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UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

FACULTY OF LAW, ARTS & SOCIAL SCIENCES

SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES, HISTORY

**Qualities of a Royal Minister: Studies in the Rise of
Thomas Cromwell, c. 1520-1534**

by

Michael Robert James Everett

Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

October 2012

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

ABSTRACT

FACULTY OF LAW, ARTS & SOCIAL SCIENCES
SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES, HISTORY

Doctor of Philosophy

**QUALITIES OF A ROYAL MINISTER: STUDIES IN THE RISE OF THOMAS
CROMWELL, c. 1520-1534**

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Existing studies of Thomas Cromwell (c. 1485-1540) have typically interpreted his life and work during the 1530s as being a reflection of his religious beliefs, his administrative zeal or his political ambitions. In doing so they have left a distorted picture of the man and his career, which often takes for granted exactly how he became the king's leading minister. The purpose of this thesis is to describe how Cromwell rose so spectacularly, by examining previously neglected areas of work he undertook for the king, and presenting the first rounded study of Cromwell and his early career.

A new study of Cromwell, which focuses on aspects of his life and work which have never before been examined, enables new insights to be drawn about the minister himself, while shedding fresh light on debate surrounding Henrician Court and government. An examination of Cromwell's greatly neglected life as a lawyer and merchant in the 1520s demonstrates how he acquired many of the qualities which were required for him to prosper under Henry VIII, while fresh consideration of the manner of Cromwell's transition into the king's service challenges the longstanding belief about how and when this occurred.

Despite the considerable evidence attesting to them in the State Papers, Cromwell's earliest responsibilities for the king – those concerning the Crown lands and King's Works, his management of the Church, and financing war with Scotland – have never before been examined. Doing so enables a new assessment of Cromwell's early career to be drawn, which challenges the prevailing belief that the break with Rome was vital in his becoming chief minister. Examination of Cromwell's earliest activities in government then presents an intriguing perspective on Cromwell as an administrative reformer. And the first comprehensive account of his role in the Anglo-papal schism not only offers new insights into his role and influence over this, but questions the existing accounts of the politics of the 1530s.

Contents

Contents	i
List of Figures	ii
Author's Declaration	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
List of Abbreviations	v
Note on Citations, Transcriptions and Dates	vii
Introduction.....	1
Chapter One: London Lawyer and Merchant, c. 1520-1530	15
Chapter Two: Transition and Transformation: Entry in the King's Service, 1529-1530.....	65
Chapter Three: The Crown Lands and King's Works	86
Chapter Four: Cromwell and the English Church, 1531-1534	138
Chapter Five: Royal Government.....	195
Chapter Six: The Minister and his Household	232
Chapter Seven: The Break with Rome	261
Conclusion: King and Minister	300
Appendices	312
Bibliography.....	325

List of Figures

Figure 1: Thomas Cromwell after Hans Holbein the Younger, c. 1533.	3
Figure 2: A Chancery Petition signed by Cromwell	25
Figure 3: A Chancery Petition written wholly in Cromwell's hand.....	26
Figure 4: Part of an arbitrational award by Cromwell and Rowland Lee.	35
Figure 5: Thomas Cromwell's Coat of Arms.....	69
Figure 6: Part of an account detailing the money paid to obtain lands and properties in King Street, Westminster	106
Figure 7: The first page of Cromwell's account B	219
Figure 8: A section from Cromwell's account C.....	220
Figure 9: Clerical grievances corrected and amended by Cromwell.....	273
Figure 10: Cromwell's amendments to the preamble of the appeals act	284
Figure 11: A clause added relating to the new appeals process.....	285

Academic Thesis: Declaration Of Authorship

I, **Michael Robert James Everett**, declare that this thesis entitled

‘Qualities of a Royal Minister: Studies in the Rise of Thomas Cromwell, c. 1520 -1534’

and the work presented in it are my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
2. Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
3. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
4. Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
5. I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
6. Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
7. Either none of this work has been published before submission, or parts of this work have been published as: [please list references below]:

Signed: Michael Everett

Date: 8 October 2012

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List of Abbreviations

Each reference is given in full on its first appearance in the text. Thereafter the following abbreviations are used.

<i>BIHR</i>	<i>Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research</i>
BL	British Library
CCL	Christ Church Library
<i>CSP</i>	<i>Calendar of Letters, Despatches, and State Papers, Spanish, Henry VIII</i> , eds. G. A. Bergenroth and P. de Gayangos (14 vols., London, 1862-1886).
DCR	Drapers' Company Records
Ellis	<i>Original Letters Illustrative of English History</i> , ed. H. Ellis, (11 vols. in 3 series, London, 1824-1846).
<i>EHR</i>	<i>English Historical Review</i>
<i>HJ</i>	<i>Historical Journal</i>
<i>HoC</i>	<i>History of Parliament, The Commons 1509-1558</i> , ed. S.T. Bindoff, (3 vols., London, 1982).
<i>LP</i>	<i>Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII</i> , 1509-1547, eds., J. S. Brewer, J. Gairdner and R. H. Brodie, (21 vols. in 36, London, 1862-1932).
<i>ODNB</i>	<i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i> , ed. B. Harrison and H. C. G. Matthew (Oxford, 2004).
<i>P&P</i>	<i>Past and Present</i>
<i>STC</i>	<i>The Short Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland and Ireland, 1475-1640</i> , revised and enlarged by W. A. Jackson, F. S. Ferguson and K. F. Pantzer (2 nd edition, London, 1976).
<i>St. P.</i>	<i>State Papers published under the authority of His Majesty's Commission, King Henry VIII</i> , (11 vols., London, 1830-1852).
TNA, PRO	The National Archives, Public Record Office

<i>TRHS</i>	<i>Transactions of the Royal Historical Society</i>
<i>VCH</i>	<i>Victoria History of the Counties of England</i>
WAM	Westminster Abbey Muniments

Note on Citations, Transcriptions and Dates

In quotations from manuscripts spelling, punctuation and capitalisation are as they appear in the original, although abbreviations have been silently expanded. The folio references to SP 1 and SP 2 in The National Archives, Public Record Office generally refer to the printed folio number on each page. The information contained in any parentheses after a manuscript reference refers to a printed volume in which the manuscript is calendared or fully transcribed.

All dates are old style but the year has been taken as beginning on 1 January.

Introduction

Thomas Cromwell [Figure 1] was Henry VIII's leading minister throughout much of the 1530s, a decade of profound political and religious change in England. During these years Cromwell played a significant role at the heart of government having amassed a considerable collection of offices and positions. After entering the royal service in 1530, Cromwell was made Master of the King's Jewels in April 1532.¹ This was followed by his appointment as Keeper or Clerk of the Hanaper in July 1532;² Chancellor of the Exchequer, April 1533;³ and then Principal Secretary in April 1534.⁴ Following this meteoric rise, which is the subject of this thesis, Cromwell was then made Master of the Rolls in October 1534;⁵ Vicegerent in Spirituals, 1535;⁶ Lord Privy Seal, July 1536;⁷ and earl of Essex and Great Chamberlain in April 1540.⁸ Understandably, given the position he occupied in such a formative decade, Cromwell has already received considerable attention from historians. Yet what is striking about previous studies is that all too often one particular aspect of his life or work has been emphasised – and everything else interpreted in that light. Cromwell has been portrayed as an evangelical reformer, a Machiavellian and corrupt politician, an administrative genius, and as a prominent player in factional

¹ T[he] N[ational] A[rchives], P[ublic] R[ecord] O[ffice], C82/654 and C66/659 m. 36 (*Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII*, [Volume] V, 978 [13]).

² TNA, PRO, C82/658 and C66/660 m. 33 (*LP V* 1207 [36]).

³ TNA, PRO, C82/667 and C66/661 m. 27 (*LP VI* 417 [22]).

⁴ The office of Principal Secretary was not one confirmed by patent, but the first warrant Cromwell signed as secretary is dated 19 April 1534. See TNA, PRO, C82/681 (*LP VII* 587 [26]).

⁵ TNA, PRO, C82/689 and C66/665 m. 1 (*LP VII* 1352 [3]).

⁶ No patent exists for the position of Vicegerent, an office which, to-date, only Cromwell has held. He was appointed to this in January 1535, although there has been some debate as to whether this was initially intended as a permanent position. See S. E. Lehmborg, 'Supremacy and Vicegerency: A Re-examination', *English Historical Review*, 81 (1966), pp. 225-236; F. D. Logan, 'Thomas Cromwell and the Vicegerency in Spirituals: a revisitation', *EHR*, 103 (1988), pp. 658-668.

⁷ TNA, PRO, C82/714 and C66/669 m. 3 (*LP XI* 202 [3]).

⁸ TNA, PRO, C82/765 (*LP XV* 611 [37 & 38]).

politics. More often than not proponents of each of these views see the one they favour as key to an understanding of Cromwell.

The earliest, and in recent years, most influential interpretation has been that put forward by the martyrologist John Foxe. In his *Acts and Monuments*, first published in 1563, Cromwell was the 'valiaunt Souldier and captayne of Christe' who, driven by his zeal to 'set forwarde the truthe of the Gospel', sought 'all meanes and wayes to beate down false Religion and to aduaunce the true'.⁹ Foxe's Cromwell was a figure entirely motivated by his religious faith: 'His whole life was nothing els, but a continuall care and trauaile how to aduaunce & further the right knowledge of the Gospell, and reforme the house of God'.¹⁰ It was an attitude which continued to find advocates among some late-sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth century writers. Raphael Holinshed also thought Cromwell 'a fauourer to the Gospel, and an enimie to the pride of prelates'.¹¹ Gilbert Burnet, in his *History of the Reformation*, similarly argued that Cromwell 'did promote the Reformation very vigorously' and was 'certain he was a Lutheran'.¹² Other writers, however, were becoming less certain of Cromwell's religious affiliation. Jeremy Collier, writing at the beginning of the eighteenth century, readily acknowledged that 'Cromwell was

⁹ There were four editions of *Acts and Monuments* (commonly known as the 'Book of Martyrs') published during Foxe's lifetime: 1563, 1570, 1576 and 1583. Foxe added to, amended and altered the text of his work in each version as new material and new accounts of the lives of his 'martyrs' became known to him. Although his account of Cromwell's life contains such amendments and alterations, nothing new of significance is added to the 1576 and 1583 editions. Moreover throughout all four editions Foxe is entirely consistent in his portrayal of Cromwell as a Protestant hero. T. Freeman has also highlighted the general problem in relying on the Victorian edition of Foxe edited by J. Pratt, demonstrating that it collates material from the 1563 and 1583 editions of Foxe, while omitting material from the 1570 and 1576 editions. See T. Freeman, 'Texts, Lies, and Microfilm: Reading and Misreading Foxe's "Book of Martyrs"', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 30 (1999), pp. 23-24. This issue has been resolved by the digitalisation of all four of the original versions of *Acts and Monuments*, freely available at: <http://www.hrionline.shef.ac.uk/foxe/>. The above quotation is from the 1563 edition: John Foxe. *Acts and Monuments [...]* (1563 edition), [online]. (hriOnline, Sheffield), p. 602. Available from: <http://www.hrionline.shef.ac.uk/foxe/>. Hereafter the online *Acts and Monuments* is cited as: Foxe, *Acts and Monuments* (edition).

¹⁰ Foxe, *Acts and Monuments* (1570 edition), p. 1353.

¹¹ Raphael Holinshed, *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland* (6 vols., London, 1807-1808), ii. 1579.

¹² Gilbert Burnet, *The History of the Reformation of the Church of England*, (4 vols., London, 1837), i. 281, 457.



Figure 1: Thomas Cromwell after Hans Holbein the Younger c. 1533.

© National Portrait Gallery, London.

no papist at his death: but then, it is pretty plain, he was no Protestant neither'.¹³

'Whig' historians of the nineteenth century, eager to emphasise English constitutional progress, had a curious attitude toward Cromwell. On the one hand the methods he employed, which were seen as ruthless and destructive, were despised; but on the other, there was a grudging admiration for the necessity of the political and religious changes he helped bring about. J. A. Froude, for instance, believed that Cromwell had been 'the most despotic minister who had ever governed England' with a 'long list of solemn tragedies...upon his memory'.¹⁴ And yet,

He had taken upon himself a task beyond the ordinary strength of man...He pursued an object, the excellence of which, as his mind saw it, transcended all other considerations – the freedom of England and the destruction of idolatry: and those who from any motive, noble or base, pious or impious, crossed his path, he crushed, and passed on over their bodies.¹⁵

Arthur Galton was another who argued that as 'a minister of destruction Cromwell is almost without an equal in history'. When, however, the causes and results of this destruction were examined 'we see how wise and necessary his policy was'.¹⁶

By the early twentieth century the majority of historians had come to see Cromwell as an entirely secular figure. In 1902 R. B. Merriman put forward an influential interpretation of Cromwell as a Machiavellian schemer. Merriman argued that Cromwell possessed an 'utter lack of emotion' in everything he did and totally disregarded the 'justness or morality of any

¹³ J. Collier, *An Ecclesiastical History of Great Britain* (9 vols., London, 1840-1841), v. 73.

¹⁴ J. A. Froude, *History of England From the Fall of Wolsey to the Death of Elizabeth* (12 vols., London, 1856-1870), iii. 521, 525.

¹⁵ Froude, *History of England*, iii. 525.

¹⁶ A. Galton, *The Character and Times of Thomas Cromwell: A Sixteenth Century Criticism* (Birmingham, 1887), p. 208, 209. Galton also felt that although 'no impartial historian can believe in the motives of Henry VIII, or admire the methods of Cromwell, it is possible to see that their work was, on the whole, indispensable' (p. 176).

action'.¹⁷ It was such characteristics that enabled him 'to tick off in his memoranda the lives of human beings, as if they were items in an account'.¹⁸ Merriman's Cromwell was corrupt, greedy and materialistic, with no concern for religion: 'Catholicism and Protestantism passed over his head; he was not touched by either of them'.¹⁹ It was a view shared by many of Merriman's contemporaries. A. D. Innes claimed Cromwell to be 'the most passionless figure' in English history, who cared 'not a straw' for any religious dispute of the time'.²⁰ A. F. Pollard also believed it was Cromwell who had enabled Henry VIII's march toward despotism.²¹

This interpretation, despite the occasional dissenting voice, remained the overwhelming view of Cromwell for almost fifty years.²² In 1948, however, the research efforts of Geoffrey Elton led him to question this prevailing orthodoxy, and throughout a career spanning some forty years, Elton would revitalise Cromwell, arguing that he was the architect of a 'revolution' in government, and the man who laid the beginnings of a 'modern' nation-state in England. *The Tudor Revolution in Government* appeared in 1953, following the findings of Elton's PhD research. Cromwell, it was argued, replaced the existing medieval household system of government with the foundations of a 'modern' structure of bureaucratic departments.²³ This thesis generated considerable debate. A lengthy argument played out on the pages of *Past and Present*,²⁴

¹⁷ R. B. Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell* (2 vols., Oxford, 1902), i. 87.

¹⁸ Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 87.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

²⁰ A. Innes, *Ten Tudor Statesmen* (London, 1906), pp. 115 & 149.

²¹ A. F. Pollard, *Henry VIII* (London, 1913), p. 323.

²² P. Van Dyke wrote a more balanced account of Cromwell's life in his book *Renascence Portraits* (New York, 1905), and included an appendix refuting the charges that Cromwell was a disciple of Machiavelli, which was first levelled at him by Cardinal Reginald Pole in 1538 or 1539. See *Renascence Portraits*, pp. 138-259 for the life of Cromwell, and pp. 377-426 for the appendix. The appendix had also been published separately a year earlier. See P. Van Dyke, 'Reginald Pole and Thomas Cromwell: An Examination of the Apologia Ad Carolum Quintum', *American Historical Review*, 9 (1904), pp. 696-724.

²³ G. R. Elton, 'Thomas Cromwell: Aspects of his Administrative Work' (University of London PhD thesis, 1948); G. R. Elton, *The Tudor Revolution in Government: Administrative Changes in the Reign of Henry VIII* (Cambridge, 1953).

²⁴ G. L. Harriss and P. Williams, 'A Revolution in Tudor History?', *Past and Present*, 25 (1963), pp. 3-59; J. P. Cooper, 'A Revolution in Tudor History?', *P&P*, 26 (1963), pp. 110-113; G. R. Elton, 'The Tudor Revolution: A Reply', *P&P*, 29 (1964), pp. 26-50; Harriss and Williams, 'A Revolution in Tudor History?', *P&P*, 31 (1965), pp. 87-97; Elton, 'A Revolution in Tudor History?', *P&P*, 32 (1965), pp. 103-110.

while some of Elton's own students also sought to reassess the novelty of the administrative changes he professed.²⁵ Nevertheless Elton defended and continued to expand his interpretation throughout his career, arguing that Cromwell was not only an innovative political reformer, but a social, economic and religious one too.²⁶

But Elton's Cromwell was as singularly driven as Foxe's Protestant hero. Cromwell's purpose, according to Elton, was 'to remake and renew the body politic of England'.²⁷ He was no despotic or sinister politician, but rather 'England's first parliamentary statesman', utilising statute law as the weapon of this transformation.²⁸ Cromwell was not erecting a tyranny, but instead a polity governed by the king-in-parliament.²⁹ Moreover 'Cromwell, not Henry, was really the government'.³⁰ The king had 'an unoriginal and unproductive mind',³¹ it was Cromwell who 'instigated and in part accomplished a major and enduring transformation in virtually every aspect of the nation's public life'.³²

²⁵ C. Coleman and D. Starkey, eds., *Revolution Reassessed: Revisions in the History of Tudor Government and Administration* (Oxford, 1986). Other notable criticisms of Elton's interpretation of Cromwell and his work in government include: R. B. Wernham, 'Review: The Tudor Revolution in Government', *English Historical Review*, 71 (1956), pp. 92-95; G. W. Bernard, 'Politics and Government in Tudor England', *Historical Journal*, 31 (1988), pp. 159-182; C. S. L. Davies, 'The Cromwellian Decade: Authority and Consent', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th Series, vii (1996), pp. 177-195; C. Russell, 'Thomas Cromwell's Doctrine of Parliamentary Sovereignty', *TRHS*, 6th Series, vii (1996), pp. 235-247; G. W. Bernard, 'Elton's Cromwell', *History*, 83 (1998), pp. 587-607; reprinted in G. W. Bernard, *Power and Politics in Tudor England* (Ashgate, 2000), pp. 108-129. The most recent contribution to the debate has been an article by Ian Harris, which examined the origins of Elton's concept of a revolution in government. See I. Harris, 'Some Origins of a Tudor Revolution', *EHR*, 126 (2011), pp. 1355-1385.

²⁶ Elton's works with the most direct relevance to Cromwell, beyond those already cited, are: *England under the Tudors* (3rd edition, London, 1991); *Policy and Police: The Enforcement of the Reformation in the Age of Thomas Cromwell* (Cambridge, 1972); *Reform and Renewal: Thomas Cromwell and the Common Weal* (Cambridge, 1973); 'Taxation for War and Peace in Early-Tudor England', in J. M. Winter, ed., *War and Economic Development: Essays in Memory of David Joslin* (Cambridge, 1975), pp. 33-49; *Reform and Reformation: England, 1509-1558* (London, 1977). Elton also wrote several important articles on Cromwell which have since been published in his collective works. See G. R. Elton, *Studies in Tudor and Stuart Politics and Government* (4 vols., Cambridge, 1974-1992). For a more thorough list of Elton's works on Cromwell see the bibliography at the end of this thesis.

²⁷ Elton, *Reform and Reformation*, p 172.

²⁸ G. R. Elton, 'The Political Creed of Thomas Cromwell', in Elton, *Studies*, ii. 225, 234.

²⁹ Elton, *England under the Tudors*, pp. 165-175.

³⁰ Elton, *Tudor Revolution in Government*, p. 175.

³¹ G. R. Elton, 'King or Minister? The Man behind the Henrician Reformation', *History*, 39 (1954), p. 218. Reprinted in H. J. Cohn, ed., *Government in Reformation Europe: 1520-1560* (Basingstoke, 1971), pp. 126-145; Elton, *Studies*, Volume I, pp. 173-189.

³² Elton, 'Thomas Cromwell Redivivus', in Elton, *Studies*, iii. 192.

While many later historians have since challenged or modified Elton's 'revolution' in government thesis, his assertion that Cromwell was the innovative force and dominant partner in the relationship between king and minister has become the standard view held by the majority of historians ever since.

And yet, while Cromwell continues to feature heavily in narratives of the 1530s, only a handful of historians have examined him as an individual since Elton. Mary Robertson wrote a thesis on Cromwell's household and articles on his landed estates and management of the localities.³³ Neville Williams and B. W. Beckingsale both wrote short biographies,³⁴ but neither substantially questioned Elton's views. Philip Ward also wrote a detailed thesis on Cromwell's work for Cardinal Wolsey, which goes some way toward redressing the imbalanced focus on Cromwell in the 1530s.³⁵ Naturally, however, this only follows Cromwell's career up to the time of his entry into the king's service.

Elton himself, although dismissive of Merriman's claim that Cromwell was not a religious man, initially saw Cromwell as 'secular a man as has existed in a pre-scientific age', and dismissed claims he was a Protestant as 'demonstrably wrong'.³⁶ In 1959, however, A. G. Dickens published *Thomas Cromwell and the English Reformation*, which resurrected Foxe's Protestant hero, and again argued that Cromwell had been one of the principal guiding forces of the Reformation during the 1530s.³⁷ This has since been followed by the emergence of a considerable consensus among historians, most of who

³³ M. L. Robertson, 'Thomas Cromwell's Servants: The Ministerial Household in Early Tudor Government and Society', (University of California PhD thesis, 1975); "'The Art of the Possible': Thomas Cromwell's Management of West Country Government', *Historical Journal*, 32 (1989), pp. 793-816; M. Robertson, 'Profit and Purpose in the Development of Thomas Cromwell's Landed Estates', *Journal of British Studies*, 29 (1990), pp. 317-346. See also H. M. Speight, "'The Politics of Good Governance": Thomas Cromwell and the Government of Southwest England', *HJ*, 37 (1994), pp. 623-638; M. Robertson, 'A Reply to Helen Speight', *HJ*, 37 (1994), pp. 639-641.

³⁴ N. Williams, *The Cardinal and the Secretary* (London, 1975); B. W. Beckingsale, *Thomas Cromwell: Tudor Minister* (London, 1978).

³⁵ P. Ward, 'The Origins of Thomas Cromwell's Public Career: Service under Cardinal Wolsey and Henry VIII, 1524-1530', (University of London PhD thesis, 1999).

³⁶ Elton, *England under the Tudors*, p. 151; 'Thomas Cromwell', *History Today*, 6 (August, 1956), p. 531.

³⁷ A. G. Dickens, *Thomas Cromwell and the English Reformation* (London, 1959).

agree that Cromwell was indeed a committed Protestant.³⁸ Even Elton modified his view, and later presented Cromwell as an evangelical.³⁹ This revival of Cromwell as a committed Protestant neatly fitted with the interpretation of factional struggles at the Henrician Court, which proved equally popular among many more recent historians. For David Starkey Cromwell was 'a supreme master of the bloody game of faction politics' and leader of an evangelical group at Court.⁴⁰ John Guy also saw Cromwell as an increasingly important member of the reformist faction battling for control in 1532.⁴¹ Proponents of faction present Cromwell as having pushed the king towards an ever-more Protestant religious policy. Susan Brigden typifies this when arguing that Cromwell 'insistently led the king towards reform in religion more radical than the king could countenance'.⁴² Guy also believed Cromwell to have been 'the driving force behind the Reformation in the 1530s' and that he 'steered the Reformation beyond the point the king decided was expedient'.⁴³ Other historians have argued that Cromwell took risks promoting and protecting

³⁸ Williams, *Cardinal and the Secretary*, pp. 261-263; C. S. L. Davies, *Peace, Print and Protestantism* (London, 1976), p. 190; J. Block, 'Thomas Cromwell's Patronage of Preaching', *SCJ*, 8 (1977), pp. 37-50; A. J. Slavin, 'Cromwell, Cranmer and Lord Lisle: A Study in the Politics of Reform', *Albion*, 9 (1977), pp. 316-336; Beckingsale, *Thomas Cromwell*, pp. 75-77; S. Bridgen, 'Thomas Cromwell and the "Brethren"', in C. C. Cross, D. Loades and J. J. Scarisbrick, eds., *Law and Government under the Tudors: Essays Presented to Sir Geoffrey Elton* (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 31-50; J. Guy, *Tudor England* (Oxford, 1990), pp. 180-181; D. MacCulloch, *Reformation: Europe's House Divided, 1490-1700* (London, 2003), p. 199. This list could be considerably lengthened. S. E. Lehmborg and P. Ward both gave more balanced and judicious assessments of Cromwell's religious beliefs than many previous historians, yet they also believed that he stood closer to the 'new' faith than the 'old'. See S. E. Lehmborg, 'The Religious Beliefs of Thomas Cromwell', in R. L. Demolen, ed., *Leaders of the Reformation* (Cranbury, 1984), pp. 134-152; P. Ward, 'The Politics of Religion: Thomas Cromwell and the Reformation in Calais, 1534-40', *Journal of Religious History*, 17 (1992), pp. 152-171. Only a handful of historians have questioned this consensus. See P. O'Grady, *Henry VIII and the conforming Catholics* (Minnesota, 1994), p. 9; and G. W. Bernard, *The King's Reformation: Henry VIII and the Remaking of the English Church* (London, 2005), pp. 512-521.

³⁹ Elton, *Policy and Police*, p. 424; *Reform and Reformation*, p. 172; *Reform and Renewal*, pp. 34, 36; *Thomas Cromwell* (Bangor, 1991) pp. 35-36. Although, in a neat illustration of the argument made here, everything for Elton continued to be understood as working towards, or contributing too, Cromwell's desire to reform the body politic, including his religion: 'He [Cromwell] had in effect become convinced that only a form of Protestantism could serve the polity he was building' (*Reform and Reformation*, p. 172).

⁴⁰ D. Starkey, *The Reign of Henry VIII: Personalities and Politics* (London, 1985), p. 105. For a similar view see J. Block, *Factional Politics and the English Reformation, 1520-1540* (Suffolk, 1993), pp. 52 & 59.

⁴¹ J. Guy, *Tudor England*, p. 124.

⁴² Brigden, 'Cromwell and the "brethren"', p. 32.

⁴³ Guy, *Tudor England*, pp. 181 & 183.

religious radicals in England and Calais,⁴⁴ while the entry for Cromwell in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* states that he possessed ‘genuine evangelical convictions’ and ‘persistently encouraged Henry to consider evangelical reforms’.⁴⁵

Typically, then, Cromwell’s life or work has been seen as a reflection of his religious convictions, his administrative zeal or his political ambitions. These interpretations, however, in turning attention away from wider aspects of Cromwell’s life and career, have left a distorted picture of both the minister and his work. This is particularly evident in the accounts of Cromwell’s rise to power. Standard narratives have tended to place tremendous significance on his role in the break with Rome when explaining this, while neglecting the numerous other tasks that Cromwell undertook at that time.⁴⁶ True, in his earliest work, Elton rightly emphasised the importance of Cromwell’s administrative hack-work when briefly discussing how he became a prominent councillor.⁴⁷ But above all, Elton saw Cromwell as ‘the man behind the break with Rome’, and believed that Cromwell’s revolutionary ideas of sovereignty had enabled it.⁴⁸ For Elton this was crucial in Cromwell securing the king’s confidence and emerging as Henry VIII’s chief minister.⁴⁹ Subsequent historians, keen to emphasise Cromwell’s religious convictions, have since presented Cromwell as the leader of a reformist group which championed the ideas of ‘empire’, enabling Cromwell’s triumph over alleged rivals on the Council.⁵⁰ Most recently, in a well-received literary account of Cromwell’s rise,

⁴⁴ Davies, *Peace, Print and Protestantism*, pp. 190 & 212; Block, ‘Thomas Cromwell’s Patronage of Preaching’, pp. 37-50; Slavin, ‘A Study in the Politics of Reform’, pp. 316-336; J. Guy, ‘Reassessing Thomas Cromwell’, *History Sixth*, 6 (1990), pp. 4-5; W. Underwood, ‘Thomas Cromwell and William Marshall’s Protestant Books’, *HJ*, 47 (2004), pp. 517-539. The notion that Cromwell protected religious radicals in Calais has been challenged by P. Ward (‘The Politics of Religion’, pp. 152-171) and G. W. Bernard (*King’s Reformation*, pp. 527-533).

⁴⁵ H. Leithead, ‘Cromwell, Thomas (c. 1485-1540)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

⁴⁶ Foxe, *Acts and Monuments* (1570 edn.), p. 1348; Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 89-92.

⁴⁷ Elton, *Tudor Revolution in Government*, pp. 89-90 & 97.

⁴⁸ Elton, ‘King and Minister’, pp. 173-189.

⁴⁹ Elton, *England under the Tudors*, pp. 128, 129; Elton, *Reform and Reformation*, pp. 152-156; Elton, *Thomas Cromwell*, p. 11.

⁵⁰ See, for examples, J. Guy, *The Public Career of Sir Thomas More* (Brighton, 1980), pp. 130-138, 161, 175-201, although Guy later modified this somewhat in ‘Henry VIII and the Praemunire Manoeuvres of 1530-1531’, *EHR*, 97 (1982), pp. 481-503; C. Haigh, *English Reformations: Religion*,

Hilary Mantel's *Wolf Hall* has also focused exclusively on Cromwell's role in the Anglo-papal schism when fictionalising this.⁵¹

Yet Cromwell was not notably involved with the king's 'great matter' until 1532. Interpretations of Cromwell as a revolutionary political theorist or factional leader have therefore obstructed questions which are often taken for granted. What exactly was it that Cromwell was doing for the king during these early years, presumably brilliantly, and what qualities did he demonstrate when doing so, which enabled him to rise so quickly? Moreover, what does the manner of Cromwell's rise reveal about the nature of Court and government? A full study of Cromwell's early career, examining *all* the work he did for the king between his entry into the royal service and his appointment as Principal Secretary in April 1534, offers new insights into how Cromwell became Henry VIII's chief minister, by illuminating responsibilities which have never before been examined. Focusing on these neglected areas means that it is possible to show Cromwell 'at work' in ways that previous historians have failed to consider, and question the rival, if conventional, views of the minister. A sharper focus on the means and manner of his rise to power also throws a great deal of light on what was to follow.

The first chapter of this thesis looks at Cromwell's early life and career before his entry into the king's service. This period of Cromwell's life has been virtually ignored by historians, yet the richness of sources, and a close examination of these, illustrates how Cromwell's earlier experiences prepared and equipped him for service under the king, while also placing him within a broader context of common lawyers who entered the royal service. Chapter two offers a new explanation for the manner and date of Cromwell's entry into Henry VIII's service. Chapters three and four then look at Cromwell's responsibilities toward the Crown's lands, the King's Works and his management of the English Church between 1531 and 1534. Once again, no previous attempt has been made to define or describe Cromwell's work over

Politics, and Society under the Tudors (Oxford, 1993), pp. 105-120; S. Brigden, *New Worlds, Lost Worlds* (London, 2000), pp. 117-119; H. Leithead, 'Cromwell, Thomas (c. 1485-1540)', *ODNB*.

⁵¹ H. Mantel, *Wolf Hall* (London, 2009).

these areas. Each, however, was crucial in the unfolding of his political career, and each helps to explain how he became involved with the Crown's finances. Cromwell's activities regarding royal government is the focus of chapter five. Although Cromwell's contribution to English government is a well-trodden and controversial aspect of sixteenth-century history, the focus here is on his involvement with the more routine work of government, often overlooked, but which sheds much light on the nature of the administrative system during this period. Consideration of how Cromwell amassed formal offices also offers an intriguing new perspective on Cromwell as an administrative reformer. Chapter six places Cromwell's private interests alongside his public work for the very first time, in order to draw a more rounded assessment of his early career and the political environment in which this developed. Chapter seven then establishes the first comprehensive account of Cromwell's role in the break with Rome, while assessing just how significant this was in the unfolding of his own career. Finally, in the conclusion to this thesis, a new date is offered for exactly when and how Cromwell became Henry VIII's chief minister.

Because attempts to present Cromwell as a religious reformer, administrative revolutionary or factional leader have led to a distorted view of the minister, a key purpose here is to present the first rounded study. A biographical approach has been adopted to do this because it enables a variety of themes to be examined concurrently. The validity of biography as a form of history, however, has been questioned by several historians.⁵² Elton has claimed that

even at its best biography is a poor way of writing history...However influential he may have been, no individual has ever dominated his age to the point where it becomes sensible to write its history purely around him. And, above all,

⁵² P. O'Brien, 'Is Political Biography a Good Thing?', *Contemporary British History*, 10 (1996), pp. 60-67; P. Croft, 'Political Biography: A Defence (1)', *CBH*, 10 (1996), pp. 67-75; J. Derry, 'Political Biography: A Defence (2)', *CBH*, 10 (1996), pp. 75-81; N. Hamilton, 'In Defence of the Practice of Biography', *CBH*, 10 (1996), pp. 81-87; D. Nasaw, 'AHR Roundtable: Historians and Biography', *AHR*, 114 (2009), pp. 573-578; L. W. Banner, 'AHR Roundtable: Biography as History', *AHR*, 114 (2009), pp. 579-586; M. Prestwich, 'Medieval Biography', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 40 (2010), pp. 325-346; L. Rail, 'The Shallow End of History? The Substance and Future of Political Biography', *JIH*, 40 (2010), pp. 375-397.

those parts of his career that may carry the greatest historical significance are not likely to be those on which a biographer should mainly concentrate. He should give much weight to those private relationships and petty concerns which have little to tell the historian...The historian should know the histories and characters of many men, as he should know much else, but he should not write biography.⁵³

P. O' Brien has been equally dismissive, arguing that historians 'are educated to deal with group rather than personal behaviour',⁵⁴ and that biographers often fail to adequately contextualise their subject within their political environment, or present their subject as representative of an entire government, class or social group.⁵⁵ History, in short, is thought to encompass 'much more than the lives of individuals; it is about the study of political, social, economic, and intellectual movements that are much more than the sum of those involved with them'.⁵⁶ Those who defend biography, however, have pointed out that groups are comprised of individuals and that history should

also involve placing the lives of statesmen in context, so that a distinctive political culture may be interpreted through the study of one individual who may or may not be 'typical', who may be successful or unsuccessful, popular or unpopular, admired or hated, adored or vilified.⁵⁷

In any case this study is not intended as a conventional biography: that is, a chronological narrative of someone's life. Instead it adopts a biographical approach, proceeding thematically, to examine aspects of Cromwell's life and career between the years 1520 and 1534. Such an approach enables Cromwell's public activities to be placed alongside his personal and private concerns,

⁵³ G. R. Elton, *The Practice of History* (2nd edition, Oxford, 1992), pp. 123-124. It is an irony therefore that despite Elton's hostility toward biography there is a considerable amount of biographical material in his historical writing.

⁵⁴ O' Brien, 'Political Biography', p. 62.

⁵⁵ Ibid., pp. 61, 65. O' Brien is equally dismissive of social historians who elevate 'a solitary miller, priest or a peasant...to represent the *mentalité* of an entire social group' (p. 61).

⁵⁶ Prestwich, 'Medieval Biography', p. 326. This article is particularly good at highlighting the issues surrounding medieval and early modern biography.

⁵⁷ Derry, 'Political Biography: A Defence (2)', p. 77.

ensuring a more complete reconstruction of Cromwell's life is produced, placing his public role within its proper circumstances. This approach also compliments the realities of the political structures within which Cromwell himself lived and operated. Steven Gunn has highlighted the significance of biographical evidence when studying the politics of the Henrician Court, noting that 'evidence of the personal affairs and interrelationships of the political actors...is of particular importance in analysing a political system in which the boundaries of public and private activity were so blurred'.⁵⁸ By adopting a methodology which embraces both the public and the private, a more realistic reconstruction of Cromwell's early career can be drawn.

Cromwell's private papers, confiscated on his fall in 1540 and fortuitously preserved, form the basis of this study. These have been calendared in the invaluable *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII*. As the editors of this calendar noted, 'Cromwell's correspondence...includes a vast number of letters on mere private matters of no political significance, and their chronology is consequently far more dubious and uncertain'.⁵⁹ The editors were therefore often forced to make arbitrary decisions when assigning a year to many of Cromwell's papers. The detailed examination of his correspondence undertaken in this study has indeed highlighted some necessary re-dating.⁶⁰ The survival of Cromwell's considerable correspondence may also have left historians with a disproportionate impression of his influence: one which sees Cromwell active everywhere and doing everything. Where possible, an attempt has therefore been made to locate what Cromwell was doing alongside the work of other royal ministers, enabling a more balanced appraisal of his influence to be drawn. Finally, although *Letters and Papers* remains indispensable to historians of the period, the comprehensive recourse to the originals adopted for this study has frequently enriched, and sometimes corrected, the calendar's

⁵⁸ S. Gunn, 'The Structures of Politics in Early Tudor England', *TRHS*, 6th Series, v, (1995), p. 71

⁵⁹ *LP V*, p. vi.

⁶⁰ Where the reason for re-dating a document is not obvious, an explanatory footnote is given.

summaries of Cromwell's papers. The insights which can be drawn from this make a sharper focus on Cromwell's rise worthwhile in its own right.

Chapter One

London Lawyer and Merchant, c. 1520-1530

During the 1520s, before his entry and rise in the king's service, Thomas Cromwell was a London lawyer and merchant. Historians have long recognised that a background in the law was a common and increasing feature of many leading figures under both Henry VIII and his father.¹ Much of the routine work of government administration, as Ives has highlighted, 'took place under legal forms and demanded some facility in law'.² Men like Sir Thomas Lovell, Richard Empson, Edmund Dudley, Sir Thomas More and Sir Thomas Audeley, to name only a few, were all royal servants with a background in the legal profession. Legal training was a common and useful quality for a royal minister.

Yet among the most notable historians to have tackled Cromwell, including Merriman, Elton, Dickens and Robertson, it has been customary to accord only the briefest consideration to his life before his entry into Henry VIII's service. Cromwell's career as a lawyer and merchant, in particular, has received remarkably little attention.³ Scholarly interest in Cromwell has almost exclusively been confined to his career in the 1530s: a focus entirely understandable given the role he occupied in such a formative decade. But what was Cromwell doing before this? And did this not in any way shape his outlook and beliefs? The fact that there has been no investigation into Cromwell's background, his activities and experiences, for what was the majority of his life, remains surprising.

¹ E.W. Ives, 'The Common Lawyers in Pre-Reformation England', *TRHS*, 5th Series, 18 (1968), p. 153; J. Guy, 'Law, Faction, and Parliament in the Sixteenth Century', *HJ*, 28 (1985), p. 441; S. J. Gunn, *Early Tudor Government, 1485-1558* (Basingstoke, 1995), p. 15.

² Ives, 'Common Lawyers', p. 153.

³ For the limited treatment of Cromwell's career as a merchant and lawyer see Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 15-16, 52; Elton, 'Thomas Cromwell Redivivus', in Elton, *Studies*, iii. 374-376; Dickens, *Cromwell and the English Reformation*, pp. 16, 19; Robertson, 'Thomas Cromwell's Servants', pp. 43-44, 48-50. See also Williams, *Cardinal and the Secretary*, pp. 144, 147-8. Beckingsale, *Thomas Cromwell*, pp. 12-13.

In part this neglect stems from the absence of sufficient sources. For much of Cromwell's earliest life nothing more can be known than that which can be pieced together from the later accounts of John Foxe; the Imperial Ambassador, Eustace Chapuys; Cardinal Reginald Pole, and the Italian novelist Bandello. Yet owing to the nature of Cromwell's legal and mercantile careers, from which written evidence survives, it is possible to be more specific about his activities during the 1520s. Many historians have therefore missed the opportunity to consider how far Cromwell's career in the 1530s can be illuminated and better understood through an examination of his life in the previous decade.⁴ Indeed, this omission goes some way toward explaining why Cromwell's later activities have been so misunderstood. An examination of his legal and mercantile careers sheds new light on neglected parts of Cromwell's life, while highlighting some of the qualities that he acquired through the practice of these professions, which enabled him to prosper so spectacularly under Henry VIII. Most importantly, it helps cast Cromwell in a more accurate light. He was a lawyer, broadly typical of his profession, who shared many of the attitudes of his legal contemporaries.

Early Life and Legal Career

Thomas Cromwell was born in Putney around 1485, the son of Walter Cromwell, a blacksmith and brewer.⁵ By his own admission, Cromwell was a 'ruffine...in hys young dayes', and at some unknown point he left England and spent time travelling on the Continent.⁶ He visited Italy on at least two occasions. In June 1514 he is recorded as a guest at an English hospice in Rome;⁷ while John Foxe, in his *Acts and Monuments*, records an amusing tale of a

⁴ One notable exception has been Philip Ward, who wrote a doctoral dissertation on Cromwell's career under Wolsey, and his role in the establishment of the Cardinal's colleges at Oxford and Ipswich. Ward's thesis, however, offers little on Cromwell's life beyond his work for Wolsey. In this chapter, the focus is primarily Cromwell's legal and mercantile activities. See Ward, 'The Origins of Thomas Cromwell's Public Career'.

⁵ For a more detailed consideration of the ancestry of the Cromwell family see J. Phillips, 'The Cromwells of Putney', *Antiquarian Magazine*, ii (1882), pp. 56-62, 178-186.

⁶ Foxe, *Acts and Monuments* (1570 edn.), p. 1386.

⁷ G. Parks, *The English Traveller in Italy* (Rome, 1954), pp. 376, 417.

young Thomas Cromwell encountering the pope in 1510 on a visit to Rome to obtain a set of papal indulgences for the town of Boston, Lincolnshire.⁸ The Boston town records support the veracity, though not the dating, of Foxe's account. Their records confirm Cromwell visited Italy on their behalf on two occasions in 1517-1518.⁹ It is also possible that Cromwell served as a mercenary at the battle of Garigliano.¹⁰ If true, this would place him in Italy as early as December 1503.

Cromwell also spent time among the English merchants in Antwerp during the 1510s. John Foxe claimed Cromwell worked for them as a 'Clerke or Secretary', and a petition from Cromwell to Cardinal Wolsey in Chancery refers to his presence 'at the towne of Andewarpe' in the company of several merchants 'abought the vth yere' of Henry VIII's reign, i.e. 1513-1514.¹¹ Similarly George Elyot, a mercer, reminded Cromwell of the 'love & trew hart that [I] have gowtt vnto you sense the syngsson martt at medelborow' in 1512, which suggests Cromwell was there.¹² These, however, are the only pieces of evidence for Cromwell's early life; and the only inferences which can be convincingly drawn from this is that Cromwell was well travelled, and probably acquired his ability to speak Latin, French and Italian during these exploits.

Unless fresh evidence for Cromwell's early life emerges, it will always be impossible to know exactly when he returned to England and established himself as a lawyer and merchant. The earliest datable evidence for Cromwell's legal activities is not to be found until late 1520, although he was surely present and practising law well before that date. The State Papers, however, are curiously silent on Cromwell before the 1520s, while the evidence they do offer neatly illustrates the issue surrounding dating much of Cromwell's early

⁸ Foxe, *Acts and Monuments* (1570 edn.), pp. 1385-1386

⁹ BL, Egerton MS 2886 f. 181v. For the history of the Boston indulgences see R.N. Swanson, *Indulgences in Late Medieval England: Passports to Paradise?* (Cambridge, 2009), p. 449; W.E. Lunt, *Financial Relations of the Papacy with England, 1327-1534* (Cambridge, Mass, 1962), pp. 495-510.

¹⁰ *The Novels of Matteo Bandello*, ed., John Payne (6 vols., London, 1890), iv. 107. According to Foxe, Cromwell was 'in the warres of Duke Bourbon at the siege of Rome'. See Foxe, *Acts and Monuments* (1570 edn.), p. 1386.

¹¹ TNA, PRO, C1/482/33.

¹² TNA, PRO, SP 1/104 f. 211 (LP X 1218).

correspondence. The editors of *Letters and Papers*, for instance, placed a document which bears an endorsement by Cromwell in 1512, making that his earliest appearance in the calendar. The document explains Thomas Empson's ownership of Whitingham manor, Buckinghamshire, and Cromwell's endorsement, 'The tittle of the manor whitynham for master Empson', appears on the back.¹³ Yet there is no indication when the document was drawn up; nor is it apparent why the editors ascribed it to 1512. It may well be of a later date, and can hardly be taken as conclusive proof that Cromwell was practising as a lawyer in 1512.

Elton cited two examples of Cromwell's early legal work, not calendared in *Letters and Papers*, which he ascribed to the years '1518 or 1519'.¹⁴ One of these, a case before the Court of Requests concerning a dispute over land ownership in Kent, can be dismissed quickly.¹⁵ It is not clear why or how Elton connected this dispute with Cromwell. There is no mention of him in the bundle of documents relating to the case, and his handwriting is not found on them. Nor is it apparent why Elton placed the dispute in 1518-1519. The only dateable reference is to a bill of costs for one protagonist, and refers to his arrest in the 'xxi yeyre' of Henry VIII's reign; another refers to a commission granted to 'examyn the matter' 'in the xxii yere'.¹⁶ This would place the dispute around 1530.

The other example cited by Elton was a petition on behalf of one Edward Dunrigge, originally addressed to the king in Star Chamber, but altered and corrected throughout by Cromwell, and re-addressed to Wolsey in Chancery.¹⁷ In it one Walter Langford is accused of breaking in to Dunrigge's house on 'the xxiii daye of Julye the viii yere' of Henry VIII's reign.¹⁸ On the basis that the crime was committed in 1516, Elton took the case as evidence of Cromwell's legal work in 1518 or 1519. Now it is certainly true that legal disputes

¹³ TNA, PRO, SP 1/3 f. 73v (*LP I*, i, 1473).

¹⁴ Elton, 'Thomas Cromwell Redivivus', in Elton, *Studies*, iii, 375.

¹⁵ TNA, PRO, REQ2/4/45 ff. 1-5.

¹⁶ TNA, PRO, REQ2/4/45 f. 1.

¹⁷ TNA, PRO, STAC 2/13 ff. 139-141. A copy of the same, incorporating Cromwell's corrections, follows on ff. 142-143.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, f. 139.

were often initiated several years after an offence had occurred, but it is by no means clear when this particular suit was initiated. Thus Elton's ascription of it to 1518-1519 remains entirely conjectural.¹⁹

It is not until late 1520 that a legal case involving Cromwell can be dated with certainty. From 1520 Cromwell was acting on behalf of Margaret Chawrey, prioress of Cheshunt, Hertfordshire. The monastery had leased lands to Sir Thomas Lovell, and tithes were due to the parish priest, Nicholas Cowper, but Lovell was refusing to pay them.²⁰ Cowper subsequently demanded them from the prioress. When she refused, he took unsuccessful action against her: first at the Consistory Court of Richard Fitzjames, bishop of London; then in the archbishop's Prerogative Court of Canterbury; before finally appealing to the papal court in Rome.²¹ The case arrived there in 1520, but was reverted to England for Wolsey to settle as papal legate. A number of documents were sent to Wolsey on the matter, including an earlier citation for the protagonists to appear in Rome. At the foot of this were the additional remarks of John Clerk, who had arrived in Italy in April 1521.²² He told Wolsey that 'the letters of Thomas Cromwell, from which your lordship will understand the merits of the case' had also been sent.²³ The citation was formally dated 18 October 1520, but Clerk's own remarks suggest it was not dealt with until December. Either way, the matter was clearly in the process of consideration at Rome in late 1520, before the matter was reverted to Wolsey. Although the documentation pertaining to the case, on which Clerk's comments were written, cannot have been sent before his arrival in April 1521, Cromwell's letters on Chawrey's behalf

¹⁹ Elton also gave an undated petition addressed to Cromwell as 'oone of the lorde Cardynalles honerable Councell', which concerned the theft of 30 gallons of 'blaktyne' on St. Bartholomew's eve 11 Henry VIII, as evidence that Cromwell was in Wolsey's service as early as 1519 ('Thomas Cromwell Redivivus', in Elton, *Studies*, iii. 374). The petition can be found in TNA, PRO, STAC2/2/274. As the petitioner, John Ayer, was requesting Cromwell to 'avyse me' on the matter, this might also attest to Cromwell's legal activities in 1519. As Philip Ward has pointed out, however, while the crime occurred in 1519, the phrasing of the value of blacktin stolen – 'wich at that tyme was worth' – suggests the petition was written sometime after 1519. See Ward, 'The Origins of Thomas Cromwell's Public Career', pp. 32-33.

²⁰ TNA, PRO, SP 1/31 f. 31 (*LP* IV, i, 368).

²¹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/31 ff. 31-32 (*LP* IV, i, 368).

²² *LP* III, i, 1228, 1230.

²³ *LP* III, i, 1026 (TNA, PRO, SP 1/21 ff.119-120). Clerk's comments are to be found on f. 120v.

must have been present when the matter was before the papal curia in late 1520.²⁴

So Cromwell can be shown practising law in England by 1520, but he must have been present before then to have acquired the necessary knowledge to enable him to operate as a lawyer. In keeping with the elusive nature of his early life, however, it is not clear how or when he obtained this. It seems unlikely that Cromwell would have learned the peculiarities of English common law while abroad in Rome and Flanders. One plausible explanation is that he studied at an Inn of Chancery or an Inn of Court. If Cromwell did acquire his legal expertise from an inn, then at some point in his early life he experienced the studying of writs, the readings and the debating, all of which characterised life in the inns during the sixteenth century.²⁵ Requests among Cromwell's correspondence asking for legal advice and counsel perhaps provide the best indication that he was a trained lawyer. Yet there is no record of his name among those listed as attending an Inn at this time. It is therefore more likely that he was self-taught, perhaps obtaining his legal skills through service as a clerk to another lawyer - not an uncommon route to the legal profession.²⁶ Regardless of whether Cromwell had any formal legal training, in 1524 he became a member of Gray's Inn.²⁷ Membership of an Inn was seen as 'the clearest indicator of professional status and as a warrant for claiming the vague

²⁴ Cromwell was still acting for the prioress on the matter in 1524. Three drafts have survived bearing Cromwell's corrections, suggesting the dispute remained unresolved, and that the prioress re-opened the dispute by appealing to the new bishop of London, Cuthbert Tunstall, following Lovell's death in 1524. Cromwell alleged the matter had remained 'vndeterminyd' in order to delay the prioress 'from the recourse of her greif costs and charges which she sholde have receueyd ayenst the said vycar for his wrongfull vexacyon'. His suggested remedy was that Tunstall command Cowper to 'surcesse his pursute vntruly made ayenst your said oratyce', and make necessary recompense to her for her costs and damages. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/31 f. 32 (LP IV, i, 368). The three drafts are SP 1/31 ff. 31-32 (LP IV, i, 368); SP 1/234 f. 95 and ff.97-98 (LP Add, I, i, 427).

²⁵ For the legal training provided by the Inns see: E.W. Ives, *The Common Lawyers of Pre-Reformation England*, *Thomas Kebell: A Case Study* (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 36-60; J. H. Baker, *The Reports of Sir John Spelman* (2 vols., London, 1978), ii. 125-135.

²⁶ N. Ramsay, 'What was the Legal Profession?', in M. Hicks ed. *Profit, Piety and the Professions in Later Medieval England* (Gloucester, 1990), p. 68; Ives, *Common Lawyers*, p. 20.

²⁷ J. Foster, *The Register of Admissions to Gray's Inn, 1521-1889* (London, 1889), p. 4.

qualification 'learned in law'.²⁸ By 1524, then, Cromwell was firmly established in London's legal communities.

Cromwell's work as a lawyer saw him undertake a variety of activities, some of which concerned Chancery and Star Chamber. There is no evidence, however, either among his private papers, or the records of the central courts, that Cromwell pleaded in King's Bench or the Court of Common Pleas.²⁹ The term most befitting of Cromwell's legal work is therefore 'solicitor', provided that term is understood loosely as someone who 'solicited' and handled the legal affairs of someone else, rather than a distinct and identifiable group within the profession. Solicitors were gradually emerging throughout the sixteenth century to cope with 'the mass of legal, especially Chancery, business which did not fall naturally to either attorney or pleader'.³⁰ In this capacity Cromwell undertook a variety of legal work, and, from what can be discerned by way of comparison, these activities appear 'typical' of that of other pre-reformation common lawyers.³¹

Cromwell's advice and counsel was frequently sought on points of law throughout the 1520s. In April 1529 Hugh Shaw and John Copley, both of the Guild of Our Lady in Boston, wrote to Cromwell thanking him for his 'good counsell labours and payne' already taken in legal matters, and requested that he

²⁸ J.H. Baker, 'The English Legal Profession, 1450-1550', in J.H. Baker, *The Legal Profession and the Common Law: Historical Essays* (London, 1986), pp. 76-77.

²⁹ With one possible exception. In a letter dated 30 August, and placed in 1531 in *LP*, Lawrence Stubbs wrote to Cromwell concerning a suit Robert Barfote, mercer, had against him in 'the common place at Westminster' over a debt. Stubbs remarked to Cromwell that 'ye showed me at our last beyng to geddere ye coud discharge me of this suyte'. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/67 f. 8 (*LP* V 386). Without further evidence, however, this letter is insufficient proof that Cromwell pleaded in the Court of Common Pleas. All that can be said of Stubbs' request is that he asked Cromwell, by his 'wisdom pollicy & lernynys' to find some way of discharging him. If he could not, Cromwell was asked to prepare a bill to remove the suit to Chancery.

³⁰ Ives, *Common Lawyers*, p.12.

³¹ There are not many studies of individual lawyers from this time. E.W. Ives' study of Thomas Kebell, and relevant chapters from Marius and Guy on Thomas More, have been relied upon. See Ives, *Common Lawyers*; E.W. Ives, 'Common Lawyers', pp. 145-174; J. Guy, *Thomas More* (London, 2000); R. Marius, *Thomas More* (London, 1993).

be [a] good maister vnto this berar oure neyghburs and what tyme that ye doo here there mater and causes that ye wyll gyve them your best advice and counsell theryn and which wey is best and moost esist in the law for them whether it be bithe commune law or bi supplicacion for thei be but poore men.³²

Similarly R. Crane wrote to Cromwell at some point in the 1520s requesting that he give 'the best cownsell that ye cane' for the bearer's husband, who was in great trouble.³³ Sir William Gascoigne was another who wrote asking Cromwell to help the bearer of his letter 'in suche matters as he hathe to do in the lawe & to be of hys counsell in the same'.³⁴ Reynold Lytelprow, from Norwich, told Cromwell that he had instructed the bearer 'to reteyn yow on hys cownsell' in a matter to be heard in Chancery or before Wolsey in Star Chamber.³⁵ William Popley of Bristol, was another who wrote to Cromwell on at least three occasions sometime before 1523. In one letter, Popley asked for 'your best counsaill' for the bearer, who was in 'ill trouble'.³⁶ He also reminded Cromwell to send Popley's brother's writs, and in another referred to Cromwell's involvement on behalf of a master Eliott.³⁷ Another letter from Popley also suggests that Cromwell may have acted in a matter 'before the Kinges Counsaill'.³⁸ Popley wanted Cromwell to procure a commission from that body enabling a case to be handled by the mayor 'and other worshipfull' of Bristol. He promised to repay Cromwell 6d for the necessary seals.³⁹

Cromwell can also be shown providing a client with legal advice. Writing to Sir Thomas Boleyn, Viscount Rochford, probably around late 1527, Cromwell recounted how he had been approached by Rochford's sister Alice, daughter of Sir William Boleyn and second wife to Sir Robert Clere (c. 1452-

³² TNA, PRO, SP 1/53 f. 168 (*LP IV*, iii, 5437).

³³ TNA, PRO, SP 1/58 f. 198 (*LP IV*, iii, 6783).

³⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 1/235 f. 219 (*LP Add*, I, i, 542).

³⁵ TNA, PRO, SP 1/236 f. 1 (*LP Add*, I, i, 606).

³⁶ TNA, PRO, SP 1/25 f. 140 (*LP III*, ii, 2461).

³⁷ TNA, PRO, SP 1/26 f. 57 (*LP III*, ii, 2577).

³⁸ TNA, PRO, SP 1/23 f. 271 (*LP III*, ii, 1963).

³⁹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/23 f. 271 (*LP III*, ii, 1963).

1531).⁴⁰ Cromwell was to 'be of counsayll' to Clere in a dispute between Clere and Elizabeth Fyneux, wife of the deceased Sir John Fyneux, a former chief justice of King's Bench. At an earlier date 'couenauntes of maryage' had been struck between Sir John Paston and Clere, whereby a payment of £400 was agreed to be paid when Paston's daughter, Elizabeth, married Clere's son, William. Following William's death, Elizabeth had re-married Sir John Fyneux, and the £400 was now apparently owed to him. Robert Clere alleged he was content to pay the money to Fyneux, but was unable to do so, having only received £200 from the Pastons. Consequently, Elizabeth Fyneux had obtained a writ of extent against Clere in Chancery, threatening his lands and body.⁴¹ Cromwell's opinion was that Clere was 'vtterlye without Remedye by course of the common lawe', and he advised Rochford to move Wolsey 'to graunt a wryt of Iniunctyon', directed to Elizabeth Fyneux, commanding her to prevent the execution of her writs, and to ensure that

no wryttes of liberata goo out of the ~~sayd-courte-vntyll~~ Chauncerye [vntyll] suche time [as] the hole matyer tochyng the premysses may dulye and accordyng to conscyence be harde and examyned.⁴²

Cromwell's comments reveal that he provided Rochford with legal advice, and the most effective way of implementing it, but they offer no indication that he acted or appeared in Chancery on Clere's behalf, or in any other way other than providing him - via Rochford - with counsel.⁴³

Nevertheless Cromwell did prepare bills for Chancery, although interestingly there is little evidence for this in the formal records of that court.

⁴⁰ TNA, PRO, SP 1/46 ff. 33-34 (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 316; LP IV, ii, 3741). What appears to be an earlier draft of this letter can be found in TNA, PRO, SP 1/235 ff. 252-253 (LP Add I, i, 561). Sir Thomas Boleyn (c. 1476-1539) had been created Viscount Rochford on 18 June 1525, and was subsequently elevated to the earldoms of Wiltshire and Ormond in 1529.

⁴¹ Writ of extent were used to recover debt, whereby the lands, goods and person of the debtor could be seized to secure the payment. Unless otherwise stated, all legal definitions have been obtained from Giles Jacobs, *Law Dictionary*, ed. T. E. Tomlins (6 vols., New York ed., 1811).

⁴² TNA, PRO, SP 1/46 f. 34 (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 316; LP IV, ii, 3741).

⁴³ For the litigation connected to this suit see: TNA, PRO, C131/108/30-31; C131/269/2; C131/269/4; C1/488/45; C1/490/33.

A draft Chancery petition survives in Cromwell's hand on behalf of John Palsgrave, prebendary of St Paul's, who was trying to reclaim debts on a benefice in Leicestershire.⁴⁴ The formal Chancery petition for this, drawn by a clerk, is signed, bottom right, 'Thomas Cromwell', confirming that he was the lawyer who initially drew up the petition [Figure 2].⁴⁵ Cromwell's signature also appears on three other formal bills of complaint, all relating to land and properties disputes,⁴⁶ while another Chancery petition relating to one of these also survives unsigned, but written wholly in Cromwell's hand [Figure 3].⁴⁷ Cromwell himself also appeared in Chancery as a plaintiff in several cases during the 1520s.⁴⁸ One of these disputes concerned financial transactions which had occurred between Cromwell and two other merchants in Antwerp 'abought the vth yere' of Henry VIII's reign, which had turned acrimonious. Of interest here is that Cromwell's signature again appears on this petition bottom right. It would appear likely that Cromwell drafted this bill himself.⁴⁹

Cromwell's private papers can also be used to connect him with further Chancery cases when the formal records provide no indication of his involvement. An undated draft of a Chancery bill in Cromwell's hand for Richard Croke, a London goldsmith, has survived. This requests that a writ of Certiorari be issued to the Mayor of London to prevent action taken by 'on[e] [Thomas] Twyn of London barboure'.⁵⁰ Interestingly, the formal petition for this in Chancery is not signed by Cromwell, nor is his name or handwriting to be found on it.⁵¹ In October 1525 Cromwell also began work on a dispute for Lawrence Giles, a Calais chandler, and his brother-in-law Richard Rutter.

⁴⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 1/29 ff. 136-137v (*LP* III, ii, 3681).

⁴⁵ TNA, PRO, C1/558/27. It was common for the lawyer who drew up a petition to sign it bottom-right.

⁴⁶ TNA, PRO, C1/569/41; C1/484/11; C1/507/43.

⁴⁷ TNA, PRO, C1/494/35 is the petition written wholly in Cromwell's hand; C1/507/43 is a petition connected to this, signed by him.

⁴⁸ TNA, PRO, C1/482/33; C1/492/17-21; C1/484/37.

⁴⁹ TNA, PRO, C1/482/33.

⁵⁰ TNA, PRO, SP 1/31 f. 54 (*LP* IV, i, 385). Another (probably an earlier) draft of this petition, again in Cromwell's hand, is SP 1/81 ff. 80-80v (*LP* VI 1625 [iv]). A writ of Certiorari was an original writ, issued from either Chancery or King's Bench, to the judges or offices of the inferior courts. It commanded them to certify, or to return the records of a cause depending before them, so justice could be served in the higher court.

⁵¹ TNA, PRO, C1/498/32.

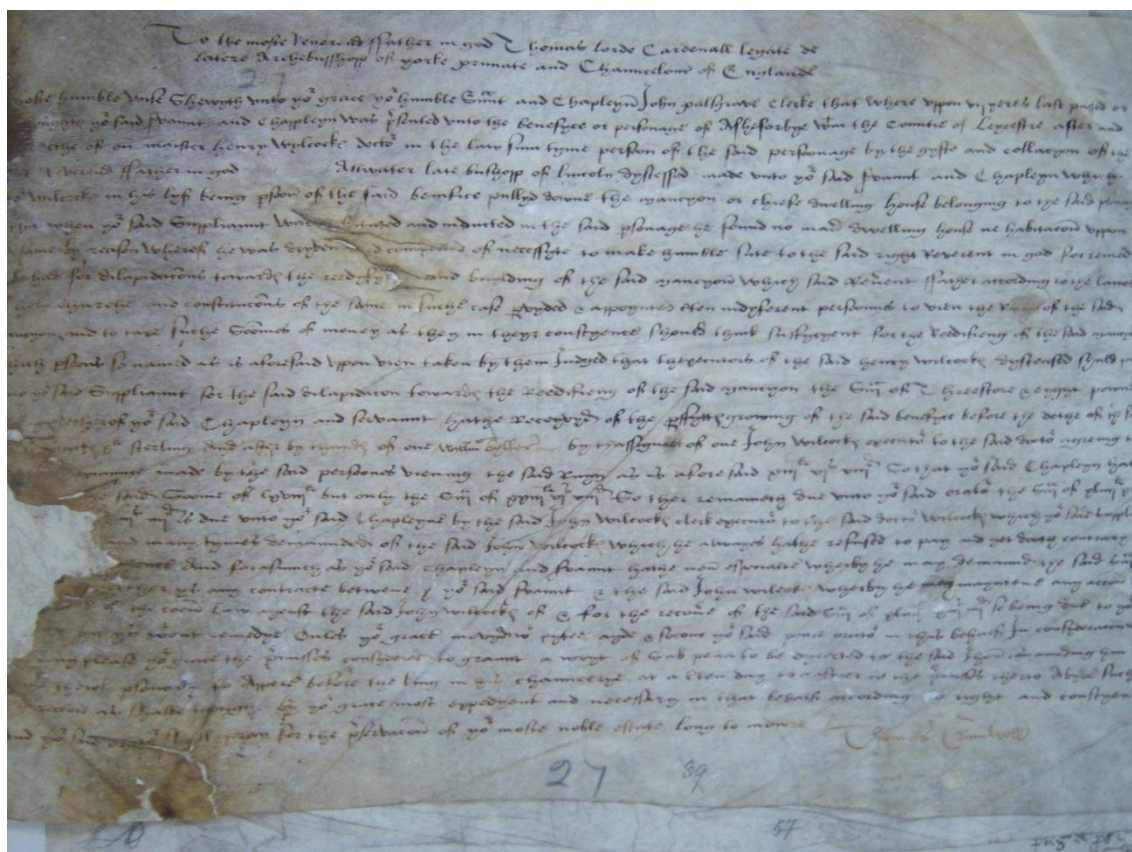


Figure 2: A Chancery Petition signed by Cromwell.

TNA, PRO, C1/558/27.

According to a draft petition in Cromwell's hand, about twenty seven years before one John Rutter of Calais had sold a variety of merchandise to another merchant, Cornelius Peterson.⁵² The payment for this was never fully met, Rutter subsequently died, and the obligation eventually passed to John Rutter and Lawrence Giles. Cromwell became involved in October 1525 when Giles requested his assistance in the dispute with Gertrude, Cornelius' widow.⁵³ Cromwell's judgement was to petition Wolsey in Chancery and request a writ of subpoena, forcing Gertrude to appear before the Court. Three draft petitions have survived: one incomplete, but wholly in Cromwell's hand; the second in another hand, probably that of Cromwell's clerk; the third is in the same hand, but corrected by Cromwell, with the final lines requesting a subpoena added by him.⁵⁴ Clearly, then, Cromwell was the lawyer responsible for preparing the bill. Again, however, the formal Chancery petition does not reveal this.⁵⁵

Several letters from Lawrence Giles to Cromwell do, however, offer details on this case's progress. On 9 December 1525 Cromwell was informed of a problem. The woman's name 'was wrong in the subpena for her ryght name ys Gertvde Cornelys...she regardys thys same subpena nothing at all by cawsse here name was sett wrong in the wrytyng'.⁵⁶ Given that Giles' original letter requesting Cromwell's aid is dated 31 October (1525), Cromwell's efficiency in

⁵² TNA, PRO, SP 1/235 f. 30 (*LP Add I, i, 469*). There is some discrepancy over the exact date the transaction occurred. Cromwell's draft reads 'xxvii yeres [past] or therabowttes', while another draft petition referred to 'xxx yeres passed', SP 1/235 f. 20 (*LP Add, I, i, 469*).

⁵³ TNA, PRO, SP 1/36 f. 100 (*LP IV, I, 1732*). Cromwell was already active on Giles' behalf in another matter. In an earlier letter, dated 5 September (1525?), Giles thanked Cromwell for his help in what appears to have been a dispute with one James Thomas over a ward. It is clear, however, that the matter was being settled by Dr John Allen, whom Cromwell was well acquainted with through his work on Wolsey's colleges. Cromwell probably provided counsel, and perhaps prompted Allen to act, because Giles requested Cromwell 'to putt master doctor Allen in remembrans of my mater'. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/36 ff. 10-10v (*LP IV, i, 1620*), quotation on f. 10. The dispute was soon resolved. In a subsequent letter dated 9 December (probably 1525), Giles revealed to Cromwell that 'I ame a greyde' with James Thomas. See SP 1/40 f. 66 (*LP IV, ii, 2701*).

⁵⁴ The drafts, in the order they appear in the State Papers, are TNA, PRO, SP 1/235 ff. 20-24 (*LP Add I, i, 469*) [First draft]; SP 1/235 ff. 26-28 (*LP Add I, i, 469*) [Second draft, corrected by Cromwell]; SP 1/235 f. 30 (*LP Add I, i, 469*) [Cromwell's draft].

⁵⁵ TNA, PRO, C1/512/69-71b. The bill of complaint is f. 69; followed by Gertrude's answer, f. 70a; the replication of Giles and Rutter is f. 71a; Gertrude's rejoinder to this is f. 71b. Folio 70b is an unconnected document.

⁵⁶ TNA, PRO, SP 1/40 f. 66 (*LP IV, ii, 2701*). Giles' remarks that the women's name was wrong are perplexing. In the formal Chancery records of the case she is still described as Gertrude Peterson, both in the bill of complaint and in her response to it.

handling the matter is notably impressive. In the space of just over a month he had drawn up a bill, albeit with an alleged error, sent it to Chancery, and obtained a subpoena which was dispatched to Calais. And despite the problem with the subpoena, the case did go before Chancery. Giles wrote again on 9 January – although the year is not specified – and remarked how a friend had shown him ‘that my mater was made an ynd of howbeit he could not shewe me to what poynt it was brought’. He therefore requested ‘that I maye knowe the conclusion...which I haue a long season desired to haue knowlege of’.⁵⁷ The editors of *Letters and Papers* believed this letter to have been sent in January 1526, but this seems unlikely. If it was, then Cromwell had handled the dispute unbelievably quickly. But Giles’s remark – ‘which I haue a long season desired’ – suggests that the matter had taken some time. Another letter to Cromwell dated 19 July 1526, in which Giles asked for good news on his ‘mater’, also suggests the dispute was not resolved by January 1526.⁵⁸

Drafts among Cromwell’s papers also reveal his involvement in disputes which have left no trace in the Chancery records whatsoever. Again, some of these can be reconstructed in some detail. Cromwell was involved in a case between Richard Chaufer, a Calais merchant, and William Blount, lord Mountjoy, in late 1522. Mountjoy was executor of the will of Henry Kebell, a deceased London Alderman, and a man for whom Chaufer had been ‘factor, deputye and attorney’ in Calais for many years. Chaufer was trying to reclaim debts from Kebell’s executor,⁵⁹ and Cromwell had been active on Chaufer’s

⁵⁷ TNA, PRO, SP 1/236 f. 70 (*LP Add I*, i, 633). This letter is not signed and the editors of *LP* were unable to identify who had sent it to Cromwell. It is clear that it was from Lawrence Giles and was connected to this case. The handwriting is very similar to his earlier letters, it was sent from Calais, and some of the details in the letter conform to Giles’ business practice. For instance, along with this letter he sent Cromwell a barrel of white herring ‘that is synged with this marke A’, to distinguish it from other barrels of lesser quality. Giles had done exactly the same thing in the letter he sent in December 1525 which informed Cromwell that Gertrude’s name was wrong. With that he also sent a barrel of white herring ‘markyt with thys marke A’. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/40 f. 66 (*LP IV*, ii, 2701).

⁵⁸ TNA, PRO, SP 1/38 f. 243 (*LP IV*, i, 2329). Unless the matter he was referring to was another case on his behalf which Cromwell was involved in, it must surely have been the dispute with Gertrude.

⁵⁹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/26 f. 119 (*LP III*, ii, 2628).

behalf for some time.⁶⁰ In a letter dated 15 August 1522 Chaufer informed Cromwell that Cuthbert Tunstall, bishop of London, who was acting as umpire to settle the matter, had instructed each man to 'chose ij indifferent persons hauyng knowlache' in the dispute to explain its details to him. Cromwell was named by Chaufer as 'the man whome aboue all other I haue confidence in dowing not but that ye well remembre and know my gret hinderance'.⁶¹

Either as a result of a failed settlement on Tunstall's part, Cromwell's advice, or perhaps his own initiative, Chaufer soon sought another remedy: first through a commission in Calais; then through action in Chancery. The latter appears to have been Cromwell's recommendation. On 22 September Chaufer wrote again, thanking Cromwell for his 'good advyse and counsell', but decided not to immediately follow it: 'sir your advyse I doo not refute but For the shortyst And most expedyton to be had I wyll Furst have a commysshon with A penaltye as greate as ye canne gett it'.⁶² A bill that Cromwell had devised (for Chancery) was also enclosed, which Chaufer had amended, and returned to enable Cromwell 'to gett me the said commysshon...And send me the same to Callaiz'.⁶³ Chaufer was

determynd Furst to perceiue what this comysshon shall doo...And if it wyll not helpe I wyll haue accyon vpon his goodes At Callaiz / And if he Remove it...then I wyll haue a writte in the Chauncery Against my lord & sewe hym to the most extreme.

Wolsey was petitioned for two commissions to be held at Calais, the second requested at the failure of the first.⁶⁴ Once again, the speed and efficiency with

⁶⁰ Chaufer remarked to Cromwell that 'the cause of my wrytinge is only towching the matt[er] bitwene the Lorde Mountioe as Executor vnto Henry Kebyll...in the whiche ye in tyme past haue takyn grete labour and payn as yet vnderued of my parte'. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/25 f. 76 (LP III, ii, 2441[i]).

⁶¹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/25 f. 76 (LP III, ii, 2441 [i]).

⁶² TNA, PRO, SP 1/26 f. 35 (LP III, ii, 2557). This letter, sent on 22 September, was in response to a letter Cromwell sent on the 20th.

⁶³ Ibid., f. 35.

⁶⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 1/26 f. 119 (LP III, ii, 2628 [ii]). According to the petition for the second commission, the first had failed due to the efforts of Mountjoy's factor, John Garwey. Both commissions were to be held by the lieutenants, constables and fellowship of the merchants of

which Cromwell obtained these commissions - the second commission being dated 21 October, less than one month after Chaufer's initial request - is strikingly impressive.⁶⁵ Both commissions must have failed, however, as the matter apparently went before Chancery, just as Cromwell originally advised. Drafts of undated Chancery proceedings relating to the dispute, which refer to the attempts at arbitration in Calais, can be found among the State Papers.⁶⁶ No trace of this dispute survives in the Chancery records.

Alongside this Chancery work, Cromwell also prepared bills for Star Chamber. His amending of a Star Chamber petition, re-addressed to Wolsey in Chancery, has already been noted.⁶⁷ In September 1529 Sir Andrew Powes, a priest from Guernsey, told Cromwell that he had 'bisynes...in my lord cardinalles court...In the whiche bysnes your gud word and advyse may do me moche ease...let me haue your lavfull ayde & aduyse in hyt'.⁶⁸ It also seems that Cromwell was active on behalf of Thomas Kenett in a case apparently before Star Chamber, concerning a dispute with Robert Butler and Nicholas White.⁶⁹ That case concerned the ownership of certain lands in Brabourne, Kent, and Cromwell can be linked to it through a mutilated document, headed 'A remembraunce for master Crumwell towching Kenyattes matter', which explained the descent of some of the lands referred to in the Star Chamber

the Staple of Calais. Also see TNA, PRO, SP 1/233 ff. 148-155v (*LP Add I, i, 345*), which are badly mutilated bonds and other documents connected with this dispute.

⁶⁵ TNA, PRO, SP 1/26 f. 119 (*LP III, ii, 2628 [ii]*).

⁶⁶ TNA, PRO, SP 1/25 ff. 77-112 (*LP III, ii, 2441[ii]*). Many of these draft petitions or replications on behalf of Richard Chaufer are written in Cromwell's hand, or corrected by him: SP 1/25 ff. 77-81 is a replication for Chaufer corrected by Cromwell; ff. 82-84 is a draft petition for Chaufer corrected by Cromwell; ff. 85-86 is another draft petition corrected by Cromwell; ff. 87-88 is another corrected draft petition by Cromwell; ff. 89-90v is Mountjoy's answer; ff. 91-92 is a draft petition for Chaufer wholly in Cromwell's hand; ff. 93-94 is a draft of Chaufer's answer to Mountjoy's demands; ff. 95-97 is another draft reply of Chaufer to Mountjoy; ff. 98-102 is a draft replication for Chaufer to Mountjoy's answer wholly in Cromwell's hand; ff. 103-104v is another draft on Chaufer's behalf corrected by Cromwell; and ff. 105-112 is a draft replication for Chaufer corrected by Cromwell.

⁶⁷ TNA, PRO, STAC 2/13 ff. 139-141.

⁶⁸ TNA, PRO, SP 1/55 f. 100 (*LP IV, iii, 5930*).

⁶⁹ The Star Chamber records for this are sporadically filed and somewhat questionable. What is presumably Kenett's bill of complaint, badly damaged, can be found in TNA, PRO, STAC 2/26/36. The answers of Butler and White can be found, respectively, in STAC 2/24/410 and STAC 2/26/19. Again there is no indication of the resolution. Kenett's bill of complaint appears to request a writ of subpoena for the two men to appear in Chancery.

dispute.⁷⁰ Another draft petition in Cromwell's hand, on behalf of John Littlecote, hints at further Star Chamber activity. This petition requested that Wolsey 'graunt the kinges lettres of Pryuie seale to be dyrectyd vnto...Jahn Roper commandyng her...to appere before your grace...in the Star Chamber'.⁷¹

Of greater interest is a dispute before Star Chamber in 1529 between two mercers, John Ap Powell and William Clay. A robbery had occurred on 8 October 1526, in which Clay and others had broken in to Ap Powell's shop and stolen over £2,400 worth of cloth and merchandise.⁷² Cromwell was active on behalf of Ap Powell, and, in the months following the robbery, had begun to sue a 'certen bill of ryott...*before the kinges highnes and the right honourable lordes of your most honorable Counsayle in your Stare Chambre* aganst the seid Cley'.⁷³ The claim of a riot was almost certainly a legal fiction devised by Cromwell to enable the case to be heard in Star Chamber, rather than in the less effective common law courts. But Clay and Buttrey attempted to prevent this. Their replication claiming that the bill was 'insufficiant in the lawe' and not 'determinable' in Star Chamber was no doubt customary.⁷⁴ More ingenious was their persuading Thomas Hine, a man to whom Ap Powell was already in debt, to sue him before the Sheriffs in London, with a view to having him imprisoned.⁷⁵ Cromwell's response to this neatly illustrates his quick-thinking and ability to deal effectively with problems as they arose. To counter-act

⁷⁰ TNA, PRO, SP 1/235 f. 122 (LP Add I, i, 511).

⁷¹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/33 f. 117 (LP IV, i, 1048).

⁷² TNA, PRO, SP 1/39 ff. 199-201v (LP IV, ii, 2553). This is a draft petition for Star Chamber, amended and corrected by Cromwell. The formal bill is TNA, PRO, STAC 2/21/182 f. 4. Another draft of this is STAC 2/21/167. The robbery was presumably the result of disagreements over the complicated financial dealings between Clay and Ap Powell, which appear to have been the principal area under investigation by the Star Chamber commission that finally examined the matter in late 1529. See TNA, PRO, STAC 2/19/9; STAC 2/19/304.

⁷³ TNA, PRO, SP 1/235 f. 88 (LP Add, I, i, 501). This is a draft of a Chancery petition on Ap Powell's behalf, amended by Cromwell. The words italicised are in Cromwell's hand. Cromwell's original bill in Star Chamber must have been prepared after October 1526 but before October 1527, because Cromwell's Chancery petition, which mentions the bill, referred to the original robbery as occurring in 'October last past'. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/235 f. 87 (LP Add I, i, 501). There is, however, some ambiguity over the exact date. Both the Star Chamber petition and draft refer to the robbery as occurring on 8 October, while the date referred to in the Chancery petition is 17 October.

⁷⁴ TNA, PRO, STAC 2/21/182 ff. 2,3. For Ap Powell's answer to this see STAC 2/22/264.

⁷⁵ TNA, PRO, SP 1/235 ff. 87-88 (LP Add I, i, 501). Ap Powell apparently owed Thomas Hinde £77.

Hinde's actions, Cromwell petitioned Wolsey in Chancery to grant a writ of Certiorari ordering the mayor and sheriffs to explain the cause of Ap Powell's arrest.⁷⁶ This presumably worked, because Wolsey ordered a commission to investigate and arbitrate the dispute in June 1527,⁷⁷ although the commissioners do not appear to have acted until October 1529.⁷⁸ The commissioners finally certified their conclusion that Clay owed Ap Powell £800 on 29 November 1529.⁷⁹

This case is interesting not only because it enables Cromwell to be seen 'at work', but because, as with several of the Chancery cases mentioned above, the records of Star Chamber alone offer no indication of his involvement. Cromwell did not take part in the final arbitration settling the matter, nor is his name to be found among the Star Chamber bundles relating to the dispute. From Cromwell's own correspondence, however, it is quite clear he was working for Ap Powell.⁸⁰ Moreover the draft petition on behalf of Clay in the State Papers, which details the robbery, is heavily corrected and altered by him,

⁷⁶ TNA, PRO, SP 1/235 ff. 87-89 (*LP* Add I, i, 501).

⁷⁷ TNA, PRO, SP 1/42 f. 59 (*LP* IV, ii, 3154). Bundles relating to the questions the commissioners should seek answer to can be found in TNA, PRO, STAC 2/19/332.

⁷⁸ TNA, PRO, STAC 2/19/9. This delay was no doubt partly caused by the action taken against Ap Powell, but also by Clay fleeing to Antwerp in order to evade his various troubles. In March 1529 John West, a friar observant, informed Wolsey how Clay had 'Fledde owt of yngland with the sum off M pownds sterling...off one John a Pool', as well as reporting how Clay 'doothe rayell on the pope[s] holynes and off yowr grace with all the holle chyrche off god with lutheryans opynyons'. See BL, Cotton MS, Appendix L f. 38 (*LP* IV, iii, 5402). Clay was in Antwerp claiming sanctuary under the privileges of merchants there, and John Hackett, under Wolsey's instructions, went to some considerable lengths to extradite him (successfully) in April 1529. See BL, Cotton MS, Galba B IX f. 187 (*LP* IV, iii, 5436); BL, Cotton MS, Galba B IX ff. 165-170 (*LP* IV, iii, 5461); BL, Cotton MS, Galba B IX ff. 173-174.

⁷⁹ Clay was urged to come to some agreement with Powell, and for his continued refusal was 'committed to the gaole of the flete there to remayne...vntill he hath satisfied & contended the saide Powell'. See TNA, PRO, STAC 2/19/304. The council was also informed by the commissioners examining the matter in 1529 that Clay had made 'delaies and excuses' when asked to present the commission with his own account books detailing transactions with Ap Powell. He had also failed to consistently give attendance when required. See TNA, PRO, STAC 2/19/9. Interestingly Clay wrote to Cromwell in late 1532 or 1533, telling him that he had remained in prison for three years. He remarked that he 'was vtterly caste away for euer / excepte god helpe / or ellis yllvmynate the harte of some worshipffull man of the kynges most honourable cownsell towards me'. The summary of this in *LP* describes Clay as requesting Cromwell to speak to the Lord Privy Seal on his behalf so he might be freed. The letter actually reads 'speake vnto my lord of the greate sealle', i.e. the lord chancellor. See TNA, PRO SP 1/68 f.120 (*LP* V 636).

⁸⁰ TNA, PRO, SP 1/42 f. 59 (*LP* IV, ii, 3154); SP 1/54 f. 44 (*LP* IV, iii, 5622); SP 1/53 f. 176 (*LP* IV, iii, 5459); SP 1/54 f. 55 (*LP* IV, iii, 5623).

while the formal petition located in the Star Chamber proceedings for 1529 is a word for word copy, incorporating Cromwell's corrections, of this draft.⁸¹

Arbitration and compromise, such as that attempted in the case above, was a popular way of settling legal disputes, owing to the speed with which an agreement could be made, and its relative cost.⁸² It is of no surprise, then, that Cromwell's legal career also saw him act as an arbitrator in several cases. He arbitrated and made awards in a case between John Prior, a priest, and Robert and Rauf Atlee on 31 October 1527.⁸³ Along with Roger Chameley, he arbitrated and settled a dispute in April of the same year, between the merchants Richard Paten and John Balevalt.⁸⁴ An unidentified man, probably John Parnell,⁸⁵ also wrote to Cromwell at some point in the 1520s requesting his help to settle a matter through arbitration.⁸⁶ In order for any dispute to be settled in this way both parties were required to agree on it as a method of settlement, and on who should arbitrate. That Cromwell acted as an arbitrator in these cases, and others [Figure 4],⁸⁷ is therefore a testimony to his legal skills and reputation during the 1520s. Cromwell was evidently perceived to be a man of fair and sound legal judgement.

⁸¹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/39 ff. 199-200 (LP IV, ii, 2553); TNA, PRO, STAC 2/21/167; STAC 2/21/182 f.4. It seems likely therefore that the formal petition in the Star Chamber records, was actually the petition made by Cromwell between October 1526 and October 1527. It has been shown that a bill was put before Wolsey between these dates, and Ap Powell's remarks to Cromwell in June 1527, 'my lorde harde ovr matar', confirms that the case was initially heard before Wolsey before he authorised a commission for arbitration (TNA, PRO, SP 1/42 f. 59). As the arbitration did not take place until late 1529, due to Clay fleeing abroad, it seems that the formal petition has been mistakenly included in the bundles relating to the settlement in 1529.

⁸² J. Guy, *The Cardinal's Court: The Impact of Thomas Wolsey in Star Chamber* (Brighton, 1977), pp. 97-105.

⁸³ TNA, PRO, SP 1/44 f. 194-194v (LP IV, ii, 3534 [i]). This is a draft award corrected by Cromwell. SP 1/44 ff. 195-197 (LP IV, ii, 3534 [ii]) is another draft of this in Thomas Wriothesley's hand. During these years, Wriothesley worked for Cromwell. See G. Gibbons, *The Political Career of Thomas Wriothesley, First Earl of Southampton, 1505-1550, Henry VIII's Last Chancellor* (Lampeter, 2001), pp. 16, 18, 19, 20.

⁸⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 1/41 ff. 141-144 (LP IV, ii, 3032). Draft in Wriothesley's hand, corrected by Cromwell.

⁸⁵ See the formal petition in the Chancery records: TNA, PRO, C1/553/35.

⁸⁶ TNA, PRO, SP 1/32 f. 239 (LP IV, i, 955 [iv]).

⁸⁷ For further examples of arbitration and awards by Cromwell during these years see: TNA, PRO, SP 2/C ff. 10-15 (LP IV, ii, 2972 [4]); SP 1/41 ff. 99-102 (LP IV, ii, 2991); SP 1/234 ff. 197-202v (LP Add, I, i, 447); SP 1/56 f. 119-120 (LP IV, iii, 6102); SP 1/56 ff. 170-171 (LP IV, iii, 6126); TNA, PRO, C1/667/9; TNA, PRO, STAC 2/17/252; TNA, PRO, E41/290; SP 1/78 ff. 73-73v (LP VI 932), this letter to Cromwell concerning an arbitrational award was placed in 1533 in LP. It would be more reasonable to date it to the 1520s.

A dispute between John Creke, a London merchant, and Ralph Dodmer, was also finally settled by Cromwell through arbitration,⁸⁸ and his determination offers a glimpse of what this actually involved. By obligations dated 28 April 1528 both parties agreed to ‘abyde obey and fulfill the awarde arbytrement ordenunce and Fynall judgement of...Thomas Cromwell as sole arbytratour’.⁸⁹ Cromwell then called both men before him and examined ‘the bookes accompttes, lettres, [and] wrytynges...brought and layed bfore me’. Arbitration, which was often employed when some right lay with both parties, ‘had to offer a degree of satisfaction on both sides’.⁹⁰ In this award Cromwell deemed that Dodmer should pay Creke £110 for all expenses owing to him,⁹¹ while Creke was instructed to deliver a number of bills to Dodmer whereby certain merchants were under obligations owing to him.⁹²

The clientele of Cromwell’s private legal practice largely reflected his geographical surroundings and connections during the 1520s. As late as September 1522 Cromwell was occupying a residence in Fenchurch Street close to the Halls of the Ironmongers and Bricklayers.⁹³ By September 1523, however, Cromwell was living at the Austin Friars, a house in Throckmorton Street, which remained his principal residence until his execution in 1540.⁹⁴ Both properties were therefore at the heart of the City of London, and Cromwell’s legal clients reflected the mercantile and professional communities from which he emerged and among whom he continued to live. A number of the cases

⁸⁸ For the details of the dispute see: TNA, PRO, SP 1/41 ff. 187-190 (*LP IV*, ii, 3086[i]); SP 1/41 f. 191 (*LP IV*, ii, 3086 [ii]); the final petition can be found in the formal records of Chancery. See TNA, PRO, C1/490/11.

⁸⁹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/52 ff. 72-78 (*LP IV*, ii, 5126). Quotation on f. 72 and f. 75 respectively. Some of the amendments in this award are in Cromwell’s hand.

⁹⁰ Guy, *Cardinal’s Court*, p. 98.

⁹¹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/52 f. 76 (*LP IV*, ii, 5126).

⁹² TNA, PRO, SP 1/52 ff. 76-78 (*LP IV*, ii, 5126). Interestingly Creke took action against Cromwell in Chancery following the arbitral settlement. He alleged that Cromwell delivered his verdict and settlement instructions to Dodmer, but not to Creke himself, thereby endangering his chances of performing the actions required of him in the award. He requested that Cromwell be issued with a subpoena forcing him to come before Chancery and deliver Creke’s part of the award. See TNA, PRO, C1/484/37. Creke was apparently a friend of Cromwell’s, SP 1/25 f. 55 (*LP III*, ii, 2394).

⁹³ TNA, PRO, SP 1/26 f. 57v (*LP III*, ii, 2577); John Stow, *A Survey of London* (2 vols., Oxford, 1908), i. 138-139, 146-147.

⁹⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 1/29 f. 117 (*LP III*, ii, 3657); SP 1/30 f. 240v (*LP IV*, i, 166)

mentioned above involved merchants.⁹⁵ These connections also enabled him to obtain legal work from foreign merchants trading in London, such as Perpoynt Deovanture, merchant of the Hanse, for whom Cromwell drafted a licence enabling him to pass into France unhindered in 1523.⁹⁶ Similarly Cromwell worked for a group of French merchants in London, amending their replication in matters which had resulted in the seizing of their ‘goodes weres & marchaundises’.⁹⁷ He also prepared a draft petition on behalf of a Florentine merchant, John Corce.⁹⁸ Another aspect of his legal work involved drafting conveyances for land transactions. Many of these were done on behalf of merchant clients.⁹⁹ Cromwell also drew up licences for a blacksmith and a London grocer.¹⁰⁰

Yet Cromwell’s clients were by no means narrowly confined to London. Members of the Guild of St Mary, Boston, Lincolnshire, had used Cromwell in a legal capacity in 1529.¹⁰¹ The account book for this guild also records two payments to Cromwell for his work on their behalf in Rome in 1517-1518.¹⁰² Cromwell worked for several merchants from Calais,¹⁰³ while in May 1525 he drew up a lease on the manor of Tanghall near York, between Robert Shorton, prebendary of Fridaythorpe, in York Cathedral, and the mayor and commonalty of York.¹⁰⁴ Reynold Lytylprow, from Norwich, also made use of his

⁹⁵ For further examples of Cromwell’s work for merchants see: TNA, PRO, SP 1/31 f. 57 (*LP IV*, i, 387); SP 1/36 f. 152-157 (*LP IV*, i, 1794 [i]); SP 1/36 ff. 158-159 (*LP IV*, i, 1794 [ii]); SP 2/C ff. 1-3 (*LP IV*, ii, 2375 [1]); SP 2/C ff. 4-7a (*LP IV*, ii, 2375 [2]); SP 2/C ff. 16-34 (*LP IV*, ii, 2375 [5]); SP 2/C ff. 35-47 (*LP IV*, ii, 2375 [6]); SP 2/C ff. 48-61v (*LP IV*, ii, 2375 [7]); SP 2/C ff. 62-73 (*LP IV*, ii, 2375 [8]).

