

## A 1535 inventory of plate in Suffolk Place Palace chapel, Southwark

*One of the few contemporary documents concerning the Duke of Suffolk's Southwark palace is a detailed inventory dated December 1535 for the chapel plate. This lists statues of saints and sacred silver vessels. The inventory provides unique insight into the precious holdings of a pre-Reformation aristocratic palace chapel. Interestingly one of these statues – a silver gilt image of St George – can be identified with a degree of certainty in the 1547 inventory of Henry VIII's possessions.*

### The construction of Suffolk Place and its chapel

In c1516, Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk (c1485–1545) decided to rebuild his uncle's house on the western side of the Southwark High Street, renaming it 'Suffolk Place' after his new dukedom. He was a leading courtier and in 1515, he had married Henry VIII's sister Mary Tudor, the dowager French queen, so he clearly now wanted a much larger and grander London residence to reflect his exalted status.<sup>1</sup> A chapel would have been an essential adjunct to an aristocratic residence of this grandeur. Exactly when work on Suffolk Place started is uncertain, but as Brandon was purchasing building timber during 1518, it seems probable that work had already started.<sup>2</sup> In June 1522, Henry VIII and the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V dined at Suffolk Place and afterwards hunted with Brandon in his deer park.<sup>3</sup> This royal visit implies that Suffolk Place had been completed by this date.

There are no surviving building accounts, surveys or plans for Suffolk Place, so our main source of architectural information is the view in the foreground of Wyngaerde's London panorama of c1544, which shows its situation on the opposite side of the Borough High Street to St George's parish church (fig 1).<sup>4</sup> The panorama shows an imposing three-storey palace towering over the timber-framed houses lining the western side of Southwark High Street. It is believed that these imposing buildings on the panorama only represent the outer courtyard of Suffolk Place, which was apparently constructed by Brandon, and that further west there was situated a second or inner courtyard. It is likely that this inner courtyard represents the earlier portion of the family residence, which after Brandon's rebuilding may have contained the service buildings (fig 1).<sup>5</sup> This suggestion is based on the contrasting appearance of the buildings of the inner and outer courtyards. Certainly, the buildings of the latter with their prominent terracotta decoration are attributed to Brandon's rebuilding.<sup>6</sup> Sadly, nothing is known about the plan, location or even the dedication of the Suffolk Place chapel, but it was likely to have been positioned near the family apartments, which were probably situated within the new buildings of the outer courtyard. 'The interior of a private chapel, at least at the aristocratic end of the spectrum would probably have looked much like a parish church, that is with a clear distinction between the chancel, largely the preserve of the chapel staff, and the nave used by the household'.<sup>7</sup> Some idea of the possible size and grandeur of Brandon's private chapel is indicated by the Chapel Royal at Hampton Court. This was built by Cardinal Thomas Wolsey during the 1520s as his household chapel and lavishly embellished by Henry VIII during 1535–6. The Chapel Royal was then remodelled

<sup>1</sup> Gunn 2004, 353–5.

<sup>2</sup> Carlin 1996, 177.

<sup>3</sup> Darlington 1955; Kingsford 1920.

<sup>4</sup> Colvin & Foister 1996, drawing vi.

<sup>5</sup> Watson 2010, figs 3 and 4.

<sup>6</sup> Carlin 1996, 64; Watson 2010, 23–4. During c1515–40 it was briefly fashionable among the nouveau riche in southern England to adorn their new residences with ornate architectural terracottas (Watson 2010, 24–5).

<sup>7</sup> Ricketts 2007, 29.



Fig 1 Suffolk Place outer courtyard (1), St Mary Overy priory (2), and St George's church (3) in the foreground of a facsimile of Wyngaerde's London Panorama (c 1544). This view is looking north-west along Southwark High Street towards the Thames and the City of London (Museum of London).

in 1714, so little of its Tudor interior survives today apart from its ceiling.<sup>8</sup> The Chapel Royal is situated within Chapel Court (the innermost of the four courtyards) close to the state rooms and sovereign's private apartments.<sup>9</sup> At Richmond Palace after it was rebuilt in c 1498–1501, the chapel was situated within the inner courtyard near the private apartments.<sup>10</sup>

The Suffolk Place chapel would have been intended for the use of Brandon's family, members of his household, as well as visitors and their retainers, who would have all worshipped together, so it must have been fairly large to accommodate everyone. Some idea of the possible schedule of services that were held in Suffolk Place chapel is provided by *The Northumberland Household Book*, which records the daily arrangements in the households of Henry Percy, 5th Earl of Northumberland, during 1500–40. Four daily services, Martins, Lady Mass, High Mass and Evensong were held in the private family chapels.<sup>11</sup> Within the Tudor royal household there was a religious body known as the Chapel Royal, which travelled around with the sovereign. In 1509, the Chapel Royal staff of Henry VIII consisted of a Dean, 30 gentlemen (normally the Sub-Dean and nine other chaplains plus twenty lay clerks) and ten choristers. In 1526, Cardinal Wolsey, as part of a cost cutting exercise, reduced the number of permanent staff attached to the Chapel Royal. During the summer months when the court was not itinerant, the reduced Chapel Royal staff held 'a masse of our lady before noon, and on sundayes and holydayes, masse of the day, besides our lady masse, and an anthem in the afternoon'.<sup>12</sup> This reduced royal daily schedule involves fewer services than the Percy family expected (see above), which suggests that there was no

<sup>8</sup> Thurley 1993, pl 270.

