**CRIMINAL LAWYERS ASSOCIATION**

 **of the Northern Territory (CLANT)**

 **NINETEENTH BIENNIAL CONFERENCE**

 ***~~TOUGH~~ ~~SOFT~~ SMART ON CRIME***

 ***THE TRIAL OF ANNE BOLEYN***

 *How Annie Lost her Head to Hal*

 A play reading presented by

 the CLANT players

 **22-28 June 2024**

 **Hyatt Regency**

 **Sanur Bali**

 **SCRIPT**

 **Nineteenth CLANT Conference**

 **Hyatt Regency**

 **Sanur, Bali**

 **22–28 June 2024**

**~~Tough~~, ~~Soft~~ – Smart on Crime**

**TRIAL OF ANNE BOLEYN**

 ***How Annie lost her head to Hal***

***Dramatis Personae and Players***

Queen Elizabeth 1 [Commentator & Historian]

 Belinda Lonsdale

Narrator [Thomas Howard, the Duke

 of Norfolk, Lord High Steward] Tom Percy

Henry VIII Grant Algie

Mary Boleyn Abi Rajkumar

Thomas Cromwell [“*Crum*”], King’s

 Chief Adviser Lloyd Babb

Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of

 Canterbury Richard Coates

Catherine of Aragon Elizabeth Morris

Anne Boleyn Peggy Dwyer

Queen Anne’s courtiers

Henry Norris Gabriel Chipkin

George Boleyn, Lord Rochford Ambrith Abayasekara

Jane, Lady Rochford Annmarie Lumsden

Mark Smeaton Emrys Nevkabil

Elizabeth, Lady Worcester Suzan Cox

Francis Weston James Stuchbery

Jane Seymour Beth Wild

Lady Anne Shelton [Anne’s Aunty] Anne Healey

Cromwell’s servant, Christophe Simon O’Halloran

Jury Jenny Blokland

 Sue Phoo

 Rosie Phoo

 Rufus Abayasekara

 Edward Wild Hubber

 Brooke Houen

 Sue Oliver

Best Boy Ian Read

***The Plot***

I expect you all know something of Tudor history. Please read the second part of the Play’s Introduction, to be distributed to the CLANT delegates. You already have it. If you are interested, read ***Bring Up the Bodies*** by Hilary Mantel. It contains all the history needed and she is an award-winning writer.

But, long story, short!

Henry wanted a son to perpetuate his lineage. Catherine his first wife (and very loyal and religious) had one daughter - Mary 1 (not in the play) and eight failed conceptions/births. She was ageing and unlikely to produce a son. He needed to get rid of her. Peculiarly, given the general killing of unwanted bods in that period, Henry wanted to do it by the law. Cardinal Wolsey refused to do it for him, being the Pope’s Man, so Henry got Thomas Cromwell (who became his favourite counsellor for some years) to scheme something with the help of the Duke of Norfolk along with Archbishop Cranmer.

Cranmer presided over the divorce from Catherine, clearing the way for the recognition of the marriage to Anne Boleyn. Henry was renowned for his affairs, one of which was with Anne’s sister, Mary. Anne was a toughie, and produced Elizabeth 1, but no son! She had to go. No more divorces...for the time being. Anne was charged with treason, so her removal would be permanent and allow the unimpeded transition to wifey number 3, Jane Seymour. Incidentally, the fifth wife, Catherine Howard - as with Anne Boleyn – was a niece of Thomas Howard, our Narrator and, as the Lord Chief Warden, the Presiding Officer at Anne’s Trial. No conflict?

Enough info?

I have added to the interest, I hope, by having Elizabeth 1 [as Anne’s daughter] supervise proceedings and act as a commentator and help the audience with some of the historical – and family – bits.

The Play will have eight acts or scenes [by whatever name]. As you will have read in the ***Introduction*** hand-out, William Shakespeare wrote a play, probably in the early 17th Century, later titled ***Henry VIII***. Originally, it was titled ***All is*** ***True***, which it certainly wasn’t! In its final scene it shows the happy birth of Elizabeth 1. I have based Scene 8 of our version of history on Shakespeare’s politically acceptable portrayal. This provides an alternative happy ending; a bit like ***choose*** ***your own adventure***!

**Scene One**

**The King’s Chambers**

***Elizabeth and the Narrator are on the podium. Henry and Mary Boleyn sitting close together along further, stage left. Cromwell and Cranmer awaiting entrance, along with Queen Catherine [each from stage right] and Anne Boleyn [stage left]***

***The jury is in position in front row of audience, but not yet showing their team outfits.***

**Elizabeth**

You will be surprised to see me…yes?

But pleasantly so? [***pause***] I’m back from the West.

I’m here as Elizabeth, *Good Queen Bess.*

I’ll help to explain the historical mess.

You might think it’s a remarkable thing,

That Henry Tudor, my Daddy, the King

For all his mad efforts to produce a male heir,

Produced me, the greatest ruler anywhere.

Forgive my immodesty, it’s what others say,

About **my** England, **my** people, back in the day.

I’ll now introduce your narrator, Thomas Howard [***indicate by hand***],

The Lord High Steward, and certainly no coward.

He was the Duke of Norfolk and somehow related,

To most of the cast…

[***Holds hand across mouth, in aside***]

He was cunning and calculated.

And, by the way, he was Anne Boleyn’s Uncle,

It’s hard not to rhyme him as a carbuncle,

In the affairs of State - as you‘ll see;

But, of course, he was related to me.

**Narrator**

[***Intones, with some gravitas***]

***The six wives of Henry*** –

***Catherine, Anne Boleyn & Jane,***

***Anne, Catherine & Catherine [again]***

* ***In this order -***

***Divorced, beheaded, died***

 ***Divorced, beheaded, survived.***

Ah! the Six wives of Henry - five fell by the side -

This is a tale of the first two of those wives.

The fate of each cannot be denied.

Each one the victim of a king’s pride.

So, Good morning, let me introduce you to the play

I am your narrator, and will have a lot to say,

I’m also Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk, Uncle of Anne.

[***Aside to the audience, with a wink and a nudge, as it were***]

Who was to become, in racing terms, an *also–ran*.

Henry the Eighth was a dashing young lad.

Any woman he wanted, he apparently had.

[***points towards Henry, cosying-up with Mary Boleyn***]

There he is with **MARY** Boleyn.

With his women, he led by his chin.

Ten thousand Cuties thought he was the man.

His fame was known throughout the land.

Women came - from Germany, France and Spain.

And from Wolf Hall and London – in the main.