⁹⁶ TNA, PRO, SP 1/26 ff. 248-249 (*LP III*, ii, 2753). For other work for Deovanture see SP 1/25 f. 126 (*LP III*, ii, 2447); SP 1/26 f. 250 (*LP III*, ii, 2754).

⁹⁷ TNA, PRO, SP 1/235 ff. 108-109 (*LP Add*, I, i, 507).

⁹⁸ TNA, PRO, SP 1/59 ff. 123-125v (*LP IV*, iii, App. 229).

⁹⁹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/31 f. 128 (*LP IV*, i, 437); SP 1/31 f. 142 (*LP IV*, i, 461); SP 1/40 ff. 243-246 (*LP IV*, ii, 2844); SP 2/C ff. 1-3 (*LP IV*, ii, 2375 [1]); SP 2/C ff. 4-7a (*LP IV*, ii, 2375 [2]); SP 2/C ff. 16-34 (*LP IV*, ii, 2375 [5]); SP 2/C ff. 35-47 (*LP IV*, ii, 2375 [6]); SP 2/C ff. 48-61v (*LP IV*, ii, 2375 [7]); SP 2/C ff. 62-73 (*LP IV*, ii, 2375 [8]).

¹⁰⁰ TNA, PRO, SP 1/31 f. 11 (*LP IV*, i, 304 [i]), annotated by Cromwell; SP 1/31 f. 12 (*LP IV*, i, 304 [ii]), wholly in Cromwell’s hand; SP 1/31 ff. 15-16 (*LP IV*, i, 311).

¹⁰¹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/53 f. 168 (*LP IV*, iii, 5437).

¹⁰² BL, Egerton MS 2886 f. 181v.

¹⁰³ TNA, PRO, SP 1/26 f. 119 (*LP III*, ii, 2628); SP 1/25 f. 76 (*LP III*, ii, 2441); SP 1/26 f. 119 (*LP III*, ii, 2628); SP 1/36 f. 10 (*LP IV*, i, 1620); SP 1/36 f. 100 (*LP IV*, i, 1732).

¹⁰⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 1/34 ff. 193-206 (*LP IV*, i, 1348).

legal skills on at least two occasions.¹⁰⁵ Judging by the letters of William Popley, of Bristol, Cromwell was not only active on legal matters on his behalf, but also for other men in and around Bristol.¹⁰⁶ Several other clients came from Guernsey, Hertfordshire and Suffolk.¹⁰⁷

Cromwell also worked for members of the clergy. The abbot of St Mary's, York, wrote to him sometime in the late 1520s, requesting that he help with the 'fortherance of my chart[er] sealyng whiche ye wor of conceall of as of all other my causes'.¹⁰⁸ Cromwell's account book, which lists various bills, debts and obligations owed to him between December 1518 and February 1529, records a number of clergy who owed money to him.¹⁰⁹ In most cases only the name of the debtor and the sum owed is listed, making it difficult to establish the nature of the business Cromwell was owed for.¹¹⁰ One of those listed, however, John Palsgrave, made use of Cromwell's legal skills on at least three occasions. It has already been noted that Cromwell drafted a petition on his behalf to recover debts on his parsonage of Ashfordby, Leicestershire.¹¹¹ Cromwell also devised an agreement between Palsgrave and Richard Pynson for the printing of seven hundred and fifty copies of 'one boke namyd lez le clarissimaunt'.¹¹² On another occasion Palsgrave promised to pay Cromwell £7 6s 8d if he obtained a papal bull enabling him to unite the benefice of Alderton,

¹⁰⁵ TNA, PRO, SP 1/235 f. 360 (*LP Add I, i, 602*); SP 1/236 f. 1 (*LP Add I, i, 606*).

¹⁰⁶ TNA, PRO, SP 1/23 f. 271 (*LP III, ii, 1963*); SP 1/25 f. 140 (*LP III, ii, 2461*); SP 1/26 f. 57 (*LP III, ii, 2577*); SP 1/236 ff. 344-354 (*LP Add I, i, 705*).

¹⁰⁷ Hertfordshire: TNA, PRO, C1/569/41; Guernsey: SP 1/55 f. 100 (*LP IV, iii, 5930*); Suffolk: TNA, PRO, C1/667/9; C1/484/11; TNA, PRO, STAC 2/17/252. The second Chancery petition cited here for Suffolk was on behalf of Anne Causton, and concerned a dispute over a manor called Whersted Hall. Cromwell also helped draft a lease on this property for Causton in February 1527. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/40 ff. 243-246 (*LP IV, ii, 2844*).

¹⁰⁸ TNA, PRO, SP 1/52 f. 97 (*LP IV, iii, 5143*).

¹⁰⁹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/53 ff. 36-51v (*LP IV, iii, 5330*). The book, which is twenty-three pages long, is entitled 'A Booke of Specyalties of Maister Crumwell'. Many of the debts or obligations listed are in Cromwell's own hand.

¹¹⁰ Listed, amongst others, were: the dean of Cardinal's College, for £100 (SP 1/53 f. 41); the Abbot of Welbeck, for £4 10s (f. 41); the Abbot of Saint James, for 26s 4d (f. 41); the Prior of Christchurch, for 10s (f. 41); the Prior of Lewes, abbey for 20s (f. 41); the Prior of Wenlock, for £13 6s 8d (f. 41v); the Prior of Butley, for £6 8s 4d (f. 42); the Prior of Lynton, for £5 (f. 42).

¹¹¹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/29 ff. 136-137v (*LP III, ii, 3681[i]*); SP 1/29 f. 138 (*LP III, ii, 3681 [ii]*); TNA, PRO, C1/558/27.

¹¹² TNA, PRO, SP 1/30 ff. 33-34v (*LP IV, i, 39*). See also SP 1/29 ff. 134v-135v (*LP III, ii, 3680 [ii]*), much of this indenture is in Cromwell's hand.

Suffolk, with his prebend of Portpool in St Paul's Cathedral.¹¹³ Taken alongside Cromwell's involvement on behalf of the prioress of Cheshunt at the papal curia in 1520, discussed above,¹¹⁴ this request provides a strong indication that Cromwell had sufficient legal expertise to operate in matters outside the borders of England.

In 1524, while continuing to operate in his private legal capacity, Cromwell also began to work formally for Cardinal Thomas Wolsey. Exactly when Cromwell joined Wolsey's services is the subject of much dispute. Elton argued for an early date, claiming that Cromwell was a member of Wolsey's household by 1516 and of his council by 1519.¹¹⁵ Yet aside from two pieces of evidence Elton provided (both of which can be convincingly challenged),¹¹⁶ there is a telling dearth of sources to support this. Several also contradict it. Two draft documents survive, probably dating to c. 1523, which refer to Cromwell.¹¹⁷ The first granted power of attorney to a number of men (including Cromwell) on behalf of the Hanse merchant Perpoynt Deovanture; the other authorised many of the same men to collect debts for him.¹¹⁸ In each of these Robert Carter is listed as a member of Wolsey's household, while Cromwell is merely referred to as 'Thomas Crumwell de London Gentilman'. This suggests Cromwell was not yet part of Wolsey's entourage. What is clear, however, is that Wolsey and Cromwell were familiar with each other from about 1520

¹¹³ TNA, PRO, SP 1/55 f. 16v (*LP* IV, iii, 5809).

¹¹⁴ See above pp. 19-20.

¹¹⁵ Elton, 'Thomas Cromwell Redivivus', in Elton, *Studies*, iii. 374; *Thomas Cromwell*, p. 3. Elton's chronology has been adopted by J. Guy, see 'Thomas Wolsey, Thomas Cromwell and the Reform of Henrician Government', in D. MacCulloch, ed., *The Reign of Henry VIII: Politics, Policy and Piety* (Basingstoke, 1995), p. 41.

¹¹⁶ The first piece cited by Elton was the account book from the Boston Guild of St Mary's, in which both Cromwell and Wolsey are listed (BL, Egerton MS 2886). While this connects both men to the Guild, at no point in the book are the two men associated or linked with one another. The second piece cited was the evidence discussed on p. 19 n. 19. Additionally, the editors of *LP* also calendered a letter from Richard, abbot of Winchcombe to Wolsey, dated 26 August 1514, which contained five lines in Latin on the reverse which they thought resembled Cromwell's hand. See BL, Cotton MS, Caligula B VI f. 25v (*LP* I, ii, 3195). As Merriman noted, however, the lines are not connected with the letter and were probably written some time after. (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. p. 14).

¹¹⁷ Both documents were on behalf of Perpoynt Deovanture, who was active in England around this time. Cromwell himself had drafted a licence for him in 1523. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/26 ff. 248-249 (*LP* III, ii, 2753).

¹¹⁸ TNA, PRO, SP 1/25 f. 126 (*LP* III, ii, 2447); SP 1/26 f. 250 (*LP* III, ii, 2754)

onwards. Cromwell's legal career naturally brought him into contact with the Lord Chancellor, and their paths also crossed in a number of suits during the early 1520s. In each of these Cromwell was working, not for Wolsey, but for the other respective party.¹¹⁹

Merriman, Dickens, Robertson and Ward all, for slightly differing reasons, correctly identified 1524 as the year of Cromwell's entry into the Cardinal's service.¹²⁰ Merriman suggested that Cromwell's entry may have come through the patronage of Cromwell's cousin, Robert Cromwell, the vicar of Battersea, or perhaps through Cromwell's work for the Marquis of Dorset: both are highly conjectural.¹²¹ But Merriman identified 1524 as the decisive year on the grounds that Cromwell helped draft an indenture for the sale of Kexby, a Yorkshire manor, in which Wolsey was the purchaser.¹²² There are hints, however, that Cromwell might have been working for the seller, John Aleyn.¹²³ Dickens argued that Cromwell's parliamentary speech in 1523, which opposed Henry VIII's campaigns in France, could not have been made by someone in Wolsey's employment, and therefore accepted 1524-5 as the date of Cromwell's entry.¹²⁴ Robertson also concurred with this, accepting the evidence given by Merriman, while also adding a further piece suggesting Cromwell was active on

¹¹⁹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/21 ff. 119-120v (LP III, i, 1026), this case has been discussed on pp. 18-19. See also SP 1/22 ff. 108-143v (LP III, ii, 1289 [1-3]); SP 1/29 ff. 136-137v, 138 (LP III, ii, 3681 [i & ii]); SP 1/233 ff. 71-77 (LP Add I, i, 322 [2]).

¹²⁰ Beckingsale and Neville also accepted 1524. See Beckingsale, *Thomas Cromwell*, p. 15; Williams, *Cardinal and the Secretary*, p. 148.

¹²¹ Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 13. For Robert Cromwell see: Phillips, 'The Cromwell's of Puntney', p. 61; S. Thurley, 'The domestic building works of Cardinal Wolsey', in S. J. Gunn & P. G. Lindley, eds., *Cardinal Wolsey: Church, State and Art* (Cambridge, 1991), p. 80. Elton highlighted that Cromwell's link with Dorset is based solely on two shaky pieces of evidence (Elton, *Thomas Cromwell*, p. 3). These are two letters between Cromwell and Cecily, mother of the marquis of Dorset, neither of which are dated. One is addressed 'To Cromwell my sonne marquys seruant'. See BL, Cotton MS, Vespasian F XIII f. 173v (Ellis, 1st Series, i, 219; LP III, ii, 2437). This was placed in 1522 in LP with a note from the editor that it probably belongs to an earlier date. The other was a letter from Cromwell to Lady Dorset. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/41 f. 160v (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 316; LP IV, ii 3053).

¹²² TNA, PRO, SP 1/31 f. 3 (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 316; LP IV, i, 294).

¹²³ A document headed 'the expences and costes of John Alyen' relating to the sale of the Kexby lands, included items listed 'for the costes of master Cromwell'. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/44 f. 312 (LP IV, ii, 3536 [3]). Cf. Ward, 'The Origins of Thomas Cromwell's Public Career', pp. 25-26.

¹²⁴ Dickens, *Thomas Cromwell*, pp. 19-20. The speech is: SP 1/27 ff. 193-207v (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 30-43; LP III, ii, 2958).

Wolsey's behalf at this time.¹²⁵ Most recently Ward has convincingly demonstrated that 1524 was the crucial year, although he dismissed much of the evidence offered by earlier historians.¹²⁶ He argued that Cromwell's skill in drafting various conveyances on behalf of Thomas Hennage, a member of Wolsey's household, provided Cromwell with a patron through whom he obtained formal work in the service of the Cardinal.¹²⁷ Disagreement therefore remains over the method of Cromwell's entry into Wolsey's service, but it is plain that the transition itself occurred in 1524. There is simply no dateable evidence to support an earlier date, while in that year there are the first signs that Cromwell was working for Wolsey in minor legal matters.¹²⁸ Moreover, in 1524 Wolsey was about to embark on a project which would require the legal skills that Cromwell possessed in abundance.

Between 1524 and 1529 Wolsey secured papal and royal approval for the suppression of some twenty-nine religious houses in England for the establishment of his twin colleges at Oxford and Ipswich.¹²⁹ The Augustinian monastery of St. Frideswide, Oxford, was dissolved to make way for the college built there.¹³⁰ Over the next year a further twenty-one monasteries were suppressed, and their lands and revenues diverted for the establishment and upkeep of Cardinal College, Oxford.¹³¹ Barely three years later, the Augustinian

¹²⁵ TNA, PRO, SP 1/30 f. 120v (*LP IV*, i, 99). This was an annuity grant to Richard Clement, bearing an endorsement by Cromwell on the back, placed in 1524 by the editors of *LP*. The year the grant was made, however, is missing, and Cromwell's endorsement does not appear to be connected to it, suggesting it was added sometime later in any event.

¹²⁶ For Ward's thorough discussion of Cromwell's entry into Wolsey's services, see 'The Origins of Thomas Cromwell's Public Career', pp. 21-45.

¹²⁷ Ward, 'The Origins of Thomas Cromwell's Public Career', p. 39-44. The indentures connected with Cromwell, made in June 1524, on behalf of Hennage, can be found in TNA, PRO, SP 1/31 f. 142 and ff. 143-147 (*LP IV*, i, 461). The first indenture is wholly in Cromwell's hand; the second, a further draft of the same, is corrected by him.

¹²⁸ TNA, PRO, E40/683.

¹²⁹ Papal approval was given for the suppression of St Frideswide's monastery, Oxford, on 3 April 1524. The royal assent was given on 19 April, TNA, PRO, SP 1/30 ff. 317-320 (*LP IV*, i, 264). For a thorough discussion of the collegiate foundations see the accounts given in D. Knowles, *The Religious Houses in England*, III, *The Tudor Age* (Cambridge, 1959), pp. 161-164; J. Newman, 'Cardinal Wolsey's Collegiate Foundations', in Gunn and Lindley, eds., pp. 103-116; *VCH, Oxfordshire*, iii. 228-238; *VCH, Suffolk*, ii. 142-144.

¹³⁰ The monastery surrendered on 24 April 1524. *LP IV*, i, 1137.

¹³¹ TNA, PRO, C82/550/101 (*LP IV*, i, 697). The monasteries listed for suppression were: Canwell, Sandwell, Littlemore, Tickford, Wallingford, Ravenstone, Daventry, Bradwell, Tonbridge, Lesnes, Bayham, Calceto, Wix, Tiptree, Blackmore, Stanesgate, Horkesley, Thoby, Poughley,

monastery of St Peter and St Paul was suppressed for the site of the second college in Ipswich.¹³² That Thomas Cromwell was highly active on behalf of Wolsey in their establishment was well recognised by contemporaries and near contemporaries. The chronicler Hall described Cromwell as Wolsey's 'chefe doer...in the suppression of abbeis'.¹³³ John Foxe recollected that when

certeine small Monasteries and Priories, in diuers places of the Realme, were by the sayd Cardinall suppressed, and the landes seased to the Cardinalls handes. The doyng wherof was committed to the charge of Thomas Cromwell...[who] shewed hym selfe verye forward, and industrious...in the handlyng therof.¹³⁴

Eustace Chapuys also alluded to Cromwell's role in Wolsey's suppressions when describing Cromwell in 1535.¹³⁵ Given that Cromwell's role in the foundation of the colleges has been reconstructed by Ward, there is little need to go over this here.¹³⁶ Nevertheless, a brief account of the nature of the work Cromwell undertook is of interest; much of it was a precursor to similar tasks which he would later undertake for the king.

Cromwell's work in the establishment of Wolsey's colleges predominantly drew on the legal skills which he had developed through his private career as a lawyer. His earliest jobs were concerned with surveying the lands, possessions and properties of many of the houses intended for dissolution. On 4 January 1525 Cromwell was named, along with Sir William Gascoigne and William Burbank, as part of a commission to survey the monasteries of Tickford, Ravenstone, Canwell, Sandwell, Poughley,

Dodnash and Snape. To these should be added the nunnery of Pre' in Hertfordshire, which was suppressed at a later date.

¹³² The papal bulls authorising the suppression of St Peter's, and the other houses intended for dissolution, were given on 14 May 1528. See TNA, PRO, SC 7/63/8 (*LP IV*, ii, 4259 [1]); SC 7/63/9 (*LP IV*, ii, 4259 [2]). Royal assent followed on 26 May, TNA, PRO, C66/652 m. 35 (*LP IV*, ii, 4297 [1]) and E24/1/2 (*LP IV*, ii, 4297 [2]). The other houses suppressed for Cardinal College, Ipswich, were Rumburgh, Felixstowe, Bromehill, Mountjoy and Blythburgh.

¹³³ Hall, *Chronicle*, p. 769.

¹³⁴ Foxe, *Acts and Monuments* (1570 edn.), p. 1347.

¹³⁵ *CSP, Spanish*, V, i, 228.

¹³⁶ Ward, 'The Origins of Thomas Cromwell's Public Career', chapters 2-5.

Medmenham, Wallingford and Finchingbroke, which had been marked for suppression.¹³⁷ Cromwell also managed many of the escheator inquests into the ownership of many Houses intended to create Cardinal College, Oxford.¹³⁸ On 6 August 1526, in the presence of Wolsey, he personally delivered thirty four ‘bagges of canvas conteyning the euydences escriptes and mynymentes’ relating to these inquests, which were given to the sub-dean of the new college.¹³⁹ He was also involved in surveying lands connected to Cardinal College, Ipswich. William Capon, the dean there, informed Wolsey how Cromwell and John Smith, Wolsey’s auditor, ‘haue takyn greate paynes in surveyeng the Landis’ of St Peters, Felixstowe, Brome hill and Rumburgh, and made ‘very good bookes’ detailing the lands and rents connected to these.¹⁴⁰ Cromwell’s skills as a surveyor and his eye for detail were readily acknowledged. Capon believed that both Cromwell and Smith had ‘a very excellent cast in surveyeng of Landes Insomuche they woll not loose oon peny bilongyng thervnto’.¹⁴¹

Cromwell played a role in drafting the legal deeds required formally to establish Wolsey’s colleges. Drafts of letters patent for the licence to found the college at Oxford, as well as drafts of licences granting the suppressed monasteries to be used for its establishment and revenue, bear Cromwell’s hand.¹⁴² Responsibilities for the preparation of these documents increased as Cromwell rose in Wolsey’s services. He ‘surueyed amended and reformed’

¹³⁷ TNA, PRO, E24/22/2; E24/23/1 (*LP IV*, i, 989). Medmenham and Finchingbroke escaped suppression.

¹³⁸ In one letter Cromwell told Wolsey he had ‘founde offices...of the saide late monasterye of Wallingforde and of all the londes and tenementtes belonging to the same’, while among the costs listed in one of Cromwell’s account books for ‘Paymentes made and issued by Thomas Crumwell in and abowtes the affares and busynes of my lord his grace and his college’ were various payments to county escheators and under-sheriffs in Suffolk, Oxfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Essex. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/47 f. 153 (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 318-318; *LP IV*, ii, 4135); TNA, PRO, E101/518/14 ff. 4-5 (*LP IV*, ii, 5117 [1]).

¹³⁹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/39 f. 34 (*LP IV*, ii, 2379).

¹⁴⁰ TNA, PRO, SP 1/53 f. 174 (*LP IV*, iii, 5458).

¹⁴¹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/53 f. 174 (*LP IV*, iii, 5458).

¹⁴² The licence to found the College on the site of St Frideswide can be found in TNA, PRO, C82/ 562 (*LP IV*, i, 1499 [1]); a corrected draft, bearing Cromwell’s hand, is TNA, PRO, SP 1/35 ff. 58-65v & C66/647 m.1 (*LP IV*, i, 1499 [3]). The grant of the sites of the suppressed monasteries to be used for this can be found in TNA, PRO, C82/ 567 & C66/646 m. 20 (*LP IV*, i, 1833 [1]); a draft of the same, in Wriothesley’s hand, with amendments by Cromwell is SP 1/35 ff. 171-180 (*LP IV*, i, 1833 [3]).

various letters patent from the king granting lands.¹⁴³ In September 1528 Cromwell wrote to Wolsey on the progress of the Ipswich foundation, informing him that ‘I haue caused suche billes as be allredie signed to passe the pryuy signet and pryuate Seale, and shall nowe put to writing the letteres patenttes for the brode Seale’ so that further lands could be bequeathed to the college.¹⁴⁴ Legal technicalities and problems with grants of land were similarly reported to Cromwell for rectification.¹⁴⁵

The financial side of the colleges also concerned him. One of Cromwell’s expense accounts includes payments for ‘wages and rewardes youen and paide’ to the late abbots, priors and monks of suppressed houses,¹⁴⁶ and he personally arranged and settled rents for various lands.¹⁴⁷ William Capon, for instance, referred to certain ‘half yeres Rentes...receyued bfore my comyng of the tenantes By master Cromwell’ in a letter to Wolsey.¹⁴⁸ At some point in the late 1520s Cromwell was also appointed receiver-general of the college lands, a position he would continue to hold during his early years under the king.¹⁴⁹ To a lesser extent he also had oversight over the building works themselves. Payments were made by him to John Higdon, dean and paymaster of the works at Cardinal College, Oxford.¹⁵⁰ Cromwell was also kept informed on the works at Ipswich, while Wolsey was told of the ‘forwardnes’ of the building at Oxford by him.¹⁵¹ Cromwell even told Stephen Gardiner how he had ‘incouraged the workemen and labourers’ to resume work after an overflow of the Thames had destroyed the work at Lyesnes.¹⁵² Not even the smaller tasks evaded him. On

¹⁴³ TNA, PRO, SP 1/47 f. 153 (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 318; LP IV, ii, 4135).

¹⁴⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 1/50 f. 70 (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 322; LP IV, iii, 4697).

¹⁴⁵ TNA, PRO, SP 1/53 f. 23 (LP IV, iii, 5304).

¹⁴⁶ TNA, PRO, SP 1/44 f. 207 (LP IV, ii, 3536 [i]).

¹⁴⁷ TNA, PRO, SC12/18/60 ff. 77v-86 (LP IV, i, 1845 [iv]). Not SC11/18/60 as given in the TNA, PRO *List and Index* guide to LP.

¹⁴⁸ TNA, PRO, SP 1/51 f. 112v (LP IV, ii, 5052).

¹⁴⁹ When he became receiver-general is unclear but his accounts in this position, covering the period between Michaelmas 1524 and Michaelmas 1527 are: TNA, PRO, SC6/HENVIII/2913 (LP IV, ii, 3461[1]).

¹⁵⁰ TNA, PRO, E101/479/11 (LP IV, ii, 3676).

¹⁵¹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/54 f. 351 (LP IV, iii, 5792); SP 1/43 f. 6v (LP IV, iii, 3334).

¹⁵² TNA, PRO, SP 1/52 ff. 146-146v (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 323-325; LP IV, iii, 5186).

one occasion he brought various ‘coopes vestementes aulter clothes plate & other thinges’ to the Ipswich college, while also taking

moche payne & Labour not only in surveyeng your graces stuff hether caryed sawfely, But also in prepayring & ordering off hanginges Benchis with all other necessities to the furniture of our hall whiche ys now well trymmed & ordered through his good diligence and helpe.¹⁵³

But Cromwell’s work for Wolsey was entirely concerned with the Cardinal’s private affairs; he was not engaged in government business until he entered the king’s service in 1530. Wolsey did, however, make some use of Cromwell’s legal skills on matters away from the collegiate foundations. In 1528 Cromwell corrected a draft indenture re-negotiating and re-affirming the Cardinal’s ecclesiastical authority with the town of Beverley in the diocese of York.¹⁵⁴ Cromwell acted as a feoffee on Wolsey’s behalf during his purchase and subsequent sale of the manor of Baddisworth, Yorkshire, in 1529.¹⁵⁵ He also managed the inquests into the lands of the deceased Sir William Compton for Wolsey in 1528-9,¹⁵⁶ and his involvement in settling the disputed wardship of Thomas Stanley, son and heir of Edward Lord Monteagle, in 1527 may also have been connected to the Cardinal.¹⁵⁷

Cromwell did not, however, abandon his private legal work during his years in Wolsey’s service. On the contrary, his private practice benefitted because many associated with Wolsey employed Cromwell on personal

¹⁵³ BL, Cotton MS, Titus B I f. 281 (Ellis, 1st Series, i. 185; *LP IV*, ii, 4778).

¹⁵⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 1/51 ff. 260-264 (*LP IV*, ii, 5107). The draft indenture is in Wriothesley’s hand, and corrected by Cromwell.

¹⁵⁵ TNA, PRO, SP 1/52 ff. 50-57 (*LP IV*, ii, 5117 [5]), this draft indenture is corrected by Cromwell; SP 1/52 ff. 58-63 (*LP IV*, ii, 5117 [6]). The final indenture of this is TNA, PRO, E40/716.

¹⁵⁶ See, for example, the entry in Cromwell’s account book, which lists among his expenses for Wolsey ‘Money spent at the finding of the finding certain offices for Sir William Compton his heire’. TNA, PRO, E101/518/14 ff. 12-13 (*LP IV*, ii, 5117 [iii]). This included payments to various escheators in London, Kent, Essex, Middlesex and Buckinghamshire, as well as for ‘half a Reme of paper’ and wax quills and inks.

¹⁵⁷ TNA, PRO, SP 1/59 ff. 106-107 (*LP IV*, iii, App., 109). Wolsey had been involved with the wardship from the very beginning, negotiating its terms on behalf of the king in January 1524. See SP 1/30 f. 39 (*LP IV*, i, 48). The young Monteagle had also been placed in Wolsey’s household during his minority, see S. J. Gunn, *Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk*, c. 1484-1545 (Oxford, 1988), p. 93.

matters. Sir William Gascoigne, Wolsey's treasurer, referred to Cromwell's legal work for him.¹⁵⁸ A receipt records that £6 13s 4d was paid to Cromwell by William Capon, dean of Cardinal College, Ipswich, and master of Jesus College, Cambridge, on 18 February 1530.¹⁵⁹ This was 'by waye of rewarde of and for certain payns takyn' by Cromwell in defence of certain tenements and gardens belonging to the Cambridge college. On another occasion Capon requested that Cromwell provide him with his 'good counseill eyed & helpe how to come by my money whiche the priest of Southampton owith vnto me', and he desired Cromwell to 'put the sayd priest in sayte [suit] in my name.'¹⁶⁰ John Keall, another priest connected with the Oxford College, reminded Cromwell of the need to 'gett owt' certain indentures required at Oxford, as well as referring to 'a mater of our college that I spake to you for'.¹⁶¹ He also added that 'I haue a matter of myn own that ye shall haue as moche mony for yf ye bring hyt to passe'.¹⁶² The abbot of York similarly employed Cromwell to draft him a charter and to further 'all other my causes',¹⁶³ while the wife of Thomas Hennage, another of Wolsey's entourage, requested that Cromwell 'make a deide off feffment for me off the landes my husband purchysid in lyncoln schere'.¹⁶⁴ Service under Wolsey not only brought Cromwell personal advancement; it also enabled his private legal career to flourish.

Mercantile Career and other Interests

Alongside his career as a lawyer, Cromwell also operated as a merchant. His mercantile activities during the 1520s mainly concerned the

¹⁵⁸ TNA, PRO, SP 1/235 f. 219 (*LP Add I*, i, 542).

¹⁵⁹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/57 f. 24 (*LP IV*, iii, 6230).

¹⁶⁰ The priest owed Capon for at least half a year's rent on a chantry farm. TNA, PRO, SP 1/53 f. 250 (*LP IV*, iii, 5526); SP 1/54 f. 4 (*LP IV*, iii, 5550); SP 1/55 f. 101 (*LP IV*, iii, 5933). SP 1/82 f. 267 (*LP VII* 341) is also connected with this, but has been erroneously placed in 1534 by the editors of *LP*.

¹⁶¹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/46 f. 35 (*LP IV*, ii, 3442). Keall was writing from 'Stoke College'.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, f. 35.

¹⁶³ TNA, PRO, SP 1/52 f. 66 (*LP IV*, ii, 5122); SP 1/52 f. 97 (*LP IV*, iii, 5143).

¹⁶⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 1/48 f. 125 (*LP IV*, ii, 4342). This request by Hennage's wife was probably connected with his purchase of the manor of Reston, Lincolnshire. Cromwell drew up a draft indenture of this purchase, and corrected several others, in February 1525. See SP 1/33 ff. 163-170 (*LP IV*, i, 1091 [1]); SP 1/33 ff. 171-177 (*LP IV*, i, 1091 [2]); SP 1/33 f. 178 (*LP IV*, i, 1091 [3]).

cloth trade, and the origins of this surely stemmed from his time spent abroad among merchants in Antwerp. On his return to England, however, Cromwell had also married Elizabeth Wykys, the daughter of a wealthy fuller,¹⁶⁵ and Cromwell may have spent some time serving his father-in-law.¹⁶⁶ If so, this would have helped Cromwell to establish his own mercantile career. Certainly his correspondence for these years contains a number of letters attesting to his occupation in the cloth trade. Thomas Twesell enquired whether ‘ye haue dressed my cloith’ and asked for Cromwell to ‘send me word what ye payed for [the] dying of my cloith.’¹⁶⁷ Another who wrote was John Robinson, from Boston, Linconshire, who thanked Cromwell for ‘my clothe for yt ys verely well done’.¹⁶⁸ Some of Cromwell’s work for Thomas Grey, Marquis of Dorset, may also have drawn on his enterprise in the cloth and mercantile trade. Dorset’s mother, Cecily, wrote during the early 1520s requesting that he send ‘the trussynn bed of cloth of tyssewe and the fether bed wyth the fustyons and amateras longynn to the same’.¹⁶⁹ Memoranda of Cromwell’s also refer to debts owed for mercantile activity. One undated list refers to ‘a pece of Chamlet’, at 40s, and 24s owed ‘for dressing of xiiii clothes.’¹⁷⁰ Another set of obligations from 1524 refers to debts owed for ‘fyne blake sattyn at ix^s the yard’, and pieces of ‘vellut blake’.¹⁷¹

Because of the nature of Cromwell’s legal work there is far more written evidence relating to his career as a lawyer than to that as a merchant. Nonetheless Cromwell operated in his legal and mercantile capacities simultaneously, and several clients made use of him in both lines of work. The merchant John Ap Powell, when writing to inform Cromwell on the progress of his legal suit, also thanked him for ‘the deleuery of the ij balis of chamlets’ in

¹⁶⁵ Judging by the age of their oldest, and only surviving child, Gregory, the marriage probably occurred before 1516. The only surviving letter from Cromwell to his wife can be found in Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 314 (LP IV, iii, 57). The original is now lost.

¹⁶⁶ CSP, Spanish, V, i, 228.

¹⁶⁷ TNA, PRO, SP 1/26 f. 108 (LP III, ii, 2624).

¹⁶⁸ TNA, PRO, SP 1/27 f. 286 (LP III, ii, 3015).

¹⁶⁹ BL, Cotton MS, Vespasian F. XIII f. 173 (Ellis, 1st Series, i. 219; LP III, ii, 2437).

¹⁷⁰ TNA, PRO, SP 1/32 f. 235v (LP IV, i, 955 [2]). Camlet was a fabric originally made from camel’s hair, but in later years from goat’s hair.

¹⁷¹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/30 f. 240v-241 (LP IV, i, 166).

June 1527.¹⁷² Another man, William Cowper, requested from Cromwell ‘a pece of lynyn clothe to make schetys of’ and ‘a gown clothe to make me a schort rydyng gown’. He also asked for counsel in a legal matter, for Cromwell’s help in obtaining a benefice for his brother, for ‘A nodyr’ plaster for his knee, and for Cromwell to ‘speke to master byrd the marchaunt for a but of Romenay [wine]’.¹⁷³ John Robinson’s letter thanking Cromwell for his cloth similarly hints that Cromwell was engaged on a legal matter for him, as well as helping with the printing of 4,000 letters and briefs.¹⁷⁴

Cromwell was well connected and entirely at home within the London mercantile communities. When Richard Cave wanted to establish his son in England, thinking him ‘verry meet for a marchand’, it was Thomas Cromwell whom he approached for help.¹⁷⁵ Cromwell’s circle of friends included such men as Stephen Vaughan, Merchant Adventurer, the merchants John Creke and ‘Master Woodall’, and the Luccan merchant, Anthony Bonvisi.¹⁷⁶ Another whom Cromwell was acquainted with was Joachim Hochsteter, a merchant from Augsburg, who was described to Cardinal Wolsey as being of ‘oon of the gretteste and Rycheste cvmpaygne of merchantes’ in those parts, a great importer of wheat to London, and a man of ‘soche a power’ and with such friends that ‘yf your grace wolld haue eny thyng done here in thes partyes or in any other I know nott soche a man...to brynge your pvrpose a bowte’.¹⁷⁷ At some point in the 1520s Hochsteter hired a horse from Cromwell - which he promptly returned - complaining about the animal’s fitness and ability to work.¹⁷⁸ In July 1528, at Hochsteter’s request, Cromwell aided his servant in a

¹⁷² TNA, PRO, SP 1/42 f. 59v (LP IV, ii, 3154).

¹⁷³ TNA, PRO, SP 1/34 ff. 233 (LP IV, i, 1385).

¹⁷⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 1/27 f. 286 (LP III, ii, 3015). For this episode, and Cromwell’s involvement with printing more generally, see A. J. Slavin, ‘The Gutenberg Galaxy and the Tudor Revolution’, in G. P. Tyson and S. S. Wagonheim, eds., *Print and Culture in the Renaissance: Essays on the Advent of Printing in Europe* (Newark, NJ, 1986), pp. 90-109; A.J. Slavin, ‘Thomas Cromwell and the Printers: the Boston Pardons’, in G.J. Schochet, ed., *Reformation, Humanism, and “Revolution”* (Washington, D.C., 1990), pp. 235-249.

¹⁷⁵ TNA, PRO, SP 1/48 f. 175 (LP IV, ii, 4388).

¹⁷⁶ TNA, PRO, SP 1/25 f. 55 (LP III, ii, 2394); SP 1/26 f.108 (LP III, ii, 2624).

¹⁷⁷ BL, Cotton MS, Galba B IX f. 13 (Ellis, 3rd Series, ii, 80; LP IV, ii, 4018).

¹⁷⁸ TNA, PRO, SP 1/49 f. 149 (LP IV, ii, 4555).

case before the mayor's court in London.¹⁷⁹ Curiously, only months later, Cromwell was also involved in a legal dispute against Hochsteter, and appears to have been acting on behalf of Richard Gresham, an equally well connected merchant, and the very man who had lauded Hochsteter to Wolsey in the letter cited above.¹⁸⁰

Although Cromwell's mercantile activities primarily concerned the cloth trade, he also dabbled in other commodities when there was a profit to be made, making the term 'man of business' a succinct description of him during the 1520s. A letter from John Williamson, Cromwell's servant and brother-in-law, makes plain that on one occasion he supplied a fishmonger named Turnball with a 'barrell of Salmon' for 30s.¹⁸¹ Cromwell's book of debts and obligations reveals he supplied 'metall towards the making of a greate bell', weighing 5,388lb, to John White of Reading on 8 February 1528.¹⁸² William Capon, the dean of Wolsey's college at Ipswich, also thanked Cromwell 'for the Labours & paynes ye haue takyn for me in makynge of my ryng',¹⁸³ while Sir William Gascoigne thanked him 'for the payn ye toke for my wyne'.¹⁸⁴

Foreign trade was another interest which Cromwell exploited during the 1520s. A friend in Flanders was instructed by Cromwell to inform him 'what thinges myght be laden vnto these parties out of Englonde to take proffit by'.¹⁸⁵

¹⁷⁹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/235 f. 354 (*LP Add I*, i, 598); SP 1/81 f. 111 (*LP VI* 1657), misdated to 1533.

¹⁸⁰ According to Gresham's petition to Wolsey, Hochsteter had 'made certen contracts and bargaynes' with him and his brother for the delivery of 11,000 quarters of grain to London. He alleged that Hochsteter had received his money and merchandise, but failed to deliver on his part of the bargain. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/50 f. 23-23v (*LP IV*, ii, 4662 [i]). Gresham's draft petition was written in Wriothesley's hand, who during these years was working for Cromwell, while a draft in Cromwell's own headed 'The end that Rychard gresham wyll take', was clearly an attempt to resolve a dispute with the Hochsteters on Gresham's behalf. See SP 1/50 f. 44-44v (*LP IV*, ii, 4662 [xi]). Sometime before August 1528 Cromwell had also written to Hochsteter on the matter and referred to Gresham's complaint of a breach of contract. See SP 1/50 f. 23 (*LP IV*, ii, 4662 [i]).

¹⁸¹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/57 f. 23 (*LP IV*, iii, 6223).

¹⁸² TNA, PRO, SP 1/53 f. 39 (*LP IV*, iii, 5330).

¹⁸³ TNA, PRO, SP 1/51 f. 131 (*LP IV*, ii, 5077). There is an entry in Cromwell's book of debts, in Cromwell's own hand, for 'Doctour Capon for his ring', charged at 43s 4d. See SP 1/53 f. 42 (*LP IV*, iii, 5330).

¹⁸⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 1/235 f. 219 (*LP Add I*, i, 542).

¹⁸⁵ TNA, PRO, SP 1/58 f. 173 (*LP IV*, iii, 6754). The friend was Stephen Vaughan, who advised Cromwell that if it were 'your pleasure to sende any maner of grayne out of Englonde vnto thise parties yow shulde no doubt take therby right good aduantage...[of] the pryces of all maner of graynes' in Flanders'. A draft of a licence for Cromwell and James Beck to buy and export 1,500

The same friend had previously told Cromwell that ‘if youe wold healpe to get alycense for chese, I could get bothe yow and me muche money’.¹⁸⁶ Money lending was a further interest which Cromwell pursued. George Elyott, a merchant at Antwerp, wrote in July 1526 asking Cromwell ‘to lend my wyff XX^{li} ...to pay serteyn dettes which y owe’.¹⁸⁷ Margaret Vernon, prioress of Little Marlow, Buckinghamshire, asked Cromwell ‘to spare me the said sum of forty poundes’, so she could purchase the corn and cattle from a neighbour,¹⁸⁸ while Robert Ap Reynold asked Cromwell to ‘lent me xl’.¹⁸⁹ An indenture dated 9 July 1527, in which the courtier and diplomat Sir John Hussey mortgaged plate to Cromwell for £100, appears a further example of his money-lending.¹⁹⁰

Like other members of the legal profession, Cromwell also invested in land during the 1520s. A letter from Harry Wykys, Cromwell’s cousin, concerning his interest in a manor, a legal dispute over lands in Huntingdonshire, and an attempt at purchasing property from one John Fleming, were apparently unsuccessful early efforts at obtaining land.¹⁹¹ Cromwell’s will, drawn up by Thomas Wriothesley, in July 1529, and amended sometime after September 1532 by Cromwell himself,¹⁹² does, however, refer to

qrs of grain was placed, along with a variety of Cromwell’s papers of ‘uncertain dates’, in 1540 in *LP*. See SP 1/162 f. 81 (*LP* XV 1029 [4]). This probably also dates to the 1520s and is a further example of Cromwell’s involvement in trade. James Beck was also a London merchant, see SP 1/55 f. 144 (*LP* IV, iii, 5976).

¹⁸⁶ TNA, PRO, SP 1/49 ff. 201v (*LP* IV, ii, 4613).

¹⁸⁷ TNA, PRO, SP 1/59 f. 88 (*LP* IV, iii, App. 78).

¹⁸⁸ TNA, PRO, SP 1/55 f. 138 (*LP* IV, iii, 5971). She promised to ‘make redy your money with malt & wheete’ on Whitsunday next, and Cromwell was apparently obliging. A subsequent letter from Vernon reveals he agreed to loan her £40, provided she obtained ‘ii sufficient men bound’ as sureties. See SP 1/65 f. 36 (*LP* V 16).

¹⁸⁹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/73 f. 132 (*LP* V 1756 [2]). In this, and another letter, Ap Reynold also referred to money Cromwell owed him for two rings. See also SP 1/73 f. 131 (*LP* V 1756 [1]). Both letters are undated but were placed in 1532 in *LP*. They should be re-dated to the 1520s because Ap Reynold also referred to his attempts to obtain a position in Calais. Another letter to Cromwell from March 1532, in which he was informed of ‘naughty wordes spok[e] by hynde yowr bake by Robard vp raynold’, reveals he was by this point well established in Calais. See SP 1/69 f. 189 (*LP* V 896).

¹⁹⁰ TNA, PRO, SP 1/42 ff. 184-185 (*LP* IV, ii, 3250).

¹⁹¹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/29 f. 26 (*LP* III, ii, 3502); TNA, PRO, C1/492/17-21; also see C1/494/55 which is connected to this; SP 1/32 f. 236-236v (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 314-316; *LP* IV, i, 955 [3]).

¹⁹² Cromwell’s will can be found in TNA, PRO, SP 1/54 ff. 235-248 (*LP* IV, iii, 5772). The will is also printed in full in Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 56-63. The original date specified on the will is 1528, but altered by Wriothesley to 1529. Merriman’s suggestion

‘my ferme of Canberye’ and Cromwell’s ownership of the manor of Rompney.¹⁹³ It has been thought that these were purchased in the 1520s.¹⁹⁴ In fact, they were not acquired by Cromwell until 1532, and appear on the will as later amendments.¹⁹⁵ Cromwell’s will is not a reliable guide to his landed acquisitions during these years. His house at the Austin Friars, which he occupied from December 1523 until his execution in 1540, is not recorded on it at all. Neither are any of the modest land purchases he made in the 1520s. In October 1527 Cromwell purchased the manor of Tolshunt Darcy, otherwise known as Tolshunt Tregor, in Essex, valued at £100 p.a., for £3,200 from Anthony Darcy.¹⁹⁶ As there is no reference to this property in Cromwell’s will, one might assume either that the transaction fell through, or that Cromwell sold the property on with a view of making a quick profit. This is certainly what he did with the manors of Sutton at Hone and Temple Dartford, Kent, which he purchased from Sir John Gage, vice-chamberlain of the household, for 500 marks on 6 July 1529.¹⁹⁷ Thomas Whalley also told Cromwell in February 1527

that this was an error made at the time the will was originally devised seems correct. However no one has offered much by way of dating on the later corrections. Robertson believed Cromwell’s amendments were made ‘at a slightly later date’ (‘Profit and Purpose’, p. 320 n. 3). Lehmberg argued ‘all one can safely say is that the revision occurred before 1536, when Cromwell himself was made a baron and would no longer have referred to himself merely as a gentlemen of London’. See S. E. Lehmberg, ‘The Religious Beliefs of Thomas Cromwell’, in R. L. Demolen, ed., *Leaders of the Reformation* (Cranbury, NJ, 1984), pp. 135-136. It has gone unnoticed that two of the corrections Cromwell made included the addition of properties he did not purchase until 1532 (the latest being made on 23 September 1532) See above, and below n. 195. The corrections were therefore made after these purchases; perhaps they prompted the will’s revision.

¹⁹³ TNA, PRO, SP 1/54 ff. 241v, 244v (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 60-61, 63). Both properties were bequeathed to Cromwell’s son, Gregory.

¹⁹⁴ Robertson, ‘Profit and Purpose’, p. 321.

¹⁹⁵ ‘Canberye’ was Canonbury House in Islington parish, Middlesex, and had been leased, along with the manor of Cutlers (not mentioned in the will), from the prior of St. Bartholomew’s, Smithfield, on 23 September 1532. See TNA, PRO, SP 2/M ff. 46-52 (LP V 1339). ‘Rompney’ was Rumney in Monmouthshire, South Wales, which until 1521 had been part of the marcher lands of Edward Stafford, duke of Buckingham. Following his attainder the Crown had leased it back to his widow, Eleanor, who died in 1530. See T. B. Pugh, *The Marcher Lordships of South Wales, 1415-1536* (Cardiff, 1963), pp. 249-250. The Crown did not grant the property to Cromwell and his son until May 1532. See TNA, PRO, C82/656 & C66/660 m. 19 (LP V 1065 [33]).

¹⁹⁶ TNA, PRO, SP 1/44 ff. 198-206 (LP IV, ii, 3535).

¹⁹⁷ TNA, PRO, SP 2/J ff. 159-170 (LP IV, iii, 6336 [i]); SP 2/J ff. 170-172 (LP IV, iii, 6336 [ii]). Gage himself had leased the lands from William Weston, Prior of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem in 1528. According to the indenture between Cromwell and Gage, Cromwell also had to pay the prior the yearly rent of £50. The sixty-year lease was sold to Sir Brian Tuke, treasurer of the chamber, under exactly the same terms the following March (1530), although Cromwell kept some of the rights connected to it as profit. See TNA, PRO, SP 2/K 1-5 (LP IV, iii, 6336

how 'Thomas Perkyns & I haue made sale of iiii akers of vnderwod in youre woodes of Tyckthornies after iiii nobulles the aker & so ye may make euery yere lyke valew'.¹⁹⁸ A grant dating to February 1531 also refers to a lease Cromwell shared with Sir Humphrey Bowland on the rectory of Gingemargaret, Essex, which the pair had taken out on 28 March 1528.¹⁹⁹ The lease for this was originally for thirty years but Cromwell subsequently gave up his interest wholly to Bowland in May 1529. A draft indenture agreed 'in the xxii^{ti} yere' of Henry VIII's reign, also suggests that Cromwell leased the parsonage of Melbourne, Derbyshire, from John Kite, bishop of Carlisle.²⁰⁰ These modest

[iii]). Robertson, in her summary of Cromwell's lands, did not note that this land was sold on to Tuke, yet this explains why the reference to the lands in Cromwell's will has been crossed out and replaced in Cromwell's own hand with the farm of 'Canberye'. Two letters to Cromwell offer something on the handling of the Sutton at Hone and Temple Dartford lands, as well as the sale to Tuke. John Williamson wrote to Cromwell in February 1530 that 'Brabazon and Swyfte according to your commaundment' had been to Sutton at Hone, along with 'hante seruant to Sir Bryan Tuke', and 'cyrumspectlye haue vewed the same and lyketh...as Brabazon more at large can informe your mastership'. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/57 f. 23 (*LP IV*, iii, 6223). Brabazon himself wrote to Cromwell on 17 February 1530 to inform him that he and Richard Swifte had viewed a farm connected with these lands, and suspected the farmer would come to Cromwell for further assurances on this land. He advised that Cromwell should not give him any, 'For vppon this litle survey taken yow may make more therof then master Gage did by vi or vii li...wherefore it is best that in nowise ye make eny graunt to hym nor to no other person'. He also wished to know 'your mynde concernyng the woddess to be sold & your price of thacre' (Brabazon himself suggested 24s per acre). Cromwell was also told they intended to hold a court tomorrow 'at Sutton For seynt Johns & on Saturday For the parsonage & on Munday at Dertford & Tewisday at kyngsdown & Wednysday at Eden Brudge', all of which were presumably lands connected with the purchase from Gage. Brabazon told Cromwell that if here were to come to Sutton 'on thursday...ye shall see our determinacion...as we thynk is much beneficall vnto yow. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/57 f. 16 (*LP IV*, iii, 6221).

¹⁹⁸ TNA, PRO, SP 1/65 f. 119 (*LP V* 84). The letter is dated to 1531 in *LP* but the references in it to William Brabazon and Richard Swift's work surveying Daventry, suggests it should be dated to 1527. See Ward, 'The Origins of Thomas Cromwell's Public Career', p. 90 n. 59. Again, these lands are not mentioned in Cromwell's will or by Robertson in her study of Cromwell's landed estates.

¹⁹⁹ TNA, PRO, C82/638 and TNA, PRO, C66/657 m. 30 (*LP V* 119). Again, this property was not mentioned by Robertson or in Cromwell's will, although the latter omission might be explained by Cromwell relinquishing the lease.

²⁰⁰ TNA, PRO, SP 1/58 ff. 199-205. Again, Robertson makes no mention of this property. It should also be noted here that Cromwell purchased a lease on the manor of Filston 'lying within the parochie of Shorham...within the countye of Kent', from William Petley on 24 May 1528. See SP 1/48 ff. 37-40 (*LP IV*, ii, 4295), which is corrected in places by Cromwell. In this instance, however, Cromwell was himself acting as a middle-man for Robert Studley, who had been trying to acquire the lease on the farm for some time. On this see SP 1/52 f. 102 (*LP IV*, iii, 5146); SP 1/52 f. 101 (*LP IV*, iii, 5145), placed in 1529, but it is off 1528; SP 1/67 f. 88 (*LP V* 442). This final letter was placed in 1531 in *LP*, but clearly dates to the 1520s: William Petley's *Inquisition Post Mortem* reveals that he died in September 1528. See TNA, PRO, E150/483. In another undated letter from Studely, similarly placed in 1531 in *LP*, Cromwell was asked for help in obtaining a 'Ferme in kilbourne nere vnto london' for 'one Mr White & one Kryton dwelling

purchases were the only successful land or property acquisitions Cromwell made during these years. His investment in land was therefore small during the 1520s, particularly when compared with other common lawyers.²⁰¹ Perhaps his mercantile activities required ready cash to be available, making it unwise to invest too heavily at this point.

Wealth and Standing in the 1520s

How wealthy was Cromwell during the 1520s? In the fourth assessment of the subsidy granted by the parliament of 1523, Cromwell was assessed as part of Wolsey's household on 20 March 1527. The highest assessment among this was Richard Warren, who was assessed at £300. By contrast, Cromwell was assessed 'in goodes' at £50,²⁰² while in the same assessment Sir Thomas More was valued in lands and fees at £340 as part of the king's household.²⁰³ In another valuation of Wolsey's entourage from the same period, Thomas Audeley was valued in lands worth a mere £7.²⁰⁴

Cromwell's will of 1529, although unreliable as a guide to his landed estates, can offer an indication of his disposal wealth at the end of the 1520s. Cromwell's three children by his wife Elizabeth had over £600 bequeathed to them in 1529.²⁰⁵ Gregory, the only surviving child, was to get £400 (£666 13s 4d when later revised), and a further £100 (later £200) when he turned twenty-four. Cromwell's two daughters, Anne and Grace, both of whom presumably died after the 1529 version had been drafted, were to get 100 marks each and £40 towards their 'fynding' in marriage.²⁰⁶ Other family members were to receive smaller sums which amounted collectively to well over £240 (many

in lyme strete in london'. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/67 f. 86 (*LP V* 440). This also probably dates to the late 1520s.

²⁰¹ Thomas Kebell, for example, had built up considerable estates amounting to over 3,000 acres in and around Leicestershire. See Ives, *Common Lawyers*, pp. 330-354.

²⁰² TNA, PRO, E179/69/8 (*LP IV*, ii, 2972 [9]).

²⁰³ TNA, PRO, E179/69/1 (*LP IV*, ii, 2972 [1]).

²⁰⁴ TNA, PRO, E179/69/10 (*LP IV*, ii, 2972 [8]).

²⁰⁵ TNA, PRO, SP 1/54 ff. 235-248 (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 56-64; *LP IV*, iii, 5772). Many of these cash bestowals in Cromwell's will were amended and increased when he revised the will after September 1532.

²⁰⁶ Their entries in the will have been crossed out by Cromwell in a subsequent revision.

received more in the subsequent revision). Cromwell's servants would have collectively received over £60 had he died in 1529. Although by no means a complete picture of his wealth at this point, Cromwell's will indicates he was in a comfortable financial position by the end of the 1520s.

R. B. Merriman accused Cromwell of a 'notorious accessibility to bribes' during these years, although he himself provided little evidence for this.²⁰⁷ How far can corruption and venality account for Cromwell's wealth at this point? It is interesting that in October 1526 Thomas Strangways, Wolsey's controller, was bound in recognisance not to commit 'any boddelye hurte vnto...Thomas Cromwell or his servuantes', suggesting that even in the 1520s Cromwell aroused hostility.²⁰⁸ Moreover there are certainly hints during these years that Cromwell was capable of acting rather unscrupulously. Christopher Burgh, parson of Spenythorn, York, brought a suit against Cromwell in Star Chamber, accusing him of extorting £20 from him on 16 May 1528.²⁰⁹ A letter from Edward Fetyplace to Cromwell similarly hints at financial duplicity. He recalled the 'promyse' Cromwell made him at the suppression of Poughley during the establishment of Wolsey's colleges

not onely for the seid parsonage bot also for the seid lease...perteynyng to the
seid monastery / Apon whiche promise I delyuered you xl^s thinking to haue
founded your worde & ded one And sithe that tyme it hath pleased you to
graunte the seid lease vnto a noder man.²¹⁰

Cromwell also extracted an annual fee of 26s. 8d. from the priory of Shulbred, Sussex, on 10 March 1525.²¹¹ The priory had given this to ensure that 'they

²⁰⁷ Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 50.

²⁰⁸ TNA, PRO, C244/169/19. Also see Guy, *Cardinal's Court*, p. 90 on this.

²⁰⁹ TNA, PRO, STAC 2/7 ff. 107-108.

²¹⁰ TNA, PRO, SP 1/59 f. 104 (*LP* IV, iii, App. 103). In this sternly worded letter to Cromwell Fetyplace also wrote: 'where you write that the ten poundes for the parsonage of Chadelworth as the vi^{li} xiii^s iiii^d for the demeanes of poffeley shulde be due at Michelmas last past / Sir you know well youre x^{li} of arrerages payd / the residue is not youre due vntill oure ladye day next'.

²¹¹ TNA, PRO, E36/140 f. 29r.

maye...dwell att rest with owte trowbill & contynue styll yn ther howse'.²¹² The brethren there was evidently unaware that the monastic houses intended for dissolution had already been identified and that they were not among them.²¹³ Cromwell clearly capitalised on the uncertainty surrounding Wolsey's suppressions, although it was another man, one Richard Bedon, who had suggested this action to him, and who prompted the priory to grant this fee.²¹⁴ Given that Cromwell was accused of bribery and corruption on his fall in 1540, allegations of venality must receive greater consideration in later chapters examining his career in the 1530s.²¹⁵ Nevertheless there is certainly evidence in the 1520s that Cromwell was capable of acting unscrupulously for his own financial gain.

A legal career naturally enabled people to increase their position in society, and Cromwell was already a man of some standing. Nevertheless, it was his work for Wolsey which placed him in a position of recognised influence. A number of letters testify that his status under the Cardinal was widely perceived. In several dating from 1526 onwards, Cromwell is addressed as 'oon of my lorde cardynalles counsaill', a position of some respect,²¹⁶ while Wolsey himself referred to Cromwell as 'my right trusty and welbiloued counsaillour and seruante'.²¹⁷ More significant is that Cromwell was often written to requesting that he might move or solicit Wolsey on various matters. The merchant Edward Baxter, writing in 1529, provides the most unequivocal

²¹² TNA, PRO, SP 1/65 f. 136 (LP V 106). This was placed in 1531 in *Letters and Papers*, but clearly refers to the fee recorded on Cromwell's list of fees and annuities granted in 1525. See TNA, PRO, E36/140 f. 29r. An undated draft of this grant was also mistakenly placed in 1533. See TNA, PRO, SP 2/O f. 133 (LP VI 1625 [7]).

²¹³ A privy seal warrant of September 1524 lists the houses intended for suppression to establish Wolsey's Oxford college. See TNA, PRO, C82/550/101 (LP IV, i, 697).

²¹⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 1/65 fo. 136 (LP V 106); TNA, PRO, SP 1/65 fo. 137 (LP V 107). Both letters are of the year 1525.

²¹⁵ BL, Additional Manuscript 48028 fo. 164. Cromwell's attainder is not printed in *Statutes of the Realm*. A printed copy can be found in Gilbert Burnet, *History of the Reformation of the Church of England*, iv. 105-109.

²¹⁶ TNA, PRO, SP 1/39 f. 3v (LP IV, i, 2347); SP 1/39 f. 4v (LP IV, i, 2348); SP 1/41 f. 180v (LP IV, ii, 3079); SP 1/49 f. 158v (LP IV, ii, 4573); SP 1/49 f. 159v (LP IV, ii, 4581); SP 1/49 f. 203v (LP IV, ii, 4614); SP 1/50 f. 64v (LP IV, ii, 4690); SP 1/52 f. 95 (LP IV, ii, 5131); SP 1/53 f. 165v (LP IV, iii, 5431).

²¹⁷ BL, Cotton MS, Appendix L ff. 37-38 (Ellis, 2nd Series, ii. 29; LP IV, iii, 6484).

illustration of this. Baxter told Cromwell that he had two sons and hoped 'too purveye fore one of theym sume goode spiritual lyvinge'.²¹⁸ He added that

As I vnderstand ye be in good Favors withe mye lordes grace whoo haithe gyfte and collacione of menye goode promotions / I inteerelie desire you too be soo goode mastere too me as too provyde me of sume substanciall promotione fore one of mye saide sonnes at mye lorde cardinalles graces hand.

Baxter was by no means alone in his belief that Cromwell was a man with influence in the right places. The priest John Gray, on hearing that Wolsey might obtain the priories of Tykford and Ranston for Cardinal College, Oxford, requested that Cromwell 'helpe me that I may contynue and enioye the Ferme of Tykford...And also that ye woll helpe me to haue the other said pryory likewise in Ferme'.²¹⁹ When Roger Richardson, mint master of Wolsey's coin at Durham, died in 1528, Cromwell was written to in the belief that he might persuade Wolsey to permanently appoint Richardson's son, John, to his former position.²²⁰ And John did indeed succeeded his father.²²¹ The merchant Christopher Coe was another who believed Cromwell had the power 'in your handes to do me good...in many...causis at my lorde Cardynalles grace hand'.²²²

Of course, what is not easy to assess is how successful Cromwell was with these requests, although, in a handful of cases, letters of thanks testifies to some. Thomas Cannar, a priest at Oxford, thanked Cromwell for his promotion to the benefice of East Hendred, Berkshire, and attributed 'yowre especyall motion and procurement made to my lorde [Wolsey]' to the acquisition.²²³ Sir

²¹⁸ TNA, PRO, SP 1/52 f. 130 (Ellis, 3rd Series, i. 332; *LP IV*, iii, 5169).

²¹⁹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/37 f. 6 (*LP IV*, i, 1881). Dated January, and placed in 1526 in *LP*. Given that Tickford and Ravenstone were suppressed in February 1525, this may well date to that year.

²²⁰ TNA, PRO, SP 1/47 f. 222 (*LP IV*, ii, 4201). Cromwell was asked to 'helpe he may haue graunte and auctoritie of my lordes grace to conteneue & be in the said mynt'.

²²¹ C. E. Challis, *The Tudor Coinage* (Manchester, 1978), p. 76.

²²² TNA, PRO, SP 1/235 f. 217 (*LP Add I*, i, 540). For further examples of Cromwell being asked to move or solicit Wolsey on matters, see TNA, PRO, SP 1/34 f. 234 (*LP IV*, i, 1386); SP 1/49 f. 196 (*LP IV*, ii, 4607); SP 1/52 f. 95 (*LP IV*, ii, 5131); SP 1/53 f. 165 (*LP IV*, iii, 5431); SP 1/55 f. 137 (*LP IV*, iii, 5970); SP 1/235 f. 56 (*LP Add I*, i, 488); SP 1/235 f. 274 (*LP Add I*, i, 573); SP 1/235 f. 346 (*LP Add I*, i, 593); SP 1/235 f. 360 (*LP Add I*, i, 602); SP 1/235 f. 363 (*LP Add I*, i, 604); SP 1/236 f. 12 (*LP Add I*, i, 611).

²²³ TNA, PRO, SP 1/51 f. 122 (*LP IV*, ii, 5069).

George Lawson, treasurer of Berwick, also attributed Wolsey's grant to his chaplain to Cromwell's 'good help and master doctour stevens [Gardiner].²²⁴ Another who thanked Cromwell was Anthony Appulby, who believed that Cromwell's 'goo[d] helpe & labur to my lord legaitt[es] grace' had ensured his promotion.²²⁵ Cromwell also managed to obtain Wolsey's signature on documents relating to matters he was handling in a private capacity. Writing to Thomas Arundell in June 1528 on college business in need of Wolsey's attention, Cromwell sent several documents for Wolsey to sign, including a private one for

the poore man of Arragasco who lyeth here to his great and importunate costes and charges in maner to his vtter vndoyng, And also for the signature of one other lettre in Frenche directed to the gouernours of the towne of Depe for the delyuerie of certeyn Englysshe mennys goodes beyng marchaunttes of London of late taken vpon the See.²²⁶

Of note here is Cromwell's method: the request was placed at the end of a letter outlining the work he had been doing on college business, and was surely intended to encourage Wolsey to return a favour. If so, it evidently worked. William Capon wrote in response, telling Cromwell 'I send also to yow...letters assigned with my lord his hand one for the Arogose the odor to the towne off depe'.²²⁷ Unsurprisingly the successful method was employed by Cromwell in another letter directly to the Cardinal requesting a benefice for a master Byrton.²²⁸

Perhaps the most interesting point in relation to Cromwell's standing during these years, however, are the people whom Cromwell was already involved with, albeit very much as a subordinate, before he made the transition into the king's service in 1530. Cromwell's book of debts and obligations

²²⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 1/50 f. 207 (LP IV, ii, 4877).

²²⁵ TNA, PRO, SP 1/59 f. 273 (LP IV, iii, App. 272).

²²⁶ TNA, PRO, SP 1/49 f. 1 (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 321; LP IV, ii, 4441).

²²⁷ TNA, PRO, SP 1/55 f. 18 (LP IV, iii, 5811).

²²⁸ TNA, PRO, SP 1/47 f. 153-153v (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 319; LP IV, ii, 4135).

ranging from 1518 to 1529 reveals he had already had contact with a number of prominent figures.²²⁹ Henry Percy, sixth earl of Northumberland, was listed for a number of obligations beginning from 15 January 1527.²³⁰ The marquis of Dorset is another who appears several times.²³¹ So too is 'my lorde George graye', who is recorded owing four different obligations.²³² It will also be recalled that Sir Thomas Boleyn had made use of Cromwell's legal skills in 1527.²³³ Cromwell was involved in settling the disputed wardship of Thomas Stanely, Lord Monteagle, which brought him into contact with Thomas Lord Darcy and Sir John Hussey.²³⁴ Sir Edward Guildford, lord warden of the Cinque Ports, and a close friend of Henry VIII, was also acquainted with Cromwell during these years.²³⁵ So too was the earl of Westmoreland.²³⁶ Cromwell's friendship with Sir John Gage, Henry VIII's vice-chamberlain, also stemmed from the late 1520s.²³⁷ Cromwell was therefore already acquainted with, working for, and operating amongst a number of prominent people well before he entered the royal service. Although Cromwell was 'unfamiliar' with the royal court before 1530,²³⁸ it is clear that he was already handling the affairs of some of its notable figures. This experience can only have enhanced his ability to manage and work alongside such people during his career under Henry VIII.

Cromwell and Parliament in the 1520s

This chapter has been concerned with Cromwell's private career during the 1520s. To conclude it some of the more public activities Cromwell was engaged with will be examined. There are certainly indications that

²²⁹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/53 ff. 36-51v (*LP IV*, iii, 5330).

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, ff. 38, 43v, 49.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, ff. 39, 41, 49v.

²³² The earliest is from June 1521, and so cannot be linked with Cromwell's association with Wolsey. *Ibid.*, ff. 40, 46, 49v, 50v.

²³³ See above, pp. 22-23.

²³⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 1/59 ff. 106-107v (*LP IV*, iii, App. 109).

²³⁵ TNA, PRO, SP 1/235 f. 363 (*LP Add I*, i, 604); SP 1/236 f. 68 (*LP Add I*, i, 631).

²³⁶ TNA, PRO, SP 1/235 f. 56 (*LP Add I*, i, 488).

²³⁷ On this friendship see below pp. 74-75.

²³⁸ Elton, 'Thomas Cromwell Redivivus', in Elton, *Studies*, iii. 376; Elton, *Reform and Reformation*, p. 170.

Cromwell already possessed the ambition to advance himself in more ‘public’ roles. In December 1523 he sat on the London wardmote inquest for Broadstreet ward.²³⁹ Wardmotes were held to ensure the smooth-running of London’s wards, and examined breaches of city regulations, as well as ensuring streets, properties and pavements were safe and clean.²⁴⁰ As late as September 1522 Cromwell was living in Fenchurch Street, in Langborne ward, yet the wardmote he sat on in December 1523 was for Broadstreet, where his newly acquired house at the Austin Friars was located. He must have established himself quickly to obtain a position on its inquest, which hints at his desire for advancement. In 1524 he would also act as a subsidy commissioner for the hundred of Osultone, Middlesex.²⁴¹ Commissioners were often appointed ‘from the leading men in the shires and boroughs’.²⁴² It was their job to select local assessors, explain the rates of payment and assessment to them, and produce a list of taxes in response to their assessments.²⁴³ Work for Wolsey also brought public rewards. In April 1525 the Cardinal appointed Cromwell to the clerkship of Salisbury,²⁴⁴ although what this office entailed was unclear.²⁴⁵ Most

²³⁹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/29 ff. 117-122 (*LP* III, ii, 3657). Cromwell’s name appears third on a list of thirteen who sat on this particular inquest. A draft of the verdict is also partially corrected in his hand.

²⁴⁰ A. E. McCampbell, ‘The London Parish and the London Precinct, 1640-1660’, *Guildhall Studies in London History*, 11, (1976), pp. 117-119.

²⁴¹ *LP* IV, i, 969 [4].

²⁴² R. Schofield, *Taxation under the Early Tudors, 1485-1547* (Oxford, 2004), p. 96.

²⁴³ Schofield, *Taxation*, pp. 116-118.

²⁴⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 1/34 f. 34 (*LP* IV, i, 1150); SP 1/235 f. 53 (*LP* Add I, i, 485). This second letter was placed in 1526 by the editors of *LP*. It would be more reasonable to date it to 1525, on the grounds that the office had become vacant following the death of the previous incumbent in March of that year.

²⁴⁵ It certainly did not entitle Cromwell to select the local mayor. *LP* erroneously describes Thomas Chaffyn, who wrote to Cromwell regarding the clerkship, as proposing ‘that the mayor be appointed by Cromwell himself’. This is a misreading of the line ‘hitt maye be your pleasure that he [Acton] maye be surly Appoyntyd by your owne selffe’. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/56 f. 190 (*LP* IV, iii, 6136). Given that this office was in Wolsey’s gift, it was probably a sinecure ecclesiastical position. The office came with a fee of £4 p.a., with an additional 13s 4d for the clerk’s livery (SP 1/34 f. 34 [*LP* IV, i, 1150]), but Cromwell was aided by a deputy who discharged him of the office. Thomas Benet, vicar-general in Salisbury, informed Cromwell in January 1529 that ‘accordyng to your former writyng concernyng thexecucion of your office in Sares I haue admytted John Acton...to be your subsatute’. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/236 f. 292 (*LP* Add I, i, 683). The following January Thomas Chaffyn, mercer, told Cromwell Acton had ensured ‘ye have byne as playnely & substancially dyschargyd in that your said office as eany gentyllman in such lyke office’. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/56 f. 190 (*LP* IV, iii, 6136). *LP* placed Benet’s letter in 1530, but the letter from Chaffyn, dated January 1529 (i.e. 1530), referred to ‘John Acton...[who] hath byne your deput[e] this last yere by the Assig[n]ment of master Doctour Benett’, meaning Benet’s letter was

indicative of Cromwell's desire for advancement, however, is that he obtained a seat in both parliaments called during this decade. In 1523 he sat for an unknown constituency, and may have delivered a speech opposing Henry VIII's campaigns in France.²⁴⁶ In 1529 he sat for the borough of Taunton, Somerset.²⁴⁷

Bold claims have been made regarding Cromwell's regard for parliament. Elton believed he entered it in 1529 determined 'to make a career',²⁴⁸ and that his entry 'appears to be the first definite step in his rise to power'.²⁴⁹ He also felt that Cromwell's commitment to parliament went beyond that of his contemporaries, that he realised the potentials of statute law in erecting a unified nation-state, and that 'Cromwell 'well deserves the name of England's first parliamentary statesman'.²⁵⁰ It is certainly true that Cromwell's intentions on securing a seat were an attempt to strengthen his position following the fall of his existing master, Thomas Wolsey. George Cavendish, the Cardinal's usher and earliest biographer, recollected how, fearing for his own prosperity in 1529, Cromwell decided 'to ride to London and so to the court / where I wyll other make or marre or I come agayn'. On his return, Cavendish discovered Cromwell had been made a burgess, and had 'put his foote where he trusted shortly to be better regardyd'.²⁵¹ But whether Cromwell entered parliament with the specific intent of securing the king as his new master, as Elton thought, seems doubtful.²⁵² Cromwell was no stranger to parliament, having sat there in 1523. Nor did he deliberately abandon Wolsey for the king's service, as the next chapter will show. Driven by the opportunities it offered for patronage, lawyers had been sitting in parliament in

probably from 1529. Nor was Acton Cromwell's first deputy. A letter from John Bigges to Cromwell, from April 1525, shortly after his appointment as clerk, refers to 'Thomas pett beyng your depute now withyn the seyd cytee'. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/235 f. 53 (*LP Add I*, i, 485). It is of interest to note that Elton believed 'there was nothing of the sinecurist about Thomas Cromwell'. (Elton, *Tudor Revolution*, p. 113).

²⁴⁶ TNA, PRO, SP 1/27 ff. 193-207v (*LP III*, ii, 2958). The speech is printed in Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 30-43.

²⁴⁷ *LP IV*, iii, 6043 [2].

²⁴⁸ Elton, 'Political Creed', p. 225. Elton, *Reform and Reformation*, p. 121.

²⁴⁹ Elton, *Tudor Revolution*, p. 80.

²⁵⁰ Elton, 'Political Creed', in Elton, *Studies*, ii. 215-235 (quote on p. 225); Elton, *England under the Tudors*, pp. 128-129, 160-192.

²⁵¹ George Cavendish, *The Life and Death of Cardinal Wolsey*, ed. R. S. Sylvester (London, 1959), pp. 105, 112.

²⁵² Elton, *Tudor Revolution*, p. 80.

increasing numbers since the fifteenth century.²⁵³ Cromwell's actions were therefore typical of his legal contemporaries, and the most likely explanation is that Cromwell sought a seat to stabilise his own position following Wolsey's fall.

What of Elton's wider claims? Cromwell left so little by way of motive or reason for his actions that it is difficult to pronounce on his attitudes or beliefs. He did, however, make one comment which is revealing of his attitude toward parliament. On 17 August 1523 Cromwell wrote to his friend, the merchant John Creke, about his experiences in the parliament of 1523 in which he sat. Cromwell wrote:

ye shall vnderstonde that by long tyme I amongst other haue Indured a parlyament which contenwid by the space of xvij hole wekes wher ~~as~~ we communyng of warre pease Stryffe contencion debatte murmure grudge Riches pouerte penwrye trowth falshode Justyce equyte discayte opprescyon magnanymyte actyuyte Force attempraunce Treason murder ~~and~~ Felonye consyli[ation] and also how to ~~deuise~~ a commune welth might be ediffyed and a[ls]o contenewid within our Realme howbeyt in conclusyon we haue d[one] as our predecessors haue bene wont to doo that ys to say as well as we myght and lefte wher we began.²⁵⁴

A great deal of discussion has centred on this single remark. For many historians of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century, Cromwell's apparent disdain for parliament confirmed their belief that Cromwell was an oppressive and despotic minister.²⁵⁵ Elton, by contrast, in an interpretation which became the prevailing orthodoxy,²⁵⁶ argued that Cromwell's use of parliament in the 1530s undermines such a conclusion, and dismissed these

²⁵³ S. J. Payling, 'The Rise of Lawyers in the Lower House, 1395-1536', *Parliamentary History*, 23 (2004), pp. 103-120.

²⁵⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 1/28 f. 154 (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 313; LP III, ii, 3249).

²⁵⁵ Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i, p. 27; Innes, *Ten Tudor Statesmen*, p. 119; H. A. L. Fisher, *The Political History of England*, V, *From the Accession of Henry VII to the Death of Henry VIII, 1485-1547* (London, 1906), p. 247.

²⁵⁶ Dickens, *Thomas Cromwell*, p. 20; Williams, *Cardinal and the Secretary*, p. 147; Beckingsale, *Thomas Cromwell*, p. 15.

comments as humorous remarks not to be taken too seriously.²⁵⁷ Neither view entirely convinces. Is it possible to offer an alternative interpretation supported by Cromwell's life and experiences in the 1520s?

What Cromwell's complaint suggests is that he regarded parliament to be rather ineffective. It is worth considering why this might have been. Parliament sat at the apex of the common law system, and Cromwell's background as a lawyer furnished him, like all lawyers, with a belief in the supremacy of statute law. But Cromwell also operated as a merchant in the 1520s. Did his mercantile background also shape his attitude toward parliament? Many of London's professional circles had a vested interest in the institution because it controlled their trades and regulated their privileges.²⁵⁸ Private bills were frequently introduced on behalf of a variety of groups. But many of these either never became acts, or if they did, took a number of sessions - sometimes even a number of parliaments - before they did so.²⁵⁹ Cromwell, who sat in both the 1523 and 1529 parliament, would not only have witnessed the failure of a variety of bills, but may even have seen some fail which he himself, as a merchant, had a vested interest in.

This conclusion can be supported by Cromwell's own activities in the 1520s. What has gone entirely unnoticed is that, even before he became a royal servant, Cromwell was drafting bills for parliament. Unsurprisingly, this was often on behalf of the merchant and professional circles that he lived amongst. It was during the 1523 parliament, for instance, that Cromwell amended and corrected a bill on behalf of the Glaziers' Company, designed to curb the influence of foreign glaziers who, so the bill alleged, were harming the interests of the king's subjects.²⁶⁰ This does not appear on the statute books. Another bill

²⁵⁷ Elton argued 'this is no weighty and pompous judgement, but a man of affairs laughing at himself and his fellows', 'Political Creed', in Elton, *Studies*, ii. 224.

²⁵⁸ H. Miller, 'London and Parliament in the Reign of Henry VIII', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 35 (1962), pp. 128-149; I. Archer, 'The London Lobbies in the Later Sixteenth Century', *HJ*, 31 (1988), p. 17-44.

²⁵⁹ Helen Miller has shown, for instance, that London's professional circles had a highly active parliamentary programme, but were often unsuccessful in getting legislation passed beneficial to their trades during the early parliaments of Henry VIII's reign. See Miller, 'London and Parliament', pp. 136, 137, 139.

²⁶⁰ TNA, PRO, SP 1/233 f. 291 (LP Add I, i, 384).

Cromwell drafted in 1523 was on behalf of the Abbot of St Mary's of the Holme, Cumberland, on the Scottish border.²⁶¹ This requested that the monastery be permanently discharged from the payment and collection of all subsidies, taxes and payments to the Crown, on the grounds of persistent attacks and robberies by the Scots. Again, this bill presumably failed: a later draft suggests that Cromwell placed a similar petition on behalf of the abbot before the king's council.²⁶² In the first session of the 'Reformation' parliament Cromwell was also among five men who endorsed a bill on behalf of the Mercers' Company designed at halting protections.²⁶³ Given that Cromwell endorsed the bill, it would be surprising if he did not wish to see it passed. Once again, however, the bill does not appear to have come into law.

The success-rate of the legislation Cromwell drafted during the 1520s is therefore unimpressive. Under such circumstances it is not difficult to see why he might have regarded parliament as being rather ineffective. None of this is to suggest that Cromwell did not regard it highly, but given that since the fifteenth century there had been 'no doubt that legislative supremacy lay in the High Court of parliament',²⁶⁴ perhaps Cromwell's use of parliament during the 1530s was driven more by a desire to ensure the radical changes brought about were seen to be as legitimate – and enforceable – as possible. What can be said, however, is that by end of the 1520s Cromwell already had practise drafting legislation, a task he would soon skilfully employ in the service of the king. Moreover, given that 'Half of the Members in each new Parliament were novices', and that he himself had served in every session during the 1520s, Cromwell was something of a parliamentary veteran.²⁶⁵ This experience would

²⁶¹ A memorandum concerning this bill, written in Cromwell's hand, refers to 'this present parlyament', which suggests it was drawn up for the 1523 parliament. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/41 f. 157 (*LP* IV, ii, 3053 [4]). For the bill itself, which Cromwell has amended and turned into a petition to the Council, see SP 1/235 f. 203 (*LP* Add I, 532 [1]). SP 1/235 f. 205 (*LP* Add I, i, 532 [2]) is a copy of this.

²⁶² TNA, PRO, SP 1/235 ff. 203 (*LP* Add I, i, 532).

²⁶³ TNA, PRO, SP 1/236 f. 169 (*LP* Add I, i, 663). Cromwell's endorsement, along with that of Paul Withypoll, Edward Hall, John Branings and Henry Seye, is on f. 168, but no longer visible. The names which can still be made out, however, indicate that the *LP* summary is correct.

²⁶⁴ Harriss, 'Medieval Government and Statecraft', in *Past and Present*, 25 (1963), p. 21.

²⁶⁵ M. A. R. Graves, 'The Management of the Elizabethan House of Commons: The Council's 'Men of Business'', *Parliamentary History*, 2 (1983), p. 16.

prove invaluable for any royal minister required to effectively manage parliament on the Crown's behalf.

Until now, the full extent of Cromwell's life in the 1520s has not been examined. Yet it has been possible here to establish what Cromwell was doing during these years with a reasonable degree of accuracy. Doing so has cast Cromwell in a fresh light by showing how he acquired many of the skills and qualities which would enable him to prosper under Henry VIII. His legal career had naturally equipped him with the versatility and resourcefulness to handle all sorts of tricky or demanding situations. It has also been possible to reconstruct several of the disputes which Cromwell helped settle during the 1520s. This has revealed that he was already a man of striking efficiency and organisational ability – qualities which would be crucially significant when handling the routine work of government. But perhaps most significantly, Cromwell has emerged from this chapter as a broadly 'typical' common lawyer. His legal background and experiences in the 1520s were similar to those of other lawyers; many of these had also entered the royal service during this period. Such a shared legal background naturally created a shared outlook.²⁶⁶ Edmund Dudley and Christopher St German were already voicing the necessity of curbing the role of the Church and extending royal power.²⁶⁷ Cromwell's attitude toward parliament, his involvement in the assault on the Church in the 1530s, and his willingness to help extend royal authority over it, should therefore be understood as part of this wider attitude among his near-legal contemporaries. Placed within his proper legal context, Elton's revolutionary political and constitutional theorist evaporates.

The correlation between Cromwell's mercantile career and the work of a royal minister is of course much less apparent. How these experiences shaped and equipped Cromwell with qualities of use for his work under the king is therefore more difficult to determine than with his career in the law.

²⁶⁶ Gunn, *Early Tudor Government*, p. 15.

²⁶⁷ Guy, *Tudor England*, pp. 122-123; S. Gunn, 'Edmund Dudley and the Church', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 51 (2000), pp. 509-526.

Nevertheless some of the earliest jobs that Cromwell did for Henry VIII certainly benefited from his background in trade. Among the tasks that Cromwell undertook during his first three years in the king's service, one included obtaining fabrics for the king and the duke of Norfolk,²⁶⁸ another saw him provide clothing for royal minstrels and arranging the patterns on the king's collars.²⁶⁹ In 1533 Cromwell also managed the sale of the king's wines.²⁷⁰ A background and connections in the cloth and mercantile trade would clearly assist in such diverse responsibilities.²⁷¹ It may even explain why Cromwell was charged with them in the first place.

Nevertheless even if Cromwell had not progressed into Henry VIII's services, his life and careers during the 1520s would still be worth studying in their own right. By 1530 Thomas Cromwell was a prosperous London lawyer and merchant. He was also a man of some wealth and standing, and was acquainted with, working for, and operating amongst, a number of prominent figures. His early life therefore provides a very instructive case history of an early sixteenth-century man on the rise, demonstrating that sheer ability could overcome (up to a point) extremely humble origins.

²⁶⁸ TNA, PRO, SP 1/70 f. 203 (LP V 1239).

²⁶⁹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/71 f. 17 (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 348; LP V 1298); SP 1/71 f. 38 (LP V 1323 [1]); SP 1/71 f. 38v (LP V 1323 [2]); SP 1/76 f. 1 (LP VI 420).

²⁷⁰ TNA, PRO, SP 1/74 f. 169 (LP VI 171); SP 1/74 f. 183 (LP VI 189).

²⁷¹ By way of illustration, Cromwell's accounts covering the period November 1532 to March 1533 record that he purchased 'red chamlettes and blacke velvettes' from Richard Gresham for £44 18d on behalf of the king. See TNA, PRO, SP 2/N f. 110 (LP VI 228). Gresham was a merchant Cromwell had known since at least the 1520s, see above p. 48.

Chapter Two

Transition and Transformation: Entry in the King's Service, 1529-1530

Cromwell's career as a lawyer and merchant gradually came to an end following his entry into the king's service in 1530. This was made possible owing to the position he found himself in following the fall of his existing master, Thomas Wolsey. Between Wolsey's fall in autumn 1529 and his death in November the following year, Cromwell was called upon to solicit the Cardinal's affairs at Court. It was this opportunity and proximity to the centre of power which first enabled Cromwell to make an impression there. Given that these events have been discussed before, they do not need a lengthy re-examination here.¹ Nonetheless some of the general conclusions surrounding Cromwell's transition into the royal service do require scrutiny. Standard accounts place enormous weight on Cromwell's growing contact with Henry VIII during 1530, yet neglect the other relationships that Cromwell relied on. Although access to the monarch was important for a career as a royal servant, Cromwell's earliest success was more dependent on the favour, connections and work which he undertook for other prominent figures, than it was on the nascent relationship between king and minister. Moreover, despite Elton's belief that Cromwell was 'intent on power' from the very beginning, his entry into the king's service was unexpected and wholly dependent on fortune and circumstance.²

¹ The best account of Cromwell's entry in the king's service is Ward, 'The Origins of Thomas Cromwell's Public Career', pp. 194-240; the most accessible remains Elton, *Tudor Revolution*, pp. 71-88.

² Elton, *Tudor Revolution in Government*, p. 84.

On Wolsey's fall in October 1529 there was nothing inevitable, or even likely, about Cromwell's entry into Henry VIII's services.³ Indeed, there was a real concern among Cromwell and his associates that he too might be ruined along with his fallen master. Stephen Vaughan wrote to Cromwell on 30 October, anxiously enquiring as to how Cromwell was fairing following 'this sodeyn ouerthrow' of the Cardinal. Vaughan's remarks that 'yow ar more hated for your maisters sake then for any thing whiche I thinke yow haue wrongfully done', make it clear that Vaughan saw Cromwell's involvement with Wolsey as threatening.⁴ This concern probably reflected a wider belief. Recollecting Cromwell's rise in 1539, Reginald Pole remembered that 'a rumor everywhere circulated' on Wolsey's fall that Cromwell was imprisoned because of his work for the Cardinal.⁵ Cromwell himself was also fearful that his service to Wolsey might have consequences for his own prosperity. He tearfully lamented to George Cavendish, Wolsey's usher and earliest biographer, that he was 'lyke to losse all that I haue travelled for all the dayes of my lyfe...I ame in disdayn with most men / for my master's sake and suerly without lust cause / howbeit an yll name oons gotten wyll not lightly be put a way'.⁶

Although Cromwell's reaction is understandable, it is difficult to see that he was in any immediate danger. Cromwell's work for Wolsey was confined to the Cardinal's private affairs; it is hard to imagine how he could have aroused hostility, or have been a principal concern, for Wolsey's enemies at Court. The animosity toward Cromwell which Vaughan referred to probably stemmed from the landed gentry and clergy whom Cromwell had come into contact with during college business.⁷ Nor was Cromwell dependent on Wolsey for his own

³ For detailed, and opposing, accounts of the fall of Wolsey, see E.W. Ives, 'The Fall of Wolsey', in S. J. Gunn and P. G. Lindley, eds., *Cardinal Wolsey: Church, State and Art* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 286-316; G.W. Bernard, 'The Fall of Wolsey Reconsidered', *Journal of British Studies*, 35 (1996), pp. 277-310.

⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 1/55 f. 198 (Ellis, 3rd Series, ii. 171-172; LP IV, iii, 6036).

⁵ LP XIV, i, 200 (p. 82).

⁶ Cavendish, *Life of Wolsey*, p. 105.

⁷ Thomas Rushe wrote to Cromwell on 29 December from Ipswich on college matters, and informed him also of 'the manyfold talys and lyes and slaunderouse wordes [that] hath bene spokyn of me & you in these parties'. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/56 f. 124 (LP IV, iii, 6110).

security and position. His private legal practice continued,⁸ while college matters also continued to occupy him.⁹ Most significantly there is no evidence that any of the Cardinal's servants suffered directly as a result of Wolsey's fate.¹⁰ Instead, Cromwell's servant, Ralph Sadler, reported to him on 1 November how 'dyuers of my lorde his seruauntes...[have] ben elect and sworne the king his seruantes'.¹¹

Unlike many of Wolsey's servants, Cromwell did not enter the king's service in 1529, nor is there any evidence of any direct contact between the king and Cromwell at this point. Moreover, between Wolsey's fall and his death in November 1530, there is no indication that Cromwell contemplated abandoning Wolsey, or that he ever deliberately sought to exchange the Cardinal's service for the king's. In the months following his fall, Wolsey referred to Cromwell as 'Myn onely ayder in thys myn intolerable anxiete And heuynes',¹² 'My onely refugy And ayde',¹³ 'Myn only comfort',¹⁴ and he acknowledged to Cromwell that 'without yow I can do no thyng'.¹⁵ Throughout Wolsey's disgrace Cromwell was busy soliciting members of Court on the Cardinal's behalf, defending him in parliament,¹⁶ drafting letters to the king for Wolsey,¹⁷ as well as handling more mundane tasks such as accommodating the Cardinal's requests for quails

⁸ William Parson of Horsmonden, for instance, was fearful that the Cardinal's guilt under praemunire would affect all who, like him, had received benefices from Wolsey. He wrote to Cromwell in November 1529 beseeching that 'I may haue your aduyve & councell what ys best for me to do'. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/56 f. 87 (LP IV, iii, 6058). In December Cromwell also took part in a further arbitrational award between two London grocers, SP 1/56 f. 119-120 (LP IV, iii, 6102), and during late 1529 he continued his involvement in a longstanding dispute between the merchants Oliver Leder and Richard Reynolds. On this see SP 1/38 ff. 28-29 and 35-39v (LP IV, i, 2109 [1 & 4]); SP 1/54 f. 80 (LP IV, iii, 5673); SP 1/55 f. 85 (LP IV, iii, 5901); SP 1/55 ff. 107-117 (LP IV, iii, 5948); SP 1/55 f. 154 (LP IV, iii, 6005); SP 1/56 ff. 191-192v (LP IV, iii, 6137); SP 2/J ff. 72v-72va (LP IV, iii, 6336 [2]).

⁹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/56 f.1 (LP IV, iii, 6039); SP 1/56 f. 86 (LP IV, iii, 6055); SP 1/56 f. 88-88v (Ellis, 2nd Series, ii, 231; LP IV, iii, 6061).

¹⁰ Interestingly, the same can be said for Cromwell's own servants on his fall in 1540.

¹¹ BL, Cotton MS, Cleopatra E IV f. 211 (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i, 67-68; LP IV, iii, App. 238).

¹² BL, Cotton MS, Appendix L. f. 30 (St. P. I., p. 352; LP IV, iii, 6098) In LP many of Wolsey's correspondence to Cromwell during his fall are erroneously labelled as being in Cotton Appendix XLVIII. Those listed as such are in fact in Appendix L., as correctly cited here.

¹³ BL, Cotton MS, Appendix L. f. 29 (St. P. I., p. 355; LP IV, iii, 6181).

¹⁴ BL, Cotton MS, Appendix L. f. 24 (St. P. I., p. 360; LP IV, iii, 6262).

¹⁵ BL, Cotton MS, Appendix L. f. 27 (St. P. I., p. 356; LP IV, iii, 6226).

¹⁶ Cavendish, *Life of Wolsey*, pp. 112-113.

¹⁷ TNA, PRO, SP 1/57 ff. 168-172v (LP IV, iii, 6467 [1]).

and seeds.¹⁸ In one letter Cromwell alleged that he had spent over one thousand pounds on Wolsey's affairs.¹⁹

Yet Cromwell was plainly aware that the Cardinal's predicament might impact upon his own. Why then did he not abandon Wolsey as others appeared to? Two likely reasons emerge. First, the cynically minded should not discount that a genuine bond had emerged between the two men. Cromwell had worked closely with Wolsey since 1524, and when Cromwell was granted a coat of arms in 1533 he proudly incorporated part of Wolsey's former arms in it [Figure 5].²⁰ Perhaps a far stronger factor, however, was that it was by no means certain that Wolsey was finished. The Cardinal's decision to submit to charges of praemunire meant that his goods were forfeit,²¹ but his life was safe, and the months following his fall were full of political wrangling and plea bargaining. Cavendish believed that many of Wolsey's enemies at Court were fearful of a revival in Wolsey's fortunes.²² The king himself did much to foster a hope in Wolsey that all was not lost. A pardon was granted, following negotiations, on 10 February 1530,²³ and Henry sent the Cardinal gifts on several occasions as a sign of his good will.²⁴ Perhaps, as Gwyn has suggested, Henry was leaving

¹⁸ BL, Cotton MS, Appendix L. f. 7 (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 329-330; LP IV, iii, 6482).

¹⁹ From a letter now lost. See Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 327.