<sup>9</sup> Cherry & Pevsner 1983, 482, 496.

<sup>10</sup> Thurley 1993, 27–8, plan 11.

<sup>11</sup> Ricketts 2007, 29.

<sup>12</sup> Thurley 1993, 196.

such thing as a standard pattern of services in pre-Reformation English aristocratic chapels, possibly the frequency of services simply reflected family piety. However, it is almost certain that daily services of some description would have been held at Brandon's chapel in addition to the celebration of Mass on Sundays and holy days. Therefore, Brandon's household must have included at least one chaplain or priest, plus various other staff like clerks and deacons to run his chapel.

### The transfer of Suffolk Place to the Crown

On 23 June 1533, Brandon's wife Mary died unexpectedly. Her death completely changed Brandon's relationship with the Crown and the ensuing debt settlement was to cost him Suffolk Place and other assets. It is thought that Henry VIII coveted Suffolk Place for its deer park, so in February 1536 Brandon exchanged his property for Norwich Place, near Charing Cross as part of this debt settlement.<sup>13</sup> In the Act of Parliament transferring Brandon's mansion to the king it was described as the manor and 'pryncypall House [...] called the Duke of Suffolkes place'.<sup>14</sup> On 1 June 1537 Suffolk Place was granted to Queen Jane Seymour. From 1545 until 1551, this redundant royal palace was used as a mint and it was demolished during 1557–8.<sup>15</sup>

It appears that as part of the seizure of Brandon's assets by the Crown an inventory (dated 18 December 1535) was compiled of 'the Remayn' (remaining) plate at his property in Southwark on this date.<sup>16</sup> This inventory includes various items from the 'cellar', 'scullery' and 'pantry', plus the contents of the chapel, which is reproduced here verbatim from the 1907 publication.

#### CHAPPEL PLATE

A crosse of sylver and gilt with a fote.

3 chalice, gilt.<sup>17</sup>

1 chalice, parcel gilt.

2 crewettes gilt with covers.<sup>18</sup>

A bell of sylver and gilt.

A pax, gilt.<sup>19</sup>

A holly watter pot with a sprynkyll, all gilt.<sup>20</sup>

A littell holy watter pot of sylver with a sprynkill not gilt.

2 candlesticks gilt.

A payre coveryd basynes with the quene's armes.<sup>21</sup>

An image of Mary Magdelyn gilt, 69 ounces.<sup>22</sup>

An image of Seynt Edward gilt, 65 ounces et di.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>13</sup> In 1535 the king had acquired Norwich Place, which since the 13th century had been the London residence or 'inn' of the bishop of Norwich.

<sup>14</sup> Kingsford 1920, 36. Statutes 27 Henry VIII c. 38 s.

<sup>15</sup> Watson 2010, 24.

<sup>16</sup> *HMC* 1907, 452–3. In the accompanying annual report of HMC the context of this inventory was discussed and it was concluded that 'the list must therefore belong to the chapel of the Duke's own magnificent house in Southwark', p 67.

<sup>17</sup> 'A chalice' in Tudor inventories, often included the paten.

<sup>18</sup> Cruets, small paired vessels, one for water, the other for wine, were used during the celebration of Mass for mixing water with the wine.

<sup>19</sup> A small plate formerly used to convey the kiss of peace from the celebrant at Mass to those attending.

<sup>20</sup> A vessel and sprinkler for scattering holy water during services.

<sup>21</sup> Basins.

<sup>22</sup> Mary Magdalene is a saint (Farmer 1992, 329).

<sup>23</sup> Either St Edward the Confessor or St Edward the Martyr, both English kings. The weight of this particular statue was 65 and a half (demi) ounces.

An image of Seynt Margeret gilt, 79 ounces.<sup>24</sup>

An image of Seynt Thomas gilt 71 ounces.<sup>25</sup>

An image of Seynt Kateryn gilt, 68 ounces.<sup>26</sup>

An image of Seynt George, gilt 60 ounces.

A pix for the sacrament.<sup>27</sup>

A monstratt for the sacrament.<sup>28</sup>

#### MENDI:

1 senser, 1 crosse, 1 chalice.

