



## Great Ladies: The Forgotten Witnesses to the Lives of Tudor Queens

*Sylvia Barbara Soberton*

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There has been a great deal written about Tudor queens, but less so about those women who surrounded the throne, who may have held even more power and influence than those who actually wore the golden crown.

Some ladies who served at the Tudor court are only faceless silhouettes lost to the sands of time, but there are those who dedicated their lives to please their royal mistresses and left documentation, allowing us to piece their life stories together and link them to the stories of Tudor queens. These female attendants saw their queens and princesses up close and often used their intimate bonds to their own benefit. Some were beloved, others hated.

This is the story of the ladies of the Tudor court like you've never read it before.

## Great Ladies: The Forgotten Witnesses to the Lives of Tudor Queens Details

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## **From Reader Review Great Ladies: The Forgotten Witnesses to the Lives of Tudor Queens for online ebook**

### **Kathleen says**

This was a fine read, a bit heavy on ElizabethI and known facts, but I enjoyed knowing about the interactions with Katherine Carey Knollys and others. Some little known interactions were mentioned which I appreciated reading about.

There were other less remarked upon vignettes, such as the brief life of Mary Seymour daughter of Katherine Parr and Thomas Seymour, that were the reason I decided to read the book.

I definitely have noted the other books by this author and will be aquiring them also. I am giving it 4 + Stars and definitely will recommend it to others.

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### **Victoria says**

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### **Pam Shelton-Anderson says**

The "great ladies" are not actually looked at in any depth and there is not any information here that is not covered more extensively in some other books. Most of the women covered were the Tudor queens themselves and not substantially so. The writing is generally good and it is well foot-noted which is a plus.

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### **Leslie says**

For some inexplicable reason I am obsessed with the Tudors and the Tudor period. I didn't watch the TV show of recent years. I just find the entire Soap Opera ( and there is no other word for it) fascinating.

This book concentrates on the 'supporting players' of the Tudor period, specifically Women in a Supporting Role. Some men will be mentioned but mostly because of their wives and or sisters.

The Tudor courts were still medieval courts; which means that it was filled with nobles, minor royalty and hangers on who actually were used as servants. The titles like Ladies of the Bedchamber or Ladies of Wardrobe actually attached to jobs. The wives and daughters of high ranking gentlemen might have been making the Queen's bed or sweeping out the grate. Which sounds completely insane. They also did this without any sort of guaranteed salary. They got bed and board, many of the women actually slept on pallets in the Queen's chamber. Clothes and other trinkets might be dispensed as a gift or they might not. So why did they do it? Influence, power and the rewards. A favored courtier could receive titles, lands and more. Of course being out of favor during this time could cost you all of the above plus your head.

What I found the most interesting was amid all the chaos that was the Tudor reign from the beginning of Anne Boleyn's influence through the death of Elizabeth there were people who were in and out of favor who kept reappearing. Anne's sister in law ended up in the household of Jane Seymour, and managed to stay in the court through the death of Henry VIII

Text ends at 72% on my kindle then we are treated to Primary, secondary sources and illustrations of the various personages. A full 20% of the book is Footnotes so this is meticulously researched.

I am adding a new 'feature' to my reviews and my shelves named "vocab". This will include words which are new to me and their definitions that were found in a particular book. Note these will be real words and not imaginary words as found in many of the P&P FF I read

Expatiated- speak or write at length or in detail:

"she expatiated on working-class novelists"

opprobrium- Harsh criticism or censure.

'the critical opprobrium generated by his films'

caparisoned -(of a horse) be decked out in rich decorative coverings.

'his horse was caparisoned with coloured ribbons'

mésalliance - A marriage with a person thought to be unsuitable.

'the loss of half a million francs only underlined the fact that her son was making a mésalliance'

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## **Paula says**

### **Not to be forgotten**

I found this book to be a fascinating account of the women who served the Queens. I am amazed that Soberton's research yielded such information and am grateful to her work. These are the women who are usually written out of history and forgotten with time. An extremely interesting read that goes quickly, I highly recommend it for anyone interested in women's history or in Tudor England.

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## **Carole says**

### **Title belies the content**

I am sad that this book only merits 2 stars. From the title it would be fair to assume that the content would illuminate those who were close, 'below stairs' servants of the Tudor Queens. There is nothing here that is new nor illuminating. The true Forgotten Witnesses would surely be those servants of both genders who worked behind the scenes, their contact with the Tudor Queens would have been tenuous but essential. Who were the servants who kept the day to day operations of the royal courts well oiled. What about the male servants who were in such roles. If you author a book on this subject, don't rehash the easily available stories regarding the established families. It's always the 'below stairs' servants who prove to be the greater insight into what really went on and it is their voices who are the real Forgotten Witnesses. Instead, undertake some new

real research and come up with new and unexplored evidence; evidencing the true witnesses whose stories this book should be telling.