But his desire to provide an heir, a son,

Despite his six spouses, caused some strain.

From before 1530, for nearly 20 years,

Trade-in terms, for his various dears,

Even with the help of his old–mate *Crum*,

Kept him unhappy, sometimes in tears.

First there was Catherine, fertile - not barren

Whom he liked a bit – she had 8 conceptions [***knowing look***]

But her sad record of unsuccessful births,

Leaving only Mary to survive her on earth,

Meant that Henry looked elsewhere,

To sire a strong, healthy male heir.

Catherine refused to go when her use was past

But with Cromwell against her, she couldn’t last.

And this is an important thing for you [***pauses,*** ***gestures to audience***],

To note, Henry was not faithful and true.

As you see him now, with Anne’s sister, Mary.

**She’d** have done well to be far more wary.

**Mary Boleyn** [***pouting, to Henry***]

Ahh! [***sighing***], you are my love, my liege, my king,

In my life, you are everything.

My wish, my Lord, is to be your Queen;

Once you are rid of the current has-been.

**Henry** [***to Mary***]

My Dear! This has just been a crush.

Come and go – all in a rush!

You will never wear my ring.

But your sister Anne is another thing.

I have to tell you, Mary Boleyn,

To ***me*** regal eye, you just don’t fit in.

You are tainted now, do you understand?

I think I prefer your sister, Anne!

**Mary**

[***In Soliloquy to Audience, in the form of a limerick***]

Consorts require emotional learning,

To deal with unrequited yearning,

Where is my pride?

He was along for the ride,

Leaving this sister Boleyn, as his spurning.

[***to Henry***]

I’m afraid, Hal, you’ll find Anne a harder call,

As she, unlike me, will not lightly fall.

[***Mary collects herself with as much dignity as she can,***

***fighting tears, and exits the scene]***]

**Henry** [***now by himself*** - ***to the Narrator – now in his role as the Duke – as Cromwell***, ***and Cranmer enter, standing below the Duke]***

Pshaw! It’s no easy matter to remove a queen.

It’s like playing Chess, if you know what I mean;

It’s check to the king, but check-mate to the queen

But I need a new mate, on whom I am keen.

**Narrator [*as Duke of Norfolk*] and Cromwell and Archbishop Cranmer confer.**

**Norfolk**

Come, Cranmer and Cromwell, lend me your ear.

It’s a sensitive matter; you’ll need to come near.

Henry’s infatuated with my niece, the Boleyn girl.

**Cromwell**

Which one though, my Lord? neither’s a pearl.

Good looking enough, I’ll certainly grant you.

But of regal bearing? More like a shrew!

**Norfolk**

Anne is the one, whom you correctly identify.

Her persona we’ll need to somehow dignify.

Compared to Queen Catherine, she’s like an Alien –

Or perhaps, worse [***pause***] – an Australian!

**Cromwell** [***to Cranmer***]

It’s now up to you, Thomas, my friend,

As Canterbury’s Archbishop, some fences to mend,

Find fault in the Queen’s union with King Harry,

So, in the marriage, he may no longer tarry.

She was married before to the King’s brother, Arthur.

Could she then marry the younger brother, after?

***Enter Queen Catherine – to centre stage***

**Catherine** [***maybe, with a Spanish accent?]***

I believe in the sanctity of vows.

Unlike these others, their catty miaows.

[***waves in general direction of others on or near the stage*]**

[***To Henry***] My husband and Lord, you will suffer from their wiles,

And so, as well, your beloved British Isles.

**Henry [*waves petulantly***]

**Archbishop Cranmer [*to Catherine*]**

I need to examine your marriage to the brother.

It seems you have been bedded by another,

Before your King, with Arthur, his elder.

It’s reputed, in consummation, ***[quoting from a document in his hand***] *he held her*.

I believe you slept together, my Queen,

In the sheets, you lay between?

**Catherine**

No, Archbishop; you are mistaken.

It was not a match of my making.

I was promised by my father;

But I would never have chosen Arthur.

**Archbishop**

But, certainly, you were betrothed,

And can’t deny this on your oath.

And thereafter entered into vows,

To keep yourself (as law allows)

Only unto him, forever and a day,

And yet, to consummation, you say nay?

**Catherine**

Remember, my Lord Archbishop, he was a boy

Of just fourteen, to me only a toy.

Until he grew to manhood,

And to a woman could be good.

And he was ill, and died the next year,

Before breaching me, I do declare.

**Anne Boleyn** [***now having replaced Mary, with the King***]

Ah! My love, my lord, my King!

In my life you are everything.

I wish, so much, to be your Queen.

Can you be rid of the other has-been?

**Henry**

What is it about you sister Boleyns?

It seems you must be identical twins?

Methinks [***pause for effect***], as Will Shakespeare would say,

I’ve heard these words on another day?

I am doing my best to cut the chain.

And then be yours, if I may.

**Anne**

My Lord, would it help your problem to solve?

And perhaps to strengthen your resolve?

If I informed you of my condition?

That is, that I carry an addition?

So, the sooner the better, or I’ll be wild.

The fact is, I’m quick with your child.

**Henry** [***to Cranmer***]

Hurry up, man, do your priestly thing.

Or else, this woman [***pointing to Anne***] won’t provide the next king.

**Elizabeth [*commenting*]**

Little does he know [and why should he *oughter*?]

That Anne will produce a glorious daughter,

And the child that now sits in her corseted tummy,

Is **ME**; with my beautiful Mummy.

**Cranmer [*to Catherine*]**

There is a principle of regularity in marriage,

Which you have failed to disparage.

By the powers vested in me - (by the King),

And no longer bound by my promises to the Pope,

I declare his marriage not worth a string,

And certainly not as good as rope.

He’ll be untethered and free to roam,

And bring Anne and friend to his home.

**Catherine**

Oh, Henry, my Lord, my liege, ***MY*** King,

Before these others I wore your ring.

And gave you my love and your daughter Mary.

The future for you and England is now scary.

Do not abandon me, and make me a Nun.

And send me off to sit in the sun.

At Kimbolton Lodgings, in house arrest,

No longer a Queen, no longer so blest.

[***Unhappy, Catherine exits the Stage; Henry moves further from the action on the top stage or sits in tableau, Cranmer leaves the stage – opposite direction to Catherine. Anne re-positions herself at the table and chairs centre, stage floor; Cromwell finds a chair in corner of stage floor. Other Players enter as noted below.]***

**Scene 2**

**The Queen’s Chambers**

[***Enter Henry Norris, George Boleyn, Mark Smeaton (the Lute player) and Francis Weston; also Lady Rochford, Elizabeth, (Lady Worcester) and Lady Jane Seymour. Queen Anne Boleyn [now wearing a small crown] presiding over her courtiers – they are milling around, gossiping - also present Cromwell- furtively spying, watching and listening***]

**Elizabeth**

Time waits for no man, and Anne’s in a fix,

Events are moving quickly; it’s 1536.