²⁰ It is also interesting that Cromwell continued to assist Wolsey's illegitimate son, Thomas Winter, during the early 1530s. In February 1532, for instance, Winter had written to Cromwell from Calais remarking on 'your goodness to do more for me than euer I durste desire of any other friend', suggesting that Winter's licence to leave the realm in January had been obtained by Cromwell. Their correspondence continued throughout that year as Winter continued to require money to continue his studies abroad in Italy and elsewhere. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/73 f. 166 (LP V App. 24); TNA, PRO, C82/651 (LP V 766 [12]); SP 1/73 f. 167 (LP V, App., 27); BL, Cotton MS, Nero B VI ff. 126-126v (LP VI 314), this is 1532, not 1533 as in LP; SP 1/70 ff. 182-183 (LP V 1210); SP 1/71 ff. 124-124v (LP V 1452); SP 1/80 f. 99 (LP VI 1428), this is 1532, not 1533 as in LP; SP 1/68 f. 80 (LP V 572), this is 1532, not 1531 as in LP; SP 1/73 f. 13 (LP V 1688); SP 1/72 f. 165v (LP V 1670 [1]); SP 1/74 f. 16v (LP VI 25); SP 1/74 ff. 170-170v (LP VI 172); SP 2/O f. 34 (LP VI 841). Much of the money Cromwell sent to Winter was financed through Cromwell's receipt of the profits from Winter's benefice of Beverley on his behalf.

²¹ TNA, PRO, E30/1458 (LP IV, iii, 6017).

²² Cavendish, *Life of Wolsey*, pp. 123-124. As early as 27 October 1529 the French ambassador reported that he thought it possible Wolsey might regain his authority. Chapuys similarly reported the duke of Norfolk feared Wolsey's revival in February 1530. See LP IV, iii, 6030; CSP, *Spanish*, IV, i, 257.

²³ TNA, PRO, C82/624 (LP IV, iii, 6213 [1]); TNA, PRO, E24/23/32 (LP IV, iii, 6213 [2]).

²⁴ CSP, *Spanish*, IV, i, 194; Cavendish, *Life of Wolsey*, pp. 102, 111, 120-121.



Figure 5: Thomas Cromwell's Coat of Arms

College of Arms, 2 G.4, 35v

The Cornish Choughs had previously been part of Wolsey's Coat of Arms.

open the possibility of using the Cardinal in his quest for a divorce.²⁵ Cromwell probably calculated that it might not be worth his while to sever links with Wolsey in 1529. It was a decision which unexpectedly presented him with the opportunity to begin his own career under the king.

Three of the earliest commentators on Cromwell's entry into the king's service all placed great significance on a momentous first meeting between Henry VIII and his future minister. Eustace Chapuys, writing in 1535, reported how, following the Cardinal's fall, Cromwell had been threatened by Sir John Wallop, and in an attempt to secure protection, procured an audience with the king, whom he

addressed in such flattering terms and eloquent language—promising to make him the richest King in the world—that the King at once took him into his service, and made him councillor, though his appointment was kept secret for more than four months.²⁶

A similar account was given by Reginald Pole in his *Apologia ad Carolum Quintum*, written in 1539.²⁷ According to Pole's account, Cromwell was the 'messenger of Satan' and disciple of Machiavelli, who approached the king and suggested a break with Rome as the resolution to Henry's 'great matter'.²⁸ The martyrologist John Foxe, writing several decades later, also described a meeting between the two men, whereby Cromwell made

²⁵ P. Gwyn, *The King's Cardinal: The Rise and Fall of Thomas Wolsey* (London, 1990), pp. 616-617.

²⁶ *CSP, Spanish*, V, i, 228.

²⁷ The *Apologia Reginaldi Poli ad Carolum V. Caesarem super quatuor Libris a se scriptis de Unitate Ecclesiae*, to give it its full title, was the first of three prefaces, all written for Pole's treatise *In Defence of the Unity of the Church (Pro Ecclesiasticae Unitatis Defensione)*. No English translation of the *Apologia* exists. Merriman has printed extracts of it (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 18-19), but here P. Van Dyke's detailed treatment of it has been relied upon, along with the summarised version in *LP*. See P. Van Dyke, 'Reginald Pole and Thomas Cromwell: An Examination of the *Apologia Ad Carolum Quintum*', *American Historical Review*, 4 (1904), pp. 696-724; *LP* XIV, i, 200 (esp. p. 82).

²⁸ *LP* XIV, i, 200 (p. 82); Van Dyke, 'Reginald Pole and Thomas Cromwell', p. 706.

manifest vnto his highness, how his princely authoritie was abused within his owne realme, by the Pope and hys Clergie, who beyng sworne vnto hym, were afterward dispensed from the same, and sworne a new vnto the Pope, so that he was but halfe a king, & they but halfe his subiectes.

Cromwell also added, according to Foxe, that Henry might ‘accumulate to him selfe great riches’, if he followed his advice and asserted his authority over his clergy.²⁹ Despite their general similarities, there is reason to doubt the veracity of these accounts as reliable sources on the beginning of Cromwell’s royal career. Modern historians have convincingly demonstrated that Cromwell was not the man responsible for the ‘intellectual origins’ of the break with Rome, and that Henry VIII was already aware of the possibility of using an Anglo-papal schism to settle his divorce.³⁰ This virtually extinguishes the possibility that there was one significant meeting between Henry and Cromwell during which Cromwell presented a plan that would lead to schism and royal supremacy. There are also problems with the accounts themselves. By his own admission, Pole was not present at the meeting he referred to, having heard of it later via someone else.³¹ Chapuys must also have heard his account second hand, as it is unlikely he would have been present in a private meeting between Cromwell and the king. Neither, of course, could Foxe have been. Nevertheless, the fact that three independent accounts exist, all of which are broadly similar, does suggest that there was a contemporary belief that it was Cromwell’s contact with the king which had enabled him to secure royal favour.

²⁹ Foxe, *Acts and Monuments* (1570 edn.), p. 1348. It is interesting to note that the first edition of *Acts and Monuments*, published in 1563, did not report this story. Instead, in his earliest version Foxe alleges it was Wolsey who facilitated Cromwell’s entry into the king’s service: ‘he was commended by the Cardinall vnto the kyng, and after that, he was translated into his court, by and by he was set to beare office’. See and compare with Foxe, *Acts and Monuments* (1563 edn.), p. 596.

³⁰ J. Guy, ‘Thomas Cromwell and the Intellectual Origins of the Henrician Reformation’, in J. Guy, ed., *The Tudor Monarchy* (London, 1997), pp. 213-233; Bernard, *King’s Reformation*, pp. 30-43.

³¹ *LP* XIV, i, 200 (p. 82); Van Dyke, ‘Reginald Pole and Thomas Cromwell’, p. 708.

Elton, writing in the 1950s, was rightly dismissive of these sources as reliable accounts of Cromwell's entry into the royal service.³² Instead, he offered a far more plausible alternative for the beginnings of Cromwell's career under Henry, well supported by Cavendish and evidence in the State Papers. Elton demonstrated that there was not one single meeting between the two men, but rather a series of meetings, which enabled Cromwell to make a good impression, while he was soliciting Wolsey's affairs.³³ Like earlier commentators before him therefore, Elton's interpretation still hinged considerably on Cromwell's contact and proximity to the king. But while Elton was correct to conclude that access to the king was an integral step in Cromwell's rise, he overstated the extent of Cromwell's relations with Henry VIII at this time, and failed to sufficiently acknowledge Cromwell's dependence on other patrons and contacts at Court. To elucidate this, the chronology of Cromwell's entry into Henry's services needs examining.

Although the accounts of Pole, Chapuys and Foxe offer little by way of dating on when Cromwell became Henry's man, the chronicler Edward Hall recollected that at the time of Wolsey's procession northwards following his disgrace 'diuers of his servauntes departed from him to the kynges seruice, and in especiall Thomas Crumwel one of his chief counsayle'.³⁴ If correct, this would date the transfer to April 1530. Elton, however, argued the transition occurred in January 1530,³⁵ noting a letter sent to Cromwell on 6 February, in which Reynold Lytelprow of Norwich wrote 'I do here that yow be the Kynges sarvand & In hys heye Favor'.³⁶ The editors of *Letters and Papers* had placed this in 1531, but Elton argued that Lytelprow's other remark, 'also I here saye

³² Elton, *Tudor Revolution*, pp. 72-75. He subsequently came to repudiate his earlier position, however, and by 1972 claimed he could identify Cromwell's influence on policy as early as 1530. He therefore felt that, although the accounts of Pole, Chapuys and Foxe were 'a bit garbled', they should not be disregarded. See Elton, *Reform and Reformation*, p. 136 and n. 12.

³³ Elton, *Tudor Revolution*, pp. 75-76.

³⁴ Hall, *Chronicle*, p. 769.

³⁵ Elton, *Tudor Revolution*, p. 83. Most modern historians have accepted this. See Dickens, *Thomas Cromwell*, pp. 34-5; Robertson, 'Thomas Cromwell's Servants', pp. 65-6; Williams, *Cardinal and the Secretary*, p. 155; J. Guy, 'Thomas Wolsey, Thomas Cromwell and the Reform of Henrician Government', in D. MacCulloch, ed., *The Reign of Henry VIII: Politics, Policy and Piety* (Basingstoke, 1995), p. 41.

³⁶ TNA, PRO, SP 1/65 f. 122 (LP V 86).

that my lorde Cardenall ys ded wyche I thynke ys not trewe', meant the letter required re-dating. As Wolsey had died on 29 November 1530, Elton believed two months were an unrealistic time for such news to reach Norwich. He therefore re-assigned the letter to 1530, linking Lytelprow's rumour to Wolsey's illness in January 1530.³⁷

But while such a re-dating does seem correct, it remains unlikely that Cromwell was in Henry's service as early as January 1530. The salient fact is that there is little evidence which attests to any work done for Henry by Cromwell at this time, a point Elton was forced to concede.³⁸ A more reasonable conclusion to draw is that Cromwell's initial encounter with the king had occurred around this time, while he solicited Wolsey's affairs, but that he was not yet working for him. This is supported by Cavendish, who recalled how Wolsey had first instructed Cromwell to meet and negotiate with Henry on his behalf at Candlemas (2 February).³⁹ It seems likely, then, that just as Lytelprow's comment on Wolsey's death was based on rumour, so too were his remarks about Cromwell being the king's servant. Cromwell probably first encountered the king around this time, but Lytelprow's remarks that 'yow be the Kynges sarvand & In hys heye favor' are likely to be a sincere misinterpretation of Cromwell's role as Wolsey's 'go-between'.

From Cromwell's correspondence, however, it is clear that he continued to enjoy access to the king while he solicited Wolsey's affairs at Court. On 17 May, for instance, Cromwell warned the Cardinal how 'His Grace [Henry] shewed me how it is come to his knowlege that your Grace should haue certain words of him and other Noblemen vnto my Lord of Norfolk'.⁴⁰ In an undated letter to Wolsey Cromwell referred to 'being in communycacyon' with the

³⁷ Elton, *Tudor Revolution*, p. 83; *LP* IV, iii, 6196.

³⁸ Elton, *Tudor Revolution*, p. 87. A letter to the inhabitants of Ripon on the king's behalf, placed in 1530 in *LP*, was thought by the editors to be written by Cromwell. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/236 f. 305 (*LP* Add I, i, 687). Elton, however, rightly pointed out that this letter was not in Cromwell's hand, and there is no reason to attribute it to him (*Tudor Revolution*, p. 87).

³⁹ 'my lord...so continued still at Assher vntill Candyllmas...Than commaunded he master Cromwell beyng with hym to make sewt to the kynges magestie that he might remove thence to some other place'. See Cavendish, *Life of Wolsey*, pp. 122-123.

⁴⁰ From a letter now lost. See Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 327.

king.⁴¹ On 12 July he also hinted at this by reporting decisions made by the king on the fate of the Cardinal's colleges.⁴² Cavendish also gives the impression of repeated contact during these months.⁴³ Yet, crucially, it was not until mid-1530 that Cromwell began to make an impression upon Henry. On 1 June Sir John Russell reported to Cromwell that 'After your departure from the kyng his grace hadd very good comvnycac[i]on of you'.⁴⁴ Not only does this reveal further contact between Henry and Cromwell, but, significantly, it suggests that it was only now that Cromwell was beginning to attract the king's attention. What is lacking here, however, is an acknowledgement of the role that other patrons played in fostering this.

From the outset of Wolsey's fall Cromwell was far closer to certain figures at Court than Elton allowed. In December 1529, for instance, Wolsey himself was urging Cromwell to work through prominent people to improve his position. He wrote instructing Cromwell how 'Mr Secreta[ry] [ys] to be laburyd [Gardiner] And my lordes of Northfolke and Suffolk [who] knowyth honor and what ys convenyent to be done with the Kynges honor'.⁴⁵ Cromwell was in contact with Sir William Fitzwilliam, treasurer of the household, and Sir Thomas More, the new Lord Chancellor.⁴⁶ He also appears to have made use of his own contacts in order to facilitate the Cardinal's affairs, as well as his own. Letters from Cromwell's servant, Ralph Sadler, reveal that in the initial months following the Cardinal's fall, Cromwell had been in contact with Sir John Gage, vice-chamberlain of the royal household, and continued to remain so.⁴⁷ Sadler wrote to his master at some point before February 1530, informing him how

⁴¹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/236 f. 171 (*LP Add I*, i, 665). Another letter to Cromwell from one James Beck was also placed with this letter to Wolsey, and referred to Beck have spoken with Cromwell 'in the kings chamber'. See SP 1/236 f. 173 (*LP Add I*, i, 666). The subject of the letter very much suggests it was written in 1531 or 1532, when Cromwell was engaged on matters of state.

⁴² From a letter now lost. See Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 327.

⁴³ Cavendish, *Life of Wolsey*, pp. 123-126.

⁴⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 1/57 f. 139 (*LP IV*, iii, 6420).

⁴⁵ BL, Cotton MS, Appendix L f. 30 (*St. P. I.*, p. 352; *LP IV*, iii, 6098).

⁴⁶ BL, Cotton MS, Appendix L f. 18 (*St. P. I.*, p. 350; *LP IV*, iii, 6263); BL, Cotton MS, Appendix L f. 25 (*St. P. I.*, p. 354; *LP IV*, iii, 6204).

⁴⁷ For a summary of Gage's career see, D. Potter, 'Sir John Gage, Tudor Courtier and Soldier (1479-1556)', *EHR*, 117 (2002), pp. 1109-1147.

I repaired vnto the courte And there according to your commaundement resorted to master viz chamberleyn desiring to knowe of him suche newes as he had concerning my lorde his affayres who answered me that of trewth he knew nothing more then he dyd at your last being with him.⁴⁸

This contact and dealing with Gage in 1529-1530 was possible thanks to an existing friendship between him and Cromwell, which was evidently a fruitful one.⁴⁹ In April 1530 Gage wrote to inform Cromwell on 'shoche sayengeys as I have harde of the maner of my lord cardenallys departheyng towardeys the northe'. He warned Cromwell 'ytt hathe byn reportheydde in the corthe that he [Wolsey] rodde in...somteuss fascheone', and Gage advised that Wolsey exercise caution.⁵⁰ His final remarks to Cromwell – 'I truste to see you here thys ester holy days' – also suggests continuing contact.

Yet Gage did not merely help Cromwell with the Cardinal's affairs. Cromwell also used this contact to strengthen his own position in 1529. It will be recalled that Cromwell endeavoured to re-enter parliament following Wolsey's fall. To do this he relied heavily on the support and friendship of Gage and others. A letter from Sadler to Cromwell on 1 November 1529 illustrates how Cromwell intended to obtain a seat.⁵¹ Sadler reported that he had spoken

⁴⁸ BL, Cotton MS, Titus B I f. 375 (LP IV, iii, 6112). The letter is undated but must have been sent before February 1530 as it was addressed to Cromwell at the Cardinal's house at 'Asshire'.

⁴⁹ The earliest evidence of any dateable contact between them can be found in Cromwell's account book. This lists an obligation owing to Cromwell from Gage and his eldest son Edward for one hundred marks, dated the 25 October 1528. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/53 f. 39 (LP IV, iii, 5330). Cromwell had also purchased lands from Gage on 6 July 1529. TNA, PRO, SP 2/J ff. 159-169 (LP IV, iii, 6336 [i]). That Gage and Cromwell shared a genuine, and probably long-standing friendship, can be further seen in remarks made by Sir William Fitzwilliam to Cromwell, following Gage's dismissal from Court, in August 1533. Fitzwilliam beseeched Cromwell 'to remember and and [sic] consider the *olde fryndeship* that hath been between the said master vicechamberlayn and you', and asked that Cromwell help reconcile Gage with the king. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/78 f. 104 (LP VI 965). (My italics for emphasis.) An undated letter from Gage to Cromwell, in which Gage revealed he had left certain fabrics 'att your [Cromwell's] howsse', to be made into vestments, and that Gage had sent his second son James to Cromwell, 'prayng you that...you have recevyed the mony you porpossyd to do to dylyvere L markes of the sam to hym for sart[eyn] bysyness I hate appoyntyd hym to do', also hints at a far greater familiarity between the two men. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/65 f. 51 (LP V 36). This letter was placed in January 1531 by LP, but probably dates to the mid-to-late 1520s, when Cromwell was more active on mercantile matters.

⁵⁰ TNA, PRO, SP 1/57 f. 67 (LP IV, iii, 6335).

⁵¹ BL, Cotton MS, Cleopatra E IV f. 211-211v (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 67-68; LP IV, iii, App. 238).

‘with Master Gage and according to your comaundement moved him to speke vnto my lorde of Norffolk for the burgeses Rowme of the parlyament on your behalf. Gage had done this ‘lyke a faythfull Frende’, and Norfolk spoke with the king, before reporting that ‘his highness was veray ~~wold~~ well contented ye [Cromwell] should be a Burges’. Royal approval was therefore sought, but neither the king nor Norfolk provided a seat. Having received subsequent instructions, Sadler then spoke with Thomas Rush, one of Cromwell’s friends, to see whether Cromwell might sit for the borough of Orford,⁵² assuring Cromwell that if he failed to secure this seat, he would speak with Wolsey’s former man, William Paulet, and ‘requiere him to name you...one of the Burgeses of one of my lordes townes of his busshopriche of wynchester’. Evidently it was through this connection that Cromwell finally secured his seat: he sat for the borough of Taunton in 1529, a possession of the see of Winchester. It is Cromwell and Sadler’s actions, however, which are of greater interest. Cromwell was not only relying on his friendship with Gage in order to facilitate his affairs, but with Rush and Paulet also.⁵³ Of more significance is Cromwell’s dependence on the duke of Norfolk. He was content to speak favourably to Henry on Cromwell’s behalf and, not only was the king’s approval obtained, it was also instructed that Cromwell should follow Norfolk’s direction once in parliament: ‘order your self in the saide Rowme according to suche instructions as the saide Duke of Norff[olk] shall gyue you from the king’.⁵⁴

Elton, when discussing these events, was quick to play down Cromwell’s reliance on Norfolk. He presented Cromwell’s entry in parliament as the product of his own ambition and ability: ‘while the king’s approval was sought for Cromwell’s entry into parliament, neither the king nor Norfolk had anything to do with the provision of a seat’. Cromwell was ‘determined to enter

⁵² Merriman and *LP* both mistakenly transcribed this burgess as being Oxford. Examination of the original manuscript confirms Elton was correct to note it is in fact Orford in Suffolk.

⁵³ Both these men, like Cromwell, had worked for Wolsey, which explains his acquaintance and access to them.

⁵⁴ BL, Cotton MS, Cleopatra E IV f. 211 (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 67-68; *LP* IV, iii, App. 238).

parliament whether or not the king proved gracious'.⁵⁵ But while it does seem that neither Norfolk or Henry were expected to provide a seat, Sadler's letter makes it clear royal approval was requested *before* Cromwell made significant preparation to obtain one. Sadler's letter suggests that Cromwell sent him to move Gage and Norfolk first, and then sent further instructions later: 'a litle *before* the receipte of your letter...I spake with Mr Gage and according to your comaundment...'.⁵⁶ True, Sadler's letter reveals he spoke with Rush while at Court, but it is by no means clear if they discussed provision for a seat. On the contrary, Sadler's remarks that 'if I then had knowen your pleasure I could now haue sent you answere of the same', suggests Cromwell's subsequent letter containing further information was sent after Sadler's visit. Sadler's other comment, 'I will then according to your ferther commaundment' speak with Paulet, also confirms that the idea of approaching Paulet was a subsequent instruction.⁵⁷ Cromwell was determined to ensure he had royal approval first, before procuring a seat; he used his proximity to Gage and the support of Norfolk to obtain this.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Elton, *Tudor Revolution*, pp. 78, 79. A. J. Slavin, in his biography of Ralph Sadler, concurred entirely with Elton on the details of this episode. See A. J. Slavin, *Politics and Profit: A Study of Sir Ralph Sadler* (Cambridge, 1966), pp. 18-21.

⁵⁶ BL, Cotton MS, Cleopatra E IV f. 211 (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 67-68; *LP* IV, iii, App. 238).

⁵⁷ That Sadler was instructed to speak with Paulet is interesting. Elton thought in obtaining his seat for Taunton, Cromwell somewhat reluctantly had to fall back on his Wolsey connection (*Tudor Revolution*, p. 79). In fact, Cromwell may have obtained this with more independence than Elton realised. In 1528 Wolsey had made Cromwell steward of the manor of Tottenham, Middlesex, which came with a fee of £6 13s 4d, following the death of the previous steward, Sir William Compton. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/236 f. 17 (*LP* Add I, i, 614). The records of that manor show that Cromwell presided over five courts held during his stewardship, before being replaced as steward by William Paulet in 1530. See F. H. Fenton, *Court Rolls of the Manor of Tottenham, 2 Henry VIII to 22 Henry VIII* (London, 1960), pp. 225-242. Intriguingly, there is an undated letter to Cromwell from Paulet requesting that they might both 'Ride...to Tottenham to se the place late master comptons *wiche ye promised me*' (my italics). Did Cromwell offer Paulet the stewardship of Tottenham in return for a seat in parliament? See TNA, PRO, SP 1/73 f. 129 (*LP* V 1754) for Paulet's letter, which was mistakenly placed in 1532 by the editors of *LP*.

⁵⁸ A letter dated 27 November from Thomas Shell to Cromwell, in which he remarked that 'you be in fauour hilie with the kynges grace lords and the commumyaltie aswell spirituall as temporall' was placed in 1531 in *LP*, with a note from the editors that it might be of 1530. Elton concurred that it was probably of 1530 (*Tudor Revolution*, p. 88). However, the reference to parliament, which did not meet at all in 1530, and Shell's comment that 'you wer in grete trouble for my lorde cardynalles causez and matters', make little sense in either 1531 or 1530. It is highly probable then, that this letter was sent in November 1529, shortly after Cromwell had secured his seat. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/68 f. 58 (*LP* V 551).

That Cromwell relied on Norfolk's favour for both Wolsey's affairs, and his own survival, can be more widely supported. Cromwell's position as Wolsey's 'go-between' necessitated contact with Norfolk, who, following Wolsey's disgrace, had become Henry's chief councillor.⁵⁹ Wolsey himself had urged Cromwell to speak with Norfolk,⁶⁰ and the Cardinal's remarks that he had not received Cromwell's letter informing him 'of the coming hyther of the duke of Norfolke', suggests Cromwell had enough access to the duke to know of his movements and intent.⁶¹ William Capon revealed that Cromwell had informed him 'how the duke of Norfolke shulde send to me a wrytyng to be sealed', which hints that the two men had met.⁶² Cavendish also reported frequent contact, recollecting how Cromwell had 'dayly accesse' to Norfolk during these months.⁶³ When the duke visited Wolsey at Esher, Wolsey thanked him 'for your noble hart & gentill nature whiche ye haue shewed me behynd my bakke / as my seruaunt Thomas Cromwell hathe made report vnto me'.⁶⁴ That Cromwell relied on Norfolk's favour, or, at the very least, his indifference, in order to survive at Court is understandable. Indeed, it is hard to see how he could have operated at Court, or have entered Henry VIII's services, had Norfolk been hostile to him at this point.

Yet Cromwell's proximity to Wolsey also meant he himself became a useful man for courtiers to know. In his attempts to secure a favourable pardon, Wolsey bestowed fees and rewards on those he thought capable of helping him. Following advice from Cromwell and Gardiner, Wolsey informed Cromwell how he had instructed Gardiner to enlarge the fees he had granted to Henry Norris, Sir John Russell, William lord Sandys and Sir Henry Guildford. Wolsey added that he would make these bequests 'with all myn herte And more as ye shul thynke expedyent', suggesting that Cromwell's advice was something the Cardinal was prepared to follow.⁶⁵ Small wonder, then, that

⁵⁹ *LP IV*, iii, 6019.

⁶⁰ BL, Cotton MS, Appendix L. f. 30 (*St. P. I.*, p. 352; *LP IV*, iii, 6098).

⁶¹ BL, Cotton MS, Vespasian F XIII f. 147 (*St. P. I.*, p. 349; *LP IV*, iii, 6080).

⁶² TNA, PRO, SP 1/56 f. 86 (*LP IV*, iii, 6055).

⁶³ Cavendish, *Life of Wolsey*, p. 124.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

⁶⁵ BL, Cotton MS, Appendix L f. 29 (*St. P. I.*, p. 355; *LP IV*, iii, 6226).

when the king began to distribute fees and rewards from the Cardinal's former lands of Winchester and St Albans, Cromwell was the man whom many approached to help secure requisite patents.⁶⁶ Why were patents required from Wolsey to grant annuities and fees from possessions already forfeited to the Crown? As Cavendish recollected, those who had been granted these rewards by the king feared that their patents 'cowld not be good but during my lords lyfe / for as myche as the kyng had no lenger estate or title therin / whiche came to hyme be reason of my lords attendure in the premunire'.⁶⁷ To bring this about 'there was non other mean but to make sewte to master Cromwell to atteyn ther confirmacion / at my lords hands / whome they thought myght best / opteyn the same'.⁶⁸

That Cavendish was correct to ascribe Cromwell a prominent role in securing these patents is evident from a number of letters sent to Cromwell over the summer of 1530. Writing from Winchester, probably in early July, William Paulet reminded Cromwell to 'haue in your remembraunce my lord of Norf[olk]es patent & my lord of Rochefordes patent master controllers [Sir Henry Guildford] & oders'.⁶⁹ On 17 July Paulet received a box from Cromwell containing patents for Rochford, Guildford and Norris, but added he had yet to receive the duke of Norfolk's patent and Sir William Fitzwilliam's.⁷⁰ Of equal note are the letters sent to Cromwell from Sir John Russell and the Lord Chamberlain, William Lord Sandys. Russell wrote to Cromwell on 1 June informing him how the king had decided to grant Sandys one hundred marks p.a. out of the lordship of Farnham. Russell told Cromwell that Sandys had requested that Cromwell 'make hym owt a pattent of the same',⁷¹ and Cromwell

⁶⁶ Wolsey's goods and temporal possessions were forfeited to the Crown on 22 October 1529 through his acknowledgement of praemunire. See TNA, PRO, E30/1458 (*LP IV*, iii, 6017). Under the terms of the pardon finally granted in February 1530, Wolsey was allowed to keep the archbishopric of York, and was given a pension of £6, 374 3s 7½d p.a., but had to formally surrender the spiritualities and possessions of the lucrative see of Winchester and the abbey of St Albans. See *LP IV*, iii, 6220.

⁶⁷ Cavendish, *Life of Wolsey*, p. 125.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 125.

⁶⁹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/236 f. 319 (*LP Add I*, i, 693).

⁷⁰ TNA, PRO, SP 1/236 f. 320 (*LP Add I*, i, 694).

⁷¹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/57 f. 139 (*LP IV*, iii, 6420). Elton mistakenly believed that the king himself had instructed Russell to write to Cromwell requesting that he make out the patent, and he saw

carried this out with characteristic efficiency.⁷² Four days later Russell wrote again revealing that ‘you haue sent hym all suche thinges as I wrott vnto you for’.⁷³ Not only had Cromwell handled this matter speedily, but Russell’s remarks following his further request, that Cromwell write to Wolsey on Sandys behalf, are also interesting. In doing this, he remarked, Cromwell would not only do Russell great pleasure, but he would ‘also bynd hym [Sandys] to be yours to the best of his power’. Sandys himself also returned his engrossed patent to Cromwell on 4 June so that Cromwell could send it to Wolsey to be signed.⁷⁴ In doing this, Sandys added, ‘you shall mynister vnto me singular pleasur...I woll not faile to endeavour my self [to you] at all tymes hereafter to the best of my power’. In carrying out such requests Cromwell was gaining some useful friends.

Devising and obtaining these patents occupied Cromwell from at least June to September 1530.⁷⁵ According to Cavendish, who was well placed to witness all of this, it was the goodwill and friendship Cromwell received from handling these patents which facilitated Cromwell’s transition into the royal service:

For his paynnes therin susteyned / they promysed euery man not oonly worthily to reward hym but also to shewe hym suche pleasures as shold at all tymes lye in ther seuerall powers...in processe of tyme he served all ther tornes so that they had ther purposes / And he ther good wylls / thus roose hys

this as further proof that the two were growing close (*Tudor Revolution*, p. 85). It is clear from the wording that it was Sandys who had asked Russell to do this, not the king: ‘Syr yt hath pleasyd the Kyng to gyve my lord chamberlayne a hundred markes by the yere owt of the lordship off Fernham...And he knowing greate famylyaryte and also you my speciall Frende/ desyryd me to wryte vnto you/ that yt wold please you to make hym owt a pattent of the same/ he to be keper of the castell ther...And also he desyryd you to sendes hym the Forme of a letter how the kyng shuld wryte to my lord cardenall for his consent...& for his signe and seale praying you that you wold send yt to my Lorde Chamberlayne as shortly as you can’. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/57 f. 139 (LP IV, iii, 6420).

⁷² Two drafts of this grant from Wolsey to Sandys have survived, one of which is complete, TNA, PRO, SP 1/57 f. 162-162v (LP IV, iii, 6460 [2]), the second is only the latter part of the grant, SP 1/57 f. 164 (LP IV, iii, 6460 [3]).

⁷³ TNA, PRO, SP 1/57 f. 148 (LP IV, iii, 6432).

⁷⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 1/57 f. 150 (LP IV, iii, 6435). See also SP 1/57 f. 160 (LP IV, iii, 6460 [1]).

⁷⁵ Paulet also wrote on the matter as late as September having finally sent Cromwell Henry Norris’s sealed patent along with another for a master Chomely. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/236 f. 326 (LP Add, I, i, 697).

name & frendly acceptaunce with all men / the fame of his honestie & wisdomed sounded so in the kynges eares that by reason of his accesse to the kyng he perceyved to be in hyme no lesse wysdome than fframe had made of hyme report.⁷⁶

What is striking here is that Cavendish makes it plain that Cromwell's gradual impression on the king depended as much on the favour and goodwill of others as it did on the king himself. His wording suggests that those about the king spoke favourably about Cromwell *before* Henry himself had any significant contact.

The turning point for Cromwell, however, came as a result of the inquests held in the summer of 1530 to establish the king's legal right to Wolsey's college lands. Since the Cardinal's fall there had been uncertainty and concern among Wolsey and his associates over the fate of these institutions.⁷⁷ On 9 November 1529 the dean of Cardinal College, Ipswich, anxiously wrote to Cromwell asking whether he should 'sue to the Kynges grace in the cawses of our collage'.⁷⁸ In late November he ominously informed Cromwell that the king's commissioners had been to Ipswich on 14 November to take an inventory of the college's possessions.⁷⁹ Thomas Rush wrote to Cromwell on 29 December reporting that 'Master Audeley...said to me that he thought the kinges grace wold take all the monasteryes suppressyd by reason of the atteynour of my lord Cardinall...& that his grace laufully might sett all the fermes belongyng to the said monasteries at his pleaur'.⁸⁰ Uncertainty persisted, however, throughout the early months of 1530.⁸¹ Firm decisions were not made until late June or early

⁷⁶ Cavendish, *Life of Wolsey*, pp. 125, 126.

⁷⁷ Wolsey himself remained highly active on the fate of his colleges following his fall, writing to many influential figures in an attempt to gain their support to protect his foundations. See, for examples, *LP IV*, iii, 6555, 6575, 6576, 6577.

⁷⁸ TNA, PRO, SP 1/56 f. 86 (*LP IV*, iii, 6055).

⁷⁹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/56 f. 88 (Ellis, 2nd Series, ii. 231; *LP IV*, iii, 6061).

⁸⁰ TNA, PRO, SP 1/56 f. 124 (*LP IV*, iii, 6110).

⁸¹ William Tresham wrote to Wolsey in May and reported the rumour that Henry would 'take yn iii lordshipes that lyeth nye to ho[n]sdon & recompense ypiswi the owners partly with ypiswiche partly with owr [Oxford] college londes'. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/57 f. 90 (*LP IV*, iii, 6377).

July. William Capon reported to Wolsey on 9 July that he had been to London and retained the best counsel he could find to examine the legal position of the colleges.⁸² These were not favourable. Because of Wolsey's guilt of praemunire all college lands granted by the king 'reverted in to theyr Fyrst nature'.⁸³ On 12 July Cromwell himself told Wolsey that 'touching your Colleges, the King is determined to dissolve them'. His subsequent remarks, however, that 'whether his Highnes, after the dissolution of them meane to revive them againe and founde them in his owne name, I know not', hint that uncertainty remained over precisely what would become of them.⁸⁴

In his letter to Wolsey concerning the colleges Cromwell had also revealed how 'new offices shall be found of all the Lands belonging to them newly to intitle his Highnes which be already drawne for this purpose'.⁸⁵ William Capon similarly reported that 'the Counseill haue made bookes to fynd offices' of all the college premisses.⁸⁶ The finding of offices referred to the inquests needed to establish the king's legal title to these lands. Although the lands reverted to the king on Wolsey's acknowledgement of praemunire, due legal process required the king's right to be established before an escheator. An inquest or 'office' was therefore required in each of the counties in which Wolsey possessed lands which fell to the king. As Sir William Weston, prior of the hospital of St John of Jerusalem, noted on 12 July, once the king had made the decision to take possession of the Cardinal's colleges, Cromwell himself was the obvious choice for the king to turn to for advice and information on them. Weston wrote to Cromwell

I vnderstonde commyssioners shalbe assigned to sett and Inquyre of all suche londes as be appropriate and annexed to senct Friswides Colledge in Oxforde and by cause no man knoweth the perfect truyth how euery thing is past

⁸² TNA, PRO, SP 1/57 ff. 227-227v (LP IV, iii, 6510).

⁸³ TNA, PRO, SP 1/57 f. 227 (LP IV, iii, 6510). On 22 August John Higdon, dean at Cardinal College Oxford, and Robert Carter, also wrote to Wolsey reporting very similar opinions on the legal position of Wolsey's Oxford establishment. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/57 ff. 276-277 (LP IV, iii, 6579).

⁸⁴ In a letter now lost. See Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 327.

⁸⁵ In a letter now lost. See Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 327.

⁸⁶ TNA, PRO, SP 1/57 f. 227 (LP IV, iii, 6510).

therein so well as ye doo the king hath put his faithfull trust and confidence in yow that euery thing may appere according to right and the true meanyng.⁸⁷

Cromwell's first royal task was therefore connected with the Crown's attempts to expropriate Wolsey's collegiate foundations, although evidence relating to his involvement in this is thin. Weston's letter itself alludes to it. So too does a letter from Thomas Donnington thanking Cromwell for ensuring the prebend of Wetwang, formerly part of the Oxford college's landed endowments, might be reunited to the church of York.⁸⁸ Crucially, Philip Ward also identified that the names of commissioners listed on two draft bills partially written by Cromwell, which recorded the receipt of 'comysions letters and indentures' from the king's attorney-general to them,⁸⁹ were the very same men listed on the patent rolls as the commissioners for the inquests into Wolsey's lands.⁹⁰ The commissions, letters and indentures they received were surely those authorising them to hold inquests into these lands. In case there remains any doubt, however, Cavendish confirms that Cromwell's first task as a royal servant was connected with the attempts to expropriate these lands. He recalled how during Wolsey's disgrace 'master Cromwell executed his office the whiche he had ouer the londes of the colleges so lustly and exactly that he was had in great estimacion'. He also emphasised Cromwell's 'great occasion of accesse to the kyng for the disposicion of dyuers londes wherof he had the order & gouernaunce / by means wherof and by his witty demeanor / he grewe continually in to the kynges favor'.⁹¹ It was Cromwell's competent handling of the arrangements for these lands, then, which convinced the king that his

⁸⁷ TNA, PRO, SP 1/66 f. 158 (*LP* V 335). Incorrectly dated to 1531 in *LP*, it clearly belongs to 1530.

⁸⁸ TNA, PRO, SP 1/57 f. 265 (*LP* IV, iii, 6556).

⁸⁹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/58 ff. 19-20 (*LP* IV, iii, 6598 [1 & 2]).

⁹⁰ Ward, 'Thomas Cromwell's Public Career' p. 230; TNA, PRO, C66/656 mm 8d, 9d (*LP* IV, iii, 6516 [1]). A letter from John Plandon, former clerk of the lands of the college at Oxford, also suggest that Cromwell continued to be involved with the fate of the colleges as late as October 1530. Plandon beseeched Cromwell 'to haue me in remembrance of the matter that I did sue vnto your maistership as concernyng thoffice of clerk of the landes of my lord Cardinalles coledge in Ipwich' (TNA, PRO, SP 1/58 f. 124; *LP* IV, iii, 6698). While this letter in no way connects Cromwell to the attempts by the Crown to confiscate Wolsey's lands, Plandon's remarks suggest that Cromwell was still seen as a man to approach on college matters, which also implies he was still involved in their affairs in October 1530.

⁹¹ Cavendish, *Life of Wolsey*, pp. 125, 126.

courtiers and councillors who had spoken favourable of him had been correct in their assessment. 'His Majesty perceived that there was in him no less wisdom than fame had reported of him, forasmuch as he had the government and receipt of those lands'.⁹²

Although Cromwell continued to act on Wolsey's behalf until the Cardinal's death on 29 November 1530,⁹³ work for the Crown evidently continued. At some point in November 1530 Cromwell began a correspondence with Stephen Vaughan in an attempt to secure William Tyndale's pen for the royal cause.⁹⁴ On 30 December Cromwell received from the privy purse £13 6s 8d, which he paid to a Florentine sculptor on 7 January 1531, for work done on the king's tomb.⁹⁵ Finally, a letter from a priest, dated 10 January 1531, in which Cromwell was addressed as one 'of the kinges...Counsail', reveals he had become a member of that body, probably in December 1530.⁹⁶ Similar appellations continued throughout early 1531 and beyond.⁹⁷ Thomas Cromwell was now a royal minister.

Cromwell's entry into the king's service had been unintended, but became possible thanks to his undoubted talents, which attracted the king's attention as he solicited Wolsey's affairs. Yet although the contact between the king and his future minister during these months was important, Cromwell also relied considerably on other figures during these crucial months, notably Gage, Norfolk, Russell, Sandys, Paulet and Rush. A focus on king and minister can lead to a rather one-dimensional interpretation of Cromwell's rise, which fails to acknowledge the role that friends, acquaintances and patronage played

⁹² Cavendish, *Life of Wolsey*, p. 126.

⁹³ See, for example, TNA, PRO, SP 1/57 ff. 270-273 (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 331-334; *St. P. I.*, p. 365; *LP IV*, iii, 6571); BL, Cotton MS, Appendix L f. 81 (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 334-335; *LP IV*, iii, 6699); and Cromwell's role in defending Wolsey against the accusations of the Cardinal's former comptroller, Thomas Strangeways, regarding a dispute over the wardship of George Bowes. On this see *LP IV*, iii, 6582, 6583, 6584, 6585, 6586, 6587, 6588.

⁹⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 1/58 f. 147 (*St. P. VII.*, p. 268; *LP IV*, iii, 6744); SP 1/58 f. 173 (*LP IV*, iii, 6754). This episode is discussed in the next chapter.

⁹⁵ N. H. Nicolas, *The Privy Purse Expenses of Henry the Eighth, 1529-1532* (London, 1827), p. 101; TNA, PRO, SP 1/65 f. 47 (*LP V* 32); *LP V* p. 753.

⁹⁶ TNA, PRO, SP 1/65 f. 58v (*LP V* 38).

⁹⁷ TNA, PRO, SP 1/68 f. 181v (*LP V* 168); SP 1/65 f. 187v (*LP V* 181); SP 1/65 f. 201v (*LP V* 196).

in Cromwell's advancement. By elucidating these relationships, a fuller, more rounded picture emerges, which places Cromwell's contact with Henry in a more multi-dimensional light. Cromwell clearly enjoyed some access to the king as he worked on Wolsey's affairs, and later Henry's own. But this was still fairly limited. Cromwell had made an impression, enough to successfully enter the king's service, but the paucity of evidence attesting to Cromwell's work for Henry during the final months of 1530 suggests that Cromwell's proximity to him was still not especially great. This would remain the case during the early months of 1531.

Chapter Three

The Crown Lands and King's Works

One of the earliest responsibilities which occupied Cromwell as a royal minister was the management of various Crown lands and building projects. Yet despite demonstrably taking up much of Cromwell's time, this has attracted remarkably little attention. Elton went no further than noting that during 1531 and 1532 Cromwell received grants of lands on behalf of the king and managed the works at Westminster and the Tower of London.¹ J. D. Alsop, after discovering an uncalendared document bearing Cromwell's hand relating to an exchange between the Crown and Waltham Abbey, was far more concerned with its implications for Cromwell's part in the development of the royal supremacy.²

Alsop's attitude is unsurprising. During Cromwell's early years under the king, historians have invariably concentrated on his role in events surrounding the break with Rome. Yet a narrow focus purely on Cromwell's involvement with Henry VIII's 'great matter' places excessive weight on this when explaining his rise, while neglecting the other numerous tasks he was undertaking during these years. The lack of consideration into Cromwell's responsibilities for various Crown lands is particularly surprising. Not only was Cromwell consistently occupied with these during the years of his ascendancy, but, in contrast to the overwhelmingly accepted view of the importance of the royal supremacy, it was Cromwell's management of these which was the greatest *single* contributing factor in explaining his rise. It enabled him to demonstrate the legal and administrative skills he had acquired during his early career; and it helps to explain how Cromwell became one of the Crown's principal financial

¹ Elton, *Tudor Revolution*, pp. 89-90.

² J. D. Alsop, 'Cromwell and the Church in 1531: The Case of Waltham Abbey', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 31 (1980), pp. 327-330. The document can be found in TNA, PRO, E407/8/180/4, among the fragmented rolls of the Exchequer of Receipt miscellanea.

agents. To illustrate just how integral these matters were to the development of his career, however, it is helpful to begin with an analysis of Cromwell's position in 1531.

Cromwell's Position and Influence in 1531: an overview

Although Cromwell had joined the Council during the final weeks of 1530, becoming a council member did not in itself unlock a wealth of new responsibilities. Throughout 1531 there were, of course, new tasks he undertook on behalf of the Crown; some of these, such as receiving and handling petitions, or attending to the Council's judicial matters, did reflect the specific responsibilities of a councillor.³ But there was no sudden eruption of 'government' work for Cromwell on joining this body. The jobs he was engaged with during the early months of 1531 were the same as those he had been doing since entering the king's service. Nor was there a dramatic change in his overall position. He remained a member of the Council, albeit an increasingly important one, but the responsibilities he came to undertake reflected the gradual unfolding and accumulation of work by an industrious royal servant.

For most of 1531 Cromwell was occupied far more often with the private concerns of the Crown, most notably the management of royal lands, than he was with administrative work which affected the governance of the realm. Several details cited in support of an early date for Cromwell's prominent role in national government have been misinterpreted. I. D. Thornley suggested that Cromwell helped draft an early version of the treason legislation finally passed in 1534.⁴ The draft contained certain clauses for enactment in March 1531, and was probably prepared during the initial weeks of that year.⁵ Examination of the draft confirms Elton was correct to argue the handwriting on it is not Cromwell's, but that of Thomas Audeley.⁶ Similarly a letter from William

³ TNA, PRO, SP 1/66 f. 171 (*LP V* 360); SP 1/68 f. 37 (*LP V* 507); SP 1/68 f. 56 (*LP V* 543); SP 1/68 f. 135 (*LP V* 650); SP 1/68 f. 140 (*LP V* 655).

⁴ I. D. Thornley, 'The Treason Legislation of Henry VIII (1531-1534)', *TRHS*, 3rd Series, 11 (1917), pp. 87-123. The act finally passed in 1534 is *Statutes of the Realm*, iii, 26. Hen. VIII. c. 13.

⁵ TNA, PRO, SP 1/65 ff. 82-86 (*LP V* 52 [1]).

⁶ Elton, *Tudor Revolution*, p. 95; Elton, *Policy and Police*, p. 265, n. 2.

Stockill to Cromwell, dated 29 March, and placed in 1531 by the editors of *Letters and Papers*, also has the appearance of 'official' work. Stockill wrote informing Cromwell that he had 'sene the ship' which 'ys fare owt of redynes', lacking a sail, mast and part of its tackling.⁷ Although this letter shows that Cromwell was clearly in a position of some authority, it can securely be dated to 1528: it relates to Cromwell's work for Wolsey.⁸ A petition from the mayor and corporation of Salisbury to Cromwell requesting fresh gaol deliveries has also been placed in 1531.⁹ This was dated 6 April, and taken by Elton as an early example of Cromwell conducting official business on behalf of the Crown.¹⁰ There is no reason, however, that it must be of 1531. It may well be of a later date, and cannot be taken as convincing proof of Cromwell's work at that time.

The 'cawsse of the Vexacion of Roger Dycker prysoner' reported a rumour that in 1531 'Abovthe the Fest off Sayntt John the Baptyste [25 June]...one Mr Cromwell pennyd sertayn matters in the parllmentte howse the whiche no man agayn sayd'.¹¹ For Elton this was proof that Cromwell was 'already a recognised leader and promoter of government policy'.¹² Yet the petition is perplexing. Parliament was prorogued at the end of March and did not reconvene until January 1532.¹³ The 'Vexacion' was most likely written well after the events it concerned itself with, and the remark about Cromwell a contorted chronological recollection of his 'official' work from the third session in 1532. There is simply no evidence of Cromwell acting as parliamentary draughtsman for the king before late 1531, at which time his hand can be found

⁷ TNA, PRO, SP 1/65 f. 175 (*LP V* 160).

⁸ Stockill's letter was 'wretyn in the newecastell the 29 day of march'. It can be re-dated because of a letter from Richard Bellyssis, who had written to Cromwell on an unrelated matter on 25 April 1528. He informed Cromwell that 'my lordes grace schip of Tynmouth is sett Forwarde and haith bene verely costly as I trust ye schall know be Stokall more att length'. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/47 f. 222 (*LP IV*, ii, 4201). The preparation of this ship was also referred to in a set of instructions 'deuysed by my lorde legate his grace for Doctour Strangwysshe Surueyour of Duresme and Richard Bellysis Esquier and to be executed by them within his Busshopriche of Duresme'. Among the instructions was one that 'my lorde his ship of Tynmouth may with all goodly spede be takeled and put in a redynes'. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/52 ff. 18-19 (*LP IV*, ii, 5111 [3]). Quotations on f. 18 and 18a respectively.

⁹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/65 f. 189 (*LP V* 182).

¹⁰ Elton, *Tudor Revolution*, p. 89.

¹¹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/68 f. 109 (*LP V* 628).

¹² Elton, *Tudor Revolution*, pp. 90-91.

¹³ Lehmborg, *Reformation Parliament*, pp. 130-131.

on a treason draft with enactments prepared for February 1532.¹⁴ When seeking approval for a seat in 1529 it will be recalled that Cromwell had been instructed to work under Norfolk's direction in parliament.¹⁵ This situation had probably not altered by the closing of the second session in early 1531. Cromwell was surely active in parliament then, but supporting, rather than drafting, government bills, and lobbying and cajoling on behalf of the Crown.

Cromwell's administrative responsibilities did not broaden until September 1531. It will be argued below that this was the result of the skills he exhibited over the Crown lands, which naturally led to the accumulation of wider jobs of similar nature, rather than a deliberate intention on Cromwell's part. Financial matters, aside from those discussed below, were limited during this year.¹⁶ The editors of *Letters and Papers* did place letters to Cromwell indicating his oversight of the surveying and collecting of revenues from the lands of the vacant bishopric of Coventry and Lichfield in 1531, but a later chapter reveals these actually belong to 1532.¹⁷ Similarly several undated financial papers annotated by Cromwell were also placed in 1531, but date to later years.¹⁸ In September 1531, however, Cromwell did receive 'Instuitions youen by the kinges highness vnto his trustie Counsailor Thomas Crumwell to be declared...to his lerned counsaill and indelayedlie to be put in execucyon this terme of Saynt Michael'.¹⁹ But these are of greater use as an indicator of the Council's workload rather than Cromwell's. While he certainly handled many instructions himself, several were for 'Master Attourney', and other

¹⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 1/65 ff. 87-90 (*LP V* 52 [2]). This was probably produced in response to royal instructions delivered the previous Michaelmas term. See BL, Cotton MS, Titus B I f. 484 (*St. P. I.*, pp. 380-383; *LP V* 394).

¹⁵ BL, Cotton MS, Cleopatra E IV f. 211 (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 67-68; *LP IV*, iii, App. 238).

¹⁶ TNA, PRO, SP 1/68 f. 53 (*LP V* 538); SP 1/68 f. 123 (*LP V* 639).

¹⁷ TNA, PRO, SP 1/66 ff. 33-33v (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 339-340; *LP V* 277); SP 1/66 f. 155 (*LP V* 332). These matters are discussed in chapter four.

¹⁸ TNA, PRO, SP 1/68 ff. 142-143 (*LP V* 657) is a list of fines owed to the king. It was placed at the end of 1531 in *LP*, but actually dates to sometime after February 1532. One of the fines is for £700 owing from the bishop of Bath, of which £300 is recorded as being 'payed alredie' into the king's coffers. A warrant dated 25 February 1532 records Cromwell's receipt of this sum. See TNA, PRO, E101/421/5 (*LP V* 825). It would also seem reasonable to re-date a 'memoriall', partially in Cromwell's hand, declaring the king's revenues, to at least 1532 when Cromwell was acting in a far greater financial role on the king's behalf. See SP 1/67 ff. 28-33 (*LP V* 397).

¹⁹ BL, Cotton MS, Titus B I ff. 483-484 (*St. P. I.*, p. 380; *LP V* 394).

members surely dealt with some. A letter from Nicholas Carew, master of the horse - if it dates to 1531 - reveals he and Cromwell were authorised to swear commissioners for the sewers in September.²⁰ During the final weeks of 1531 Cromwell also began to play a greater role in the management of parliament.²¹

Cromwell's position at the end of 1531 is neatly illustrated by the observations of the Venetian ambassador. On 10 November, when describing the composition of the King's Council, he included Cromwell seventh in a list of eight councillors, suggesting that by then Cromwell had risen to the Council's 'inner ring'.²² Its leading figures, however, remained Norfolk, Suffolk, Gardiner (as Secretary), and the earl of Wiltshire. The Venetian ambassador saw fit to describe Norfolk in detail. He noted that 'His Majesty makes use of him in all negotiations more than any other person', adding that since Wolsey's death Norfolk's 'authority and supremacy have increased, and every employment devolves to him'.²³ Two letters from John Longland, bishop of Lincoln, are also illuminating. Writing in early January 1532, Longland reported an encounter with a man whom he suspected of misdemeanours.²⁴ The matter was forwarded to the Council, but Longland, despite being in correspondence with Cromwell around this time,²⁵ addressed his letter to 'my lorde of norfolke, And in his absence, to my honourable good lord of Wilteschire'.²⁶ Again, this suggests it was Norfolk whom Longland perceived to be the Council's leading figure. He enclosed his findings and informed the duke 'I shall kepe hym safe...tyll I knowe frome you, other the kyng his plesur or yours'.²⁷

²⁰ TNA, PRO, SP 1/67 f. 83 (LP V 429).

²¹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/68 f. 79 (LP V 571); SP 1/68 f. 83 (LP V 578); SP 1/68 ff. 102-103 (LP V 612); BL, Cotton MS, Titus B I f. 371 (LP V 625); SP 1/68 f. 128 (LP V 644); SP 1/72 f. 164 (LP V 1669). This final reference is a letter from Edward Lee, archbishop of York, asking Cromwell to obtain the king's permission for his absence from parliament. The letter is dated in full by Lee, but the editors of *LP* placed it in 1532, with a note that the year was doubtful. It is quite clearly dated 28 December 1531. Cromwell and parliament are discussed in greater detail in a later chapter.

²² *Calendar of State Papers, Venetian*, IV, 1527-1533, ed. R. Brown, (London, 1871), 694 (p. 297).

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 294-295.

²⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 1/69 f. 12 (LP V 712).

²⁵ TNA, PRO, SP 1/68 f. 108 (LP V 624); SP 1/82 f. 249 (LP VII 322). Incorrectly dated to March 1534 in *LP*. For its re-dating see below p. 93 n. 37.

²⁶ TNA, PRO, SP 1/69 f. 13v (LP V 712).

²⁷ TNA, PRO, SP 1/69 f. 12 (LP V 712). Interestingly, however, it was Cromwell who finally handled the matter. Two days later Longland remarked to Cromwell that his findings 'I wrote and sent vnto my said lord of Norfolke, *whiche wrytinges his lordeshippe sent vnto you by my*

A further indication that Cromwell was not yet a leading figure on the Council is that he still found time to operate in a private business and legal capacity. A number of undated letters showing Cromwell engaged in such matters have been placed in 1531 and later years in *Letters and Papers*. Many of these probably belong to the 1520s.²⁸ Several, however, can be dated to 1531. On 10 January Sir John Barkar, addressing Cromwell as ‘one of the Kinges most gracious Counsaill’, asked for his ‘good helpe and futheraunce’ in a matter of private debt Barkar was bound in concerning Wolsey.²⁹ In March Sir James Worsley asked for Cromwell’s ‘indifferent ayde and aduyce’ concerning a longstanding legal suit surrounding the attempted poisoning of Worsley’s wife in February 1528.³⁰ Many other suitors continued to seek Cromwell’s legal skills

seruaunt’. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/69 f. 15 (*LP V 717*), my italics for emphasis. The duke had received Longland’s letter and, seeing that it concerned a routine judicial matter, decided to delegate it. That Cromwell was specifically chosen seems doubtful. Longland’s initial letter addressed to Norfolk was re-addressed, in other hand, ‘To maister Threesourer Maister Controller and to Maister Cromewell or to any of them’. See SP 1/69 f. 12v (*LP V 712*). Whether Cromwell seized the opportunity to undertake this work ahead of the other two, or whether, more prosaically, he was merely the first of the three whom Longland’s servant encountered, is impossible to deduce and the danger of circular argument evident. The significance is that this episode illustrates that at the beginning of 1532 Cromwell, along with Sir William Fitzwilliam (Treasurer of the Household) and Sir Henry Guildford (Master of the Household), was seen as one of the Council’s work horses.

²⁸ See for example: TNA, PRO, SP 1/65 f. 162 (*LP V 141*); SP 1/66 f. 34 (*LP V 279*); SP 1/66 f. 122 (*LP V 312*); SP 1/67 f. 8 (*LP V 386*); SP 1/67 f. 77 (*LP V 417*); SP 1/67 f. 86 (*LP V 440*); SP 1/67 f. 87 (*LP V 441*); SP 1/68 f. 9 (*LP V 466*); SP 1/68 f. 23 (*LP V 481*); SP 1/68 f. 53 (*LP V 538*); SP 1/68 f. 131 (*LP V 647*); SP 1/68 ff. 205-208 (*LP V 672*); SP 1/70 f. 1 (*LP V 981*); SP 1/70 f. 96 (*LP V 1083*). These all might reasonably be re-dated to the 1520s, or possible 1530. If they do belong to 1531, as ascribed in *LP*, then they only strengthen the argument made above. Another letter, suggesting Cromwell arbitrated and negotiated a settlement for the ‘sommes of money’ John Pynrand, John Donnington, Anthony Hammond and Thomas Barton stood bound to Richard Jervis for, on behalf of the deceased Thomas Donnington, is dated November and placed in 1531 by the editors of *LP*. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/68 f. 54 (*LP V 541*). When Donnington died is unclear. The revised edition of Le Neve records Donnington as a prebendary of Givendale, York diocese, and that he died before 19 November 1531 (John Le Neve, *Fasti Ecclesiae Anglicanae, 1300-1541*, Vol. VI, *Northern Province*, p. 53 [London, 1963]). But this is based on the dating in *LP* for SP 1/68 f. 54 (*LP V 541*). *LP* conversely contains a note that Donnington died before April 1532, when his two prebends of York and Southwell were filled up (*LP V p. 248*). It seems probable that he died in 1531 and that Cromwell negotiated a settlement between the parties in that year. But it also seems likely that the letter from Pynrand and others to Cromwell actually dates to November 1532. The writers referred to sending up money ‘for the secunde payment’, which hints that some time had passed since arbitration. A letter from Thomas Barton, dated June, also on this subject, similarly dates to 1532. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/70 f. 132 (*LP V 1123*) and Cf. SP 1/72 f. 150 (*LP V 1658*). Another example of what appears to show Cromwell engaged on another private legal matter has also been placed in 1534. See SP 1/82 f. 164 (*LP VII 212*). Again, this probably dates to the 1520s.

²⁹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/65 ff. 58-58v (*LP V 38*).

³⁰ TNA, PRO, SP 1/65 f. 163 (*LP V 142*). Also see SP 1/53 ff. 8-10 (*LP IV, iii, 5293*).

in 1531.³¹ His money-lending also continued,³² while mercantile interests were similarly maintained. During 1531, throughout his time in Flanders, Stephen Vaughan continued to inform Cromwell of the difficulties he was experiencing trying to sell Cromwell's spermaceti.³³

Membership of the King's Council naturally ensured a measure of status and influence for the holder. Cromwell's correspondence contains many letters attesting to this in 1531. Given that in January he was 'newly come to the fauor of the kyng', it is unsurprising that there are fewer examples of such requests during the initial months of that year.³⁴ But from April onwards requests for favours begin to hint at a more widely perceived influence. Yet neither the requests, nor the language used to make them, suggest these were anything other than the type of appeals surely received by every councillor or prominent figure at Court.³⁵ Similarly a number of documents suggesting that Cromwell

³¹ BL, Cotton MS, Vespasian F XIII f. 256 (*LP* V 499); TNA, PRO, SP 1/73 f. 144 (*LP* V 1767); SP 1/73 f. 145 (*LP* V 1768); TNA, PRO, SP 1/73 f. 130 (*LP* V 1755). These last three letters are all undated, but were placed in 1532 in *LP*. It would be more reasonable to date all of them to 1531, when Cromwell was far less pre-occupied with government work.

³² TNA, PRO, SP 1/72 f. 100 (*LP* V 1610); SP 1/72 f. 135v (*LP* V 1639); SP 1/73 f. 133 (*LP* V 1757); SP 60/2 f. 49 (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 357-358; *LP* VI 791); SP 60/2 f. 3 (*LP* VI 857). This final loan, of £80 to Lord Leonard Gray on 21 September 1532, is also recorded in a catalogue of Cromwell's obligations. See TNA, PRO, E36/141 f. 36 (*LP* V 1285). Also see SP 1/69 f. 138 (*LP* V 840), which is a letter from Cromwell's friend John Creke asking him to lend him £10. This was dated February and placed in 1532 in *LP*, but SP 1/68 f. 137 (*LP* V 652), an undated letter from an unidentified person, was placed in 1531. The handwriting and the letter's subject matter confirm this was also from Creke, and concerned the same request.

³³ TNA, PRO, SP 1/58 f. 147 (*LP* IV, iii, 6744); BL, Cotton MS, Galba B X f. 47 (*LP* V 65); TNA, PRO, SP 1/66 f. 121 (*LP* V 311); SP 1/68 f. 55 (*LP* V 542); BL, Cotton MS, Galba B X f. 3 (*LP* V 804); BL, Cotton MS, Galba B X f. 5 (*LP* V 808), BL, Cotton MS, Galba B X f. f. 3 (*LP* V 813). Spermaceti, a type of wax obtained from the head of a sperm whale, was often used to make candles and ointments. In January 1531 Vaughan was telling Cromwell he could not sell his spermaceti because 'it is in maner nothing worthe'. By February the following year Vaughan remarked that trying to sell it 'putteth me to more payne then any thingeuer I had to sell in all my lyfe'.

³⁴ Hall, *Chronicle*, p. 775. Those which do relate to Cromwell's responsibilities toward Wolsey's former lands, or private requests connected with his decreasing legal practice. See above for the legal matters and below, pp. 97-98, for those relating to Wolsey's lands.

³⁵ TNA, PRO, SP 1/65 f. 181 (*LP* V 168); SP 1/65 f. 187 (*LP* V 181); see also SP 1/73 f. 123 (*LP* V 1748), which is undated but possible connected with this; SP 1/65 f. 222 (*LP* V 205); SP 1/66 f. 49 (*LP* V 305); SP 1/66 f. 172 (*LP* V 365); SP 1/68 f. 53 (*LP* V 538); SP 1/68 f. 94 (*LP* V 597); SP 1/68 f. 118 (*LP* V 624); SP 1/68 f. 123 (*LP* V 639). A letter from Elizabeth, countess of Worcester, asking Cromwell to ignore 'certayn articles of vntrueth ayenst my lord my husbondes officers of glamorgan', and a request from the earl of Huntingdon asking Cromwell to help his servant to an annuity he was owed, were both placed in 1531 and 1533 in *LP*. This again illustrates the problem with dating much of Cromwell's correspondence, of which the editors of *LP* were evidently aware. Huntingdon's letter could date to either year, but the Countess' is more in

had considerable influence over ecclesiastical patronage were placed in 1531 by the editors of *Letters and Papers*. These have been erroneously dated, and will be shown to belong to 1532 and 1533.³⁶ The examples of Cromwell's influence over Church appointments which ostensibly do belong to 1531 fail to indicate that he had yet become more than a prominent royal servant close to the centre of power.³⁷ Instead they were a reflection of the 'incesse' in Cromwell's 'honour and auctoritie' which Richard Kidderminster, the former abbot of Winchombe, referred to in November of that year,³⁸ and provide further evidence that Cromwell had not notably begun to work his way up until the latter part of 1531.

Although the nature of the relationship between Cromwell and Henry VIII is a question which will require examination throughout this study, some general conclusions about Cromwell's influence with the king in 1531 are of interest here. Several letters requested or thanked Cromwell for moving Henry on a particular matter. In April 1531, for instance, Cuthbert Marshall, archdeacon of Nottingham, thanked him for 'laboring to the Kinges highnes' that he should not be exempt from the pardon granted to the York Convocation for the English clergy's praemunire offences.³⁹ Similarly in July Henry Sadler wrote that his wife had told him Cromwell would 'gett the warrant signed by the Kynges grace' so that William Holgill, Master of the Savoy, would take Sadler's account sooner.⁴⁰ Wolsey's former comptroller,

keeping with Cromwell's demonstrable position in 1533. See BL, Cotton MS, Vespasian F XIII f. 180 (*LP* V 298; *LP* VI 662) and BL, Cotton MS, Vespasian F XIII f. 175 (*LP* V 323; *LP* VI 772). A letter from Richard Hutton to Cromwell, dated 6 February, and placed in 1531, asked that he be a good master to 'Dane Thomas Nevill' and 'help hym to a capacite Accordynge (as he saith) doctor Stephens & you promised hym'. See SP 1/65 f. 123 (*LP* V 87). This also hints at Cromwell's influence, but clearly relates to the suppression of Felixstowe in the late 1520s.

³⁶ The documents placed in 1531 which should be re-dated are: TNA, PRO, SP 1/65 f. 239 (*LP* V 224); SP 1/66 f. 45 (*LP* V 294); SP 1/66 f. 46 (*LP* V 300); SP 1/68 f. 34 (*LP* V 501); SP 1/77 f. 44 (*LP* V 295); SP 1/66 f. 174 (*LP* V 367); SP 1/65 f. 129 (*LP* V 95); SP 1/65 f. 130 (*LP* V 96). The re-dating is discussed in the next chapter.

³⁷ TNA, PRO, SP 1/68 f. 26-26v (*LP* V 486); SP 1/67 f. 80 (*LP* V 426); SP 1/66 f. 160 (*LP* V 339); SP 1/68 f. 33 (*LP* V 500); SP 1/68 f. 108 (*LP* V 624); TNA, PRO, SP 1/82 f. 249 (*LP* VII 322). Placed in March 1534 in *LP*, it clearly relates to Longland's letters from December 1531 (see and compare also SP 1/69 f. 15; *LP* V 717). Also see SP 1/68 f. 78 (*LP* V 570), which is another request for this benefice.

³⁸ TNA, PRO, SP 1/68 f. 38v (*LP* V 510).

³⁹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/237 f. 25 (*LP* Add, I, i, 732).

⁴⁰ TNA, PRO, SP 1/66 f. 156 (*LP* V 333).

Thomas Strangways, asked that Cromwell move the king to finish the hospital of Jesus Christ at Branforth,⁴¹ while James Layburn also asked that Cromwell ‘speke one wourd to the kynges grace’ for a pardon for his brother.⁴² Such requests not only point to Cromwell’s continual access to Henry, but also suggest a degree of influence. Whether this went beyond that of other courtiers is difficult to assess. Some of Cromwell’s own correspondence, however, does offer glimpses of his early relations with the king.

A letter in Cromwell’s hand written on behalf of the king on 1 October was placed in 1531 in *Letters and Papers*. Whom the letter was addressed to is unclear, but it requested the recipient to ‘move the Frenche kynge...for the preferment of on[e] Frere Thomas beryer’ so that he ‘may be now elect to be gardyan of the grey freers in parys’.⁴³ The year in which the letter was written, however, is not recorded, and while 1531 cannot be ruled out, it seems unlikely that Cromwell acted in a secretarial capacity in that year. Stephen Gardiner was Henry’s secretary from July 1529 until April 1534, when Cromwell formally replaced him.⁴⁴ The correspondence between Cromwell and Gardiner in June 1531 suggests the bishop was closer to Henry at this point.⁴⁵ Cromwell did, however, act in a secretarial capacity while Gardiner was in France between January and March 1532, and toward the end of 1533.⁴⁶ Perhaps this letter dates to then.

In July 1531 the abbot of St Mary’s, York, informed Cromwell that he was sending a falcon and two tassels to be ‘presentid to the kynges most graciouse highnesse’. What is of interest is that the abbot asked for Cromwell’s ‘councell who ye thynk best to present theme for me’.⁴⁷ That he did not instinctively request Cromwell to present them seems significant. It suggests he believed that there were others closer to Henry at this point better suited to this

⁴¹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/66 f. 172 (LP V 365).

⁴² TNA, PRO, SP 1/68 f. 94 (LP V 597).

⁴³ TNA, PRO, SP 1/67 f. 159 (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 341; LP V 458 [1]).

⁴⁴ G. Redworth, *In Defence of the Church Catholic: The Life of Stephen Gardiner* (Oxford, 1990), p. 22.

⁴⁵ BL, Cotton MS, Vespasian F XIII f. 257 (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 340-341; LP V 302).

⁴⁶ J. A. Muller, *The Letters of Stephen Gardiner* (Cambridge, 1933), pp. 44-49; LP V 1025.

⁴⁷ TNA, PRO, SP 1/66 f. 162 (LP V 346).

purpose. That he asked for Cromwell's advice also shows he did not think that Cromwell would feel irritated that the abbot thought he was insufficiently close to the king to do this.

It will also be recalled that since November 1530 Cromwell had been at the centre of attempts to persuade William Tyndale to return to England and write in support of Henry VIII's 'great matter'. This continued throughout the first half of 1531, and Cromwell's associate, Stephen Vaughan, was the man in Flanders meeting with Tyndale to facilitate this. The attempts themselves are well known and do not need repeating.⁴⁸ Nevertheless two points about the episode are worth emphasising. First, it should be noted that these attempts should not be viewed one dimensionally as 'king and minister' working closely together. Vaughan's correspondence somewhat cryptically alluded to the involvement of 'Master Treasurer' in several letters, while in one he referred to 'certeyn lettres directed to me from Master Fitzwillyam' containing instructions sent in January 1531.⁴⁹ Evidently, Cromwell was not the only royal servant working and corresponding with Vaughan on this matter.⁵⁰

Of greater interest is that, while Vaughan was in constant contact with Cromwell, it was the king himself who was controlling these attempts, and who was kept well informed. A letter to Henry from Vaughan on 26 January makes it plain that Cromwell was acting under Henry's direction. Vaughan remarked how 'your magestie commaunded me to lerne, and practise in these parties, and therof taduertise youe, from tyme to tyme, as the case shulde requyre'.⁵¹ Although Vaughan was sceptical that Tyndale could be persuaded to return,⁵²

⁴⁸ See Elton, *Tudor Revolution*, pp. 91-93; W.C. Richardson, *Stephen Vaughan: Financial Agent of Henry VIII* (Louisiana, 1953), pp. 25-35.

⁴⁹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/58 f. 147 (*LP* IV, iii, 6744); SP 1/58 f. 173 (*LP* IV, iii, 6754); BL, Cotton MS, Galba B X f. 46v (*LP* V 65). In the summary given in *LP* for the first two letters cited here 'Mr Treasurer' is thought to refer to Sir Brian Tuke, treasurer of the Chamber. Given that Vaughan refers to Fitzwilliam, treasurer of the household, in the letter to the king, this was probably the treasurer he referred to in all these letters.

⁵⁰ Nor, incidentally, was Vaughan the only agent Cromwell was using to contact Tyndale. Thomas Jermyn wrote to Cromwell in June 1531 to inform him that 'accordynge to your mynde I haue sent to master tyndall...the kynges lettre to hym'. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/66 f. 48 (*LP* V 304).

⁵¹ BL, Cotton MS, Galba B X f. 46 (*LP* V 65).

⁵² He privately wrote to Cromwell on 26 January that 'It is vnlikely to gett Tyndall into Englund, when he Dayly hereth so many thinges from thense which scarethe hym'. See BL, Cotton Galba B X f. 46v (*LP* V 65).

in April he sent Tyndale's *Answer* to Thomas More's *A Dialogue Concerning Heresies*. Cromwell's reply in May cautioned that

*his highness nothing liked the sayd boke beyng fyllyd with Scedycyous Slaunderous lyes and Fantastycall oppynyon...The kinges highness therfor hathe commaunded me ~~expressely to wryte vnto you~~ to aduertise you that is [sic] pleasure ys that ye should desiste and leue any ferther to persuade or attempte ~~him thereunto~~ the sayde tyndalle to Com into this realme.'*⁵³

Again this hints the direction of policy in 1531 was dictated by the king; Cromwell was nothing more than Henry's agent. Sensibly Vaughan's attempts to persuade Tyndale to return ceased after this.⁵⁴

During the first half of 1531, then, Cromwell played no part in national government. By the end of that year, he had risen to a prominent, but by no means leading, position on the King's Council, handling much of that body's routine work. If Cromwell's responsibilities over royal government did not begin until the second half of 1531, then they do not adequately explain Cromwell's rise to that position. Nor does it explain how he amassed these wider administrative tasks in the first place. The key to this, and to Cromwell's rise generally during 1531, lay in his management of various Crown lands. It is to this subject which this present chapter will now turn.

⁵³ BL, Cotton MS, Galba B X ff. 354-355 (LP V 248; Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 336-337). Cromwell's letter to Vaughan is written in the hand of one of Cromwell's clerks, but heavily altered by Cromwell himself, with crossings-out and additional remarks in his own hand. The italicised parts of the extracts here are those written in Cromwell's own hand.

⁵⁴ He continued, however, to obtain and send works circulating in Antwerp to both Cromwell and the king, at the request of the latter. See, for example, TNA, PRO, SP 1/66 f. 47 (LP V 303); SP 1/68 ff. 51-52 (LP V 533).

The Crown Lands, 1531-1534

The fate of Wolsey's college lands not only provided Cromwell with the means of entry into the king's service, but they continued to occupy him during his early years as a royal minister. The Ipswich lands were forfeited to the Crown in September 1530; most were re-distributed the following year.⁵⁵ The college at Oxford was similarly forfeited, but allowed to continue, stripped of most endowments. It was formally re-founded in July 1532 as King Henry VIII's College, before becoming Christ Church in 1546.⁵⁶ Aside from the dealings with Tyndale discussed above, the only evidence of Cromwell's work for the king during the initial months of 1531 is of the collection of rents from former college lands. Although Cromwell was not formally re-appointed receiver-general for these until January 1532,⁵⁷ annotations in his hand can be found in two places in the book of arrearages due at Michaelmas (29 September) 1530 for the Oxford lands, indicating that he continued to oversee these.⁵⁸ On 2 February Cromwell's servant, William Laurence, also told him 'I haue byne accourdyng to your commaundment in Cambrige sheare Northfolke and Suffolke for...the rearages'.⁵⁹ He wrote again in April asking Cromwell to 'asserteyn me whan...I shall cum after the renttes be gathreid and make payment to your mastershipp', confirming that Cromwell was already receiving money on behalf of the Crown.⁶⁰ Other agents also wrote on the collecting of rents in early 1531.⁶¹ On 5 April Henry Hargryppe reported the difficulties he

⁵⁵ VCH, *Suffolk*, ii, 331; TNA, PRO, SP 1/57 ff. 242-243 (LP IV, iii, 6523); SP 1/58 ff. 94-95 (LP IV, iii, 6663); SP 1/58 f. 107 (LP IV, iii, 6666); SP 1/58 ff. 122-123 (LP IV, iii, 6688). Much of the building materials at Ipswich were transported south to be used for the construction of Whitehall. See SP 1/69 f. 235 (LP V 953).

⁵⁶ TNA, PRO, SP 2/M ff. 21-28 (LP V 1180); SP 2/M f. 29 (LP V 1181 [1]); SP 2/M f. 30 (LP V 1181 [2]); J. McConnica, ed., *The History of the University of Oxford*, iii, *The Collegiate University* (Oxford, 1986), p. 32.

⁵⁷ TNA, PRO, SP 1/69 f. 9 (LP V 701).

⁵⁸ TNA, PRO, E36/102 ff. 59-68 (LP IV, iii, 6651). Cromwell's annotations are on ff. 64 and 66.

⁵⁹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/65 f. 117 (LP V 83).

⁶⁰ TNA, PRO, SP 1/65 f. 186 (LP V 175).

⁶¹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/69 f. 80 (LP V 769); incorrectly placed in 1532 in LP. TNA, PRO, SP 1/65 f. 185 (LP V 174); SP 1/66 f. 21 (LP V 273). A letter to Cromwell from Thomas Whalley, dated February, and placed in 1531 in LP actually relates to the surveying of Daventry for Cardinal College, Oxford, in 1527. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/65 f. 119 (LP V 84). Two further letters from Whalley to

was experiencing in gathering and receiving the rents from the lands of a suppressed priory to Cromwell.⁶² It also appears likely that several letters from John Knight to Cromwell, written in March and April, and placed in 1533 in *Letters and Papers*, actually date to 1531.⁶³ These concerned lands connected with the manor of Raunston, or Ravenston, acquired by Cromwell and others to provide income for Cardinal College, Oxford, in the late 1520s, and now belonging to the king.⁶⁴ In March Knight wanted to know ‘whether the kynges grace shall haue the rent of Raunston at ovr lady day next or my old master [Throckmorton]’.⁶⁵ In mid-April, having received Cromwell’s response, Knight informed the king’s tenants at Raunston ‘to pay it [the rents] to my handes’ next May Day.⁶⁶

Cromwell was also occupied with the re-distribution of former college lands. John Smith, Wolsey’s former auditor, acquired the manor of Blackmore, Essex, in February 1531.⁶⁷ Cromwell was probably involved with this grant: a copy of Smith’s bill was in Cromwell’s possession.⁶⁸ Similarly in March Nicholas Hurelton, clerk of the Green Cloth, was granted a lease on the manor of Bawdewyn’s, Kent.⁶⁹ A draft of this grant contains an endorsement by Cromwell.⁷⁰ Further grants were made in April. The duke of Norfolk received the site of the monastery of Felixstowe, along with a number of manors belonging to it in Suffolk.⁷¹ A draft of this patent is partially corrected by Cromwell.⁷² Sir John Gage was also granted a number of former lands

Cromwell concerning other college matters were also erroneously placed in 1532. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/70 f. 190 (*LP V* 1221); SP 1/70 f. 218 (*LP V* 1252). These also belong to 1527. (Ward, ‘The Origins of Thomas Cromwell’s Public Career’, pp. 90 & 93).

⁶² TNA, PRO, SP 1/65 f. 185 (*LP V* 174).

⁶³ Knight was receiver at Raunston, but was dead by November 1532. See SP 2/N f. 107 (*LP VI* 228 [i]); also see *LP V* 1598 [24]. These letters cited below could date to 1531 or early 1532, but it would appear more probable, given that they are concerned with the ordering of the king’s rents on former college lands recently acquired by the Crown, that they date to the 1531.

⁶⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 1/51 f. 101 (*LP IV*, ii, 5024 [i]).

⁶⁵ TNA, PRO, SP 1/75 f. 30 (*LP VI* 249). See also SP 1/74 f. 197 (*LP VI* 203).

⁶⁶ TNA, PRO, SP 1/75 f. 132 (*LP VI* 342).

⁶⁷ TNA, PRO, C82/638 and C66/656 m. 6 (*LP V* 119 [48]).

⁶⁸ TNA, PRO, E36/143 f. 7 (*LP VI* 299 [ii]).

⁶⁹ TNA, PRO, C82/639 and C66/656 m. 19 (*LP V* 166 [37/i]). The manor had belonged to the Abbey of Lesnes, which was suppressed by Wolsey in February 1525 (*VCH, Kent*, ii. 166).

⁷⁰ TNA, PRO, SP 1/65 ff. 179-180 (*LP V* 166 [37/ii]); Cromwell’s endorsement is on f. 179v.

⁷¹ TNA, PRO, C66/656 m. 17 (*LP V* 220 [11]).

⁷² TNA, PRO, SP 1/65 ff. 234-237 (*LP V* 220 [11/ii]).

belonging to the college at Ipswich, while Robert Downes received licences to alienate certain lands of Rumburgh and St Mary's.⁷³ Although no draft patents survive for either of these, jottings in Cromwell's hand confirm he was involved with Downes' grant.⁷⁴ William Laurence also informed Cromwell in April of his findings concerning the 'valor' of 'the wood called the lunt that master alford shulde haue'.⁷⁵ This presumably comprised part of the Ipswich lands that Alvard was granted in August 1531; the draft of this is also in Cromwell's hand.⁷⁶

That Cromwell was one of the Crown's principal agents in these re-distributions is further attested by his influence over them from a surprisingly early date. In January Lord Morley wrote to him regarding a canon who had been granted 'the Farme off Bromefelde' by the monastery of Christchurch, but who had since been 'wrongffully vexyd' by one John Smythe who laboured for the same farm.⁷⁷ Morley believed Cromwell was the man to approach on this matter.⁷⁸ William Laurence also told Cromwell in April that if Thomas Alvard were allowed to purchase certain lands he would be 'much beholding to your mastership'. He also referred to 'the medows ye grawntt me'.⁷⁹ John Knight, receiver at Raunston, similarly mentioned that Cromwell 'grauntid to me your especiall favour for the hauyng of Westhaddon'.⁸⁰ Each of these comments hints that Cromwell had some say over the arrangement of the lands. In February Richard Wharton also warned a priest who received tithes from certain college lands to avoid Cromwell's 'farther dysplesur', and follow his commandment over payments due to the king.⁸¹ Other farmers were similarly

⁷³ TNA, PRO, C66/656 m. 17 (*LP V* 220 [3 & 4]); C82/640 and C66/656 m. 21 (*LP V* 220 [10])

⁷⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 1/73 f. 149v (*LP V* 1778). Among Cromwell's jottings was a list of manors, including 'romborow...For master Downes'.

⁷⁵ TNA, PRO, SP 1/65 f. 186 (*LP V* 175).

⁷⁶ TNA, PRO, C82/646 and C66/659 m. 4 (*LP* 392 [9]). Cromwell's draft is SP 1/237 f. 32 (*LP Add I*, i, 737).

⁷⁷ TNA, PRO, SP 1/65 f. 45 (*LP V* 23) 'Bromefeld' was a farm belonging to the late priory of Bromehill, suppressed by Wolsey in September 1528 and used to endow his Ipswich College. The canon whom Morley wrote on behalf was probably a former canon at Bromehill because Morely referred to my lord cardinal's 'suppression [of] hys pryory'.

⁷⁸ He asked Cromwell to 'be [a] goode master onto hym aswell towchyng hys lese as also yff ony bylles of complaynte be put vp'. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/65 f. 45 (*LP V* 23).

⁷⁹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/65 f. 186 (*LP V* 175).

⁸⁰ TNA, PRO, SP 1/75 f. 30 (*LP VI* 249). For its re-dating see above, p. 98.

⁸¹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/69 f. 80 (*LP V* 769), incorrectly dated in *LP*.

reluctant to pay their rents without direct instruction from Cromwell.⁸² Again, all this suggests he was already a man with some authority over these lands.

Serious re-distribution did not begin, however, until mid-1531 when the Crown began negotiations for a complex and continuing series of land exchanges. It has been noted that following the fall of Wolsey Henry VIII 'suddenly took up building as a passion', and having acquired many of the Cardinal's former residencies, the king set about transforming these into magnificent royal palaces.⁸³ Cromwell was one of the royal ministers who co-ordinated the exchanges of land which enabled the Crown to expand and transform these buildings. An indenture made 16 May 1531 records that Waltham Abbey, Essex, had agreed to grant the manor of Stansted, Essex, to the king in return for the late monastery of Blackmore, previously endowed to Wolsey's Oxford College. Thomas Cromwell, alongside Sir William Paulet, Sir John Daunce, Christopher Hales and Baldwin Mallet, was listed as one of those who would receive the eventual grant on behalf of the king.⁸⁴ Similarly a draft copy of articles 'concludyd and aggrede the xxxth day of Maij' 1531 between William Weston, prior of St John's of Jerusalem, and four of the king's councillors, is corrected in places by Cromwell.⁸⁵ This concerned an exchange between the king and the convent by which Henry would receive the manor of Hampton Court, Middlesex, along with its surrounding lands, a messuage in Chancery Lane, and a prebend in Salisbury Cathedral. In return the priory received the lands of the late monastery of Stanesgate, which had also previously belonged to Cardinal College, Oxford. The Crown's intention for these lands is not entirely clear given their geographic spread, but it seems the acquisition of Hampton Court was to ensure the king now held it permanently before embarking on major re-building there.⁸⁶

⁸² TNA, PRO, SP 1/66 f. 21 (LP V 273).

⁸³ S. Thurley, *The Royal Palaces of Tudor England: Architecture and Court Life, 1460-1547* (London, 1993) p. 49.

⁸⁴ W[estminster] A[bbey] M[uniments] 3231.

⁸⁵ TNA, PRO, SP 1/66 ff. 13-17 (LP V 264).

⁸⁶ Wolsey had originally been granted a 99-year lease on the manor of Hampton Court in 1514 from St John's of Jerusalem. Presumably, when Wolsey gifted Hampton Court to the king at some unknown date in the mid-1520s, this lease was transferred to Henry. See *VCH, Middlesex*, ii. 325-326.

The councillors who conducted the Hampton Court negotiations were not specified in the draft,⁸⁷ but were surely the four men listed as receiving the formal grant resulting from these negotiations on 5 June on behalf of the king.⁸⁸ Once again these were Paulet, Hales, Mallet and Cromwell. As the king's Attorney and Solicitor-General respectively, Hales and Mallet were not only the Crown's principal prosecutors, but also two of its chief legal advisers.⁸⁹ Paulet was surveyor-general of the king's lands and master of the wards, which explains his inclusion in a matter of land exchange.⁹⁰ But why was Thomas Cromwell involved? The answer, aside from his obvious legal and administrative talents, was surely that these exchanges involved former college lands. The Crown would naturally require that any lands exchanged were of similar value and the deal beneficial to the king. Cromwell was the obvious man to turn to when ensuring this given his unrivalled knowledge and familiarity with them.⁹¹ Nevertheless he was more than just an adviser; his involvement was clearly considerable. Both the draft of the articles of agreement with St John's, and a draft of the grant itself are corrected by him, revealing he oversaw some of the legal drafting.⁹² Three of Cromwell's own men, Ralph Sadler, Hugh Whalley and William Brabazon were also used to deliver up possession, which further suggests Cromwell was one of - if not *the* - principal agent on behalf of the Crown.⁹³

On 5 September 1531 a series of agreements were reached for further exchanges in which Cromwell continued to play a considerable part. A draft agreement between the king and the Charter House of Sheen is heavily

⁸⁷ In the draft articles the councillors are merely described as A, B, C and D. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/66 f. 13.

⁸⁸ A draft of the grant, corrected by Cromwell, lacks the day and month it was made, but is dated 1531. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/66 ff. 36-37 (LP V 285 [1]). See also SP 1/66 ff. 38-41 (LP V 285 [2]), which is another corrected draft. The grant was confirmed in the third session of the Reformation parliament, and provides the date of 5 June. See *Statutes of the Realm*, iii, 23 Henry VIII. c. 26.

⁸⁹ For the office of Attorney and Solicitor-General, see Baker, *Laws of England*, pp. 425-426.

⁹⁰ LP V 80 [11 & 28].

⁹¹ Among his papers, for instance, were those which contained the values of the suppressed lands of Wolsey's colleges. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/65 f. 63 (LP V 47 [2]); SP 1/65 f. 64 (LP V 47 [3]).

⁹² TNA, PRO, SP 1/66 ff. 13-17 (LP V 264); SP 1/66 ff. 36-37 (LP V 285 [1]).

⁹³ TNA, PRO, SP 1/66 ff. 36-37 (LP V 285 [1]); *Statutes of the Realm*, iii, 23 Henry VIII. c. 26.

amended by Cromwell.⁹⁴ According to this the king would receive ‘the manours and lordships of lewesham and Estgrenewich and all other *thayr* londes tenementes rentes...woodes vnderwoodes waters Fysshynges aduousons *thayr* and all other *thayr* heredy tanementtes...apperteynyng to the said manours or Lordshippes’.⁹⁵ In return the Charter House received the late priory of Bradwell and a number of other lands, all of which had belonged to Wolsey’s Oxford college.⁹⁶ Although the terms of the agreement were merely described as being ‘devised by the lerned Counsaill of our said Souereigne lord’, Cromwell was one of the Crown’s leading agents in this exchange.⁹⁷ Not only did he heavily amend the draft indenture, but he also managed wider details connected with it. William Wogan, for instance, received a letter from Cromwell in August enquiring ‘wetherre I be mynded to leve my interest of my Ferme off Bradwell’, one of the tenements shortly granted to Sheen.⁹⁸

Several other exchanges were also drawn up on the same day. Robert Catton, abbot of St Alban’s, consented that the king should have the abbey lands of the More, Asshelesse and Bachewortte, in return for the late monastery and lands of Pré, Herefordshire.⁹⁹ Eton College agreed to exchange the House of St James in the field, along with over 185 acres between Charing Cross and Aye Hill, for lands in Kent.¹⁰⁰ John Islip, abbot of St Peter’s, Westminster, also agreed to an exchange on a messuage called Pete Caleys in King’s Street, Westminster, in return for the site of the late monastery of Poughley.¹⁰¹ As with the exchanges with St John’s and Sheen, these grants were not ratified until

⁹⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 1/67 ff. 39-53 (LP V 403 [2]).

⁹⁵ TNA, PRO, SP 1/67 f. 39 (LP V 403 [2]). The italics are parts in Cromwell’s hand.

⁹⁶ TNA, PRO, SP 1/67 ff. 40-41 (LP V 403 [2]). The final indenture for this agreement is TNA, PRO, E41/149 (LP V 403 [1]).

⁹⁷ TNA, PRO, SP 1/67 f. 42 (LP V 403 [2]).

⁹⁸ TNA, PRO, SP 1/67 f. 7 (LP V 385). According to Wogan Cromwell had been ‘the chefe helper of me to the same Ferme’ when he had first acquired it.

⁹⁹ TNA, PRO, E41/214 (LP V 405 [1]). See also E41/215 (LP V 508), which is a deed giving part effect to E41/214.

¹⁰⁰ TNA, PRO, E41/216 (LP V 406 [1]); SP 1/67 ff. 58-60 (LP V 406 [2]), draft in Wriothesley’s hand; SP 1/67 ff. 61-62 (LP V 406 [3]), another draft.

¹⁰¹ TNA, PRO, E41/213 (LP 404 [1]); SP 1/67 ff. 54-57 (LP V 404 [2]); the convent’s indenture for this grant can be found in: WAM 32345.

December, and then confirmed by acts of parliament in January 1532.¹⁰² Two further exchanges were also in negotiation, and were finally made on 1 November, before being formalised in December. Waltham Abbey finalised its grant to the king of the manor of Stansted Abbot, along with other lands in Stansted, Hertfordshire, and Roydon, Essex. They were recompensed with the lands of Blackmore monastery in January 1532. Christ's College, Cambridge, also consented to the king having the manor of Roydon, in return for Bromehill priory, another of Wolsey's former lands. They received this in January.¹⁰³

Given that many of these agreements were entered into on the same day, was Cromwell involved with all of them? The exchange with St Alban's concerned former college lands, while Cromwell's 'clerk' William Candisshe witnessed the convent's grant in November.¹⁰⁴ Two of Cromwell's men, Ralph Sadler and William Brabazon, were also used to deliver up possession in the exchange with Eton.¹⁰⁵ Similarly both grants made in November by Waltham abbey and Christ's College, Cambridge, were witnessed by Sadler.¹⁰⁶ J. D. Alsop also discovered an uncalandered draft of the Waltham abbey exchange, with amendments in Cromwell's hand, which included the addition of Sir Robert Norwich, Chief Justice of the Common Pleas; William Paulet; Thomas Audeley, Serjeant-at-law; and Baldwin Mallet, alongside the existing names of Cromwell and Christopher Hales, as those who would receive the grant on behalf of the king.¹⁰⁷ From this Alsop rightly deduced that 'Cromwell was in control of the

¹⁰² Sheen's warrant for the Great Seal is: TNA, PRO, C82/650 (LP V 627 [22]); St Peter's is C82/650 and its enrolment on the Patent Rolls is: C66/659 m. 22 (LP V 627 [23]), SP 1/237 ff. 84-90 (LP Add I, i, 748) is a similar draft of this; St Alban's is C82/650 and C66/659 m. 24 (LP V 627 [24]); Eton College's is C82/650 and C66/659 m. 27 (LP V 627 [28]). The acts of parliament, respectively, are: *Statutes of the Realm*, iii, 23. Henry VIII. c. 27; 23. Henry VIII. c. 21; 23. Henry VIII. c. 25; 23. Henry VIII. c. 24.

