

Blanche Herbert, LADY TROY

Lady Mistress to the Tudor children, the future King Edward VI and Queen Elizabeth I

Blanche Herbert, known as Lady Troy, was the Lady Mistress of Elizabeth (the future Queen Elizabeth I) and Edward (the future King Edward VI), the children of King Henry VIII. It was Lady Troy who gave them a stable and happy childhood. She may also have been important in helping to form the children's religious ideas and beliefs as her family had residual Lollard connections. Lady Troy is mentioned in '***Blanche Parry & Queen Elizabeth I***', a book with superb pictures of Elizabeth I and Blanche Parry's life (innovative calendar-format). This is sold on amazon.uk to raise funds for the church where Lady Troy became godmother to her niece, Blanche Parry, at her Christening in 1507/1508. The new evidence for both ladies, with full references, is in '***Mistress Blanche, Queen Elizabeth I's Confidante***'. This is a summary:

Blanche Milborne, was one of eleven surviving daughters of Simon Milborne and his wife Jane (Baskerville). Her oldest sister, Alice, married Henry Myles, and were Blanche Parry's parents. In 1493/4 Blanche (in Welsh Blaens) Milborne married James Whitney of Whitney and Pen-cwm. Her dowry was the manor of Icomb in Gloucestershire, later inherited by their elder son (ancestor of the Whitney family in the USA). James Whitney died in 1500, leaving Blanche with three small children: 6 year old Robert, James and Elizabeth. In 1545 Anne Morgan (of Arkstone, Herefordshire), one of this Elizabeth's daughters, married Princess Elizabeth's cousin (or possible half-brother) Henry Carey, later Lord Hunsdon. Anne's grandmother, Blanche, who had seen her two elder sons die, was still at Court on the occasion of her grand-daughter's marriage.

Blanche Whitney was not a widow for very long as she soon married, as his second wife, William Herbert of Troy Parva, a son of the 1st Earl of Pembroke by one of his mistresses. Blanche seems to have been some years younger than William. She was attractive and, from a practical point of view, she was likely to produce an heir for William as she already had small children. As the bard, Lewys Morgannwg, asserts that she joined her husband in welcoming King Henry VII, his queen and earls at the *palace of Troy* (Troy House south-east of Monmouth) in August 1502, Blanche's re-marriage must date between July 1500 and August 1502. In 1516, when her husband was knighted, Blanche became Lady Troy. Although English, Blanche Herbert was bilingual for she lived in a Welsh cultural environment, with Welsh spoken not only to servants but also within the family, and close contact was maintained with Henry Myles and her sister's family. The Herberts had two sons, Charles and Thomas.

Sir William Herbert, described by Lewys Morgannwg as *an outstanding knight*, died in 1524. In his Will he directed his executors to build a marble tomb with an effigy of himself between those of his first wife Margery and his second wife Blanche, who outlived him. Blanche was well provided with manors, lands and tenements for her lifetime and their son Charles needed Blanche's consent to make a jointure of other properties, indicating that William obviously admired his wife's good sense. He added the pious hope that *I trust that Blanche will keep herself sole*. Blanche's opinion is not recorded though, in fact, she did not marry again. Sir William asked his patron *Henry Somerset knight, Lord Herbert*, then heir to the Earl of Worcester, to be *a good lord to my wife and children*. As Lewys Morgannwg said that Blanche Herbert had been a *governess* when she was young, she may have fulfilled this rôle for some of Henry Somerset's

children. The frequent references to Blanche in this Will certainly suggest that Blanche and William had been fortunate in having a loving marriage, and it was during this period of her life that Blanche Herbert became godmother to her baby niece.

Lady Troy went to the royal court in the entourage of Elizabeth Somerset, Countess of Worcester who was a friend of Queen Anne Boleyn. The countess was one of two ladies who held the cloth to conceal Queen Anne whenever she wished *to spit or do otherwise* at her Coronation. Princess Elizabeth was born at Greenwich Palace on Sunday 7th September 1533. We know that Lady Troy was a member of the household, because there is a record of her involvement in the choice of a wet nurse for the healthy baby: *My mother was chosen and brought to the Court by my Lady Herbert of Troy, to have been her Majesty's nurse and had been chosen before all other had her gracious mother (Queen Anne Boleyn) had her own will therein.* This suggests that Queen Anne was not allowed her own choice of nurse for her daughter, or possibly the woman was not suitable. Mrs. Pendred (a Welsh name pronounced and often spelled, Pendryth) was actually chosen. It also suggests that Queen Anne Boleyn and Lady Troy knew each other well.