2 crewettes white, 2 gold and berrall.<sup>29</sup>

The capyll [chapel] plate wayes [weighs] 968 unes [ounces] wyche as after 4s. the unce .. .. 193l. 12s

[further items listed apparently refer to secular plate from the pantry etc]

The next item is an inventory of the Duchess of Suffolk's horses (90 horses and geldings, plus 35 mares of all ages) at Grimsthorpe, it is dated 22 May 1546.<sup>30</sup> Later there is another inventory of apparel and other items lent by the Duchess of Suffolk to the Duke, her sons and Lord Charles Brandon.<sup>31</sup>

### Discussion

Plate in this context clearly refers to high-quality metal objects most of which were clearly gilded or of silver. However, some items such as the candlesticks and queen's basins might have been brass or copper alloy. The list of liturgical or sacred vessels from the Suffolk Place chapel show that they had the wherewithal for holding a wide range of activities and services including Mass, plus the Exposition and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. The bell was probably a sacring bell rung during services, including the elevation of the Host and chalice during Mass. Two of the basins were adorned with the arms of the 'queen', a reminder that Brandon's third wife Mary had previously been married to the elderly Louis XII of France.<sup>32</sup> There were two candlesticks and a cross, which presumably adorned the main altar. There were also gilded statues of six saints that imply the existence of a number of side altars or shrines. In addition to the plate items listed here there would have been clerical vestments, altar hangings, various books (almost certainly a breviary or service book and a hymnal) and other metal objects such as censers. This list shows that the Suffolk Place chapel was lavishly appointed and offers an insight into the type and number of 'plate' items that were present in pre-Reformation aristocratic private chapels.

Shortly after Henry VIII's death in 1547, a comprehensive inventory of his possessions was undertaken. There is the intriguing possibility that one of the items from Brandon's chapel was also listed in Henry's inventory under 'images of siluer gylte':

<sup>24</sup> Either St Margaret of Antioch or St Margaret of Scotland.

<sup>25</sup> Either St Thomas of Canterbury, who in 1538 was declared a traitor by Henry VIII or St Thomas the Apostle.

<sup>26</sup> Probably St Katherine of Alexandria.

<sup>27</sup> Pyx, a vessel for holding the consecrated host or Blessed Sacrament.

<sup>28</sup> Monstrance, a vessel for displaying the Blessed Sacrament at Exposition, Benediction and in processions.

<sup>29</sup> Beryl, a transparent pale green, blue or yellow gem stone. However here it may refer to crystal items as the Earl of Oxford's 1509 inventory included 'a monstrance of beryl' and a 'second monstrance with a beryl on top' (St John 1915, 278), which presumably means that these two items contained transparent crystal panels.

<sup>30</sup> *HMC* 1907, 453.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 457.

<sup>32</sup> Mary and Louis XII married on 9 October 1514 and he died on 1 January 1515.



f. 36v **225** 'Item an Image of Sainte George vpon a foote with a Dragon one weyeng [?wing] brokin with a sheedle [shield] a speare a dagger a sworde a sallett a fether and three pynnes of Siluer within the base poiz [weight] lvij oz'.<sup>33</sup>

The weight of the above statue of St George (57 ounces compared with 60 ounces) very closely matches the one listed in the 1535 inventory. As the dragon battling with St George in the 1547 royal inventory apparently possessed a broken wing this loss of material would explain the slight discrepancy between the two weights. From the description given in the 1547 inventory we can get a good idea of the appearance of this particular statue. St George was on foot wearing an open-faced helmet (sallet) adorned with a feathered plume, which suggests that he was wearing full armour. He was presumably wearing a belt to carry his sword and dagger and he was probably spearing his dragon with one arm as he was also carrying a shield. The famous story of St George's fight with the dragon became very popular after Caxton translated and printed it in *The Golden Legend* (c1483–4).<sup>34</sup> St George can be represented either mounted or on foot, fighting a dragon. As St George was the patron saint of soldiers and of the Order of the Garter to which Brandon had been elected a knight in 1513,<sup>35</sup> he was a saint with whom Brandon could have easily identified. Incidentally, the nearby parish church was also dedicated to St George (fig 1). The existence of this church was first documented in 1122. In c1144–9, one of the witnesses on a document concerning the transfer of land nearby in Bankside was 'Robert the priest of St George's', which is believed to refer to this particular church.<sup>36</sup> The other gilt statues of saints listed in the 1547 royal inventory, which have the same saints' names as those listed in Brandon's 1535 inventory, are all either too light or too heavy to match the sculptures in his Suffolk Place Palace chapel.