¹⁰³ TNA, PRO, C82/651 and C66/659 mm. 26-27 (LP V 766 [2]); C66/659 m. 23-24 (LP V 766 [4]) and SP 2/L ff. 116-128 (LP V 766 [4/ii]), which is a draft of this. The acts of parliament confirming the exchange are: *Statutes of the Realm*, iii, 23. Henry VIII. c. 23 (Waltham); 23. Henry VIII. c. 22 (Cambridge).

¹⁰⁴ TNA, PRO, C54/400 m. 13d (LP V 600). Candisshe is described as Cromwell's 'clerk' in TNA, PRO, SP 1/73 f. 96 (LP V 1722).

¹⁰⁵ TNA, PRO, SP 1/67 f. 59 (LP 406 [2]).

¹⁰⁶ TNA, PRO C54/400 m. 13d (LP V 619 & 622).

¹⁰⁷ TNA, PRO, E407/8/180/4. Alsop believed the entire draft was in Cromwell's hand, and amended by him (Alsop, 'Cromwell and the Church' p. 328). While the amendments are his, the original writing is not obviously Cromwell's distinctive hand.

entire negotiation'.¹⁰⁸ How Cromwell was involved with the exchange with St Peter's, however, is less clear. Former college lands did form part of the exchange, and a draft of this listing Audeley and Mallet as those receiving the grant had Cromwell's and Hales' names added alongside them.¹⁰⁹ But Cromwell's and Hales' names have been replaced with those of Richard Lister, Robert Norwich and William Paulet on the formal grant in December.¹¹⁰ Evidently, then, a number of the Crown's legal servants were involved in these exchanges, which is unsurprising considering the considerable estates which were changing hands. Cromwell, if not involved in every single aspect, was clearly one of the Crown's principal agents in this.¹¹¹

The Crown's intention for the lands acquired through the exchanges made in 1531 is not immediately apparent. Some were later used to endow Anne Boleyn, while others were kept as royal residencies and hunting estates.¹¹² Much of the land acquired in and around Westminster, however, was secured to allow the reconstruction and extension of Whitehall Palace. Wolsey's surrendered residence of York Place provided the basis for this, and work had

¹⁰⁸ Alsop, 'Cromwell and the Church', p. 328.

¹⁰⁹ TNA, PRO, SP 2/L ff. 66-71 (*LP V* 673). Also see WAM 32335, which grants power of attorney from the abbot, prior and convent of Westminster to William Middleton and William Russell to deliver seisin on this messuage to Norwich, Lister, Paulet, Audeley, Hales, Malet and Cromwell. It is dated 1 November in the Chapter House at Westminster.

¹¹⁰ TNA, PRO, C82/650 and C66/659 m. 22 (*LP V* 627 [23]); WAM 32345.

¹¹¹ Further proof of Cromwell's general management of the Crown's exchanges and granting of former college lands can also be found in a twenty-five page document, detailing the assignment of lands to the college at Oxford, the school intended to be founded at Ipswich, and to a number of courtiers and other prominent figures. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/65 ff. 68-80v (*LP V* 47 [5]). The document is written in Latin, and offers no indication as to when it was drawn up. However, it contains many annotations by Cromwell regarding the assignment of lands, which again points to his general oversight of this. See SP 1/65 ff. 70, 71, 71v, 72, 75v, 77v, 79 & 79v for Cromwell's annotations. Several of the assignments, such as the lands given to Sir William Fitzwilliam, have left no further traces in the State Papers. This document implies that Cromwell was involved with these. Sir Edward Guildford was also granted a number of Wolsey's former college lands, including Tonbridge, in July 1533. See TNA, PRO, C82/672 and C66/662 m. 43 (*LP VI* 929 [9]). Memoranda in Cromwell's hand dating to this time refers to 'landes yevyn to sir Edward gulddforde', confirming his involvement with this grant. See SP 1/77 f. 137 (*LP VI* 756).

¹¹² For Anne Boleyn's lands see below p.112. Many of the Cambridge lands were joined to the manor of Hunsdone. See *Statutes of the Realm*, iii, 23 Henry VIII. c. 30. Henry Norris was made Steward of the manors of Lewisham and East Greenwich, Kent, acquired from the Charter House of Sheen. See TNA, PRO, C82/654 (*LP V* 1065 [22]); *LP V* 1075.

begun by early 1531.¹¹³ But while the king would acquire over 185 acres of land around Westminster and Charing Cross through the exchange with Eton College and St Peter's, a number of smaller properties and surrounding lands were also required to enable the construction and expansion of Whitehall.¹¹⁴ The Venetian ambassador noted in April how the king

comes often to Westminster, having designed new lodgings there, and a park adjoining York House, which belonged to the late Cardinal Wolsey. The Plan is on so large a scale that many hundreds of houses will be levelled, well nigh all of which belong to great personages.¹¹⁵

Chapuys similarly reported in May how Henry was 'having a great park made in front of the house which once belonged to the Cardinal'. For this purpose 'a number of houses have been pulled down to the great damage and discomfort of the proprietors without there having yet been any question of indemnifying them for their losses.'¹¹⁶ But the Crown *had* been making preparations to recompense many of the inhabitants whose properties were required in King's Street, Westminster. In early 1531 the lands and properties required were surveyed and valued.¹¹⁷ In May two commissioners were dispatched to negotiate purchases for the lands and leases. One of the commissioners was John Islip, abbot of Westminster, with whom many of the tenants held their existing leases. The other was Cromwell himself. An account of the 'sommès' paid to obtain these leases reveals that most of the agreements were concluded by Cromwell and Islip by 18 May 1531, although amendments in Cromwell's

¹¹³ For the construction of Whitehall see Thurley, *Royal Palaces*, pp. 50-56; M. H. Cox & P. Norman, *Survey of London*, XIII, *The Parish of St. Margaret, Westminster*, Part II, (London, 1930), pp. 8-22; H. M. Colvin ed., *The History of the King's Works*, iv, 1485-1660 (London, 1982), pp. 305-315.

¹¹⁴ G. Rosser & S. Thurley, 'Whitehall Palace and King's Street, Westminster: The Urban Cost of Princely Magnificence', *London Topographical Record*, xxvi (1990), pp. 57-78.

¹¹⁵ *CSP, Venetian*, IV, 664.

¹¹⁶ *CSP, Spanish*, IV, ii, 720.

¹¹⁷ WAM 18048; WAM 18049a; 18049b; 18049c; TNA, PRO, SC/12/3/13. Was Cromwell one of the surveyors?

hand suggest a few agreements and payments were made later.¹¹⁸ Overall this account reveals Cromwell paid out over £1,129 purchasing these leases on the king's behalf, while personally negotiating the terms of at least twenty six indentures for them [see Figure 6 and Appendix 1].¹¹⁹

There is, however, no indication that Cromwell was supervising the building of Whitehall at this point. He did amend a draft indenture dated 25 May 1531 by which Sir John Gage agreed to deliver timber to Thomas Heritage and Thomas Alvard.¹²⁰ He also corrected a draft document authorising Alvard and Heritage 'as pryncipalle surveyours of our works at our new manour besides Westminster' to retain carpenters, masons and other workmen for the king's use about these works.¹²¹ But this, at most, suggests Cromwell may have been involved with the negotiations for these indentures. The account books of payments made in 1531 for the works at Westminster do not mention Cromwell.¹²² Although he would later acquire greater responsibility for these works, in 1531 his involvement was that of a negotiator and legal draughtsman.

Of the Crown's legal agents involved with the larger exchanges of college lands, only Cromwell had been notably involved with these earlier smaller purchases. This underlines that he was overseeing the entire series of transactions. Whether this was intended from the start is unclear. Given Cromwell's experience managing Wolsey's suppressions, he was an obvious choice to acquire the properties surrounding Whitehall. His first-hand experience of the topography gained when doing so would then naturally have made him a useful agent when the Crown began to negotiate for the required

¹¹⁸ TNA, PRO, SP 1/67 ff. 66-69 (*LP V* 408). The latest dated payment on the account is to Hugh Marble in August 1531 for a 'mesuage callyd the Rosse...vii tenementtes A garden an orchard and vii acres of lande' (SP 1/67 f. 68v). This was presumably one of the five messuages in St Margaret's Parish, Westminster, which Cromwell received, along with Christopher Hales and Thomas Alvard, as a grant from Marble on 2 August. See TNA, PRO, E40/1543. A similar release was made to the same three on 5 October by William Huchen, mercer, for the manor and garden of 'Copped hall', Westminster, which corresponds to a later, but undated payment of £20 made to 'hochyn' on Cromwell's account. See E40/1566; SP 1/67 f. 68v (*LP V* 408).

¹¹⁹ A number of the indentures Cromwell struck with the various occupants of King's Street have survived in the State Papers and the Exchequer, Treasury of Receipt, Ancient Deeds (TNA, PRO, E40). To avoid cluttering the text with footnotes an appendix has been provided, with brief descriptions of each.

¹²⁰ TNA, PRO, SP 1/65 ff. 255-257 (*LP V* 253).

¹²¹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/65 ff. 262-267 (*LP V* 260).

¹²² TNA, PRO, E36/251; E36/252 (*LP V* 952).

lands around Charing Cross possessed by Eton. But his knowledge of the college lands was surely the greater reason when explaining his involvement with the larger exchanges. The important point here, however, is that his involvement with both the large and smaller land acquisitions in 1531 helps to elucidate much of what Cromwell was doing during this initial year. Although most of the indentures concerning the lands in King's Street were concluded on 18 May, their negotiation must have occupied Cromwell prior to this. (They also continued to occupy him for some time after.)¹²³ Similarly the agreements made for the larger exchanges represented weeks - if not months - of work. The initial agreement for the Waltham abbey lands, for example, was concluded on 16 May 1531, but the grant was made 1 November, and finally formalised in December. The abbey then had to wait until January to receive their lands in exchange.¹²⁴ The negotiations and legal process was evidently lengthy. Cromwell's involvement explains why there is little evidence of him undertaken 'government' work until well into the second half of 1531.

Alongside these exchanges, Cromwell continued to handle other matters connected with the lands of Wolsey's former Oxford college. Having stripped this foundation of much of its landed revenue, the Crown was periodically required to grant the 'King's college at Oxford' money during 1531 and early 1532 before its formal re-establishment. Given his association with the institution and his role supervising the collecting of rents, it is unsurprising that Cromwell was the Crown's agent when doing this. In April 1531, for instance, the king granted the half year's rents and profits from lands, including the late monasteries of St. Frideswide, Littelmores, Canwell, Daventry and Wallingbroke, to the college.¹²⁵ A draft of the grant is amended by Cromwell.¹²⁶ His general management of these lands also persisted. On 27 June Cromwell

¹²³ Cromwell was still in correspondence with John Bouchier lord Berners in August 1532, concerning his lease of 'pete caleys' in King's Street. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/69 ff. 154-155 (LP V 857); SP 1/70 f. 188 (LP V 1219).

¹²⁴ WAM 3231; TNA, PRO, C54/400 m. 13d (LP V 622); C82/651 and C66/659 mm. 26-27 (LP V 766 [2]); *Statutes of the Realm*, iii, 23. Henry VIII. c. 23.

¹²⁵ TNA, PRO, E101/518/15 (LP V 173). Not E101/578/15 as listed in the TNA, PRO *List and Index* guide to LP.

¹²⁶ TNA, PRO, SP 2/K f. 102.

wrote to a chantry priest at Lamburon, accusing him of ‘the withholdyng of certain londis whyche...shuld be long to the monestery of Walyngford’, a former college endowment.¹²⁷ The later remarks of the bishop of Lincoln to Cromwell in October 1532 are also interesting. He referred to the king’s college at Oxford ‘whiche is nott yet perfyted ne stabylished in ther lyveleode the ordre wherof is in your handes’.¹²⁸ Similarly the canons at Oxford referred to Cromwell’s ‘grett care for thestablishment’ of the king’s college in June 1533.¹²⁹ In July Cromwell was certified ‘of the state of this the kings college which ye so sincerely fauour & sette forward to your grette paynes’.¹³⁰ In February 1534 the canons at Oxford also complained to Cromwell of the difficulties they were experiencing receiving the money recently assigned to them. They remarked how ‘considering that youre mastership / next of all men vnder the kyng his highness haue most beneficially hitherto stande and helpen this house / we further most instantly desire you to be so for vs Amediatour vnto the kynges mageste’, not only for their arrears but also ‘for the establisshement of this his grace honourable College’.¹³¹ Such remarks not only indicate that Cromwell

¹²⁷ TNA, PRO, SP 1/66 f. 151 (*LP* V 329). A letter from Robert Parette dated May, in which he told Cromwell how one ‘Master browne dyd shew me of late that he was with yow concernyng ye lands that he holdes from my lord cardynalles college & that ye wore sum what playn with hym...that ye wold have a office fownd in it by the exchettour’, was placed in 1531 in *LP*. Given that Parette referred to the college as ‘my lord cardynalles college’, it would appear likely that this dates to the 1520s. If it does belong to 1531 then it is further evidence of Cromwell’s management of college lands on behalf of the king. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/65 f. 240 (*LP* V 228).

¹²⁸ TNA, PRO, SP 1/71 f. 99 (*LP* V 1423).

¹²⁹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/77 f. 54 (*LP* VI 673).

¹³⁰ TNA, PRO, SP 1/66 f. 157 (*LP* V 334). Placed in 1531 in *LP*, but it probably dates to 1533. The letter was written ‘from King henry the viiith college’, suggesting it was sent after the formal re-founding in July 1532. The writer also began his letter thanking Cromwell for excusing his brother from being made a knight, which fits with the policy of distraint of knighthood in 1533. See Elton, *Tudor Revolution*, p. 146.

¹³¹ Given that the college was re-founded in July 1532 the remarks about moving the king for the establishment of the college might seem somewhat incongruous if made in 1534, but there is little reason to doubt the dating in *LP*. The canons ended their letter ‘frome kyng henrye the viiith his Colledge in oxford’ which again indicates the re-founding of July 1532 had already taken place. What their remarks (and Longland’s in the letter to Cromwell cited above) regarding the establishment of the college suggest is that the re-foundation in July was fairly rudimentary. Endowments of land were added at later dates to supplement and support the college’s existence. See, for example, TNA, PRO, C82/660 & C66/661 m.1 (*LP* V 1370 [3]). The prebend of Wetwang, York, was also granted to the college in 1534. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/84 f. 207 (*LP* VII 879); TNA, PRO, SP 1/84 f. 208 (*LP* VII 880); TNA, PRO, SP 1/66 f. 120 (incorrectly dated to 1531 in *LP* V 310; it belongs to 1534).

managed the college lands in 1531, but also that he continued to handle its affairs beyond this.¹³²

Such responsibilities naturally ensured Cromwell accumulated wider work of similar nature. On 4 December 1531 Rhys ap Gruffyd was executed for treason.¹³³ Gruffyd was a member of a prominent Welsh family, and possessed considerable estates, notably in Carmarthenshire.¹³⁴ A letter from the king to the sheriffs of London authorising the execution of ap Gruffyd referred them to the king's 'welbelouyd Counsaellours' Christopher Hales and Thomas Cromwell, 'who shall declare vnto you our ferther pleasure in that behalf'.¹³⁵ Cromwell's involvement is interesting. He may well have been one of the king's councillors the Chief Justice referred to as providing evidence to indict ap Gruffyd in his account of the trial.¹³⁶ Given that he failed to name these councillors, however, this is speculative. What cannot be doubted is Cromwell's involvement supervising the inquests into the lands held by ap Gruffyd, which fell to the king by reason of attainder. It was this, possibly in conjunction with his judicial responsibilities as a councillor, which explains his involvement. In late 1531 he amended 'Instruccyons youen by the kinges highness vnto his [trusty] servauntes to be by theme *with all cerleryte* put in execution'.¹³⁷ The commissioners were to go into Wales 'where any of the Castells Mannors Lordshipes Landes tenements and offices of Rice ap Griffith...do lye', examine

¹³² For further examples of Cromwell handling college matters, including the continuing collection of rents associated with former college lands, see: TNA, PRO, SP 1/68 f. 91 (LP V 590); SP 1/69 f. 190 (LP V 899), misdated, it is of the year 1533; SP 1/70 f. 168 (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 346; LP V 1185 [i]); SP 1/75 f. 30 (LP VI 249); SP 1/76 ff. 26-28 (LP VI 453) and SP 1/76 f. 78r (LP VI 1519); SP 1/77 f. 76 (LP VI 695); SP 1/82 f. 103 (LP VII 98); SP 1/82 f. 228 (LP VII 294); SP 1/82 ff. 229-229v (LP VII 295); SP 1/83 f. 63 (LP VII 439); SP 1/86 ff. 84-86 (LP VII 1301). Also see Cromwell's account of the money he received on the king's behalf between 22 November 1532 and 11 March 1533. This records the receipt of money from numerous former college lands, SP 2/N f. 107 (LP VI 228).

¹³³ He was executed, according to Chapuys, for failing to inform the king of an alleged plan by the Scots and the Welsh to conquer England, although he had clearly been a problem for the Crown for some time. CSP, *Spanish*, IV, ii, 796, 853.

¹³⁴ For the family see, R. A. Griffiths, *Sir Rhys ap Thomas and his Family: A Study in the Wars of the Roses and Early Tudor Politics* (Cardiff, 1993); especially chapter four on Rhys ap Gruffyd, pp. 88-112.

¹³⁵ TNA, PRO, SP 1/237 f. 77v (LP Add I, i, 743).

¹³⁶ *Reports of Sir John Spelman*, i. 47.

¹³⁷ TNA, PRO, SP 1/68 ff. 217-220 (LP V 683). Quotation on f. 216. Italics are parts in Cromwell's hand.

all auditors, surveyors and stewards connected with these lands, and obtain their rental and manorial accounts. They were also empowered to enter these lands and make surveys of the various goods, and 'cause offycys' to be found before the county escheators.

The earliest surviving draft of the instructions given to the commissioners offers the opportunity to see Cromwell 'at work'. They have been prepared in the hand of a clerk, presumably his own, and are heavily amended by Cromwell. The clauses, while coherent in themselves, are in no logical order, which gives the impression that they were initially dictated orally, probably by Cromwell himself. Once drawn-up they were amended by him, with two further clauses added entirely in his own hand. Most amendments are fairly minor, but some indicate that Cromwell sharpened several instructions, while expanding others. He amended a clause, for instance, telling the commissioners to have an auditor sworn by adding a further instruction to produce a 'vew' of the various lands and properties, while also providing the commissioners with a specified time frame for their enquiries, which was lacking in the original draft.¹³⁸ It also seems that on reviewing the instructions Cromwell began to give them a more logical order. In the margin a letter has been added by Cromwell next to each clause in the following order: A, A, d, b, c, E, F, g, h and J [i]. This was surely an attempt to re-order the instructions: an inference confirmed by a later draft where the clauses are indeed re-ordered alphabetically in accordance with the letter each was ascribed.¹³⁹

The commissioners were not named in the earlier draft, but their names have been added by Cromwell in the later version.¹⁴⁰ They were Thomas Jones, a gentleman usher of the king's chamber;¹⁴¹ Moris ap Harrye, another with connections to the royal household;¹⁴² and two of Cromwell's men, John Smith

¹³⁸ TNA, PRO, SP 1/67 f. 217v-218 (LP V 683).

¹³⁹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/69 ff. 43-45 (LP V 724 [9]). In this later version three further instructions have been added which are not present on the earlier draft, but these appear at the end.

¹⁴⁰ TNA, PRO, SP 1/69 f. 43 (LP V 724 [9]).

¹⁴¹ In April 1532 Jones was rewarded for his work as a commissoner by being given the offices of steward, surveyour and receiver of several of ap Gruffyd's former lands. See TNA, PRO, C82/654 (LP V 978 [3]). A draft bond for these offices was drawn up by Cromwell. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/237 f. 166 (LP Add I, i, 166).

¹⁴² Griffiths, *Sir Rhys ap Thomas*, p. 114.

and William Brabazon.¹⁴³ Cromwell's use of his own men, in this instance alongside servants of the king, is a recurring feature in the tasks he undertook during these early years.¹⁴⁴ Many of his servants had been used in the land exchanges in 1531.¹⁴⁵ In late 1532 Cromwell also oversaw the grants of lands used to endower Anne Boleyn as marchioness of Pembroke.¹⁴⁶ Smith and Brabazon were again used in this to take possession of her newly acquired lands in north and south Wales in early 1533.¹⁴⁷ Operating in this fashion enabled Cromwell to delegate - and therefore maximise - work to men he knew well and trusted implicitly. (Brabazon and Smith had worked alongside Cromwell since Wolsey's suppressions.)¹⁴⁸ It also ensured he maintained a greater degree of control over such work by giving it to those in his own service.

¹⁴³ TNA, PRO, SP 1/69 f. 43 (*LP V* 724 [9]).

¹⁴⁴ The same was also true of his work for Wolsey. See, for example, the entry in Cromwell's account book for costs and expenses paid to his servants, including Hugh Whalley, Stephen Vaughan and Richard Swifte, for collecting rents and receipts of money during Wolsey's suppressions. TNA, PRO, SP 1/44 ff. 213 & 219 (*LP IV*, ii, 3536 [1]). Another set of 'Expenses layd out by Thomas Cromwell' for Cardinal College, Ipswich, also recorded 45s 'for two of my seruantes which surueyd the landes of Rumburgh and Bromhill by the space of xv dayes'. See SP 1/47 f. 287 (*LP IV*, ii, 4229 [9]).

¹⁴⁵ See above, pp. 101, 103.

¹⁴⁶ While in Calais Cromwell sent and received patents for these endowments to and from Thomas Audeley. See BL Cotton Vespasian C XIV ff. 166-167 (*LP V* 1430); TNA, PRO, SP 1/71 f. 113 (*LP V* 1437); SP 1/71 f. 121v (*St. P. I.*, p. 385; *LP V* 1450). Drafts copies of several of these grants have also survived (among Cromwell's papers?), one of which is written in Wriothesely's hand, who was still working with Cromwell during these years. The grants are: TNA, PRO, C82/660 and C66/660 m. 25 (*LP V* 1370 [3/i]), a corrected draft of this is SP 2/M ff. 96-97 (*LP V* 1370 [3/ii]); C66/662 mm. 44-47 (*LP V* 1499 [23/i]), a draft of this in Wriothesely's hand is SP 2/M ff. 98-120 (*LP V* 1499 [23/ii]). Valuations of the lands granted to Anne, presumably those which have survived in SP 1/71 f. 6 (*LP V* 1274 [6]), were also returned to Cromwell. See TNA, PRO, E36/143 f. 14 (*LP VI* 299 [iii]).

¹⁴⁷ TNA, PRO, C82/664 (*LP VI* 74). See also BL, Harley MS 368 f. 176 (*LP V* 1274 [5]), which has been misdated to September 1532. On 1 March 1533 Brabazon informed Cromwell 'we haue bene at all my ladiez possessions in the shirez of Pembroke & karmaden...the tenantes haue yeven...at her entre asmuch as haith bene in thiez C[oun]t[ie]z heretofore yeven'. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/74 f. 196 (*LP VI* 200).

¹⁴⁸ For examples of Brabazon's work for Cromwell on Wolsey's suppression, including the surveying of lands, see: TNA, PRO, SP 1/48 f. 23 (*LP IV*, ii, 4275); SP 1/54 f. 351 (*LP IV*, iii, 5792); SP 1/55 f. 196 (*LP IV*, iii, 6033); SP 1/57 f. 2 (*LP IV*, iii, 6217), probably earlier than 1530 as in *LP*; SP 1/57 f. 16 (*LP IV*, iii, 6221); SP 1/65 f. 119 (*LP V* 84), for its re-dating see above p. 97 n. 61. Brabazon became under-treasurer and receiver-general of Ireland in August 1534 (*LP VII* 1122 [12]). John Smith appears to have been an auditor in Wolsey's entourage during the 1520s (*LP IV*, i, 1834 [i]), and worked alongside Cromwell in Wolsey's suppressions. Smith and Cromwell acted together as attorneys taking possession of several sites intended for the collegiate foundations, as well as settling rents, and surveying monastic lands together. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/33 f. 73 (*LP IV*, i, 990 [i]); TNA, PRO, E24/9/1 (*LP IV*, i, 1964); TNA, PRO, SC12/18/60 ff. 78-86 (*LP IV*, i, 1845 [iv]); SP 1/44 f. 62 (*LP IV*, ii, 3406); SP 1/44 f. 114a (*LP IV*, ii, 3448); SP 1/44 f. 146 (*LP IV*, ii, 3489); SP 1/44 f. 218 (*LP IV*, ii, 3536 [i]); SP 1/53 f. 174 (*LP IV*, iii, 5458). Whether Smith

Cromwell oversaw the entire operation of enquiries into ap Gruffyd's lands. A list of the Welshman's lordships, presumably those which the commissioners were to investigate, is written in Cromwell's hand.¹⁴⁹ More indicative is that the commissioners' findings were returned to him and remained in his possession.¹⁵⁰ The revenues from these attainted lands were also paid to Cromwell. William Brabazon's computus, or account, of the revenues of a number of ap Gruffyd's castles and demesnes from 29 September 1530 to 29 September 1531, records that the revenues would be paid to Thomas Cromwell.¹⁵¹ Cromwell's accounts for 22 November 1532 to 11 March 1533 also record the receipt of £139 7s 3d from several of ap Gruffyd's other lands.¹⁵²

That Cromwell received these revenues is significant because it helps to explain how he became a 'minister of finance'.¹⁵³ The earliest offices he held under the king, Master of the King's Jewels, Clerk of the Hanaper and Chancellor of the Exchequer, were all financial ones.¹⁵⁴ When discussing these positions over sixty years ago Elton was less than satisfactory in his explanation of how and why Cromwell obtained them, believing that he deliberately 'snapped up every financial office of some standing that happened to fall vacant'.¹⁵⁵ Yet it is not clear whether the king appointed Cromwell, or whether he asked for each office. Elton himself, however, was confident 'the chances are

ever formally entered Cromwell's household after Wolsey's fall seems doubtful, although Edward Fetyplace did refer to one 'master Smythe your Auditor' in a letter to Cromwell probably from 1527. See SP 1/59 f. 104 (LP IV, iii, App. 103). For Smith and Brabazon's later careers see Robertson, 'Thomas Cromwell's Servants', pp. 451-452, 560-561.

¹⁴⁹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/69 f. 42 (LP V 724 [7]).

¹⁵⁰ Among the papers in Cromwell's possession were the 'accomppte of Willi[a]m Brabson...of all the londes and tenantes late Res ap Gryffith' and 'the accompt of Res ap Gryffith gooddes [sic] londes tenantes and possessions at the tyme of his atteyndure'. See TNA, PRO, E36/143 ff. 26 & 39 (LP VI 299 [ix] & [xi]). At least some of these papers were surely: TNA, PRO, E36/151 ff. 1-12 (LP V 724 [1]); ff. 13-18 (LP V 724 [2]); ff. 19-20 (LP V 724 [3]); ff. 21-24 (LP V 724 [4]); ff. 25-27 (LP V 724 [5]); ff. 28-33 (LP 724 [6]); TNA, PRO, SC6/HenVIII/4882-4888.

¹⁵¹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/67 f. 104 (LP V 448).

¹⁵² TNA, PRO, SP 2/N f. 109 (LP VI 228 [i]).

¹⁵³ Elton, *Tudor Revolution*, p. 110.

¹⁵⁴ Cromwell became Master of the King's Jewels on 14 April 1532, TNA, PRO, C82/654 and C66/659 m. 36 (LP V 978 [13]); Clerk of the Hanaper on 16 July 1532, C82/658 and C66/660 m. 33 (LP V 1207 [36]); and Chancellor of the Exchequer on 12 April 1533, C82/667 and C66/661 m. 27 (LP VI 417 [22]). The holder of each of these offices was appointed by patent for life, and Cromwell was appointed to each following the death of the previous incumbent.

¹⁵⁵ Elton, *Tudor Revolution*, p. 119.

that the initiative came from him [Cromwell]'.¹⁵⁶ Lobbying for offices was a common occurrence, and it is reasonable to suppose that Cromwell did show interest in obtaining formal positions, not least for their financial benefits. But without further evidence the danger of circular argument is evident. What can be said, however, is that Cromwell had *already* been acting vigorously and substantially in a financial capacity before he obtained the Jewel House in April 1532. This makes it easier to understand why his initial positions were financial ones.

The college lands provide the clearest indication that Cromwell was handling what were now Crown revenues from an early date. It will be remembered that he had continued to receive and oversee the collection of rents associated with these since their forfeiture to the Crown. This continued throughout 1531 and beyond. On 18 July 1531 Cromwell received his first royal warrant, noting 'ye haue receyved to our vse certain Somes of money of the Rentes and Revenues of the Landes sumtyme apperteignyng vnto the college...Late called the Cardinall College'. It authorised him to pay £100 for the diets and wages of the scholars there.¹⁵⁷ A warrant to Sir John Daunce, John Hales and Thomas Tamworth in December reveals Cromwell paid 1400 marks into the king's privy coffers, one thousand of which was from college rents collected at Michaelmas; the remaining four hundred forming part of a fine owed to the king from the bishop of Bangor.¹⁵⁸ On 3 January 1532 he received £266 13s 4d of 'the residue for the reuenues issues and proffites of the londes belonging to the college in oxford'.¹⁵⁹ On the 9th Cromwell was formally made receiver-general of those lands,¹⁶⁰ and in early February William Percy told him he had sent £10 for rents, addressing Cromwell as 'generall receyuer of the kynges graces landes nowe in his graces handes by Atteynder'.¹⁶¹ On 17 January Cromwell had also paid £200 to Thomas Hennage 'due of the issues reuenues

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 120.

¹⁵⁷ TNA, PRO, E101/421/1 (LP V 341). This warrant is in English, not Latin, as specified in LP.

¹⁵⁸ TNA, PRO, SP 1/68 f. 82 (LP V 577).

¹⁵⁹ TNA, PRO, E36/141 f. 39 (LP V 1285 [ix]). This is recorded on a list of Cromwell's warrants signed by the king. The warrant itself does not appear to have survived.

¹⁶⁰ TNA, PRO, SP 1/69 f. 9 (LP V 701).

¹⁶¹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/69 ff. 83-83v (LP V 774).

and profittes' of the Oxford and Ipswich lands.¹⁶² In March he received £26 19s 4d from the duke of Norfolk for two years annuity on lands belonging to the suppressed priory of Felixstowe.¹⁶³ In the same month he also received £100 from the college lands of Oxford and Ipswich.¹⁶⁴

True, not all the revenues Cromwell handled before his appointment as Master of the King's Jewels were connected with land. Of the £500 he paid into the privy coffers on 25 February 1532 only £33 6s 8d was from the residue of rents for college lands.¹⁶⁵ By contrast, £300 was in part recompense for the bishop of Bath's fine for escaped prisoners; £140 was in part payment of the revenues of the archbishop of York; and £26 13s 4d was for a fine made with a prisoner. But Cromwell's earliest financial responsibilities had been virtually exclusively associated with land, the sole exception being his modest receipt of £13 6s 8d from the Privy Purse which he paid toward work on the king's tomb in January 1531.¹⁶⁶ It will be remembered that from May 1531 he was paying money for the purchasing of land and leases in Westminster. In December, as noted, Cromwell managed the inquests into the extent and value of ap Gruffyd's land's, with the revenues again being paid to him. Reliably handling these revenues would explain why he received wider sums on behalf of the Crown. When the existing incumbent of the Jewel House, Robert Amadas, died in early 1532, Cromwell was an obvious choice to succeed him given the relative insignificance of the office, and his own financial skills and experience.

¹⁶² TNA, PRO, E36/141 f. 40 (*LP* V 1285 [ix]). This warrant does not appear to have survived, but is recorded in Cromwell's book listing the warrants directed to him from the king.

¹⁶³ TNA, PRO, SP 1/69 f. 139 (*LP* V 842). The amount owed was actually £40 but £13 6s 8d was paid to one Robert Holdyche, treasurer of the duke's household, for 'twoo yeres ffee'.

¹⁶⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 1/70 f. 49 (*LP* V 1040). The description of this document in *LP* fails to record that this is an amended warrant, originally designed to discharge Cromwell for the payment of £200 into the privy coffers. £100 of this was from the college lands noted above; the other £100 was paid to Cromwell by Sir Jeffrey Blythe, treasurer of Lichfield Cathedral. This money was for the landed revenues from the see of Coventry and Lichfield, which had been vacant since the death of Jeffrey Blythe's uncle, the former bishop there, who was also confusingly called Geoffrey Blythe. The warrant has been amended to incorporate £333 6s 8d from Sir Thomas Seymour. The description of the details of the £200 has been crossed out and replaced with a general description of it coming from 'certen landes and tenementes', and the combined sum of £533 6s 8d recorded as being paid in May 1532, replacing the month of March.

¹⁶⁵ TNA, PRO, E101/421/5 (*LP* V 825).

¹⁶⁶ Nicolas, *Privy Purse Expences*, p. 101; *LP* V p. 753; TNA, PRO, SP 1/65 f. 47 (*LP* V 32). He also made later payments for this, SP 1/70 f. 204 (*LP* V 1244).

Whether, once in this office, Cromwell consciously expanded its influence, as argued by Elton, is considered elsewhere.¹⁶⁷

During his initial year in the king's service, then, Cromwell was heavily occupied with responsibilities connected with various Crown lands. Although he would accumulate wider tasks from late 1531 onwards, these matters continued to be among his foremost concerns between 1532 and 1534. An undated document in Cromwell's hand, headed 'Thinges done by the kynges highness sythyn I came to his seruyce', contains a list of thirty-three tasks Cromwell managed during these early years [Appendix 2].¹⁶⁸ It emphasises the wide range of jobs that Cromwell was involved with, although it demonstrably does not list everything. (Modern scholars might be struck by the absence of anything connected with the royal supremacy.) What seems significant is that, of the thirty-three jobs listed, nineteen of them concern land acquisitions, and a further four concern building works associated with them. It therefore succinctly illustrates the extent to which the Crown's landed affairs dominated Cromwell's early career.

Cromwell's involvement with the Crown's landed acquisitions continued throughout these years. During 1532 he concluded a series of exchanges with Christ's College, Cambridge.¹⁶⁹ The Crown's procurement of various parks and manors in Essex, throughout 1532, 1533 and 1534 are of greater interest, however, because they offer the opportunity to see Cromwell working alongside other royal ministers at a time when he himself was fast emerging as the king's chief

¹⁶⁷ See below, pp. 211-231.

¹⁶⁸ TNA, PRO, SP 1/104 ff. 220-222 (*LP X* 1231). This document has been included as an appendix.

¹⁶⁹ A number of letters from Henry Lockwood, the master there, asked for Cromwell's help to 'bryng the landes off the college in sum beyter fraym' and for a 'fynall end with owr exchanges' in March 1532. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/69 f. 140 (*LP V* 403). Evidently, however, the exchanges with Lockwood's college were not to their advantage. By June he was reporting that people were saying he had 'releyssyd' the lands without proper surety, and lost a great sum. That he wrote to Cromwell for help confirms he was seen as the minister handling these matters: 'yt ys only in yow...that thys new exchange may be both mor profyttubyll & in mor suerte to the college'. See SP 1/70 f. 137 (*LP V* 1136). That he was still requesting Cromwell's aid on the same matter in 1535, in increasingly desperate tones, suggests he was unsuccessful in his attempts to obtain his help. See SP 1/69 f. 140 (*LP V* 403); SP 1/69 f. 108 (*LP V* 798); SP 1/70 f. 137 (*LP V* 1136); SP 1/71 ff. 26-27 (*LP V* 1309); SP 1/73 f. 120 (*LP V* 1745); SP 1/78 f. f. 10 (*LP VI* 848); SP 1/82 f. 13 (*LP VII* 16); SP 1/92 f. 41 (*LP VIII* 571); BL, Cotton MS, Faustina CIII f. 483 (*LP VIII* 577).

minister. In February 1532 Cromwell had bought Giles Heron's house called Alderbroke in Wanstead, Essex, on behalf of the king, with the assistance of Christopher Hales and Baldwin Mallet.¹⁷⁰ Negotiations for this had begun in late 1531, and Cromwell personally visited these lands, making 'a vew' of them,¹⁷¹ before they were subsequently inclosed in the park at Eltham.¹⁷² It was probably in late 1532 that Cromwell also begun negotiations for an exchange for the manors of Coppydhall and Netyswell, with Robert Fuller, abbot of Waltham abbey.¹⁷³ On 31 December Fuller wrote to Cromwell informing him that he had assembled the convent for sealing the deeds relating to the exchange, but doubted whether they would consent. He therefore asked Cromwell 'to take the payn to cum over and speke with them in the Kynges behalf as your polytyk wisdom shall thynke best'.¹⁷⁴ Whether Cromwell did so is unknown, but the king did eventually acquire these lands. The acts of parliament ratifying the exchange were passed in early 1534.¹⁷⁵ Memoranda in Cromwell's hand reveals he had been identifying further lands to be granted in exchange from mid-1533.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁰ TNA, PRO, SP 2/L ff. 150-151 (LP V 814); a draft of this grant, corrected by Cromwell, is SP 2/L ff. 56-61 (LP V 658).

¹⁷¹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/68 f. 105 (LP V 620); TNA, PRO, E36/143 f. 35 (LP VI 299 [ix]).

¹⁷² TNA, PRO, SP 1/70 f. 138 (LP V 1139 [24]).

¹⁷³ TNA, PRO, E36/182 ff. 37-41 (LP VII 63 [2]). These are articles of agreement made between Cromwell and the abbot and convent, written in Cromwell's hand. They are undated, but were placed in 1534 in LP on the grounds that the exchanges were finally ratified in parliament in that year. According to these articles, however, in return for the manor and park of Coppydhall the abbey was to receive lands 'which the kinges highness shall purchase of humffrey Browne serjeant of the law' (f. 37). The significant point here is that Browne was one of the king's serjeant's between 1530 and 1532, and then from 1535, but not in 1533 or 1534. See J. Sainty, *A List of English Law Officers, King's Counsel and Holders of Patents of Precedence* (London, 1987), p. 14; J. H. Baker, *The Order of Serjeants at Law* (London, 1984), p. 502. In 1533 Browne himself wrote to Cromwell notifying him he would be happy to exchange his Waltham lands for 'A lettell house callyd Alderbroke the wyche was heronz' while also asking Cromwell to have him in remembrance for 'woon of the kynges sergeantes to be made'. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/81 f. 90 (LP VI 1635); my italics for emphasis. It seems highly probably therefore that these articles were first drawn up in 1532, not 1534.

¹⁷⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 1/73 f. 7 (LP V 1684).

¹⁷⁵ *Statutes of the Realm*, iii, 25. Henry VIII. c. 26; 26. Henry VIII. c. 24. The trustees of the lands on behalf of the king again included Cromwell, along with Audeley, Tuke and Richard Riche, the Solicitor-General.

¹⁷⁶ An item among Cromwell's remembrances was 'To remember my lord of Waltham's recompense for Copped Hall park. See LP VII 143 [ii]. Another memoranda in his own hand, written on the back of a letter from the bishop of Ely, is headed 'landes to be appointed for the Abbot of Waltham in the leu of coppydhall park and the manor of Epping'. It goes on to list a number of lands, each of which is valued. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/75 f. 73 (LP VI 312).

The articles of agreement with Waltham specified that in return for their lands they would receive, amongst others, 'lands which the king will purchase from Humphrey Browne'.¹⁷⁷ Cromwell had already begun negotiation with Browne for this in 1532,¹⁷⁸ but his direct involvement was temporarily cut short when he accompanied the king to Calais for his meeting with Francis I in October. From Calais, however, Cromwell co-ordinated further negotiations via another royal servant, Christopher Hales, who, it will be recalled, had also been involved with many of these exchanges.¹⁷⁹ Cromwell and Hales had known each other since at least the 1520s,¹⁸⁰ and, according to John Foxe, they were genuine friends.¹⁸¹ Their correspondence in October reveals Hales worked in conjunction with Cromwell, albeit under his direction, in order to facilitate these negotiations. He told Cromwell on 17 October that he had spoken with a number of people regarding land exchanges, including one with lord Scrope (discussed below), but that when he had had spoken with Humphrey Browne, he had not been prepared to sell his lands; instead he wanted an exchange of similar value.¹⁸² Cromwell sent further instructions from Calais, and on 23 October Hales told him 'I intend to comen with master Browne after such sort as ye write'. He also told him 'master [Richard] Rych and I have had comunicacion with master mannock owner of chynghford with whome by mediacion and helpe of master Alyngton...we be moche concluded'.¹⁸³ On 26 October he also told Cromwell that he and Riche 'be at a Full point with [Thomas] Roberttes the Audytors for his lands beside Coppinghall, having

¹⁷⁷ TNA, PRO, E36/182 f. 37 (*LP* VII 64 [2]).

¹⁷⁸ TNA, PRO, SP 1/71 f. 118 (*LP* V 1445).

¹⁷⁹ See above, pp. 100-104.

¹⁸⁰ Hales was in correspondence with Cromwell throughout the 1520s, and his wife, the sister of one of Cromwell's servants (*LP* XII, ii, 1141), sent Cromwell a piece of 'browne' for the pleasures Cromwell had done for her in 1526. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/235 f. 74 (*LP* Add, I, i, 494); SP 1/235 f. 216 (*LP* Add I, i, 539); SP 1/235 f. 75 (*LP* Add I, i, 495).

¹⁸¹ Foxe, *Acts and Monuments* (1570 edn.), pp. 1347-1348. Foxe claimed Hales was one of the figures who recommended Cromwell to the king in 1530 following Wolsey's fall: 'There was at the same tyme one Syr Christofer Hales Knight, Maister of the Rolles, who notwithstanding was then a mighty Papiste, yet bare he such fauour and good lykyng to Cromwell, that hee commended hym to the kyng, as a man most fitte for hys purpose, hauyng then to do agaynst the Pope'.

¹⁸² TNA, PRO, SP 1/71 f. 118 (*LP* V 1445).

¹⁸³ TNA, PRO, SP 1/71 f. 141 (*LP* V 1466); *Feet of Fines for Essex*, IV, 1423-1457, ed. P. H. Reaney and M. Fitch (Colchester, 1964), p. 196 n. 21.

promised him £220 for it.¹⁸⁴ The survival of Cromwell's correspondence often gives the misleading impression that he was virtually single-handedly dealing with all of the Crown's affairs. These letters show Cromwell co-ordinating work with others.

Cromwell also worked cooperatively when defending the king's right or title to land. On 26 May 1532 Sir George Throckmorton reported to him that 'I haue knowledge...that Syr William Spenser ys departyd...and that he hath doon asmuche as in hym lyeth to defrawde the kynge Both of the wardeshyp of the londe and of the Body'.¹⁸⁵ Spencer held considerable lands in Northamptonshire and Warwickshire,¹⁸⁶ and Cromwell was later told the king was in danger of losing 500 marks if he lost his legal right to the Spencer lands.¹⁸⁷ Exactly how the king was being defrauded is not clear. In September Cromwell told the king how a dispute between lady Spencer and the executors of her husband's will was heard 'before my lorde the keper of your greate seale [Audeley] Sir Willyam Poulet and me'.¹⁸⁸ Cromwell informed Henry that one of the executors, Edmund Knightley, had 'trauayled asmoche as in him...*to sett pyke between the sayd ladye and the executors and to defeate your grace of your title to the heire of the saide spencer*'.¹⁸⁹ In a series of letters to Cromwell,

¹⁸⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 1/71 f. 145 (LP V 1470). Robert's lands were also in Waltham and are listed on Cromwell's list of 'Thynges done by the kinges highness sythyn I came to his seruise'. The account of payments Cromwell made on behalf of the king between 22 November 1532 to 11 March 1533 records that he delivered the £220 to Richard Riche to purchase these lands. See SP 2/N f. 110 (LP VI 228).

¹⁸⁵ TNA, PRO, SP 1/70 f. 57 (LP V 1051). Throckmorton's partiality in the Spencer matter was later suspected, see SP 1/74 f. 132 (LP VI 128), and he attempted to defend his actions to Cromwell in a letter dated 10 November. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/68 f. 48 (LP V 527). This was mistakenly placed in 1531 by the editors of LP. It belongs to either 1532 (the most likely) or 1533.

¹⁸⁶ TNA, PRO, C142/55; C142/60; C142/290. According to Sir William Spencer's *inquisitions post mortem*, Throckmorton's information was premature: he died on 20 June 1532.

¹⁸⁷ TNA, PRO, SP 1/74 f. 132 (LP VI 128).

¹⁸⁸ TNA, PRO, SP 1/71 f. 17 (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 348-349; LP V 1298).

¹⁸⁹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/71 f. 17 (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 348-349; LP V 1298). Italics indicate additions added in Cromwell's own hand. Knightley had also issued false proclamations in the king's name, and was therefore committed to the gaol of the Fleet. Interestingly, however, by October he had been released, possibly at Cromwell's own instigation. Knightley was a lawyer who, in November 1531, had been created a serjeant-at-law [J. Baker, 'Knightley, Sir Edmund (d. 1542)', *ODNB*; Baker, *Order of Serjeants*, p. 168.] This explains the Chief Justice of the Common Pleas' letter to Cromwell, beseeching him 'to be good master vnto master Knightley now being in the flete...forasmoche as he is one of our flokke'. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/71 f. 47 (LP V 1336). Perhaps this explains Cromwell's sympathy with Knightley,

Thomas Audeley reveals the two men were working in conjunction to protect the king's rights. During Cromwell's sojourn in Calais, Audeley reported that the juries in the counties were reconvening to determine to whom the Spencer lands should escheat too. Cromwell was told 'ther ys gret counsel & frendes made to be ther ag[a]yn[st] the kyng', but Audeley had made sure that if 'it may apere to suche as be there for the kynge that the jury be so laboryd that they wil passe agenst the kyng...then the eschetor shal haue A superseda & take no verdyte tyll it be better examyned'.¹⁹⁰ The importance of Audeley's actions were emphasised in a letter on 15 November: 'I haue byn enfourmed that if I had not devised a superseda into warwikshire for spencers mattier it wold haue byn founde against the king by beryng and mayntenaunce'.¹⁹¹ His remarks are of interest because they again confirm he was working alongside Cromwell to protect the king's rights, and evidently acting with some independence. More generally, they also hint at the difficulties faced by the Crown's servants when trying to impose the king's authority and rights in the localities.¹⁹² The final resolution of the Spencer matter is unclear, but it would appear that the king did successfully obtain his right to the lands. Two of the men Cromwell had been using to resolve it (Anthony Coope and John Onely) were among the four men appointed as custodians of the lands during the minority of Spencer's heir in June 1534.¹⁹³

acknowledged by Knightley himself in a letter to Cromwell while he was incarcerated: 'I perceue by my brother...that ye stond & be to me sych [sic] good & sir I perceue nottes this by him only but by other my especialles good frendes as Sir John Russell & other...iff it wold ples you to shewe me your fauour in such wise ...the kyng...may be the suner moued to haue pitie'. See SP 1/72 f. 72 (LP V 1368). If Cromwell had helped free him it appears this was a mistake: it was later reported that Knightley had 'ryddon downe' to the county escheators 'to worke some mysheff hym self or ellys to sett other men therto & all agenst the kynges tytyll' of the Spencer lands. See SP 1/71 f. 130 (LP V 1455).

¹⁹⁰ BL, Cotton MS, Titus B I ff. 89v-90 (LP V 1518).

¹⁹¹ BL, Cotton MS, Titus B I f. 351 (Ellis, 1st Series, ii. 22-25; LP V 1542).

¹⁹² Anthony Coope echoed this in letters to Cromwell on the same matter during 1533. In February he lamented 'It grevithe me to se his grace have so fewe frendes' here, while in May he was reporting that he had 'takyn payn with scheriffe to chose an Indifferent or a favourable [jury] for the king to be befor the exchetour'. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/74 f. 132 (LP VI 128); SP 1/74 f. 132 (LP VI 128).

¹⁹³ TNA, PRO, C82/685 and C66/665 m. 15 (LP VII 922 [20]). For other examples of Cromwell protecting the king's title or right to land during these years, see: TNA, PRO, SP 1/83 f. 19 (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 379-380; LP VII 383). This is a letter from Cromwell to a sheriff in Yorkshire, following the death of Sir John Dunham. He had held land off the king in York, and Cromwell was instructing the sheriff to 'retourne a suffycient Inquest'

Cromwell's letter to Henry reveals that he had initially examined the Spencer matter with Audeley and William Paulet. Cromwell's relationship with Audeley is examined elsewhere, but Paulet was a royal minister whose name frequently appears alongside Cromwell's in connection with Crown lands. Can anything be said about the relations between these two? Both had been in Wolsey's household, and it will be recalled that Paulet helped Cromwell obtain his seat in the 1529 parliament. Whether this was done through friendship is unclear,¹⁹⁴ but all the available evidence for the years 1531-1534 points to a cordial working relationship. Paulet's letters to Cromwell, even when the latter was indisputably Henry VIII's chief minister, are courteous but confident in tone.¹⁹⁵ Both men were also appointed masters of the king's woods and worked together in this.¹⁹⁶ Letters and surveys concerning the king's woods were often addressed to them both, while warrants for the sale of woodland were also issued in both their names.¹⁹⁷ Evidently Paulet was just as active as Cromwell in fulfilling his responsibilities in this office. The only letter from him to Cromwell relating to their joint responsibilities supports this conclusion. Paulet wrote 'I haue sent you new lettres to signe *wherewith I troble you often...I pray you send me the boke of the forest of deane that you and I may speke with Sir Christopher Bayneham thereupon bfore he depart*'.¹⁹⁸

to enquire about the tenants of these lands following their reversion to the king. See also SP 2/O f. 150 (*LP VI 1680*), which is a notification addressed to Cromwell, informing him of the fraudulent attempts to deny the king the issues and profits owed to him from the lands of Thomas Haddon.

¹⁹⁴ Although in one letter from 1534, Paulet remarked to Cromwell that a servant knew 'moche Frindship to be bitwene you and me'. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/88 f. 85 (*LP VII 1653*).

¹⁹⁵ TNA, PRO, SP 1/73 f. 128 (*LP V 1753*), for its re-dating see below n. 198; SP 1/77 ff. 203-204 (*St. P. VII*, p. 481; *LP VI 830*) SP 1/83 f. 139 (*LP VII 527*); SP 1/83 f. 140 (*LP VII 528*); SP 1/88 f. 85 (*LP VII 1653*).

¹⁹⁶ When Cromwell was appointed master of the king's woods is unclear because no patent has survived. The earliest evidence of him acting in this capacity is a letter from March 1533, addressed to him as 'one of the masters of the kynges woddess'. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/74 f. 205 (*LP VI 209*). An undated draft patent appointing him and Paulet masters of the king's woods in the duchy of Lancashire was also placed in 1533 in *LP*. See SP 2/O ff. 116-117 (*LP VI 1623*). It seems probable therefore that he was appointed at the beginning of 1533. Paulet, however, may have already held this position. See SP 1/72 f. 26 (*LP V 1549*).

¹⁹⁷ TNA, PRO, SP 1/74 f. 206 (*LP VI 210*); SP 1/75 f. 23 (*LP VI 231*); SP 1/75 ff. 187-193 (*LP VI 406*); SP 1/81 f. 31 (*LP VI 1575*); SP 1/81 f. 32 (*LP VI 1576*). Several documents also show Paulet active by himself. See SP 1/238 ff. 137-145v (*LP Add I, i, 876 [1 & 2]*); SP 1/82 ff. 139-140 (*LP VII 154*).

¹⁹⁸ TNA, PRO, SP 1/73 f. 128 (*LP V 1753*). Undated and placed in 1531 in *LP*. It would be more reasonable to date this to 1533. My italics for emphasis.

One further land exchange during Cromwell's early years as a royal minister is of interest. In February 1532 Cromwell had informed Henry lord Scrope of Bolton that it was the king's pleasure 'to haue my maner of Pisshoo with the comodites of the sayme to be Annexede to his honour of hunsdone'.¹⁹⁹ Negotiations were continuing and the lands were not acquired by the Crown until 1534.²⁰⁰ Cromwell again managed the exchange, but did so alongside other familiar legal agents, including Hales, Riche and one John Chauncey.²⁰¹ Of greater interest, however, is that these negotiations cast further light on the relationship between Cromwell and the king. Scrope told Cromwell in May 1532 that he was prepared to exchange his land, rather than sell it, and for this 'his grace hade commaundet youe to enserche for other Londes for my recompence'.²⁰² Cromwell's role is therefore evident: he was to carry out much of the detailed work identifying lands of similar value for the exchange. In January 1533 Scrope sent Cromwell 'the trewe valew' of the Pissho lands to aid him in this,²⁰³ and a list headed 'Maneres londes and tenements within the countie of York to be geuyn by the kynges highness to John lord Scrope in recompence For the manor of Pisho' was probably one of the fruits of Cromwell's labours.²⁰⁴ But while Cromwell had a formative role in identifying lands for exchange, it was the king who made the final decision on exactly what would be given. At the foot of the list is the telling comment: 'Any of thes

¹⁹⁹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/69 f. 208 (*LP V* 916). See also SP 1/69 f. 207 (*LP V* 915).

²⁰⁰ A surviving fragment of an indenture between Lord Scrope on the one part, and Cromwell, Audeley, Brian Tuke, Hales and Mallet, on the other, was placed in 1527 in *LP*. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/46 ff. 31-32 (*LP IV*, ii, 3740). It is surely connected with this exchange and should be dated to the early 1530s.

²⁰¹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/71 f. 118 (*LP V* 1445); SP 1/71 f. 141 (*LP V* 1466).

²⁰² TNA, PRO, SP 1/70 f. 28 (*LP V* 1015). This letter was placed in 1532, but surely sent in response to Cromwell's letter dated 24 April, which was placed in 1533 in *LP*. In this Cromwell told Scrope 'his Mageste hath commaundyed me ~~therfor~~ to Inserche for landes for your Recompens...which I ~~haue~~ shall do with all convenient speide'. See SP 1/75 f. 168 (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 352-353; *LP VI* 383). Scrope, in his letter, wrote 'accordinge to your letters...his grace hade commaundet youe to enserche for other Londes for my recompence / whiche in your lettre ye surmytt to doo with all convenient speide'. The similar phrasing suggests it was written in direct response to Cromwell's, and the two should be read together. Both probably belong to 1532.

²⁰³ TNA, PRO, SP 1/74 f. 37 (*LP VI* 43).

²⁰⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 1/75 f. 139 (*LP VI* 348 [ii]). John lord Scrope was son and heir to Henry, who died in 1533 before negotiations were complete. See TNA, PRO, C82/677 and C66/663 m. 19 (*LP VI* 1595 [27]).

landes by what parcelles yt *will please the kynges grace to appoint* so that Amount to the valew of Pisho'.²⁰⁵ Scrope's comment to Cromwell regarding the 'great payne' he had taken 'laboryng the kyngis highness for an awnswer to be had off suche landes as it pleased the Kyngis highnes that I shuld haue in recompence', also underlines it was Henry who had the final say, not Cromwell.²⁰⁶

Of course, this is not to suggest that Cromwell did not possess any influence over the exchange. In a practical sense he exerted a formative one, by identifying and selecting the lands from which the king was to choose. Moreover, it would be reasonable to assume that his opinion was sought on precisely which land should be given for a favourable deal. There are even hints that Cromwell was prepared to act unscrupulously for personal gain when doing this. In a number of letters Scrope made cryptic remarks to Cromwell, obviously alluding to some form of bribe, regarding 'suche promesse as my servaunt did mak[e] secretly vnto you (yff the promyssis goy [sic] forwarde) I haue commaundet hym to performe'.²⁰⁷ This was to ensure that Scrope might have 'the Reedhouses and the lordschipe belonging ther vnto' in recompence for Pisho. What this 'promesse' entailed is unclear, but it seems Cromwell was receptive. He told Scrope that 'as to the rede howsys with the other thinges mouyd to me by this berer your seruaunt I wyll vndowtydlye doo my best'.²⁰⁸ Frustratingly Henry lord Scrope died in 1533, and further details on this are lacking. Negotiations over Pisho were concluded with his son, John, who was eventually forced to settle for money rather than land.²⁰⁹

Nevertheless the Crown's landed interest was one area over which Cromwell had a very real influence with the king. Letters of thanks testify that Cromwell often had success in moving Henry to grant lands and bestow offices

²⁰⁵ TNA, PRO, SP 1/75 f. 139 (*LP VI 348 [ii]*). My italics for emphasis.

²⁰⁶ TNA, PRO, SP 1/74 f. 37 (*LP VI 43*); BL, Cotton MS, Vespasian F XIII f. 208 (*LP V 348 [i]*)

²⁰⁷ BL, Cotton MS, Vespasian F XIII f. 208 (*LP V 348 [i]*); SP 1/74 f. 37 (*LP VI 43*).

²⁰⁸ TNA, PRO, SP 1/75 f. 168 (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 353-3; *LP VI 383*).

²⁰⁹ *Statutes of the Realm*, iii, 25. Henry VIII. c. 31; TNA, PRO, SP 1/76 ff. 26-27 (*LP VI 453*); SP 1/79 f. 79 (*LP VI 520*); TNA, PRO, E36/143 f. 43 (*LP VII 50*); SP 1/86 f. 150 (*LP VII 1364*). See H. Miller, *Henry VIII and the English Nobility* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 219-220, for the details of the final settlement.

connected to estates. In one such instance Nicholas Poyntz reminded Cromwell that

where the kings grace gaue to one Thomas ap gwilliams the keeping of mykelwod chase in gloucester shir during his graces pleasur / afterwards by your (as yet undeserued) goodness and at your only desire / yt pleasid...his highness to gyue me the same office for terme of my life.²¹⁰

Of greater significance, however, are the attempts by Sir John Russell to move Henry on the paling of More park, Hertfordshire, in April and May 1532.²¹¹ Henry had acquired the More as part of his exchange with St Albans in late 1531. Russell was custodian and keeper of the parks there, and wrote several times to Cromwell on their ruinous state.²¹² In one letter he told Cromwell 'I moved the kynges highness dyuerse tymes...toching the pailyng of the More park and showed his grace what fowle lanes and wais wer goyng to the More'. Henry had agreed 'it should be pailyd shortely' but Russell had received no money or authorisation to do this yet.²¹³ Russell continued to write to Cromwell on this matter,²¹⁴ which is unsurprising given the response he received from Thomas Heritage, who had also been in conversation with the king on Russell's behalf. Heritage told Russell 'I cowlde Gette no Graunte of money ne othor answere' from the king because

²¹⁰ TNA, PRO, SP 1/74 f. 134 (LP VI 133). Poyntz's grant for this office is TNA, PRO, C82/665 and C66/660 m. 9 (LP VI 196).

²¹¹ Paling was a process by which trees were turned into fencing material. Russell reported that men had broken down the 'pales' and made 'highe wais through the parke'. This had resulted in the loss of four or five hundred deer. The gardens of the More also reportedly 'goith to greate Ruyn', previously costing Wolsey one hundred marks a year to maintain. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/75 f. 138 (LP VI 347); SP 1/76 f. 7 (LP VI 426), which are incorrectly placed in 1533. They belong to 1532.

²¹² VCH, Hertfordshire, II, p. 376. For a succinct history of the More see M. Biddle, L. Barfield and A. Millard, 'The Excavation of the Manor of the More, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire', *Archaeological Journal*, 116 (1959), pp. 138-142.

²¹³ TNA, PRO, SP 1/75 f. 138 (LP VI 347). The king believed he received enough of the revenues to do it himself.

²¹⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 1/75 f. 182 (LP VI 401); SP 1/76 f. 7 (LP VI 426). Both incorrectly placed in 1533 in LP. They belong to 1532.

I cowlde nott cause hym [to] loke apon your letter but seyde [he] wold Furste haue master Cromwell and me to gether...Secunderely he mervelyd what hathe be done with the Revenyv[e]ws of the more syne the lord cardenall was depossyd to the whyche I showyd hym...that master harvye Receuyd hyt...and master cade as Receuor or surveyor / where vnto he seyde he Gaue but lytle credence vnto he might here master Cromwell and me to gether.

Heritage also told the king of the 'Ruynes of the parke' and that the workmen would not labour without pay, to which the king agreed they should be paid, 'bute Furste he woll here master Cromwell speke'.²¹⁵ What is striking here is Henry's insistence on hearing from Cromwell before he made a decision. It serves to underline that the Crown lands were an area over which Cromwell had a very real influence. Henry was the decision maker, but he did so on the advice and information provided by trusted ministers. He relied here on Cromwell because of his detailed knowledge. Cromwell had managed the original exchange which acquired The More, and Russell's remarks indicate he was familiar with its financial arrangements since then.²¹⁶ What is more, Russell's repeated request that Cromwell 'solycite his highenes effectuously' for the paling of the park, emphasises he felt only Cromwell could achieve this.²¹⁷ Sure enough, where Russell and Heritage themselves had failed, Cromwell succeeded. On 15 May Russell told Cromwell 'my wyff brought me xl^{li} which she Receuyd of you for the payling of the more park And also that I shuld receyue of your seruauant Candishe A nother some of money of the Reuenuez of the more for the same'.²¹⁸

²¹⁵ TNA, PRO, SP 1/69 f. 266 (*LP V* 976).

²¹⁶ Russell wrote how 'as for the Reuenuz of the More you [Cromwell] know very well...that I neuer receiued] peny profett therof'. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/75 f. 138 (*LP VI* 347); SP 1/75 f. 182 (*LP VI* 401). Thomas Heritage and 'the kinges Auditor' were also aware of this, according to Russell, but Henry's response to Heritage's attempts to obtain money make it clear that he would only take Cromwell's word on this.

²¹⁷ TNA, PRO, SP 1/75 f. 138 (*LP VI* 347).

²¹⁸ TNA, PRO, SP 1/76 f. 45 (*LP VI* 483). This is also from 1532, not 1533 as in *LP*. A record of Cromwell's warrants lists one 'bering date the xxii day of May in the xxiiii yere of king henry the viiith [i.e. 22 May 1532] of and for the payment of xl li to Sir John Russell knight to be employed about the paling of the parke at more'. See TNA, PRO, E36/141 f. 41 (*LP V* 1285 [ix]).

Many of the requests for patronage Cromwell received between the years 1531-1534 were also connected with Crown lands. These again underline both the extent of his involvement with them, and the influence toward them he was perceived to have. Numerous letters were written to Cromwell with the intent of obtaining his help in regards to land.²¹⁹ Most would be tedious to describe here, but some are worthy of particular note because they offer glimpses of the extent of this influence. Unsurprisingly, given his long-standing involvement, Cromwell was often approached on matters concerning former college lands.²²⁰ In December 1531 Anthony Cave, receiver at the late priory of Tickford, asked that Cromwell ‘continewe your good Remembraunce & jentilnes to me concernyng this hows of tickfford’. Cave complained that his lease on Tickford was of small value and ‘of lesse proffyt with owtte your good helpe’.²²¹ Whether Cromwell aided him is unclear, but in early 1534 he was still active on Cave’s behalf, requesting and obtaining a new ‘graunte of a lease to Antony Cave concernyng the Farme of Tykeford’ from the canons at Oxford.²²² In March 1534 Robert Cokett sought Cromwell’s aid in securing a farm connected with the prebend of Wetwang, York, lately re-granted to the king’s college at Oxford.²²³ Sir William Parre, a Northamptonshire knight, also asked

²¹⁹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/65 f. 45 (LP V 23); SP 1/65 f. 239 (LP V 224), wrongly placed in 1531 in LP, for its re-dating to 1533 see and compare Higdon’s comments regarding the receipt of Cromwell’s letter delivered by Rowland Lee with SP 1/75 f. 179 (LP VI 398), SP 1/75 f. 179 (LP VI 398) and SP 2/O ff. 20-22 (LP VI 664). Other examples of landed influence include: SP 1/237 f. 80 (LP Add I, i, 745); SP 1/69 f. 83 (LP V 774); SP 1/69 f. 213 (LP V 924); SP 1/70 f. 96 (LP V 1083); SP 1/70 f. 121 (LP V 1105); SP 1/70 f. 169 (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 347; LP V 1185 [2]) and SP 1/72 f. 43 (LP V 1561); LP V 1372; SP 1/71 f. 83 (LP V 1395); SP 1/73 f. 125 (LP V 1750); SP 1/74 f. 55 (LP VI 59); SP 1/75 f. 173 (LP VI 388) and SP 1/79 f. 142 (LP VI 1223); SP 1/79 f. 165 (LP VI 1265); SP 1/80 f. 23 (LP VI 1354); SP 1/80 f. 37 (LP VI 1361) and SP 1/80 f. 170 (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 367-368; LP VI 1502), which is another example, possible connected to this; SP 1/80 f. 92 (LP VI 1410); SP 1/80 f. 150 (LP VI 1480); SP 1/80 f. 153 (LP VI 1484); SP 1/81 f. 137 (LP VI 1689); SP 1/82 f. 212 (LP VII 272); SP 1/82 f. 228 (LP VII 294); SP 1/82 f. 229 (LP VII 295) Cromwell’s position as master of the king’s woods similarly saw him approached on favours connected with this. See for examples: TNA, PRO, SP 1/69 f. 204 (LP V 913); SP 1/238 f. 61 (LP Add I, i, 839); SP 1/81 f. 91 (LP VI 1638); SP 1/74 f. 6 (LP VI 9); SP 1/82 f. 242 (LP VII 312).

²²⁰ Some of the earliest examples of this have already been touched on, see above, pp. 98-99, 108-110.

²²¹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/68 f. 91 (LP V 590). Cromwell had obtained the lease and position of receiver for Anthony Cave during the 1520s. See SP 1/48 f. 175 (LP IV, ii, 4388); SP 1/49 f. 88 (LP IV, ii, 4481).

²²² TNA, PRO, SP 1/82 f. 146 (LP VII 174).

²²³ TNA, PRO, SP 1/82 f. 228 (LP VII 294); SP 1/82 f. 229 (LP VII 295).

that Cromwell help his servant to ‘my fee off dawntre & tykfforde, wych was dew vn to me at mychellmas last past’.²²⁴

Members of the nobility, upper gentry and courtiers also looked to Cromwell as a figure capable of assisting them with matters concerning land.²²⁵ Henry, earl of Essex, wanted Cromwell to get him a licence from the king enabling him to enter certain lands, as well as obtaining ‘A writte to fynde an office’ in others formerly held by the deceased lord Berners in May 1533.²²⁶ Lord Leonard Gray similarly asked Cromwell to ‘remembre me for my land wiche the king hath geven me thorowe your good helpe’ in one letter.²²⁷ In another he asked him to assist his sister, who was trying to obtain certain lands in Ireland.²²⁸ Sir Edward Guildford, Master of the Armoury and Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports, wanted Cromwell to obtain the king’s signature and warrants for the paling of Leeds castle, Kent.²²⁹ John lord Dudley was another who requested that Cromwell ‘move the kynges highness that it may be his pleasure to take in to his hands and possession’ Dudley’s lordship of Segeley, Kent, and discharge him of his debts.²³⁰ Even Thomas Audeley, keeper of the Great Seal,

²²⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 1/69 f. 231 (*LP V* 950).

²²⁵ Again, many of these examples would be tedious to recite here. For examples beyond those described above, see: TNA, PRO, SP 1/70 f. 184 (*LP V* 1212); SP 1/71 f. 95 (*LP V* 1415); SP 1/73 f. 125 (*LP V* 1750); SP 1/76 f. 17 (*LP VI* 443); SP 1/76 f. 36v (*LP VI* 473); SP 1/81 f. 91 (*LP VI* 839); SP 1/79 f. 168 (*LP VI* 1279); SP 1/79 f. 189 (*LP VI* 1307); SP 1/81 f. 93 (*LP VI* 1640); SP 1/82 f. 172 (*LP VII* 218); SP 1/83 f. 84 (*LP VII* 482).

²²⁶ TNA, PRO, SP 1/76 f. 9 (*LP VI* 430).

²²⁷ TNA, PRO, SP 1/70 f. 200 (*LP V* 1233).

²²⁸ TNA, PRO, SP 60/2 f. 3 (*LP VI* 857).

²²⁹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/71 f. 83 (*LP V* 1395).

²³⁰ TNA, PRO, SP 1/73 ff. 101-102 (*LP V* 1727). Quotation on f. 101. Cromwell also assisted Henry Percy, sixth earl of Northumberland with a complicated sale of lands to the king in order to alleviate the earl’s debts. Exactly when Cromwell begun acting in this is unclear. Several documents connected with the king’s purchase of various Percy lands were placed in 1531 by the editors of *LP*. See SP 1/67 ff. 25-27 (*LP V* 395); SP 1/67 f. 85 (*LP V* 435). Yet it appears these date to 1534, shortly before a renegotiated settlement for Northumberland’s lands was made in February 1535. See R. W. Hoyle, ‘Henry Percy, sixth earl of Northumberland, and the fall of the House of Percy’, in G. W. Bernard, ed., *The Tudor Nobility* (Manchester, 1992), p 193 (and n. 64 & 65). On the basis of this it may also be reasonable to re-date SP 1/66 f. 260 (*LP V* 371) to 1534. Whether Cromwell was involved in the king’s earlier acquisition of the earl’s honour of Cockermouth in July 1531 is impossible to say: the indenture of this is no longer extant, and no drafts appear to have survived. However, on 12 July 1532 Cromwell did, on behalf of the king, purchase a £200 bond Northumberland was tied to, see SP 2/M f. 15 (*LP V* 1169), which may also have formed part of the terms of the land negotiations. For the details of these landed acquisitions from Northumberland, and for differing interpretations on why they occurred, see Hoyle, ‘House of Percy’, pp. 192-197; J. M. W. Bean, *The Estates of the Percy Family, 1416-1537* (Oxford, 1958), pp. 154-158.

looked to Cromwell when requesting favours regarding land. In October 1532 Audeley wanted to be made keeper of the house and park of Southwell, recently granted to Anne Boleyn, and approached Cromwell.²³¹ Following the suppression of the monastery of Christchurch the same year, Audeley also requested that Cromwell speak to the king so that he might have its House and lands.²³² The fact that Audeley, himself no mean figure at Court, asked Cromwell to assist him indicates that by late 1532 Cromwell was close to the summit of Court patronage.

Of course, not all of Cromwell's requests concerning landed patronage were successful. In March 1532 Cromwell had written to Dr John London, warden of New College, Oxford, for a 'Farme callyd Alton in Wilschyer' for a friend.²³³ In this London was forced to disappoint, because one John Benger already held an existing lease. He did, however, offer Cromwell 'a nother farme within iiii myles of yt callyd strertt', which Cromwell accepted, before selling the lease on for £10.²³⁴ A similar response was given by Richard Wenman in September 1532 when he responded to Cromwell's request that 'I shoulde make labor to master Dene of the kynges college in Oxford / to be Frendly vnto...John hygges for the Farme of the parsonag of wytney'. He was unable to do this having already laboured the dean to grant Edward Wilmot a lease for three years.²³⁵ The abbot of Cockersand wrote in October 1532 over Cromwell's request for the advancement of Sir James Layburn to lands belonging to the monastery there. He again refused on the grounds of a previous agreement.²³⁶ Thomas lord Lawarr also begged Cromwell's remembrance 'tochyng certyn land that off right I owght to have', and sought a loan from the king to aid him in this.²³⁷ A subsequent letter reveals that despite Cromwell's attempts, 'the

²³¹ BL, Cotton MS, Vespasian C XIV f. 166v (*LP V* 1430).

²³² TNA, PRO, SP 1/74 f. 1 (*St. P. I.*, p. 388; *LP VI* 2). Cromwell was successful; Audeley would indeed receive these. See TNA, PRO, C82/680 and C66/663 m. 37 (*LP VII* 419 [28]); C66/663 m. 37 (*LP VII* 587 [10]).

²³³ TNA, PRO, SP 1/75 f. 32 (*LP VI* 251), incorrectly placed in 1533 in *LP*; SP 1/237 f. 161 (*LP V* 773)

²³⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 1/75 f. 32 (*LP VI* 251); SP 1/71 f. 171 (*LP V* 1496).

²³⁵ TNA, PRO, SP 1/237 f. 216 (*LP Add I*, i, 788).

²³⁶ TNA, PRO, SP 1/71 f. 96 (*LP V* 1416). He told Cromwell 'if I had made no form[er] graunte I wolde haue been glad to haue Accomplished your mynde.'

²³⁷ TNA, PRO, SP 1/76 f. 102 (*LP VI* 536).

kynges highness is nott mynded to geve nother lend me nothyng'.²³⁸ A letter from the bishop of London also reveals another unsuccessful attempt by Cromwell to obtain a farm for William Tyndale's brother.²³⁹ In many respects, these unsuccessful attempts at dispensing patronage are as significant as those in which Cromwell succeeded. The voluminous survival of letters requesting his support or asking for favours often leaves a distorted impression that Cromwell was the only figure approached in such a way. Common sense dictates this cannot have been the case, but it is all too easy to lose sight of this when lacking the correspondence of another royal minister for comparison. Such examples illustrate that no matter how powerful or influential Cromwell became, he was by no means always successful in soliciting patronage; nor was he the only minister approached to acquire it.

The King's Works, 1532-1534

Given that many of the lands Cromwell helped acquire for the Crown during 1531 were used for the construction of certain royal residences, it is perhaps unsurprising that he soon obtained additional responsibilities connected with the building works themselves. In a letter to the abbot of Bury St Edmunds in 1532 Cromwell himself referred to 'I and and [sic] other hauyng charge ~~in~~ aswell of the Kynges buldynge at his Towre of london as also at westminster'.²⁴⁰ The work required at the Tower comprised 'a general repair of the whole circuit of walls and towers'.²⁴¹ Much of this was undertaken between June 1532 and early 1533 under Cromwell's oversight.²⁴² The construction of Whitehall at Westminster had begun in early 1531, and eventually saw the

²³⁸ TNA, PRO, SP 1/77 f. 63 (LP VI 681).

²³⁹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/74 f. 89 (LP VI 95); SP 1/74 f. 83 (LP VI 82).

²⁴⁰ TNA, PRO, SP 1/73 f. 91 (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 351-352; LP V 1719).

²⁴¹ Colvin, *King's Works*, iii. 264. What appears to be a survey of the work required at the Tower at this point can be found in TNA, PRO, E101/474/18.

²⁴² TNA, PRO, E101/474/12 (LP V 1307); E101/474/13 (LP VI 5).

emergence of ‘a sprawling palace’ covering over twenty-three acres.²⁴³ During the years in focus here (1531- 1534) most of the western side of the Palace was erected, containing the ‘Tennysplays cokffygthes and [a] wallyd in...park ther with a somptyo[u]s wall’, which Cromwell referred to as being built in his list of ‘Thinges done by the Kynges highness sythyn I came to his seruyse’.²⁴⁴ In this memorandum he also referred to ‘his highness’ having ‘newlye byldyd Hampton cowrt’, the building of a ‘magnyffycient and goodlye howse’ at Saint James’ in the Field, and the king newly edifying ‘a gret parte of the wallys of Caleys’.²⁴⁵ With the possible exception of Hampton Court, Cromwell was involved with all of these works in varying capacities. He also oversaw minor works at Lesnes.

The first dateable evidence of Cromwell’s direct involvement with the king’s works is an indenture between Cromwell and James Nedeham, Master Carpenter, dated 11 June 1532. It employed Nedeham to ‘buyelde and sett vp oon substanciall house’ on the North side of the west end of St Thomas’ Tower, at the Tower of London, and to edify the Tower itself.²⁴⁶ Cromwell not only made this indenture, but articles of agreement partially in his hand reveal he negotiated its terms on the king’s behalf.²⁴⁷ Evidently, then, Cromwell was the royal minister charged with the detailed implementation of the work at the Tower. His involvement securing some of the requisite building materials for the works there further supports this conclusion.²⁴⁸ Part of his responsibilities

²⁴³ Thurley, *Royal Palaces*, p. 55. Hampton Court Palace, by way of contrast, covered a mere six acres.

²⁴⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 1/103 f. 220v (*LP* X 1231; appendix 3); Thurley, *Royal Palaces*, p. 54.

²⁴⁵ TNA, PRO, SP 1/103 f. 220v (*LP* X 1231; appendix 3).

²⁴⁶ TNA, PRO, SP 1/70 ff. 101-103 (*LP* V 1086 [1]). Quotation on f. 103.

²⁴⁷ TNA, PRO, SP 1/70 ff. 104-104v (*LP* V 1086 [2]). A bond between the two men, also from 11 June, by which Nedeham is bound by £200 to ‘kepe perfourme and fulfill’ all the obligations ‘conteyned and specified in certeyne Indentures’ can be found in TNA, PRO, E40/5944.

²⁴⁸ TNA, PRO, SP 1/65 f. 268 (*LP* V 261). This is an undated receipt in Cromwell’s hand, probably made around the same time, recording that ‘Nycholas Tyrrye hath solde to Thomas Cromwell to thuse of our soueraigne lorde the king’ 200 tons of Luke stone, and 300 tons of Cane stone, for delivery at the Tower next Michaelmas. It was placed in 1531 in *LP*, but it would be more reasonable to date this to mid-1532. Cromwell was to pay 4s 6d for every ton of Cane stone, and 6s for every ton of Luke stone. This amounted to £130 16s in total. Cromwell paid £40 up front, with the residue being specified for payment on delivery. There appears to be no trace of these payments on Cromwell’s accounts. See also the comments of John Whalley, who informed Cromwell in late 1532 of the need to acquire further Cane and Luke Stone from Tyrre. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/71 f. 156 (*LP* V 1487).

also required Cromwell to ensure there were sufficient craftsmen available for the works at both the Tower and Westminster. Writing to the abbot of Bury in 1532 Cromwell remarked how the 'lakke of masons carpenters and other woorkmen' had 'compellyd' him 'to sende in to all the plases of this Realme For prouysyon of the same'; and he reprimanded the abbot for retaining workmen who should have been released to serve on the king's works.²⁴⁹

Cromwell's letter to the abbot is of further interest because his comment that '*I and and [sic] other hauyng charge...of the kynges buldinges*' again indicates that he was not single-handedly overseeing the royal building projects during these years.²⁵⁰ Much of the day-to-day 'on-site' management of the works at Westminster continued to be handled by Thomas Alvard and Thomas Heritage, the principal surveyors who had been occupied with the construction of Whitehall since its commencement in 1531. Both these men were already acquainted with Cromwell, having also been in Wolsey's service.²⁵¹ Alvard and Cromwell, in particular, were probably friends.²⁵² While Cromwell was in Calais in late 1532 Alvard sent him several letters on the progress of work at Westminster, which indicate he and Heritage were now working under Cromwell's direction.²⁵³ At the Tower, by contrast, on-site management was handled primarily by James Nedeham. He too had worked for Wolsey, and also possibly new Cromwell through this.²⁵⁴ Again, however, Cromwell also employed one of his own servants, John Whalley, to manage the works there

²⁴⁹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/73 f. 91 (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 351-352; LP V 1719).

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, f. 91.

²⁵¹ For Heritage in Wolsey's service see: TNA, PRO, SP 1/48 f. 230v (LP IV, ii, 4438); SP 1/49 f. 93v (LP IV, ii, 4486); SP 1/49 f. 102 (LP IV, ii, 4497); SP 1/53 f. 174 (LP IV, iii, 5458). For Alvard see: BL, Cotton MS, Titus B I f. 282 (LP IV, ii, 4778); TNA, PRO, E24/5/4 (LP IV, ii, 4461); SP 1/44 ff. 315-317 (LP IV, ii, 3539); SP 1/51 f. 101 (LP IV, ii, 5024); SP 1/38 ff. 233-236v (LP IV, i, 2321).

²⁵² Alvard addressed Cromwell as 'hys Rythe hartely lovyd Frende' in a letter to him in the late 1520s, and his will, drawn up on 26 January 1535, named Cromwell as one of the executors, and bequeathed him Alvard's 'best chaine of golde'. Cromwell also left Alvard money in his will. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/50 f. 116v (LP IV, ii, 4793); TNA, PRO, PROB 11/27 (Dyngelley). Alvard died in 1538.

²⁵³ TNA, PRO, SP 1/71 f. 146 (LP V 1472); SP 1/71 f. 148 (LP V 1473).

²⁵⁴ BL, Cotton MS, Titus B I f. 328 (LP IV, iii, 6390). In April 1531 he had been made Master Carpenter of the King's Works, followed by Clerk of the Works in 1533. See LP V 220 [20]; TNA, PRO, SP 1/73 f. 135 (LP V 1759); LP VI 418 [9].

and act as paymaster.²⁵⁵ He kept Cromwell informed on progress, telling him in October 1532 that ‘within three wekes our works at the tower shalbe at agoode poynt’.²⁵⁶ It is interesting to note that all of these men – Whalley, Nedeham, Alvard and Heritage – were simultaneously working for Cromwell on his own private building works at his house in London.²⁵⁷

Cromwell’s most important task towards the king’s works was securing and distributing the money required for them. On 23 June 1532 Cromwell paid £2,000 of the king’s money to Alvard for work at Westminster.²⁵⁸ Further evidence among Cromwell’s papers reveals he paid another £2,000 to him in March 1533,²⁵⁹ and £1,000 sometime between 29 September 1532 and 28 June 1533.²⁶⁰ Initially Cromwell was not monopolising the payments for the Westminster works. Alvard himself had also paid out over £8,700 on the works at Westminster between April 1531 and April 1532 – a larger quantity than Cromwell supplied over a similar period from June 1532.²⁶¹ On 2 July 1532 Alvard also received £2,000 ‘to be employed aboutes his graces buyldinges at Westm[inster]’ from the Privy Purse.²⁶² Once Cromwell became involved, however, and the money supplied by Alvard had been used up, Cromwell appears the sole distributor of royal money on the Westminster works. Similarly, at the Tower, Cromwell supplied Whalley with £1,200 for the works there between 1532 and early 1534.²⁶³ An undated memoranda, placed in 1532,

²⁵⁵ For his career under Cromwell, see Robertson, ‘Thomas Cromwell’s Servants’, p. 586.

²⁵⁶ TNA, PRO, SP 1/71 f. 106 (LP V 1432); SP 1/71 f. 128 (LP V 1454); SP 1/71 f. 143 (LP V 1467); SP 1/71 f. 156 (LP V 1487); SP 1/73 f. 143 (LP V 1766).

²⁵⁷ TNA, PRO, SP 1/71 ff. 114-115 (LP V 1442); SP 1/71 f. 106 (LP V 1432); SP 1/71 f. 136 (LP V 1461); SP 1/71 f. 137 (LP V 1462); SP 1/71 f. 139 (LP V 1464); SP 1/71 f. 143 (LP V 1467); SP 1/71 f. 156 (LP V 1487). For these works see chapter six.

²⁵⁸ TNA, PRO, SP 1/70 f. 128 (LP V 1119).

²⁵⁹ TNA, PRO, E101/421/5 (LP VI 220).

²⁶⁰ TNA, PRO, SP 2/O f. 29 (LP VI 717).

²⁶¹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/69 f. 235 (LP V 953). It should also be noted that Alvard’s account, which technically terminates on 21 April, reveals a further payment of over £5,883 was paid by him from 22 April 1532 onwards for ‘seueralle pays made for the seid buyldinges vppon a newe yere’. This coincides with the period during which Cromwell begun supplying revenue, but appears distinct from it, because it is recorded as being paid by Alvard from the king’s money he had been receiving since October 1529. See *Ibid.*, f. 235.

²⁶² Harris, *Privy Purse Expences*, p. 228.

²⁶³ TNA, PRO SP 2/N f. 109 (LP VI 228 [ii]); SP 1/75 f. 57v (LP VI 284). Whalley himself wrote alerting Cromwell to the need of money for labourers. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/71 f. 106 (LP V 1432); SP 1/71 ff. 128-129 (LP V 1454); SP 1/71 f. 143 (LP V 1467); SP 1/71 f. 128 (LP V 1454).

also refers to there being no warrant yet obtained for £2,736 7s 5d ‘delyuerid’ to Whalley.²⁶⁴ This money was also probably provided by Cromwell, although it may date to a later year.²⁶⁵ Nevertheless, given that the estimated cost of the repairs at the Tower was £3,593, it again seems reasonable to suppose that Cromwell was the sole supplier of money for this.²⁶⁶

The expenditure and cost of these works was similarly monitored by Cromwell. Thomas Alvard’s account as paymaster at Westminster from 7 May 1531 and 21 April 1532 was audited by William Candisshe, one of Cromwell’s men.²⁶⁷ Colvin also suggested that two accounts from the Tower, one specifying payments made between June and September 1532, were drawn up by Whalley for Cromwell.²⁶⁸ This seems likely given that among Cromwell’s papers was ‘a vew of John Whalles accompt for the recept of money to be imployd about the Kynges buyldinges in the tower of London’.²⁶⁹ Cromwell also became concerned more generally with the cost of the king’s building programme during these years. His ‘Remembraunces touching the byldinges’ noted ‘what a gret charge it is to highness [sic] to contenew his byldinges in so many placys at oons’, and that ‘yf his grace wolde spare For on[e] yere how moche proffitable yt woold be to hym’.²⁷⁰ These memoranda neatly illustrate whose initiative building was.

The transformation of Hampton Court was another project embarked on by Henry VIII during the 1530s. Substantial modifications were begun in 1533, and continued intermittently until 1539.²⁷¹ Cromwell referred to the king’s work at Hampton Court in his list of ‘Thinges done by the Kynges highness sythyn I came to his seruyse’, but this provides the only hint that he may have been

²⁶⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 1/238 f. 36 (*LP Add I*, i, 825).

²⁶⁵ The memoranda also lists a warrant required for £1, 266 13s 4d ‘delyuerid to master Gunston for ryggyng of the kings shippys’. Cromwell made payments to Gonson for this, but apparently from October 1533 to December 1534. See BL, Cotton MS, Otho E IX ff. 58-61 (*LP VII* 1564).

²⁶⁶ TNA, PRO, E101/474/18.

²⁶⁷ TNA, PRO, E351/3322

²⁶⁸ Colvin, *The King’s Works*, iii. 265. They are TNA, PRO, E101/474/12 (*LP V* 1307); E101/474/13 (*LP VI* 5).

²⁶⁹ TNA, PRO, E36/139 f. 99 (*LP VII* 923).

²⁷⁰ BL, Cotton MS, Titus B I f. 455 (*LP VII* 143).

²⁷¹ Thurley, *Royal Palaces*, p. 52.

involved with this between the years 1532-1534.²⁷² His memoranda also referred to the king having ‘purchasyd Saynt Jamys in the Felde and all the grownd wher of the new parke of Westminster ys now made’ and the building of ‘a magnyffycent and goodlye howse’ there.²⁷³ The chronicler Hall similarly noted how ‘the Kyng purchased all the medowes about saynt Iames...and there made a fayre mansion and a parke, & buylded many costly and commodious houses for great pleasure’.²⁷⁴ St James’ in the Field, it will be recalled, was one of the properties Cromwell had helped acquire in 1531.²⁷⁵ Again, however, evidence of his direct involvement with these works during 1532-1534 is thin. But he did continue to acquire land for the park surrounding it.²⁷⁶

Drainage work required at former college lands also occupied Cromwell. The Abbey of Lesnes, near Erith, Kent, had been one of the first monastic houses suppressed by Wolsey for the establishment of his Oxford College. Once in the hands of the Crown, efforts were overseen by Cromwell to prepare and parcel these lands. But their proximity to the river Thames meant they were vulnerable to flooding. Edward Boughton told Cromwell in July 1533 that the king’s works at Lesnes would be ‘greatly hyndryd’ because a levy paid for the upkeep of the flood defences there remained ‘vnpayde’.²⁷⁷ Cromwell was also told that the labourers making ditches for drainage remained unpaid and ‘wolle leve worke’. Boughton was concerned that

²⁷² TNA, PRO, SP 1/102 f. 220v (LP X 1231; appendix 3). There are certainly no records of payments among Cromwell’s accounts for the works there. However, a list of debts for work done at Hampton Court does contain annotations, some of which have the appearance of being written in Cromwell’s hand. It is impossible to say conclusively that these are his because the sample of handwriting is so small. See SP 1/237 f. 273 (LP Add I, i, 804).

²⁷³ TNA, PRO, SP 1/102 ff. 220, 200v.

²⁷⁴ Hall, *Chronicle*, p. 786.

²⁷⁵ TNA, PRO, E41/216 (LP V 406 [1]) and p. 102 above.

²⁷⁶ TNA, PRO, E41/156 (LP VI 1526). This land, according to the indenture, had previously been in the tenure of one John Lawrence, and was now inclosed in the park surrounding St James’. Anthony Cotton, the owner, also wrote to Cromwell regarding this transaction, informing him ‘I have ben with your mastership for the money of the same howe be it I cowed not have you at convenyent leysser’, and requested Cromwell send it to his servant. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/80 f. 107 (LP VI 1450).

²⁷⁷ TNA, PRO, SP 1/78 f. 7 (LP VI 843). Another letter Boughton sent in July also asked Cromwell to remember to organise commissions for sewers ‘for the savegarde of the marshes’. See SP 1/78 f. 19 (LP VI 860).

it shalbe harde to haue diches made in con[v]enyent tyme to drye the grownde afore winter / whiche may cause that the Kynges grace & other owners shall lose the proffyte of the marshe an other yere...it wolbe so wete in winter that it shall not be able the marches to be sowne or pasturyd.²⁷⁸

A warrant dated 29 October 1533 reveals Cromwell paid £5 to Richard Swyfte of Erith to make ditches at Lesnes.²⁷⁹ There were also memoranda among his ‘remembrances’ for the marshes at Lesnes to be measured and allotted: a response to another of Boughton’s requests.²⁸⁰ Once again, then, Cromwell can be shown dealing with problems and requests with speed and efficiency. In this particular instance, however, previous experience stood him in good stead. He had already made payments toward the levy at Lesnes on the Cardinal’s behalf in 1526,²⁸¹ and the flooding of Wolsey’s works there had been a problem he personally dealt with in January 1529.²⁸²

Can Cromwell’s responsibilities toward the King’s Works shed any further light on the relationship between king and minister? Between 1532 and 1534 Cromwell oversaw the arrangements for the fortification at Calais. He had helped acquire a number of tenements there for this purpose during the king’s visit in late 1532.²⁸³ The lands Sir Robert Wingfield had ‘draynyd & dyched’ in Calais were then surveyed by fifteen commissioners, including the dukes of Norfolk and Suffolk, along with Cromwell himself, during that visit. This was to ensure they caused no impediment to the intended fortifications. A draft list of the commissioners for this, along with their instructions, was drawn up by Cromwell,²⁸⁴ a later version of the same also contains minor corrections by

²⁷⁸ TNA, PRO, SP 1/78 f. 30 (*LP VI* 893). Also see Boughton’s earlier remarks on the work at Lesnes, and the comments of William Brereton: SP 1/72 f. 120 (*LP V* 1619); SP 1/72 f. 130 (*LP V* 1631).