Mother is now Queen and knows what that’s worth.

But she has since lost a male child at birth

By this time, I am born - I’m two… with the nurse maid.

Anne no longer commands Dad’s interest, I’m afraid.

You see her here, in her own private Court;

Surrounded by courtiers; not behaving as she ought.

She is a terrible flirt, and likes to tease;

Not always nice, not always to please.

It will eventually bite her in the backside,

Or worse [***pauses***] – p’raps - [***pauses***] tyrannicide?

 **Narrator**

Henry Norris was a close friend of the King.

Loyal to a fault, in everything.

Here’s the exchange which led to his death;

Without his head, without a breath.

***[Background music plays: Billie Eilish: You should see me in a crown]***

**Anne [*to Henry Norris*]**

Henry - why do you not marry my cousin Madge?

She would be an excellent catch.

**Norris**

I don’t think so, just for now -

No, I will tarry a time to find my match.

**Anne [*Flirting with Norris]***

Then you look for dead men’s shoes.

If something bad to the King ensues,

You would look to **have** me;

Now that would be news!

**Norris [*reacting seriously***]

If I had any such thought,

May my head be removed.

**Anne**

Don’t be so serious, Henry, my dear.

My husband, the King, cannot be moved.

[***Henry Norris moves away;* George Boleyn, Lord Rochford, approaches the Queen**]

**Elizabeth**

This is my mum’s brother, another English Lord,

My uncle George Boleyn – Lord Rochford.

For reasons which will become clear,

I never really met him; he was gone later this year!

**George** [***up close and personal with Anne, removes bonnet to shield words from eavesdroppers; appears to whisper in her ear***]

My dear sister, you put yourself in danger,

With idle chat - heard by **no** stranger [***points towards Cromwell, lurking in the*** ***corner***]

Cromwell’s the King’s man - no longer your friend.

This could hurt you in the end.

**Anne**

Surely not, George, my dear;

Of Cromwell, I have little fear.

I **made** this man, as the King’s pawn.

**George**

But he might think **you** are **his** spawn?

Let’s leave it there, pray for good life.

For I don’t trust Lady Jane, my wife.

[***He indicates Jane;*** ***with which, Lady Jane sidles up to Cromwell, and has a private conversation, with much whispering and gesturing toward Anne & George, and nodding by Cromwell***]

**Elizabeth**

Uncle George speaks of Jane, my Aunt.

Do I remember her? I can’t.

But she was not of our blood, which she was happy to spill.

As you see her now – spreading malice and ill.

**Narrator**

Our next poor lover, **so-called,** [***accentuate***], for you to meet,

Is Mark Smeaton, the lute player, so nice and sweet.

A man of straw, or so it appears –

No money or rank; scorned by Anne’s courtiers.

**Anne** [***to Mark Smeaton***]

Come close, my lutenist, with your puppy dog eyes,

And play some melodies with lover’s lies.

Sit at my feet, like good doggies do,

And sing of the charms of mine you value.

**Mark Smeaton [*sits at Anne’s feet*, *strumming his lute***]

Well, let me borrow some words I’ve heard,

From a beautiful song by a future bird.

*How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.*

*I love thee to the depth and breadth and height*

*My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight*

*For the ends of being and ideal grace\**

**Anne**

Thank you, Mark, you are so cute,

In exploring the future for words for your lute.

So please stay, musician and special friend,

And we’ll be together until day’s end.

[***Mark stays at Anne’s feet***]

Francis, come and talk with me, if you please [***addressing Francis Weston, who approaches***]

**Narrator**

Francis Weston is a reckless, extravagant man of ease,

Who spends days at the court, without a thought,

For work, family, debts or else ought.

**Anne**

Mr Weston, dear Francis, how are you fending?

With debts that you have, and may be extending?

Because of our friendship, some loans I have made.

Are they gifts? Or will they be repaid?

**Weston**

Oh! Your Highness, my friend (**and** my Queen)

So gracious to me you have always been.

I hope one day I will return your present.

Or else, its purpose may be misrepresented.

**Anne**

Frances, we are not concerned will small-minded men,

We will leave the topic of money to pigs in the pen.

And we will talk with the women of our Court,

And see what mischief they have wrought.

[***To Elizabeth, Lady Worcester***]

Lizzie, my friend of childhood days –

**Elizabeth [*interposing***]

Tis is Elizabeth, Lady Worcester, another courtier,

Whose name Anne gave to her daughter [***indicating herself***].

**Anne** [***continuing]***

What foolish game should we play?

That dangers no soul, and gives no hurt,

Perhaps no more than a harmless flirt.

**Elizabeth, Lady Worcester**

It grieves me, Anne, to have to say,

But the time’s not right for fun and play.

The King’s man visits here and spies.

And we Ladies-in-Waiting tell him lies.

**Anne**

Yes, I see Lady Jane Seymour there, in the corner,

Oozing nitroglycerin

We were both Ladies-in-Waiting,

Of course, to Queen Catherine.

[***To Jane Seymour; Jane approaches***]

Tell me dear, what are you plotting,

Against your Queen and Mistress?

Which of my goods are you alloting,

To others, as you plan my distress?

**Jane Seymour**

I remain as loyal to you, as we were both,

To your predecessor as Queen. I plight thee my troth;

 ***[Fingers crossed***, ***behind her back, shown to audience***]

And I hope and I pray, whatever life brings,

That it will produce **even more** Tudor Kings!

**Anne [*approaches Cromwell***]

Cromwell, why are you here and harassing my friends?

**Cromwell**

I am sorry, Your Highness, if my presence offends,

I’m on the King’s business, and will do what I must,

I always hope the result will be just.

If I were you, I wouldn’t assume they **are** friends;

Some might be here to serve their own ends.

**Anne**

Remember, Master Cromwell, those that can be made,

Can be unmade – their power can fade!

**Cromwell**

Madam, I have to say, I entirely agree;

But who came first? Was it you or was it me?

**[*players exit the stage*]**

**SCENE 3**

**The King’s Chambers**

***[Henry joined by Jane Seymour, Henry still on the stage***]

**Elizabeth** and **Narrator** still on podium.

**Narrator**

Henry, once again, is on the move.