The 1547 royal inventory also included numerous silver and gold images of saints and Christ. Plus various Sanctus bells, chalices and patens, candlesticks, crosses, crucifixes, cruets, holy water pots and sprinklers, frankincense containers, monstrances, pyxes, censers and tabernacles, mostly made of either silver or silver-gilt.<sup>37</sup> Some idea of the sheer number of religious items present in this royal inventory is illustrated by the listing at Windsor Castle chapel of eleven pairs of silver and gilt candlesticks.<sup>38</sup> While the original context of some of these items (such as those stored in the 'secret' Westminster 'jewel house') is uncertain, the various chapels in the king's many residences were all well supplied with precious sacred silver and gilt items.

Interestingly, the range of liturgical goods and sacred images belonging to Henry VIII and Brandon was very similar suggesting that this was the normal paraphernalia present in household chapels of great magnates before the Reformation. This suggestion is certainly supported by the contents of the will of John de Veer, 13th Earl of Oxford (dated 10 April 1509), which includes a detailed inventory of his liturgical goods, sacred images and vestments. Clearly much, but certainly not all, of this material was from his private chapel at Hedingham Castle, Essex. This inventory and his intended bequests include at least twelve complete sets of vestments, some 50 copes, 'altar-cloths' or frontals. There were vestments for priests, plus a set for a deacon and a sub-deacon. Most of the vestments were made of expensive materials such as damask or velvet. Their main colours were white, blue and crimson. There were 30 choir surplices and four albs for children to wear while serving at the altar. At Hedingham chapel music was provided by two organs and a pair of 'portatives' (small portable organs). While the earl's silver or silver-gilt liturgical items included alms dishes, basins, candlesticks, censers, chalices, cruets (two of which were of beryl), crosses,

<sup>33</sup> Starkey 1998, 16.

<sup>34</sup> Farmer 1992, 197.

<sup>35</sup> Gunn 2004, 354.

<sup>36</sup> Carlin 1996, 33.

<sup>37</sup> Starkey 1998, 6–21.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

holy water pots with sprinklers, monstrances, pyxes and scaring bells. There was a large silver-gilt basin, which was described as a font. There were various Mass and service books, plus a psalter and a gospel. There were a number of silver or silver-gilt statues including three images of 'Our Lady' (the Blessed Virgin Mary), St John the Baptist, nine of the twelve apostles (with an average weight of 64½ ounces), plus various other images including St Anne, St Barbara, St Margaret, the Trinity, a group of three angels bearing relics, plus a 12 ounce golden image of St George.<sup>39</sup> The Earl of Oxford's inventory provides some idea of the other goods that must have been present in the Suffolk Place chapel such as the altar-frontals and vestments. Certainly, the earl possessed a much larger and wider range of sacred images and other religious goods than were present in the Suffolk Place chapel inventory, but it should be remembered that the earl's inventory is of all his possessions, not just the plate present in one of his residences. Brandon possessed other residences such as Westhorpe Hall in Suffolk, which he had built during c1526–33.<sup>40</sup> The buildings of Westhorpe were laid out around a moated courtyard.<sup>41</sup> A 1538 survey of Westhorpe mentions 'a fayre chapel contenyng in length xxxij foote and in breadyth xx foote'. The 'chauncell' of the chapel possessed an elaborately decorated and painted ceiling or roof. Adjoining the north and south side of the chapel were 'fayre' closets with windows (perhaps housing side altars or shrines) and a vestry.<sup>42</sup> Clearly, Westhorpe chapel was an imposing building and its detailed description provides some idea of the possible layout of Suffolk Place chapel.

Judging by the various bequests of vestments and sacred images that the earl proposed to make to at least seven religious houses he may well have been more pious than Brandon.<sup>43</sup> Interestingly, many of these silver or silver-gilt sacred images listed in both these inventories were of a similar weight, so presumably they were a similar size (though we have no idea what height these images would have been as none survives in England). The presence of three images of 'Our Lady' in the earl's inventory is evidence of her popularity during this period.<sup>44</sup> Therefore, it is curious that no image of her was recorded in the Suffolk Place chapel inventory. Could this mean that there were other sacred images made of different materials such as alabaster or wood in the Suffolk Place chapel of which there is no record?

In conclusion, the Suffolk Place chapel inventory provides some idea of the range and wealth of the sacred images and liturgical goods present in the private chapels of the highest echelons of the Tudor aristocracy before the Reformation. It is the almost complete loss of this material during the Reformation that makes the few surviving inventories so important as without them we would have almost no idea how these private chapels were decorated and equipped.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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<sup>39</sup> St John 1915.

<sup>40</sup> Gunn & Lindsey 1988, 274–5.

<sup>41</sup> Anderson 2003, fig 1.

<sup>42</sup> Gunn & Lindsey 1988, 286.

<sup>43</sup> St John 1915, 280.

<sup>44</sup> Marks 2004, 121–54.

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