²⁷⁹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/80 f. 49 (*LP VI* 1367).

²⁸⁰ TNA, PRO, SP 1/78 f. 7 (*LP VI* 843); BL, Cotton MS, Titus BI f. 462v (*LP VII* 108).

²⁸¹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/44 ff. 211v & 246v (*LP IV*, ii, 3536).

²⁸² TNA, PRO, SP 1/52 ff. 146-147 (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 323-325; *LP IV*, iii, 5186). Cromwell’s agent at Lesnes, Edward Boughton, was also a contact he had made in the 1520s when doing this. See SP 1/56 f. 144 (*LP IV*, iii, 6118).

²⁸³ TNA, PRO, E40/13578 (*LP V* 1537); E40/13579 (*LP V* 1571); E40/13500 (*LP V* 1580); E40/13580 (*LP V* 1581); E40/13581 (*LP V* 1606); E40/13582 (*LP V* 1607); E40/13583 (*LP V* 1611), not E40/13582 as listed in TNA, PRO, *List and Index guide to LP*; E40/13584 (*LP V* 1615).

²⁸⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 1/73 f. 61 (*LP V* 1705 [2]).

him.²⁸⁵ Nevertheless the king himself also took considerable interest in these works. During the visit in 1532 Henry had viewed the existing defences and produced 'A Devyse made by the kings highenes at his graces being at the towne of Calis...for the fortification of the saide towne'.²⁸⁶ Whether these particular plans were implemented in 1532-1534 seems doubtful.²⁸⁷ What they illustrate is that the king was actively involved with royal works. It would be more realistic, therefore, to see Cromwell and Henry working with one another on these fortifications, rather than seeing king or minister as individually responsible. When, for instance, Lord Lisle, deputy at Calais, sent updates on the progress of the works,²⁸⁸ letters were sent to both Henry and Cromwell respectively. The king was informed by Lisle that 'I haue caused to be tacken downe bechaumps towre and Deublyn tower', and Henry was asked to give 'commaundment to your vice tresorar here to leve suche a some of money' for the rebuilding of these 'according vnto the bill which your graces surveyour here hathe...sent vnto master Cromewell'.²⁸⁹ The following day Cromwell was then asked to

haue in remembraunce that commission may be gevin vnto master vicetreseryer here from the kynges majestie to leve suche money as shalbe nedefull and requysit to the building & repaying of suche works as ar...now in hande / as by the bill of parcelles that master surveyour / sendithe you it shall more / plainly appere.²⁹⁰

Cromwell was sent the bill of money required because he was now firmly established as the figure who handled much of the detail of government administration on the king's behalf. But Lisle also kept the king well informed:

²⁸⁵ TNA, PRO, SP 1/73 f. 59 (LP V 1705 [1]).

²⁸⁶ BL, Cotton MS, Faustina E VII ff. 33-38 (LP V 1495) Printed in full in J. G. Nichols, ed., *The Chronicle of Calais, in the Reigns of Henry VII and Henry VIII to the year 1540* (London, 1846), pp. 125-130.

²⁸⁷ Colvin, *King's Works*, iii. 347.

²⁸⁸ The work, which was commenced in late 1533, was done so in response to a view made by Lisle and others for the 'sure defence' of Calais. See LP VI 930; Colvin, *King's Works*, III, p. 348

²⁸⁹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/239 f. 36v (LP Add I, i, 924).

²⁹⁰ TNA, PRO, SP 1/82 f. 227 (LP VII 293).

he was updated on the work; he was told that Cromwell knew the necessary financial requirements; and he was looked to for the authorization of the final decision. All this very much suggests that Lisle expected the two men to discuss and work with one another on the matter.

No previous attempt has been made to examine Cromwell's responsibilities for the Crown's lands and king's works, yet much of his early responsibilities under Henry VIII concerned these, and they go some way toward explaining Cromwell's rise. At the beginning of 1531 Cromwell was 'newly come to the fauor of the kyng'; by its end he was a member of the Council's inner-circle.²⁹¹ This was a remarkable increase in status, during a year in which there is little evidence of Cromwell handling work obviously associated with government or the king's 'great matter', despite Elton's claim that Cromwell was already a 'leader' of government policy.²⁹² By contrast, the work he undertook toward the Crown's lands was considerable, and would continue to occupy him throughout the years 1532-1534 and beyond. All this has failed to attract notice, partly because Cromwell's responsibilities toward these were diverse, and the evidence for it fragmented and difficult to reconstruct, but also owing to historians' tendencies to focus on the 'high' politics of these years, often to the detriment of the more routine aspects of administrative work which Cromwell undertook. Yet it was precisely this which enabled Cromwell, day-in and day-out, to demonstrate the legal, administrative and financial qualities which greatly helped Henry VIII. His efficiency when dealing with it then naturally brought him wider responsibilities as he rose in the king's favour.

²⁹¹ Hall, *Chronicle*, p. 775.

²⁹² Elton, *Tudor Revolution*, pp. 90-91.

Chapter Four

Cromwell and the English Church, 1531-1534

Even before the Reformation English kings enjoyed considerable influence over the Church. The possession and administration of its temporal wealth had long been claimed by the Crown, and medieval kings effectively controlled the appointment of English bishops. Under Henry VII, and during the early years of Henry VIII, royal influence was extended further still. Ecclesiastical resources were exploited, clerical benefits curtailed, and the king's power over church appointments vigorously pursued.¹ Defending and maintaining the Crown's ecclesiastical influence was therefore an important aspect of royal government. Much of the work connected with it was often handled by the king's most trusted servants.

Almost from the very beginning of his career as a royal minister, Cromwell was handling various ecclesiastical matters on the king's behalf. Existing considerations of Cromwell and the Church, however, have focused on the 'high' politics of the period: the establishment of the royal supremacy, the dissolution of the monasteries and the extent of his responsibility for the religious and doctrinal changes of the decade. Virtually nothing has been said about his involvement with the more quotidian aspects of the Church, such as administration, finance and clerical appointments. The purpose of this chapter is to illustrate how this ecclesiastical hack-work was significant in Cromwell's rise, while also offering a glimpse of how the Crown controlled the Church on the very eve and beginning of the Reformation.

¹ J. R. Lander, *Government and Community: England, 1450-1509* (London, 1980), p. 118; Gwyn, *King's Cardinal*, pp. 43-50; Gunn, 'Edmund Dudley and the Church', pp. 516-518; G. W. Bernard, *The Late Medieval Church: Vitality and Vulnerability before the break with Rome* (London, 2012), pp. 17-49.

Church Administration and Finance

The earliest ecclesiastical work Cromwell undertook for the king did not begin until the end of 1531, and was connected with the administrative and financial details surrounding the appointment of new bishops. In September 1531 the king granted two of the most significant sees formerly held by Cardinal Wolsey.² Edward Lee, a former royal chaplain, was nominated to the archbishopric of York, while Stephen Gardiner, the king's secretary, would become bishop of Winchester.³ During the vacancy of a bishopric the estates of the see passed to the king, who received the profits from its temporalities during the interim. In order to have this temporal wealth reinstated, the bishop-elect swore an oath renouncing anything prejudicial to the king's authority which he had received from Rome.⁴ He was also required to pay a fine calculated from the taxable income of his new see. The restitution of temporalities for York and Winchester were granted at the end of November.⁵ Cromwell was the royal agent who handled and received these fines on the king's behalf from early 1532. The work was routine, but required Cromwell to be a constant mediator between the prelates and Henry. On 14 February Lee thanked Cromwell for his 'paynes taken for me in knowing the kynges pleasur' concerning his fine, but asked that 'by your good mediation' the king might be content to grant him favourable terms for its payment. He also requested help obtaining a discharge in the Exchequer, and for a pardon for intrusions before the formalities of his appointment had been completed.⁶ The king had already agreed in principle to these terms; it was left to Cromwell to remind him of them before implementing his response.⁷ A pardon for intrusions was granted

² CSP, *Spanish*, IV, ii, 796.

³ LP V 418; TNA, PRO, SC7/64/63; SP 1/67 f. 79 (LP V 419, *St. P.* VII., p. p. 319); TNA, PRO, C82/649 and C66/659 m. 15 (LP V 627 [3]); C82/649 and C66/658 m. 21 (LP V 627 [8] & [8/ii])

⁴ Gardiner's oath for the temporalities of Winchester can be found in Muller, App. I, pp. 479-480.

⁵ TNA, PRO, C82/649 and C66/659 m. 15 (LP V 627 [3]). The fine for York was set at £200; that for Winchester at £366 13s 4d. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/68 ff. 143, 143v (LP V 657).

⁶ TNA, PRO, SP 1/69 f. 111 (LP V 802).

⁷ TNA, PRO, SP 1/69 f. 209 (LP V 918).

to the archbishop in July 1532.⁸ That Cromwell was closely involved in drawing this up is suggested not only by Lee's multiple requests to him on the matter but also by the details specified by him which he instructed Cromwell to include.⁹

Gardiner, too, was in correspondence with Cromwell over his fine. He wrote in June 1532 that he had been notified by William Paulet 'howe it wer expedient for me to be at a point with the kings highness for my temporalities'.¹⁰ Gardiner's remarks to Cromwell seem significant. He reminded him that 'at my last comunicacion with youe in that matier I remitted al to the kinges pleasur *an executor wherof ye be in that behaulf*'.¹¹ Clearly both Gardiner and Lee very much saw Cromwell as the king's executor – that is, the person carrying out his requests. Yet they also believed it possible for Cromwell to obtain favourable terms for the repayments of their debts. Gardiner requested that Cromwell 'doo for me as ye maye doo for your frend and procure such an end as I may be able to perfourme'. Cromwell was not merely handling these payments; he was also thought capable of moving Henry VIII on them.¹²

During the early months of 1532 Cromwell quickly established himself as the minister who managed the king's ecclesiastical revenues. Alongside the negotiation for these restitution of temporalities, he also oversaw the inquests and collection of revenues owed to the king from vacant bishoprics themselves. During such a vacancy it was necessary to appoint persons to administer the estates on the king's behalf and account for these before the general surveyors.¹³ Dr William Strangways, Wolsey's vicar-general at Durham, had

⁸ TNA, PRO, C82/656 and C66/661 m. 35 (LP V 1139 [7]). A draft of this pardon, prepared by Cromwell's office, is SP 2/M ff. 5-7 (LP V 1139 [7/ii]). What happened following Lee's request for a pardon for any outstanding 'dismes due afore my tyme' is less clear. According to a later letter from Lee, Cromwell had 'commaunded the baron of the exchequier to make ouyt no processe againste me'. However, in 1533 he had then 'commaunded that they shalbe levied' and Lee again requested a pardon. See SP 1/79 ff. 71-71v (LP VI 1158).

⁹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/69 f. 209 (LP V 918); SP 1/69 ff. 111-11v (LP V 802).

¹⁰ BL, Cotton MS, Titus B I f. 378 (LP V 1138).

¹¹ *Ibid.*, f. 378. My italics for emphasis.

¹² Cromwell's accounts record the £200 Lee owed by obligation was paid to him sometime between 22 November 1532 and 11 March 1533. See TNA, PRO, SP 2/N f. 108 (LP VI 228). It is not clear when Gardiner's fine was settled.

¹³ During the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries these revenues were accounted before the barons of the Exchequer. See M. Howell, *Regalian Right in Medieval England* (London, 1962), pp.

been appointed receiver-general of the king's possessions there, and in York, following the Cardinal's death. He wrote to Cromwell in February 1532 asking that 'I may bee dyscharged of such money as I have had forth of the temporalities of duces[me].¹⁴ He also sent Cromwell his accounts of the revenues from York, received between September 1530 and September 1531, for auditing.¹⁵ £140 of these arrears were then paid to Cromwell on 24 February 1532.¹⁶ Richard Strete, archdeacon of Salop, had also been appointed receiver-general of the bishopric of Coventry and Lichfield following the death of bishop Geoffrey Blythe.¹⁷ By March 1532 Strete was working in conjunction with Cromwell, sending him rents and accounts throughout 1532 and 1533.¹⁸

It has been suggested that the concentration of church revenues which were coming into Cromwell's hands was an attempt to exert and exploit royal authority over the Church.¹⁹ The handling of the Coventry and Lichfield revenues provides an interesting illustration. Several of the estates pertaining to this see were located in Cheshire, and Strete told Cromwell's associate, Rowland Lee, that on his arrival there in March 1532 'the exchetur of cheshire

98-102. By the sixteenth century, however, as a 'memoriall for the Kings highnes' makes clear, these were now 'accompted before the general surueyours'. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/67 f. 29 (LP V 397).

¹⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 1/65 f. 129 (LP V 95). This was placed in 1531 in LP, but belongs to 1532. See the dating of his account of the money sent to Cromwell, below n. 15. Also see SP 1/65 f. 130 (LP V 96), which should be similarly re-dated.

¹⁵ TNA, PRO, SC6/HenVIII/412 (LP V 822); E36/143 f. 26 (LP VI 299 [ix]).

¹⁶ TNA, PRO, SC6/HenVIII/412 f. 11 (LP V 822). Cromwell's warrant recording his receipt of this is dated 25 February, TNA, PRO, E101/421/5 (LP V 825).

¹⁷ TNA, PRO, SP 1/65 ff. 31-32 (LP V 13). Exactly when the bishop died is unclear, but the generally accepted date appears to be late 1530. See the A. A. Chibi, 'Blyth, Geoffrey (c. 1470-1530)', *ODNB*, which states that his will was proved on 1 March 1531, and A. A. Chibi, *Henry VIII's Bishops: Diplomats, Administrators, Scholars and Shepherds* (Cambridge, 2003), p. 290. Curiously, however, Blythe was still listed as a commissioner of the peace in several locations as late as March 1531. See TNA, PRO, C66/656 m. 17d (LP V 119 [56] & LP V 166 [60]); C66/656 m. 14d (LP V 119 [70]; C66/656 m. 18d (LP 166 [44]). Moreover Strete's account of the money he received as receiver runs from 19 January 1532 to 19 January 1533, suggesting Blythe's death may have occurred a little later. See SC6/HenVIII/7156 (LP VI 52).

¹⁸ TNA, PRO, SP 1/66 ff. 33-33v (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 339-340; LP V 277); SP 1/66 f. 155 (LP V 332); SP 1/237 f. 31 (LP Add I, i, 736), these three letters were erroneously placed in 1531 in LP, but are re-dated to 1532 below pp. 142 & 170-172; SP 1/70 f. 54 (LP V 1045); SP 1/75 ff. 174-175 (LP VI 389). One of Cromwell's accounts records that he received a total of £612 18s 1d from Strete between 22 November 1532 and 11 March 1533. See SP 2/N f. 108 (LP VI 228).

¹⁹ D. R. Starkey, 'Court and Government', in Starkey and Coleman, eds., *Revolution Reassessed*, p. 44; F. Heal, *Of Prelates and Princes: A Study of the Economic and Social Position of the Tudor Episcopate* (Cambridge, 1980), pp. 107, 108.

had settyn apoun an office apoun the deithe of the late bisshop / and therapon intendith to gedre and receyue all the rentes within the said cheshire'. Strete was refusing to cooperate with this until 'I know master Cromwell mynd & pleasur [sic]'.²⁰ During the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries it had often been common for the local escheator to handle the temporalities of vacant bishoprics on the Crown's behalf, and this occasionally continued during the early sixteenth century.²¹ In April 1532, however, Cromwell responded to Strete, telling him:

ye shall receyue the kings commission and warraunte yeuyng you auctoryte to Suruey the londes of the bisshopriche of Couentre and Lichfeld and to receyue the rentes and profites of the same to the kings vse / And also ye shall receyue his gracious lettres directed to ~~the~~ the Eschetour of the Countie palentyne of Chester vppon the sight wherof I doubte not but he will not onelie surcease to medle any ferther with the receipt of any rentes there but also in case he haue receyued any / will repay the same vnto your hands.²²

The half year rents, Cromwell concluded, should then be sent up to London before 24 June. Was this an illustration of Cromwell seeking to impose personal control over the collection of ecclesiastical revenues in order to exert royal authority over the Church? Perhaps, but it might equally have been an attempt to maximise Crown revenues. Strete reported his concern as being that 'if thay shall receyue those lands I thynke the kyng shuld have but small advauntage ther / if the chambreleyn ther accompt I suppose he wyll accompt but after the old rent / and that wylbe loose to the kyng'.²³

²⁰ TNA, PRO, SP 1/69 f. 141 (LP V 848). Also see Randall Wodnut's letters to Strete on the difficulties gathering the Cheshire rents, SP 1/75 f. 159 (LP VI 373); SP 1/76 f. 42 (LP VI 479). Both belong to 1532, not 1533 as in LP. For the re-dating see below n. 22 and pp. 170-172.

²¹ Howell, *Regalian Right*, pp. 60-63; Heal, *Of Prelates and Princes*, p. 107.

²² TNA, PRO, SP 1/66 f. 33 (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 339-340; LP V 277). This letter was placed in 1531 by the editors of LP, and this dating was also accepted by Professor Elton, *Tudor Revolution*, p. 90 & 144. Other instructions in Cromwell's letter to Strete, however, relate to the suppression of Calwich. This did not occur until 1532, see below, pp. 170-172.

²³ TNA, PRO, SP 1/69 f. 141 (LP V 848).

Nevertheless it does appear that Cromwell was keen to receive and manage the king's ecclesiastical revenues directly himself. When Thomas Skeffington, bishop of Bangor, died in late 1533, Cromwell made a note to 'wrytt to Sir Charles Bowkley for the reue[news] of the bisshoprych of Banger',²⁴ and to send letters to the bishop's executors, and to William Glynn, the vicar-general.²⁵ Glynn came to London in February 1534 having made a book for Cromwell detailing the temporalities of Bangor and the names of those who received them.²⁶ Similarly John Hornyold, receiver of the bishopric of Worcester, wrote to Cromwell in June 1533 wishing to know 'your pleasure & mynde yf ye woll I shul paye my money to your hands to the kynges vse of the Revenos of the Bishopryshe of worcestor or noo'.²⁷ He was subsequently told to 'come vppe to London with my accompte / and with all the money by me receyued / of the Revenues of the seide Bysshopricke'.²⁸

Of greater interest is Cromwell's handling of the vacant bishopric of Ely. The bishop there, Nicolas West, had died on 28 April 1533, but it was not until October that Cromwell had sent out letters in the king's name, instructing the monastery there not to 'medle with the receipt or gathering of Any parte of the same revenues' of the see, because the king had appointed collectors to receive the temporalities on the Crown's behalf.²⁹ The prior objected to this, telling Cromwell the monastery possessed patents and grants authorising them to receive these, and should 'nott thus be discharged for leveing And gathering the kynges duetys ~~but by~~ but by curse and ordyr of the kynges high curte of escheter [sic] wher the monastery of Ely doth stoned charged to Answer And pay the kynges duety'.³⁰ Evidently this did not satisfy Cromwell: one of his

²⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 1/82 f. 200v (*LP* VII 257).

²⁵ BL, Cotton MS, Titus B I f. 493v (*LP* VI 1194); TNA, PRO, E36/143 f. 69 (*LP* VI 1589).

²⁶ TNA, PRO, SP 1/83 f. 169 (*LP* VII 563).

²⁷ TNA, PRO, SP 1/77 f. 68 (*LP* VI 689).

²⁸ TNA, PRO, SP 1/80 f. 174 (*LP* VI 1507). Hornyold's account as receiver general is TNA, PRO, SC6/HenVIII/4035.

²⁹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/79 f. 155 (*LP* VI 1244). One of Cromwell's remembrances was to write 'a lettre to the prior and conuent of Ely to permitte suche persons as the kinges highnes shall appoynte to Be receyuors of the reuenues of the Bisshopriche of Elye without any their impechement or lette', TNA, PRO, E36/143 f. 70 (*LP* VI 1589).

³⁰ TNA, PRO, SP 1/79 f. 155 (*LP* VI 1244). The summary in *LP* has transcribed 'escheter' as Exchequer, which does make more sense in the context of the sentence.

memoranda reveals he intended 'A nother letter to be sent eftesones to the prior of Ely not to medle with the ~~Bissh~~ reuenues of the Bisshopriche';³¹ and he sent his own clerk, William Candisshe, to Ely, armed with letters from the king, to 'exercise and occupie the offices of Auditor and Receptor'.³² Given the wider assaults on the Church's independence during the early years of this decade, it is hard not to see such actions as a further method of asserting royal authority. But, again, it may also have been an attempt to ensure the Crown extracted the maximum revenues available by preventing any local fraud. The chapter at Ely had indeed received the revenues for temporalities at earlier points in Henry VIII's reign,³³ but the sums they paid at three previous vacancies separated by over a century had been consistently the same.³⁴ By using agents directly under his control, Cromwell could be sure the Crown was exacting its full entitlements. And there does seem to have been a contemporary recognition of his ability to increase these revenues. When, for instance, Richard Lister noted that certain revenues from vacant temporalities would be paid to the king, he remarked to Cromwell that 'with your policy' these would amount to 'more than the kyng had in a hundredth yeres byfore'.³⁵

Two of Cromwell's accounts detailing the money he received on the king's behalf record further sums connected to temporalities paid to him. One account, running from 25 September 1532 to 28 June 1533, records over £76 received from restitution of temporalities for several monastic houses.³⁶ Another account overlaps the first, but records separate receipts from other

³¹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/78 f. 110v (LP VI 977 [ii]). A letter from the prior to Cromwell, dated 18 October, by which he requested 'leysur for a little season' before making a response to the king's letters concerning the privileges granted to the monastery by the king's progenitors, was written upon the receipt of Cromwell's second letter, SP 1/79 f. 192 (LP VI 1310).

³² TNA, PRO, SP 1/80 f. 165 (LP VI 1494). On 3 December Candisshe reported to Cromwell that he had successfully 'takyn Accomptes. And haue receyuyd ii^c markes And aboue in money, SP 1/80 f. 165v (LP VI 1494).

³³ LP II, ii, 472; LP III, ii, 1408.

³⁴ Heal, *Of Prelates and Princes*, p. 107.

³⁵ TNA, PRO, SP 1/75 f. 68 (LP VI 304).

³⁶ TNA, PRO, SP 2/O f. 26 (LP VI 717). Those listed are the prior and convent of Montague and the abbot and Convent of St John's.

houses amounting to £135.³⁷ Money received for 'Vacations of Bysshopriches and Abbeyes' on this second account also records £612 from Richard Strete for Coventry and Lichfield; £666 13s 4d for the monastery at Westminster, and £1,100 from the executors of the late Archbishop of Canterbury, William Warham, who died in August 1532.³⁸ Throughout the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century revenues arising from vacant bishoprics, and fines for temporalities, appear to have been paid into the Chamber.³⁹ In the years immediately preceding Cromwell's ascendancy at least some of them were paid into the privy coffers.⁴⁰ From early 1532, however, Cromwell began handling these revenues; and following his appointment as Master of the King's Jewels in April of that year, they were not only paid to him, but were mostly held by him. Whether the appropriation of this money was a deliberate intention is impossible to say. What can be said is that this reflected the flexibility of the financial system at that time: where such revenues were paid into was probably far more arbitrary than many historians of government administration have allowed. Nevertheless Cromwell's assumption of them was also a reflection of his protean talents, and the king's need to have a capable minister tending to the day-to-day issues arising from their collection. When the Crown's receiver in the localities reported numerous problems, including tenants unwilling to pay rents and a steward holding unauthorised courts, during the vacancy at Worcester in 1533, it is not difficult to see why it might be necessary to have a central figure managing this on the king's behalf.⁴¹ It is interesting that the receiver believed 'that worschipull man master Cromwell' should be moved, so

³⁷ TNA, PRO, SP 2/N f. 107 (LP VI 228). This account runs from 22 November 1532 to 11 March 1533. Those listed were the abbot of the Holme, the prior of Huntingdon, the minister of Saint Robert 'nye Knaresborowgh', and the abbot of Walden.

³⁸ TNA, PRO, SP 2/N f. 108 (LP VI 228).

³⁹ B. P. Wolffe, 'The Management of English Royal Estates under the Yorkists', *EHR*, 71 (1956), pp. 17, 19; F. C. Dietz, *English Government Finance, 1485-1558* (London, 2nd edition, 1964), p 31; B. P. Wolffe, *The Crown Lands, 1461 to 1536: An Aspect of Yorkist and Early Tudor Government* (London, 1970), pp. 113, 120.

⁴⁰ TNA, PRO, E101/421/5 (LP V 825).

⁴¹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/77 f. 68 (LP VI 689); SP 1/76 f. 99 (LP VI 533).

that 'he of his goodenes & grete wisdomes who haue high experiaunce in souche thynges may Redrese all the premysses'.⁴²

Another ecclesiastical revenue handled by Cromwell was the individual fines paid by members of the clergy. Charles Booth, bishop of Hereford, gave £266 13s 4d of the one thousand marks fine he had agreed to pay the king for 'the certefieng of an vntrew certificate of non Bigamye' to Cromwell on 3 January 1532.⁴³ Cromwell received a further £200 from Booth sometime between November 1532 and March 1533.⁴⁴ John Clerk, bishop of Bath and Wells, and John Longland, bishop of Lincoln, were also both forced to pay fines in 1531-1532 for the escape of prisoners at the bishops' gaols. Clerk was fined £700 for this: £200 of which he paid to Cromwell on 25 February 1532,⁴⁵ followed by another instalment of £133 6s 8d between November and March 1533.⁴⁶ These fines were entirely conventional. But Cromwell received others which evidently were further examples of the Crown seeking to impose its authority over the Church. In early 1531 both provinces of the Church were pressured into paying a combined sum of £118,000 to the king in return for a pardon for offences committed against the statutes of Provisors and Praemunire.⁴⁷ The sum itself was specified to be paid to the Treasurer of the Chamber,⁴⁸ but Cromwell's accounts reveal he received £242 2s 3½d from the executors of Archbishop Warham, listed as 'Mony graunted By the Spirituallie

⁴² TNA, PRO, SP 1/76 f. 99 (*LP VI* 533). Also see SP 1/79 f. 169 (*LP VI* 1274); SP 1/80 f. 174 (*LP VI* 1507) for Cromwell's handling of these matters.

⁴³ TNA, PRO, E36/141 f. 39 (*LP V* 1285 [ix]). There is, however, a slight discrepancy concerning this. The list of fines drawn up after February records this, but only £200 is recorded as being paid, with £466 13s 4d outstanding. See SP 1/68 f. 142 (*LP V* 657). The confusion surrounding this is not helped by the fact that Cromwell's warrant for this payment does not appear to have survived.

⁴⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 2/N f. 108 (*LP V* 228).

⁴⁵ TNA, PRO, E101/421/5 (*LP V* 825). The list of warrants made by one of Cromwell's clerks describes this erroneously as being dated 15 February, E36/141 f. 41 (*LP V* 1285 [ix]). The pardon was granted in February 1532, TNA, PRO, C66/658 m. 32 and C82/652 (*LP V* 909 [7]).

⁴⁶ TNA, PRO, SP 2/N f. 108 (*LP VI* 228). Longland's fine was £666 13s 4d for the breach at his gaol, but he consistently looked to Cromwell for respite from payments, evidently with some success. See SP 1/68 f. 107 (*LP V* 623); SP 1/70 f. 123 (*LP V* 1107); SP 1/70 f. 143 (*LP V* 1144). Longland's pardon was finally granted in March 1534. See TNA, PRO, C82/679 and C66/663 m. 6 (*LP VII* 419 [10]); SP 1/82 f. 249 (*LP VII* 322).

⁴⁷ See J. Guy, 'Henry VIII and the Praemunire manoeuvres of 1530-1531', *EHR*, 97 (1982), pp. 481-503, for an overview of these events.

⁴⁸ TNA, PRO, E135/8/37.

at the last convocation'.⁴⁹ Presumably this was part of the praemunire fine owed by Warham, and Cromwell received this because he was overseeing the administrative details of the vacant see following the bishop's death.⁵⁰ Cromwell similarly concluded and received several fines arising from specific praemunire charges brought before and after the English clergy received their pardon.⁵¹

Cromwell was also involved in what might be loosely termed Church 'jurisdictional' matters during these years. In August 1532 Thomas Bedyll wrote to him requesting the return of 'the book conteynyng the som of the priuilegies of the church of cauntrebury', which hints that Cromwell had some interest in this. Bedyll wanted it back 'to see what priuilegies the said church hath that the prior and chapter conuent may cal a conuocation of the prouince'.⁵² The archbishopric of Canterbury was vacant following the death of Warham, and during such a vacancy the priory of Christ Church, Canterbury, possessed the right to exercise jurisdiction in the archiepiscopal see, and preside over the

⁴⁹ TNA, PRO, SP 2/N f. 108 (*LP* VI 228).

⁵⁰ TNA, PRO, SP 1/71 f. 39 (*LP* V 1326).

⁵¹ In July 1530 fourteen clerics had originally been charged with praemunire before a general pardon was granted to the entire English clergy in early 1531. Then, in the summer of 1531, a further eight clerics, who had been specifically excluded from this pardon, were individually charged with praemunire offences and required to pay fines. See Guy, 'Praemunire Manoeuvres', pp. 482-487 & 500-502 for the names of those involved and the details surrounding this. Thomas Skeffington, bishop of Bangor, had been one of the fourteen charged in 1530. He had to pay a fine of £333 6s 8d to the king, which was paid to Cromwell. John Alen, archbishop of Dublin, and Peter Ligham, dean of the Arches, two of the clerics fined in July 1531, were also both in correspondence with Cromwell over their fines. Alen thanked Cromwell in March 1532 for 'suche labors & paynes as yow...right lovynglie hath taken to bryng my (second) great praemunire to a conclusion'. This was in response to a pardon granted on 7 February which Cromwell negotiated. The archbishop was to pay £1, 466 13s 4d to the king; £800 of this was paid to Thomas Alvard; £200 was given to Cromwell on 10 February 1532, before being paid into the privy coffers; while another £200 was paid to him between November 1532 and March 1533. Alen was killed in 1534 with the remaining £200 still outstanding. Peter Ligham's pardon was granted in June 1532 in return for a fine of £132 6s 8d. One hundred marks for this was given to Cromwell and paid into the privy coffers in June; the remainder was again paid to him sometime between November 1532 and March 1533. For all of this see: TNA, PRO, SP 1/68 f. 142 (*LP* V 657); SP 1/68 f. 82 (*LP* V 577); TNA, PRO, E36/141 f. 39 (*LP* V 1285 [ix]) and E101/421/5 (*LP* V 1052); SP 60/1 f. 148 (*St. P.* II, p. 158; *LP* V 878); TNA, PRO, C82/652 and C66/658 m. 16 (*LP* 838 [10]); E36/141 f. 39 (*LP* V 1285 [ix]); SP 2/N f. 108 (*LP* VI 228); , SP 60/2 ff. 57-57v (*LP* VII 1109); SP 60/2 ff. 62-62v (*LP* VII 1404); SP 60/2 f. 49 (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 357-358; *LP* VI 791), mistakenly placed in 1533, it is of 1534; , C82/656 and C66/661 m. 19 (*LP* V 1139 [10/i]); SP 2/M ff. 8-10 (*LP* V 1139 [10/ii]) is a draft of this grant prepared by Cromwell's office; E36/141 f. 42 (*LP* V 1285 [ix]). The summary of this in *LP* mistakenly describes the payment as £100.

⁵² TNA, PRO, SP 1/71 f. 58 (*LP* V 1356).

southern convocation.⁵³ The prior there informed Cromwell he wished to be excused from presiding on the grounds of lacking the ‘experience and qualitees necessary’. That he wrote to Cromwell suggests he expected him to be dealing with this issue, and the prior indeed asked that ‘I may knowe the kynges gracious pleasure to what Bysshop of Any dioces of this province of cauntebury I shall make my commission to be president of the same Convocacion and me self to be Absent’.⁵⁴

Other ecclesiastical issues which Cromwell was consulted over included the protection of rights for monastic houses,⁵⁵ the pope’s refusal to grant bulls consecrating English bishops following the passage of the appeals act,⁵⁶ and disciplinary matters concerning pluralities.⁵⁷ In November 1533 he was also engaged in mediating a jurisdictional dispute between Edward Lee, archbishop of York, and William Knight, archdeacon of Richmond.⁵⁸ Of interest here are Lee’s remarks to Cromwell that ‘I shalbe as glad to come to a raysonable and charitable communication in this controuersie between tharchdieacon and me

⁵³ I. J. Churchill, *Canterbury Administration* (2 vols., London, 1933), i. 551.

⁵⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 1/74 f. 24 (LP VI 34). Cromwell did handle the matter. The prior was instructed to cause ‘a commission to be sealed Accordyng to your [i.e. Cromwell’s] counsell levyng in the same a voyde place for the name of hym that it shall please the kynges highness to nomynatte or appoint to be president of the conuocacion the whiche commyssion I do now send vnto you’. See SP 1/74 f. 123 (LP VI 108).

⁵⁵ TNA, PRO, SP 1/69 f. 210 (LP V 920).

⁵⁶ John Salcott had been nominated to the see of Bangor in September 1533, but reported to Cromwell that ‘the poopys hollynes wyll in noo wysse grawnte me the bulles Accordynge to the tenor off my supplycacyon to hym made’, thereby preventing his consecration as bishop. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/79 f. 5 (LP VI 1067); SP 3/12 f. 145 (LP VI 1433); SP 1/80 f. 85 (LP VI 1396). This was in retaliation for Henry’s split with the papacy, ostensibly confirmed by the act of appeals, which had been drafted by Cromwell and passed only months earlier. Although new jurisdictional procedures regarding appeals had been designed by Cromwell, there was no mention in this for the appointment of bishops. It is therefore worth emphasising the English hypocrisy of disputing papal power yet still seeking bulls from Rome for Salcot’s installation, and for one enabling him to hold the abbey of Hyde *in commendam*, both as late as October 1533. The pope’s response must have been anticipated, and on his refusal Salcot told Cromwell ‘I cane goo noo further in thys matter tylle I knowe yowr cowncelle...In caas the bulle cane natt be opteynede as ytt ys dyuysyde I beseech your mastershypp to calle to yowr remembrans that ye deuysyde and thowght ytt goode the kynges hyghnes to gyue me the temporaltees off the sayde Bysshopptryche. See SP 1/80 f. 85 (LP VI 1396). In the absence of the pope’s bull of confirmation it was decided that the archbishop of Canterbury could confirm and consecrate English bishops, and Salcot was consecrated bishop in April by Cranmer, along with Rowland Lee at Chester and Thomas Goodrich at Ely. See CSP, *Spanish*, V, i, 45.

⁵⁷ TNA, PRO, SP 1/73 f. 153 (LP V 1784).

⁵⁸ TNA, PRO, SP 1/80 ff. 103-103v (LP VI 1440); SP 1/79 f. 71 (LP V 1158); SP 1/80 f. 105 (LP VI 1441); SP 1/80 f. 108 (LP VI 1451); SP 1/80 f. 109 (LP VI 1452).

as the kinges highness by you wolde haue me'. He told Cromwell that if all else failed he would be content to have him and the Lord Chancellor make an end in the matter.⁵⁹ This raises a question about Cromwell's authority, which is illustrated by letters from the nuns of Stratford on a separate issue. They were having problems with their prioress, and had written to Cromwell wishing to have her removed.⁶⁰ The chancellor of the bishop of London, however, 'rebewked' the nuns for approaching Cromwell, saying 'we had gotten a temporall man to ower ordinary & that he spak by you'.⁶¹ Because Cromwell was not a member of the clergy, the chancellor clearly felt there were limits to the extent of his involvement with ecclesiastical matters. Why was it, then, that he was able to involve himself with the Church's jurisdictional matters, some of which - as with the case at the priory of Stratford - prompted objections? The answer, surely, is that Henry VIII allowed Cromwell to do so. Archbishop Lee's letters concerning his dispute with the archdeacon makes it clear that the king wanted the dispute resolved and was prepared to have Cromwell see to this. It has been argued by Gwyn that during the 1520s Henry VIII used Wolsey to control and manage the English Church on his behalf.⁶² There are tentative hints here that the same may have been true of Cromwell in the early 1530s. This suggestion is confirmed by Cromwell's involvement with religious houses.

Cromwell and the Monasteries

There were almost 900 religious houses in England on the eve of the Reformation.⁶³ Each of these required a head, and whenever a head died or relinquished office - perhaps owing to infirmity - it was necessary to fill the vacancy. Religious orders had their own procedures for elections; and there were different stages, from the emergence of candidates to the final formal ratification. The Crown, however, also took an interest. Many reforming kings

⁵⁹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/80 f. 108 (*LP VI* 1451).

⁶⁰ TNA, PRO, SP 1/81 f. 139 (*LP VI* 1692).

⁶¹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/81 f. 140 (*LP VI* 1693).

⁶² Gwyn, *King's Cardinal*, pp. 309-312.

⁶³ D. Knowles and R. N. Hadcock, *Medieval Religious Houses: England and Wales* (London, 1971), p. 494.

and their councillors saw monastic heads as crucial to the wellbeing of monasteries and were concerned that good heads be appointed. The Crown also had direct rights over certain institutions founded by Kings or Queens, and even privately founded houses were still required to obtain a royal *congé d'élire* before proceeding to an election. The royal assent was then needed for a newly chosen abbot or prior. At a more mundane level, the Crown also took possession of the revenues from vacant offices and restored these on the confirmation of a new head. Upholding all these rights created considerable work for royal officials.

Who was it specifically that handled this? Bishops undoubtedly played a part in the oversight of religious houses within their diocese, and during the 1520s Wolsey attended to much of the work associated with monastic appointments. Between 1518 and 1529 the Cardinal was closely involved with at least twenty elections, eighteen of which were 'compromitted', or decided, personally by him as cardinal legate.⁶⁴ Judging by the number of *congé d'élire*s requested between December 1530 and April 1534, there were twenty three monastic heads appointed during this period. Of the six elections between December 1530 and March 1532, none appear to have involved Cromwell.⁶⁵ Between April 1532 and April 1534, however, a further seventeen heads were elected. With the exception of one,⁶⁶ Cromwell can be shown to have been involved in some form with every single appointment. His correspondence also links him with the resignation or replacement of heads at four additional monasteries, as well as the promotion of several priors. From 1532 onwards then, Cromwell was managing the king's interests over religious houses.

⁶⁴ Gwyn, *King's Cardinal*, p. 317.

⁶⁵ These were: the priory of St Giles of Barnewell, TNA, PRO, C82/637 (LP V 80 [27]) & C82/639 (LP V 166 [27]); St Mary's, York, C82/638 and C66/656 m. 32 (LP V 119 [19]) & C82/640 and C66/657 m. 25 (LP V 220 [9]); Burton-on-Trent, C82/638; C66/656 m. 33 (LP V 119 [21]) and C82/639; C66/657 m. 28 (LP V 166 [53]); St Albans, C82/638 (LP V 119 [44]) & C82/639 (LP V 166 [28]); Athelney, C82/638 and C66/656 m. 33 (LP V 119 [66]) & C82/639 and C66/657 m. 28 (LP V 166 [55]); Elnestone, C82/640 and C66/659 m. 14 (LP V 278 [1]).

⁶⁶ This was the priory of St Andrew, Northamptonshire, whose abbot resigned in August 1532. See TNA, PRO, C82/659 (LP V 1270 [15]) and C82/660 (LP V 1499 [2]). Given the overwhelming statistics quoted above, it would seem highly likely that Cromwell was also involved with this one, but there is no evidence which can link him with it.

Cromwell's earliest involvement in a monastic election came in May 1532.⁶⁷ William Boston, prior of St Bartholomew's, Smithfield, had died in April,⁶⁸ and Robert Fuller, abbot of Waltham abbey, had emerged as the likely candidate to replace him. On 22 May he wrote to Cromwell on the matter asking him to

contynewe your most herty goodnes to the ende and fynisshynge of this matter for the house of seynt bartilmews, And where as I do surely knowe that for your Assueryd good mynd in the premssis ther hath byn liberall mocyons sett forward: be ye well assueryd of my part...nott onely reward for your labors takyn in this tyme of the begynnynge of this matter: but also such yerely remembrance.⁶⁹

Fuller's remarks indicate that Cromwell was handling the 'matter' of his election, and he was indeed made prior of St Bartholomew's in July.⁷⁰ The 'yerely' reward the abbot referred to for Cromwell's role facilitating this was a £20 annuity which Fuller and the convent granted him on 20 September.⁷¹ Cromwell's purchase of the manor of Canonbury from the convent on 23 September may also have formed part of his reward.⁷²

A number of Cromwell's remembrances further demonstrate that he was handling the administrative details of monastic appointments. Among the notes he regularly made of matters to be done there is one reminding himself

⁶⁷ That is, on behalf of the king. As Philip Ward has shown, Cromwell was also involved with the replacement of heads at religious houses as part of his work for Wolsey. No doubt this previous experience greatly assisted Cromwell when carrying out similar work for the king. See Ward, 'The Origins of Thomas Cromwell's Public Career', pp. 160-172.

⁶⁸ TNA, PRO, C82/654 (*LP V* 978 [23]).

⁶⁹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/70 f. 53 (*LP V* 1044).

⁷⁰ TNA, PRO, C82/658 (*LP* 1207 [24]; C82/658 and C66/661 m. 21 (*LP V* 1207 [35])). Also see C82/658 and C66/661 m. 35 (*LP V* 1207 [25]), which is a licence for Fuller to obtain papal bulls allowing him to hold the priory of St Bartholomew's and Waltham abbey, for life, *in commendam*.

⁷¹ TNA, PRO, E36/140 f. 43r. This fee was due to be paid in equal portions at Michaelmas and Lady Day each year, and replaced the earlier fee of £5 the then prior William Boston had granted Cromwell the previous September (*ibid.*, f. 38). This had presumably been granted to encourage Cromwell to act favourably toward the monastery during their land exchange with the king.

⁷² TNA, PRO, SP 2/M ff. 46-52 (*LP V* 1339).

to obtain ‘a conge de lyre for thurgarton’ in 1534,⁷³ and ‘for the signyng of the restytucyons of Burton’ in 1533.⁷⁴ Cromwell’s receipt of various revenues from vacant houses also provides some indication of his involvement at a handful of monasteries where wider evidence is sometimes lacking. In May 1532 a *congé d’élire* was granted to the monastery of St James, Northamptonshire, followed by the royal assent to the election of John Dasset as abbot there in June.⁷⁵ That Cromwell was involved in this appointment is suggested by the fact that the entry for ‘a Fyne made with the Abbott of Saynt Jamys in northampton for the Restytucyon of his temporalties’ was written in Cromwell’s hand on a list of fines owed to the king.⁷⁶ Whether Cromwell himself received this sum is unclear, but he certainly received the money for the new prior of Huntingdon’s temporalities in July.⁷⁷

Cromwell also received £666 13s 4d of the revenues from St. Peter’s, Westminster, following the death of the abbot there.⁷⁸ A memorandum in Cromwell’s hand reminded him ‘To send to the abbott of Westminster for his end’, and appears to be concerned with the completion of this appointment.⁷⁹ William Boston succeeded at St Peter’s in early 1533, and several letters to Cromwell do indeed hint at his involvement.⁸⁰ Another memorandum of Cromwell’s also lists sums owed by five abbots, including the abbot of Westminster, which has the appearance of being a list of money these heads owed for their temporalities.⁸¹ This is confirmed by Cromwell’s role in the

⁷³ BL, Cotton MS, Titus B I f. 463 (*LP VII 408*).

⁷⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 1/82 f. 200 (*LP VII 257*).

⁷⁵ TNA, PRO, C82/656 (*LP V 1065 [30]*); C82/657 (*LP V 1139 [23]*).

⁷⁶ TNA, PRO, SP 1/68 f. 143v (*LP V 657*). The fine was £33 6s 8d, with £10 recorded as having already been paid.

⁷⁷ TNA, PRO, SP 2/N f. 107 (*LP VI 228*); TNA, PRO, C82/656 and C66/661 m. 6 (*LP V 1139 [4]*); C82/658 (*LP V 1207 [43]*).

⁷⁸ TNA, PRO, SP 2/N f. 108 (*LP VI 228*); TNA, PRO, C82/666 and C66/660 m. 15 (*LP VI 300 [15]*).

⁷⁹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/78 ff. 215-215v (*LP VI 1056 [2]*). Another note in this remembrance contained a similar reminder ‘[To the] Abbott of malmesbury for his end’, f. 215v. For Cromwell and Malmesbury, see below, pp. 152-155.

⁸⁰ TNA, PRO, SP 1/72 f. 163 (*LP V 1665*); SP 1/73 f. 99 (*LP V 1725*). Boston did not receive his temporalities until April 1533. See TNA, PRO, C82/667 and C66/661 m. 21 (*LP VI 417 [21]*).

⁸¹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/78 f. 217v (*LP VI 1057*). The abbots and sums are as followed: Westminster, £1000; Malmesbury, £1000; Colchester, £200; Burton, £100; Athelney, £100. Cromwell can be linked with each of their elections. See below, pp. 152-153, 154-156, 158, 160-162.

election of another of those listed, the abbot of St John's, Colchester'.⁸² A *congé d'élire* was requested from St John's in May 1532,⁸³ and by 10 June Thomas Marshall had been elected there. He wrote to Cromwell telling him he had sealed four obligations Cromwell had asked for concerning 'the pa[y]ment of too hunderith poundes to the kyngges vse'. This was sent to Cromwell 'trustyng now of your especiall favor to haue the resatucion [sic] of my temporaltes'.⁸⁴ The salient point is that the two hundred pounds matches the sum recorded for the 'Abbott of Colchester' on Cromwell's list,⁸⁵ and therefore further confirms his involvement in routine matters surrounding these appointments.

Once Cromwell began managing the Crown's rights and interests toward the monasteries he was very likely to acquire considerable influence over the appointment of heads. When, for instance, Thomas Charde, the prior at Montague, Somerset, resigned in July 1532,⁸⁶ Cromwell was perceived to be the figure worth approaching on the matter of a successor. Sir John Fitzjames, Chief Justice of the King's Bench, had done just that, and wrote to thank Cromwell on 4 August having heard 'that the mater at montagew hathe taken gode effect accordyng to my suyte', while assuring him the bearer would 'performe suche promyse as hathe ben made'.⁸⁷ Fitzjames' man, Robert Shirbourne, had been installed at Montague in late July, and Fitzjames requested Cromwell 'to gett hym the kyngges Royall Assent with Restitucion of his temporalties', which again points to Cromwell handling the administrative details of this appointment. Shirbourne received his temporalities on 29 August,⁸⁸ and Cromwell was thanked by Fitzjames 'for your kynd & substancyall dealyng for the prior off mountegewe' in early September.⁸⁹

⁸² Ibid., f. 217v; SP 1/78 f. 215 (LP VI 1056 [2]).

⁸³ TNA, PRO, C82/670 (LP VI 578 [19]).

⁸⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 1/76 f. 173 (LP VI 621). Marshall's temporalities were not in fact restored until January 1534, TNA, PRO, C82/680 and C66/663 m. 10 (LP VII 147 [16]). It is also interesting to note that the abbot asked for Cromwell's 'favor and ayd in recoueryng such rentes and de[wties] as be withdrawn frome the monastery'.

⁸⁵ TNA, PRO, SP 1/78 f. 217v (LP VI 1057).

⁸⁶ TNA, PRO, C82/658 and C66/661 m. 17 (LP V 1207 [27]); TNA, PRO, SP 1/70 f. 154 (LP V 1163).

⁸⁷ TNA, PRO, SP 1/70 f. 185 (LP V 1213).

⁸⁸ TNA, PRO, C82/659 and C66/661 m. 17 (LP V 1270 [18]).

⁸⁹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/71 f. 23 (LP V 1304).

What happened over the vacancy at Malmesbury, Wiltshire, in mid-1533 offers further insight into Cromwell's influence over elections, while also providing an illustration of a monastery attempting to resist royal authority. The abbot of Malmesbury died in May 1533, and Cromwell had sent a 'compendivs lettrre' on 13 May requiring the prior, John Coddryngton, to send somebody 'to sertyffy vp the dethe of our Father the abbot vnto the kynges hyghtnys'.⁹⁰ Evidently a formal notification was required before a *congé d'élire* could be issued, and it is again interesting that Cromwell was attending to such administrative formalities, and following due legal process.⁹¹ To undertake the election at Malmesbury Cromwell sent his ecclesiastical agent, Rowland Lee, there in June.⁹² On the 19th he informed Cromwell he had received his letters 'whereby I doo well perseue the kynges pleasure is I shuld bring the eleccion at malmysbury to compromise'.⁹³

An election by compromise was one in which the authority to choose the abbot was delegated to a person or persons who elected in the name of the monastic community.⁹⁴ Those chosen at Malmesbury would undoubtedly have been expected to favour the royal choice. Shortly after Lee's arrival, however, those at the monastery of 'the cosynneres party' told him 'thay whold not consent' to this 'for soo myche as thay hade the kynges licens grantyd to thame for thyre fre eleccion', and wanted to proceed 'per modum scrutinii', that is, by individual voting.⁹⁵ Lee believed that if they 'myght a gotten the congy delyre In to thayre handes' they would have 'mayd thayre eleccion at thayre owne mynde and soo a frustratyd and deludyd your exspectacion' by electing the

⁹⁰ TNA, PRO, SP 1/76 f. 48 (LP VI 489).

⁹¹ On this point also see the note among Cromwell's remembrances 'to speke with the king that he grante no elecyon for bewlay [Beulieu] without desire of congye'. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/78 f. 215 (LP VI 1056 [2]).

⁹² TNA, PRO, SP 1/66 f. 46 (LP V 300). Erroneously placed in 1531 in LP, it is of 1533. See p. 157 for its re-dating. Lee was Cromwell's agent in many of the monastic appointments he oversaw in 1532, including Montague, Muchelney and St Bartholomew's, and he continued to work as Cromwell's agent throughout 1533. See TNA, PRO, 1/70 f. 154 (LP V 1163) SP 1/237 f. 210 (LP Add I, i, 784); SP 1/70 f. 192 (LP V 1225); C82/659 and C66/661 m 17 (LP V 1270 [18]); E. A. Webb, *The Records of St. Bartholomew's Priory, West Smithfield* (2 vols., London, 1921), i. 239-240, 241-242.

⁹³ BL, Cotton MS, Cleopatra E IV f. 28 (LP VI 674).

⁹⁴ D. Knowles, *The Religious Orders in England*, II, *The End of the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1955), p. 250.

⁹⁵ BL, Cotton MS, Cleopatra E IV f. 28 (LP VI 674).

cosyner.⁹⁶ The cosyner's (or cofferer's?) name was Dan Walter Bristow,⁹⁷ and although Cromwell's associate, William Popley, had urged him to act on his behalf,⁹⁸ Cromwell apparently wished to see the monastery's chamberlain, Robert Frampton, elected. The Lord Chancellor, however, supported Bristow, and because Lee's 'dewte' was 'to helpe to sat[i]sfy your purpoce and to the same apply my selffe', he sent Cromwell a copy of the Abbot of Gloucester's visitation of 1527, detailing Bristow's 'dissolute lyffe whiche thynges oppenyd to my lorde chanceler and other his frendes by your good police and wysdome shall soo stope thayre mothes and and [sic] mynde'.⁹⁹ In the meantime Lee postponed the election until 17 July,¹⁰⁰ but continued to attend and move matters at the monastery to no avail.¹⁰¹

Sir Edward Baynton had also begun negotiation with the monks at Malmesbury on 5 July on the king's behalf. He declared to them 'youre highness was not as yet holy and effectually determynyd in on[e] man' as abbot. As a result, the monks 'were contentyd to put iiii in compromission to youre highness...of the which iiii the chamberer to be on[e] / and your hignes to chose and nominate soche on[e] as god shall put in your most gracious mynde'.¹⁰² Cromwell was informed of Baynton's agreement with the monks on 12 July by Lee, and that new letters from the king were expected within two or three days. The meaning behind Lee's subsequent remark that 'after thys tydynges it whas foly for me to doo eny ferther for what for trust of contrary commandment to me wiche boundes not to the kynges honer' is unclear, but requires comment.¹⁰³ In some circles this might be taken as proof that

⁹⁶ BL, Cotton MS, Cleopatra E IV ff. 28, 29r (*LP* VI 674).

⁹⁷ In a letter to the king on this matter, signed by Bristow, he is described as 'coffurer', TNA, PRO, SP 1/66 f. 133 (*LP* V 322). Mistakenly placed in 1531 by the editors of *LP*, it clearly relates to this episode of 1533.

⁹⁸ TNA, PRO, SP 1/76 f. 50 (*LP* VI 492).

⁹⁹ BL, Cotton MS, Cleopatra E IV ff. 28-28v (*LP* VI 674). The book, however, also implicated those of the 'the chamberes frendes' in wrong doing, and Lee told Cromwell 'I have mayd a crosse of the hedes of thame that be of the chambereres party' in the book, so this information could be concealed. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/77 f. 56 (*LP* VI 676); *VCH, Wiltshire*, iii. 226.

¹⁰⁰ BL, Cotton MS, Cleopatra E IV f. 28 (*LP* VI 674).

¹⁰¹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/66 f. 133 (*LP* V 322), misdated in *LP*, it is off 1533; SP 1/77 f. 196 (*LP* VI 816)

¹⁰² TNA, PRO, SP 1/238 f. 87 (*LP* Add I, i, 858); SP 1/66 f. 133 (*LP* V 322), incorrectly placed in 1531 in *LP*.

¹⁰³ TNA, PRO, SP 1/77 f. 196 (*LP* VI 816); SP 1/77 f. 197 (*LP* VI 817).

Cromwell had been acting independently, without the king's approval or knowledge. Alternatively, if this remark is taken at face value, Lee was merely waiting to hear the king's response in case his instructions had changed. After all, Lee's belief that if the monks at Malmesbury went 'vnpunnisseyd' for their refusals 'lett neuer the kynges grace trust to have suche spede for his perogatiffe in monasteries' certainly suggests he believed he was following the king's instructions, rather than Cromwell's own.¹⁰⁴

What this episode does perhaps suggest is that the king was not all that concerned with who was appointed at Malmesbury, and had been open to suggestion. The next abbot at Malmesbury was, after all, a relatively minor issue, while the dispersal of patronage was a useful tool through which Henry was happy - and probably expected - to reward his courtiers by appointing their nominees. Cromwell was apparently successful in persuading the king to appoint Robert Frampton, but both Cromwell and Lee still felt it necessary to make preparations to dissuade Audelely from acting in support of Bristow. This certainly implies they believed Henry might be persuaded to support a different candidate. On 17 July, however, following the monastery's submission to the king, Lee finally reported to Cromwell that 'I have browght the mater of eleccion at malmsbury...in too myne arbitrament'.¹⁰⁵ The royal assent for the election of Cromwell's candidate, Robert Frampton, as abbot was given on 22 July 1533.¹⁰⁶

Cromwell's ability to influence who was appointed in monastic elections, and Henry's willingness often to accept this, provided his own interests were served, is also indicated in the election at Muchelney, Somerset, in September 1532. Matters at Muchelney were closely tied to those at Montague (discussed above) because John Shirbourne, who it will be recalled was appointed abbot at

¹⁰⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 1/77 f. 196 (*LP* VI 816).

¹⁰⁵ TNA, PRO, SP 1/78 f. 9 (*LP* VI 847).

¹⁰⁶ TNA, PRO, C82/672 (*LP* VI 929 [51]). Restitution of temporalities was granted in December: C82/677 and C66/662 m. 38 (*LP* VI 1595 [15]). Also see TNA, PRO, SP 1/73 f. 121 (*LP* V 1746), which is a letter asking for Cromwell to excuse the abbot of Malmesbury for being behind in the money he owed Cromwell for his temporalities. It is undated, and placed in 1532 in *LP*, but surely dates to 1533. Three other letters concerning Cromwell's influence at Malmesbury were also erroneously placed in 1531 and 1533 by the editors of *LP*. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/70 f. 10 (*LP* V 990); SP 1/76 f. 196 (*LP* VI 629); SP 1/76 f. 195 (*LP* VI 628). They are of the year 1534.

Montague in September, had resigned as abbot at Muchelney prior to this in June.¹⁰⁷ Why this switch took place is unclear, but letters from Henry and Cromwell had commanded his resignation.¹⁰⁸ Cromwell was then lobbied hard to secure the appointment of one Dan Thomas Inde to succeed Shirbourne. There are even hints that he may have been offered, and probably accepted, some form of bribe, to achieve this. Henry Thornton, acting on Inde's behalf, had certainly made some sort of unscrupulous deal with Cromwell. In one letter he cryptically assured him that 'on my fayth & pour honestie ther shale be no cryater [creature] levyng know what is or shale be done betwe[en] your mastership & me consernyng mechelnes'.¹⁰⁹ Nevertheless other parties were lobbying for other candidates. Thornton told Cromwell that the convent at Muchelney by 'gret polacie & craftie menys' were set against Inde, and working to have the bishop of Bath and Wells appoint a monk from Glastonbury as abbot. The canons at the Cathedral Church were also set against him, but Thornton cared 'nat gretlye...becawse I...well remembre your assured discret worddes'.¹¹⁰ Cromwell indeed confirmed on 20 July 1532 that 'ther hathe bene moche busynes at the Courte / made by the Frenedes of the sayd convent', but Thornton was told Rowland Lee would shortly be at Muchelney and 'ye shall know more who I trust at his Repayre'.¹¹¹

On Lee's arrival in August rival parties were still lobbying for another candidate.¹¹² Money, however, continued to be the motivating factor, and Thornton was concerned by the 'gret labore...mayde' by others 'with more largger offers then I am prevye vnto'. While continuing to assure Cromwell of Inde's credentials, he thought it prudent to promise him that 'any offer that hathe or shale be mayde / above that your mastership & I wase agreid vppon

¹⁰⁷ TNA, PRO, C82/659 and C66/661 m. 18 (*LP V* 1270 [7]).

¹⁰⁸ TNA, PRO, SP 1/70 f. 106 (*LP V* 1088); SP 1/237 f. 211 (*LP Add I*, i, 785).

¹⁰⁹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/70 f. 107 (*LP V* 1089).

¹¹⁰ TNA, PRO, SP 1/70 f. 156 (*LP V* 1167).

¹¹¹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/237 f. 210 (*LP Add I*, i, 784).

¹¹² TNA, PRO, SP 1/70 f. 192 (*LP V* 1225); SP 1/70 f. 197 (*LP V* 1230). The question had also been raised of whether Dan Thomas Inde was of sufficient canonical age, i.e. twenty four, to be elected abbot. Thornton told Cromwell his age of twenty five years would be 'proved' by one hundred people 'bessyddes those xiiii names that I send your mastership'. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/70 f. 196 (*LP V* 1229).

for the kynges profyt or otherwise at your commandment / dan thomas shale be so good that way as the best with owt fayle'.¹¹³ This guarantee was enough to clinch it for Thornton; Inde became abbot in September, receiving his temporalities in October.¹¹⁴ It is worth emphasising that to secure his choice Thornton had been required to make financial promises to both the king and Cromwell. The king's money was of course customary, and Cromwell no doubt ensured the successful candidate paid the highest fine. But the separate promise to Cromwell also confirms he himself was thought to be highly influential in securing a particular outcome.¹¹⁵

Cromwell's influence over monastic appointments is hinted at in several other requests received during these years. On 14 June 1533 Sir William Courtenay requested Cromwell's favour toward the abbot-elect of Athelney, 'nott only for the kynges hyghnes Riall assent Butt also for the Resitucions of his temporaltes'.¹¹⁶ A letter sent by Rowland Lee on 17 June reveals Cromwell was obliging. Lee reported 'I fynisseyd the eleccion at Athelney and thayre was electyd the steward of stawystoke acordyng to master cawrteney[es] desire as your pleasure whas'.¹¹⁷ In April 1534 Henry, marquis of Exeter, wrote to

¹¹³ TNA, PRO, SP 1/70 f. 196 (*LP* V 1229).

¹¹⁴ TNA, PRO, C82/660 (*LP* V 1370 [11]); C82/661 (*LP* V 1499 [16]). A note among Cromwell's papers reminded him to obtain the warrant for the restitution of these temporalities, TNA, PRO, E36/143 f. 9 (*LP* VI 299 [ii]).

¹¹⁵ In the event, however, Thornton's promise went somewhat awry. In December he wrote to Cromwell perceiving 'ye rakyn smale kyndes vppon many consederacions in thabbott of michelney', while assuring him the king would still 'take proffit'. The following June Inde himself wrote, telling Cromwell 'I haue receuyd your mynde...concernyng forty powndes...Thornton promysyd to your masterschippe yn parte of recompens of your paynys taken for me', but he protested that 'by the faythe of an honest man I payyd to hym on[e] C^{li} for your vse'. This was presumably the money owed to the king because Cromwell was also told 'concernynge your fee...that master Sargeante Thornton dyd promyse I neuer dyd knowe there of', although he conceded he was now content to pay it. (A fee of 5 marks from the monastery of Muchelney, dated 15 June, is recorded on a list of Cromwell's annuities and fees, TNA, PRO, E36/140 f. 55r). Rowland Lee, who visited the abbot while on other monastic business for Cromwell, verified the abbot's story. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/72 f. 118 (*LP* V 1614); SP 1/77 f. 44 (*LP* V 295), this was incorrectly placed in 1531 in *LP*, it belongs to 1533; SP 1/66 f. 46 (*LP* V 300). Placed in 1531 in *LP* but belonging to 1533. See below (n. 117) for the details for its re-dating.

¹¹⁶ TNA, PRO, SP 1/66 f. 45 (*LP* V 294). Mistakenly placed in 1531 in *LP*. For its re-dating to 1533 see n. 117 below.

¹¹⁷ TNA, PRO, SP 1/66 f. 46 (*LP* V 300). Mistakenly placed in 1531 in *LP*. This, and the previous letter cited immediately above, along with a letter to Cromwell from the newly elected abbot, Robert Hamlyn, informing Cromwell he had sealed the obligations he had requested, binding the abbey to pay two hundred marks to the king's use (SP 1/68 f. 34 [*LP* V 501]), were all actually sent in 1533. A grant of March 1531 confirms the assent of John Major as abbot of

Cromwell believing the election for a new prioress at Witney, Hampshire, 'is compromitted into your handes', and he wished to see his wife's kinswoman appointed there.¹¹⁸ In February 1533 the bishop of Exeter told Cromwell he received his letters and devised to ensure 'your beides man Thomas wanswurthe' would be installed prior at Bodman. Similarly in October Cromwell requested the election of Thomas Hammond as sub-prior of the Austin Friars in London.¹¹⁹ The prior of St Gregory's, Canterbury, also attributed his promotion to Cromwell, while Christopher Hales asked him to favour at monk at Sherbourne to succeed as abbot.¹²⁰ It is also interesting that when Sir Edward Chamberlain wanted to quickly enable the priory of Ixford, Suffolk, of which he was founder, to elect a new prior in 1534, he still beseeched Cromwell 'to graunt acordyngly / so that be your fauour yt may nat be vsed to the contrary'.¹²¹ All this not only points to Cromwell's further involvement in elections, but also reveals his influence was considerable and widely perceived.

And yet, on occasion Cromwell was less successful in securing his own choice of head. The monastery of Croxton, Leicestershire, rejected Cromwell's request on behalf of their founder not to proceed with their election, although the convent were anxious to placate him, 'having regarde and reuerence to your mastership...whose favour ayde and assistens we desire gretly'.¹²² In March 1534 Cromwell was written to by the prioress of Wilton, Wiltshire, who complained that 'we stond & haue done long for lack of an heed yn grett Inquyetnes', following the death of Isabel Jordayne.¹²³ Richard Lister, chief baron of the

Athelney, which is chronologically incompatible with Courtenay's request, TNA, PRO, C82/639 and C66/657 m. 28 (*LP* V 166 [55]). However, Major died in February 1532 and the next abbot was Robert Hamlyn. Royal assent to his appointment was given on 22 June 1533, which correlates with Lee and Courtenay's remarks. TNA, PRO, C82/671 (*LP* VI 737 [18]). In his letter to Cromwell on 17 June Lee also informed him 'thys day...I intende towards malmesbury and thayre to doo after your commandment...the eleccion thayre shalbe apon Wedynesday'. See SP 1/66 f. 46 (*LP* V 300). As outlined above (pp. 153-156) the election at Malmesbury occurred in mid-1533, not 1531.

¹¹⁸ BL, Cotton MS, Vespasian F XIII f. 178 (*LP* VI 446).

¹¹⁹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/74 f. 168 (*LP* VI 169); SP 1/79 f. 167 (*LP* VI 1270).

¹²⁰ TNA, PRO, SP 1/80 f. 167 (*LP* VI 1495); SP 1/80 f. 169 (*LP* VI 1499).

¹²¹ BL, Cotton MS, Cleopatra E IV f. 64 (*LP* VII 43).

¹²² TNA, PRO, SP 1/83 f. 9 (*LP* VII 376). Also see, SP 1/82 f. 231 (*LP* VII 297); SP 1/238 f. 69 (*LP* Add I, i, 843).

¹²³ TNA, PRO, SP 1/75 f. 58 (*LP* VI 285). This was placed in 1533 in *LP*, but it might be more reasonably placed in 1534 when Cromwell began making notes for the position there to be filled.

Exchequer, wrote to Cromwell on this vacancy, probably in early 1534. He wanted Cecile Lambert to succeed as abbess there, and offered Cromwell the incentive of £100, and the promise of the stewardship of that house, with a fee of £10, if Cromwell advanced her to the king.¹²⁴ A number of Cromwell's remembrances reminded him to 'speak with the king for the abbess of Wilton',¹²⁵ suggesting the final decision lay with Henry VIII. It is interesting, then, that the abbess appointed at Wilton in April 1534 was Cecelia Bodenham, not Lister's (and perhaps Cromwell's) choice of Cecile Lambert.¹²⁶

Resistance from monasteries themselves could also inhibit success at influencing elections. Cromwell managed the replacement of the head at St Mary's Tewkesbury,¹²⁷ and dispatched John Tregonwell and Thomas Bagarde to obtain an election by compromise for the king. These agents reported it had been 'noysed amonges the Bretherne' that the king intended to appoint a 'strainger' as abbot, and the two men 'cowld non oderwyse obteigne the said compromys...by any our pollycie' other than by promising the convent one of their own would be appointed by the king.¹²⁸ Although Tregonwell recollected that Cromwell's instructions had been that the promotion of one of the monastery's own would 'suffyciently please' Henry, the Crown clearly wanted a free hand in its choice of head. The monastery's objections provide a reminder that decisions by the Crown were often made in response to local realities.

It will also be recalled that William Boston had been appointed abbot at St Peter's, Westminster, in early 1533. Before this he had been abbot of Burton-on-Trent, Staffordshire, from which he had to resign in order to succeed at

A *congé d'élire* was also granted for Wilton in March 1534, TNA, PRO, C82/680 and C66/662 m. 15 (LP VII 419 [14]).

¹²⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 1/75 f. 68 (LP VI 304). Undated, but placed in 1533, it would be more reasonable to date this to 1534 when Cromwell became making notes to have this position filled. SP 1/75 f. 69 (LP VI 305) also dates to 1534.

¹²⁵ BL, Cotton MS, Titus B I f. 428 (LP VII 48); TNA, PRO, E36/143 f. 43 (LP VII 50); TNA, PRO, SP 1/82 f. 113 (LP VII 107).

¹²⁶ TNA, PRO, C82/681 and C66/665 m. 7 (LP VII 589 [3]); C82/684 and C66/665 m. 8 (LP VII 761 [41]). She was previously the prioress at Kington St Michael, and had borrowed money to procure her position as abbess there. See TNA, PRO, C1/902/34.

¹²⁷ TNA, PRO, SP 1/83 f. 43v (LP VII 360); TNA, PRO, C82/680 and C66/662 m. 15 (LP VII 419 [23]); SP 1/82 f. 270 (LP VII 346).

¹²⁸ TNA, PRO, SP 1/75 f. 82 (LP VI 328), this is of 1534, not 1533 as in LP. John Wyche, the prior at St Mary's, was elected abbot there. See SP 1/83 f. 77 (LP VII 460); TNA, PRO, C82/683 (LP VII 761 [22]); C82/685 and C66/665 m. 7 (LP VII 922 [5]).

Westminster.¹²⁹ Once again Cromwell can be shown handling the routine work for this switch.¹³⁰ He also continued to use his familiar agents, Rowland Lee and Richard Strete, to deal with the 'on-site' administration.¹³¹ A note among Cromwell's remembrances indicates he originally intended 'the monk bayle to be Abbot of Byrton'.¹³² This was John Fulwell, 'bayly' of St Peter's, Westminster, and what had clearly been devised was a promotion, which probably reflected Cromwell's personal choice given that the monk had worked for him until then.¹³³ Nevertheless the monks at Burton appear to have foiled his intentions. Lee wrote on 25 June, telling Cromwell he had 'trauylyd with the convent of burton But as yeytt I haue noo promise the one part trustyng to haue from the kyng and quen and you a contrary comandment to...that yee have send'.¹³⁴ Was this a delaying tactic by the convent? Cromwell was told by Lee 'thayre is one here that by eleccion shuld haue had the abbacye be fore and yeyt by the same shall haue it consydyrnyng the ould ancient ordre and determiners of the lawe'.¹³⁵ By the 27th, however, Lee reported that the monks were content to allow an election by compromise conducted by himself and Strete, but this was on the condition that one of their own was chosen as abbot.¹³⁶ This offered a face-saving opportunity that ensured the monastery was observing the king's prerogative. Cromwell's original candidate lost out, and William Edis, the 'third prior' at Burton was elected as abbot on 30 July.¹³⁷

Cromwell's influence over monastic appointments needs qualifying in another way. He was not the only figure seeking to dispense patronage. Other courtiers might also successfully persuade the king to appoint one of their

¹²⁹ TNA, PRO, C82/639 and C66/657 m. 28 (*LP* V 166 [53]); C82/668 (*LP* VI 417 [2]).

¹³⁰ A memorandum in his hand from April 1533 reminded him to obtain 'the congye de lyre for burton'. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/75 f. 171v (*LP* VI 386).

¹³¹ Lee was dealing with the election at Burton simultaneously with matters at Malmesbury, and in his letter to Cromwell on 19 June, he informed him 'I wyll thys day towards burton apon trente...thayre to execute yo[ur] purpoce'. See BL, Cotton MS, Cleopatra E IV f. 28v (*LP* VI 674).

¹³² TNA, PRO, SP 1/77 f. 137 (*LP* VI 756).

¹³³ TNA, PRO, SP 1/71 f. 112 (*LP* V 1436); SP 2/N f. 108 (*LP* VI 228).

¹³⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 1/77 f. 80 (*LP* VI 700).

¹³⁵ TNA, PRO, SP 1/77 f. 80 (*LP* VI 700).

¹³⁶ TNA, PRO, SP 1/77 f. 89 (*LP* VI 715); SP 1/77 f. 90 (*LP* VI 716).

¹³⁷ TNA, PRO, C82/672 and C66/663 m. 13. He did not receive his temporalities, however, until April the following year, C82/681 and C66/662 m. 23 (*LP* VII 587). Note Cromwell's remembrances 'for the signyng of the restytucyons of Burton' in early 1534, TNA, PRO, SP 1/82 f. 200 (*LP* VII 257).

recommendations. When, for instance, Thomas Skeffington, bishop of Bangor and abbot of Beaulieu, died in August 1533, it was reported that ‘myche labore...ys made For his rome’.¹³⁸ On this occasion Sir William Fitzwilliam, treasurer of the household, secured the king’s support for the abbot of Waverley to succeed at Beaulieu. Fitzwilliam told Cromwell how

I chaunsed in communycacion with the kinges said highness to saye / that I knewe a man which was not oonly a virtuous man a clene lyver and a good husbonde...whom I thought mete to bee Abbot of the said house of Beaufele And his highness demanded of me who that was and I shewed his grace thabbot of Wauerley / And his highness sayed that trouthe it was And that I coulde not haue named a better ner a meter man.¹³⁹

Interestingly, however, it was Cromwell to whom the king looked to implement this installation. Fitzwilliam added that the king ‘willed me to write vnto you / that ye shall put his grace in remembraunce at his cumyng to London that he maye speke with you in that behalf / and take an ordre in the same saying that the said Abbot shuld haue it’.¹⁴⁰ The king’s attitude seems significant. Unlike Wolsey before him, Cromwell was a layman, and did not possess a spiritual mandate to intervene in monastic affairs. Fitzwilliam’s comment again suggests that Cromwell was able to do all this because the king wanted him to.¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ TNA, PRO, SP 1/78 f. 140 (LP VI 1007).

¹³⁹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/78 f. 138 (LP VI 1006). Cromwell himself was also written to in support of the abbot of Waverley to succeed at Beaulieu. See SP 1/78 f. 137 (LP VI 1001); SP 1/79 f. 14 (Ellis, 3rd Series, II, p. 242; LP VI 1074).

¹⁴⁰ TNA, PRO, SP 1/78 f. 138 (LP VI 1006).

¹⁴¹ One of the reasons Henry was content to leave this routine business to Cromwell was surely his ability to devise a solution in tricky situations. Sir John Fitzjames acknowledged as much when writing to Cromwell in September 1532 concerning the monastery of Bruton, Somerset. Cromwell was told the abbot ‘is nowe old and allso sike’ and ‘intendith to Resign’. Fitzjames was seeking Cromwell’s favour to ensure a more ‘kynd neybour’ was appointed. He reported, however, that ‘Sir Andrewe lutterell and his anncestors’ were founders at Bruton, not the king: ‘off them the howss[e] hathe hade long & meny tyme a licence to goo to ther eleccion’. Nevertheless Fitzjames was confident that ‘whan tyme schall cume the kyngges fauorable letter with *other your policie schall do moche yn the matter*’ [my italics]. Responding to this, Cromwell not only revealed that he had ‘moued the kinges hignes concerning thelection of the Abbote of Bruton’, securing Henry’s consent for Fitzjames’ nominee, but he also added that ‘your lordship...should stay the saide election vntill the kinges title might be tried’. In short, Cromwell had devised an inquest to be held before the local escheators testing the validity of the founder’s claim, with the intent of seeking to establish a legally binding title for the king.

Is there any indication that when overseeing monastic appointments Cromwell was concerned with the quality of monastic heads, or with the wellbeing of monasteries themselves? Cromwell was involved in the resignation of Richard Pexall, abbot of St Mary's, Leicestershire, at the end of 1533.¹⁴² The abbey there had performed poorly in several visitations, and Pexall, in particular, was presented in a bad light by the injunctions which followed the visitation of John Longland, bishop of Lincoln, in the 1520s.¹⁴³ Efforts to remove the abbot were not attempted, however, until the summer of 1532.¹⁴⁴ Longland wrote to Cromwell on 15 July, and revealed that Cromwell and the king were aware of the abbot's faults, and had written to him. Yet Longland felt that Pexall 'will make butt a bare annswer vnto suche wrytinges...And the longer he taryeth therein, the more it shall dekeye [i.e. the monastery]...I thynke itt shalbe meate he haue other lettres in the premises, whiche I commit vnto your grette wisdom'.¹⁴⁵ By August Cromwell was also ostensibly of the opinion that Pexall should be removed,¹⁴⁶ but negotiations for his resignation were not settled by Cromwell until the very end of 1533. John Bouchier was then elected

Although the outcome of this is unclear, it provides a neat illustration of Cromwell working to ensure the Crown might extend its authority further still over monasteries. For this episode see TNA, PRO, SP 1/71 ff. 23-23v (LP V 1304); SP 1/71 ff. 50 (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 347-348; LP V 1340). Admittedly there is some discrepancy over when the next head was appointed, but John Elye was apparently elected abbot there in July 1533, with Fitzjames taking his oath of fealty. See TNA, PRO, C66/663 m. 28 (LP VI 929 [38]) and D. M. Smith, *The Heads of Religious Houses: England & Wales, 1377-1540* (Cambridge, 2008), p. 397, for the discrepancy.

¹⁴² The *congé d'élire* there was granted in January 1534, following Pexall's resignation. See TNA, PRO, C82/678 (LP VII 147 [10]). A memoranda of Cromwell's, 'Item the Restytucyons for leycester', was also a reminder to attend to this. See BL, Cotton MS, Caligula B I f. 463 (LP VII 108).

¹⁴³ G. G. Peery, 'Episcopal Visitation of the Austin Canons of Leicestershire and Dorchester', *EHR*, iv, (1889), pp. 304-309; A. Hamilton Thompson, ed., *Visitations of Religious Houses in the Diocese of Lincoln* (3 vols. London, 1940-1947), ii. 206-217; A. Hamilton Thompson, *The Abbey of St Mary of the Meadows, Leicester* (Leicester, 1949), pp. 77-79.

¹⁴⁴ Although a letter from the abbot to Cromwell reveals that Longland had installed several of his own canons there prior to this in an attempt to resolve the problems there. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/80 f. 168 (LP VI 1496).

¹⁴⁵ TNA, PRO, SP 1/70 f. 161 (LP V 1175).

¹⁴⁶ Lord Leonard Grey referred to a conversation he and Cromwell had in a letter to him: 'as touching the comunicacion you had with me...concerning the Abbot of leycestre...I haue spoken...& declared to the abbot that he ys not lyke to contynewe Abbot there for such causes as the busshop will alledge againste hym'. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/70 f. 200 (LP V 1233).

abbot there in February 1534.¹⁴⁷ He was evidently a better head. Pexall had left the monastery 'a thousand pound in debt',¹⁴⁸ but by 1538 Bouchier had reduced this to £411 10s.¹⁴⁹

Yet all was not what it seemed. Cromwell was in correspondence with Pexall himself throughout all of this, and their correspondence suggests that Cromwell's favour could be bought. In July 1532, when Bishop Longland was campaigning to remove the abbot, Pexall told Cromwell 'I haue been enformed it shulde be your pleasurr that I shulde sende fourty poundes to your maistership by the whiche you myght soner stey myn aduersite & troble whiche is deyly wroght agence me for myn office'.¹⁵⁰ He enclosed this sum, and a short while later he sent him 'a copull of...geldinges', adding he wanted nothing more 'but that I may continue my lyffe in quietnes'.¹⁵¹ In July 1533 the abbot also thanked Cromwell 'for yowre laburs to the kynges highness in my behalf' and concluded by requesting Cromwell's 'fauors towards me & by yowre wysedom make some meyne to the kynges hyghnes to be gudde & gracious lord to me...& the pore monastery'.¹⁵² Evidently Cromwell was unconcerned enough about the abbot's conduct to act in his favour - provided the price was right.¹⁵³ Moreover when the abbot's position became untenable, Cromwell ensured he was granted a pardon and a sizeable pension.¹⁵⁴ This amounted to £100 p.a., and Cromwell instructed the new abbot there to seal the indenture confirming this quickly.¹⁵⁵ Cromwell was also responsive to Pexall's requests to appoint his late canon, Thomas Deydyk, as prior at the monastery of Thurgarton, York, in early

¹⁴⁷ TNA, PRO, C82/679; C66/663 m. 14 (LP VII 262 [9&28]). Thompson states Bouchier had been Cromwell's choice, but offers no evidence in support of this. See Thompson, *St Mary's*, p. 85. Cromwell also received the fee for Bouchier's temporalities, SP 1/82 f. 234 (LP VII 301).

¹⁴⁸ TNA, PRO, SP 1/83 f. 174 (LP VII 579).

¹⁴⁹ VCH, *Leicestershire*, ii. 17; LP XIII, ii, p. 80; Thompson, *St Mary's*, p. 89.

¹⁵⁰ TNA, PRO, SP 1/70 f. 152 (LP V 1158).

¹⁵¹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/71 f. 101 (LP V 1426).

¹⁵² TNA, PRO, SP 1/77 f. 136 (LP V 755).

¹⁵³ It should also be noted that Leonard Grey also asked Cromwell to be Pexall's 'frend at my desyre', which may also have contributed to his acting in the abbot's interests. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/70 f. 200 (LP V 1233).

¹⁵⁴ A memorandum reminded him 'for pexsalles pardon to be assignyd', and Cromwell received his thanks in December 1533 'for your most tendir kyndenesse in all my busyness trusting...suche order to be takyn for my pension'. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/83 f. 43v (LP VII 414); SP 1/81 f. 25 (LP VI 1565); SP 1/82 f. 15 (LP VII 18).

¹⁵⁵ VCH, *Leicestershire*, ii. 16; TNA, PRO, SP 1/83 f. 93 (LP VII 513); SP 1/83 f. 174 (LP VII 579).

1534.¹⁵⁶ Dethyk was elected there in April after the convent had ‘compromytt the hoill matter to the kynges highnes’.¹⁵⁷ Cromwell was clearly prepared to sweeten the blow for Pexall.

There is, however, some evidence that Cromwell did make attempts to remove allegedly poor abbots. Two letters from Margaret, marchioness of Dorset, reveal that Cromwell instigated the removal of Edmund Emery from the monastery of Titley, Essex, in late 1532. In one letter dated 17 October she referred to Cromwell’s pains

taken for me and specially nowe of late concernyng the reformation of this pore house of Tyltey which if ye had not of your goodness proudeyed the remedy which this day is fully executed by my lord abbott of Towre hill thabbott of coksall and master watkyns...[who are] desposyng our olde vnthrifty abbot and chosen anewe oone.¹⁵⁸

In another she claimed ‘iff yow hadde not put to your louyng hande’ the monastery at Titley would have been ‘vtterly destroyed and confunded’.¹⁵⁹ Similary, if the findings of royal commissioners in the north are to be believed, the removal of Edward Kirkby, the abbot of Rievaulx, at the end of 1533 may also have been partially due to ‘hys abhomynable living’; although it might be more realistic to attribute his removal to the letter he had written ‘to the slaundare of the kinges heygnes’ and refusal to follow the royal command.¹⁶⁰ Cromwell sent a letter to the abbots of Fountains and Byland on 8 November 1533 reprimanding them for not having yet ‘indeuored youreselves to

¹⁵⁶ TNA, PRO, SP 1/82 f. 145 (*LP* VII 169). Notes among Cromwell’s remembrances reminded him to obtain a ‘conge de lyre for thurgarton’, which was granted in March, and to attend to ‘the elleccyon of the pryor of thurgarton’. See BL, Cotton MS, Titus B I f. 463 (*LP* VII 108); TNA, PRO, C82/679 and C66/662 m. 29 (*LP* VII 419 [2]); TNA, PRO, SP 1/83 f. 43v (*LP* VII 414).

¹⁵⁷ TNA, PRO, C82/681 and C66/662 m. 29 (*LP* VII 587 [11]); restitution of temporalities were granted in May, C82/684 and C66/664 m. 15 (*LP* VII 761 [28]); SP 1/75 f. 25 (*LP* VI 236)

¹⁵⁸ TNA, PRO, SP 1/79 f. 186 (*LP* VI 1304). This letter was placed in 1533 in *LP*, but it is of 1532. The abbot deposed must have been Edmund Emery, who resigned and had a pension awarded to him on 13 March 1533. See *VCH, Essex*, ii. 136 n. 34.

¹⁵⁹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/72 f. 42 (*LP* V 1557).

¹⁶⁰ *Cartularium Abbatthiae De Rievalle*, ‘Surtees Society’, lxxxiii, (London, 1889), p. cvi. These were presumably the matters the earl of Rutland had been in correspondence with Cromwell about since May. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/76 f. 13 (*LP* VI 437); SP 1/76 f. 110 (*LP* VI 546); SP 1/78 f. 47-47v (*LP* VI 913); SP 1/78 f. 115v (*LP* VI 985).

thaccomplishement' of the king's commandment for the election of a new abbot at Rievaulx.¹⁶¹ This was enough to ensure Robert Blyton, abbot of Rufford, was installed there on 6 December.¹⁶²

Cromwell can be shown taking disciplinary action when reports of wrongdoings were reported to him. In August 1532 Gawyne Boradalle, a monk of Holmcultram, Cumberland, was placed in the custody of the abbot of Byland on Cromwell's orders because he had been accused of poisoning the recently appointed abbot there.¹⁶³ The conflicting reports make it difficult to ascertain the veracity of the charges,¹⁶⁴ but Cromwell evidently took them seriously enough to have the monk held for some time.¹⁶⁵ In the meanwhile, Cromwell, who had handled the installation of the previous abbot Dan Matthew Dyves in early 1532,¹⁶⁶ now tended to the details of the next election, which saw Thomas Ireby elected in late 1532. In November John Lord Husey wrote to him regarding the new abbot, reassuring Cromwell that 'all suche thynges as ys Behynd in the abbottes days Late deceasyd shall be performyd to your

¹⁶¹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/80 f. 91 (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i.366; *LP* VI 1408).

¹⁶² TNA, PRO, SP 1/80 f. 176 (*LP* VI 1513). Also see SP 1/84 f. 84 (*LP* VII 724) and *VCH*, York, iii. 152, for Cromwell's involvement with the pension granted to abbot Kirkby in May 1534.

¹⁶³ TNA, PRO, SP 1/71 f. 34 (*LP* V 1317); SP 1/78 f. 118 (*LP* VI 987); SP 1/78 f. 117 (*LP* VI 986)

¹⁶⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 1/78 ff. 115-115v (*LP* VI 985); SP 1/81 f. 18 (*LP* VI 1557). He was probably later acquitted because he became the last abbot at Holmcultram in 1538. See *VCH*, Cumberland, ii. 173.

¹⁶⁵ Boradalle wrote to Cromwell complaining he had been kept 'outt of my awn hows the space of xx weikkes', and had been moved from Byland to Furness abbey. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/78 f. 117 (*LP* VI 986); SP 1/78 f. 118 (*LP* VI 987), this is probably of 1532, not 1533 as in *LP*; SP 1/81 f. 18 (*LP* VI 1557). For the dispositions and examination taken in regards to this crime, see *LP* Add I, i, 866; *LP* VI 988.

¹⁶⁶ No *congé d'élire* appears to have survived for his appointment, and the editors of the *VCH*, Cumberland, ii, believed Dyvers was elected in 1531 (p. 170 & 178). This was based on the dating of several documents in *LP*, re-dated in this thesis, which also reveal that Cromwell handled the election for the Crown. On the back of a draft of a letter sent to Richard Strete, placed in 1531 in *LP*, but concerning the suppression of Calwich priory in 1532 (see below, pp. 170-172) is the following note in Cromwell's hand: 'Robert Cokett of bolton prorye in the cownty of the cyte of yorke gentilman to be bownde for danne Mathew dyues monke of the monasterye of the holme'. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/66 f. 33v (*LP* V 277). Cokett was evidently instrumental in his appointment and agreed with Cromwell to be bound to ensure the money owed to the king was paid. This was probably the money owed for the restitution of temporalities, recorded on the list of fines owed to the king placed in 1531 in *LP*, but re-dated here to 1532. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/68 f. 143v (*LP* V 657), and above, p. 89 n. 18 for its re-dating.

pleasure...he that now ys abbott Intenddythe so to handdell hym sylf towerds you that I tryst you shall be contentt'.¹⁶⁷

Cromwell was also concerned about the abbot of Woburn's intention to depose Henry Saxton, abbot of Vaudey, Lincolnshire, whom Cromwell described as 'my welbeloued Frende' in 1532 or 1533.¹⁶⁸ According to the abbot of Vaudey's letter to Cromwell, the abbot of Woburn wanted to promote his own 'celerer...to myn offyce'.¹⁶⁹ Cromwell wrote in his defence, telling Woburn

he is agood religious man And that his house wiche was in gret debt at the tyme of his promocion is now by his good policie reduced to good & welthy state & condicion aswell in catell as in corn furnished with other requisites & necessities.¹⁷⁰

Woburn was instructed to 'loke therupon baryng your good & lawfull favour vnto hym', but was also told that another 'wiche ye know well haith gretely mysordered hymselff' should be instructed to reform so that 'he shall not need to be further reconciled to amend his lyvyng'.¹⁷¹ Here, then, is an example of Cromwell ordering a bad monk to be reformed by the relevant authority, while also defending someone he believed to be a competent head. The problem is that there may have been a grain of truth in Woburn's misgivings about Saxton. In his reply to Cromwell, Woburn referred to 'manyfolde accusations' proved by himself, and the abbots of Fountains and Pipewell in their visitation. Because Cromwell had written on his behalf, however, these three had been content to persuade the abbot to resign with a pension of £20 p.a., which it was

¹⁶⁷ TNA, PRO, SP 1/72 f. 41 (LP V 1556). Cromwell also received £50 towards this abbot's fine for his temporalities between November 1532 and March 1533, further hinting at his involvement with the appointment, SP 2/N f. 107 (LP VI 228). See also the abbot's letter to Cromwell in 1533, SP 1/79 f. 117 (LP VI 1205).

¹⁶⁸ TNA, PRO, SP 1/77 f. 175 (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 362-363; LP VI 778).

¹⁶⁹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/71 f. 152 (LP V 1477).

¹⁷⁰ TNA, PRO, SP 1/77 f. 175 (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 362-363; LP VI 778). The abbot of Vaudey had sent Cromwell his account detailing the state of the monastery to illustrate this, SP 1/71 f. 152 (LP V 1477).

¹⁷¹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/77 f. 175 (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 362-363; LP VI 778).

reported he was content to take.¹⁷² The difficulty is ascertaining who was correct about the abbot. The abbot of Woburn was apparently a man of good character, yet his opinions might be suspect, given that it was his brother whom he wanted to succeed at Vaudey.¹⁷³ It is interesting that for Cromwell, however, the point worth emphasising in Saxton's favour was that he had competently managed the monastery's finances and reduced its debt. As a layman and an administrator himself, is it possible that Cromwell was judging a 'good head' under broader criteria than those of the religious orders who had conducted the visitation?

Cromwell's concern for the wellbeing of monastic houses between the years 1532-1534 appears largely unimpressive. True, there were occasions when he can be shown exhibiting intent to ensure a poor head was removed, or an interest in the financial stability of a house. At other times, however, his motives appear less reformist, and probably driven by personal financial gain. Nevertheless this should not be taken to mean that Cromwell was inherently hostile to monasticism. Nor should Cromwell's later involvement in the dissolution of the monasteries be allowed to colour his relationship with houses during the early 1530s. It is worth emphasising once again that Cromwell was a secular figure, and therefore perhaps less concerned with the spiritual reform of monasteries than a bishop might be. With the later dissolutions in mind, however, it is of interest to conclude this section by examining Cromwell's earliest involvement in the suppression of religious houses on the king's behalf.