With conduct of which you’ll disapprove.

He’s now courting Jane Seymour

He wants to **see more** of Jane [***raises eyebrows for audience to appreciate the play on words***]

And he’s got Cromwell trying to find reasons,

Not just for divorce – but for treasons.

[And surprise, surprise, when Jane talked of Kings,

She meant such of those as she wants to bring]

**Jane**

You are the King; I’ll be your Queen,

When you get rid of the current has-been.

The sooner the better, else I’ll get wild.

Let’s get together, and make a boy child!

**Henry**

Dear, oh, me! Here we go but once more.

I’m sure I’ve heard these exact words before.

I’m doing my best a scheme to explore;

I think we are up to Plan number 4.

**Scene 4**

**Cromwell’s House at Stepney Green**

**[*Enter Cromwell and his servant, Christophe*]**

**Narrator**

We are at Cromwell’s house at Stepney Green,

He is going to interview some men of the Queen.

He is with Christophe, his loyal and strong servant;

A man of few words, if you know what I mean.

**Cromwell [*sitting at his desk, with writing paper and quill*]**

Chris, we are to interrogate some gentlemen;

Their doings with the Queen is the gravamen

Of the matter; but there’s also a rolling stone,

With whom we will need to pick a bone.

[***Knock on door; speaks to Christophe***]

Ah, that will be him now; show him in, eh?

[You may strong and silent stay]

**[*Christophe ushers Mark Smeaton in; Cromwell addresses Smeaton***]

Mark, welcome to my home establishment,

I see you have brought your musical instrument.

**Smeaton**

Sire, I thought I was here to entertain.

**Cromwell**

Yes, but not with music; let me explain.

I expect before this night is over,

You’ll share with us some disclosure.

It appears you are in the nature of a pet,

To the Queen, one to fondle, and yet –

Is there more to it than that?

It seems she uses you as a doormat?

**Smeaton**

Don’t be deceived by what appears on the face;

The beautiful lady treats me with grace.

I know she is sad and finds my music,

For her soul and mind, very therapeutic.

**Cromwell**

And why is she sad, my dear young man?

**Smeaton**

Why, she is in love, you understand!

**Cromwell**

And who is the object of this melancholy ardour?

**Smeaton**

Why me, of course, you should look much harder,

And see the depths of her feelings towards this minstrel,

Who in matters of love is quite skilful.

**Cromwell**

You are a handsome young man, I will grant you.

The Queen has found you to her liking?

**Smeaton**

I may be poor but by no means inferior,

To those other courtiers of the Court’s interior.

They are jealous of me and the success I have had,

In charming the Queen, who no longer is sad.

**Cromwell**

Perhaps you can help me and reveal the names,

Of these our couriers playing these games?

**Narrator**

Smeaton realises he has gone a bit far,

His boasting has unconsciously raised the bar.

**Smeaton** [***suddenly alarmed and suspicious]***

I’m not saying more about the Queen’s Court

I’ve already said more than I ought.

**Cromwell**

That may be, but there are names that I need

Go with Christophe for 10 minutes or so – [***Smeaton whimpers, holds up*** ***hands***] – no, don’t plead!

**Christophe** [***aggressively; takes Smeaton none too gently, off-stage***]

Five will be enough

[***Christophe returns as door knocks again; admits Henry Norris***]

**Norris**

Who was that who just disappeared, skulking

**Cromwell**

Oh, that was the Queen’s troubadour – he was sulking.

Thanks for visiting me, Harry, my friend

It’s sad that it’s come to this at the end.

**Norris**

What do you mean? I’ve been loyal to my King?

**Cromwell**

Well, you have been more loyal to his wife, and that’s the thing.

**Norris**

I have loved the Queen as a good subject should,

But have never crossed the threshold, even if I could.

**Cromwell**

But these words you exchanged about the King’s shoes,

And filling them if his life he does lose?

Clearly envisage his death in an untimely manner.

What do you say – you weren’t a planner?

**Norris**

Just words in jest, uttered not by me,

But by the Queen in teasing levity.

**Cromwell**

The King takes a different view,

And the onus will be completely on you

At trial, to disprove the meaning, simple and clear,

Of English words -a hard task, I fear.

**Norris**

It seems, my doom is cast,

I must say I am aghast,

That my friendship with the King,

And my life, is such a worthless thing,

To be forfeit to the Prince’s desire;

His wish, with which you conspire.

**Cromwell [*he ticks his papers*]**

Your choice, Henry; go with Christophe, then to the Tower.

And await the exercise of the Court’s power.

[t***o Christophe***] Take Norris out; See how Mark is going.

Is he still to-ing and fro-ing? [***knock on door***]

Bring Francis Weston in; I hear him knocking.

[***Weston enters, with Christophe, sits down***]

Chris, how’s the Minstrel, Master Smeaton?

**Christophe**

I ‘d say he’s ready. You’d think he’d been beaten.

**Cromwell**

No need to sit, Weston, this isn’t a social call.

[***Weston stands up quickly***]

I’m wanting some information, that’s all.

You’re one of the Queen’s lovers, so I’m told.

Who are the others? Come on, be bold.

**Weston**

I don’t know who told you but it isn’t the truth,

I have never touched Her Highness, forsooth.

**Cromwell**

Your problem, Frances, is the payment of money,

To you by the Queen; doesn’t that seem funny?

**Weston**

It was a loan made as a friend

**Cromwell**

More likely a means to an end?

You can stick with that story if you like.

But it is clear to me, as a staff -pike,

That you were both up to no good,

And failed in your duty as you should.

**Weston**

I knew that suspicion would fall upon me,

Unfairly. But I’ll let matters be.

I make no false confession,

To you in this session.

I’ll ask the King for gentle mercy;

P’raps banishment beyond the sea?

**Cromwell [*ticks his papers*]**

Mercy might follow an admission…but?

Unlikely, unless you agree that Anne is a s...[***don’t use word – leave it hanging***]

[***to Christophe***] Prepare Francis for the Tower, and bring back Mark.

He’s probably had enough time in the dark.

 [***Christophe returns with Mark, visibly shaking and nervous***]

Ah, Mark, thanks for coming back; how’s your memory now?

Refreshed after your break; I hope so, anyhow.

Sorry if it was dark in that room out the back.

At least you probably couldn’t see **that** rack!

**Smeaton**

You don’t need the rack. Your questions I’ll answer.

**Cromwell**

For a start, how many times did you and Anne bed?

**Smeaton**

About a thousand times, I would have said!

**Cromwell/Christophe** [***in unison]***

Don’t be ridiculous, you are being a fool.