Princess Elizabeth's nursery was headed by her first Lady Mistress, Margaret, Lady Bryan, who had previously been the first Lady Mistress to Princess Mary. In December, before the crowds arrived at court for the Christmas festivities, bringing with them a risk of infection, a separate household was arranged for little Princess Elizabeth at Hatfield. Her mother was able to visit her there the following spring. In March the baby was moved to Eltham, where her father had spent much of his childhood and which was near enough for both parents to visit her. However, Elizabeth's childhood would largely be passed in Hertfordshire, where the household would move between Ashridge House, Hunsdon House, Hatfield House and Hertford Castle.

In May 1536 Elizabeth's mother was put on trial on a trumped-up charge of adultery, which in a queen was high treason, and was executed. Anne's real fault lay in her two subsequent miscarriages, for King Henry was adamant in wanting a male heir to ensure the dynasty's succession. In the fraught atmosphere little Elizabeth was temporarily forgotten. A letter from Lady Bryan to Thomas Cromwell shows that the little girl had outgrown the beautiful clothes previously supplied by her mother. Mention was also made of Sir John Shelton, who with his wife (Anne Boleyn's uncle and aunt) was in overall charge of the household, now at Hunsdon, where the King's daughters, Mary and Elizabeth, were living together. According to Lady Bryan, Elizabeth was teething which made her fractious as *she is toward a child and as gentle of conditions as ever I knew any in my life, Jesu preserve her Grace.*

His wife dead, the King immediately re-married, his new wife being Jane Seymour. In October 1537, Prince Edward, the longed-for son, was born and Lady Bryan became the Lady Mistress in charge of the nursery for the new baby prince. Three days later he was christened in the Chapel Royal at Hampton Court. When the procession re-formed after the Service *Lady Elizabeth went with her sister Lady Mary and Lady Herbert of Troy to bear the train.* This shows that Lady Troy was now in charge of Lady Elizabeth and, while the sisters lived together, of Lady Mary as well.

Information concerning Lady Troy's position in the royal household has survived in the elegy composed for her by Lewys Morgannwg. A family bard of the Herberts, he was asked by Lady Troy's sons to celebrate her life, probably a month after her funeral. Similar to a modern obituary, it records highlights of her life and it had to be accurate as the gathered relatives and friends would have known all the details anyway:

Marwnad yr Arglwyddes Blaens

Elegy to the Lady Blanche

Rhos oer fyned sir Fynwy
Ail Elen Goel o lan Gwy. (*Because of the loss of*) a peer to Elen Goel from the banks of the Wye,
Mae'r Farn ym am feirw'n nes,
For me, because of the dead, the Day of Judgement is nigh,
Marwgoel oedd am arglwyddes:
It was the death-omen of a lady:
Bwrw Arglwyddes, brig loywddoeth,
Smiting Lady Blanche, (*she of*) bright, wise countenance,
Blaens, un ddawn Sibli hen Ddoeth; (*Whose*) gift (*was*) akin to (*that of*) the old wise Sibyl.
Arglwyddes, teyrnes bwrdd tâl,
The lady of the royal Herbert household,
Bord Troe, tŷ Harbart rial,
Queen of the high table, the table of Troy,
Mal y wraig gynt, mawl rhag cam,
Similar to the lady Marcia of yore, praise lest there be wrong,
Marsia ar ôl marw Syr Wiliam.
Following the death of Sir William.
Bwrw iawn henwaed brenhinoedd
Smiting the ancient Milborne bloodline was akin to
Mal bwrw hen waed Mylbwrn oedd,
Smiting the ancient true bloodline of Kings.
Ei llin o Went i ieirll Nordd
Her lineage, from Gwent to the northern Earls,
O'r lle hanffont ieirll Henffordd.
Is that from which the Earls of Hereford trace their ancestry.
Arglwyddes breninesau,
(*She was a*) Lady (*in charge*) of Queens,
Gofrner oedd ban oedd yn iau.
A governess she was in her youth.
Hi a wyddiad yn weddus
She knew in a fitting manner
Wybodau iarllesau'r llys,
The accomplishments of the ladies of the court,
Gorcheidwad cyn ymadaw
(*And she was the*) guardian, before she passed away,
Tŷ Harri Wyth a'i blant draw.
Of Henry VIII's household and his children yonder.
I Edwart Frenin ydoedd,
To King Edward she was a true
Uwch ei faeth, goruchaf oedd,
(*And*) wise lady of dignity,
Waetio yr oedd at ei Ras,
In charge of his fosterage (*she was pre-eminent*),
Gywirddoeth wraig o urddas.
(*And*) she waited upon his Grace.