The suppression of the monastery of Christchurch, London, is familiar to historians of the dissolution, and often cited as a precursor to later events.¹⁷⁴ The monastery there surrendered to the king on 24 February 1532 because of

¹⁷² TNA, PRO, SP 1/77 f. 176 (*LP VI 779*). Saxton was indeed replaced in late 1532 by William Stile. See *VCH, Lincoln*, ii. 144-145.

¹⁷³ *VCH, Lincoln*, ii. 144; *VCH, Bedfordshire*, i. 367-70; TNA, PRO, SP 1/77 f. 176 (*LP VI 779*)

¹⁷⁴ E. Jeffries Davis, 'The Beginning of the Dissolution: Christchurch, Aldgate, 1532', *TRHS*, 4th Series, VIII, (1925), pp. 127-150; D. Knowles, *The Religious Orders in England*, III, *The Tudor Age* (Cambridge, 1971), pp. 200-201.

the debt the house was in.¹⁷⁵ It is probable that the brethren did this expecting the king to restore the community to prosperity.¹⁷⁶ Nevertheless, following the receipt of the formal surrender, the decision was made to suppress the house, and as a contemporary London chronicler observed:

in July the kynge put downe the priour of Christchurche in London, all the chanons of the same place the king sent to othar placis of the same relygyon, for be caws the same priour lyvyd vnthriftely & with his vngracious rewle brought the same house in debt, that he was not able to kepe his house and mayntayne it.¹⁷⁷

Given his experience suppressing monasteries under Wolsey, it is unsurprising that Cromwell oversaw this dissolution. Yet the first dateable evidence of Cromwell's involvement is not to be found until 29 September 1532, when a draft privy seal instructed that an annuity of 100s granted by the king's ancestors to Christchurch should now be paid to Cromwell for the king's use.¹⁷⁸ A note among Cromwell's remembrances, 'to devise a commission for Cristis church', also indicates he was arranging for assessments to be made on the claims of those whom the monastery was indebted too. Several of Cromwell's men adjudicated over these claims.¹⁷⁹ It was also Cromwell's men who compiled the list of rentals of lands belonging to the monastery, and some of the money from these was received by him.¹⁸⁰ Nevertheless, as a later chapter will show, the most portentous decision regarding Christchurch – that parliament should be used to ratify the king's right to title – was not made by

¹⁷⁵ TNA, PRO, C54/400 m. 35d (LP V 823).

¹⁷⁶ Davis, 'Christchurch', p. 135. Certainly one of the late canons wrote to Cromwell in distress following the suppression, having believed the monastery to have been in a peaceful condition and devoted to religion. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/73 f. 119 (LP V 1744).

¹⁷⁷ 'Two London Chronicles from the Collections of John Stow', ed., C. L. Kingsford, *Camden Society*, xii (London, 1910), p. 6.

¹⁷⁸ TNA, PRO, SP 2/M f. 87 (LP V 1362).

¹⁷⁹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/73 f. 96 (LP V 1722). The commissioners at Christchurch included Rowland Lee and William Oliver, along with Cromwell's clerk, William Candisse.

¹⁸⁰ TNA, PRO, E36/108; E36/162; E315/279/1; TNA, PRO, SC12/11/12; TNA, PRO, SP 1/74 f. 3 (LP VI 4); SP 2/N f. 107 (LP VI 228). A number of letters from Nicholas Hancock, the former prior, also underlines Cromwell's oversight of the suppression. He frequently requested that Cromwell 'discharge me' from the debts of the house. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/73 f. 106 (LP V 1731); SP 1/73 f. 107 (LP V 1732); SP 1/73 f. 108 (LP V 1733); SP 1/73 f. 109 (LP V 1734); SP 1/73 f. 110 (LP V 1735).

Cromwell at all, but by Thomas Audeley, the Lord Chancellor, after Cromwell had impanelled juries to ‘find’ an office in favour of the king.¹⁸¹ In a fate which would reflect that of later monastic lands, Audeley received the site of Christchurch following this as a reward.¹⁸²

Given the use of parliament as a means of settling the fate of Christchurch, it is unsurprising that some commentators have seen this episode as ‘the beginning of the dissolution’. The suppression also attracts note because it was the first undertaken without papal approval.¹⁸³ Yet surprisingly, the almost simultaneous dissolution of another religious house, the Augustinian priory of Calwich, Staffordshire, has been neglected by historians, or mistakenly absorbed into the narrative of the later dissolutions.¹⁸⁴ The suppression of Calwich is of similar interest to that of Christchurch. There is no indication that papal approval was sought, and the secularisation of its wealth and goods was an obvious precursor to the fate of the monasteries during the later 1530s. Most significantly, Cromwell can be linked to this dissolution almost from the very beginning.

The priory at Calwich had been in a poor condition for some time, and with a community of two recorded in a visitation of 1518, it was clearly a small and dwindling house.¹⁸⁵ On 6 April 1532, Richard Strete, who was busy collecting rents for the vacant see of Coventry and Lichfield, reported to Roland Lee that ‘the prior of Calwich is departyd this present lief’, leaving only one canon occupant there.¹⁸⁶ Ralph Longford was founder of the priory, yet Strete reported uncertainty over his rights, and added that because the land

¹⁸¹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/74 f. 2 (*LP VI* 3); *Statutes of the Realm*, iii, 25. Henry VIII. c. 33; Davis, ‘Christchurch’, p. 143. On this episode see below, pp. 210–211.

¹⁸² TNA, PRO, C82/680 and C66/663 m. 37 (*LP VII* 419 [28]); C66/663 m. 37 (*LP VII* 587 [10]); Stow, *Survey of London*, I, pp. 141–142. Audeley had written to Cromwell prior to this asking for his help in obtaining Christchurch from the king, TNA, PRO, SP 1/74 f. 1 (*St. P. I.*, p. 388; *LP VI* 2).

¹⁸³ Knowles, *Religious Orders*, iii, 201; Davis, ‘Christchurch’, p. 128.

¹⁸⁴ F. A. Gasquet, *Henry VIII and the English Monasteries* (London, 1906), p. 194; G. H. Cook, *Letters to Cromwell and Others on the Suppression of the Monasteries* (London, 1965), pp. 105–107. This has not been helped by the fact that documents relating to it have been calendared sporadically in *LP*.

¹⁸⁵ *VCH, Staffordshire*, iii, 238.

¹⁸⁶ TNA, PRO, SP 1/57 f. 55 (*LP IV*, iii, 6313). This letter was placed in 1530 in *LP*, but internal references in the letter reveal it belongs to 1532.

was worth one hundred marks ‘the king shuld putto his power for provision’.¹⁸⁷ The decision to suppress the monastery was taken quickly: a draft indenture between the king and Ralph Longford, which permitted Henry to dissolve the monastery, was drawn up on 27 April 1532.¹⁸⁸ Cromwell, who was working in conjunction with Lee and Strete concerning the revenues from Coventry and Lichfield, also gained responsibility for this dissolution. In a letter probably sent in mid-April, he told Richard Strete that with regards to the ‘catell at the pryorie of Calliche’, the king’s pleasure was that ‘Fyndern’ and ‘Curson’, the bearers of his letter, should have ‘preferment in the byeng of the same’.¹⁸⁹ Having heard the corn and cattle had already been allocated, Sir Anthony Fitzherbert then quickly requested that Cromwell allow his son-in-law, Ralph Longford, to have ‘al the stufe...off the grond and pastrez...and he shall paie ye For as hyt shall be valued by I[n]different persone’.¹⁹⁰ Fitzherbert’s request was surely written before the draft indenture between the king and Longford was made because the terms and language of the indenture are similar to those of this request.¹⁹¹ This suggests Cromwell was successful in this, and also probably had a hand in the drafting of the indenture, linking him to the decision to dissolve Christchurch from the very beginning.

Cromwell then coordinated the suppression itself. On 30 April he sent instructions to Strete, and in response to these Strete reported ‘I haue ben at Calwich and takyn an Inventory of the goodes’, a summary of which was sent to Cromwell.¹⁹² On 22 May Strete also sent him ‘a draght of an office for

¹⁸⁷ TNA, PRO, SP 1/57 f. 55 (*LP IV*, iii, 6313).

¹⁸⁸ TNA, PRO, SP 1/69 ff. 260-261 (*LP V* 969).

¹⁸⁹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/66 f. 33 (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 339-340; *LP V* 277). This was erroneously placed in 1531 in *LP*, it clearly belongs to 1532 during the suppression of Calwich.

¹⁹⁰ TNA, PRO, SP 1/238 f. 77 (*LP Add I*, i, 851).

¹⁹¹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/69 ff. 260-261 (*LP V* 969). See and compare the section of the indenture which states that ‘the same Rauf [Longford] shall haue the occupacion & maintance of the landes tenements pasturez proffittes & comoditez of the same...payng therefore yerly vnto his graces highness...For suche pasturez & groundes as before this tyme haue be Accustomed (f. 260).

¹⁹² The ‘valor’ of the house, cattle and church apparel alone amounted to £117 8s 10d. See BL, Cotton MS, Cleopatra E IV ff. 283-283v (*LP X* 857). Incorrectly placed in 1536; it is of 1532. G. H. Cook also mistakenly included this letter in 1536 in his *Letters to Cromwell*, pp. 105-107.

Calwich',¹⁹³ but this did not pass until October,¹⁹⁴ and it was not until the following April that Cromwell was finally told 'The Pr[i]ory of Calwich nowe voide shall rest to the kyng his pleasur be knowen'.¹⁹⁵

Cromwell's management of this dissolution is revealing because it offers glimpses of the independence he had over this. In all that he did, Cromwell consistently acted for the king's profit. When Strete sent Cromwell updates on the money owed to Henry VIII from Ralph Longford,¹⁹⁶ as if to underline his responsibility for ensuring the king received his dues, a note of the sums owed was made by Cromwell at the bottom of one of these letters.¹⁹⁷ It will also be recalled that the king had agreed to two men buying the corn from Calwich, perhaps at Cromwell's instigation. When, however, Sir Anthony Fitzherbert made further enquiries as to whether Longford might receive the tithes and corn 'sown vppon the demayns of the sayd late proyrre', Cromwell was obliging. He instructed Strete that Longford was to have these, adding that

wher as I wrott in mye other letter that curson and Fynderne shold haue the preferment of the catell and corn I dyd not wrytt for Anye corne growing on the grownde ne yet for Any tythys which in no wyse ye shall suffer them to haue *but to order hyt as ys...most to the kynges proffyte*.¹⁹⁸

Given that Cromwell did not precede this, as he often did, by saying that this was 'the kinges gracious pleasure', it seems reasonable to suppose that this was his own decision. And this is precisely the sort of independence one might expect Cromwell to have: independence over the details of the suppression, during which he habitually ensured the king's interests were protected. It is

¹⁹³ TNA, PRO, SP 1/70 f. 54 (LP V 1045).

¹⁹⁴ In August Cromwell was required to send his servant William Brabazon to assist with the finding of the office. Brabazon reported concern over the partiality of the jury impanelled, and the claims of the earl of Shrewsbury to some of the monastery's lands. He added, however, that 'Maister Strete & I perswaded my lord [of Shrewsbury] his counsell...that they shuld suffer the office to be Founden withowte eny Interupcion'. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/70 f. 201 (LP V 1234).

¹⁹⁵ TNA, PRO, SP 1/75 f. 174 (LP VI 389).

¹⁹⁶ TNA, PRO, 1/70 f. 54 (LP V 1045); SP 1/71 f. 131 (LP V 1456).

¹⁹⁷ TNA, PRO, SP 1/71 f. 131 (LP V 1456).

¹⁹⁸ TNA, PRO, SP 1/77 f. 41 (LP VI 645). My italics for emphasis. Placed in 1533 by the editors of LP; it is of 1532.

also of note that this independence cut both ways. Longford was to have the corn and tithes, Cromwell told Strete, ‘at suche prysys as *ye shall thinke conveyent*’.¹⁹⁹ Similarly, when he ordered him to transfer the remaining canon at Calwich to another monastery, he ordered him ‘to gyue hym sumthing after your discrecyo[n]...and also to his honest contentacyon...trustyng in yowr approuyd wysdom’.²⁰⁰ Like the king himself, Cromwell relied on delegating decisions to capable servants.

Does the dissolution of Christchurch and Calwich offer anything on Cromwell’s attitude toward monasteries generally? Regrettably, Cromwell left virtually nothing to indicate his motives or beliefs in any of his actions, and his attitude toward the monasteries is no exception. Of some note, however, is a letter to Cromwell from the bishop of Chichester in 1532. He remarked on the ‘good opynion and report...I haue of you from the tyme I knewe that by your prudent counsel and charitable words the prorye of hardham (the which was decreyde to be suppressed) standith and prosperithe’.²⁰¹ This was probably a reference to a house intended for dissolution under Wolsey’s scheme in the 1520s, but it does hint that Cromwell may have acted to save a monastery at some point, and certainly did not take every available opportunity to suppress one.

Historians have highlighted, however, that there were some by 1529 who were advocating the suppression of religious houses which no longer fulfilled their purpose, and diverting their wealth to better uses.²⁰² There seems no reason to doubt that the suppression of Calwich was due to its poor state and lone occupant.²⁰³ Moreover the indenture between Longford and the king enabling its closure states that Henry VIII was ‘mynded to suppressse’ the house

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., f. 41. My italics for emphasis.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., f. 41v.

²⁰¹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/72 f. 119 (LP V 1618).

²⁰² R. W. Hoyle, ‘The Origins of the Dissolution of the Monasteries’, *HJ*, 38, (1995), pp. 284-290; G. W. Bernard, ‘The Dissolution of the Monasteries’, *History*, 96 (2011), pp. 393-394.

²⁰³ It should be noted that the priory of Longleat, Wiltshire, had also been dissolved by Henry VIII in June 1529 because of the ‘decayed state of the said priory’. Its property was appropriated to the Carthusian house of Hinton, Somerset. See *VCH, Wiltshire*, iii. 302. The royal assent for Longleat’s suppression is LP IV, iii, 5664, but it is unclear whether papal approval was given; it presumably was.

and intended 'the possession and inheritaunce of the same' for some 'oder godly and cheritable vse and purpose after his graces pleasur & intende'.²⁰⁴ Following Christchurch's voluntarily surrender the decision was also taken to suppress it, possibly for a similar purpose. Richard Lyst, a Friar Observant, recalled a rumour that the king intended moving the Observants to Christchurch and to turn their house at Greenwich into a college.²⁰⁵ Although the king did have Christchurch valued in late 1531,²⁰⁶ neither dissolution appears to have been planned. It seems reasonable to suppose, therefore, that the king and his counsellors felt these struggling monasteries might be put to better use. Cromwell was probably among that number. He had a scholar producing works attacking the possessions of the Church,²⁰⁷ and he supported Richard Taverner,²⁰⁸ who dedicated his translation of Erasmus' epistle 'in laude and prayse of matrymony' to Cromwell.²⁰⁹ This work called for 'som speddy reformation' and 'specifically anticipates the general assault on religious houses'.²¹⁰ Above all, however, Cromwell's earlier work for Wolsey had probably convinced him that struggling monasteries could be put to better use. This was a view which was widely shared by many bishops – and the king.

Cromwell's Ecclesiastical Patronage and Religious Beliefs

Management of the English Church brought Cromwell tremendous influence over clerical patronage and appointments. As a layman, in theory, Cromwell did not have a great deal of his own ecclesiastical patronage to

²⁰⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 1/69 f. 260 (LP V 969).

²⁰⁵ BL, Cotton MS, Cleopatra E IV f. 31 (LP VI 115); BL, Cotton MS, Cleopatra E IV f. 34 (Ellis, 3rd Series, ii. 253; LP VI 116).

²⁰⁶ TNA, PRO, SC12/11/15 ff. 7-7v (Davis, 'Christchurch', pp. 134, 147).

²⁰⁷ TNA, PRO, SP 1/75 f. 65 (LP VI 295).

²⁰⁸ TNA, PRO, SP 1/73 f. 138 (LP V 1762); SP 1/73 f. 139 (LP V 1763).

²⁰⁹ A. W. Pollard & G. R. Redgrave, eds., [*The*] *S[hort] T[itle] C[atalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland, and Ireland, 1475-1640*], 2nd edition, revised and enlarged by W. A. Jackson, F. S. Ferguson and K. F. Pantzer (London, 1976), 10492.

²¹⁰ J. McConica, *English Humanists and Reformation Politics under Henry VIII and Edward VI* (Oxford, 1965), p. 118.

distribute beyond the rights he acquired to several advowsons.²¹¹ Bishops by contrast possessed the technical right to appoint to any vacant prebend, collegiate church or spiritual living within their diocese.²¹² From 1532 onwards, however, Cromwell's influence over 'indirect patronage' - the ability to persuade others to appoint one's own candidate - became considerable.²¹³ To what end did Cromwell use this patronage? First and foremost he used it as a reward, obtaining positions, fees or land for a number of his closest servants and family. In January 1534 he requested that the priory of Coventry make his servant, William Brabazon, their receiver, while the prior of Bodmin was asked to give the tithing of fishes at Padstow to another of Cromwell's servants in February.²¹⁴ Ralph Sadler was similarly granted an office by bishop Rowland Lee at Cromwell's instigation,²¹⁵ and Cromwell's nephew, Richard, was given the keepership of Marwell park by Stephen Gardiner, and a farm from the abbot of Leicester.²¹⁶ Cromwell also went to considerable trouble obtaining ecclesiastical positions for a number of his longstanding friends and acquaintances. In May

²¹¹ TNA, PRO, C82/659 & C66/660 m.28 (LP V 1270 [8]); C82/664 & C66/662 m. 44 (LP VI 105 [13]).

²¹² It has been calculated, for instance, that from 1524 onwards Wolsey had 380 livings potentially at his disposal (Gwyn, p. 300), while William Warham possessed an estimated 135 spiritual livings as Archbishop of Canterbury. See M. Kelly, 'Canterbury Jurisdiction and Influence during the Episcopate of William Warham, 1503-1532' (Cambridge University PhD. Thesis, 1963), p. 10.

²¹³ The term 'indirect patronage' is borrowed from Kelly, 'Canterbury Jurisdiction', p. 14. For some examples see: TNA, PRO, SP 1/69 f. 114 (LP V 812); SP 1/69 f. 159 (LP V 861); SP 1/81 f. 109 (LP VI 1654) and SP 1/72 f. 125 (LP V 1624); SP 1/79 f. 55 (LP VI 1132); SP 1/71 f. 22 (LP V 1302); SP 1/71 f. 103 (LP V 1428); SP 1/73 f. 16 (LP V 1691); SP 1/71 f. 116 (LP V 1443) and SP 1/71 f. 137 (LP V 1462); SP 1/72 f. 147 (LP V 1563); SP 1/73 f. 120 (LP V 1745); LP V 1672; SP 1/69 f. 14 (LP V 716); SP 1/74 f. 178 (LP VI 179); SP 1/77 f. 69 (LP VI 690); SP 1/80 f. 153 (LP VI 1484); SP 1/75 f. 166 (LP VI 380); SP 1/75 f. 174v (LP VI 389) and TNA, PRO, C82/667 (LP VI 416 [26]); LP V 888; LP V 910; SP 1/69 f. 216 (LP V 926); SP 1/75 f. 54 (LP VI 272); LP VI 417 [2] and LP VI 299 [ii] (p. 132); SP 1/75 f. 186 (LP VI 405); SP 1/76 f. 8 (LP VI 429); SP 1/76 f. 15 (LP VI 441); SP 1/76 f. 47 (LP VI 488); SP 1/76 f. 109 (LP VI 545); SP 1/79 f. 73 (LP VI 1159); BL, Cotton MS, Cleopatra E IV f. 178 (LP VI 632); SP 1/79 f. 60 (LP VI 1144); SP 1/79 f. 98 (LP VI 1182); SP 1/79 f. 99 (LP VI 1183) SP 1/79 f. 147 (LP VI 1230); SP 1/79 f. 175 (LP VI 1284); SP 1/79 f. 176 (LP VI 1285); SP 1/80 f. 29 (LP VI 1354); SP 1/80 f. 77 (LP VI 1514); SP 1/77 f. 128 (LP VI 746); SP 1/80 f. 34 (LP VI 1359) and SP 1/82 f. 229 (LP VII 295); SP 1/78 f. 78 (LP VI 937 and SP 1/85 f. 70 (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 385-386; LP VII 1007); SP 1/83 f. 32 (LP VII 403).

²¹⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 1/82 f. 123 (LP VII 122); SP 1/82 f. 176 (LP VII 222).

²¹⁵ TNA, PRO, SP 2/P f. 148 (LP VII 416 [2]); SP 2/P f. 147 (LP VII 416 [1]).

²¹⁶ TNA, PRO, SP 2/O ff. 114-115 (LP V 1622); SP 1/82 f. 234 (LP VII 301). The summary of this last letter might give the impression that the £100 the abbot had promised Cromwell was also for his nephew. It is clear from the original manuscript this money was intended for Cromwell, perhaps as a reward for the abbot's recent appointment (see above, pp. 163-164).

1533 he sought to obtain the vicarage of Sutton-in-Galtres, Yorkshire, for Anthony Middleton, on behalf of Elizabeth Lawson.²¹⁷ She was the estranged wife of Cromwell's friend, Sir George Lawson, both of whom he had previously worked for in a private capacity.²¹⁸ Cromwell was highly active on her behalf, writing twice to the prior of Merton on the matter and, on his refusal, he approached the archbishop of York.²¹⁹ Edward Lee finally consented, telling Cromwell that 'for somutche as you haue made long sute and travaile...I woll for your sake give to the saied antonie' the vicarage.²²⁰ He added that 'at any ooder mannes requeste the king only except, I wolde not haue done'.²²¹

Cromwell also promoted men to ecclesiastical positions in which they might be of use to him. Launcelot Collins correctly attributed Rowland Lee's promotion to the bishopric of Coventry and Lichfield to Cromwell's instigation in late 1533, and believing that Lee was very much Cromwell's prelate, remarked 'I Rakune yow bechope thare yowre selff'.²²² In November 1532 Cromwell made Thomas Bagarde chancellor of Worcester.²²³ A draft letter on behalf of the absentee bishop Ghinucci appointing Bagarde to this office is corrected by

²¹⁷ TNA, PRO, SP 1/70 f. 19 (*LP V* 1006), placed in 1532 in *LP*, but it might be more reasonable to place this in 1533 alongside the rest of the correspondence on this matter; SP 1/79 f. 36-36v (*LP VI* 1105); SP 1/79 f. 38 (*LP V* 1106). For the benefice see *VCH, Yorkshire, North Riding*, ii. 200-202.

²¹⁸ For Cromwell and Elizabeth Lawson, see TNA, PRO, SP 1/73 ff. 115-116 (*LP V* 1740); SP 1/73 ff. 116-117 (*LP V* 1741); SP 1/73 f. 117 (*LP V* 1742). Sir George Lawson was treasurer of Berwick, but, like Cromwell had previously been in Wolsey's service (*LP IV*, i, 2069). If Lawson's own remarks are anything to go by, Cromwell was privately active on his behalf in the late 1520s; the two men also shared the same circle of friends. See SP 1/50 f. 207 (*LP IV*, ii, 4877); SP 1/50 f. 213 (*LP IV*, ii, 4888). See also SP 1/50 f. 207 (*LP IV*, ii, 4877); SP 1/59 f. 91 (*LP IV*, iii, 3103); SP 1/59 f. 90 (*LP IV*, iii, App, 83); SP 1/55 f. 105 (*LP IV*, ii, 5946).

²¹⁹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/70 f. 19 (*LP V* 1006); SP 1/79 f. 38 (*LP V* 1106).

²²⁰ TNA, PRO, SP 1/79 f. 39 (*LP VI* 1107).

²²¹ TNA, PRO, SP 1.79 f. 71 (*LP VI* 1158). Of similar interest are Cromwell's efforts to obtain the benefice of Olderkirke, in the marches of Calais, for John Benolt in late 1532. Benolt was another friend of Cromwell's, and not only was Cromwell again highly active in his attempts to obtain this benefice for him, but he was also content to depose its current incumbent, Thomas Baschurche, in order to do this. On this episode see TNA, PRO, SP 1/72 f. 19 (*LP V* 1528); SP 1/72 f. 23 (*LP V* 1540); SP 1/74 f. 21 (*LP VI* 30); SP 1/74 f. 71 (*LP VI* 77); SP 1/75 f. 31 (*LP VI* 250); SP 1/72 f. 21 (*LP V* 1530); SP 1/74 f. 151 (*LP VI* 153); SP 1/74 f. 152 (*LP VI* 154); SP 1/75 f. 185 (*LP VI* 404); TNA, PRO, C82/656 and C66/660 mm. 19 & 20 (*LP VI* 196 [31, 32, 33]). Cromwell also obtained 'the office of the comyssaryship within the towne & marches of Calice' for Benolt and one William Peterson in October 1532, SP 1/71 f. 140 (*LP V* 1465). A further illustration of his indirect church patronage was his ability to persuade the abbot of York to grant a lease on the parsonage of Rudeston to one master Fenton. See SP 1/70 f. 172 (*LP V* 1192); SP 1/71 f. 21 (*LP V* 1301); SP 1/76 f. 56 (*LP VI* 499).

²²² TNA, PRO, SP 1/79 f. 145 (*LP VI* 1226).

²²³ TNA, PRO, SP 1/72 f. 45 (*LP V* 1563); SP 1/74 f. 10 (*LP VI* 14).

Cromwell, testifying to his personal involvement in the selection.²²⁴ Bagarde himself also attributed his possession of the office to Cromwell on several occasions.²²⁵ A bishop's chancellor had initially been a secretarial position, but by the sixteenth century this office entailed acting as a surrogate judge in the bishop's court or deputising in other non-judicial activities, such as granting licences or dispensations.²²⁶ It was therefore a position of some use through which to influence the localities; and by appointing his own candidate, Cromwell might do just that. Edmund Boner certainly referred to Bagarde as 'your chaunceler' in a letter to Cromwell, and Bagarde himself promised he would 'be redy at your commaundment to do yow suche pleasure or seruice as shall lie in me'.²²⁷ In 1533 Cromwell was able to use him to exert some influence over the licensing of preachers. William Huberden, a religious conservative, had gone to Bagarde 'desyryne me to haue a ~~lyse~~ licence to preache'. Bagarde assured Cromwell 'he [will] gett no licence off me as long as hyt schall please godde the kynges grace and your maisterschype'.²²⁸

Cromwell's standing with the king during these years ensured he was frequently successful at obtaining ecclesiastical patronage for a number of suitors. In July 1532 Anthony Fitzherbert requested a prebend at Lichfield for Nicholas Cotton, which Cromwell immediately obtained for him that month.²²⁹ Thomas Preston similarly recollected to Cromwell how 'it hathe pleased the kyng...By your oonly medyacion and meanes to give vnto me a Lyuyng and yerely pencyon'.²³⁰ Rowland Lee's and Richard Strete's request that the latter be made archdeacon of Derby was also carried out.²³¹ Yet it is important to acknowledge that there were failures as well as successes. Brian Higdon was

²²⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 1/237 f. 264 (*LP Add I, i, 800*).

²²⁵ TNA, PRO, SP 1/72 f. 45 (*LP V 1563*); SP 1/74 f. 10 (*LP VI 14*).

²²⁶ C. R. Chapman, *Ecclesiastical Courts, Officials & Records: Sin, Sex and Probate* (2nd ed., Dursley, 1997), pp. 33-34. Bagarde noted to Cromwell that 'the people resorte very faste vnto me for the redresse of many maters, and for the due admystracion of justice'. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/74 f. 10 (*LP VI 14*).

²²⁷ TNA, PRO, SP 1/76 f. 14 (*St. P. VII, p. 454; LP VI 438*); SP 1/72 f. 45 (*LP V 1563*).

²²⁸ TNA, PRO, SP 1/75 f. 197 (*LP VI 411*).

²²⁹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/70 f. 141 (*LP V 1141*); TNA, PRO, C82/658 and C66/661 m. 35 (*LP V 1207 [23]*)

²³⁰ TNA, PRO, SP 1/81 f. 128 (*LP VI 1674*).

²³¹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/75 f. 166 (*LP VI 380*); SP 1/75 f. 174v (*LP VI 389*); TNA, PRO, C82/667 (*LP VI 417 [26]*).

forced to disappoint Cromwell over his request concerning the office of sub-treasurer of York Minister,²³² and the bishop of Norwich intended to prevent Cromwell's designs for the benefices of 'Romborwho wyssett & Holton' in 1533.²³³ When Cromwell tried to secure the next advowson of Cottenham for a friend, the bishop of Ely also told him that the incumbent had died 'about six dayes Last past...and I haue given the same benefice to my chauncelor' who was already in possession.²³⁴ Evidently it was necessary to move fast to obtain such promotions; in some instances even pre-emptive action was not enough.²³⁵

One area in particular over which Cromwell had little influence were the episcopal appointments made between 1531 and 1534. Of the six nominations made during these years, only Rowland Lee's acquisition of the bishopric of Coventry and Lichfield at the end of 1533 can be attributed to Cromwell.²³⁶ By contrast the appointments of Stephen Gardiner and Edward Lee to Winchester and York in 1531 were most likely royal decisions. According to Chapuys Henry did not wait the customary year before appointing them because he wanted two further prelates in parliament who would support him over the divorce.²³⁷ Thomas Cranmer, the new archbishop of Canterbury appointed in 1533, was also very much the king's man.²³⁸ John Salcot, appointed to Bangor in late 1533, and Thomas Goodrych, appointed to Ely around the same time, had both been highly active on the king's 'great matter', and surely owed their promotions to

²³² TNA, PRO, SP 1/78 f. 46 (*LP VI* 912); SP 1/78 f. 47 (*LP VI* 913); SP 1/78 f. 143 (*LP VI* 1011); SP 1/78 f. 170 (*LP VI* 1043).

²³³ TNA, PRO, SP 1/80 f. 198 (*LP VI* 1534). For other examples of unsuccessful ecclesiastical patronage see: SP 1/82 f. 250 (*LP VII* 323); SP 1/70 f. 193 (*LP V* 1226) and *LP V* 1449 [13]; SP 1/74 f. 125 (*LP V* 1636); SP 1/75 ff. 47-47v (*LP VI* 262); SP 1/75 f. 165 (*LP VI* 378) and BL, Harley 6148 f. 78 (*LP VI* 449).

²³⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 1/74 f. 213 (*LP VI* 218).

²³⁵ That speed was often of the essence when obtaining Church livings can be further seen in the events following the death of William Clayton. He had died on 14 October 1532, and Cromwell was informed immediately by Thomas Bedill, who listed Clayton's benefices and their values, telling him 'I haue written this vnto you to thentent ye may first enforme the kings grace' before any suit was made. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/71 f. 102 (*LP V* 1427). The next day John Williamson also wrote listing Clayton's benefices, and asked Cromwell to obtain one for Christopher Wellyfed; Bedill wrote again on the 21st in case Cromwell had not received his previous letter. Both men's urgency indicates Cromwell would need to act fast to secure these promotions from the king. See SP 1/71 ff. 110-110v (*LP V* 1435); SP 1/71 f. 132 (*LP V* 1457).

²³⁶ See below, pp. 192-193.

²³⁷ *CSP, Spanish*, IV, ii, 796.

²³⁸ D. MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer: A life* (London, 1996), pp. 75, 83-84.

this.²³⁹ Doubtlessly other courtiers and those about the king had spoken on behalf of these men, but it does seem that episcopal appointments were an area which Henry VIII kept closely under his control.²⁴⁰ Involvement in the king's divorce was the crucial factor in explaining episcopal appointments in the early 1530s.

In fact, the king himself was often highly active in deciding who should be the recipient of much wider ecclesiastical patronage. When the earl of Westmorland had asked Cromwell to be favourable to lord Conyers in his suit for the benefice of Rudby, Rowland Lee had told the earl 'it whas not in you [i.e. Cromwell] to determine in that behalf otherwayes thane might stond with the kynges plesure'.²⁴¹ The archbishop of York similarly believed Henry was vigorous when exploiting church patronage. He complained to Cromwell that 'the kingis highness hath had iii promotions of me to gidres syns I gaue anye to anye of my chapleignes'.²⁴² As Cromwell was fast emerging as the king's leading minister, however, he was ideally placed to move the king on such appointments. A testimony to Cromwell's influence with the king can be seen in the request of John Boothe. He had persuaded certain members of the Privy Chamber to move the king on his behalf for a piece of monastic land in 1533, but Henry had rebuked this, saying 'that I hayd lyffynge enoythe, and more then I was worthy'. It is of note that Boothe's next step was to approach Cromwell, asking him 'to speke a gud word for me in that I may have my princis faver'.²⁴³

What is interesting, however, is that Henry and Cromwell often appear to have worked together when dispensing patronage. When Rowland Lee was elected to the bishopric of Coventry and Lichfield, for instance, a number of hopefuls made requests to Cromwell for benefices void as a result of Lee's promotion.²⁴⁴ But Cromwell reminded himself to 'seke vpp the cople of doctor

²³⁹ *Liber Monasterii De Hyda*, ed., E. Edwards, (London, 1866), pp. lxvi-lxviii; A. J. Louisa, 'Capon, John (d. 1557)', *ODNB*; F. Heal, 'Goodrich, Thomas (1494-1554)', *ODNB*.

²⁴⁰ Cf. Gwyn, *King's Cardinal*, pp. 298-299.

²⁴¹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/81 f. 27 (*LP VI* 1567).

²⁴² TNA, PRO, SP 1/79 f. 140 (*LP VI* 504); SP 1/80 f. 108 (*LP VI* 1451).

²⁴³ TNA, PRO, SP 1/81 f. 89 (*LP VI* 1634).

²⁴⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 1/79 f. 42 (*LP VI* 1109); SP 1/79 f. 98 (*LP VI* 1182); SP 1/79 f. 145 (*LP VI* 1226); SP 1/80 f. 177 (*LP VI* 1514). Cromwell was also similarly looked to for the benefices of Thomas

lees benefeffycys now my lorde elect and to move the kyng to gyve them', which underlines the fact that the distribution was discussed with the king, and that the decision ultimately lay with Henry, not his minister.²⁴⁵ The copy listing Lee's benefices has survived, and it attests to a close working relationship. The names the king specified or consented to have been added in Cromwell's hand next to the vacancies, and this was presumably done in conversation with the king.²⁴⁶ Certainly contemporaries were of the opinion that Cromwell discussed appointments with Henry. Both the abbot of St Alban's and the prior of Montague wrote to Cromwell in response to letters they received from the king regarding appointments.²⁴⁷ That they responded to Cromwell was not because they saw him as the architect of the request, but because they saw him as the king's executor dealing with these matters.

Did Cromwell, as is so often alleged, give support and patronage to religious radicals? Given that this is a question inextricably linked to Cromwell's religious beliefs, it is necessary to examine these before considering whether this determined his ecclesiastical patronage. A consensus currently prevails that Cromwell was an evangelical. It was an interpretation initially put forward by John Foxe in his *Acts and Monuments*,²⁴⁸ which has since found considerable support among many modern historians.²⁴⁹ Yet there is

Goodrych when he was promoted, alongside Lee, to the bishopric of Ely, SP 1/83 f. 32 (*LP VII* 403).

²⁴⁵ BL, Cotton MS, Titus B I f. 456r (*LP VII* 143 [ii]); SP 1/82 f. 200v (*LP VII* 257).

²⁴⁶ TNA, PRO, SP 1/81 f. 63-63v (*LP VI* 1594).

²⁴⁷ TNA, PRO, SP 1/77 f. 135 (*LP VI* 754); SP 1/82 f. 250 (*LP VII* 323).

²⁴⁸ Foxe, *Acts and Monuments* (1563 edn.), p. 654; Foxe, *Acts and Monuments* (1570 edn.), p. 1392.

²⁴⁹ A. G. Dickens has claimed that Cromwell and Cranmer were leaders of a 'reforming group' at Court and that their theology was 'in a considerable measure Lutheran'. More recently W. Underwood has argued Cromwell's support and protection of William Marshall confirms he was a committed Lutheran, and B. W. Beckingsale similarly concluded that Cromwell's earliest interest in the Scriptures soon developed into a 'Lutheran acceptance of the authority of the Bible'. Others have been less specific, but still firmly convinced that Cromwell was a 'crypto-protestant', or an evangelical, perhaps even a Sacramentarian. D. MacCulloch writes that Cromwell was a 'highly motivated evangelical', while S. Bridgen has claimed that he was a member and protector of a Protestant 'brethren' in London, and actively supported Sacramentarians in Calais. L. Wooding was more judicious in her treatment of Cromwell's religious outlook, but still concluded he had 'evangelical leanings'. Even Elton, who had initially been sceptical of Cromwell's evangelical beliefs, later converted to this emerging orthodoxy and saw Cromwell as a religious reformer. See Dickens, *Cromwell and the English Reformation*, p. 51; Underwood, 'William Marshall', pp. 517-539; Beckingsale, *Thomas Cromwell*,

surprisingly little contemporary evidence for Cromwell's religious beliefs. Of course, he was a layman and had not studied theology, which perhaps explains why his correspondence offers little which might reveal his religious inclinations. One point which does seem certain is that Cromwell was anti-clerical, although given his background in London's legal and mercantile communities this is perhaps unsurprising. The chronicler Edward Hall, a lawyer and member of parliament who knew Cromwell, noted how he 'could not abide the snoffyng pride of some prelates',²⁵⁰ and an apprehended priest was warned in 1533 'howe sore that master Crvmwell was ageynst prestes and howe grievously he dydde handle them...for he is aman withowte any consciens ageynst prestes'.²⁵¹ It should be stressed, however, that evidence in support of Cromwell's evangelical credentials is very much weighted toward the second half of the 1530s. Although this falls outside the confines of this present study, given its implications, it demands consideration here. Much of it does not bear the weight of interpretation many scholars have placed on it.

Cromwell's attainder in 1540 certainly accused him of being a 'detestable herytike' guilty of Sacramentarian offences.²⁵² But Cromwell was not permitted to stand trial for his alleged crimes because there was 'no case against him that would have stood up to a moment's judicial scrutiny'.²⁵³ Equally, even the most promising evidence in support of any Lutheran credentials remains ambiguous at best. True, in 1540 Lutheran envoys did report a meeting with Cromwell in which they alleged he had said that 'he sees our opinions in matters of the

pp. 75-77; D. MacCulloch, *Reformation: Europe's Houses Divided*, p. 199; Bridgen, 'Thomas Cromwell and the Brethren', pp. 31-50; L. Wooding, *Henry VIII* (London, 2009), pp. 242-243. For Elton's fluctuating views on Cromwell's religion see and compare *England under the Tudors*, p. 151; 'Thomas Cromwell', *HT*, p. 531; *Policy and Police*, p. 424; *Reform and Reformation*, p. 172; *Thomas Cromwell*, pp. 35-36. For others who have similarly concurred with this assessment see Williams, *The Cardinal and the Secretary*, pp. 261-263; Davies, *Peace, Print and Protestantism*, p. 190; J. Guy, 'Reassessing Thomas Cromwell', *History Sixth*, 6, (1990), pp. 4-5; Guy, *Tudor England*, pp. 178, 181, 183, 188. P. Ward, 'The Politics of Religion', p. 154; MacCulloch, *Cranmer*, pp. 114, 135. Only a minority have taken issue with this consensus, and highlight the traditional elements of Cromwell's religion often ignored by many historians. See Bernard, *King's Reformation*, pp. 514-21; P. O'Grady, *Conforming Catholics*, p. 9.

²⁵⁰ Hall, *Chronicle*, pp. 838-839.

²⁵¹ TNA, PRO, E36/120 f. 101 (*LP VI* 87).

²⁵² BL, Additional Manuscript 48028 ff. 161v-162. This is not printed in *Statutes of the Realm*, but it can be found printed in Burnet's, *History of the Reformation of the Church of England*, IV, pp. 105-109.

²⁵³ G. R. Elton, 'Thomas Cromwell's decline and fall', in Elton, *Studies*, i. 225.

faith'.²⁵⁴ But this was quickly qualified by Cromwell's remark that 'the world standing now as it does, whatever his lord the king holds, so too will he hold', suggesting that, whatever convictions Cromwell had, these were not strong enough to see him disagree with Henry VIII on religious policy. Moreover, it is hard not to see these comments as being a diplomatic tactic designed to foster closer relations with the envoys.

The words spoken by Cromwell before his execution, recorded by the chronicler Hall and John Foxe, are similarly inconclusive. On the scaffold Cromwell declared:²⁵⁵

I die in the Catholicke faith, not doubting in any article of my faith, no nor doubting in any Sacrament of the Church. Many hath sclandered me, and reported that I haue been a bearer, of suche as hath mainteigned euill opinions, which is vntrue.

He then knelt, however, and said a prayer, during which he did not appeal to the Virgin Mary or other intercessors - as he had in his 1529 will - which would seem to indicate that his beliefs concerning the saints had changed by this point. But of course, Henry VIII himself had by this time come to reject the intercession of individual saints. Cromwell also declared that 'I haue no merites nor good workes, whiche I may alledge before thee', which could be read as a belief in justification by faith in Christ alone, or merely as an expression of modesty.²⁵⁶ In a judicious analysis, S. E. Lehmborg concluded Cromwell's final words demonstrate a 'personal conviction that is at once orthodox and reformed'.²⁵⁷

Cromwell's support and patronage for an English bible more plausibly suggests he was a committed evangelical. In his *Acts and Monuments* John Foxe alleged that Cromwell's 'whole life was nothing els, but a continuall care and

²⁵⁴ Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 279.

²⁵⁵ Hall, *Chronicle*, p. 839; Foxe, *Acts and Monuments* (1570 edn.), pp. 1400-1401.

²⁵⁶ Foxe, *Acts and Monuments* (1570 edn.), pp. 1400-1401; Hall, *Chronicle*, p. 839.

²⁵⁷ Lehmborg, 'The Religious Beliefs of Thomas Cromwell', p. 138.

trauaile how to aduaunce & further the right knowledge of the Gospell',²⁵⁸ and in 1537 Thomas Cranmer praised his 'diligence...in procuring the king's highness to set forth the said God's word and his gospel.'²⁵⁹ In December 1538 Cromwell also told the French ambassador that he had contributed £400 toward its production.²⁶⁰ There can be no doubt therefore that Cromwell was instrumental in persuading Henry VIII to adopt a vernacular bible. If its production was an exclusively evangelical goal, then this provides the strongest proof that Cromwell was one.

And yet, there is also evidence which contradicts the interpretation of a Protestant Cromwell offered by Foxe and many more recent historians. Cromwell's will from 1529 (later altered between September 1532 and 1536) suggests he still held many traditional religious beliefs. In it he invoked 'our blessed ladie Saynct Mary the vyrgyn and Mother with all the holie companye of heuen to be Medyatours and Intercessours' for his soul.²⁶¹ He also specified a priest of 'good lyuyng' should be hired to 'Syng for my Sowle'.²⁶² And Money was left for the five orders of friars in London to 'pray for my Soule'.²⁶³ Inventories of Cromwell's goods reveal he continued to possess many traditional religious images throughout the 1520s and 1530s, including 'ii ymages in lether gylted the one of our ladye the other of saynte christopher' and 'An ymage of saynte Anthony in golden lether'.²⁶⁴ There is also an incidental reference to him attending mass.²⁶⁵

Although Cromwell's correspondence reveals very little interest in theology, that which does also frustrates the picture of a religious radical. Writing to Cardinal Wolsey in 1529, Cromwell reported a rumour that Martin Luther had died, adding 'I would he had never bin borne'.²⁶⁶ In the same year

²⁵⁸ Foxe, *Acts and Monuments* (1570 edn.), p. 1392.

²⁵⁹ J. E. Cox, ed., *The Works of Thomas Cranmer* (2 vols., Cambridge, 1846), ii. 346.

²⁶⁰ LP XIII, ii, 1163.

²⁶¹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/54 f. 235 (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i.56; LP IV, iii, 5772).

²⁶² Ibid., f. 242.

²⁶³ Ibid., f. 242v.

²⁶⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 1/42 ff. 108v, 109 (LP IV, ii, 3197). Also see ff. 104, 106, 106v, 108 ; SP 1/162 ff. 83-92v (LP XV 1029 [6]).

²⁶⁵ TNA, PRO, SP 1/73 f. 133 (LP V 1757).

²⁶⁶ In a letter now lost. Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 327.

he also told Wolsey that he had discovered a Lutheran sect from whom he had confiscated John Frith's *Revelation of Antichrist* and Simon Fish's *Supplication for the Beggars*. Describing these as 'pestiferous books' which 'if they be scatired among the common people so destroy the whole obedience and policy of this realm', Cromwell urged Wolsey to stop this doctrine.²⁶⁷ One silence among contemporary evidence is also worth noting. The Imperial Ambassador, Eustace Chapuys, was often quick to describe Anne Boleyn, viscount Rochford and Thomas Cranmer as 'Lutherans', a 'habitual catch-all term for anyone of whose religion he disapproved'.²⁶⁸ It is odd, then, that despite frequent contact with Cromwell, he never appears to have labelled him in such a way.²⁶⁹

Historians who argue for Cromwell's Protestant credentials often point to his support for evangelicals where more telling evidence is lacking. What is generally given less consideration, however, is whether Cromwell's support for such men reflected his own religious outlook or the government's need to draw on certain reformist arguments to bolster and defend 'official' policy. William Underwood has recently argued that the 'most convincing conclusion' surrounding Cromwell's support for William Marshall is that Cromwell 'shared the radical [Lutheran] views expressed in Marshall's texts'.²⁷⁰ Yet it seems significant that the only works by Marshall sponsored by Cromwell were translations of the 'Gift of Constantine', Marsilius of Padua's *Defensor pacis*, and Erasmus' work on the Common Creed.²⁷¹ The 'Gift' and the *Defensor pacis* were anti-papal tracts, not Lutheran ones. Unlike many historians, Marshall

²⁶⁷ Cited in Brigden, 'Thomas Cromwell and the "brethren"', p. 37, from Bodleian Library, Jesus College MS 74, f. 192, which is a 17th century note from a lost original.

²⁶⁸ LP V 850, 1013; LP VI 232; LP VIII 666; MacCulloch, *Cranmer*, p. 86

²⁶⁹ In 1533 Chapuys did report that a German had arrived in England offering an alliance in case of war. The ambassador's comment that 'I hear that Cremvel [Cromwell] is the man appointed to treat with him, not the Duke, which circumstance makes me believe that he has been sent here by Melanchton himself' is frustratingly cryptic. This might be read as an endorsement that Cromwell had Lutheran tendencies; alternatively it might merely show that the German was considered to be of considerable importance and that the king's chief minister should deal with him. See CSP, *Spanish*, IV, ii, 1055.

²⁷⁰ Underwood, 'William Marshall', pp. 536, 539. Cromwell had been acquainted with Marshall since the late 1520s, when the two men had come into contact through Cromwell's work for Wolsey. In 1533 Marshall also wrote to Cromwell on behalf of Nicholas Statham, who had purchased a lease from Cromwell. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/57 f. 17 (LP IV, iii, 6222); SP 1/59 f. 113 (LP IV, iii, app. 133); SP 1/81 f. 119 (LP VI 1665).

²⁷¹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/83 f. 51 (LP VII 422); SP 1/83 f. 52 (LP VII 423); STC 5641, 17817, 10504. Cf. Underwood, 'William Marshall', p. 522.

was under no illusion as to why Cromwell was interested in them, remarking to him that in the 'Gift' 'surely...there was neuer better boke made & sett, for the defasing of the pope of Rome'.²⁷² Chapuys too was also aware of the anti-papal and official nature of Cromwell's patronage. He told Charles V in January 1534 about the 'important treatises now being printed, among which is the one entitled *Defensorium pacis*...against Apostolic authority'. The king's 'chief purpose in having the said tract written and published' the ambassador added, 'is that he may the better justify himself in the eyes of his people'.²⁷³ Cromwell's propaganda efforts were driven less by his religious zeal, and more by the practical need of justifying the break with Rome.

Can a more detailed focus on Cromwell's ecclesiastical patronage before he was in a position capable of influencing, or required to justify, religious policy, shed a more telling light on his own religious outlook? During the late 1520s and early 1530s Cromwell kept scholars at Oxford and Cambridge. Edward Copland and Henry Lockwood were two who signed letters to Cromwell as 'your scoler'.²⁷⁴ Lockwood had been a fellow of Christ's College, Cambridge since 1523 and was Master there by 1531.²⁷⁵ Cromwell continued to support his career in the early 1530s, apparently offering him a benefice in 1532.²⁷⁶ Frustratingly, however, there is no indication of Lockwood's religious views. Similarly little is known about Edward Copland, who wrote to Cromwell from Oxford, where he was a fellow of New College until 1527, and probably maintained there by him.²⁷⁷ He appears to have been a tutor to Cromwell's son Gregory, and Nicholas Sadler, teaching both Latin.²⁷⁸ John Chekyng was another who tutored these two, along with Cromwell's nephew Christopher

²⁷² TNA, PRO, SP 1/83 f. 51 (*LP VII* 422).

²⁷³ *CSP, Spanish*, V, i, 1.

²⁷⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 1/69 f. 140 (*LP V* 403); SP 1/53 f. 209 (*LP IV*, iii, 5268).

²⁷⁵ J. Venn & J. A. Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigienses* (6 vols., Cambridge, 1924), i. (part iii) 98.

²⁷⁶ TNA, PRO, SP 1/71 f. 26v (*LP V* 1309).

²⁷⁷ A. B. Emden, *A Biographical Register of the University of Oxford, A.D. 1501 to 1540* (Oxford, 1974), p. 136. Copland is listed as owing £3 to Cromwell in June 1538, TNA, PRO, SP 1/53 f. 41v (*LP IV*, iii, 53300). He was also rector of Arthingworth, Northampton, from March 1528 (Emden, p. 136), and Cromwell apparently maintained his association with him into the 1530s, SP 1/69 f. 212 (*LP V* 922).

²⁷⁸ TNA, PRO, SP 1/65 f. 35 (*LP V* 15). Nicholas Sadler may have been a relation of Ralph Sadler.

Wellyfed, probably at Cambridge during the late 1520s.²⁷⁹ Chekyng similarly wrote to Cromwell regarding ‘your scolers’, and requested money ‘for I hayve neyd off it for euey syxe weykys I pay xl^s for your men and scolers’.²⁸⁰ How many these numbered besides Gregory, Christopher and Nicholas is unclear, but these were probably ‘my scolers in Cambryge’ whom Cromwell referred to in a letter to Wolsey.²⁸¹

Some indication of what these men were studying, however, is hinted at in Chekyng’s letter informing Cromwell he had purchased a copy of Erasmus’s work, which he expected him to pay for.²⁸² Interestingly, another of Gregory’s tutors wrote to Cromwell informing him ‘how he spendith his tyme...firste, after he hathe herde Masse he taketh a lecture of a Diologe of Erasmus Colloquium, called Pietas puerilis, where inne is described a veray picture of oone the sholde be vertuouselie brought upp’.²⁸³ Foxe believed Cromwell himself had memorised a copy of Erasmus’s New Testament by heart during a trip to Rome in the 1510s,²⁸⁴ and he also appears to have financed William Marshall’s printing of Erasmus’ Common Creed and the Ten Commandments.²⁸⁵ Clearly, then, Cromwell had an interest in the teachings of Erasmus.

Three further scholars of Cromwell’s can also be identified. Robert Welles, writing to Cromwell from Eton in May 1532, referred to himself as ‘yowr power scoler’.²⁸⁶ All that is known of him is that he had been a canon at Cardinal College, Oxford, and was probably kept there by Cromwell, before becoming a Fellow at Eton on 26 May 1532.²⁸⁷ Thomas Cannar, sub-dean of

²⁷⁹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/50 f. 179 (LP IV, ii, 4837).

²⁸⁰ TNA, PRO, SP 1/48 f. 220 (LP IV, ii, 4433); SP 1/57 f. 3 (LP IV, iii, 6219). Also see SP 1/54 ff. 223-224 (LP IV, ii, 5757); SP 1/58 f. 135 (LP IV, iii, 6722); SP 1/49 f. 152-152v (LP IV, ii, 4560); SP 1/51 f. 2 (LP IV, ii, 4916); SP 1/66 ff. 169-169v (LP V 359).

²⁸¹ In a letter now lost. Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 334.

²⁸² TNA, PRO, SP 1/48 f. 79 (LP IV, ii, 4314).

²⁸³ TNA, PRO, SP 1/85 ff. 168-169 (Ellis, 3rd Series, i. 344; LP VII 1135).

²⁸⁴ Foxe, *Acts and Monuments* (1570 edn.), p. 1385.

²⁸⁵ TNA, PRO, SP 1/83 f. 51 (LP VII 422); SP 1/83 f. 52 (LP VII 423).

²⁸⁶ TNA, PRO, SP 1/70 f. 42 (LP V 1035).

²⁸⁷ TNA, PRO, E36/104 f. 7v. He remained at Eton throughout the 1530s, and was appointed to several benefices after Cromwell’s death, before himself dying in 1547. See Emden, *Biographical Register*, p. 614.

Wolsey's Oxford college, also referred to 'yowre scholler John hunt' in a letter to Cromwell.²⁸⁸ He was a pupil Cromwell was maintaining at Oxford and he received a bill of thirty-nine shillings for his studies in 1528.²⁸⁹ Sir William Tresham, writing from the 'kinges college in oxford' in April 1531, also referred to 'one hunte a scolar of yours' who wanted to 'here continue for a season and so consider hym selfe to the commen Lawe'.²⁹⁰ Curiously a John Hunt received a B.C.L from Oxford in April the following year,²⁹¹ and the likelihood that this was the same man is strong. Again, however, there is no indication of John Hunt's religious views.

At least one of Cromwell's scholars, however, did later exhibit evangelical tendencies. Robert Woodward, warden of All Souls College, Oxford, wrote to Cromwell in July 1533 following the minister's request that 'Richard Biseley yowr scoler...be chosen oone of owr number / and felowes of owr colledge', a position he was obligingly appointed to.²⁹² Biseley had been a scholar at Cardinal College, Oxford, before this, and Cromwell had sustained him there.²⁹³ In 1535 Biseley recollected to Cromwell how

Furst ye appoynted me student in Oxforde in the nue colledg which nue transposede afterward, ye promotede me to thefelowshipe of Alsolue colledge and now haue preferred me to a Benefice for suere contynuaunce of lerninge so that all my Bringinge vp in studye hathe depended oonlye vn your liberalitre.²⁹⁴

²⁸⁸ TNA, PRO, SP 1/51 f. 122 (LP IV, ii, 5069).

²⁸⁹ Ibid., f. 122.

²⁹⁰ TNA, PRO, SP 1/65 f. 201 (LP V 196). See also SP 1/66 f. 11 (LP V 263); SP 1/66 ff. 169-169v (LP V 359).

²⁹¹ J. Foster, *Alumini Oxonienses: The Members of the University of Oxford, 1500-1714* (4 in 2 vols., Nechlan, 1968), p. 771.

²⁹² TNA, PRO, SP 1/78 f. 49 (LP VI 916); Emden, p. 49.

²⁹³ TNA, PRO, E36/104 f. 7v.

²⁹⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 1/89 f. 39 (LP VIII 68). The benefice Biseley was referring to was Staplehurst, Kent, where he is recorded as rector in 1535. See *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, ed. J. Caley, and J. Hunter, (6 vols., London, 1810-34), i. 95. Biseley originally came from York. A 'Supplication of Richard Biseley scoler of yorke', is among Cromwell's remembrances, and in his letter to Cromwell, Biseley also mentioned Cromwell had been good to his father. See TNA, PRO, E36/139 f. 103 (LP VII 923); SP 1/89 f. 39 (LP VIII 68).

Although Biseley also received support from the king, becoming a royal chaplain,²⁹⁵ it was Cromwell who took considerable interest in his career, and Biseley felt his support was ‘the deade more of a parent then of a patrone’.²⁹⁶ It is of interest, then, that later in life Richard Biseley became a committed Protestant. He was ‘pronounced contumacious’ under Mary, and fled abroad to Frankfurt, before returning to England during Elizabeth’s reign.²⁹⁷ The unanswerable in all of this is how developed his beliefs were in the 1520s and 1530s, and whether Cromwell was aware of them.

What of Cromwell’s friendships, acquaintances and wider Church patronage during these years? He was certainly friendly with several people who held evangelical or radical views between 1520 and 1534, the most striking example being his friendship with Stephen Vaughan. He had been in Cromwell’s service since at least the early 1520s, and was one of his most trusted servants.²⁹⁸ Cromwell made use of him in his work for Wolsey,²⁹⁹ and later facilitated his entry into the king’s service as an agent and diplomat.³⁰⁰ The correspondence between the two men during these years testifies to a close friendship.³⁰¹ Yet there can be no doubt that Vaughan was an evangelical,

²⁹⁵ TNA, PRO, SP 1/241 f. 264 (LP Add I, i, 1284); *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic, Edward VI – Elizabeth I, 1547-1580*, ed., R. Lemon (London, 1856), p. 287.

²⁹⁶ TNA, PRO, SP 1/89 f. 39 (LP VIII 68).

²⁹⁷ C. H. Garrett, *The Marian Exiles: A Study in the Origins of Elizabethan Puritanism* (Cambridge, 1966), pp. 85-86.

²⁹⁸ TNA, PRO, SP 1/30 ff. 240-241v (LP IV, i, 166); Vaughan was one of the three intended executors of Cromwell’s will, and he was also bequeathed a sum of one hundred marks in this. See also SP 1/41 ff. 158-158v (LP IV, ii, 3053); SP 1/235 f. 78 (LP Add I, i, 498).

²⁹⁹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/39 f. 192 (LP IV, ii, 2358 [8]); SP 1/52 f. 38 (LP IV, ii, 5115); TNA, PRO, E101/518/14 ff. 9r, 8v (LP IV, ii, 5117); SP 1/53 f. 128 (LP IV, iii, 5398); TNA, PRO, E37/117 ff. 19, 20 (LP IV, iii, 5787).

³⁰⁰ His work on the Tyndale matter has been discussed above pp. 95-96; TNA, PRO, SP 1/58 f. 147 (LP IV, iii, 6744); SP 1/58 f. 173 (LP IV, iii, 6754); BL, Cotton MS, Galba B X f. 47 (LP V 65); 247; BL, Cotton MS, Galba B X ff. 354-355 (LP V 248; Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 336-337); SP 1/70 f. 59 (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 344; LP V 1055); SP 1/70 f. 189 (LP V 1220); SP 1/71 f. 17v (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 348-349; LP V 1298); SP 1/70 f. 222 (LP V 1261); SP 1/71 f. 1 (LP V 1270 [2]); SP 1/71 f. 19 (LP V 1299); SP 1/72 f. 99 (LP V 1609); SP 1/72 f. 121 (LP V 1620); SP 1/78 f. 31 (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 362; LP VI 894); TNA, PRO, C82/672 and C66/662 m. 22 (LP VI 929 [50]); SP 1/78 ff. 50-50v (LP VI 917); SP 1/78 ff. 75-77r (LP VI 934); SP 1/78 ff. 167-168v (LP VI 1040); SP 1/79 ff. 22-22v (LP VI 1082); SP 1/79 ff. 64-65 (St. P. VII, p. 509; LP VI 1150); SP 1/80 ff. 5-6 (St. P. VII, p. 516; LP VI 1324); SP 1/80 ff. 75-76 (LP VI 1385).

³⁰¹ SP 1/45 f. 217 (LP IV, ii, 3675); SP 1/47 ff. 138-138v (LP IV, ii, 4107); SP 1/51 f. 105 (LP IV, ii, 5034); SP 1/53 f. 176 (LP IV, iii, 5459); SP 1/53 f. 176 (LP IV, iii, 5459); SP 1/54 f. 44 (LP IV, iii, 5622); SP 1/54 f. 55 (LP IV, iii, 5623); SP 1/55 ff. 27-27v (LP IV, iii, 5823); SP 1/55 f. 57 (LP IV, iii, 5860); SP

possibly even a Lutheran, and that Cromwell was aware of this.³⁰² He informed Vaughan in December 1531, for instance, that it was likely that Vaughan was going to be accused of being a Lutheran, and Cromwell advised him ‘only to apply and endeuoyr...vnfayuedly to serue the king his magestie’.³⁰³ Is there any indication that Cromwell shared his friend’s sympathies? Vaughan was certainly obtaining a number of books for Cromwell, including works by Luther, but this was on the king’s behalf and concerned the divorce campaign.³⁰⁴ In fact, Vaughan’s letter to Cromwell regarding the charge that he was a Lutheran – which he vehemently denied to Cromwell – provides the most compelling evidence that during these years Cromwell was not one. After all, why would Vaughan deny the charge if he thought Cromwell sympathetic to Luther’s views?

Miles Coverdale was another whom Cromwell knew in the 1520s.³⁰⁵ He was a member of humanist circles in London and Cambridge, and possibly had Lutheran sympathies also.³⁰⁶ At some point before 1528 he wrote to Cromwell referring to ‘the godly communication which your mastyr schype had with me...in mastyr moorys howse’ and to the ‘fervent zeall...yow have to vertu and godly study’. Having begun the ‘taste of holy schryptures’, Coverdale was in need of books to continue his study, and looked to Cromwell to supply these.³⁰⁷ Whether Cromwell did so is unclear, but it seems probable. Nevertheless

1/55 f. 170 (*LP* IV, iii, 6010); SP 1/55 f. 198 (*LP* IV, iii, 6036); SP 1/56 f. 227 (*LP* IV, iii, 6196); SP 1/57 f. 145 (*LP* IV, iii, 6429); SP 1/58 f. 147 (*LP* IV, iii, 6744); SP 1/65 f. 46 (*LP* V 26); SP 1/66 f. 121 (*LP* V 311); SP 1/68 f. 55 (*LP* V 542); SP 1/68 f. 56 (*LP* V 543); SP 1/69 f. 87 (*LP* V 789) BL, Cotton MS, Galba B X f. 3 (*LP* V 804); BL, Galba B X f. 5 (*LP* V 808), BL, Cotton MS, Galba B X f. 4 (*LP* V 870); SP 1/69 f. 239 (*LP* V 957); SP 1/76 ff. 10-11 (*LP* VI 434); SP 1/76 f. 121 (*LP* VI 559); SP 1/78 f. 31 (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 362; *LP* VI 894) and TNA, PRO, C82/672 and C66/662 m. 22 (*LP* VI 929 [50]).

³⁰² TNA, PRO, SP 1/68 ff. 51-52 (*LP* V 533); BL, Cotton MS, Galba BX ff. 23-25v (*LP* V 574); BL, Cotton MS, Galba B X ff. 26-26v (*LP* V 618).

³⁰³ BL, Cotton MS, Galba B X f. 23 (*LP* V 574).

³⁰⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 1/68 ff. 51-52 (*LP* IV, iii, 6429); SP 1/66 f. 47 (*LP* V 303); BL, Cotton MS, Titus B I ff. 373-373v (*LP* V 532); SP 1/68 ff. 51-52 (*LP* V 533); SP 1/68 f. 85 (*LP* V 585); BL, Cotton MS, Galba B X f. 2 (*LP* V 739); SP 1/69 f. 75 (*LP* V 753); BL, Cotton MS, Galba B X f. 37v (*LP* V 843); SP 1/80 f. 106 (*LP* VI 1448).

³⁰⁵ TNA, PRO, SP 1/44 f. 34 (*LP* IV, ii, 3388); SP 1/65 f. 238 (*St. P.* I, 383-384; *LP* V 221). This was placed in 1531 in *LP*, with a note from the editor that it had been mistakenly printed in that year and belonged to before 1527.

³⁰⁶ J. F. Mozley, *Coverdale and his Bibles* (London, 1953), pp. 2-3.

³⁰⁷ TNA, PRO, SP 1/65 f. 238 (*St. P.* I, 383-384; *LP* V 221).

Coverdale was abroad between 1528 and 1535, although Cromwell did later employ him to work on the production of the English bible.³⁰⁸

Cromwell is also thought to have been close to Thomas Cranmer.³⁰⁹ The two men certainly worked together,³¹⁰ but then the same could be said of most of the counsellors involved with the divorce campaign. The archbishop's evangelical beliefs are known well enough, but it is often supposed that Cromwell shared these and worked with Cranmer to further the Reformation.³¹¹ MacCulloch writes: 'the two men valued each other's skills, and recognized how their talents could be complementary in striving for common evangelical goals'.³¹² During the years in focus here, however, there is little to attest to a notably close friendship. True, Cranmer did sign a letter to Cromwell as 'your awne assured & veray lovyng good frende',³¹³ but there are remarkably few letters between the two men during these years, and most relate to patronage.³¹⁴ Certainly none suggest a 'special relationship'.³¹⁵ It is unclear if W. Benet's remark to Cromwell that 'yow wul have the advoyson off barnak for your frynd' was a reference to Cranmer, but it does seem likely.³¹⁶ He had requested that Cromwell obtain this for John Newman on several occasions,

³⁰⁸ J. K. McConica, *English Humanists and Reformation Politics* (Oxford, 1965), pp. 163-166

³⁰⁹ J. Ridley, *Thomas Cranmer* (Oxford, 1962) pp. 144-145; MacCulloch, *Cranmer*, p. 84.

³¹⁰ BL, Cotton MS, Vespasian F XIII f. 145 (LP VI 137); CSP, Spanish, IV, ii, 1048 (p. 601); TNA, PRO, SP 1/78 f. 25 (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 361; LP VI 861).

³¹¹ Dickens, *Cromwell and the English Church*, p. 51.

³¹² MacCulloch, *Cranmer*, p. 135.

³¹³ BL, Cotton MS, Vespasian F XIII f. 145 (LP VI 137).

³¹⁴ BL, Cotton MS, Vespasian F XIII f. 145 (LP VI 137); BL, Cotton Otho C X f. 165 (LP VI 496); TNA, PRO, SP 1/76 f. 171 (LP VI 616); Cranmer, *Complete Works*, ii. 252 (LP VI 868); SP 1/77 f. 79 (LP VI 698); SP 1/79 f. 59 (LP VI 1143); SP 1/80 f. 196 (LP VI 1531); BL, Cotton MS, Vespasian F XIII f. 145 (LP VI 137); SP 1/82 f. 14 (LP VII 17); BL, Harley MS 6148 f. 81 (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 372; LP VII 19); SP 1/82 f. 16 (LP VII 20); BL, Cotton MS, Cleopatra E VI f. 175 (LP VII 499). MacCulloch notes that a 'remarkable feature' of the letter-book containing Cranmer's outgoing correspondence for the years 1533-1535 is that it 'contains hardly a single letter from Cranmer to Cromwell'. Bizarrely, he takes this as a 'clear although topsy-turvy piece of evidence for Cranmer and Cromwell's special relationship', believing that the archbishop must have 'kept a separate file for his letters to his chief ally in politics' (*Cranmer*, p. 135). This seems highly implausible. Cranmer's letter book is a transcription of the letters he sent to leading figures, meaning the originals would obviously lie with the recipients. If there had been a more voluminous correspondence between Cromwell and Cranmer there would surely be a far greater survival of Cranmer's letter among Cromwell's preserved private papers.

³¹⁵ The phrase is MacCulloch's, *Cranmer*, p. 135.

³¹⁶ TNA, PRO, SP 1/75 f. 57v (LP VI 501).

but Cromwell evidently kept him waiting.³¹⁷ Cranmer himself was similarly reluctant to appoint Cromwell's nominee as prior at St Gregory's, Canterbury, despite Cromwell's assurance that the man was of 'good Leryng and religiouse Lif'.³¹⁸ After voicing his objections, however, Cranmer did finally consent.³¹⁹ In February 1533 Cromwell also paid the new archbishop-elect a loan of one thousand pounds from the king,³²⁰ and he was involved in negotiations on Cranmer's behalf to resolve the poor finances of the metropolitan see later in that year.³²¹ But Cromwell had acted as a mediator on similar financial matters for other prelates during these years.³²² During both men's early careers under the king, cooperation, rather than a close friendship, is easier to substantiate from their surviving correspondence, and there is no evidence of any shared evangelical sympathies during this period.

In fact, a number of Cromwell's oldest and closest friends held traditional religious beliefs. Cromwell's friendship with Christopher Hales, the attorney general, dated back to at least the 1520s.³²³ According to John Foxe, Hales was 'a mighty Papiste, yet bare he such fauour and good lykyng to Cromwell, that hee commended hym to the kyng, as a man most fitte for hys purpose' in 1530.³²⁴ John Gostwick, a member of Wolsey's entourage between 1514 and 1529, was another well acquainted with Cromwell.³²⁵ Their association was maintained throughout the 1530s, and Gostwick worked closely with Cromwell following his appointment as Treasurer of the First Fruits.³²⁶ Yet

³¹⁷ BL, Cotton MS, Vespasian F XIII f. 145 (*LP VI* 137); TNA, PRO, SP 1/75 f. 149 (*LP VI* 360); *LP VI* 1305; *LP VI* 1473.

³¹⁸ TNA, PRO, SP 1/76 f. 19 (*LP VI* 447).

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*, f. 19; TNA, PRO, SP 1/80 f. 167 (*LP VI* 1495).

³²⁰ TNA, PRO, E101/421/9 (*LP VI* 31). This was part of two thousand pounds delivered to Cromwell by Thomas Alvard. The remaining one thousand was paid into the privy coffers.

³²¹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/80 f. 135 (*LP VI* 1474).

³²² See above, pp. 139-140.

³²³ TNA, PRO, SP 1/235 f. 74 (*LP Add I*, i, 494); SP 1/235 f. 75 (*LP Add I*, i, 495); SP 1/235 f. 216 (*LP Add I*, i, 539).

³²⁴ Foxe, *Acts and Monuments* (1570 edn.), pp. 1386-1387.

³²⁵ *LP IV*, i, 2321 [i]; TNA, PRO, SP 1/238 ff. 233-236 (*LP IV*, i, 2321 [ii]); *LP IV*, ii, 3216; TNA, PRO, SP 1/46 ff. 27-28 (*LP IV*, ii, 3737); TNA, PRO, E24/5/4 (*LP IV*, ii, 4461) SP 1/51 f. 101 (*LP IV*, ii, 5024); SP 1/59 f. 127 (*LP IV*, iii, App. 233). For Gostwick's career see H. P. R. Finberg, 'The Gostwicks of Willington', in *The Publications of the Bedfordshire Historical Record Society*, xxxvi (1955), pp. 46-75.

³²⁶ TNA, PRO, SP 1/73 f. 117 (*LP V* 1742); SP 2/O ff. 20-22 (*LP VI* 664); Elton, *Tudor Revolution*, pp. 192-203.

Gostwick was a staunch conservative. He attacked Archbishop Cranmer's heretical preaching in parliament, and was described by John Foxe as 'a man of contrary Religion', i.e., not an evangelical.³²⁷ Cromwell was also friendly with several conservative clerics. Edmund Bonner had been a chaplain under Wolsey, and he and Cromwell appear to have been close.³²⁸ Notes among Cromwell's correspondence reminded him to 'Remembre doctor bonner for sum promocyon' in the early 1534, and the cleric himself referred to Cromwell as 'my great patrone' in a letter to the king in October 1533.³²⁹ In the later 1530s Bonner became bishop of Hereford and later London, and according to John Foxe he 'was aduanced only by the Lorde Cromwel'.³³⁰ Although Foxe erroneously believed Bonner to be 'a fauourer of Luthers doctrine', he was in fact 'broadly conservative', and later persecuted evangelicals for heresy under Mary.³³¹

Cromwell's acquaintance with Rowland Lee was another which dated to their time working for Wolsey, and there is no doubt they were firm, and probably close, friends.³³² Cromwell's son Gregory often visited and stayed with Lee,³³³ and Henry Dowes, one of Gregory's tutors, felt Lee treated Gregory as if he 'were his owne naturall sonne'.³³⁴ Lee was another conservative in religion, yet Cromwell obtained several church livings for him between 1532 and 1534. In August 1532 Lee reported the vicar of St. Sepulchre had died, and requested

³²⁷ Foxe, *Acts and Monuments* (1570 edn.), p. 2080; MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer*, p. 252; Finberg, 'Gostwicks of Willington', p. 72 for Gostwick's religious outlook.

³²⁸ Cromwell had 'promised' to send Bonner 'the triumphes of petrarche in the ytalion tonge' in 1530, and throughout the cleric's diplomatic sojourn abroad he sent Cromwell's gifts, including 'a worcestershire chese' and 'sedes of Rome' for him to 'sow in your gardyn'. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/57 f. 75 (LP IV, iii, 6346); SP 1/74 f. 157 (LP VI 158); SP 1/69 f. 69 (LP V 743). Also see TNA, PRO, SP 1/57 f. 130v (LP IV, iii, 6411); SP 1/236 f. 71 (LP Add I, i, 634).

³²⁹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/82 f. 200v (LP VII 257); SP 1/79 f. 183 (LP VI 1299).

³³⁰ Foxe, *Acts and Monuments* (1583 edn.), p. 1112.

³³¹ Foxe, *ibid.*; K. Carelton, 'Bonner, Edmund (d. 1569)', *ODNB*; D. Loades, *Mary Tudor: A Life* (Oxford, 1989), p. 284.

³³² TNA, PRO, SP 1/47 f. 292v (LP IV, ii, 4229 [x]); SP 1/50 f. 69 (LP IV, ii, 4696); SP 1/50 f. 101 (LP IV, ii, 4755); BL, Cotton MS, Titus B I ff. 281-282 (Ellis, 1st Series, I, p. 185; LP IV, ii, 4778); SP 1/53 ff. 141-141v (LP IV, iii, 5411); SP 1/52 f. 253 (LP IV, iii, 5533); TNA, PRO, C66/655 m. 1 (LP IV, iii, 5805) SP 1/57 f. 1 (LP IV, iii, 6212); SP 1/236 f. 71 (LP Add I, i, 634); TNA, PRO, E41/290.

³³³ TNA, PRO, SP 1/237 f. 5 (LP Add I, i, 724); SP 1/75 f. 85 (Ellis, 3rd Series, I, p. 338; LP V 337); SP 1/68 f. 22 (Ellis, 3rd Series, I, p. 339; LP V 479); SP 1/78 f. 143 (LP VI 1011); SP 1/78 f. 111 (LP VI 981); SP 1/78 f. 145 (LP VI 1014).

³³⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 1/85 f. 44 (LP VII 967).

that Cromwell ‘contynew your goodnesse towards me for the same if it soo may plesse yow’.³³⁵ Lee was appointed there on 19 August after Cromwell had granted his advowson for this benefice to the king.³³⁶ Lee was also nominated to the bishopric of Coventry and Lichfield at Cromwell’s instigation in late 1533.³³⁷ Launcelot Collins remarked to the minister in October that ‘I hert say / that...master doctore lee (by yowr helpe) schalbe bechope off chestore’.³³⁸ Stephen Vaughan’s response on hearing of Lee’s appointment is particularly interesting. He reprimanded Cromwell in November because

yow haue lately helpen an erthely beste a molle and an enemy to all godly lernyng...a papiste an Idolater and a fleshely preste vnto a Busshop of Chester...who knowethe more of the Busshoppes iniquytie then yow / who knowethe more of theyr tyrannye...and vntruthe agaynst god prynce and man then yow. And shuld yow helpe in this tyme specially to increace the number of wycked men where there is a lack and so greate a nede of good and vertuous men / Be yow sorye for it ...I am more sorye for this dede done by yow / then for all the thinges that euer I knew yow do.³³⁹

The letter wonderfully illustrates Cromwell’s friendship with both Vaughan, an obvious radical, and with Lee, an obvious conservative. Clearly Lee’s traditional beliefs were not an issue for Cromwell, and this should prompt reservations over the interpretation of him as a single-minded patron of religious radicals.

It is against this contradictory and frustratingly inconclusive evidence that a judgement on Cromwell’s own religious beliefs must be made. Cromwell’s religion, particularly during his early life and career, contained many traditional elements, and it is of note that even John Foxe conceded that Cromwell was ‘not grounded in iudgement of Religion in those hys youthfull

³³⁵ TNA, PRO, SP 1/70 f. 194 (*LP V* 1227).

³³⁶ TNA, PRO, C82/659 and C66/660 m. 28 (*LP V* 1270 [8]). Cromwell had apparently initially offered this benefice to Henry Lockwood, SP 1/71 f. 26v (*LP V* 1309).

³³⁷ TNA, PRO, SP 1/79 f. 42 (*LP VI* 1109); SP 1/81 f. 50 (*LP VI* 1579); TNA, PRO, C82/677 and C66/662 m. 37 (*LP VI* 1695 [20]).

³³⁸ TNA, PRO, SP 1/79 f. 145 (*LP VI* 1226).

³³⁹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/80 ff. 75v-76r (*LP VI* 1385).

dayes', that is, he did not think him yet an evangelical.³⁴⁰ His actions and work in the 1530s, however, often overshadow and conflict with this. In many respects, Cromwell might appear the epitome of many of the laymen at the centre of government who it has been noted seem to have 'combined with a conventional late medieval faith a preparedness to extend royal power over the Church, to exploit the Church's resources...and to accept that the clergy needed improving and that the laity, led by the king, had the right to tell them so'.³⁴¹ Undoubtedly Cromwell believed that certain aspects of the Church, such as the monasteries, were questionable and in need of reform. He also probably became more supportive of reformist views, such as the need for a vernacular bible, as the 1530s wore on. If religious beliefs are measured as points along a spectrum, then by the end of his life Cromwell may well have been closer to the 'reformed' faith than he was to the 'old'. But does that make him an evangelical? Between the years 1520 to 1534 there is no indication that he used his increasing influence to protect or promote religious radicals, or for that matter, that disputes over theology were of any notable concern for him. Although a detailed examination of Cromwell's later support and ecclesiastical patronage is beyond this present study, the conclusions here must raise serious doubts as to whether Cromwell was driven by a religious zeal, or pursued his own religious agenda in the later 1530s, as is so often alleged.

³⁴⁰ Foxe, *Acts and Monuments* (1570 edn.), p. 1385.

³⁴¹ Gunn, 'Edmund Dudley and the Church', p. 526.

Chapter Five

Royal Government

From late 1531 onwards, Cromwell was undertaking a variety of responsibilities which might loosely be defined as 'government work'. Among these were his management of parliament, tasks connected with his position on the Council and his duties in the various offices he was accumulating. Cromwell's association with government and administration is of course well-known. In 1953 Elton claimed that the minister was responsible for a radical change in the way that English government was organised. Cromwell, it was argued in *The Tudor Revolution in Government*, replaced the existing 'medieval' household system with a modern structure of bureaucratic departments.¹ This thesis sparked considerable debate, and the question of whether there was a 'revolution' in government during the 1530s has remained one of the most enduring controversies of sixteenth-century history.² Yet this concern with the bold concept of revolution, and the search for dramatic change, has often come at the expense of the more quotidian aspects of royal government. These can be revealing in themselves because they shed much light on the nature and character of the administrative system during this period. It is this which is considered here.

When examining the ways in which royal government functioned, many historians of the early twentieth century focused almost exclusively on the

¹ Elton, *Tudor Revolution*.

² R. B. Wernham, 'Review: The Tudor Revolution in Government', *EHR*, lxxi (1956), pp. 92-95; Harriss and Williams, *PP*, 25 (1963), pp. 3-59; Cooper, *P&P*, 26 (1963), pp. 110-113; Elton, *P&P*, 29 (1964), pp. 26-50; Harriss and Williams, *P&P*, 31 (1965), pp. 87-97; Elton, *P&P*, 32 (1965), pp. 103-110; Coleman and Starkey, eds. *Revolution Reassessed*; Bernard, 'Politics and Government', pp. 159-182; 'Elton's Cromwell', pp. 587-607. The most recent discussion on this question has examined the originality of Elton's claims, see Harris, 'Some Origins of a Tudor Revolution', pp. 1355-1385.

institutions and machinery which enabled it to do so.³ Formal structures were of course important, but so too were the people behind the offices and political institutions: personality might be as formative as procedure. This chapter therefore seeks to show how Cromwell himself worked and operated, and tries to locate this within the framework of the central machinery. To begin with Cromwell's work in the Council and parliament are considered. Examining this not only further shows exactly what he was doing during these years, but it can also cast light on some of the more routine responsibilities connected with these institutions. The final section then looks in greater detail at the offices which Cromwell held. What were his activities in these positions, and what do these reveal more generally about the character of royal government? It has previously been suggested that Cromwell was able to use his official positions to establish his own influence and rule.⁴ A closer re-examination reveals something very different.

Council Work, 1531-1534

Cromwell had joined the King's Council during the final weeks of 1530. Although the Council handled an enormous variety of work – indeed, 'nothing that happened within the realm appeared to fall outside its competence' – becoming a council member did not in itself lead to the accumulation of government work.⁵ Membership of the Council was a status rather than a 'job' with defined responsibilities, and the number of people sworn as councillors was probably high in the early 1530s.⁶ The majority of its workload was

³ A. P. Newton, 'The King's Chamber under the Early Tudors', *EHR*, 32 (1917), pp. 348-372; A. F. Pollard, 'Council, Star Chamber, and Privy Council under the Tudors: 1. The Council', *EHR*, 37 (1922), pp. 337-360; A. F. Pollard, 'Council, Star Chamber, and Privy Council under the Tudors: 2. The Star Chamber', *EHR*, 37 (1922), pp. 516-539; A. F. Pollard, 'Council, Star Chamber, and Privy Council under the Tudors: 3. The Privy Council', *EHR*, 38 (1923), pp. 42-60; T. F. Tout, *Chapters in the Administrative History of Mediaeval England* (6 vols., Manchester, 1920-33); Dietz, *English Government Finance*; F. M. G. Evans, *The Principal Secretary of State. A Survey of the Office from 1558 to 1680* (Manchester, 1923); K. Pickthorn, *Early Tudor Government*, (2 vols., Cambridge, 1934); Elton, *Tudor Revolution*.

⁴ Elton, *Tudor Revolution*, pp. 156, 158-159.

⁵ G. R. Elton, *The Tudor Constitution: Documents and Commentary* (Cambridge, 1962), p. 101.

⁶ It is interesting, for instance, that Cromwell took several dispositions with John Allen, a London alderman, and councillor, who also served on the temporary Council made up of a

therefore undertaken by an inner ring of regular attenders. These men were among the king's most trusted servants, and it will be recalled that Cromwell had joined this group toward the end of 1531, as the Venetian ambassador had recognised.⁷ Cromwell was undoubtedly more a councillor than he was a courtier during these years.⁸ In a broad sense of course, 'every councillor was a courtier', and many courtiers were also councillors.⁹ But Cromwell was certainly not involved with the chivalrous aspects of court life, and between 1531 to 1534 he was heavily tied to London, apparently often remaining there while king and court were elsewhere [Appendix 3]. Nor can he convincingly be linked with any Court 'faction' during these years. Although there plainly were courtiers whose interests and prosperity encouraged them to work together, Cromwell was not obviously one of them. He had risen thanks to his work for the king; and he did not rely on the likes of Anne Boleyn for favour or patronage.¹⁰ What occupied Cromwell throughout his early political career was the legal, administrative and financial work of government; much of this depended on his position on the Council.

What exactly did Cromwell's responsibilities on the Council entail? In August 1531 instructions to be executed by the Council were given to Cromwell by the king. These offer a glimpse of the considerable business that body handled. Among these were orders to proceed against a number of clerics suspected of praemunire; to prepare legislation for parliament, including bills for treason and customs on imported wines; as well as an instruction to proceed against the owners of 'galeys and shippes' in Southampton for illegally

number of obscure men who governed the realm briefly during the king's absence in Calais. All of these men had probably been councillors long before this date, but served the king intermittently in this capacity, perhaps when minor work was needed to be done. See SP 1/70 ff. 181-181v (LP V 1209); LP V 1421. Cf. Elton, *Tudor Revolution*, pp. 335-335.

⁷ CSP, Venetian, IV, 694 (p. 297).

⁸ For the debate regarding just how separate administrative government was from the royal court see, G. R. Elton, 'Tudor Government', *HJ*, 31 (1988), pp. 425-434; D. Starkey, 'Communications, A Reply: Tudor Government: the Facts?', *HJ*, 31 (1988), pp. 921-931; G. W. Bernard, 'Court and government', in G. W. Bernard, *Power and Politics in Tudor England* (Aldershot, 2000), pp. 129-134.

⁹ S. J. Gunn, 'The Courtiers of Henry VII', *EHR*, 108 (1993), p. 28.

¹⁰ Indeed, there is not a single letter among Cromwell's correspondence to or from Anne between 1531 and April 1534.

importing ‘malvesies’.¹¹ A memorandum prepared for the Council by Cromwell himself in 1533 shows that in that year its time was more heavily dominated by the break with Rome. Councillors were organising a preaching campaign defending the abolition of papal authority, and preparing a book of articles justifying the king’s actions over his great matter.¹² Other instructions concerned the sending of ambassadors abroad, and ordered preparations for the provisions of the royal navy.¹³ Cromwell himself implemented many of these directives, again underlining that from late 1531 onwards he was acting as one of the Council’s work horses. Of the twenty eight instructions delivered to the Council in 1531, for example, at least eleven were executed by him – either alone or with other councillors. A summary revealing the delegation of the 1533 instructions also reveals that the ‘ixth xth and xith Article[s]’ – i.e., those concerning the publication of proclamations publicising the appeals act and the king’s new titles – were to be committed to the Lord Chancellor and ‘Master Cromewell’.¹⁴ The thirteenth article – ‘to sende exploratours and spies into Scotland’ – was also committed to Cromwell and the duke of Norfolk.¹⁵ Many of the other articles were also probably overseen by him. For instance, the diminishing and ordering of the princess dowager’s household was delegated to the duke of Suffolk, the earl of Sussex, William Paulet and Richard Sampson. Cromwell was kept informed on their progress, and provided money for its re-establishment.¹⁶

Councillors also had judicial responsibilities, and its members sat in the court of Star Chamber when formally attending to this. Cromwell presumably did so, although Guy’s belief that he was almost as active in Star Chamber as he was in the Council proper is difficult to substantiate.¹⁷ Certainly in June 1532

¹¹ BL, Cotton MS, Titus B I ff. 483-484 (*St. P. I.*, p. 380; *LP V* 394).

¹² BL, Cotton MS, Cleopatra E VI ff. 325-328 (*LP VI* 1487 [1]); TNA, PRO, SP 6/3 ff. 85-88 (*LP VI* 1487 [2]); *LP VII* 149; *CSP, Spanish*, IV, ii, 1165.

¹³ BL, Cotton MS, Cleopatra E VI ff. 325-328 (*LP VI* 1487 [1]); TNA, PRO, SP 6/3 f. 87 (*LP VI* 1487 [2]).

¹⁴ BL, Cotton MS, Cleopatra E VI ff. 329-329v (*LP VI* 1486; *St. P. I.*, p. 414).

¹⁵ BL, Cotton MS, Cleopatra E VI f. 327v (*LP VI* 1487 [1]).

¹⁶ TNA, PRO, SP 1/81 ff. 1-2 (*LP VI* 1542); SP 1/81 ff. 3-3v (*LP VI* 1543); SP 1/103 f. 221 (*LP X* 1231); BL, Cotton MS, Titus B I f. 478 (*LP VI* 1381 [2]).

¹⁷ Guy, *Cardinal’s Court*, p. 138.

Cromwell discharged a man from appearing in Star Chamber,¹⁸ and his remarks to Richard and William Haybourne, that he and the Lord Chancellor ‘will sitt vpon y [sic] the mater in variaunce betwixt Elisabeth Colcoke widowe and you’ in 1533, might also refer to his activity in this court.¹⁹ Clear-cut evidence that Cromwell regularly attended Star Chamber is lacking, however, but what can be said is that he took an interest in this court and was keen to add to - and improve - its work. Memoranda suggest Cromwell was planning an act of parliament enabling murders in Wales and the Welsh marches to be tried there.²⁰ More interesting in the light of Star Chamber’s later development is that one of his remembrances also called for an act to be made enabling the Chancellor and two judges to proceed in the court notwithstanding the absence of officials whose attendance was a statutory requirement.²¹ This suggests that Cromwell had concerns with the court’s efficiency, and provides a foretaste of his later separation of the Council in Star Chamber from the newly established Privy Council in the mid-1530s.²²

Cromwell was also engaged with the quasi-judicial functions of the Council itself – that is, those of the executive board. Despite the existence of Star Chamber, people could still submit petitions to the Council directly, and its members largely operated in an arbitrational capacity.²³ Cromwell and the Council were informed that ‘one Stephen Mylles schuld vnlawfully take a wey my lady Saluond frome hyr owyn howse a gaynste hyr mynd’ in 1532, and a local inquiry was called with the intent of sending those accused before them early the following year.²⁴ A considerable number of private petitions were also sent to Cromwell, many of which were addressed to him as ‘one of the kynges most honerable counsell’.²⁵ Although these were probably appeals for private

¹⁸ TNA, PRO, SP 1/70 f. 122 (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 345; LP V 1106).

¹⁹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/80 f. 14 (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 366; LP VI 1332).

²⁰ BL, Cotton MS, Titus B I f. 161v (LP VI 1381 [3]).

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Elton, *Tudor Revolution*, p. 344.

²³ D. E. Hoak, *The King’s Council in the Reign of Edward VI* (Cambridge, 1976), p. 223.

²⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 1/73 f. 90 (LP V 1718); SP 1/75 f. 53 (LP VI 271).

²⁵ TNA, PRO, SP 1/68 f. 37 (LP V 507); SP 1/68 f. 120 (LP V 636); SP 1/68 f. 140 (LP V 655); SP 1/71 f. 2 (LP V 1271); SP 1/73 f. 11 (LP V 1686); SP 1/73 f. 12 (LP V 1687); SP 1/70 f. 140 (LP V 1140); SP 1/73 f. 24 (LP V 1697); SP 1/73 f. 100 (LP V 1726); SP 1/73 f. 105 (LP V 1729); SP 2/M f. 202 (LP V 1793); SP 2/M ff. 208-209 (LP V 1797); SP 2/O f. 105 (LP VI 1606); SP 2/O ff. 107-110 (LP VI 1614);

intercession, many still urged Cromwell to ‘call’ people before him and examine them - something the Council frequently did, usually on allegations of treasonous activity or slanderous speech. Thomas Woodhouse and ‘on[e] Johnnson’ are just two examples of men cited to appear before Cromwell ‘and other of the kings grace counsell’; there were many others.²⁶ Sometimes it was even necessary to exact some form of obligation to ensure a person would appear before the Council at a specific date. A ‘Regestre...concerny[n]ge the Apperance of certeyne persones...before the kinge and his counsayll’ has survived. This contains a list of all the obligations Cromwell made between July 1532 and February 1533 to ensure people appeared when called.²⁷ The depositions of some of those brought before councillors were also heard and recorded by Cromwell. In January 1532, for instance, Cromwell took the deposition of Peter Alleyn, alongside Sir Henry Guildford, Sir William Fitzwilliam and the earl of Oxford.²⁸ This deposition is written in Cromwell’s hand, again indicating that he personally undertook much of the Council’s hack-work. Interestingly, this was to continue throughout his meteoric rise. In August and September 1532 he can be shown taking further depositions, both alone and with other councillors.²⁹ Once again it was Cromwell who recorded these, despite hearing them with minor councillors, such as John Allen, a London alderman.

