and lands was then determined and endyd". Wordiche attempted to maintain possession of the manor, despite the fact that the king had then leased the land to one William Newland. This lease was later assigned to Edmund Clerk, who entered the land and was able to obtain confirmation in the court baron on February 22, 1543 that the land he claimed was his. The ending of Jane Seymour's life interest clearly caused confusion.

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<sup>71</sup> L&P VI 1188.

<sup>72</sup> TNA E 315/177.

<sup>73</sup> BL Cotton Vitellius B/XI f.80.

<sup>74</sup> TNA E 321/42/157.

As life tenants of their jointure lands, a queen's primary economic focus was to maximize income and profits during her lifetime, rather than looking towards the long-term upkeep of the manor. There is also evidence of them investing in improvements to their lands, presumably in an attempt to increase the rental yield. Catherine Parr, for example, who had been granted the manor of Thorpe Achurch in Northamptonshire in 1544, paid for building a mill in the manor in 1546, with detailed accounts surviving to show that it would have been a considerable structure: the millstones alone cost five nobles (around £2), with additional sums outlaid for their carriage and installation.<sup>75</sup> While this would bring in a profit, the evidence of surviving indentures from the seven Tudor queen consorts shows that mills were rarely leased for a fine. Rental yields, however, tended to be disproportionately high. Anne Boleyn was able to obtain £3 6s 8d for a watermill in Chilton, Wiltshire, for example, and £12 per year for four mills in Sudbury, Suffolk, with similar sums known from other indentures.<sup>76</sup> Without a fine, the immediate gains on mills would be minor and the initial outlay large, with queens presumably looking to their long term profitability when they decided to build or improve mills on their estates, something which again demonstrates the nuanced ways in which they women operated in relation to their landholdings.

### **The Queen as Lady of the Manor**

The seven Tudor queen consorts enjoyed a diverse range of lands, stretching across both England and Wales. As landowners, they ranked amongst the wealthiest in England, although their life interests meant that the ways in which they used their lands were subject to some constraints. In spite of this, it is clear that the queens' jointures were a coherent and organized body of lands, with much continuity between queens due to the similarity in lands granted, the retaining of some manorial officers and the personalities of the individual queens themselves. The queens were not necessarily involved in the day-to-day running of their estates, but there is very clear evidence of them having direct agency in the administration of their lands, something which would be expected of any large landowner. That this agency has not always been recognized is almost certainly due to their sex, despite the growing body of evidence that female landowners were often highly active in their management and finances in the period.

The work presented here is necessarily something of a survey to demonstrate the material that survives and the way that it can be interpreted to add to understandings of the economic agency of the Tudor queen consorts. Each queen would benefit from a more detailed analysis, while there is also scope for a broader study of the continuities, and divergences, that existed in the queen's jointure as it passed through the seven queen consorts. When Catherine of Aragon, Anne Boleyn, Jane Seymour or any of the other Tudor queen consorts granted a lease by "theadvyse of her counsell", she might not be privy to the terms of the lease or its subject. However, her council would be very aware of the queen's own preferences in relation to the alienation of her lands and how they were expected to administer them and conscious that they might be called upon to explain their activities to the woman who was their employer. The queens, as lady of the manor, played both active and supervisory roles, taking direct action when required and making their preferences and policies known. As such, the draftsman might just as well have framed the indentures to claim that the council had agreed the terms, by the advice of the queen.

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<sup>75</sup> TNA SP 1/445 f.149.

<sup>76</sup> TNA E315/177.

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