Arglwyddys plas a gladden',
(*She, whom*) they buried, the Lady of the palace of Troy,
Troee, a'i llew lletyai'r ieirll hen.
And her lion (*i.e. William*), gave hospitality to the old Earls.
Bu i frenin, bu fawr unwaith,
A welcome was given to the King, Henry VII,
Roeso, a'i ieirll, Harri Saith.
And his Earls; he was great once.
Gweddu y bu tra fu fyw
She gave service all her life,
Hon sydd frenhines heddiw.
To the one who is Queen today (*i.e. Mary I*).
I dlawd gwan didlawd giniaw,
(*She gave*) to the weak and poor a worthy meal,
I'r dall hen rhôl fwyd â'i llaw.
To the old (*and*) blind she would give food with her hand.
Â'i llaw draw llywiau druin,
With her hand yonder she would guide those who were forlorn,
Lle da, rhoes dillad i'r rhain.
A good place, (*and*) she clothed them.
Diwarth y rhoes da wrth raid:
She honourably gave generously in response to need,
Dêl hyn yn dâl i'w henaid!
Let this be a reward for her soul!

Gwely Gonstans ag Elen
Akin to Constantine and Elen
Merch Coel, hi a'i marchog hen,
Daughter of Coel, she (*Blanche*) and her old knight,
O! Dduw gwyn, ni ddug annoeth,
Woe (*that*) blessed God did not take away an unwise (*one*),
Ysbeilioedd ddwyn Sibli Ddoeth.
He caused devastation by taking away (*the*) Wise Sybil.
Aeth wraig. Nid â fyth ar ôl
The lady has gone. Never again will the ages witness the loss
O'r oesoedd wraig mor rasol.
Of a lady as full of grace as she.

Mae i Blaens feibion fal Tonwen:
Blanche has sons who are like Tonwen's:
Beli o'i bron hi, Brân hen;
Beli from her bosom, (*and*) old Brân,
Dau frodyr, gwŷr difredych,
Two brothers, men of honour,

Dau feirch cad o farchog gwydh:	<i>Two battle-steeds issuing from an outstanding knight [i]:</i>
Syr Siarls o hil Syr Wiliam,	<i>Sir Charles of the line of Sir William,</i>
Mor wych cawr â'r Marchog Cam.	<i>A giant as great as he Marchog Cam [ii],</i>
Arhowch cloi aur Marchog Glas	<i>(And) delay the sealing of the Blue Knight's [iii] wealth</i>
Tros wart Hvmr, Meistr Tomas.	<i>On account of the Humber's defender, master Thomas.</i>
Dau filwr y'u dyfelynt	<i>Two soldiers whom they compare</i>
Wrth wŷr o gwrt Arthur gynt.	<i>With men of Arthur's court of yore.</i>
Oes hir, eleirch Syr Wiliam!	<i>Long live the swans of Sir William!</i>
Yn fyw maent. Mae nef i'w mam.	<i>They are alive - heaven awaits their mother.</i>

[i] The original has *freich*, a mutated form of *braich* / arm, which could be used metaphorically as 'defender', in which case this line would be *Two defenders in battle*, instead of *Two battle-steeds*.

[ii] Sir Dafydd Gam (Davy Gam in Shakespeare's *Henry V*), great-great-grandfather to Sir Charles and Sir Thomas (and Blanche Parry's great-great-great-grandfather through her Stradling grandmother). *Marchog Cam* translates loosely as 'the crooked knight', apparently on account of a physical peculiarity (possibly attained in battle).

[iii] Sir William ap Thomas Herbert, great-grandfather to Charles and Thomas, known as the 'Blue Knight of Gwent'.