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### **Mariessa says**

I'm what I would call a Tudor geek and I judged from other reviews that this might have new material. It was a good introduction to ladies and waiting but if you are like me, it was a rehashing of the ladies I already knew.

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### **Keeley says**

#### **Interesting, but shockingly biased**

While none of the stories in this book are unknown, it is interesting to have them supported by contemporary sources. The chauvinistic quotes from some of the men - oy vey!

It was fascinating to read quotes about how good Mary was and how awful Elizabeth was, particularly as it's normally the other way around. This does, however, lead to a slight problem in that the author's bias is startlingly clear. All the quotes about Mary are positive. All the quotes about Elizabeth are negative. The author really really hates Elizabeth I.

As long as you are aware of the bias and don't assume this is a complete portrait of those at the Tudor court, it's an interesting and informative read.

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### **Carole P. Roman says**

Tudor history is a rich tapestry overflowing with colorful personalities that often overshadow some of the smaller players that joined the court. The Tudor palaces were filled with the flowers of English society, whether it was the daughters of the house sent to find a husband or wives helping their family's travel up the social and political ladder. Soberton writes a delightful book listing many of the other women, the less famous- who walked the corridors, attending the queens, influenced fashion, and ideas, or even toppled a royal marriage. She begins with Henry VII, the court filled with Elizabeth of York's beautiful sisters and the marriages he negotiated to his advantage. He even kept Lady Katherine Gordon, wife of the pretender, Perkin Warbeck central in his court, paying for her keep, despite who her husband was.

Henry VIII liked a lively court filled with aristocratic girls, flocking to dance around him, serving Queen Katherine, sometimes betraying her. They were there to supply fresh faces for him to pick and choose a new companion. Each of his wives surrounded themselves with suitable a circle to comfort and serve them, never realizing they might be indeed promoting their own successor.

She goes on to discuss women like Frances Grey, Katherine Brandon, and Anne Stanhope Seymour, a lady who tried to rival the dowager Queen Catherine Parr. She was her sister in-law and was determined to see who was the supreme lady in the land. Some, like Queen Mary, surrounded herself with sycophants who encouraged her delusional behavior. Lastly, Elizabeth's ladies, who were made to endure her vicious behavior and strict rules or risk banishment or worse. This is a book about the women behind the throne, their quiet strength influenced the flavor and traditions of the court and supported the monarchy at the expense of their own freedom and personal lives.

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### **Sarah Crawford says**

This is a look behind-the-scenes of some of the English queens. They had various women working for them, sometimes called ladies-in-waiting, who basically were companions and workers. They took care of their mistress. Sometimes they were rewarded. Sometimes they were punished. They were expected to be beautiful, know the various 'womanly' arts of sewing, etc., and be utterly devoted to their mistress.

Of course that was the ideal. It didn't always work that way from either direction. Elizabeth I, for example, was known to beat the women working for her.

It makes for some rather interesting reading.

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### **Joy says**

The title is misleading. There is very little new here for someone familiar with the Tudor period.

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### **Kathy says**

#### **I could not, in all conscience, give this book a very good rating.**

This book is touted to be about the women who surrounded the Queens of England, and had an influence on them and their decision making. In truthfulness many women are named who served each Queen, but there is very little told about them except their connections to aristocracy. I would have much preferred fewer names and more about them as persons. I was disappointed in this book. Kathy R. Blackman

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### **gillian a gillard says**

#### **Interesting but!**

A nice read but not much that is not already told countless times before  
In other books, liked the pictures

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### **Michelle says**

An accessible introduction to the complex world of the Tudor court. Sylvia Barbara Soberton covers the history of the Tudor dynasty from its founding in 1483 with Henry VII to 1603 with the death of Elizabeth I. Focusing on the supporting women of the Tudor court, Soberton argues that the real power behind the throne were the ladies of the royal court.

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**Adrienne Dillard says**

This book gets all the stars from me for two big reasons: Jane Boleyn and Catherine Carey Knollys. Thank GOD authors and historians are finally getting it right with these two. Ms. Soberton gives Jane the sympathetic treatment she wholeheartedly deserves and, even better, gives Catherine more than just a passing mention. So many historians ignore Lady Knollys and I haven't quite figured out why; she was one of Elizabeth I's closest companions. Two big bonuses to an already delightful read. Highly recommend!

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