**Smeaton**

I’m nervous – would three or four do?

**Cromwell [*ticks something off on his paper*]**

Now for the others – name me some names!

**Smeaton**

Obviously, Norris and Weston, both of them to blame.

**Cromwell**

I’ll need more, or else you’ll need here to remain.

**Narrator**

Smeaton wilts under pressure. The result is plain.

He talks nonsense; he names all those he thinks of –

(But he forgets the servant, Christophe)

**Smeaton [*ticking them off on his fingers*]**

The Archbishop of Canterbury, the King and her brothers,

You, Master Cromwell [***pointing to him]*** and a whole list of others.

And then there was Tom Pearce and Bill Brewer,

Peter Gurney, Peter Davy and Jan Stewer

Dan’l Whiddon, Harry Hawke and old Uncle Tom Cobley-

And All!!!

**Narrator**

He really is a fool, or he no longer cares;

He’s named those in the poem, ***Widecombe Fair***! \*\*

How he managed to do so, is beyond my ken;

It wasn’t written until about 1810! [***eighteen ten – without the “hundred***”]

**Cromwell**

Take the fool away to join the others, Chris.

I’m pleased to say we have now finished with this.

[***Cromwell, Christophe and a hangdog Smeaton leave the stage; Cromwell to return almost immediately, with Christophe in background***]

**Scene 5**

**Lord High Steward’s Court [George Boleyn’s Trial]**

***[Enter Cromwell, takes up central position, as prosecutor*]**

***[Enter George Boleyn***; ***Jury members remove over-shirts, revealing T’s***]

**Norfolk [*the Narrator now, literally, wearing his hat as Lord High Steward; carrying white rod of office*]**

We are now in the Lord High Steward’s Court,

Where I preside over cases which are brought.

But only those which involve nobles of the realm.

Who are entitled to trial, with peers at the helm.

**Elizabeth**

I am asked to inform you no counsel are allowed,

On behalf of the defence, the story to cloud,

In cases of treason. Nor may evidence be called,

That causes the path to justice to be stalled.

On the other hand, the Crown has its advocate,

To, as it were*, put in the hatchet*.

(As an aside, the first Queen’s Counsel, was appointed by me!

Francis Bacon, in about 1593)

**Norfolk**

I now address the Jury; would you each stand.

And, at the same time, raise your right hand.

And turn a full circle, so the public can view.

That you are not, as first thought, such a motley crew.

 **Jury**

We’ll be the Jury, when comes the time,

To decide without reason, but with rhyme.

We are particularly anxious our role to perform,

But with fear **and** favour – as is the norm.

**Norfolk** [***to Cromwell***]

Master Secretary, I understand you will prosecute,

But with some dramatic licence as to order and form.

For instance, the case of the Queen will be last,

And you’ll call some evidence, which is not the norm.

I assume that the cases of the lesser traitors,

[Norris, Weston and the simpleton]

Were heard in the lower Court, but still with spectators.

Were the results to your (and the King’s) satisfaction?

**Cromwell**

Yes, my Lord, there were unanimous findings of guilt

***[Loud banging noises off stage]***

Ah! that will be the scaffolds being built.

[***to the jury***]

The Jury’s task here will be eased by the facts,

That in those cases, the Court ordered the axe.

**Norfolk** [***to George***]

Stand up, Lord Rochford, and listen closely to this,

As it’s the first time we have had the full list.

You are charged that the Queen procured and invited you

To violate her, with sharing of tongue, gifts and jewels,

And you carnally knew the Queen, your own sister

And you failed your King in not resisting her.

[***jurors gasp***]

How plead you to these appalling crimes?

Said to have occurred on numerous times?

[***jurors aghast***]

**George**

It’s complete nonsense, my Lord, and I so plead.

The charges, no doubt, serve some ulterior need.

It is hard to imagine, and must be said,

Would Anne choose our tongues and risk her head?

**Cromwell [*to the Jury*]**

We are dealing first with Lord Rochford,

George Boleyn, the Queen’s brother.

All these crimes were bad, my Lords

But his were worse than the other[s]

You’ll hear in the Court bad behaviour was rife;

Rochford was seen by his own lady wife,

To kiss the Queen Anne, his sister.

It’s a short step to something more sinister.

So, we will allege he committed adultery,

And with his sister, the Queen. That’s treason!

We make this appalling allegation ***[jury, and crowd, audibly disapproving***]

**He** must prove an innocent reason.

Members of the jury, I call his good lady wife,

Who had to observe all this horrible strife.

[***Lady Rochford moves to give evidence in witness area***]

You are Lady Jane Rochford, soon to be a remanent?

Would you please read your prepared statement?

**Lady Rochford**

Yes; firstly, Master Cromwell, thank you for the redraft.

It shows very clearly your lawyer’s handicraft.

As I told you before, good kissing needs a tongue.

And Lord George used his from when very young.

[***jury and crowd hissing***]

So, when I saw him kiss the Queen, of which I am sure,

They certainly would have looked for more.

I saw him visit Anne in her room, and as I opine,

He must have been in her bed – he was no longer in mine.

**Cromwell**

Thank you, Lady Rochford, very well read.

By that clear evidence, nobody could be misled.

[***jurors nodding, vigorously, in agreement***]

**George**

**Without** respect, Master Cromwell, as its not due,

That humbug is from a vicious shrew,

Who needed more taming than I could provide;

And for the sake of revenge, to this Court she has lied.

 *[****now****,* ***a weak attempt at a limerick by George*]**

These allegations are a joke…they’re quite grotesque!

Emanating, it seems, from the Prosecutor’s desk.

Supposed to be heard by a jury of peers, [***waves towards younger jurors***]

Some of whom seem of tender years

[***young jurors bristle, loudly***]

This is not a trial; it’s just a burlesque**.**

**Norfolk [*sternly*]**

There will be no more jury noise;

I appreciate your upset – but hold your poise.

**Cromwell**

Yes, try this, my Irish Limerick friend**,**

We will see what happens in the end.

There is a further charge written on this note [***holds up***],

Read it to yourself, not aloud, **Don’t Quote!** [***said very firmly***]

[***hands to George, paper***]

Do you recognise these words?

They have spread like singing birds!

**Elizabeth**

George cannot resist reading it out.

Once he sees what it’s about.

**George *[laughs to himself, but out loud***]

“The King cannot copulate with a woman,

He has neither strength nor vigour!”

[***There is scattered laughter in the spectators –* Audienceto be Cued? *- but an audible hiss from the jurors] [George realises his error, quickly]***

But they are not my words, I don’t own them.