Lewys Morgannwg's poem describes Lady Troy as *in charge of Queens* and responsible for the proper accomplishments of the court ladies. This suggests that her position included the teaching of good manners, basic education, etiquette, protocol and perhaps the enjoyment of music and dancing. The 1557 elegy dates from before the death of Queen Mary I so the queens mentioned do not include Elizabeth as her elevation was not certain before 1558. The phrase may refer to Lady Troy having responsibility in the household of Queen Anne Boleyn. It certainly refers to Queen Mary, 1553-1558, who had lived with Elizabeth and Edward for a time. The line that Lady Troy *gave service all her life to the one who is Queen today* refers to Queen Mary.

It may be that Lady Troy was put in charge of Mary's household as early as 1531, when Mary's father separated her from her mother, Catherine of Aragon. Perhaps Mary's brief stay in Ludlow Castle (1525-1526) gave Mary and Lady Troy some common ground. Lewys Morgannwg's choice of words when he says that Lady Troy *was the guardian...of Henry VIII's household and his children yonder* shows not only how careful one had to be in mentioning Elizabeth before her accession but also how tenuous Elizabeth's position was right up to the very moment that her sister died. The only one of Henry VIII's children named in the elegy is King Edward and here there is no equivocation: *To King Edward she was a true and wise lady of dignity, in charge of his fosterage - she was pre-eminent - and she waited upon (looked after) his Grace*.

Prince Edward later wrote in his *Chronicle* (or journal) that until the age of six years he had lived *among the women* and this was the household presided over by Lady Troy. The evidence suggests that it was Lady Troy who taught both the little Elizabeth and then Edward, her half-brother, their letters. Kate Champerton / Ashley or Askley was only appointed as Elizabeth's governess in 1536, so it was Lady Troy who taught Elizabeth the rudiments of education for her first 3 years. Edward was born in 1537 and male tutors were appointed for him in 1540 so again Lady Troy taught him for his first 3 years. Both children started their more prescribed education at the same age.

A formal household was arranged for the prince in 1538 with Sir William Sidney as his chamberlain. Lewys Morgannwg states that Lady Troy was *in charge* of Prince Edward's *fosterage*. She was eminently suitable to be the second Lady Mistress to Elizabeth and Edward,

being related to the Earls of Worcester and Pembroke and having raised five children of her own. All the surviving evidence suggests that Lady Troy was a pleasant, graceful and charming person whose own children loved her, making her quite capable of fulfilling the role of mother to the younger royal children. Her training of Elizabeth can be credited for the little girl's self-possession and ability to handle discerning visitors. The courtier Thomas Wriothesley was most complimentary (in 1539) about the 6 year old Lady Elizabeth's upbringing and education. It is quite possible that Elizabeth and Edward did not later remember Lady Bryan's tenure at all and that their earliest memories were of Lady Troy as their Lady Mistress and the mother-figure who provided the security and love that is so important in the early years of childhood and could easily have been lacking in the lives of these particular children.

Lady Troy's position is confirmed by analysis of four lists of personnel in the Letters and Papers of Henry VIII. Kate Champernon, later Ashley / Askley, is second in the list of ladies after Lady Troy. Kate's position was not that of Lady Mistress (as has been asserted) but that of governess.

As the guardian of the royal children Lady Troy was responsible for their early religious education, encouraging regular prayers. While at Court she must have favoured a form of worship reflecting the Catholicism of the last years of King Henry VIII's reign, as if she had shown any overt Protestantism it would have at least been noted. From about 1544 Elizabeth seems to have become aware of the theological discussions at court, particularly in the household of her step-mother Queen Katherine Parr, an awareness further fostered by the Protestant leanings of Kate Ashley. That Elizabeth kept her religious interest within the bounds of her father's dictates may well have been due to the influence of Lady Troy and her niece, Blanche Parry, who went to court with her.

In 1545 Roger Ascham (Elizabeth's tutor from 1548 and who may have had a connection with Lady Troy through John Whitney, his page and favourite pupil) wrote to Kate Ashley, as she then was following her marriage to John Ashley in the same year. Ascham asked that she commend him to *my good Lady Troy and all that company of gentlewomen*, proving Lady Troy was still in charge. However, she is not mentioned in the c.1546 household list for Lady Elizabeth.