Some of Cromwell’s Council work might cast doubt on the claim that the minister himself was a notably concerned social reformer.³⁰ In 1531 ‘unseasonable weather failing’ had created a shortage of corn and other victuals. A proclamation was issued on 7 September prohibiting its export, and

SP 1/81 f. 70 (*LP VI* 1617); SP 1/81 f. 84 (*LP VI* 1629); SP 1/81 ff. 85-85v (*LP VI* 1630); SP 1/81 f. 88 (*LP VI* 1633); SP 2/O f. 142 (*LP VI* 1636); SP 2/O f. 143b (*LP VI* 1656); SP 1/81 f. 113 (*LP VI* 1658); SP 2/O ff. 146-148 (*LP VI* 1663); SP 2/O f. 154 (*LP VI* 1684); SP 2/O f. 153 (*LP VI* 1683); SP 2/O f. 158 (*LP VI* 1688); SP 1/81 f. 143 (*LP VI* 1697); SP 1/82 f. 142 (*LP VII* 158 [2]); SP 1/238 f. 95 (*LP Add I*, i, 863); SP 1/238 f. 198 (*LP Add I*, i, 911).

²⁶ TNA, PRO, SP 1/76 f. 156 (*LP VI* 595); SP 1/80 f. 2 (*LP VI* 1320); SP 1/76 f. 164 (*LP VI* 607); SP 1/80 f. 2 (*LP VI* 1320); SP 1/238 f. 82 (*LP Add I*, i, 855).

²⁷ TNA, PRO, E36/142 ff. 1-8 (*LP VI* 480 [i]).

²⁸ TNA, PRO, E36/120 ff. 63-63v (*LP V* 759).

²⁹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/70 ff. 181-181v (*LP V* 1209); SP 1/71 f. 29 (*LP V* 1312).

³⁰ Elton, *Reform and Renewal*, *passim*.

Cromwell was one of those responsible for its enforcement.³¹ A 'breeff Regestre of suche specialties...supposed to be Forfeyte to the kynge for caryeuge oute of corne & other vytayles' was in his possession in 1532. This lists twenty five instances of forfeited obligations for this that Cromwell had uncovered.³² One of his accounts similarly records that over £1,580 'forfetted to the kings vse by sondry persones for conueying of corne' was received by him in late 1532.³³ Just before Christmas in that year he had also requested that a scholar should produce a short piece of work on the cost of corn.³⁴ Was all this an example of Cromwell's concern for the commonwealth? Penry Williams has noted the 'very detailed supervision' which the Council exercised over the grain trade.³⁵ In particular it devoted a considerable amount of its time and energy during periods of poor harvests to making sure that corn was not shipped overseas.³⁶ It is more reasonable therefore to attribute Cromwell's activity over the supply of corn to his position on the Council, rather than to an unusual concern about this problem on his part. The 'Regestre' noted above was produced in response to the king's instructions.³⁷ Cromwell does not appear to have been unduly occupied with agricultural or social issues during these years. True, his activities in parliament, considered shortly, do offer some evidence that he grappled with the problem of enclosure. This, however, is heavily outweighed by the impression gleaned from his remembrances. These memoranda are impressively thorough, and a testimony to Cromwell's capacity for work. It is surely revealing, then, that remarkably few are concerned with anything resembling a social concern or matters affecting the commonweal. Instead, they are mainly focused on 'high-policy' or the routine administrative work Cromwell was engaged with. He was not unduly concerned with much else during his early years under the king.

³¹ P. L. Hughes and J. F. Larkin, eds., *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, i, *The Early Tudors, 1485-1553* (London, 1964), pp. 201-203.

³² TNA, PRO, E36/142 ff. 13-26v (LP VI 480 [ii]).

³³ TNA, PRO, SP 1/72 f. 137 (LP V 1639).

³⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 1/74 f. 157 (LP VI 158).

³⁵ P. Williams, *The Tudor Regime* (Oxford, 1979) p. 190.

³⁶ Williams, *Tudor Regime*, pp. 185-190.

³⁷ BL, Cotton MS, Titus BI ff. 483-484 (*St. P. I*, p. 380; LP V 394).

Cromwell's position on the Council also further hints at his influence and standing. By 1533 Cromwell was one, if not *the*, leading figure on the king's Council, and drafts survive of an early council schedule prepared by a clerk, which Cromwell has amended. The final version of this schedule was produced by Ralph Salder, Cromwell's clerk.³⁸ According to Elton, these drafts demonstrated 'Cromwell's complete control of the Council's agenda'.³⁹ Bernard disputes this, however, arguing 'A reading more attentive to what the record says would rather suggest that it was the king who was making decisions and issuing orders'.⁴⁰ Here both Bernard and Elton occupy opposite extremes of an over-simplified model in which policy was formulated either by the king (in Bernard's case), or the minister (in Elton's). It is certainly true that Henry VIII was informed and actively involved with the Council's decisions. The minutes for the meeting in question reveal that it was 'the Kynges Highnes' who appointed the councillors to oversee the newly established households of Catherine of Aragon and Princess Mary, and therefore disprove the suggestion that Henry was uninterested or uninvolved with the Council's business. But the very purpose of the Council was to assist the monarch with the governance of the realm and to rid him of its day-to-day business. That Cromwell was compiling the Council's agenda does suggest that he now had considerable influence – even a degree of independence – over its proceeding.⁴¹ But what the 1533 Council agenda suggests in particular is that matters which most closely affected Henry – such as the arrangements surrounding his family – were directed by him; over others, particular those which dealt with more quotidian aspects of government, Cromwell had greater freedom and direction.

³⁸ TNA, PRO, SP 6/3 ff. 85-88 (LP VI 1487 [2]), is Cromwell's amended version; BL, Cotton MS, Cleopatra E VI ff. 325-328 (LP VI 1487 [1]) is the final set of instructions produced by Sadler.

³⁹ Elton, *Tudor Revolution*, p. 363.

⁴⁰ Bernard, 'Elton's Cromwell', p. 113.

⁴¹ It is interesting to note, however, that Audeley's hand can also be found on the Council's minutes, alongside that of Cromwell.

Parliament, 1531-1534

Alongside his responsibilities as a councillor, Cromwell also sat as MP for Taunton during the Reformation Parliament (1529-1536). On obtaining this seat in 1529, and throughout 1530 and most of 1531, Cromwell operated under the direction of the duke of Norfolk, working as one of the Crown's supporters in the Commons. Toward the end of 1531, however, Cromwell himself had assumed greater responsibility for managing the king's affairs there, and by early 1532 he was drafting much of the government's legislation.

It is well recognised that the Crown's ministers worked to ensure the efficiency and productivity of parliament in dispatching official business.⁴² As both an MP and councillor, Cromwell himself was entitled to occupy a special position close to the speaker's chair, and would have worked with that royal nominee to promote the king's interests personally. His name also appears in the journals of the House of Lords, testifying further to his activity.⁴³ More detailed information about the management of parliament, however, in particular the Commons, is frustratingly lacking. It is of interest therefore that Cromwell's papers, closely scrutinised, can go some way toward illuminating aspects of this, while also offering further indications of Cromwell's own influence and responsibilities over yet another area of royal government.

The first indication that Cromwell was assisting in the running of parliament is that from December 1531 he was receiving requests from men who wished to be excused from attending.⁴⁴ Some of these, such as bishop Fisher of Rochester in February 1534, undoubtedly wanted to be excused for political reasons or matters of conscience relating to the divorce campaign.⁴⁵ The vast majority, however, probably had more banal motives. Attendance at parliament could prove costly, as John Lord Latimer claimed when complaining to

⁴² Graves, 'Management of the Elizabethan House of Commons', pp. 11-38.

⁴³ *Journals of the House of Lords*, i, 1509-1577 (London, 1836), p. 58.

⁴⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 1/68 f. 79 (LP V 571); SP 1/68 f. 83 (LP V 578); SP 1/68 f. 102 (LP V 612); SP 1/68 f. 106 (LP V 621); BL, Cotton MS, Titus B I f. 371 (LP V 625); SP 1/68 f. 128 (LP V 644); SP 1/69 f. 10 (LP V 708); LP V 709; SP 1/69 f. 66 (LP V 734); SP 1/69 f. 66 (LP V 741); SP 1/74 f. 124 (LP VI 112); SP 1/74 f. 120 (LP VI 106); SP 1/79 f. 142 (LP VI 1223); SP 1/81 f. 17 (LP VI 1556); SP 1/82 f. 41 (LP VII 31); BL, Cotton MS, Cleopatra E VI ff. 156-158 (LP VII 239); SP 1/83 f. 8 (LP VII 365); SP 1/83 f. 62 (LP VII 438).

⁴⁵ BL, Cotton MS, Cleopatra E VI ff. 156-158 (LP VII 239).

Cromwell that his continual presence there had proved very ‘chargeable’ to him.⁴⁶ Parliamentary proceedings could also be long and tedious. All of this fuelled absenteeism, a particular problem which impeded the efficiency of the Crown’s business there, especially if those who sought a license for discharge (or stayed at home regardless) were experienced in the legislative affairs of the Commons.⁴⁷ Handling requests to tarry at home, and the problem of absenteeism more generally, must therefore have been an important, yet routine, aspect of Cromwell’s management of the lower house.

The Crown was also reliant on having sufficient support in parliament to achieve its goals there. Another matter which therefore occupied Cromwell was filling vacancies created by the death of an MP. This was likely to be a more acute problem during the Reformation Parliament because it lasted longer than any other parliament in the sixteenth century. Several lists of MPs were in Cromwell’s possession, including ‘a paper of the names of theme that be...burgesis in the parlement ho[use]’, indicating that he took an interest in the composition of the Commons.⁴⁸ It is also possible that the cryptic note in one his remembrance – ‘to remember the parliament boke’ – was a reference to the ‘book’ or register of the House of Commons clerk, which contained a roll-call of every member, and that this was also in Cromwell’s possession.⁴⁹ More interesting, however, is that several of Cromwell’s papers reveal he took care to ensure the Commons included men who could be called on to support the king’s interests there. A memorandum from 1533 reminded him to attend to ‘the new elleccyons of suche burgessys knyghtz and cytyzens as be lakkyng in the parlyament’,⁵⁰ while a letter from an anonymous man in Huntingdonshire sent in the same year reveals that Cromwell had written to him urging that he

⁴⁶ TNA, PRO, SP 1/83 f. 62 (*LP VII* 438).

⁴⁷ Graves ‘Management of the Elizabethan House of Commons’, pp. 16-17.

⁴⁸ TNA, PRO, E36/143 f. 27 (*LP VI* 299); TNA, PRO, SP 1/99 f. 202 (*LP IX* 1077), and for its re-dating to 1533 see A. F. Pollard, ‘Thomas Cromwell’s Parliamentary Lists’, *BIHR*, 9 (1931-32), pp. 31-43.

⁴⁹ BL, Cotton MS, Titus B I f. 437 (*LP V* 1548). This book is mentioned in *Statutes of the Realm*, iii, 6. Henry VIII. c. 16.

⁵⁰ BL, Cotton MS, Titus B I f. 464v (*LP VI* 1382). Another paper in Cromwell’s possession, placed in 1534 in *LP*, lists the names of knights who had died since the beginning of parliament. This actually dates to May 1536. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/82 ff. 52-53v (*LP VII* 56); Pollard, p. 40 n. 2.

‘make...Frendes in the Countre here to serve the kinges hyghnes...At this parlyament’.⁵¹ In this instance, Cromwell’s efforts were apparently slow. Thomas Hall of Huntingdon had already been active canvassing ‘all the Frendes that he cowde make’, and was an obstacle to the man whom Cromwell wanted returned in the by-election. Later remarks by Cromwell, however, suggest that on the whole the Crown’s servants were effective at ensuring the king had sufficient support in the lower house. In 1539, Cromwell would tell Henry that he and the Council had ensured ‘your Majestie had never more tractable [a] parlement’.⁵²

It is also of note that during these early years Cromwell was consulted on when or whether parliament itself would be prorogued. Christopher Hales asked to be informed in December 1531 if parliament should ‘holde or be deferred’, while at the end of September 1532 he requested Cromwell ‘to let me knowe howe oure parlement shall succede / eyther to be kept at the day prefixed or shalbe proroged’.⁵³ As remarks by Thomas Audeley make plain, the decision over when to prorogue parliament was taken by the king.⁵⁴ Nevertheless by October 1532 Cromwell was being requested to ‘move’ Henry on this matter, and on whom the authority to prorogue it should be given.⁵⁵ By that date, then, Cromwell was working with both Henry and Audeley to plan and arrange the parliamentary session.

Typically sixteenth-century parliaments lasted only as long as was needed for the Crown to dispatch its business there. That parliament would be

⁵¹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/74 f. 22 (*LP VI* 31).

⁵² BL, Cotton MS, Titus B I f. 266 (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, ii. 199; *LP XIV*, i, 538).

⁵³ TNA, PRO, SP 1/68 f. 105 (*LP V* 620); SP 1/71 f. 56v (*LP V* 1354).

⁵⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 1/72 f. 15 (*LP V* 1514); SP 1/71 f. 150 (*LP V* 1476); BL, Cotton MS, Titus B I f. 89 (*LP V* 1518).

⁵⁵ TNA, PRO, SP 1/71 f. 121 (*St. P. I.*, p. 385; *LP V* 1450). It is probable that Audeley’s appointment as Lord Chancellor was the result of the need to have the Chancellor preside over the prorogation of parliament. Since More’s resignation, Audeley had custody of the Great Seal, and at the beginning of October he was authorised to hear and determine cases in Chancery ‘as the Chancellor of England might do’, suggesting he was not formally installed as this yet. See C82/661 (*LP V* 1499 [9]). By January 1533, however, he was, [SP 1/74 f. 1 (*LP VI* 2)] and the likelihood is that he was made Chancellor to prorogue parliament because on 20 October 1532 he told Cromwell that the authority to do this was usually given ‘to A temporal lord & to A Bischop & the Chaunceler’. On 4 November he then told Cromwell that *he* had prorogue parliament, along with earl of Sussex and the archbishop of York. See SP 1/71 f. 121 (*St. P. I.*, p. 385; *LP V* 1450); BL, Cotton MS, Titus B I f. 89 (*LP V* 1518).

needed in the divorce campaign, however, meant that the king was unwilling to dissolve it in the early 1530s. This presented particular issues. Attendance at parliament was not only costly for members, but it also kept them from their own affairs. Indeed, in March 1532 the Commons had expressed concern about parliament's length by requesting that it be prorogued so that they 'myght repayre into their countreys', something which Henry immediately denied them.⁵⁶ Effective management of parliament might also therefore involve trying to keep its members as content as possible by not keeping them sitting for too long. This perhaps explains Audeley's remarks to Cromwell in October 1532 that parliament 'must be prorogid' on 4 November.⁵⁷ In this instance the king did consent, perhaps at Audeley's and Cromwell's instigation, and the Commons 'right joyusly acceptyd the said prorogacion'.⁵⁸ Yet proroguing parliament created further work. Business in the House still remained unfinished and Cromwell was required to have a list drawn of the bills which had been read but not yet passed, so these could be resumed in the next session.⁵⁹ This was immediately planned for 4 February 1533, when the days 'shal wex sum what fayer agayn', and Cromwell was instructed that the writs had been instantly drawn to notify the sheriffs.⁶⁰

Cromwell's concern for the progress of legislation in parliament is understandable: he himself was drafting many of the government bills which were introduced. His involvement with those connected with the break with Rome will be considered in a subsequent chapter. Of interest here are the wider bills that Cromwell was drafting. Once again, papers in his possession testify to his activity. Among these were an 'act that none shall sue to Rome for the Judgement of right of inheritaunce'; 'a bill resiting by what meanes the kyng is disceyued of his custome by reason of brynging in to this Realme silk wrought'; 'a act for Fermes'; 'a byll for Fermes and Fermeholdes'; 'a byll for Tyn works and wasshinges'; bills for the sowing of 'lynsede', 'Flaxsede' and

⁵⁶ Hall, *Chronicle*, p. 784.

⁵⁷ TNA, PRO, SP 1/71 f. 121 (*St. P. I.*, p. 385; *LP V* 1450).

⁵⁸ BL, Cotton MS, Titus B I f. 89 (*LP V* 1518).

⁵⁹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/74 f. 129 (*LP VI* 120); TNA, PRO, E36/143 f. 20 (*LP VI* 299).

⁶⁰ TNA, PRO, SP 1/72 f. 15 (*LP V* 1514).

‘hempsede’; ‘a byll for consederac[i]ons of derth and vitiall’; ‘a byll for the conveyng of clothes owt of this realme’; ‘a byll for...repelling of Atteynders’; ‘a byll for the daungers of Fermes’; ‘a byll for proteccions’ and a ‘byll how the kynges receyuours Ryves and bayliffes do detayne certen offices and reuenues from the kyng’.⁶¹ Cromwell’s hand can also be found on a number of draft acts, including one confirming existing statutes on husbandry and another concerning the ports of Plymouth and Dartmouth.⁶² Was Cromwell himself the architect of these proposed pieces of legislation? Certainly some of the acts he was involved with, such as the failed bill regulating primer seisins and uses introduced during the third session of 1532, were strongly in the king’s interest and produced under royal instruction.⁶³ Yet there is good reason to attribute many of these bills, if not solely to Cromwell, then certainly to the Council as a whole rather than to the king. It is difficult to imagine Henry having much concern for the act authorising the destruction of rooks and crows, which Cromwell amended, or the act regulating the import of French wines, a draft of which survives in the hand of one of Cromwell’s clerks.⁶⁴ There is even a clear instance of Cromwell attempting to persuade the king of the merits of a piece of legislation, which he had most likely produced. In January 1534 Cromwell informed Henry that a bill to limit enclosure, by restricting the number of sheep grazed on enclosed land, had passed the Commons.⁶⁵ He added that if this bill

by the gret wysdom vertuew goodness and zerales [sic] that your highness beryth towards this your Realme might haue good successe and take good effect Amongyst your lords aboue...I doo coniecture and suppose in my pore simple and vnworthye iugement that your highness shall do the most noble

⁶¹ TNA, PRO, E36/143 ff. 22, 31 (LP VI 299).

⁶² TNA, PRO, SP 1/69 ff. 17-18 (LP V 721 [12]); SP 2/L ff. 100-105 (LP V 721 [8]); *Statutes of the Realm*, iii, 23. Henry VIII. c. 8.

⁶³ CSP, *Spanish*, IV, ii, 899; Hall, *Chronicle*, pp. 784-5; BL, Cotton MS, Titus B I f. 483v (LP V 394); E. W. Ives, ‘The Genesis of the Statute of Uses’, *EHR*, 82 (1967), pp. 682-686.

⁶⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 2/N ff. 22-25 (LP VI 120 [4]); *Statutes of the Realm*, iii, 24. Henry VIII. c. 10; SP 2/L ff. 91-99 (LP V 721 [7]; *Statutes of the Realm*, iii, 23. Henry VIII. c. 7.

⁶⁵ The act as finally passed is: *Statutes of the Realm*, iii, 25. Henry VIII. c. 13. For the details of the probable passage of this bill see Elton, *Reform and Renewal*, pp. 90-92.

proffyttable and most benefycyall thing that euer was done to the commune wealthe of this your Realme...sythyn br[e]wtyse tyme.⁶⁶

What is striking here is that Henry clearly had no knowledge of this bill and that Cromwell was attempting to persuade the king to accept it: ‘pardon my boldness in this ~~to wrytyng to your highness~~ to your grace which onely procedythe for the...loue I doo bere to your ~~grace~~ mageste and the common welth’. If this bill had emanated from Cromwell’s office, then this provides clear proof that Cromwell did operate with a measure of independence, and initiated his own attempts at reform. At the very least, the episode provides an example of Cromwell attempting to move the king to accept legislation which he himself thought beneficial.

This is not of course to claim that Cromwell himself had a preconceived plan to improve the commonwealth. The problem of enclosure was a familiar one, and Cromwell’s attempts to tackle it should be seen in the broader context of a long line of efforts by the Crown’s ministers.⁶⁷ Moreover, many of the other bills which Cromwell drafted or corrected were actually produced in response to matters as they arose. The problem of rooks and crows, for instance, had been raised with Cromwell by the abbot of Faversham.⁶⁸ A draft bill for the town of Salisbury, which Cromwell corrected, had been requested by the mayor, alderman and commons of that town.⁶⁹ His draft bill for the repair of Dover pier was also produced in response to a petition from the people there to the king.⁷⁰ If, however, Cromwell was not the initiator of every bill he drafted or amended, he certainly deserves credit for attempting to remedy the concerns of the king’s subjects.

It will be recalled that Elton, in his general attempt to rehabilitate Cromwell, made some bold claims about the extent of his commitment to parliament. Cromwell was supposedly the ‘the first statesman to understand

⁶⁶ TNA, PRO, SP 1/82 ff. 82-82v (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 373; LP VII 73).

⁶⁷ Williams, *Tudor Regime*, pp. 180-182; Gwyn, *King’s Cardinal*, pp. 412-435.

⁶⁸ TNA, PRO, SP 1/69 f. 114 (LP V 812).

⁶⁹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/238 ff. 33v-34r (LP Add I, i, 824).

⁷⁰ TNA, PRO, E101/58/13 (LP VII 66 [1]); SP 2/P ff. 131-135 (LP VII 66 [2]).

the potentialities of statute', someone who worked tirelessly to ensure that almost everything done during the 1530s was done using this instrument, and a man who 'well deserves the title of England's first parliamentary statesman'.⁷¹ One of the few comments that Cromwell made regarding legislation does not support these conclusions. In 1535, when it became necessary to prevent the export of coin out of the realm, and with parliament no longer sitting, there was concern about how this could legitimately be done. Writing to the duke of Norfolk, Cromwell informed him that if no existing statute could be found which served this purpose, the Lord Chief Justice and the Lord Chancellor had told him that the king

by the aduysse of his Cownsayll myght make proclamacyons and vse all other polecyes at his pleasure aswell in this Case as in Anye other lyke For the avoyding of any suche daungers and that the sayd proclamacyons and polyces so deuysyd by the King & his cownsayll for any such purpose sholde be of as good effect as Any law made by parlyament or otherwyse *which oppy[ny]on I assure your grace I was veray gladde to here.*⁷²

Two things are of note regarding this. First, what Cromwell was concerned with here was to ensure that the most legitimate and legally binding method possible was employed to enforce government policy: he did not seem concerned that a proclamation might be used to do this instead of a statute.⁷³ Secondly, he was taking advice on the strength of proclamations from Lord Chancellor Audeley, which does rather imply that he had a stronger grasp of 'the potentialities of statute' than Cromwell did.

Thomas Audeley was a close ally and associate of Cromwell's. Audeley himself described Cromwell as 'oon of my grettest frendes'.⁷⁴ Both men had

⁷¹ Elton, *England under the Tudors*, p. 167; Elton, 'Political Creed', in Elton, *Studies*, ii. 224-227.

⁷² BL Cotton Titus B I ff. 318v-319 (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 410; *LP* VIII 1062).

⁷³ Cf. with Elton, 'Political Creed', p. 226, who takes a somewhat different view.

⁷⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 1/71 f. 20 (*LP* V 1300). Audeley has not received a great deal of attention from historians, but there is a useful article by S. E. Lehmberg, 'Sir Thomas Audley: A Soul as Black as Marble?', in A. J. Slavin, ed., *Tudor Men and Institutions: Studies in English Law and Government* (Louisiana, 1972), pp. 3-32. Also see L. L. Ford, 'Audley, Thomas (1487/8-1544)',

served in the parliament of 1523 and had been members of Wolsey's household during that decade.⁷⁵ Audeley had also been a practising lawyer, occasionally working with Cromwell, but - crucially - Audeley himself received a formal legal training.⁷⁶ This point probably explains why Elton's conjectural claims regarding Cromwell and parliament are far easier to substantiate for Audeley. It was he, for instance, who demonstrably saw an act of parliament as the highest and surest form of law. In October 1532, during the king's absence at Calais, Audeley wrote to Cromwell regarding the concerns of the Chief Justice, who had enquired whether the king had empowered a lieutenant of the realm so the 'Lawes and justice shold procede in [his] absens'. Audeley 'secretlie debated' with the king's justices whether the king should have done this. Although the justices 'remayned in some doubtes of their clere resolucion', Audeley decided it was best to keep quiet about the matter because the king was due to return soon. Interestingly, he added to Cromwell that 'incase hereafter ther shold happen any doubt of errour in hit / it myght sone be helpen by ~~aet~~ of Parliament without difficultie whereunto all they agreed and accorded'.⁷⁷ Evidently Audeley, and indeed the broader legal consensus, was that parliament could be used to rectify any legal discrepancies. A similar conclusion can be drawn from the events following the suppression of the monastery of Christchurch. As Lord Chancellor, Audeley was responsible for issuing the letters patent confirming the king's new title of ownership to this, yet two statutes from Henry VI's reign made void all grants or letters patent which were issued before a jury's verdict on the ownership of that land or

ODNB; *HoC*, i. 350-353. For further evidence of Audeley's friendship with Cromwell, note Audeley's request to borrow books from Cromwell and that Audeley sought his help in alleviating his financial troubles. See SP 1/70 f. 86 (*LP V* 1066); SP 1/74 f. 1 (*LP VI* 2); SP 1/78 ff. 60-61 (*LP VI* 927). The two men also often worked closely together during the early 1530s. See, for example, TNA, PRO, E407/8/180/4; SP 1/70 ff. 61-63 (*LP V* 1060); BL, Royal MS 7. CXVI f. 75 (*LP V* 1388); SP 1/71 f. 91 (*LP V* 1408); SP 1/71 f. 113 (*LP V* 1437); SP 1/71 f. 138 (*LP V* 1463); BL, Cotton MS, Titus B I f. 351 (*LP V* 1542); SP 1/73 ff. 93-93v (*LP V* 1721); E40/634; SP 1/76 f. 43 (*LP VI* 481); SP 1/76 f. 44 (*LP VI* 482); SP 1/77 f. 129 (*LP VI* 747); SP 1/77 f. 130 (*LP VI* 748); SP 1/78 f. 17 (*LP VI* 858); SP 1/78 f. 60 (*LP VI* 919 [2]); SP 2/O ff. 48-51 (*LP VI* 919 [3]); SP 1/78 f. 83 (*LP VI* 945); SP 1/78 f. 174 (*LP VI* 1049); SP 1/80 f. 14 (*LP VI* 1332); BL, Cotton MS, Cleopatra E VI f. 329-329v (*LP VI* 1486); BL, Harley MS 442 ff. 121-121v (*LP VI* 425).

⁷⁵ *HoC*, i. 350; TNA, PRO, E179/69/10 (*LP IV*, ii, 2972 [8]); SP 1/56 f. 124 (*LP IV*, iii, 6110).

⁷⁶ TNA, PRO, SP 2/C f. 8-9 (*LP IV*, ii, 2375); SP 1/44 f. 119 (*LP IV*, ii, 3460); SP 1/55 f. 197 (*LP IV*, iii, 6034); TNA, PRO, C1/587/13.

⁷⁷ BL, Cotton MS, Vespasian CXIV f. 166-166v (*LP V* 1430).

property was returned to Chancery.⁷⁸ Audeley was uneasy about the legality of Henry's right to Christchurch, having concerns as to whether a London jury empanelled to return a verdict on the possession of Christchurch would, or could, establish a title in Henry's favour.⁷⁹ It was probably on Audeley's recommendation therefore that in March 1534 the king's title to Christchurch was confirmed by an act of parliament 'as though offyce and offices had been duely founde therof according to the laws of this Realme'.⁸⁰ Evidently, it was not merely Cromwell who 'preferred statute to any other form of law-making'.⁸¹

Cromwell's Offices

Cromwell held a number of formal offices during these years. In April 1532 he was made Master or Treasurer of the King's Jewels, and this was followed by his appointment as Keeper or Clerk of the Hanaper in July, and Chancellor of the Exchequer in April 1533.⁸² Cromwell's offices are of interest here for a number of reasons. Most importantly, they have been seen as significant in Cromwell's rise. By pressing these offices 'further than they had been pressed before', it has been claimed, Cromwell used them to establish his own influence and rule as a 'bureaucrat minister'.⁸³ Cromwell's work in these positions has also been seen as indicative of his approach to government more generally. Cromwell's offices, Elton once wrote, reflect 'the character and extent of his administration'.⁸⁴ Although many have questioned the revolutionary nature of the administrative changes which Elton claimed Cromwell would later bring about, no one has looked at Cromwell's work in these offices since Elton did over sixty years ago. A fresh examination is

⁷⁸ *Statutes of the Realm*, ii, 8. Henry VI. c. 16; 18. Henry VI. c. 6.

⁷⁹ Davies, 'Beginnings of the Dissolution', pp. 142-143. This explains Audeley's remark to Cromwell that he had received 'iiij rolles of paper concernyng the offices drawn of the possessions of the said monasterye / except London'. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/78 f. 109 (LP VI 976).

⁸⁰ *Statutes of the Realm*, iii, 25. Henry VIII. c. 33; Davis, 'Beginnings of the Dissolution', p. 141, 143.

⁸¹ Elton, 'Political Creed', in Elton, *Studies*, ii, 226.

⁸² TNA, PRO, C82/654 and C66/659 m. 36 (LP V 978 [13]); C82/658 and C66/660 m. 33 (LP V 1207 [36]); C82/667 and C66/661 m. 27 (LP VI 417 [22]).

⁸³ Elton, *Tudor Revolution*, pp. 158-159.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

justifiable here because Elton's most significant conclusions do not bear the weight of close scrutiny. Moreover Cromwell's actions while in these offices reveal much about the nature of royal government in the early sixteenth century.

Cromwell's first three offices were all connected with financial administration.⁸⁵ The Master of the King's Jewels was a household position, and its holder was responsible for the custody of the King's reserve in plate and jewels. The Clerk of the Hanaper was a position in Chancery, the holder of which oversaw the sums paid to the Crown as fees or fines for the letters and writs passed under the Great Seal. Finally, the Chancellor of the Exchequer was a position confined to the upper exchequer, and its holder had custody of the exchequer seal and limited control over its records.⁸⁶ According to Elton, Cromwell was deliberately accumulating these positions in order to control the finances of government.⁸⁷ Reality, however, was undoubtedly more prosaic. Each of these offices was held by patent for life, and Cromwell succeeded to each on the death of the previous incumbent. He was therefore unable to cherry-pick these offices: his acquisition of them relied primarily on chance and opportunity. Moreover, as Elton conceded, all three were minor positions of no great importance.⁸⁸ It is therefore difficult to see why Cromwell would have wanted them beyond the immediate benefit of profit and prestige.⁸⁹ And yet, still, Elton concluded that Cromwell had acquired these positions for their strategic value:

Each of these three offices gave Cromwell a definite place in the administration of a financial department...Such a collection made the detailed control of finance easier...the offices of the jewel-house, the hanaper, and the chancellorship of the exchequer secured to their holder a more direct and

⁸⁵ Elton, *Tudor Revolution*, p. 99.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 98-117.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 98, 109, 120.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

⁸⁹ The profits which would be accumulated through holding office are discussed in the next chapter.

more detailed influence over their affairs than the mere general supervision of a great minister, however powerful, could have given.⁹⁰

The problem with this assessment, however, is that it does not withstand scrutiny.

With regard to both the Hanaper and the Exchequer, there is little to suggest that Cromwell was notably active there. Cromwell's deputy in the Hanaper, John Judde, evidently kept him informed on matters, but probably discharged him of most of his duties.⁹¹ Cromwell's papers suggest Cromwell did little more than pay the money to the Chancellor for his wax in July 1533,⁹² receive the £300 surplus his deceased predecessor possessed on his death,⁹³ and negotiate a fine in which he was styled as 'Clerk' in the indenture.⁹⁴ In the Exchequer evidence of his activity is thinner still. Edward Lee, archbishop of York, did write to Cromwell in 1533, asking him to use his 'rome of authoritie in the saied exchequier' to obtain a discharge for him from debts owed there, which Cromwell apparently did.⁹⁵ He may also have occasionally acted in a judicial capacity in the Exchequer: a petition to him as Chancellor certainly suggests he heard a suit there.⁹⁶ Nevertheless, none of this suggests he was notably active in these positions. Indeed, his lack of activity in these two offices is in stark contrast to his activity as Master of the King's Jewels. Here Cromwell's correspondence leaves no doubt that he was highly occupied with the routine responsibilities which came with this office. He delivered plate to the king and to goldsmiths, he sold plate on the king's behalf, oversaw the production of Henry's jewel encrusted collars, and endowed the princess

⁹⁰ Elton, *Tudor Revolution*, pp. 109-110.

⁹¹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/70 f. 186 (*LP V* 1214); SP 1/71 f. 109 (*LP V* 1434).

⁹² TNA, PRO, SP 2/O f. 41 (*LP VI* 861).

⁹³ TNA, PRO, SP 2/M ff. 183-185 (*LP V* 1730); SP 2/N f. 108 (*LP VI* 228).

⁹⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 2/O ff. 52-52a (*LP VI* 970 [1]); SP 2/O f. 53 (*LP VI* 970 [2]). Also see TNA, PRO, E212/102 (*LP VI* 970 [1/ii]), which is a bond connected with this.

⁹⁵ Lee later heard, however, that Cromwell had since 'commaunded that they shalbe levied', and was shocked considering this earlier promise. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/79 f. 71 (*LP VI* 1158).

⁹⁶ TNA, PRO, SP 2/O f. 149 (*LP VI* 1668); Cf. Elton, *Tudor Revolution*, pp. Also see SP 2/O f. 150 (*LP VI* 1680).

dowager with sufficient jewels and plate in 1533.⁹⁷ Of far greater significance is that Cromwell also accumulated wider revenues than those received by any of his immediate predecessors in this position. This led Elton to the conclusion that the Jewel House was transformed by Cromwell into 'one of the leading financial ministries of state'.⁹⁸

How convincing is such a claim? It is certainly true that Cromwell was increasingly handling the king's revenues. On entering the king's service, Cromwell had received money from various Crown lands; and these responsibilities quickly broadened as he undertook wider financial negotiations on the Crown's behalf, and acted as a financial mediator between suitors and the king.⁹⁹ Cromwell also oversaw the settlement of several outstanding debts relating to Wolsey,¹⁰⁰ and was regularly paying and receiving wider sums of money on Henry VIII's behalf.¹⁰¹ Many of these, such as Cromwell's receipt of church revenues or his responsibilities as paymaster for the king's works, have already been noted. He also received the revenues from distraint of knighthood, which the chronicler Hall recollected as raising 'a greate somme of money to the Kynges vse'.¹⁰² Money forfeited for the conveying of corn was similarly paid

⁹⁷ TNA, PRO, E101/421/5 (*LP* V 1237); BL, Royal MS 7. CXVI ff. 40-46v (*LP* V 1376); BL, Cotton MS, Appendix XXVIII ff. 39-39v (*LP* V 1385); *LP* V 1399; SP 1/82 f. 128 (*LP* VII 137); E101/421/6 (*LP* VI 6); SP 1/76 f. 122 (*LP* VI 566); SP 1/80 f. 49 (*LP* VI 1367); TNA, PRO, E36/143 f. 69 (*LP* VI 1589); SP 1/71 ff. 117-118 (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 348-349; *LP* V 1298); SP 1/71 f. 19 (*LP* V 1299); TNA, PRO, C36/85 (*LP* V 1799); SP 1/78 f. 169 (*LP* VI 1041); SP 1/80 ff. 165-165v (*LP* VI 1494); SP 2/P f. 9 (*LP* VII 10); BL, Cotton MS, Titus B I f. 493 (*LP* VI 1194); BL, Cotton MS, Titus B I f. 465 (*LP* VI 1382); *LP* VI 1589 – 92; SP 1/82 f. 165 (*LP* VII 213).

⁹⁸ Elton, *Tudor Revolution*, p. 111.

⁹⁹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/70 ff. 61-63 (*LP* V 1060); SP 1/69 f. 239 (*LP* V 957); *LP* V 1065 [14 & 32]; SP 1/70 f. 147 (*LP* V 1152); TNA, PRO, E101/421/5 (*LP* V 1314); SP 2/M ff. 31-34 (*LP* V 1205); SP 1/68 f. 102 (*LP* V 612); SP 1/69 f. 70 (*LP* V 874); SP 1/69 ff. 236-237 (*LP* V 955); SP 1/71 f. 58 (*LP* V 1356); SP 1/81 ff. 94-94v (*LP* VI 1641); SP 1/83 f. 2 (*LP* VII 356).

¹⁰⁰ TNA, PRO, SP 1/80 f. 175 (*LP* VI 1508); TNA, PRO, E101/421/8 (*LP* V 1264 [1]); SP 2/M ff. 38-42 (*LP* V 1264[2]); E101/421/9 (*LP* VI 283); SP 1/75 f. 83 (*LP* VI 330).

¹⁰¹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/68 f. 82 (*LP* V 577); TNA, PRO, E101/421/5 (*LP* V 825; *LP* V 1052); *LP* V 1314; *LP* V 1346); TNA, PRO, SP 1/70 f. 49 (*LP* V 1040); SP 1/70 f. 128 (*LP* V 1119); SP 2/M ff. 13-16 (*LP* V 1169); SP 1/70 f. 204 (*LP* V 1244); SP 1/72 f. 6v (*LP* V 1504); SP 1/72 f. 8 (*LP* V 1506); *LP* V 1645; SP 1/78 f. 216v (*LP* VI 1057); SP 1/74. f. 82 (*LP* VI 81); SP 1/74 f. 85 (*LP* VI 88); E101/421/9 (*LP* VI 131; *LP* VI 220; *LP* VI 326); SP 2/O f. 41 (*LP* VI 861); SP 1/79 f. 172 (*St. P.* VII, p. 511; *LP* VI 1281); SP 1/79 f. 196 (*LP* VI 1313); SP 1/80 f. 49 (*LP* VI 1367).

¹⁰² Hall, *Chronicle*, p. 795; TNA, PRO, SP 1/72 f. 137 (*LP* V 1639); SP 2/O f. 26 (*LP* VI 717); SP 1/66 f. 157 (*LP* V 334), which was probably misdated in *LP* and belongs to at least 1532 when this policy was initiated; SP 1/72 f. 98 (*LP* V 1608); SP 1/76 f. 33 (*LP* VI 468); SP 1/76 f. 43 (*LP* VI 481); SP 1/76 f. 67 (*LP* VI 509); SP 1/76 f. 70 (*LP* VI 514); SP 1/76 f. 77 (*LP* VI 516); SP 1/76 f. 81v (*LP* VI 521); SP 1/76 f. 2 (*LP* VI 421); BL, Cotton MS, Vespasian F XIII f. 282 (*LP* VI 550); SP 1/76 f. 127

to him.¹⁰³ Cromwell also managed the supply of money for the Anglo-Scottish war, paid the diets for several ambassadors, received over £95 from the sale of the king's wines,¹⁰⁴ and paid money for the rigging of the king's ships.¹⁰⁵ Moreover several men and women beseeched Cromwell to move the king on financial matters, debts and obligations. His emergence as an important financial figure was therefore widely recognised by contemporaries.¹⁰⁶

Four of Cromwell's accounts survive for this period and illustrate the considerable sums he was receiving and paying on the king's behalf. All four are drafts, and each slightly overlaps another chronologically.¹⁰⁷ The first runs from 29 September 1532 to 17 December 1532;¹⁰⁸ the second [Figure 7] from 22 November 1532 to 11 March 1533;¹⁰⁹ the third [Figure 8] covers the period 29 September 1532 to 28 June 1533;¹¹⁰ and the fourth covers 2 April 1533 to 2 April 1534.¹¹¹ Elton labelled these accounts A, B, C and D respectively, and for convenience this shorthand is adopted here. A and D are merely summaries of the total receipt and expenditure by Cromwell, but B and C offer a much more detailed breakdown of the revenues he was handling. Among the more unusual

(LP VI 575); SP 1/77 f. 151 (LP VI 763); SP 1/79 f. 76 (LP VI 1160); SP 1/79 f. 97 (LP VI 1178); SP 1/79 f. 143 (LP VI 1224); BL, Cotton MS, Vespasian F XIII f. 164 (LP V 1260); SP 1/76 f. 164 (LP VI 607); SP 1/80 ff. 198-198v (LP VI 1534 [1]); SP 1/80 f. 198a (LP VI 1534 [2]); SP 1/80 f. 36 (LP VI 1360); SP 1/80 f. 80 (LP VI 1390); SP 1/81 f. 99 (LP VI 1646); SP 1/81 f. 114 (LP VI 1659); SP 1/80 f. 23 (LP VI 1346); SP 1/82 f. 86 (LP VII 80); SP 1/238 f. 148 (LP Add I, i, 877); SP 1/239 f. 33 (LP Add I, i, 922).

¹⁰³ TNA, PRO, SP 1/72 f. 137 (LP V 1639).

¹⁰⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 2/M f. 194 (LP V 1785).

¹⁰⁵ TNA, PRO, SP 1/80 f. 49 (LP VI 1367); BL, Cotton MS, Otho E IX ff. 58-61 (LP VII 1564).

¹⁰⁶ TNA, PRO, SP 1/68 f. 53 (LP V 538); SP 1/68 f. 123 (LP V 639); SP 1/71 f. 58 (LP V 1356); SP 1/81 ff. 94-94v (LP VI 1641); SP 1/83 f. 2 (LP VII 356).

¹⁰⁷ It is interesting to note here that Elton believed one of the accounts was written in Cromwell's own hand, while he thought another contained additions by him. See *Tudor Revolution*, pp. 141-142. In actual fact none of the accounts are in Cromwell's hand. The hand Elton mistook for Cromwell's is that of his clerk and early household treasurer, William Body, although, in fairness to Elton, the hand is remarkable similar to that of Cromwell's. There can be no doubt, however, that it was Body who drew these accounts up. The handwriting on TNA, PRO, SP 2/O ff. 25-30 (LP VI 717), which Elton thought was drawn up by Cromwell, and that on SP 2/N f. 110 (LP VI 228), which was thought to contain Cromwell's additions, should be contrasted with that on Body's account of Cromwell's private income and expenditure between January and July 1533, SP 2/O ff. 34-40 (LP VI 841). In case there remains any doubt, the account which Elton thought was wholly in Cromwell's hand is also endorsed on the reverse of the first folio as being 'Bodies declarac[i]on', SP 2/O f. 25v (LP VI 717).

¹⁰⁸ TNA, PRO, SP 1/72 ff. 136-137 (LP V 1639). According to the 'Arrerages' on this account, there was an earlier account which was began on 2 April.

¹⁰⁹ TNA, PRO, SP 2/N ff. 107-110 (LP VI 228).

¹¹⁰ TNA, PRO, SP 2/O ff. 25-30 (LP VI 717).

¹¹¹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/83 f. 55 (LP VII 430).

payments recorded on these latter two include money for the yeoman of the crossbow's livery coat, the cost of carrying stuff from the monastery of Christchurch, money for the king's fabrics, and £100 for the wages of men on the king's ships.¹¹² The total receipt and expenditure recorded on each account can be summarised as follows:¹¹³

	Receipt	Expenditure
A	£25, 655	£24, 606 ¹¹⁴
B	£20, 567	£21, 240 ¹¹⁵
C	£12, 496	£12, 332
D	£38, 504	£37, 232

It was largely on the basis of these impressive figures that Elton argued that the office of Master of the Jewels became an important treasury under Cromwell: one which enabled him to have the custody and personal control of large sums of money, and which provided him with the independence to finance 'high policy' on his own initiative.¹¹⁶

From the two accounts which offer the most detailed breakdown, however, a different picture emerges. Most of the money recorded as being received on accounts B and C all came from a single source. £8,000 of the money received by Cromwell on account B is recorded as being taken from 'the kynges cofres...oute of the Towre',¹¹⁷ while a further £10,991 is recorded as being so on account C.¹¹⁸ This led Elton to believe that most of Cromwell's revenues were derived from a capital reserve transferred into his possession which he

¹¹² TNA, PRO, SP 2/N ff. 109-110 (*LP VI 228*); SP 2/O f. 29 (*LP VI 717*).

¹¹³ For convenience these have been given in pounds only.

¹¹⁴ At the end of this account is a list of incomes due but not yet collected. These included 'Fynes for knyghtes sessid by the said Thomas Cromwell...and nat paid', £2,180, and fines negotiated by him with 'sondry persons spirituall and temporall', £7,200. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/72 f. 137 (*LP V 1639*).

¹¹⁵ Although this account runs from 22 November 1532 to 11 March 1533 at the bottom of the account there is a list of additional receipts and payments made by Cromwell since 11th. According to the summary Cromwell received £4,000 during this period and paid out £6, 374. See TNA, PRO, SP 2/N ff. 110-110v (*LP VI 228*).

¹¹⁶ Elton, *Tudor Revolution*, pp. 139, 154, 155.

¹¹⁷ TNA, PRO, SP 2/N f. 108 (*LP VI 228*).

¹¹⁸ TNA, PRO, SP 2/O f. 26 (*LP VI 717*).

used to cover a variety of expenditures.¹¹⁹ What he did not realise, however, was that the money from the Tower had been placed there for a very specific purpose. On 5 October 1532 £20,000 was delivered out of the king's coffers at Greenwich into the hands of Thomas Audeley, Brian Tuke and Cromwell, before being 'put...in a great chest' in the Tower of London.¹²⁰ Although it was not specified on the bill detailing its transfer,¹²¹ this sum was intended to finance war with Scotland, the preparations for which coincided with the transfer of this money.¹²² Accounts B and C reveal that £20, 084 9s 4d was paid out by Cromwell to Sir George Lawson for this conflict during the same period.¹²³ What is of significance here, however, is that Cromwell did not have custody of this money: the key for the £20,000 stored in the Tower was in Audeley's possession.¹²⁴ Moreover Cromwell's most detailed account (C), closely scrutinised, makes it clear that the second instalment of £10,991 from the Tower was never in his possession as a lump sum [Figure 8]. Instead, he was arranging for the transfer of small instalments from the Tower, which

¹¹⁹ Elton, *Tudor Revolution*, p. 147.

¹²⁰ BL, Royal MS 7. CXVI f. 75 (LP V 1388). Elton did not include this document in his discussion of Cromwell's treasury. It was first noted by D. R. Starkey, who rightly noted that this document 'plays a crucial part in unravelling Cromwell's treasurership'. Like Elton, however, Starkey also failed to realise what this money was actually for and therefore misunderstood the document's true significance. See D. R. Starkey, 'The King's Privy Chamber, 1485-1547', (University of Cambridge PhD thesis, 1973), pp. 401-402; D. R. Starkey, 'Court and Government', in Starkey and Coleman, ed., *Revolution Reassessed*, p. 44-45 and n. 64.

¹²¹ The bill notes that the money was 'to be ordered and disposed in such wise as is declared by the kinges warraunt...delyuered to the saide Thomas Audeley at the making herof'. See BL, Royal MS 7. CXVI f. 75 (LP V 1388).

¹²² Troops had been ordered to muster at Newcastle on 18 September, and by the beginning of October Chapuys was reporting a number of small raids had been conducted on both sides. See Devonshire Manuscripts, Chatsworth, Bolton Abbey MSS 14a, f. 10r; CSP, *Spanish*, IV, ii, 802. There were 2,500 English troops involved in this minor conflict. The war, which is absent from every narrative of the 1530s, lasted only a matter of months, and the manner of its conduct amounted to little more than an intensification of border raids. A truce was agreed in May 1533, and continually extended, until a formal peace treaty was signed in London in 1534.

The only account of the war to-date is a short narrative by R. Hoyle, 'The Anglo-Scottish War of 1532-3', *Camden Society*, xxxi, 4th Series, 44 (London, 1992), pp. 23-29.

¹²³ This is similar to the total sum recorded on Lawson own account detailing the money received from Cromwell. See TNA, PRO, SP 2/O ff. 20-22 (LP VI 664). Lawson's account shows that between September and June he received a total of £20, 034 13s 4d from Cromwell. This leaves a discrepancy in Cromwell's own accounts suggesting he paid out £50 16s more than Lawson recorded as receiving. The most likely explanation for this discrepancy is that this amount included the cost of delivering the money, along with the wages of the men used to do this. Cromwell's account hints at this when referring to 'the mony delyuered to the north parties *with the charges therof*'. See SP 2/N f. 109 (LP VI 228). My italics.

¹²⁴ BL, Royal MS 7. CXVI f. 75 (LP V 1388).

correspond closely to the final five monthly payments sent north for the garrison.¹²⁵ All this seems significant because it undermines Elton's, and later Starkey's belief, that Cromwell held large sums of capital from the royal coffers which he controlled with considerable independence.¹²⁶ In reality, that which he did obtain from this source was used for a very specific purpose – 'disposed in such wise as is declared by the kings warraunt' – and was probably only held by Cromwell in small amounts for a brief period (perhaps less than a day?), before being sent north.¹²⁷ With regards to the largest receipts and payments recorded on these accounts then, Cromwell was less a treasurer, and more of a paymaster.

On closer inspection many of the other larger sums Cromwell was receiving appear to have been similar transactions. Although in most cases it is impossible to follow the progress of the money through Cromwell's hands, the suspicion must be that a great deal of the larger sums recorded merely passed through his possession, rather than being personally held by him as an independent treasurer. It is also likely that several of the larger sums recorded came into Cromwell's hands in smaller amounts over a prolonged period, rather than in the impressive totals the accounts record. Although only accounts B and C offer detailed breakdowns, a list of the king's warrants issued to Cromwell survives among his papers, as do several of the warrants themselves.¹²⁸ These reveal that many of the larger sums Cromwell received were paid straight into the privy coffers.¹²⁹ The £533 he received on 22 May 1532 was paid into this,¹³⁰ as was the 100 marks he received on the 27th of that month

¹²⁵ See and compare TNA, PRO, SP 2/O f. 26 (LP VI 717) and SP 2/O f. 20 (LP VI 664).

¹²⁶ Elton, *Tudor Revolution*, p. 147; Starkey, 'Court and Government', p. 45.

¹²⁷ BL, Royal MS 7. CXVI f. 75 (LP V 1388).

¹²⁸ TNA, PRO, E36/141 ff. 39-46 (LP V 1285 [ix]). The warrants can be found in three bundles in TNA, PRO, E101/421/5 (LP V 825, 1052, 1237, 1314, 1346, 1392, 1590, 1646, 1668, 1671); E101/421/6, which contains 33 warrants not calandered in LP; and E101/421/9 (LP VI 6, 130, 131, 149, 170, 220, 229, 283, 326). Several of Cromwell's warrants can also be found among the state papers and records of the exchequer, see: TNA, PRO, E101/420/1 (LP V 341); E101/420/5 (LP V 1215); SP 1/70 f. 128 (LP V 1119); SP 1/78 ff. 216-217 (LP VI 1057); SP 1/80 f. 49 (LP V 1367); SP 1/82 f. 128 (LP VII 137); SP 1/80 f. 175 (LP VI 1508).

¹²⁹ Elton himself acknowledged this in a footnote, but was quick to downplay it by stating that after Cromwell 'became a treasurer in the full sense he rarely paid money into the coffers'. The above paragraph suggests this was not the case. See *Tudor Revolution*, p. 148 n. 1.

¹³⁰ TNA, PRO, E36/141 f. 42 (LP V 1285 [ix]).

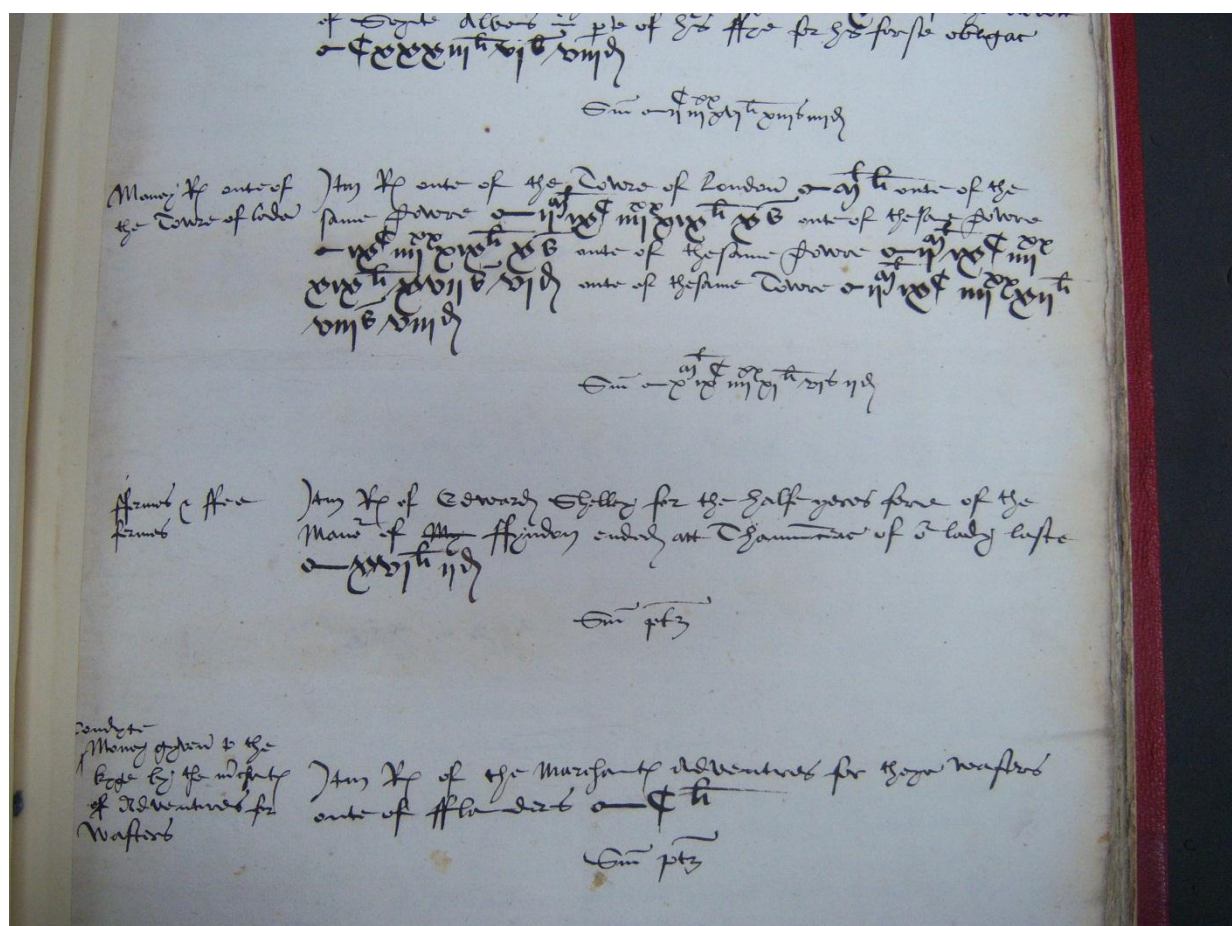


Figure 8: A section from Cromwell's account C, which details some of the money that Cromwell received 'oute of the Towre'.

This account is written in the hand of William Body, not Cromwell, as Elton mistakenly thought.

TNA, PRO, SP 2/O f. 26 (LP VI 717).

from the bishop of Bangor.¹³¹ Another 600 marks owed to the king by Richard Southwell and Peter Ligham was paid into the coffers in June.¹³² It was also in that month that Cromwell received £2,241 5s 11d from the prior and convent of Westminster on the king's behalf. £2,000 of this was immediately redistributed to Thomas Alvard for the works at Westminster, while the residue was again paid into the coffers.¹³³ Similarly, £2,000 of the £3,304 Cromwell received from Alvard on account B was given to him on 6 February 1533. £1,000 of this was paid straight into the privy coffers, while £1,000 was given to Cranmer as a loan at the king's behest.¹³⁴ This also means that less than half of the £2,100 recorded on B as being paid into the privy coffers came from Alvard: another £1,100 of the money Cromwell received was paid into this in addition.¹³⁵ Account B also records another £1,000 paid into the privy coffers by Cromwell after 11 March 1533.¹³⁶ This should not be mistaken as a duplication of another £1,000 paid into this reserve on account C,¹³⁷ which was probably the £1,000 Cromwell paid into the coffers on 11 April.¹³⁸ It is also of note that the £1,658 of surplus money on Account A is recorded as being 'due' to the king on 17 December when this account terminates; all that was left 'in the custody' of William Body, Cromwell's servant, was £595 – slightly less than the arrearages brought forward from a previous account which has not survived.¹³⁹ Finally, the £4,000 Cromwell received from Thomas Alvard sometime after 11 March on account B was surely the £4,000 Cromwell paid to Robert Fowler, vice treasurer of Calais,

¹³¹ E101/421/5 (*LP V* 1052).

¹³² TNA, PRO, E36/141 f. 42 (*LP V* 1285 [ix]).

¹³³ TNA, PRO, SP 1/70 f. 128 (*LP V* 1119); E101/141 f. 43 (*LP V* 1285 [ix]).

¹³⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 2/N f. 108-109 (*LP VI* 228); TNA, PRO, E101/421/9 (*LP VI* 131).

¹³⁵ TNA, PRO, SP 2/N ff. 108 & 109 (*LP VI* 228). This was probably the revenues of the vacant see of Canterbury, and the £100 received from the archbishop's executors for a 'mounte'.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, f. 110.

¹³⁷ Although the sums recorded as being paid out since 11 March are very similar to some of the payments made in account C (which overlaps the period covered by B) those which can be identified appear to be different payments. Compare, for instance, the payments made to the king's tombmaker on SP 2/N f. 110 (B) with those recorded on SP 2/O f. 28 (C); and the £1,000 paid to Sir George Lawson on B, which does not correspond with the breakdown given of the £5,000 paid to him for the Anglo-Scottish war on C.

¹³⁸ TNA, PRO, SP 2/O f. 27 (*LP VI* 717); E101/421/9 (*LP VI* 326).

¹³⁹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/72 ff. 136-137 (*LP V* 1639).

for the wages of the garrison there.¹⁴⁰ That these two amounts are identical, and are recorded on the same section of the account, suggests that Cromwell did nothing more than immediately redistribute this money.

Although it is true, then, that Cromwell was receiving and paying money out on the king's behalf, the money that he personally held or had custody of was far smaller than Elton realised. The remaining receipts and expenditure recorded on accounts B and C were far smaller than the sums he paid into the privy coffers or that paid out on the Scottish war. These two expenditures alone account for more than half of the sums recorded on these accounts. By contrast, the other revenues recorded as receipts were much smaller. The money he received from suppressed lands was £325 on B and a mere £85 on C;¹⁴¹ that paid out to ambassadors and others as rewards was £935 and £743 respectively.¹⁴² There were also all sorts of smaller miscellaneous payments, which, among others, included: 14s 4d 'for ynke and papyer'; £38 9s 9d to 'Benedicte the kynges Tombemaker'; £55 11s 6d for 'sylkes and velvettes'; and £50 'payde to master speker of the parlament'.¹⁴³ Admittedly, account D does reveal that Cromwell kept the larger sum of £1, 271 in his possession when that account terminated in April 1534; but this lacks detail on how the total income and expenditure recorded broke down, and whether any of the £37, 232 Cromwell paid out was placed in the privy coffers.¹⁴⁴

One or two notably larger sums were recorded on accounts B and C, however. Over £2,200 of the receipts on B came from vacant bishoprics and abbeys (although £1,000 of this was paid into the coffers), £3,000 was from the

¹⁴⁰ TNA, SP 2/N f. 110 (*LP VI* 228). The section of Cromwell's account which records this payment is damaged, and it is not clear from it why the £4,000 was paid to Fowler. The entry for the account in *LP* describes it as being paid for the fortifications made at Calais, but it was undoubtedly the payment for the Calais garrison. One of Cromwell's warrants survives recording a payment of £4,000 given to Fowler 'to be employed vpon our Garryson within the saide Towne of Caleys'. See TNA, PRO, E101/421/5 (*LP V* 1668). This is dated 27 December 1532, however, but Cromwell's account records that the £4,000 paid to Fowler was given to him after 11 March 1533. The reason for this, surely, is that the warrant was back dated by Cromwell and the money paid after 11 March was intended to cover several months' wages beginning from December. There is no other payment of £4,000 made to Fowler on any of these accounts.

¹⁴¹ TNA, PRO, SP 2/N f. 107 (*LP VI* 228); SP 2/O f. 25 (*LP VI* 717).

¹⁴² TNA, PRO, SP 2/N f. 10 (*LP VI* 228); SP 2/O f. 28 (*LP VI* 717).

¹⁴³ TNA, PRO, SP 2/N f. 10 (*LP VI* 228); SP 2/O ff. 28-30 (*LP VI* 717).

¹⁴⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 1/83 f. 55 (*LP VII* 430).

receipt 'of suche mony as Late was prested by the kynge'; and £1,366 in obligations owing to the king, which Cromwell had personally settled, was also received by him. Account A also lists £1,580 in Cromwell's possession which had been forfeited for conveying corn.¹⁴⁵ There seems no reason to doubt that Cromwell had custody of these sums, and it was presumably these which he drew on to make the various payments recorded as expenditure. If the possession of these sums can be described as a 'treasury', it was certainly far smaller than previously thought, and it is difficult to imagine that these revenues would have ensured Cromwell was independent of all other Crown treasuries when meeting government expenditure, which is what Elton (and later Starkey) believed the principal purpose of Cromwell's own 'treasury' was.¹⁴⁶

Illuminating the true nature of Cromwell's financial administration also has important implications for the broader debate about the condition of royal finances in the 1530s. It has been widely argued that Henry VIII's early continental wars had virtually bankrupted the royal reserves. Both Cromwell's alleged treasury and the wider attacks on the Church's wealth have been seen as clear attempts at resolving this.¹⁴⁷ The financial arrangements concerning the war with Scotland suggest a very different picture. Around Easter 1532 Henry had requested a subsidy in parliament to contribute to the defence of the border.¹⁴⁸ This request was not granted,¹⁴⁹ and it will be recalled that the

¹⁴⁵ TNA, PRO, SP 1/72 f. 137 (*LP V* 1639).

¹⁴⁶ 'The purpose behind his treasurership was, it seems, a desire to be independent of all other agencies in the covering of that expenditure. He wished to be free to employ ambassadors, to build the king's palaces, to fortify the realm and supply the navy, and to fulfil all the other tasks of government which he attended without having to go to others for the necessary money'. See Elton, *Tudor Revolution*, p. 156.

¹⁴⁷ Starkey, 'King's Privy Chamber', pp. 393-410; 'Court and Government', p. 44; Guy, 'Praemunire Manoeuvres', pp. 44-45; Hoyle, 'Origins of the dissolution', p. 290; R. W. Hoyle, 'War and Public Finance', in D. MacCulloch, ed., *The Reign of Henry VIII: Politics, Policy and Piety* (Basingstoke, 1995), pp. 78-79. Not all, however, have been convinced by this. See G.W. Bernard, 'The pardon of the clergy reconsidered', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 37 (1986), pp. 259-262.

¹⁴⁸ *CSP, Spanish*, IV, ii, 948. Chapuys wrote that several men in parliament objected to paying a subsidy toward defence on the grounds that 'there was no need at all of such military preparations as the King purposed to make, for the Scotch would never declare war or invade England without having an ally on the Continent, and that the best fortifications against the enemy consisted in maintaining justice in the kingdom and keeping on friendly terms with Your Imperial Majesty'. Nevertheless Chapuys claimed a small subsidy of 'one tithe and a half

£20,000 which paid for the war was drawn entirely from the king's coffers. That the king was able to finance a war entirely himself suggests that the Crown's finances were not in the perilous state many have assumed. Admittedly the royal treasury had been enlarged by the recent windfalls of Wolsey's confiscated wealth, and the £118,000 which the English clergy gave the king for their praemunire pardon. But under the terms of this fine, the enormous sum was to be paid in yearly instalments of £20,000 over five years.¹⁵⁰ By October 1532 - at most - the Crown would only have received the first two instalments, and if royal finances were in such a perilous state one might expect this to have been swallowed by outstanding debt. It is also interesting that the praemunire fine was specified to be paid to the Treasurer of the Chamber, rather than into the privy coffers.¹⁵¹ This might suggest it was used to cover the routine government expenditures usually met by the the Chamber. Equally, a significant proportion of Wolsey's wealth had already been lavished on the construction of Whitehall and building works at the Tower of London and Hampton Court.¹⁵² The extent of Henry's spending on buildings and war throughout these years does rather suggest that he had more money than many historians have allowed.

on Church property' was granted, which he thought very small, and added that 'Many people think that when the time comes for levying this tax there will be riots'. The chronicler Edward Hall similarly recollected that after Easter in the parliament of 1532 the Commons were informed 'howe on the Marches between Englande and Scotlande was very lytell habitacion on the Englysh side...wherefore the King entended to make dwelling houses there, and also to make diuers Pyles and stoppes to let the Scottysh men from their inuasions'. The Commons subsequently agreed to pay the king a fifteenth towards this, although, according to Hall, the outbreak of plague in London prevented this payment from being enacted. See Hall, *Chronicle*, pp. 785-786.

¹⁴⁹ A retrospective subsidy was made in 1534. See *Statutes of the Realm*, iii, 26. Henry VIII. c. 19. Elton thought that this request, which was made at a time of peace, marked an innovative and 'new' approach to taxation devised by Cromwell. He did not sufficiently recognise that there had indeed been a war, albeit a minor one, between England and Scotland in 1532-33. Indeed, the preamble to the act of 1534 referred specifically to 'the greate somes of moneye & other charges by his Highnes susteyned issued & employed in his last warres ayenst Scotlande'. This makes the request for a subsidy far less innovative, and adds further weight to G. L. Harriss' argument that there was no change in the nature of taxation under Cromwell. See Elton, 'Taxation for war and peace', pp. 33-48; Harriss, 'Thomas Cromwell's "new principle" of taxation', pp. 721-738.

¹⁵⁰ TNA, PRO, E135/8/37.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² TNA, PRO, SP 1/69 f. 235 (LP V 953).

Nevertheless Elton's broader argument, that under Cromwell the scope of the Jewel House broadened, has some merit. Although some of the sums that Cromwell received during these years were the traditional receipts of his various positions,¹⁵³ most of the money that Cromwell received or paid out was from or on aspects of government which his predecessors in the Jewel House had not dealt with. What is less clear, however, is whether this accumulation of revenues was a deliberate intention. Elton and Starkey certainly believed that it was, arguing Cromwell wanted detailed control of Crown finances in order to meet the expenditure of policy he was increasingly directing.¹⁵⁴ Yet Cromwell made no attempt formally to establish the Jewel House as a key institution of the financial machinery, and this seems crucially significant. Once he was deprived of it in 1540,¹⁵⁵ the Master of the Jewels reverted into a minor position again.¹⁵⁶ This suggests that Cromwell's expansion of this office was not a deliberate, or a 'bureaucratic', intention. Instead Cromwell's receipt and payment of these wide-ranging revenues was a reflection of his natural accumulation of financial work because of his skills as an administrator. His ability to do this also demonstrates that much of the financial machinery was personal, and depended more on the people behind it than it did established procedure. It was Cromwell's protean skills and sheer hard work which ensured he amassed more and more responsibilities, while the flexibility and personal nature of government ensured that many revenues which had previously gone to another official could just as easily be paid to him.

Cromwell was not, however, single-handedly financing the workings of royal government. Although only a handful of his papers have survived, Sir Brian Tuke, Treasurer of the Chamber, also continued to play an important role

¹⁵³ The £1,602 14s for 'Chaynes molten', the £21 8s received from Robert Draper and John Halalie 'of the Juell howse', and the payment to a goldsmith of £300, clearly related to his responsibilities as Master of the King's Jewels. See TNA, PRO, SP 2/N f. 108 (*LP VI* 228); SP 2/O f. 30 (*LP VI* 717). £300 is also recorded as 'Reuenewes of the hanaper'. See TNA, PRO, SP 2/N f. 108 (*LP VI* 228).

¹⁵⁴ Elton, *Tudor Revolution*, p. 156; Starkey, 'The King's Privy Chamber, 1485-1547', p. 404; Starkey, 'Court and Government', p. 45.

¹⁵⁵ Although Cromwell continued to hold this position, from late 1535 or early 1536 he shared it with John Williams, who was previously one of the clerks in the Jewel House. See Elton, *Tudor Revolution*, p. 100.

¹⁵⁶ Elton, *Tudor Revolution*, p. 101.

in royal finance. The Chamber had emerged as an important financial position under Henry VII, and continued to be so under his son. Although some of the Chamber's revenues, such as the money received from forfeited lands, were now diverted to Cromwell,¹⁵⁷ Tuke still continued to pay and receive money during these years,¹⁵⁸ and his overall revenues still vastly outstripped those which now went to Cromwell.¹⁵⁹ But it was Cromwell who quickly established himself as Henry's financial manager, and by late 1532 Tuke was operating under his direction.¹⁶⁰ Their relationship appears to have been one of cooperation, however, and their correspondence and actions once again underlines the informal arrangements which often lay at the heart of effective government.¹⁶¹ In August 1533 Cromwell instructed Tuke to pay William Gonson £300 for the wages of the men aboard the king's ships.¹⁶² A letter from Gonson to Cromwell confirms that Tuke did so,¹⁶³ yet only two months later Cromwell made a note for himself to 'delyuer or cause to be delyuered vnto William Gonson two hundredth poundes...not onlie vpon the Riggyng repayringe and newe makynge of our shippes, But also vppon the victuallinge and wages'.¹⁶⁴ A memorandum from 1534 also suggests Cromwell later paid out £1,266 13s 4d to Gonson for similar purposes.¹⁶⁵ Evidently there was no rigid distinction between whether this payment was paid by Tuke or Cromwell. Who paid what when probably depended more on convenience than established procedure. On one occasion Tuke can be shown paying money to goldsmiths for parcels of plate delivered into Cromwell's possession, which the master of

¹⁵⁷ According to an act of parliament, all revenues from forfeited lands were directed to be paid into the Chamber. See *Statutes of the Realm*, iii, 14 & 15 Henry VIII. c. 15.

¹⁵⁸ TNA, PRO, SP 1/69 f. 54 (*LP V* 730); SP 1/74 ff. 45-45v (*LP VI* 51); SP 1/74 f. 211-211v (*LP VI* 217); SP 1/75 f. 27 (*LP VI* 241); SP 1/75 f. 133 (*LP VI* 343); SP 1/76 f. 55 (*LP VI* 498); SP 1/78 f. 7 (*LP VI* 843); SP 1/78 f. 128v (*St. P. I.* 404; *LP VI* 992); SP 1/78 f. 133 (*LP VI* 995); SP 1/79 f. 102 (*LP VI* 1185); BL, Cotton MS, Titus B I f. 493v (*LP VI* 1194); SP 1/82 f. 102 (*LP VII* 91); SP 1/82 f. 199 (*LP VII* 255); E101/421/14 (*LP VII* 372); SP 1/239 f. 46 (*LP Add I*, i, 932).

¹⁵⁹ In the year ending Michaelmas 1530, for instance, Tuke paid out £55, 270. See *LP V* p. 321.

¹⁶⁰ TNA, PRO, SP 1/70 f. 37 (*LP V* 1026); SP 1/70 f. 147 (*LP V* 1152); SP 1/70 f. 171 (*LP V* 1189).

¹⁶¹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/70 f. 195 (*LP V* 1228); SP 1/76 f. 98 (*LP VI* 532).

¹⁶² TNA, PRO, SP 1/78 f. 128v (*St. P. I.*, p. 404; *LP VI* 992).

¹⁶³ TNA, PRO, SP 1/70 f. 195 (*LP V* 1228). This letter was wrongly placed in 1532 in *LP*. It was written in 1533.

¹⁶⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 1/80 f. 49 (*LP VI* 1367).

¹⁶⁵ BL, Cotton MS, Otho E IX ff. 58-61 (*LP VII* 1564).

the Jewels might well have paid himself.¹⁶⁶ Cromwell also paid wages and rewards to the king's ambassadors,¹⁶⁷ yet so too did Tuke,¹⁶⁸ who at times did so under Cromwell's instruction. A letter from Tuke's servant reveals that he paid the wages for the duke of Norfolk's diplomatic mission abroad at Cromwell's behest.¹⁶⁹ In 1534 Tuke also followed Cromwell's instruction to pay John Hacket, the king's ambassador in the Low Countries, £100 for his arrears there.¹⁷⁰ Perhaps too much emphasis can be placed on the formal procedures of government finance. Did it really matter, as all the money dispersed by Cromwell and Tuke properly belonged to the king, who paid what? Perhaps, as much as anything, it was dependent on who possessed sufficient funds at the required time.

Some aspects of financial administration, however, appear more formal than others. In a minute drafted by Tuke, headed a 'Remembrance to Master Cromwel', the treasurer revealed himself to be particularly concerned about being properly authorised in his responsibilities in the Chamber. In particular, Tuke told Cromwell that he wanted a more regular audit of the payments and receipts he made. He also asked Cromwell if he might have more frequent warrants because

things be so grett in receiptes and paymentes as ferre excede any meane mans charge to supporte or beare...For if I shulde make paymentes by commaundment and afterwarde sue my self for perticuler warant I myzt be vndone in a day lakking any warant when I sue for it And there shulde be no day but I shulde molest the kinges highness to signe my warantes And I shulde

¹⁶⁶ TNA, PRO, SP 1/82 f. 102 (*LP VI 91*).

¹⁶⁷ TNA, PRO, E101/421/5 (*LP V 1646*); SP 2/N f. 109 (*LP VI 228 [ii]*); SP 2/O ff. 27-28 (*LP VI 717*); SP 1/75 f. 57v (*LP VI 284*); SP 1/78 f. 216v (*LP VI 1057*); BL, Cotton MS, Titus B I f. 493 (*LP VI 1194*); E36/143 f. 69 (*LP VI 1589*); SP 1/82 f. 128 (*LP VII 137*); BL, Cotton MS, Galba B X f. 48 (*LP VII 167*); TNA, PRO, E101/421/5 (*LP V 1668*); SP 2/36 f. 60 (*LP VII 501*); E101/421/9 (*LP VI 149, 229*); SP 1/74 f. 149 (*LP VI 150*); SP 1/75 ff. 156-157 (*LP VI 372*); BL, Cotton MS, Titus B I f. 493v (*LP V 1194*); SP 1/82 f. 179 (*LP VII 227*); SP 1/80 f. 175 (*LP VI 1508*); SP 1/78 ff. 216-217 (*LP VI 1057*); E36/143 f. 77 (*LP VI 1371*).

¹⁶⁸ TNA, PRO, SP 1/79 ff. 68-70 (*LP VI 1156*); SP 1/75 ff. 156-157 (*LP VI 372 [1]*); SP 1/78 f. 158 (*LP VI 372 [2]*); SP 1/78 f. 215 (*LP VI 1056 [2]*); BL, Cotton MS, Titus B I f. 493v (*LP VI 1194*); BL, Cotton MS, Galba IX f. 163 (*LP VII 253*).

¹⁶⁹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/78 f. 133 (*LP VI 995*); BL, Cotton MS, Titus B I f. 493v (*LP VI 1194*).

¹⁷⁰ TNA, PRO, SP 1/82 f. 179 (*LP VII 227*); BL, Cotton MS, Galba B IX f. 163 (*LP VII 253*).

entre in to a common sute for euery mannes money, bring my self in to mystrust whiche of al men shulde not make and sue myn own warantes nor neuer man did in that office or any other.¹⁷¹

Tuke's ostensible attitude toward formal authorisation of payment is in stark contrast to Cromwell's own.¹⁷² Cromwell would often make payments first and then obtain a warrant later. Notes among his remembrances indicate that this was a frequent occurrence. Several memoranda reminded him 'to know what thinges that I doo lake warrant for and to cause a warrant to be made therof to be signed', 'to remember the signature of my warrauntes for suche money as I have disbursed of the kinges', to 'cause warrauntes to be drawn for suche money as is newly laid owt by me for the king' and 'for my warraunttes to be assigned for all suche money as I haue yssewyd for the kyng sithen the signyng of my last warranttes'.¹⁷³ In some instances it is even possible to identify a handful of payments which Cromwell made before having obtained a formal discharge. One remembrance reminded him to obtain 'A warrant for the thowsand markes payd to bonvysxi' in 1533,¹⁷⁴ while the £2,000 received from Thomas Alvard, half of which Cromwell paid into the privy coffers, with the other half going to Cranmer as a loan, was also re-distributed before he obtained a warrant.¹⁷⁵ An undated memorandum, which is clearly one of Cromwell's remembrances, also refers to there being no warrant yet obtained for the £2,736 7s 5d 'delyuerid' to John Whalley for building works at the Tower.¹⁷⁶ Similarly, during the Anglo-Scottish war, Sir George Lawson wrote to inform Cromwell that he had received £3,000 which Cromwell had sent north for the garrison on 1 February 1533.¹⁷⁷ Cromwell's warrant for this is dated 6

¹⁷¹ BL Cotton Titus B IV ff. 117v-118 (*LP VII* 254).

¹⁷² It should be noted that Tuke paid sums of money out on Cromwell's orders without having obtained a warrant first. See below, p. 230.

¹⁷³ TNA, PRO, SP 1/78 f. 215 (*LP VI* 1056 [2]); SP 1/82 f. 207 (*LP VII* 263); BL, Cotton MS, Titus B I f. 419 (*LP VII* 48); SP 1/82 f. 200 (*LP VII* 257).

¹⁷⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 1/74 f. 149 (*LP VI* 150). The eventual warrant Cromwell obtained is TNA, PRO, E101/421/9 (*LP VI* 149).

¹⁷⁵ TNA, PRO, SP 1/74 f. 149 (*LP VI* 150). The eventual warrant Cromwell obtained is TNA, PRO, E101/421/9 (*LP VI* 131).

¹⁷⁶ BL, Cotton MS, Otho E IX ff. 58-61 (*LP VII* 1564).

¹⁷⁷ TNA, PRO, SP 1/74 ff. 121-122 (*LP VI* 107).

February, meaning he sent this money north before having obtained his warrant.¹⁷⁸ All this is further evidence of an administrative system that was at once both formal and informal. Warrants for payments were routinely required, yet the implementation of policy meant that procedures were often adaptable to accommodate practical realities.

What this was not proof of was that Cromwell frequently ‘paid money on his own initiative and for purposes of which he alone was the judge’.¹⁷⁹ Even despite Henry VIII’s reluctance to sign warrants regularly, it is difficult to imagine Cromwell paying out what were often very large sums of money without having at least obtained an oral command or agreement from the king first. Indeed, it was primarily Henry to whom contemporaries looked when decisions were needed regarding money. During the Anglo-Scottish war of 1532-3, when Cromwell was written to on the question of whether the garrison should receive money for their coats, it was ‘the kinges pleasur’ which those on the border desired to be informed of.¹⁸⁰ Similarly when £500 was delivered to William Lord Dacre, his letter of acknowledgement reveals that this had been done at the ‘pleasoure of the kinges highnes’.¹⁸¹ Perhaps most revealingly of all, the impression gleaned from Cromwell’s own papers is that the payments he was making were very much authorised by Henry. In 1533, when the ambassador John Hacket wrote to Cromwell requesting the payment of his arrears,¹⁸² several memoranda reminded Cromwell ‘to take hakettes lettres with me to the court’ and ‘to Remembre master hakettes dyettes and to make sute to the kyng For the same’.¹⁸³ What is striking here is that the king’s permission was sought even over a routine payment. It would be better, then, to see

¹⁷⁸ TNA, PRO, E101/421/9 (*LP VI* 130).

¹⁷⁹ Elton, *Tudor Revolution*, p 155.

¹⁸⁰ TNA, PRO, SP 1/237 f. 266 (*LP Add I*, i, 801).

¹⁸¹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/74 f. 127 (*LP VI* 117).

¹⁸² TNA, PRO, SP 1/77 ff. 92-92v (*LP VI* 724); SP 1/79 ff. 24-25 (*St P. VII.*, p. 505; *LP VI* 1084); SP 1/80 ff. 187-188v (*LP VI* 1524); SP 1/81 ff. 2022 (*LP VI* 1559).

¹⁸³ BL, Cotton MS, Titus B I f. 493v (*LP VI* 1194); BL, Cotton MS, Titus B I f. 456 (*LP VII* 143 [2]). Also see TNA, PRO, E36/143 ff. 55 (*LP VI* 1370); E36/143 f. 77 (*LP VI* 1371); BL, Cotton MS, Titus B I f. 427v (*LP VII* 48); BL, Cotton MS, Titus B I f. 463 (*LP VII* 108); SP 1/82 f. 207 (*LP VII* 263). Also see Hacket’s letter from March 1534 to Cromwell in which he referred to Cromwell’s letter informing ‘me of the kynges good mynd & Intent toward me & that his grace hath agreyd vnto me the rest of myn old arerages’, SP 1/83 f. 23 (*LP VII* 397).

Cromwell's actions as those of an efficient administrator - someone who bypassed time-consuming formalities in order quickly to provide money on the king's behalf - rather than proof he was an independent policy maker. Significantly, this practice may not have been exclusively confined to Cromwell. Despite the reservations Tuke expressed in the letter noted above, he too paid sums of money out on Cromwell's orders before having obtained a warrant.¹⁸⁴ Sir Thomas Audeley was another who also employed this practice, asking Cromwell in July 1533 'to get all my warrauntes assigned which ye haue for my discharge the tymes now ys farr past sythen I dispatched the kynges seales'.¹⁸⁵ There are hints here that this practice, so well documented in Cromwell's own correspondence, may have been far more prevalent among royal officials than has previously been realised.

Rather than the innovative administrator which Elton described, then, Thomas Cromwell was merely a highly efficient royal minister. It was this efficiency when dealing with the routine work of government which explains why he was so successful during these years under the king. Henry VIII relied on competent ministers to rid him of the quotidian aspects of administration, and Cromwell was plainly happy to do so quickly and competently. Tremendous energy, sheer hard work and the ability to deal with any issue which arose were also necessary personal attributes, and Cromwell evidently possessed these too. His remembrances, in particular, are remarkably thorough, and perhaps explain why so few things went wrong in government during these years, as well as illustrating his capacity for work. These qualities, which ensured that Cromwell was capable of dealing with the increasing amount of work he was amassing, were fast ensuring that he was emerging as the king's chief minister.

Nevertheless Cromwell was aided enormously in his capacity to deal with government business by the informal nature of much of its machinery.

¹⁸⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 1/78 f. 133 (*LP VI* 995); SP 1/78 f. 215 (*LP VI* 1056 [2]); BL, Cotton MS, Titus B I f. 493v (*LP VI* 1194).

¹⁸⁵ TNA, PRO, SP 1/78 f. 6 (*LP VI* 842).

The flexible character of the financial departments enabled an industrious figure to circumvent some of its more formal proceedings, making the detailed implementation of policy easier. It also meant Cromwell could receive or pay sums previously handled by another treasurer himself, making quick payments possible. Yet Cromwell did not use his official positions to gain control of the Crown's finances, as suggested by Elton and Starkey. Instead, what Cromwell's amassing of financial work suggests is that his influence was personal. It is telling that the sums of money he received as Master of the King's Jewels were all connected with tasks he himself was handling; he did not divert wider revenues away from other officials into his hands. Above all, there was not a hint of any innovation or re-organisation of the financial system during the years 1531-1534. Although the revenues received by the Jewel House did increase under Cromwell, the Privy Coffers and the Chamber still remained the most important financial institutions.

Chapter Six

The Minister and his Household

One of the points the Spanish Ambassador saw fit to mention when describing Cromwell in 1535 was that 'He lives splendidly' and was 'remarkably fond of pomp and ostentation in his household and in building',¹ yet surprisingly few historians have sought to examine these facets of Cromwell's life and career. For Elton - and the majority of scholars since - the focus has very much been on the 'public' man and politician. And this reflected the approach to the political history of the sixteenth century Elton advanced more generally: one which placed attention on the men who governed, and the formal institutions and administrative structures which enabled them to do so. In more recent years, however, there has been an increasing recognition of the need to consider more 'informal channels of power', such as the patronage networks, the friendships and affiliations - even the households - of the men *and* women involved in the political process.² Such a focus is particularly pertinent when examining a political system in which the distinction between the public and the private were by no means rigidly defined. As Barbara Harris puts it 'the world of kinship, the great household, client/patron relations, and the court conflated concerns that we would label as either personal or political...much of the distribution of resources and exercise of power took place outside formal institutions'.³

¹ CSP, *Spanish*, V, i, 228.

² Williams, *Tudor Regime*; D. Starkey, 'The age of the household: politics, society and the arts c. 1350-c. 1550', in S. Medcalf, ed., *The Later Middle Ages* (New York, 1981), pp. 225-290; B. J. Harris, 'Women and Politics in Early Tudor England', *HJ*, 33 (1990), pp. 259-281; Gunn, 'Structures of Politics', pp. 71-77. For a good summary of this 'New Tudor political history', and the historians associated with it, see N. Mears, 'Courts, Courtiers, and Culture in Tudor England', *HJ*, 46 (2003), pp. 703-722.

³ Harris, 'Women and Politics', pp. 260, 281.

The only exception to the overwhelming focus on Cromwell's 'public' career has been the work of Mary Robertson. She wrote a prosopographical thesis on Cromwell's servants, and an article on his landed estates.⁴ Yet Robertson's focus was very much weighted toward the years of Cromwell's ascendancy, offering little on Cromwell's early household, while her work on his estates is incomplete and, at times, slightly inaccurate. Moreover Robertson consulted few original documents; instead she relied heavily on the printed calendar *Letters and Papers*, which does not always do justice to the rich detail found in Cromwell's correspondence. Both areas therefore benefit from a sharper focus here, and what follows is concentrated on several areas. First Cromwell's private household is considered, and the key members of it identified, in order to illustrate how Cromwell was assisted in his public role by his private servants. His landed interests and building works are also explored: were these in any way intended to be a physical reflection of his new found power and authority? The minister's wealth during these years is similarly examined. Did Cromwell exploit his public position for private gain? Finally, can Cromwell's own personality reveal anything about the development or nature of his political career?

Household and Building Works

Thomas Cromwell's household, like that of any great nobleman or rising courtier, was first and foremost a private institution, designed to serve the minister in his personal needs. A residence was required for him to live, rest and relax in, while servants were needed to cook food, administer estates and manage Cromwell's revenues and wealth. And yet, paradoxically, perhaps no institution better illustrates how little distinction existed between the public and the private in sixteenth-century politics. During an age which lacked a formal civil service many of Cromwell's private servants were employed by him on official government business. Moreover, as people increasingly looked to

⁴ Robertson, 'Thomas Cromwell's Servants'; 'Profit and Purpose', pp. 317-346.

Cromwell as someone who might advance their interests, his household became an important centre of power and patronage in its own right. Not only, then, does its development and expansion provide a physical expression of his rise to power, but many of those who served him privately also played an important part in the success of his early ministry. Before examining these points in turn, however, it is of use to begin with an overview of the institution itself.

‘At the heart of every household...was the same basic unit: the family’; and Cromwell’s household was no exception.⁵ Although his wife, Elizabeth, and their two daughters, Anne and Grace, had probably died by the time Cromwell began to rise under the king, his mother-in-law and sister, along with both their husbands, all lived with him at his London residence during the late 1520s and early 1530s.⁶ So, too, did Cromwell’s son Gregory, and his two nephews, Richard Williams and Christopher Wellyfed, when these three were not working or studying elsewhere. Of Cromwell’s family members only Richard Williams played any ‘public’ part in his early ministry.⁷ He had entered his uncle’s service in 1530, adopted Cromwell’s surname, and acted as a channel of communication for him.⁸ His most notable work during these years included the examination of the servants of a suspected traitor, delivering over two thousand pounds of the king’s money to the borders during the Anglo-Scottish war, and conveying Sir Thomas More from the Tower to his trial in 1534.⁹ In July 1533 Cromwell also attempted to arrange a marriage between his nephew and Sir William Courtenay’s daughter-in-law, a ‘kynneswoman to the quenes

⁵ Starkey, ‘The Age of the Household’, p. 230.

⁶ TNA, PRO, SP 1/51 f. 105 (LP IV, ii, 5034); SP 1/53 f. 128 (LP IV, iii, 5398); SP 1/56 f. 227 (LP IV, iii, 6196); SP 1/57 f. 23 (LP IV, iii, 6223); SP 1/57 f. 145 (LP IV, iii, 6429); SP 1/59 f. 133 (LP IV, iii, App. 237); SP 1/71 f. 106 (LP V 1432); SP 1/71 f. 110v (LP V 1435); SP 1/71 f. 139 (LP V 1464); SP 1/71 f. 143 (LP V 1467); SP 1/71 f. 146 (LP V 1472); SP 1/71 f. 155 (LP V 1483).

⁷ He was the son of Cromwell’s sister, Katherine, and her husband, Morgan Williams. Richard served the Marquis of Dorset during the 1520s, before entering Cromwell’s service following the Marquis’ death. By the early 1530s he had adopted his uncle’s surname. He would later serve in parliament, and would go on to establish the Huntingdonshire branch of the Cromwell family. His great-grandson was Oliver Cromwell. See HoC, i. 733-4.

⁸ TNA, PRO, SP 1/71 f. 101 (LP V 1426); SP 1/75 f. 56 (LP VI 275); SP 1/75 f. 59 (LP VI 286); SP 1/75 f. 178 (LP VI 394); SP 1/79 f. 96 (LP VI 1177); SP 1/80 f. 84 (LP VI 1395); SP 1/81 f. 107 (LP VI 1653).