**Cromwell**

You do **now**, declared by your snigger!

And by reading them out, yourself you condemn!

We have heard you spread rumours that Princess Elizabeth,

That precious young babe, is not the King’s child.

You will not be surprised that this shibboleth,

Has made, and continues to make, the King wild!

And now, despite caution, you spread them out more,

Reading them out in the High Steward’s Court of Law.

[***George looks crestfallen***]

**Cromwell [*continues, to the Lord High Steward]***

Words fail me, my Lord, not to mention the rhyme,

For the Jurors’ verdicts, I submit it is time.

**Norfolk**

We will send the Jury out to consider the case;

Hopefully, the result will not be a disgrace.

***[Jury sits in tableau]***

**Elizabeth**

I understand the Jury then left

Thought on the matter, the decision was heft.

[***short break***]

**Norfolk**

I understand there is a verdict;

[***Jury is re-animated***]

What is the result you wish to inflict?

We will start with the most junior,

Do you say guilty or not?

**Jurors**

***[Each one answers, in turn****]*

Guilty, my Lord

**Norfolk**

Well, that’s unanimous, are you happy, Master Crom**well**?

**Cromwell**

It’s for the Law to be happy, not for me to tell,

My personal views on such important things.

After all, the justice that’s sought is that of the King’s!

**Norfolk**

You should **both** be content, as I proceed to sentence,

This traitor, so found, to a shortened existence.

He is sentenced to death, with the traitor’s addition;

Hung, drawn and quartered, as is tradition.

Yes, take him away, back to the Tower,

To wait there until his final hour.

*C****hristophe moves to George’s shoulder and walks him from the Court.***

***Other players remain in tableau temporarily, awaiting any scenery changes,* *etc*]**

**Scene 6**

**Lord High Steward’s Court [Anne’s Trial]**

***[Enter Queen Anne, attended by Elizabeth, Lady Worcester and her Aunt, Lady Shelton]***

**Elizabeth**

My mother, still a Queen, enters the Court,

Attended by Ladies-in-Waiting, as she ought.

Her childhood friend and Aunt, Lady Shelton;

But are they loyal? Her position is fraught.

**Norfolk**

Members of the jury, here we be again [***pronounce “agin”],***

To hear more of the crimes inflicted on our King.

**Jury**

We’ll be the Jury, now comes the time,

And decide without reason, but with rhyme.

We are anxiously awaiting our role to perform,

Without fear nor favour - as is the norm.

**Norfolk [*addresses the Queen***]

My Lady, you are charged with the following crimes,

All committed over various dates and times.

Listen carefully, you’ve not heard them before;

It’s taken some hours to apply the right law.

*Despising your marriage, and with carnal lust,*

*You had many lovers, betraying the King’s trust*

*With touchings, and gifting and incestuous kissing;*

*From the King’s bed, you were always missing.*

*Your lovers included Henry Norris and your brother,*

*Weston, Smeaton****,*** *and most probably others.*

*And you conspired with your lovers,*

*The Lord, your King’s, death,*

*Saying if he was to die,*

*You would marry one of them instead.*

In sum total, my Lady, there’s adultery and incest;

And conspiracy to murder, from a traitor’s nest.

What is your response to this list of misdeeds?

Now you must answer, how do you plead?

**Anne**

I plead not guilty. I cannot conceive

Wherefrom come these stories, I do not believe.

To my King, ever have I been a true Queen.

Uncle, my uncle, what does this mean?

**Norfolk**

***[Growling]*** Don’t *uncle* me, my Lady,

Don’t make me ashamed.

You must look at yourself,

Rather than others, to be blamed.

***[To Cromwell]***

Present your evidence Master Cromwell,

And we’ll hear the story that it doth tell.

**Elizabeth**

Cromwell then read from alleged statements made,

By the so-called lovers (with Cromwell’s aid).

[***Cromwell reading, without sound; Elizabeth speaks over***]

It was usual for evidence to be given in writing,

No chance to examine or legal infighting.

No witnesses or counsel for the defence,

The difficulties for the accused were quite immense.

**Cromwell**

My Lady, you have heard their statements

In response, what do you say?

A**nne**

I have heard **your** statements, Master Cromwell.

Have you got any real witnesses, I pray?

**Cromwell**

Funnily enough, your Lady-in-Waiting,

Lady ElizabethWorcester, is repudiating,

Your self-vision of innocence portrayed,

I’ll call her; will you accept this maid?

**Anne**

***[distraught, as is Lady Worcester***]

I have loved this woman all my life as a friend,

If you’ve turned her, it’s a means to an end.

**Cromwell [*Lady Worcester into the witness area*]**

Lady Worcester, you have been sworn,

Here is your statement ***[she cries; he pauses],*** please don’t mourn.

Just read it out loud, so we can all hear,

The happenings in the Queen’s boudoir [***statement handed to witness***]

**Lady Worcester**

***[Holds statement, still crying, mumbles some words sotto voce*]**

Master Cromwell, could you read if for me please?

They’re your words; you can do it with ease.

**Cromwell** [c***rossly***]

Pshaw! Woman, I have a copy in my brief

And hearken as I read to the jurors what was your belief.

*I have known the Queen*

*Since I was a teen.*

*I was surprised at her marriage,*

*But became part of**her entourage.*

*The Queen’s Court and Chambers were*

*Dens of iniquity, led by Queen Anne.*

*She was very fond of all men.*

*She flirted and led them to her bed,*

*Not caring if they were wed.*

*She encouraged her ladies to behave the same.*

*I was embarrassed and ashamed.*

Is that your statement?

**Lady Worcester [*nods]***

**Cromwell**

You must answer; a nod’s no good to a blind horse.

**Lady Worcester**

[***very softly***] Yes,

[***louder***] But the words are yours, of course.

**Cromwell [*waves dismissively]***

I’m sure the jury gets the message,

And will regard it as a presage.

***[jurors nod vigorously; Lady Worcester, visibly upset leaves witness area*]**

**Cromwell**

[***to the Queen, aggressively and loudly*]**

There you are, some evidence! what’s your answer,

To what in your Chambers was a veritable cancer?

**Anne**

I’m sorry, Master Cromwell, what was the evidence, pray tell?

I heard more of **your** words, delivered with a yell.

You have pressured my Courtiers with promises and threats,

With fear of regal retribution and debts.

But I answer thus: I have been a true and faithful wife,

To the King, notwithstanding this current strife.