Exactly what had happened is described in a letter written a few years later, on 31st January 1549, by Sir Robert Tyrwhitt to the Duke of Somerset: *Kate Ashley...was made her mistress by the King her father...For her (Elizabeth's) desire to see the King, she confesses that her (Ashley's) pallet was removed from her (Elizabeth's) bedchamber because it was so small at Chelsea. But four of her gentlewomen confess that Ashley first removed Lady Troy, who has lain there continually for about two years and then her successor (Blanche) Parry and could abide nobody there but herself...* Sir Robert Tyrwhitt's letter suggests that Kate Ashley was not popular with the other ladies in the household. It also shows that Lady Troy had trained her niece as her successor. However, Kate Ashley was married while Blanche was not and this may have been the preferred status for a third Lady Mistress. King Henry, who died in January 1546/1547, had approved the change and Kate was in place before Elizabeth went to live with her step-mother Queen Katherine Parr at Chelsea later in 1547.

Princess Elizabeth became fluent in Latin, Italian, French and Spanish and fairly proficient in Greek. It is occasionally asked if she could speak Welsh. This seems very unlikely but as Elizabeth clearly had a gift and fascination for languages, she may well have understood how to pronounce Welsh words and to have enjoyed Welsh lullabies sung to her as a child by Lady Troy and Blanche Parry. Reading the Bible was a discipline that both had followed all their

lives and Lady Troy would have encouraged Elizabeth and Edward to do this too. Blanche Parry was fully trained by Lady Troy to be competent, efficient, discreet and sympathetic. She was with Elizabeth for 56 years, becoming Elizabeth's Chief Gentlewoman, in charge of the Privy Chamber after Kate Ashley's death in 1565.

Lady Troy was probably in her late sixties when she retired, having been Elizabeth's Lady Mistress for about 13 years. Although Sir Robert's letter seems to suggest 'removal', there is no reason to suppose the change was other than amicable. It certainly appears that Kate Ashley and Blanche Parry subsequently managed to have a calm, working relationship, which might not have been possible if Blanche Parry had felt her aunt had been badly treated. Lady Troy retired to Troy House, where she was still living in 1552. It is probable that she had found retirement to the beautiful rural area she had known when younger, an attractive proposition. Lewys Morgannwg provides a picture of a dignified, graceful and wise lady who personally gave food and clothes to the poor, blind and needy.

The Household Accounts of Princess Elizabeth, which survive for 1551-1552 when she was at Hatfield, include the item:

Sent to my Lady Troy, as by warrant appears, with v shillings (5 shillings) given to the Knights Marshall's servant - lxx shillings

(that is 70 shillings = £3-10s, worth c.£701 today, which was then a very good pension).

This is the only item in these accounts where a sum was *sent* and not just *paid*. Lady Troy remained on the princess' payroll and her pension was especially delivered by the knights marshall's servant, who was paid to do this. The accounts make it clear that payments mentioned were half-yearly. The reference to *by warrant* shows that this pension was a regular payment. Certainly Elizabeth remembered her former Lady Mistress and made sure that she received her pension. Analysis shows that it was about half of the wage given when she was in post. Lady Troy's pension proves her enduring importance to Princess Elizabeth.

By the time she retired both her Whitney sons were dead and her grand-daughter was married to Lord Hunsdon. She had her own furnished apartment in Troy House where her son, Sir Charles Herbert, and daughter-in-law, Cicill, lived and where she received her pension. Lady Troy died in 1557 just before her son. She was probably in her late seventies, a marvellous age for the time. She was presumably buried in Monmouth Parish Church next to Sir William Herbert, her second husband.

It is reasonable to ask why the contribution of Blanche Herbert, Lady Troy has never been acknowledged before in the accounts of the childhoods of Queen Elizabeth I and King Edward VI. The answer is partly an accident of history and partly due to her own personality. With Lady Troy in charge, the household was harmonious, without the unpleasant undercurrents that caused trouble and necessitated correspondence during Kate Ashley's later tenure. Her elegy has only recently been translated and it demonstrates the ambiguity of Elizabeth's position at that time. However, she should not again be forgotten as it is due to Lady Troy that Elizabeth and Edward had happy and secure childhoods.

See paper Lady Troy and Blanche Parry for referenced details.

Above article first written for On the Tudor Trail, see <http://onhetudortrail.com/Blog/?s=Lady+Troy>

If you would like to discuss Lady Troy with me, or if you have any questions (which I will try to answer for you), then please do contact me through the contact page...Ruth.