P’raps I could have shown more reverence and humility,

For his goodness and the honour bestowed upon me,

And in my private friendships more tactful;

But I have otherwise never failed to be dutiful.

But there must be reasons not before this Court,

(Because the evidence produced adds up to nought),

Why I have been brought to face this outrageous sling.

I am left to rely on the mercy of the Court and my King.

**Cromwell**

Simple question; did you give money to Weston?

**Anne** [***hesitates]***

Yes [***pauses***]; but he was a friend.

**Cromwell**

The jury will decide where that was to end!

***[to Norfolk]***

I submit that’s a good place to finish, my Lord

**Norfolk**

Yes, with that I’m in accord.

[***to the jury***]

You have enough before you to make a decision.

Please now consider the matter with proper precision.

***[Jury, and rest of cast, sits in tableau for a short interval***]

Can I have your findings, delivered as before,

Junior to senior, as is the Law.

**Jurors**

[each one answers in turn]

Guilty, Sire

**Norfolk**

Unanimous, again, a very good jury;

Very calm and patient, no tempest or fury.

I’ll proceed straight to sentence, not await my own leisure.

You will be burnt or beheaded, at the King’s pleasure.

**Cromwell**

With respect, my Lord, I understand the King will show lenience,

And use the lesser option, a simple head severance.

N**orfolk**

Whatever: remove the lady from my Court

No longer a queen; merely a traitor.

She can return to the Tower, until later

When to execution she is brought.

***[Signalling to Christophe***] Remove the traitor.

***[Cromwell also signalling to Christophe to come over to him, for a quiet word]***

**Cromwell**

Go to the King and tell him all is well,

He can proceed with the banns for his new belle.

***[Anne leaves the Court with Lady Shelton, with Christophe escorting them.***

***Lady Worcester leaves in the opposite direction. We see Christophe approach Henry – sitting wide on the upper stage with Jane throughout the trial [but notionally NOT there] – and appears to give him a message with which he is happy. Cromwell leaves last and separately]***

**Elizabeth *[speaks as cast are on the move*]**

The King and Jane Seymour were not in the Court,

And hence they were waiting for Cromwell’s report.

***[The cast – if any - are in tableau for a short period, pending the next scene]***

**Scene 7**

**Tower of London**

**[*Anne and Lady Shelton present, both sitting, but apart; Lady Shelton is knitting, or similar – playing patience?]***

**Narrator**

We are in the dreaded London Tower

Anne is now bereft of power

With her, the unpleasant Lady Shelton

Her Aunt, another Anne Boleyn.

**Anne**

Oh, Aunt, I do wish I could see my brother George,

And see how the poor dear is coping.

**Lady Shelton**

An unfortunate wish in the circumstances;

Like you, he is probably moping.

**Anne**

Would you be able to arrange a meeting with him?

He must be somewhere near, in his cell.

**Lady Shelton**

It’s not my job to make your life easier.

I’m here to watch you; Ask Cromwell.

**Anne**

Yes, you are here to spy, aren’t you?

You’re no more than a prisoner’s screw.

***[Lady Shelton shrugs, continues her own activity;***

***Cranmer and Cromwell enter]***

**Cromwell**

***[Separately, to Lady Shelton]***

Ah! Lady Shelton, how is our guest?

**Lady Shelton**

Complaining, not eating, and no rest.

**Cromwell**

Well, hopefully, she’ll get plenty soon.

 [***To Anne]***

How are you my lady? Doing well?

**Anne**

What do you think, Cromwell?

Sentenced to death, beheading or burn.

I’d like my own maids, to see brother George,

And to meet with my husband King, I yearn.

**Cromwell**

I have brought the Archbishop with you to speak.

You might, unusually, do well to be meek.

**Cranmer**

The King would like you to sign this document,

Showing that your marriage is spent.

**Anne**

You’re telling me he wants a divorce?

Something he’s already getting by force?

He’s murdering me, Archbishop;

Haven’t you heard the news?

I may face the stake and burn!

**Archbishop**

Of that I have heard different views,

The final decision I’ve yet to learn.

But signing this paper, will please your King,

And ensure Elizabeth’s upbringing.

**Anne**

On that basis, I’ll sign the divorce bill

 [***signing document proffered by Cranmer***]

Please tell the King…I honour and obey him still.

**Narrator**

She signs; Henry was ensuring any son would succeed.

Anne still hoped her execution wouldn’t proceed.

She also hoped to protect her daughter’s life.

***[Cranmer departs***]

**Elizabeth *[interposing*]**

I’m pleased about that

***[Off-stage: three loud bangs followed by other sounds]***

**Anne *[startled; others don’t stir*]**

What was that?

**Cromwell**

Oh, that reminds me, I have bad news;

A visit to George, I’ll now have to refuse

***[indicates where the noise had come from]***

But, I have some good, your King is merciful,

Something of which he is quite boastful,

(Speaking of it often!) You will not burn.

And of that awful axe, have no concern.

Some weeks ago, he spent 23 sovereigns -

An expert swordsman from Calais,

Will preside at your departure, with less malaise.

**Lady Shelton**

Oh! You lucky little chicken, not so gory,

Just one ***swoosh*** [***demonstrates***] and you’re history.

Unlike George and your other friends;

Three strikes with the axe before their ends.

Anne

Thanks, auntie, you really are a piece of work.

I see you sitting there with your smirk.

[***To Cromwell, both hands around her neck, momentarily***]

Cromwell, I have such a little neck,

It will be the work of a moment, to wreck.

[***Draws hand across her throat***]

The King was very clever to predict.

The need for the swordsman before the verdict.

It’s good for you both, the money’s not waste,

I am sorry to say, I’ll be disposed of in haste.

**Cromwell**

And I am **sorry** that you have come to this place,

**[*Indicating, by sweeping hand, the Tower*]**

You are behaving, in the circumstances, with much grace.

**Anne**

I said **sorry** first, and I’m **sorry much more** [***hand across her throat***]

Is it not possible, yet, to see my husband, or –

**Cromwell** [shrugs]

**Lady Shelton**

Don’t be so blind, isn’t it plain?

The King has moved on; he’s with Lady Jane.

**Anne**

Thank you, again, Aunt [***sarcastically***]; would you now leave me alone?

You are nothing but a nasty old crone.

You, too, Cromwell – you are no longer welcome to me.

And don’t think you’ll stay favoured by King Henry.

You have outplayed this Queen;

But it will be interesting to see your place in history,

I predict you, too, will be headless by 1540.

[***Cromwell and Lady Shelton leave, as Anne is speaking***]

I wish myself for death to prepare,

And spend some time, alone, to say a prayer.

**Narrator**

She practices words she’ll say on the scaffold,

Perhaps at the end he’ll the execution hold?

*Hope springs eternal*, don’t they all say?

An unrealistic thought, but she can still pray.

**Anne *[Quietly, walking off the stage, pausing near her final exit]***

I pray for the King, for he’s a good man,

Perhaps led astray by other men’s plan(s).

A gentle, virtuous, amiable prince,

These are the virtues he does evince.

I wish him a long and happy life,

I just wish I could be his forever wife.

**Anne** *[departs the stage*]

***[When she is completely out of view, there is a*** **swoosh]**

**Scene 8**

**King’s Chamber**

**Narrator**

For those who prefer a happier ending,

Without the *swishing* of Anne’s beheading,

I’ll take you to the Shakespearian version.

Without wishing to cast aspersion

On that eminent scribe and writer of plays,

(Much like our own [***waving towards our writer***], I’m bound to say);

Although Will’s play is entitled ***All is True***,

It is completely a myth, I am telling you.

But never mind, it is certainly “*feel good*”.

Will it please my companion? [***points to Elizabeth***] – it should.

Written at the end of Elizabeth’s reign,

It doesn’t describe how her mother was slain.

It has Lillibet’s birth in its final scene,

And allows what’s unsaid to remain unseen.

So let’s see how William dealt with that birth;

He made it appear it was shattering-earth.

**Elizabeth**

Well, I am looking forward, with delight and glee,

To seven September, fifteen-thirty-three.

The joy my arrival is for King Henry

And it’s – [***pause***] - Happy Birthday - ***[pause***] - to me!

[***all the cast – excepting the King and Anne - now return to the stage, milling around, noisy and happy, chatting merrily - Jury still in its place*** ***to lead noise and, later, three cheers. Queen Catherine also present with Mary Boleyn- slightly apart from the rest and not so happy. Baby’s bassinet -or similar- on stage as a prop]***

**Henry Norris**

Heaven, from thy endless goodness, send prosperous life,

Long and ever happy, without strife,

To the high and mighty princess of England –

Elizabeth – who will bend her knee to no man!

[***Henry enters, on stage floor, joining in with cast***]

**Cranmer [*kneeling*]**

And to your royal grace, and the good queen,

My noble partners [***indicates the throng***], and myself have seen,

All comfort, joy, in this gracious young lady,

May heaven rise up to make parents most happy.

**King**

Thank you, good lord. Archbishop. What is her name?

**Cranmer**

Elizabeth, my liege, and she’ll be a flame.

**King**

Stand up, Archbishop [***leans over bassinet, to kiss child***]

With this kiss, take blessing; God protect thee,

Into whose hand I give thy life, from me.

My noble friends, [i***ndicating the whole group***] you have been too generous,

With words and sounds so sonorous.

I thank you heartily, as will this child,

When she can frame words so beguiled,

In English, to give her a voice

And in your welcome, share her rejoice.

**Cranmer**

Let me speak, sir, for heaven now bids me,

And let no man think it mere puff and flattery.

This infant, though in her cradle, yet now promises

A thousand, thousand blessings, and a land that’s peerless…

[***Cranmer keeps talking, sotto voce, but the Narrator speaks over; in the meantime,***

***the Queen joins the group, with perhaps some covering to indicate her very, very recent confinement***]

**Narrator**

Shakespeare’s Archbishop speaks for what seems an hour.

Extolling the virtues of this one-day old flower.

He thankfully concludes, with prescient power,

Of the sort that kept him safe from the tower.

**Cranmer [*continues***]

She shall be to the happiness of England,

An aged princess, ever so grand;

And be taken to the saints as a virgin,

With the angels she’ll be mergin(g).

**Narrator**

He continued with the same 1600 sycophancy,

From which I’ll spare all of you [and me].

We’ll let Henry the Eighth have the last word;

By the truth of what really happened, he seems undeterred.

**Elizabeth**

I don’t know, great uncle, I was happy to hear more

About me, and the boon I had brought, in days of yore.

**King**

I thank you again, Archbishop, and all;

I shall ever be in your collective thrall.

We [***arm around Anne***] have received much honour by your presence,

You will find me thankful to the essence.

This day is special; let no man think,

To work at business, trade, pen or ink.

At celebration, let us all stay.

This little one shall make it a holiday!

**Elizabeth**

That was put another way, by a more recent prince

An associate of sailors, words he didn’t mince.

**Any boss who sacks anyone, for not turning up today, is a bum!**

A final word: thank you all - who, to this performance, have come!

**Jury**

Three cheers for the Play, and to us, as the cast;

And let’s hope this Play Reading will not be the last.

Hip hip hooray; hip hip hooray; hip hip hooray!

**Footnotes**

\*From Sonnet 43, ***How Do I love Thee***, by Elizabeth Barrett Browning

 [1808-1861]

\*\* ***Widecombe Fair*** [spelt variously] is a Devon folksong from the 19th century, the first date of which is unknown. It has a repeating chorus with a long list of characters. The last name in the repeating list, ***Uncle Tom Cobley (and all),*** has come to be used as a humorous colloquialism, meaning *anyone and everyone.*

In 1952, your writer spent some months in a little private school, *Nilgala*, in Devon, UK [We spent a couple of years in the UK – Dad was in the OZ Army].

We performed *Widecombe Fair*, the poem, at the school play night. I was nine. I played Harry Hawke. The poem is still performed regularly in public, often – so it is said - with *spirit and indeterminate dialect*. My performance was said to be *melancholic to the Nth degree* and I was the subject of much teasing by my family thereafter (pardon my self-indulgence in recording all this!)

Widecombe is a real place and has a real fair. In 2024, it will be held on Tuesday 10 September. Don’t miss it!

At the end of a historical film, they often have end-notes.

Google can fill some gaps, but you might like to know –

* Anne was executed on 19 May 1536
* Henry married Jane Seymour on 30 May 1536
* Edward VI [Jane’s son] was born 12 October 1537
* Jane died 24 October 1537, of birth complications
* Henry died 28 January 1547, aged 55
* Edward (1547-1553) and then Mary (1553-1558) reigned
* Elizabeth reigned 1558-1603
* Thomas Cromwell lost favour with the King, and thus his head [28 July 1540]
* Thomas, the Duke of Norfolk, also offended the King and was due to be executed. The King died on the eve of that event, and Norfolk was pardoned and lived to the age of 81
* George’s wife, Lady Jane Rochford was declared insane by 1542, when she also lost her head (she was reportedly tongue-tied?)