⁹ TNA, PRO, SP 2/O f. 97 (LP VI 1591 [2]); SP 1/74 f. 16 (LP VI 25); SP 1/74 f. 121 (LP VI 107); SP 2/O ff. 20-22 (LP VI 664); William Roper, *The Lyfe of Sir Thomas Moore, knyghte*, ed., E. V. Hitchcock (London, 1935), p. 74.

grace'.¹⁰ This apparently fell through, and Richard Cromwell later married the daughter of a London alderman and Lord Mayor.¹¹

Beyond this family unit, the late-medieval and early-modern household was chiefly comprised of three types of servants. The domestic staff, which included cooks, clerks and accountants, provided its fundamental working core. Next there were retainers and livery men contracted to provide attendance - and occasional military service - as and when required. Finally, there might also be professional men (like Cromwell himself in Wolsey's household) who worked for, but did not necessarily live with, their master.¹² All of these were presided over by three principal officers. The steward was responsible for the overall running and management of the household; the comptroller oversaw its requisite provisions; and the treasurer, or cofferer, handled the master's revenues.¹³ Although there is a reference to Cromwell's 'steward' in November 1532, it is not clear who was occupying this office for him at that point.¹⁴ Cromwell's brother-in-law and 'trusty seruante' John Williamson acted as his comptroller during the early 1530s.¹⁵ He oversaw the first expansion of Cromwell's London residence,¹⁶ and had custody of a variety of Cromwell's private bills, indentures and obligations.¹⁷ William Body, one of Cromwell's clerks, also appears to have been his principal cofferer during these early years.¹⁸ Certainly many of Cromwell's private revenues were received and handled by him,¹⁹ although Williamson himself also received some.²⁰

¹⁰ TNA, PRO, SP 1/77 f. 211 (LP VI 837).

¹¹ Bindoff, *HoC*, i. 734.

¹² M. Girouard, *Life in the English Country House* (London, 1978), pp. 14-21; Starkey, 'The Age of the Household', pp. 243-250.

¹³ G. R. Batho, 'The Household Papers of Henry Percy, Ninth Earl of Northumberland (1564-1632)', *Camden Society*, 3rd Series, xciii (London, 1962), pp. xxi-xxxiv; Girouard, *English Country House*, p. 18; Robertson, 'Thomas Cromwell's Servants', pp. 81-82.

¹⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 1/72 f. 10 (LP V 1509). According to Robertson, from 1535 onwards Richard Tomyow was Cromwell's steward. Thomas Thacker and Thomas Avery later became his comptroller and treasurer respectively. See Robertson, 'Thomas Cromwell's Servants', pp. 84-129.

¹⁵ TNA, PRO, SP 1/72 f. 10 (LP V 1509).

¹⁶ TNA, PRO, SP 1/71 f. 110-110v (LP V 1435); SP 1/72 f. 10 (LP V 1509); SP 1/71 f. 139 (LP V 1464); SP 1/71 f. 114v (LP V 1442); SP 1/71 f. 128 (LP V 1454); SP 1/71 f. 146 (LP V 1472); SP 1/72 f. 13 (LP V 1512).

¹⁷ TNA, PRO, E36/141 ff. 1-48 (LP V 1285).

¹⁸ When Body joined Cromwell's household is uncertain. He is mentioned in Cromwell's will, first drawn up in 1529 by Thomas Wriothesley, but his name has been added in Cromwell's hand, presumably as part of Cromwell's later amendments to the will sometime after 1532.

The overall size of Cromwell's household is difficult to determine because no complete list of his servants survives.²¹ Robertson has estimated that it numbered around 400 men in the 1530s, but during the years in focus here it was undoubtedly smaller.²² It is difficult to imagine that Cromwell would have needed (or could have afforded) such a large staff in the 1520s, but numbers probably increased quickly once he had entered the royal service. Whatever its exact number, however, as soon as Cromwell was established in the king's favour the size of his entourage would no longer have been purely designed to meet practical needs. The size and magnificence of a courtier's household was also partially intended to reflect their wealth and power. It has been claimed that Cromwell himself was far less ostentatious than the king's previous minister, Thomas Wolsey, and his supposedly modest household and building programme were a reflection of this.²³ It is certainly true that Cromwell's household - even at its height in the later 1530s - was smaller than the Cardinal's.²⁴ But this should not be taken to mean that Cromwell himself did not maintain an impressive entourage in line with the social elite in which he now numbered. The remarks of the Imperial Ambassador, noted above, certainly suggest that contemporaries were impressed by Cromwell's household, while John Stow, admittedly writing much later, noted that Cromwell 'kept the like, or greater number' of men in his service as William Paulet and Thomas Audeley did.²⁵ He also recalled the scenes at the gates of the minister's house:

See TNA, PRO, SP 1/54 f. 244 (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 56-63; LP IV, iii, 5772). The earliest dateable reference to Body being in Cromwell's service is not found until October 1532. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/71 f. 114 (LP V 1442); SP 1/71 f. 149 (LP V 1475).

¹⁹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/72 f. 136v (LP V 1639); SP 2/O f. 25v (LP VI 717); SP 2/O ff. 36-40 (LP VI 841); SP 1/83 f. 55 (LP VII 430 [1]); SP 1/83 f. 56 (LP VII 430 [2]).

²⁰ TNA, PRO, SP 1/71 f. 128 (LP V 1454).

²¹ A partial list of the gentlemen in Cromwell's service in 1538 numbers 173. See LP XIII, ii, 1184.

²² Robertson, 'Thomas Cromwell's Servants', p. 9.

²³ Dickens, *Thomas Cromwell*, p. 8; Williams, *Cardinal and the Secretary*, p. 173; Beckingsale, *Thomas Cromwell*, p. 5; Robertson, 'Thomas Cromwell's Servants', p. 9; P. Wilding, *Thomas Cromwell* (London, 1935), p. 55.

²⁴ Stow writes that Wolsey's household surpassed all other subjects of his time, and that the servants providing daily attendance on him numbered 400 (*Survey of London*, i. 88). According to Pollard, Wolsey kept around 429 domestic staff, while the total number of his household 'was little if at all short of a thousand'. See A. F. Pollard, *Wolsey* (London, 1929), p. 327. Also see Cavendish, *Life of Wolsey*, pp. 18-22, for his description of the Cardinal's household.

²⁵ Stow, *Survey of London*, i. 88-89.

I my selfe, in that declining time of charity, haue oft scene at the Lord Cromwels gate in London, more then two hundred persons serued twice euery day with bread, meate and drinke sufficient, for hee obserued that auncient and charitable custome as all prelates, noble men or men of honour and worship his predecessors had done before him.²⁶

Such generous hospitality was another way of exhibiting one's position in society: 'to have drink flowing in abundance, to serve up more food than could possibly be eaten, and to feed the poor waiting at the gate with the leftovers was all evidence of power, wealth and glory'.²⁷ Cromwell displayed magnificent hospitality and charity from an early point in his political career. When Thomas Alvard wrote to commend him on his 'howse keepyng' in November 1532, he remarked how 'It is shewed me there is neuer an Englishe man there the kinges grace except That doth kepe and Feaste Englishe men and strangiers as ye doo'.²⁸ Cromwell also maintained twelve children as musicians.²⁹ According to J. Stevens, 'Almost anyone with pretensions to rank or position employed musicians'.³⁰ The abbot of St Albans was certainly impressed by those in Cromwell's service. He commended the 'Grett chere' which Cromwell made him 'at Sopper' in his house 'with all mesyke plesant' in 1533.³¹

It has already been noted that Cromwell employed many of his most trusted servants on the king's business as well as his own. Of his principal household officers, however, only his cofferer, William Body, was involved in matters of state during the early 1530s. In November 1532 he was sent by Cromwell to collect the £200 owing from the archbishop of York for the fine for his temporalities, and he also had the custody of a great deal of the king's money which Cromwell received as Master of the Jewels.³² William Brabazon, John Whalley, John Smith, Stephen Vaughan and William Candisshe were other men in Cromwell's service who it has already been shown worked for him

²⁶ Stow, *Survey of London*, i. 89.

²⁷ Girouard, *English Country House*, p. 23.

²⁸ TNA, PRO, SP 1/72 f. 10 (LP V 1509).

²⁹ Foxe, *Acts and Monuments* (1570 edn.), p. 1400.

³⁰ J. Stevens, *Music and Poetry in the Early Tudor Court* (Cambridge, 1979), p. 296.

³¹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/76 f. 15 (LP VI 441).

³² TNA, PRO, SP 1/71 f. 149 (LP V 1475); SP 1/72 ff. 136-137 (LP V 1639); SP 2/O ff. 36-40 (LP VI 841); SP 1/83 f. 55 (LP VII 430 [1]); SP 1/83 f. 56 (LP VII 430 [2]).

during the 1520s, and now did so on the king's business. Richard Swift was another who served Cromwell in a private capacity before being employed on royal work.³³ So, too, was Ralph Sadler, Cromwell's most senior clerk, who lived with his master.³⁴ He not only drafted some of Cromwell's letters to the king,³⁵ but was even entrusted with the custody of the signet in 1532, when Cromwell held it temporarily for the absent Gardiner.³⁶ All these men played an important role - often overlooked - when explaining Cromwell's rise. The increasing amount of government work Cromwell undertook from late 1531 onwards was fast ensuring his indispensability to Henry VIII, and his emergence as chief minister. But Cromwell's successful management of this work depended, in part, on his ability and willingness to delegate some of its implementation to men in his own service: men who had similar skills to those possessed by Cromwell himself, and who had acquired these in a similar way through their earlier work for him. Brabazon, Sadler, Vaughan, Whalley and Candisshe had all cut their teeth under Cromwell by undertaking various legal and administrative work connected with Wolsey's colleges, just as Cromwell himself had.

It was not merely Cromwell, however, who benefitted from the service of these men; a position in the minister's establishment carried its own rewards. First service in Cromwell's household provided a form of education, enabling many to acquire skills and experience through the work they were required to do. Some might even receive formal instruction. Thomas Avery was a servant

³³ Richard Swift had been in Cromwell's service since the early 1520s, and the only surviving letter from Cromwell to his wife, Elizabeth, requests her to send Swift to attend on him. See Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 314 (LP IV, iii, App. 57); the document is not found in TNA, PRO. Throughout the 1520s Swift worked for Cromwell on legal matters, and on Wolsey's college projects. He also apparently had some domestic household duties. John Williamson, for instance, had remarked in 1529 that Swift had got Cromwell's corn in. For Swift's public and private work for Cromwell see: SP 1/65 f. 119 (LP V 84), and for its re-dating to 1527 see above p. 51, n. 198; SP 1/39 f. 192 (LP IV, ii, 2358 [8]); SP 1/42 f. 143 (LP IV, ii, 3212 [10]); SP 1/44 f. 219 (LP IV, iii, 3536); SP 1/59 f. 133 (LP IV, iii, App. 237); SP 1/52 f. 38 (LP IV, iii, 5115); SP 1/57 f. 2 (LP IV, iii, 6217); SP 1/57 f. 16 (LP IV, iii, 6221); SP 1/235 f. 78 (LP Add I, i, 498); SP 1/80 f. 49 (LP VI 1367). Swift was bequeathed £6 13s 4d by Cromwell in his will (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 62).

³⁴ BL, Cotton MS, Titus B I f. 163v (LP V 584).

³⁵ Compare TNA, PRO, SP 1/238 ff. 90-91 (LP Add I, i, 860) and SP 1/78 ff. 25-25v (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 360-362; LP VI 887).

³⁶ TNA, PRO, SP 1/79 f. 96 (LP VI 1177); SP 3/7 f. 160 (LP Add I, i, 886).

sent by Cromwell to Stephen Vaughan in Antwerp in 1530 'to be taught and brought vp in the knowledge and exercise of thinges meate for his age and capacitie'.³⁷ In 1532 he was sent back, and during the later 1530s Avery would serve as Cromwell's household cofferer.³⁸ Many servants were also rewarded financially for their work. Ralph Sadler and William Body each received £5 and £20 respectively from the king in 1533,³⁹ while Cromwell himself secured fees, annuities and positions for many in his service.⁴⁰ Working in the household of a rising figure might also present opportunities for social advancement. After all, service under Wolsey had been significant in the development of Cromwell's own career, and many of those who now served in his household would later advance greatly from their own humble origins. Three examples are sufficient. William Brabazon was made under-treasurer and receiver-general of Ireland in 1534, one of Cromwell's deputy vicegerents there in 1539, and later became Lord Justice of Ireland in 1543.⁴¹ Ralph Sadler and Thomas Wriothesley both jointly replaced Cromwell as royal secretary on his fall in 1540.⁴²

Unsurprisingly, membership of Cromwell's household became an increasingly sought after position as Cromwell himself became a figure of rising importance. One man remarked to Cromwell that a kinsman of his desired to be Cromwell's servant 'not to put you to charge of wagis but only to deserve and have your Favour'.⁴³ Another was prepared to promise Cromwell that his suitor would 'neuer take wages of your maystershipp',⁴⁴ while Richard Jones valued a place in Cromwell's establishment so highly he beseeched him to 'admytte me to your seruyce not as a seruaut but as one of your dogges'.⁴⁵ Some

³⁷ TNA, PRO, SP 1/69 f. 87 (LP V 789). Also see SP 1/57 f. 145 (LP IV, ii, 6429); BL, Cotton MS, Galba B X ff. 7-7v (LP V 247); BL, Cotton MS, Galba B X f. 3 (LP V 804).

³⁸ Robertson, 'Thomas Cromwell's Servants', p. 441.

³⁹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/80 f. 175 (LP VI 1508).

⁴⁰ TNA, PRO, SP 2/O ff. 114-115 (LP V 1622); SP 2/O ff. 118a-118av (LP V 1624); SP 1/82 f. 123 (LP VII 122); SP 1/82 f. 176 (LP VII 222); SP 1/82 f. 234 (LP VII 301); SP 2/P f. 148 (LP VII 416 [2]); SP 1/78 f. 31 (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 362; LP VI 894).

⁴¹ LP VII 122; 1122 [12]; LP XIV, ii, 5, 8, 24; M. A. Lyons, 'Brabazon, Sir William (d. 1552)', *ODNB*; Robertson, 'Thomas Cromwell's Servants', pp. 451-452.

⁴² Slavin, *Proft and Purpose*, pp. 46-47; Gibbon, *Thomas Wriothesley*, p. 61.

⁴³ TNA, PRO, SP 1/73 f. 136 (LP V 1760).

⁴⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 1/71 f. 100 (LP V 1424).

⁴⁵ TNA, PRO, SP 1/73 f. 1 (LP V 1680). Also see SP 1/66 f. 43 (LP V 292); SP 1/74 f. 68 (LP VI 72) for further examples.

were even prepared to cover their own costs and expenses. Richard Phillips promised Cromwell £20 if he allowed his son to work for him, and claimed he would give the boy £40 a year to live on.⁴⁶ Also of interest are some of the skills that hopeful applicants thought Cromwell might require from his servants. David Cecil told the minister that his suitor ‘wrytethe a gude secretary hand, and Romans, vnderstondeth well and speketh lattyn’, while John Amadas similarly told Cromwell that his son knew French and Latin, wrote a good secretary hand, and had studied the common law.⁴⁷ One person hoping to join Cromwell’s growing household was even asked to send three examples of his handwriting: one in English, French and Latin.⁴⁸

Cromwell’s growing importance ensured his household became a recognised centre of influence, not only for aspiring members of the gentry, but also for prominent figures at Court too. Leading families frequently sought to place their children in the homes of their kinfolk, friends and patrons in order to strengthen their own positions and networks of influence.⁴⁹ Sir John Gage was one such figure who wanted his son to be placed in Cromwell’s service; so too did Sir Thomas Worsley.⁵⁰ That the social elite now saw Cromwell’s household as a centre of power and influence not only highlights the difficulties in distinguishing between the private and the political in the early sixteenth century, but it also illustrates that Cromwell’s contemporaries now saw him as a dispenser of patronage in his own right.

Members of Cromwell’s household would have attended on their master wherever he was resident. From 1523 until his fall in 1540, the minister’s principal residence was his capital house in Throckmorton Street, next to the

⁴⁶ TNA, PRO, SP 1/83 f. 92 (*LP VII* 508).

⁴⁷ TNA, PRO, SP 1/71 f. 100 (*LP V* 1424); SP 1/82 f. 121 (*LP VII* 117).

⁴⁸ TNA, PRO, SP 1/81 f. 155 (*LP VI* 1705). See the endorsement on the reverse by one of Cromwell’s clerks, ‘a copy or forme of ons writing that sheweth to be in my master his seruice’ (f. 155v).

⁴⁹ Harris, ‘Women and Politics’, p. 264.

⁵⁰ TNA, PRO, SP 1/68 f. 90 (*LP V* 588); SP 1/68 f. 136 (*LP V* 651). No doubt it was to a similarly influential figure whom Cromwell himself wrote in the early 1530s requesting that Cromwell may ‘send my systers doughter vnto ~~you~~ the jentylwomen your wyff and that ye wyll on my behalf desire her to take here and to bryng her vpp’. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/54 f. 224v (*LP IV*, iii, 5757).

Augustinian Friars.⁵¹ An inventory of this property from the 1520s suggests a relatively modest house, originally containing over fourteen rooms, including several chambers and parlours, a kitchen and a hall.⁵² Following his entry into the king's service Cromwell began to enlarge the building into a house more befitting a royal minister. On 4 June 1532 he took out a ninety-nine year lease on 'two mesuages...late of newe buyelded...seuerall gardens belonginge to thesaide two tenements...A greate warehouse lienge and belonginge to oon of the sayde mesuages' and a tenement called 'the Swane', all of which lay against the west end of the Augustinian friary church-yard wall.⁵³ During Cromwell's attendance upon the king at Calais in late 1532, his servants set about enlarging and transforming his existing property to incorporate these new acquisitions.⁵⁴ John Allen informed Cromwell on 25 October 1532 how his household and friends were preparing 'anew Altered howse' which 'haryng saye...shall content your mynde'.⁵⁵ Two days' earlier John Whalley similarly reported to him that a thousand loads of rubbish had been 'taken owte of the sellours & prevy kechyn and other lodgynges...your hous yt goyth well forwards / ye shall see a greate thinge done there in so litle awhile'.⁵⁶ Unfortunately, there is no indication as to what Cromwell's capital house looked like at this point, although John Stow recollected that Cromwell built a 'very large and spacious' house 'in the place of olde and small Tenementes'.⁵⁷ A description of the residence as it stood in 1543, following its purchase from the Crown by the Drapers' Company has also survived; so too has a seventeenth-century survey of the property and

⁵¹ Letters to Cromwell were often addressed to him as 'dwellynge at the freare Awstene gaytte', 'by the Freyers awstyns' or 'at the frer Augustens'. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/65 f. 185v (LP V 174); SP 1/235 f. 360v (LP Add I, i, 602); SP 1/235 f. 70v (LP Add I, i, 490). Also see SP 1/45 f. 217v (LP IV, ii, 3675); SP 1/58 f. 173v (LP IV, iii, 6754); SP 1/235 f. 74v (LP Add I, i, 494); SP 1/235 f. 363v (LP Add I, i, 604); SP 1/236 f. 1v (LP Add I, i, 606); SP 1/236 f. 3v (LP Add I, i, 608); SP 1/236 f. 70v (LP Add I, i, 633); SP 1/236 f. 90v (LP Add I, i, 646); SP 1/236 f. 115v (LP Add I, i, 653).

⁵² TNA, PRO, SP 1/42 ff. 101-116 (LP IV, ii, 3197).

⁵³ D[rapers'] C[ompany] R[ecords], A. I. 61. Cromwell paid £12 a year for these properties. A draft of this lease written in Cromwell's hand, and dated 26 May, can be found in TNA, PRO, 2/L ff. 183-188 (LP V 1028).

⁵⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 1/71 f. 106 (LP V 1432); SP 1/71 ff. 110-110v (LP V 1435); SP 1/71 f. 114v (LP V 1442); SP 1/71 f. 128 (LP V 1454); SP 1/71 f. 136 (LP V 1461); SP 1/71 f. 139 (LP V 1464); SP 1/71 f. 143 (LP V 1467); SP 1/71 f. 146 (LP V 1472); SP 1/71 f. 156 (LP V 1487); SP 1/72 f. 10 (LP V 1509); SP 1/72 f. 13 (LP V 1512); SP 1/73 f. 97 (LP V 1723).

⁵⁵ TNA, PRO, SP 1/71 f. 144 (LP V 1469).

⁵⁶ TNA, PRO, SP 1/71 f. 143 (LP V 1467).

⁵⁷ Stow, *Survey of London*, ii. 179.

surrounding area.⁵⁸ These show a three storey house, based around a large central courtyard, with over fifty rooms, including: numerous chambers and halls, cellars ‘for wyne Ale & bere’, ‘A fayre grete chamber or hall fyled & matted with iiii bay glas windows & a chy[m]ney over the greate gate’, and a ‘greate Garden’.⁵⁹ But the building programme embarked on in 1532 was the first in a continuing series of alterations made to the property throughout the decade, and the most significant of these seems to have been completed between 1535 and 1536, after Cromwell had purchased the properties in full from the friary in May 1534.⁶⁰ It is therefore difficult to establish what was added when. Nevertheless, on his fall in 1540 Cromwell possessed one of the grandest houses in London.

The first enlargement of the Austin Friars house was an obvious indication of Cromwell’s rising status in 1532. He now had the wealth to build on a significant scale and, like other rising courtiers, he was keen to announce his newly established position by developing his home into a more impressive building. But the suggestion that Cromwell’s house was intended as an expression of his power should only be pushed so far. Grand as it undoubtedly became, an urban residence was no country house from which a landed power base might be constructed. During the 1520s and early 1530s Cromwell’s house

⁵⁸ The property was forfeited to the Crown on Cromwell’s fall in 1540. Sir Thomas Wriothesley rented the house from the Crown shortly after this, but it was finally sold to the Drapers in 1543 for £666 13s 4d. See *LP* XV 942 [113]; *LP* XVIII, ii, 231 [2]; DCR, Charter X.

⁵⁹ DCR, MB/ I C pp. 761-762 (Court of Assistants Minutes, 1543-1553); DCR, A XII 121

⁶⁰ Cromwell continued to purchase tenements immediately surrounding his property between May 1534 and April 1535. See DCR, A. I. 64, 65, 66; A. I. 67, 68, 69; A. I. 70; A. I. 71 [1-2]. He also purchased a further tenement in September 1538, DCR, A. I. 75. A letter to Cromwell sent in late 1534 also advised him to secure a piece of land belonging to the Bridgehouse, London. In doing so Cromwell could ‘make your wall goo strayt’, making ‘your gardyn square’, and ‘you maye haue Afayer stabell mayd and...a fayre tennys playe and A close Bowlyng Alle with A gallere ouer it’. See TNA, PRO, E36/153 f. 41 (*LP* VII 1617). Interestingly, John Stow also recollected that Cromwell ‘caused the pales of the Gardens adioyning to the northe parte therof [of Cromwell’s own garden] on a sodaine to bee taken downe, 22. foot to bee measured forth right into the north of euery mans ground, a line there to bee drawne, a trench to be cast, a foundation laid, and a high bricke Wall to bee builded’. Stow’s father ‘had a Garden there, and an house standing close to his south pale, this house they lowsed from the ground, & bare vpon Rowlers into my Fathers Garden 22. foot...no warning was giuen him, nor other answere, when hee spake to the surueyers of that worke, but that their Mayster sir Thomas commanded them so to doe, no man durst go to argue the matter, but each man lost his land’. See Stow, *Survey of London*, ii. 179. For the building works from 1535 onwards see: TNA, PRO, SP 1/95 f. 90 (*LP* IX 106); SP 1/95 f. 114 (*LP* IX 131); SP 1/95 f. 159 (*LP* IX 172); SP 1/96 f. 129 (*LP* IX 340); SP 1/96 f. 200 (*LP* IX 414); SP 1/105 f. 144 (*LP* XI 159); SP 1/106 f. 30 (*LP* XI 335); SP 1/106 f. 172 (*LP* XI 455).

had a practical function as a home and working office. That he played bowls in the garden, and later built a bowling alley and tennis courts there, confirms it was also a place for rest and relaxation.⁶¹ Of greater significance here, however, is that Cromwell himself often worked from his home during these years. In the 1543 account of the property one of its rooms is described as ‘An office to wryte in’,⁶² while an account of Cromwell’s expenses incurred on Wolsey’s college projects records money paid out ‘for the carriage of Theuydences of Saynt Frediswide from yorke place to my house in London’, which hints that the preparation of legal documents was undertaken there.⁶³ Stephen Vaughan also told Cromwell that he had ‘Diligently sought in your countynghouse and other places for suche wrytynges’ concerning several monasteries in 1529.⁶⁴ Cromwell’s papers – both private, and those relating to the governance of the realm – were therefore kept at his Austin Friars house. According to a ‘catholog’ of the papers in Cromwell’s ‘closet’ many of the ‘billes and other thinges’ which were in his possession from February 1533 were kept ‘in his chamber’, while others were housed in his ‘new cawberd’.⁶⁵ It is even possible to offer a tentative reconstruction of how some of Cromwell’s papers might have been stored. A book listing ‘certayn Euydences and specyalties’ in Cromwell’s possession reveals that these were kept in ‘great rounde boxes standing vnder the drawing boxes on the right hande [of] the dore’ or ‘In a longe box with a particion’.⁶⁶ Many of Cromwell’s wider correspondence also contain annotations on the back in his hand, or that of one of his clerks, recording the surname of the writer.⁶⁷ This suggests that Cromwell’s papers were originally

⁶¹ TNA, PRO, E36/153 f. 41 (*LP* VII 1617); *LP* VIII 1105.

⁶² DCR, MB/ I C p. 762.

⁶³ TNA, PRO, SP 1/44 f. 219 (*LP* IV, ii, 3536).

⁶⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 1/53 f. 128 (*LP* IV, iii, 5398).

⁶⁵ TNA, PRO, E36/143 ff. 18, 23 (*LP* VI 299 [iv & vii]).

⁶⁶ TNA, PRO, E36/140 ff. 19r, 12v. This document, which is badly water damaged, is not calendared in *LP*. It appears to be a list of papers in Cromwell’s possession relating to his career as a lawyer and work for Wolsey.

⁶⁷ See, for example, TNA, PRO, SP 1/58 f. 124v (*LP* IV, iii, 6698); SP 1/235 f. 360v (*LP* Add I, i, 602); SP 1/65 f. 122v (*LP* V 86); SP 1/53 f. 250v (*LP* IV, iii, 5526); SP 1/67 f. 89v (*LP* V 442); SP 1/65 f. 244v (*LP* V 237); SP 1/65 f. 45v (*LP* V 23); SP 1/68 f. 53v (*LP* V 538); SP 1/68 f. 106v (*LP* V 621); SP 1/81 f. 90 (*LP* VI 1635); SP 1/69 f. 80v (*LP* V 769); SP 1/70 f. 28v (*LP* V 1015); SP 1/75 f. 182v (*LP* VI 401); SP 1/74 f. 196v (*LP* VI 200); SP 1/71 f. 41 (*LP* V 1327); SP 1/76 f. 9v (*LP* VI 430); SP 1/75 f. 173v (*LP* VI 388); SP 1/76 f. 32v (*LP* VI 462); SP 1/76 f. 80v (*LP* VI 521).

stored by him in alphabetical bundles, some of which were also arranged in chronological sequence.⁶⁸ The likelihood that most of these were kept at the Austin Friars is high: shortly after Cromwell's arrest in 1540 his goods and papers were seized from there by the Crown, and this resulted in their fortuitous preservation.⁶⁹ Rather than being a 'power house' therefore, Cromwell's residence at the Austin Friars is better seen as a working home, and a base for Cromwell's early ministry. It would continue to remain so throughout the 1530s.⁷⁰

Wealth and Landed Interests, 1531-1534

Service under the king offered considerable opportunity for enrichment, and Cromwell's personal wealth grew significantly during his first four years as a royal minister. Although specific details regarding his incomes are lacking, the limited evidence available suggests that Cromwell's wealth had almost doubled between 1529 and the end of 1533. It will be recalled that Cromwell's will bequeathed cash bestowals of over £900 in 1529. When the will was amended sometime after, but probably close to, September 1532, many of the bequests were doubled in value, and collectively it then bequeathed well over £1,830 in cash alone.⁷¹ Similarly the fees and annuities paid to Cromwell by private individuals seeking his favour more than quadrupled between 1529 and 1533.⁷² Cromwell had clearly made considerable financial gains in the space of less than three years. There is even some suggestion that by 1533 he was wealthier than some more long-standing Crown officials. In that year

⁶⁸ *LP* V p. v.

⁶⁹ In June 1540 the French ambassador reported that the king's archers went to Cromwell's house, made an inventory of his goods, and transferred all his moveable wealth to the king's treasury. His correspondence was also presumably seized in the process. Certainly the ambassador confirmed that the 'Next day were found several letters he [Cromwell] wrote to or received from the Lutheran lords of Germany', which suggests his papers were examined. See *LP* XV 804.

⁷⁰ Throughout the later 1530s Cromwell entertained guests there, including the king and the French and Imperial ambassadors, while members of the Council also convened there. *LP* VIII 516, 556; *LP* XIII, i, 756; *LP* XIII, ii, 232; Elton, *Tudor Revolution*, p. 327.

⁷¹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/54 ff. 235-248 (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 56-64; *LP* IV, iii, 5772).

⁷² TNA, PRO, E36/140 ff. 29r-62v. See below pp. 249-250.

Christopher Hales rejected Cromwell's accusation of covetousness for withholding lands belonging to the minister's servant, and responded by telling him 'if ye know aswell the value of my treasor as ye do of your owne' he would not have grounds to think that.⁷³

How had Cromwell amassed such considerable sums in such a short period of time? One of the most persistent accusations to have been made against Cromwell is that he was a corrupt and unscrupulous minister, keen to enrich himself through the acceptance of bribes. In 1538 allegations were made that Cromwell was a 'great...taker of money / For he woll speke sollicite or doo for noo man but all for money'.⁷⁴ On his fall in 1540, the act of attainder which condemned Cromwell also alleged that he had 'acquired and obteyned into his possession by oppression bribery extort power and false promises...Innumerable somes of money and Treasure'.⁷⁵ These have been charges which continued to find support among several 'modern' historians. R. B. Merriman believed Cromwell to have been notoriously favourable to bribes, particularly concerning monastic suppressions.⁷⁶ Neville Williams broadly concurred with this, so too did M. St. Clare Byrne.⁷⁷ She accused Cromwell of 'taking money for every favour granted...he pocketed annuities, bribes and fees from gentle and simple, rich and poor', adding 'The so-called fees sent to him by most abbots and abbesses...were nothing but bribes'.⁷⁸ The late Sir Geoffrey Elton, however, in his final paper on Cromwell, sought to defend the minister against these charges. Although anxious not to 'make Cromwell out to be lily-white', and conceding that 'He probably did on occasion take what to modern eyes would look like straightforward bribes', Elton emphasised the system of payments in operation in the sixteenth-century world, which included the giving of fees for services rendered which were 'totally above board'.⁷⁹ He also criticised Merriman and Byrne for falling to provide adequate examples of

⁷³ TNA, PRO, SP 1/81 f. 29 (*LP VI* 1574).

⁷⁴ TNA, PRO, 60/6 f. 48v (*St. P. II.*, p. 551; *LP XIII*, i, 471 [1]).

⁷⁵ BL, Additional Manuscript 48028 f. 164.

⁷⁶ Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 50.

⁷⁷ Williams, *Cardinal and the Secretary*, p. 149.

⁷⁸ M. St. Clare Byrne, *The Lisle Letters*, (6 vols., Chicago, 1981), i. 11; ii. 560.

⁷⁹ G. R. Elton, 'How Corrupt was Thomas Cromwell?', *HJ*, 36 (1993), pp. 907-908.

Cromwell's venality.⁸⁰ Other historians have concurred with Elton's interpretation of the payment system, also highlighting the difficulty in distinguishing between unscrupulous payments and those which were deemed acceptable.⁸¹ And yet, although the charges brought against Cromwell in 1540 in no way prove that he did take bribes, it does confirm that venality among royal servants was a concern in the sixteenth century. If the accusations of corruption against Cromwell are to be satisfactorily assessed, then it becomes necessary to identify the types of income he received, and try to draw some distinction between those which were acceptable and those which were not.

Perhaps the most straightforward sums of money Cromwell received during these years were the salaries for the various offices and positions he held. In January 1532 the king re-appointed Cromwell as receiver-general of Wolsey's former college lands.⁸² Although no fee is mentioned in the patent for this office, Cromwell presumably continued to receive the £20 granted to him by Cardinal College, Oxford, in 1528 for this position.⁸³ In April 1532 he was then made Master of the King's Jewels, while in July he was made Clerk of the Hanaper.⁸⁴ These offices came with salaries of £50 and approximately £65 a year respectively.⁸⁵ In April 1533 Cromwell was also made Chancellor of the Exchequer, receiving an annual fee of £26 13s 4d *per annum*.⁸⁶

The salaries for such offices, however, had long been fixed, and were rarely altered in line with the fluctuating values of money. Instead ministers supplemented these relatively modest incomes through a variety of payments and rewards made by people for whom they undertook additional favours and requests. One such remuneration was the numerous gifts and tokens that

⁸⁰ Elton, 'How Corrupt was Thomas Cromwell?', pp. 905-907.

⁸¹ Slavin, *Profit and Purpose*, pp. 177-178; J. S. Block, 'Political Corruption in Henrician England', in C. Charlton, R. L. Woods, M. L. Robertson and J. S. Block, eds., *State, Sovereigns & Society in Early Modern England* (Stroud, 1998), pp. 45-57; J. Hurstfield, 'Political Corruption in modern England: the historian's problem', in J. Hurstfield, *Freedom, Corruption and Government in Elizabethan England* (London, 1973), pp. 137-163.

⁸² TNA, PRO, SP 1/69 f. 9 (LP V 701).

⁸³ TNA, PRO, E36/140 f. 33r.

⁸⁴ TNA, PRO, C82/654 and C66/659 m. 36 (LP V 978 [13]); C82/658 and C66/660 m. 33 (LP V 1207 [36]).

⁸⁵ TNA, PRO, E36/140 f. 52v; Elton, *Tudor Revolution*, p. 101; TNA, PRO, SP 2/O f. 34 (LP VI 841).

⁸⁶ TNA, PRO, C82/667 and C66/661 m. 27 (LP VI 417 [22]); TNA, PRO, E36/140 f. 52v.

Cromwell received during his early years in the king's service. First and foremost these were given as a sign of friendship. Cromwell sent his friend John Benolt a 'litle hoby' in 1531 and received 'a casse of knyffes' in return.⁸⁷ Christopher Hales sent a lean doe and a dish of wild fowl to Cromwell around the same time,⁸⁸ and Sir William Fitzwilliam and his wife sent him fowl and 'a piece of a Reddere' in 1533.⁸⁹ But gifts were also given in order to encourage or reward ministers when undertaking minor favours. In 1532 Cromwell was sent a gift of twenty four partridges and six plowers along with a request 'to obteyne the signature of the kings highness' for a bill.⁹⁰ In the same year Cromwell was also informed that the townsfolk of Cambridge

for the harty goode mynde and service that they owe vnto your saide maistershyppes have sent...A small present of suche commodetyes as be in this partyes viz xx pykes and x Tenches...besechyng you to be goode maister to the poore Towne of Cambrigge and to bear your lawfull and indifferent favour to the same.⁹¹

Such foodstuffs were commonly given or exchanged as gifts,⁹² although other items could also be offered in return for a favour. Amongst the more unusual gifts that Cromwell received during these years was a piece of turquoise,⁹³ a

⁸⁷ TNA, PRO, SP 1/68 f. 92 (*LP V* 591).

⁸⁸ TNA, PRO, SP 1/68 f. 105 (*LP V* 620).

⁸⁹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/77 f. 149 (*LP VI* 792).

⁹⁰ TNA, PRO, SP 1/72 f. 123 (*LP V* 1621).

⁹¹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/72 f. 146 (*LP V* 1651).

⁹² For further examples of food given as gifts and rewards, see: TNA, PRO, SP 1/65 f. 111 (*LP V* 79); SP 1/65 f. 187 (*LP V* 181); SP 1/68 f. 40 (*LP V* 514); SP 1/68 f. 79 (*LP V* 571); SP 1/68 f. 93 (*LP V* 596); SP 1/68 f. 119 (*LP V* 635); SP 1/68 f. 130 (*LP V* 646); BL, Cotton MS, Titus B I f. 358 (*LP V* 718); SP 1/71 f. 55 (*LP V* 1483); SP 1/68 f. 122 (*LP V* 638); SP 1/70 f. 179 (*LP V* 1204); SP 1/71 f. 94 (*LP V* 1412); SP 1/72 f. 13 (*LP V* 1512); SP 1/71 f. 97 (*LP V* 1418); SP 1/71 f. 100 (*LP V* 1424); SP 1/72 f. 52 (*LP V* 1569); SP 1/73 f. 16 (*LP V* 1691); SP 1/72 f. 100 (*LP V* 1610); SP 1/73 f. 122 (*LP V* 1747); SP 1/74 f. 118 (*LP VI* 103); SP 1/77 f. 87 (*LP VI* 713); SP 1/76 f. 162 (*LP VI* 604); SP 1/78 f. 111 (*LP VI* 981); SP 1/78 f. 145 (*LP VI* 1014); SP 1/77 f. 77 (Ellis, 3rd Series, ii. 237; *LP VI* 696); SP 1/80 f. 37 (*LP VI* 1361); SP 1/80 f. 90 (*LP VI* 1407); SP 1/80 f. 152 (*LP VI* 1483); SP 1/80 f. 190 (*LP VI* 1525); SP 1/80 f. 197 (*LP VI* 1532); SP 1/80 f. 200 (*LP VI* 1538); SP 1/75 f. 77 (*LP VI* 321); SP 1/74 f. 133 (*LP VI* 129), this is a letter from Robert Hogan, the king's cook, placed in 1533. He was dead by November 1532 (*LP V* 1598 [20]), so this letter, and several others to Cromwell placed after this date (*LP VI* 244, 245, 256, 709), belong to 1531 and 1532.

⁹³ TNA, PRO, SP 1/70 f. 135 (*LP V* 1129).

‘Rowll off lechis’,⁹⁴ four pieces of tin for him to make pewter vessels for his household from,⁹⁵ several knives,⁹⁶ a pair of perfumed gloves,⁹⁷ and a precious stone’.⁹⁸ Another regular gift or recompense given to Cromwell was horses,⁹⁹ and he himself gave them as gifts on several occasions, even offering Eustace Chapuys one in July 1533.¹⁰⁰ Many gifts given, however, were generally of small value and often sent as ‘sweeteners’ when the person requesting something was unable to immediately provide a greater incentive. In 1532, for example, Cromwell was sent a ‘Tothepicke with a wystell of golde’ as a ‘Remembraunce’ from a widow who wanted her warrant signed. She promised to recompense Cromwell for his efforts more fully at a later date.¹⁰¹

Equally frequent, and perhaps more of an incentive, was the payment of money to royal ministers in return for services rendered. In ‘modern’ eyes many of these exchanges have the uncomfortable appearance of being bribes. But here too it is important to distinguish between the different types of payments offered, most of which were entirely conventional in the eyes of sixteenth-century men and women. One such example were the small charges many office-holders were entitled to levy on the suitors to their office, in addition to their fixed salaries. The clerks of the signet, for instance, charged fixed fees for applying the seal to an individual’s warrant.¹⁰² As Clerk of the Hanaper Cromwell himself was involved in the sealing process in Chancery, and would have drawn additional fees of 2s 6d from every suitor requiring a document to be sealed there.¹⁰³ When he became secretary in April 1534 Cromwell would

⁹⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 1/80 f. 23 (LP VI 1346).

⁹⁵ TNA, PRO, SP 1/70 f. 157 (Ellis, 3rd Series, ii. 220; LP V 1168).

⁹⁶ TNA, PRO, SP 1/71 f. 120 (LP V 1447); SP 1/74 f. 21 (LP VI 30).

⁹⁷ TNA, PRO, SP 1/77 f. 40 (LP VI 644).

⁹⁸ TNA, PRO, SP 1/237 f. 169 (LP Add I, i, 779).

⁹⁹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/57 f. 265 (LP IV, iii, 6556); SP 1/68 f. 116 (LP V 632); SP 1/69 f. 240 (LP V 960); SP 1/71 f. 85 (LP V 1398); SP 1/69 f. 14 (LP V 716); SP 1/70 f. 56 (LP V 1049); SP 1/70 f. 116 (LP V 1100); SP 1/70 f. 132 (LP V 1123); SP 1/70 f. 136 (LP V 1132); SP 1/70 f. 155 (LP V 1166); SP 1/80 f. 1 (LP V 1319); SP 1/71 f. 51 (LP V 1341); SP 1/71 f. 101 (LP V 1426); SP 1/80 f. 153 (LP VI 1484); SP 1/80 f. 198 (LP VI 1534); SP 1/81 f. 28 (LP VI 1573); SP 1/83 f. 62 (LP VII 438).

¹⁰⁰ CSP, *Spanish*, IV, ii, 1107; TNA, PRO, SP 1/69 ff. 223-224 (LP V 944); SP 1/71 f. 145 (LP V 1470).

¹⁰¹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/73 f. 4 (LP V 1682).

¹⁰² Elton, ‘How Corrupt was Thomas Cromwell?’, p. 907.

¹⁰³ Slavin, *Politics and Profit*, p. 180; Elton, *Tudor Revolution*, pp. 101-102.

also have been entitled to his share of the signet fees, which brought him approximately £60 p.a.¹⁰⁴

Cromwell was also given a considerable number of annuities between 1531 and 1534. These were annual payments, often referred to as 'fees', which were paid by private individuals, religious houses and professional corporations in order to retain Cromwell's services, or to encourage him to speak, lobby or act on the grantors behalf as and when required. The abbot of Pipwell gave Cromwell an annuity of 26s 8d on 4 June 1531. According to the grant for this it was given for Cromwell's 'good and gratuitous counsel and aid, and for his good will already shown to us and to be shown'.¹⁰⁵ In 1533 the earl of Westmorland told Cromwell 'im verye desirous to haue your favour...wherefore I Requyre you to be contented to accept oon yerely annuytie of X^{li}'.¹⁰⁶ Other fees were offered in the hope of eliciting Cromwell's assistance or favour concerning land disputes.¹⁰⁷ Sir Henry Everingham, for instance, made Cromwell 'stuard off hys holl landes', with a fee of 53s 4d, in August 1533. This was to encourage him to assist Everingham with 'a Forward fellow...whyche wold occupy hys land agaynst hys wyll'.¹⁰⁸ A list of Cromwell's annuities, which covers the period March 1525 to June 1534, reveals that in mid-1530, shortly before his entry into the king's service, Cromwell was receiving thirteen such annuities, and these provided him with an income of over £54 a year.¹⁰⁹ By June 1534, after four and a half years serving the king, Cromwell was then receiving a staggering eighty-seven annuities, which supplied him with an income of over £524 p.a.¹¹⁰

Perhaps more important in terms of Cromwell's overall income, however, were the wider sums of money offered and given to royal servants in

¹⁰⁴ Elton, *Tudor Revolution*, p. 126.

¹⁰⁵ TNA, PRO, E315/96 f. 122. This grant is printed and translated in J. Youings, *The Dissolution of the Monasteries* (London, 1971), p. 144.

¹⁰⁶ TNA, PRO, SP 1/75 f. 144 (LP VI 354).

¹⁰⁷ TNA, PRO, SP 1/74 f. 55 (LP VI 59); SP 1/76 f. 167 (LP VI 612); BL, Cotton MS, Cleopatra E IV f. 178 (LP VI 632); SP 1/80 f. 153 (LP VI 1484).

¹⁰⁸ TNA, PRO, SP 1/70 f. 184 (LP V 1212); TNA, PRO, SP 1/81 f. 26 (LP VI 1566). The grant was not formalised until October 1533. See TNA, PRO, E36/140 f. 58v.

¹⁰⁹ TNA, PRO, E36/140 ff. 29r-35r.

¹¹⁰ TNA, PRO, E36/140 ff. 36v-62v.

return for specific favours and patronage. These were not annual payments, but rather *ad hoc* ones given for particular requests. Thomas Pope promised to ‘recompense’ Cromwell’s pains if he obtained the king’s signature for a bill, while the abbot of York sent him £5 as ‘a poore rewarde for your goodness to me shewyd concernyng my discharge for my apperaunce at london’ during Anne Boleyn’s coronation.¹¹¹ Thomas Leson sent the minister 20 nobles for his favour and counsel toward his brother concereng a lease on a parsonage.¹¹² The same amount was also sent to Cromwell by Sir William Stourton’s father in order to be absent from parliament at the beginning of 1532.¹¹³ Again, such sums of money might have the appearance of being bribes, but it would be better to see these as gratuity payments: small sums of money offered in return for services rendered. These sorts of payment were widespread throughout sixteenth-century government. The king’s secretary could expect to receive around £5 or £6 for forwarding suits to the king.¹¹⁴ Richard Hart, a canon at Bruton, also told Lady Lisle how ‘master Weston got my byll synd of the kyng & had of me xx^{li} for hys labor master Crumwell dyd red the byll to the kyng & gaue hytt hys good worde & he had v^{li}’.¹¹⁵ How much Cromwell and other royal servants accumulated from these sorts of payments is impossible to calculate. But there was clearly potential here for any industrious man to exploit his position for considerable financial gain.

All of these incomes were customary ways for Crown servants to supplement their relatively modest salaries. In an age during which the cost of government fell on royal expenses, the Crown relied on this system to pay and enrich its servants, being unable – or perhaps unwilling – to raise taxes to do so itself. Moreover the Crown participated in this system and therefore actively

¹¹¹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/82 f. 150 (*LP VII* 180); SP 1/77 f. 128 (*LP VI* 746).

¹¹² TNA, PRO, SP 1/75 f. 141 (*LP VI* 349).

¹¹³ BL, Cotton MS, Titus B I f. 371 (*LP V* 625). Richard Master was another who sent Cromwell ‘ii gold royalls’ in return for a pardon. In 1533 Rowland Lee also sent Cromwell ‘the rewarde I Resaueyd for my Intrecession to you’ for an unnamed man’s ‘fauorable delyuerans’ from punishment. See SP 1/81 f. 120v (*LP VI* 1666); SP 1/81 f. 23 (*LP VI* 1560).

¹¹⁴ F. M. G. Evans, *The Principal Secretary of State. A Survey of the Office from 1558 to 1680* (Manchester, 1923), p. 211.

¹¹⁵ TNA, PRO, 3/11 f. 10 (*LP V* 961).

encouraged it.¹¹⁶ Gifts were given from the king at New Year and at other times, while the Crown also used sinecures as a further method of reward. Cromwell himself received two ‘gilte saltes with a couer’, ‘a gilte boolle’, ‘a gilte truse glasse fasshion’, ‘a Ring with a Ruby & abox with the Imagis of the frenche kinges children’ and two bucks from the king during these years.¹¹⁷ In February 1534 Henry also granted him the constableness of Hertford Castle, with a fee of £12 14s.¹¹⁸ Another resource which the king recompensed courtiers with was land. In May 1532 Cromwell was given the manor of Rompney, or Rumney, in Monmouthshire, South Wales, by Henry.¹¹⁹ According to an abstract of Cromwell’s lands from mid-1535, Rompney was worth 100 marks a year;¹²⁰ and William Walwyn, auditor of the duchy of Lancaster, told him its lands were ‘verry goode for all kyndes of corne’.¹²¹ In 1533 Cromwell and several other men also received a fifty-year lease from the king on some lead mines in Dartmoor Forest.¹²²

Nevertheless, despite Elton’s vigorous defence of Cromwell, and even bearing in mind the numerous legitimate incomes which the minister received,

¹¹⁶ W.T. MacCaffrey, ‘Place and Patronage in Elizabethan Politics’, in S.T. Bindoff, J. Hurstfield & C.H. Williams, eds., *Elizabethan Court and Society: Essays Presented to Sir John Neale* (1961), pp. 95-127.

¹¹⁷ TNA, PRO, E101/420/15 (LP V 686); TNA, PRO, SP 2/N ff. 1-10 (LP VI 32); E101/421/13 (LP VII 9); SP 1/65 f. 111 (LP V 79).

¹¹⁸ TNA, PRO, E36/140 f. 60v; R. Somerville, *History of the Duchy of Lancaster, 1265-1603* (2 vols., London, 1953-1970), p. 604.

¹¹⁹ TNA, PRO, C82/656 and C66/660 m. 19 (LP V 1065 [33]); TNA, PRO, SP 1/72 f. 44 (LP V 1562). M. L. Robertson, in her article on Cromwell’s landed estates, believed that Cromwell was in possession of Rompney from 1529 because the property was bequeathed in Cromwell’s will first drawn up in that year by Thomas Wriothesley. The will, however, was amended by Cromwell at an unknown date sometime after this, and the addition of Rompney made then, along with Cromwell’s property of Canonbury house, Middlesex, which he purchased in September 1532 (also mistakenly dated to 1529 by Robertson). See TNA, PRO, SP 1/54 ff. 242 and 244a (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 60-61 & 63; LP IV, iii, 5772) Cromwell’s revisions were therefore made sometime after he obtained Rompney and Canonbury, i.e. after September 1532. Perhaps the acquisition of these two properties prompted the revision. For the purchase of Canonbury see TNA, PRO, SP 2/M ff. 46-52 (LP V 1339). Also see Robertson, ‘Profit and Purpose’, p. 231.

¹²⁰ TNA, PRO, SP 1/88 f. 21 (LP VII 1610). This abstract was placed in 1534 in LP, but dates to mid-1535 at the earliest. One of the lands mentioned on it, the manor of Donton, Bedfordshire, was not acquired by Cromwell until June 1535. See LP VIII 962 [22]. In one of Cromwell’s accounts covering the money he received between January and July 1533 the revenues received from Rompney were £12 13s 10d. See TNA, PRO, SP 2/O f. 35 (LP VI 841).

¹²¹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/71 f. 52 (LP V 1342).

¹²² TNA, PRO, SP 2/O ff. 68-72 (LP VI 1176). The formal grant of this is TNA, PRO, E41/219. Also see SP 2/O ff. 73-74 (LP VI 1176 [2]).

Cromwell certainly enriched himself through the acceptance of bribes. Two such instances where he almost certainly took bribes while in the royal service have already been discussed in previous chapters.¹²³ Each was detectable because those offering Cromwell the bribe hint in their letter that they were aware that what they were doing was unscrupulous. Attempts to identify further bribes in a system which relied on customary exchanges of gifts and money, however, are problematic. J. Block has suggested that a bribe in this period should be defined as 'a conditional offer for a material reward in pursuit of a desired objective'.¹²⁴ Yet this is not satisfactory given that many of the fees paid to Cromwell outlined above would fit this criteria, and were entirely acceptable. Ultimately, with no clear indication from contemporaries as to what they saw as constituting bribery, each offer of a reward needs to be considered individually, and weighed against the request. What can also be said is that the customary gifts and gratuities discussed above tended to be of relatively small denominations: generally between 40s and £10, depending on the nature of the request. Perhaps notably larger offers to Cromwell have a much greater likelihood of being a bribe. For instance, in 1534 Cromwell was offered £100 and the stewardship of Wilton, which came with a yearly fee of £10, if he advanced a candidate to succeed as abbess there.¹²⁵ When William Owen wanted to be made 'the Kynges justice' in North Wales in 1532 he offered Cromwell 'a C^{li} for your so doing / or asmoche as any otherman will offyr'.¹²⁶ Martin Bowes, and his associate deputy worker at the Tower Mint, also asked Cromwell to be 'our solysitour to the kyng' so that they might have the office of master worker. They promised him a chain of gold worth £30 in return.¹²⁷ Each of these proposed payments appear conspicuously large for what were relatively routine requests. If these were not outright bribes, then Cromwell

¹²³ See above pp. 123, 156-157.

¹²⁴ Block, 'Political Corruption', p. 52.

¹²⁵ TNA, PRO, SP 1/75 f. 68 (*LP* VI 304). For its re-dating see above, p. 160.

¹²⁶ TNA, PRO, SP 1/237 f. 261 (*LP* Add I, i, 798).

¹²⁷ TNA, PRO, SP 1/68 f. 118 (*LP* V 634). Placed in 1531 in *LP*, but considering that Bowes and Ralph Rowlett were appointed as joint master workers in April 1533, this request to Cromwell surely dates to late 1532 at the earliest. See TNA, PRO, C54/402 m. 36d-38d (*LP* V 919), which is misdated to 1532 in *LP*; C82/667 and C66/661 m. 28 (*LP* VI 417 [7]); Challis, *Tudor Coinage*, pp. 80-81 & 311-312.

was certainly being presented with a strong financial incentive. Also of note is Sir Richard Bulkeley's offer to give Cromwell £20 'for your paynys' if he moved the king to appoint his brother to a benefice. His brother, Bulkeley added, would also give Cromwell a third of that benefice's value each year.¹²⁸

Does all this make Cromwell an unscrupulous and corrupt minister? Ultimately, yes: he certainly took bribes, and probably made considerable sums when doing so. Moreover given that contemporaries did not approve of venality among Crown officials, this is not an anachronistic judgment from a 'modern' point of view. It should be stressed, however, that Cromwell was by no means alone when capitalising on his position; other Crown servants and courtiers also enriched themselves in similar ways.¹²⁹ It should also be noted that the allegations from Merriman and St. Clare Byrne - that Cromwell was especially rapacious in his pursuit of bribes - perhaps reflects simply the survival of Cromwell's considerable correspondence, and the lack of those of other men in comparable positions. None of this is to excuse Cromwell's actions, but political corruption of this sort has been a recurring feature of governments throughout the early modern period down to the present day. Cromwell certainly abused his position for his own enrichment, but the suggestion that he was wholly corrupt and far more receptive to bribery than his contemporaries is probably unjust.

Cromwell had several sources of income in addition to the wealth his work for the Crown directly generated. It will be recalled that he continued to dabble in trade during 1531 and 1532, while his money lending similarly continued.¹³⁰ A further source of income was provided by the wardships Cromwell obtained of Lawrence Courtenay, Anthony Stydoffe and Thomas Rotherham. Very little information can be discerned about Cromwell's wards.

¹²⁸ TNA, PRO, SP 1/74 f. 178 (LP VI 179).

¹²⁹ Williams, *Tudor Regime*, pp. 102-107; J. Hurstfield, *The Queen's Wards: Wardship and Marriage under Elizabeth I* (1958), pp. 267-268, 279; L. Stone, 'The Fruits of Office: The Case of Robert Cecil, First Earl of Salisbury, 1596-1612', in F.J. Fisher, ed., *Essays in the Economic and Social History of Tudor and Stuart England* (Cambridge, 1961), pp. 89-117

¹³⁰ See above pp. 91-92.

Courtenay may have served him as a servant during his minority,¹³¹ while the sum of £4 12s 11d is recorded as coming from the wardship of Anthony Stydoffe on Cromwell's account between January and July 1533.¹³² Evidently this wardship was valuable enough to justify Cromwell's letter to a judge of the Common Bench defending his title when questions were raised about it.¹³³ Finally, Thomas Rotherham, who would come to inherit land in Bedfordshire worth 100 marks when he came of age, became Cromwell's ward in 1533. According to the draft indenture arranging this, Cromwell intended to have him marry his niece, Alice Wellyfed, when Rotherham reached the age of his majority at twenty-one.¹³⁴

Cromwell also continued to invest personally in land during his early political career, although his acquisitions – even including the land which the king rewarded him with noted above – continued to be small and piecemeal, with no discernible intent beyond profit and investment.¹³⁵ In fact, the only significant property he acquired between 1531 and 1534 (besides Rompney) was the sixty-year lease he took out on the manors of Canonbury and Cutlers, in Islington parish, Middlesex, in September 1532.¹³⁶ Canonbury in particular was described as 'a greate tenement' and included 'A greeite gardeyn therto lienge and two stables and A Berne' along with other 'houses edifices buyeldynges yards gardeyn courtes...waters pondes fysshe poles' and numerous fields.¹³⁷ In the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* of 1535 its lands were valued at £26 8s 7d.¹³⁸ Canonbury served Cromwell as another residence. He lived there on occasion,¹³⁹ and spent

¹³¹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/70 f. 164 (LP V 1178); SP 1/74 f. 56 (LP VI 60).

¹³² TNA, PRO, SP 2/O f. 34 (LP VI 841).

¹³³ TNA, PRO, SP 1/78 f. 20 (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 359; LP VI 872).

¹³⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 2/O ff. 119-131 (LP VI 1625 [5]).

¹³⁵ Cf. Robertson, 'Profit and Purpose', p. 322.

¹³⁶ TNA, PRO, SP 2/M ff. 46-52 (LP V 1339). This was leased from the monastery of St. Bartholomew's, West Smithfield, and Cromwell paid £26 8s 4d yearly for the lease. Robertson mistakenly believed Cromwell acquired this property before 1529, because it is mentioned in his will from that year. In fact, the inclusion of Canonbury (and Rompney) were made to the will when Cromwell amended it sometime after September 1532.

¹³⁷ TNA, PRO, SP 2/M ff. 47-38 (LP V 1339). For a history of the manor see W. Thornbury, *Old and New London* (6 vols., London, 1878), ii. 269-273.

¹³⁸ Webb, *St. Bartholomew's*, i. 343.

¹³⁹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/78 f. 52 (LP VI 919); SP 1/84 f. 156 (LP VII 813); SP 2/5 f. 127 (LP VII 1182); SP 1/84 f. 141 (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 384; LP VII 790); SP 1/85 f. 143

over £58 'for the settinge vpp of the Pale att Canbury and for the prouysyon of the Tymber and stuffe for the same' between January and March 1533.¹⁴⁰ There were also other smaller acquisitions. Cromwell purchased the manor of Bourne from Sir Robert Waterton, a Yorkshire knight, paying out over £162 to secure this in 1533.¹⁴¹ In September of that year he also attempted to lease the farm of Nasingbury from William Parry, and finally obtained the property in 1534.¹⁴² It would also appear that in 1533 Cromwell purchased a property in Stepney.¹⁴³

What is interesting, however, is that between 1531 and 1534 Cromwell did not seek to transform Henry VIII's favour into something more permanent by establishing himself and his family as a landed power. Throughout these years Cromwell's purchases were small, with no geographic pattern or concentration to them beyond an obvious proximity to London.¹⁴⁴ It was not until after the

(Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 387-388; *LP* VII 1134); SP 1/85 f. 172 (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 388; *LP* VII 1179).

¹⁴⁰ TNA, PRO, SP 2/N f. 115 (*LP* VI 263). One of Cromwell's accounts records a slightly larger amount of £72 paid to the same workmen for the same period.

¹⁴¹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/81 f. 136 (*LP* VI 1687).

¹⁴² TNA, PRO, SP 1/78 f. 215 (*LP* VI 1056 [2]); SP 1/79 f. 40 (*LP* VI 1108); SP 1/80 ff. 21-21v (*LP* VI 1337); SP 1/74 f. 86 (*LP* VI 93). This final letter is dated January and was placed in 1533 in *LP*. It would make more sense to place this in 1534 following on from Cromwell's requests in September 1533. It should also be noted that the entry for this letter in *LP* describes the property Cromwell was seeking to obtain as being 'the feefarm of Malmesbury'. The original manuscript clearly states the property in question is 'the Ferme of nasynghbury'.

¹⁴³ TNA, PRO, SP 1/80 f. 10 (*LP* VI 1329); SP 1/80 f. 15v (*LP* VI 1333); *LP* VI 1128; SP 3/2 f. 163 (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 365; *LP* VI 1141); SP 1/83 f. 180 (*LP* VII 593); SP 1/238 f. 155 (*LP* Add I, i, 879). Also see Elton, *Reform and Renewal*, p. 27 n. 63.

¹⁴⁴ Robertson, 'Profit and Purpose', p. 324. In fact the properties Cromwell leased or purchased during these early years were even smaller than Robertson realised. With regards to two of the properties she mistakenly thought he was interested in during these years, Cromwell was actually acting as a middle-man for somebody. Robertson thought Cromwell bought Coggeshall and Fyllolshall, Essex, from Richard Southwell in 1532 ('Profit and Purpose', p. 322). Cromwell actually purchased these properties in conjunction with several royal servants on the king's behalf, and the lands were used to endower Anne Boleyn. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/71 f. 6 (*LP* V 1274 [6]); TNA, PRO, C82/660 and C66/660 m. 25 (*LP* V 1370 [3/i]); C66/662 mm. 44-47 (*LP* V 1499 [23/i]). She also stated that Cromwell attempted to lease the farm of Alton, Wiltshire, from New College, Oxford ('Profit and Purpose', p. 322). It will be recalled, however, that Cromwell was purchasing this for a friend of his. See above, p. 128. Two further land deals in which Cromwell acted as a middle-man are also of note. He obtained the farm of 'harlowebury' for Robert Studley from the abbot of Bury St Edmunds during these years, while George Beynam reveals that he obtained the farm of Stanwey for him from the abbot of Tewksbury in 1532. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/72 f. 55 (*LP* V 1573) and SP 1/86 f. 42 (*LP* VII 1260); SP 1/73 f. 98 (*LP* V 1724). A letter from Cromwell to Sir Ralph Ellercar concerning a bargain Cromwell was about to make with John Arden for the manor of Belthorp was placed in 1531 in *LP*. This was presumably on the grounds of an endorsement on it which could only have been made when Cromwell was in the king's service. In fact, Cromwell's original letter, and a remembrance mentioning Arden which was also placed with this in *LP* V, actually date to 1524. See SP 1/68 f. 203 (*LP* V 670); SP

dissolution of the smaller monasteries in 1536 that Cromwell chose to invest notably in land.¹⁴⁵ Between 1531 and 1534 his purchases were merely intended as another form of investment. A summary of his lands as they stood in mid-1535 (by which point one or two further properties had also been bought) suggests they provided Cromwell with an income of about £500 p.a. - a sizeable, but by no means enormous amount.¹⁴⁶ H. Miller has shown that the average annual income for a member of the nobility in 1534 was £921 p.a.¹⁴⁷ Robertson noted that subsidy rolls for Sussex in 1524-1525 show that at least twenty four men and three women of gentry status or lower had landed incomes greater than Cromwell did in mid-1535.¹⁴⁸ Before 1536, then, Cromwell made no serious attempt to build up a landed power base for his political career; nor was the wealth he generated from them conspicuously large. Perhaps he was simply not quite rich enough yet to invest heavily in land.

Personality and Politics

Does Cromwell's personal life or character reveal anything of significance about his political career and its development? Several references in letters to him make it plain that Cromwell enjoyed gardening as a pastime,¹⁴⁹ went hunting,¹⁵⁰ and kept hawks and greyhounds for this purpose.¹⁵¹ He was

1/68 f. 204 (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 342-343; *LP* V 671). In that year Cromwell assisted Thomas Hennage with the purchase of Belthorp manor from Arden. See SP 1/31 f. 142 ff. 143-147 (*LP* IV, i, 461), which are draft indentures concerning this deal, corrected by, or wholly in, Cromwell's hand. The endorsement was therefore made latter.

¹⁴⁵ For his later acquisitions see Robertson, 'Profit and Purpose', pp. 324-329. It should be noted, however, that Robertson sees Cromwell's later investment in land as a 'continuation of politics by other means', i.e. as an extension of an alleged factional battle with the duke of Norfolk (*Ibid.*, pp. 332-337). This is largely unconvincing given that much of the land Cromwell obtained in the late 1530s was acquired from the duke himself with his consent. It would be better to see these later acquisitions as an attempt to establish his family as a landed power - a point which Robertson dismisses.

¹⁴⁶ TNA, PRO, SP 1/88 f.21 (*LP* VII 1610).

¹⁴⁷ H. Miller, 'Subsidy Assessments of the Peerage in the Sixteenth Century', *BIHR*, 27 (1955), p. 18.

¹⁴⁸ *The Lay Subsidy Rolls for the County of Sussex, 1524-1525*, ed. J. Cornwall, Sussex Record Society, 56 (1956), pp. 8, 12, 26, 146. Cited in Robertson, 'Profit and Purpose', p. 324.

¹⁴⁹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/69 f. 69 (*LP* V 743); SP 1/70 f. 86 (*LP* V 1066); SP 1/74 f. 157 (*LP* VI 158)

¹⁵⁰ *CSP, Spanish*, IV, ii, 1107; *LP* VI 975; TNA, PRO, SP 1/77 f. 149v (*LP* VI 762).

¹⁵¹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/71 f. 9 (*LP* V 1281); SP 1/76 f. 111 (*LP* VI 547); SP 1/78 f. 79 (*LP* VI 938); SP 1/78 f. 125 (*LP* VI 989).

also personally well-travelled, and presumably had an interest in geography and history. The MP Edward Hall sent Cromwell a map of Hungary in 1533, while two world maps were among his possessions during the 1520s.¹⁵² Stephen Vaughan obtained a globe for Cromwell from Antwerp, and tried to locate for him a copy of the *Cronica Cronicarum cum figuris*, an illustrated history of the world published in 1493.¹⁵³ In 1531 Vaughan also recommended that Cromwell read *De vanitate scientiarum* by Cornelius Agrippa, ‘a man of great litterature and knowlag’ according to Vaughan, who added ‘I wolde yow dyd Rede it for your pastyme’.¹⁵⁴ Such revelations are of use when presenting a well-rounded reflection of a man, but reveal very little about the politics of the period, or what Cromwell himself was really like. Perhaps the most salient point here in relation to Cromwell’s private life is that he did not re-marry. Although his wife died at some point before 1529, Cromwell never sought to advance his own career through a favourable marriage.¹⁵⁵ Nor is there any convincing evidence of a mistress.¹⁵⁶

Cromwell’s correspondence, which is almost exclusively focused on his work and matters of state, reveals very little with regard to his personality or motives. It is beyond dispute that he must have been a hard-working and extremely driven man. What motivated him to be so, however, is less clear.

¹⁵² TNA, PRO, SP 1/77 f. 111 (*LP* VI 741); SP 1/42 ff. 108v, 110 (*LP* IV, ii, 3197); SP 1/58 f. 147 (*LP* IV, iii, 6744).

¹⁵³ TNA, PRO, SP 1/57 f. 145 (*LP* IV, iii, 6429). Florence Voluzence also sent Cromwell a ‘treaty of hystoire’, SP 1/237 f. 24 (*LP* Add I, i, 731).

¹⁵⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 1/68 f. 85 (*LP* V 585).

¹⁵⁵ There was a later rumour reported by Chapuys that Cromwell intended on marrying Princess Mary, although the ambassador rightly dismissed this as gossip. See *LP* XIV, ii, 782.

¹⁵⁶ G.W. Bernard refers to T. B. Pugh’s suggestion that the Countess of Worcester may have been Cromwell’s mistress by the mid-1530s, but the evidence for this is hardly convincing. See G. W. Bernard, ‘The Fall of Anne Boleyn’, *EHR*, 106 (1991), p. 598 and most recently in *Anne Boleyn: Fatal Attractions* (London, 2010), pp. 155-156. The duke of Norfolk certainly made some allusions to Cromwell’s interest in women. In 1537, when enquiring whether Cromwell would lodge with one Tristram Teshe in York, he remarked to Cromwell ‘if ye Lust not to daly with his wif, he [i.e. Teshe] hath a yowng woman with praty proper tetins’. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/121 f. 55 (*LP* XII, ii, 35). A later reference to a possible illegitimate daughter of Cromwell’s is also of note. In Arthur Collins’ *The History of the Lives and Actions of Thomas Cromwel Earl of Essex and his Descendants*, written in c. 1761, Collins made reference to Cromwell’s son Gregory ‘and a daughter Jane’, who he claimed had married one William Hough esq. See BL, Add MS 20706 f. 22v. Cromwell’s only known daughters, Anne and Grace, had both died young. There is, however, a curious reference to a daughter in a letter to Cromwell from Richard Southwell in 1537. Southwell remarked to Cromwell ‘I sawe a child of my ladye your daughters at a nonrye in yorkshire’, SP 1/24 f. 73 (*LP* XII, ii, 549).

Pure ambition and a desire for advancement are more probable personal factors rather than the religious zeal, political ideals or commonwealth concerns usually given. Judgements on Cromwell by his contemporaries and near contemporaries were also equally sparse. The Imperial Ambassador, Eustace Chapuys, described Cromwell as ‘a man of wit, well versed in Government affairs, and reasonable enough to judge correctly of them’ in 1533.¹⁵⁷ He also noted in 1535 that Cromwell was ‘eloquent in his own language’ and could speak ‘Latin, French, and Italian tolerably’, as well as being ‘liberal both of money and fair words’.¹⁵⁸ Both John Foxe and the Italian novelist Bandello were also impressed that Cromwell was a man who did not forget his old friends and acquaintances - even after his meteoric rise.¹⁵⁹ The opinion of Cromwell given by Cardinal Reginald Pole in 1539, however, was far less positive. According to Pole, Cromwell was a ‘messenger’ and ‘ambassador’ of Satan,¹⁶⁰ and in the first preface to his treatise *In Defence of the Unity of the Church*, he recalled a conversation with Cromwell from 1528 in which the two men had discussed what makes a prudent counsellor.¹⁶¹ Cromwell, it was alleged, told Pole that an effective counsellor ‘worked in secret and always tried to discern what the prince wanted. His job was to make the prince appear virtuous, while yet having his way’. Cromwell then offered the Cardinal an unnamed book on statecraft – which Pole later assumed must have been Machiavelli’s *The Prince*.¹⁶²

These remarks have led several historians to interpret Cromwell as a disciple of Machiavelli, and this has been seen as key to an understanding of his character and philosophy. R. B. Merriman accepted Pole’s story wholeheartedly, arguing that Cromwell ‘read and studied his Machiavelli’ and that

¹⁵⁷ *CSP, Spanish*, IV, ii, 1107.

¹⁵⁸ *CSP, Spanish*, V, i, 228.

¹⁵⁹ Foxe, *Acts and Monuments* (1570 edn.), pp. 1395-1397; Bandello, pp. 110-116.

¹⁶⁰ *LP XVI* 404.

¹⁶¹ *In Defence of the Unity of the Church* was first published in 1539 against Pole’s wishes. The *Apologia Reginaldi Poli ad Carolum V. Caesarem super quatuor Libris a se Scriptis de Unitate Ecclesiae*, which is its first preface, and contains the account of Pole’s meeting with Cromwell, was not published until much later. Although it was written in 1539, it was originally a polemical letter sent to Charles V to persuade him to launch a crusade against England.

¹⁶² T.F. Mayer, *Reginald Pole: Prince & Prophet* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 97; *LP XIV*, i, 200 (esp. p. 82); P. Van Dyke, ‘Reginald Pole and Thomas Cromwell’, pp. 707-708.

this was 'a guide to his future political career'.¹⁶³ A. D. Innes similarly believed 'The "Prince" became Cromwell's political text-book, whose principles and maxims he was prepared to apply with appalling thoroughness if ever the opportunity offered'.¹⁶⁴ There are difficulties, however, in accepting Pole's testimony on Cromwell. Although he may well have sincerely believed that Cromwell had poisoned the mind of Henry VIII, and caused the destruction of the Church in England, it is by no means clear that the book he offered Pole was Machiavelli. As the Cardinal's account makes plain, Cromwell did not name the work, and P. Van Dyke has dismissed the notion that Cromwell could have read Machiavelli in 1528, noting that the book itself - although written in 1513 - was not printed until 1532.¹⁶⁵ Instead, he suggested Castiglione's *The Courtier* as the book which Cromwell had recommended to Pole.¹⁶⁶ A letter from Edmund Bonner certainly reveals that Cromwell possessed Castiglione's work, while one from Lord Morley in 1539 implies that he did not think Cromwell had read *The Prince*.¹⁶⁷ Although it is not inconceivable that Cromwell read a manuscript copy of Machiavelli on his youthful travels in Italy, there is certainly no evidence - besides Pole's questionable testimony - to suggest that Cromwell had any interest in his writings.

A man's character is particularly difficult to glean from the State Papers, and in the further absence of any statement of beliefs, other scholars have often used Cromwell's actions to identify his personality and political outlook. T. M. Parker has suggested that regardless of whether or not Cromwell read *The Prince*, he was still 'essentially Machiavellian' in his character and principles.¹⁶⁸ The majority, however, have followed Elton's line that Cromwell's political beliefs were centred on a determination to remake the body-politic by subjecting the Church to the State, and establishing the supremacy of the King-

¹⁶³ Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 85. Also see pp. 86-87.

¹⁶⁴ Innes, *Ten Tudor Statesmen*, p. 123. Peter Hughes and Peter Wilding also concurred. See P. Hughes, *The Reformation in England* (5th edn, London 1962), p. 225; Wilding, *Thomas Cromwell*, pp. 62-66.

¹⁶⁵ P. Van Dyke, 'Reginald Pole and Thomas Cromwell', p. 709.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 712-713.

¹⁶⁷ TNA, PRO, SP 1/57 f. 75 (LP IV, iii, 6346); SP 1/143 ff. 74-74v (LP XIV, i, 285).

¹⁶⁸ T. M. Parker, 'Was Thomas Cromwell a Machiavellian?', *JEH*, I (1950), pp. 63-75.

in-Parliament.¹⁶⁹ The writings of Marsilius of Padua have therefore been seen as a stronger influence on Cromwell than Machiavelli by many of these scholars.¹⁷⁰ Although the *Defensor pacis* was certainly used by Cromwell to defend government policy, this was primarily for anti-papal purposes, and there is no indication that he was personally taken with its arguments.¹⁷¹

Looking for a set of all-encompassing principles or an ideology in Cromwell's actions is far too neat and probably unrealistic. Cromwell was nothing if not a political animal by nature, and many of his actions and policies in the 1530s were surely responses to events or circumstance, rather than the implementation of some master plan based on a set of governing principles. It is odd, however, that the most formative area of Cromwell's life – his background in the law – has been so neglected by historians. As this thesis has shown, throughout the 1520s Cromwell was first and foremost a lawyer; and his work for Wolsey illustrates that he was something of a stickler for procedure and due legal process.¹⁷² Having entered the king's service through his assistance with the legal transfer of Wolsey's college lands, Cromwell then became a councillor and one of the Crown's legal agents on a series of land exchanges. It was only following this, having demonstrated his skills and qualities, that his work for the king broadened along with his career. And yet, still, even after Cromwell had emerged into a position of extraordinary political influence, when Hans Holbein came to paint Cromwell in c. 1533, it was demonstrably the lawyer which he chose to capture [Figure 1].

¹⁶⁹ Elton, 'Political Creed', in Elton, *Studies*, ii. 215-235.

¹⁷⁰ Elton, 'Political Creed', in Elton, *Studies*, ii. 227-230; Elton, *Reform and Renewal*, p. 65; Williams, *Cardinal and the Secretary*, p. 173; Beckingsale, *Thomas Cromwell*, p. 7.

¹⁷¹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/83 f. 52 (LP VII 423); SP 1/83 f. 51 (LP VII 422). See above, pp. 184-185.

¹⁷² See, for example, his letter to Thomas Arundel on the progress of Wolsey's college. In this Cromwell gave instructions that Wolsey 'must not in any wise procede to therrection of his saide colledge in Gipswiche, before the xxi. daye of Julye next coming, for asmuche as thoffices in the Chauncerie shall not expire, vnto the full accomplishment of iii Monethes vntill the saide xxi Daye, nor his grace cannot haue the Syte and circuyte of the late Monastori of Saynct Peter suppressed, vpon the whiche the saide colledge muste be erected by thordres of the lawe of thie londe before the saide xxi Daye. TNA, PRO, SP 1/49 f. 1 (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 317; LP IV, ii, 4441).

Chapter Seven

The Break with Rome

Existing accounts of Thomas Cromwell's rise have customarily placed considerable emphasis on his role in Henry VIII's break with Rome. Two of the earliest commentators on this subject, Cardinal Reginald Pole and John Foxe, both recounted a momentous first meeting between king and minister during which Cromwell suggested that Henry should end his allegiance to Rome and settle the validity of his first marriage in England.¹ Even though the veracity of these accounts is questionable,² later historians also argued that Cromwell was the architect behind the Anglo-papal schism. R. B. Merriman accepted Pole and Foxe's accounts and saw the 'important services' that Cromwell provided the king with during the divorce as crucial in his becoming chief minister.³ It was Elton, however, who was most vociferous in arguing that the break with Rome was Cromwell's innovative solution to the king's marital problem.⁴ For Elton, the years 1529-32 were 'years without a policy', with neither the king nor his counsellors capable of solving the conundrum of how to proceed.⁵ Elton attributed what he saw as a radical shift in royal policy in 1532 as coinciding with Cromwell's growing importance as a member of Henry's council.⁶ Although he had rightly emphasised the importance of Cromwell's administrative hack-work when discussing his rise to prominence on the

¹ *LP XIV*, i, 200 (p. 82); Van Dyke, 'Reginald Pole and Thomas Cromwell', p. 706; Foxe, *Acts and Monuments* (1570 edn.), p. 1348.

² See above pp. 70-71 for a discussion of Foxe and Pole's accounts. Also see the comments by Chapuys, who reported a similar meeting between the king and Cromwell, but did not attribute the policy of a break with Rome to the minister, *CSP, Spanish*, V, i, 228.

³ Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 89-92.

⁴ Interestingly, despite never wavering in his belief that Cromwell was the man behind the break with Rome, Elton initially dismissed the accounts of Pole and Foxe as unreliable. In later years, however, he decided to accept them. See *Tudor Revolution*, p. 73-76 and *Reform and Reformation*, p. 136 and n. 12.

⁵ Elton, *England under the Tudors*, p. 122.

⁶ Elton, 'King and Minister', in Elton, *Studies*, i. 177 & 186.

Council,⁷ for Elton it was Cromwell's responsibility for the idea of schism which was crucial in securing the king's confidence. This was vital in his emergence as chief minister, and something which Elton believed Cromwell 'first secured in the year 1532' through his plan to resolve the king's great matter.⁸

Few historians now would subscribe to the view that Cromwell was responsible for the concept of an Anglo-papal schism. Graham Nicholson and John Guy have both shown that the intellectual origins behind this were being formulated well before Cromwell's ascendancy, and G. W. Bernard has demonstrated that there was a good deal more consistency to Henry VIII's efforts to secure a divorce than is generally thought.⁹ Nevertheless, if Cromwell is no longer seen as the originator behind these ideas, the important part he played in the break with Rome, particularly in drafting the various Reformation statutes, is still largely undisputed and seen as decisive in his own rise to power.¹⁰ This is in spite of the fact that there is still no convincing account of his precise role in all of this. Two of the most notable historians to have discussed Cromwell in relation to these events have both performed complete reversals on their earlier positions. Guy initially followed Elton's interpretation that the change in royal policy regarding the praemunire attack on the Church in 1530-31 was Cromwell's doing, before later changing his mind.¹¹ Similarly Elton himself, although resolute in his belief that Cromwell conceived the idea of schism, was forced to drastically modify his chronology of when Cromwell

⁷ Elton, *Tudor Revolution*, pp. 89-90 & 97.

⁸ Elton, *England under the Tudors*, pp. 128, 129; Elton, *Reform and Reformation*, pp. 152-156; Elton, *Thomas Cromwell*, p. 11.

⁹ G. Nicholson, 'The Act of Appeals and the English Reformation', in C. Cross, D. Loades & J. Scarisbrick, eds., *Law and Government under the Tudors: Essays Presented to Sir Geoffrey Elton* (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 19-31; J. Guy, 'Intellectual Origins', pp. 213-233; G.W. Bernard, 'The Pardon of the Clergy Reconsidered', *JEH*, 37 (1986), pp. 262-275; Bernard, *King's Reformation*, pp. 30-68.

¹⁰ Haigh, *English Reformations*, pp. 111-116; Guy, *Public Career*, pp. 130-138, 175-201; *Tudor England*, pp. 124-134; Brigden, *New Worlds*, pp. 117-118. Although note Scarisbrick's more measured assessment of Cromwell's role in *Henry VIII*, pp. 302-304, and his perceptive remarks that 'Cromwell's coming and the new decisiveness of royal policy were perhaps not so much related as cause and effect as, both of them, effects of the same cause' (p. 313).

¹¹ Guy, *Public Career*, pp. 136-138; 'praemunire manoeuvres', pp. 481-503.

unveiled this, in order to suit the findings of one of his own research students.¹² In his later writings, Elton presented Cromwell as providing the solution to the king's great matter as early as 1530.¹³

This chapter is therefore intended to establish the first comprehensive account of Cromwell's role in the break with Rome, while also assessing how significant these events were in the unfolding of his own political career. To do this it will not offer yet another narrative of the break with Rome itself, but will instead focus on Cromwell and the aspects of royal policy connected to this with which he was involved. Between 1530 and 1534 this primarily included drafting much of the legislation connected with the schism, the production and dissemination of 'propaganda' justifying the king's actions, and the enforcement of the government's policy in the localities. Throughout all of this Cromwell's role as the innovative force will be scrutinised. To what extent was he formulating aspects of the divorce policy during these early years, or was he merely implementing it? Is it misleading to attribute the break with Rome as being entirely the product of king and minister? And just how significant was the Anglo-papal schism to Cromwell's own political rise?

Legislating Schism

In July 1530 charges of praemunire were brought against fifteen members of the English Church, marking the opening stages in a struggle for supremacy which would continue throughout the next few years. Eight bishops and three abbots were among those cited to appear in King's Bench at Michaelmas. In a possible act of defiance, however, nine of these failed to appear, and the case was postponed. When these matters were resumed in early 1531 the entire Canterbury convocation felt sufficiently threatened to

¹² The student was Dr G. Nicholson, whose PhD thesis 'The Nature and Function of Historical Argument in the Henrician Reformation' (Cambridge University PhD thesis, 1977) demonstrated that a group of scholars had prepared a manuscript with historical precedents proving that the king had the authority to settle his first marriage domestically. His findings are more accessibly summarised in Nicholson, 'The Act of Appeals and the English Reformation', pp. 19-31. They are also accepted and discussed in Guy, *Public Career*, pp. 131-134; *Tudor England*, pp. 110, 128, 133; 'Intellectual Origins', pp. 213-233.

¹³ Elton, *Reform and Reformation*, pp. 136-138.

agree to pay the king a £100,000 'subsidy' in return for a pardon.¹⁴ Although it is unclear whether a general charge of praemunire was ever levied against the clergy as a whole (technically impossible, as they were not a corporate entity), there can be no doubt that there was a 'shift in emphasis'.¹⁵ The original charge brought against the fifteen clerics in 1530 had been for abetting and complying with Wolsey's legatine authority; the pardon eventually granted in March 1531 absolved the entire English clergy for the illegal exercising of their spiritual jurisdiction.¹⁶ Cromwell himself has been put forward as the mastermind behind this transformation in royal policy. According to Elton, Cromwell saw in the early charges a more ambitious opportunity, and implemented a decisive change in strategy: threatening the whole clergy with praemunire, with the intent of emphasising the king's authority over them.¹⁷ In support of this argument, Elton noted Cromwell's comments to Cardinal Wolsey in a letter from 21 October 1530: 'the Parlyment ys prorogyd [vntil the] vi daye of January. The prelattes shalnot appere [in the] premunire Ther ys Another way deuysyd in [place thereof] as your grace shall Ferther know'.¹⁸ These remarks do indeed suggest that Cromwell was aware of some change in how the government intended to proceed. But whether this change referred to *the* change which actually occurred is less clear, and must be called in to doubt given that Guy has put forward a convincing enough case that there was no dramatic shift in emphasis until early 1531.¹⁹

What is significant here, however, is that whoever or whatever lay behind the decision to alter the framing of the praemunire manoeuvres, there

¹⁴ For a detailed narrative and analysis of these events see J. Scarisbrick, 'The Pardon of the Clergy, 1531', *HJ*, 12 (1956), pp. 22-39; *Henry VIII*, pp. 273-276; Guy, 'praemunire manoeuvres', pp. 481-503; Bernard, 'pardon of the clergy reconsidered', pp. 258-282.

¹⁵ Guy, 'praemunire manoeuvres', pp. 489-490; Cf. Scarisbrick, 'Pardon of the Clergy', pp. 27-28

¹⁶ TNA, PRO, E135/8/36; *Statutes of the Realm*, iii, 22. Henry VIII. c. 15. Also see TNA, PRO, SP 1/56 ff. 57-84v (*LP* IV, iii, 6047 [3]), incorrectly placed in 1529 in *LP*.

¹⁷ Elton, *Reform and Reformation*, pp. 140-144. Also see the earlier comments in P Hughes, *The Reformation in England* (London, revised edition, 1963), p. 227, who similarly believed Cromwell was behind the plan.

¹⁸ BL, Cotton MS, MS, Appendix L f. 81 (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 334; *LP* IV, iii, 6699).

¹⁹ Guy has argued that the change occurred after January 1531, 'Praemunire Manoeuvres', pp. 488-492. It should be noted, however, that Guy's argument largely hinges on the accuracy of Edward Hall as an eye-witness to these events. For Hall's comments see, *Chronicle*, p. 774.

is nothing whatsoever to link Cromwell with this decision. Although Scarisbrick and Guy disagree with one another over when the shift in royal policy occurred, both were in agreement that Cromwell played no part in formulating this.²⁰ Guy correctly highlighted that there is no evidence suggesting that Cromwell ‘was anything more than Henry VIII’s executive agent in 1530 and 1531,’²¹ while Scarisbrick questioned whether Cromwell would have had sufficient influence to impact on these events at such an early point in his royal career.²² This study has in fact gone further, demonstrating that Cromwell was preoccupied with the Crown’s landed interests during these early months, and was not entrusted with the implementation of government policy until the second half of 1531. What Cromwell’s remark to Wolsey the previous October does suggest is that he was by then close enough to the centre of power to be sufficiently aware of the threats and rumours against the Church.

Cromwell did, however, play a minor role in the manoeuvres which immediately followed in Convocation during early 1531. The southern clergy had convened at St. Pauls’ on 12 January to address the threats against its members; it was transferred to the Chapter House of Westminster Abbey on the 19th, where it responded to recent events and grudgingly offered the king £100,000 in return for a pardon, the confirmation of clerical rights and a clear definition of praemunire. It was in a rejoinder to this that the king demanded to be recognised as ‘supreme head of the English church and clergy’, and several of the king’s councillors attended Convocation during a critical week in early February when the king’s new conditions were being debated.²³ Cromwell was one of the Council members in attendance on 10 February, and he held a private conversation with Archbishop Warham on the king’s behalf.²⁴ For Elton, Cromwell’s ‘decisive appearance’ was enough to prove ‘who stood behind the policy of subduing the clergy by forcing them to buy a pardon and make

²⁰ In contrast to Guy, Scarisbrick believed that the change must have come in late 1530, and cited Cromwell’s comments as evidence for this. See ‘Pardon of the Clergy’, pp. 27-28. He appears, however, to somewhat contradict himself with remarks on p. 29.

²¹ Guy, ‘Praemunire Manoeuvres’, p. 502.

²² Scarisbrick, ‘Pardon of the Clergy’, p. 29

²³ Oxford, Christ Church Library, MS 306 ff. 33-36; David Wilkins, *Concilia Magnae Britanniae et Hiberniae*, (4 vols., London, 1737), iii . 725.

²⁴ CCL, MS 306 f. 34.

sweeping concessions'.²⁵ But the accounts of Convocation make it plain that many of the king's councillors attended during this crucial week, and took part in the arm twisting.²⁶ Francis Atterbury, working from Convocation records now lost, states that between 7-12 February 'at least seven or eight Menacing Messuages were sent from the King by the Great Men of the Law, or by some of his Privy Councillors and Nobles'.²⁷ Cromwell was therefore one of many sent to cajole the clergy, and it is far from clear that he played any notable role.²⁸ Indeed, given that he had only joined the Council less than two months before, it was undoubtedly the king's leading councillors – Norfolk, Gardiner and Wiltshire – who were coordinating these efforts.

A letter showing Cromwell's handling of the northern Convocation in May 1531 was cited by Scarisbrick and Kelly in general support of the notion that Cromwell had an ill-defined hand in the pardon.²⁹ Elton also alluded to this in order to strengthen his overarching argument that Cromwell masterminded a dramatic change in royal policy.³⁰ But the letter in question, although dated to 1531 in *Letters and Papers*, was actually sent to Cromwell in May 1533, and does not relate to these events.³¹ Another letter, however, which

²⁵ Elton, *Reform and Reformation*, pp. 143-144.

²⁶ CCL, MS 306 ff. 34-36; Wilkins, iii. 725; Scarisbrick, 'Pardon of the Clergy', p. 33

²⁷ Francis Atterbury, *The Rights, Powers, and Privileges of an English Convocation* (London, 1701), p. 83.

²⁸ When discussing this critical week in Convocation, Lehmborg suggested that it was most likely Cromwell or Thomas Audeley who was responsible for the clause 'as far as the word of God allows', which was added to the king's newly claimed title to make it more palatable to Convocation. No justification or evidence was given for this conjecture, and as Lehmborg himself acknowledges, 'we do not know who suggested this saving clause'. John Fisher, bishop of Rochester, is the generally accepted figure. See Lehmborg, *Reformation Parliament*, p. 114.

²⁹ Scarisbrick, 'Pardon of the Clergy', p. 29; M. Kelly, 'The Submission of the Clergy', *TRHS*, 5th Series (1965), p. 119 n. 1; The York Convocation had agreed to follow its southern counterpart and granted the king a subsidy of £18,840 on 4 May 1531. See A. G. Dickens, 'The Northern Convocation and Henry VIII', *Church History Quarterly*, 127 (1938), p. 86; *Statutes of the Realm*, iii, 23. Henry VIII. c. 19.

³⁰ 'We recall the decisive appearance of Cromwell in Convocation. We conclude that we know who stood behind the policy of subduing the clergy by forcing them to buy a pardon and make sweeping concessions. Cromwell really proved the point in May when he managed the parallel surrender of the northern Convocation', See Elton, *Reform and Reformation*, pp. 143-144

³¹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/65 f. 239 (*LP* V 224). This letter is discussed in its proper context below, p. 281. But for its re-dating see and compare it with Rowland Lee's letter to Cromwell, SP 1/75 f. 179 (*LP* VI 398). Evidently the editors of *LP* realised their mistake because it was later placed in its proper chronological position in *LP* VI 431. Nevertheless it was cited incorrectly by Scarisbrick in 'Pardon of the Clergy', p. 29 n. 35; and in Kelly, 'Submission of the Clergy', p. 119 n. 1. Kelly

was not cited by any of these historians, could be used tentatively to suggest Cromwell's involvement with the pardon through his handling of the northern synod. This was sent from Brian Higdon, dean of York, and William Strangways, the vicar-general there, on 14 May 1531. They told Cromwell that they had

recevyd your lettres In the favour of the lord of sanct Johns that the church belonging to [the] said lord of sanct Johns might bee [sic] the conuocation here bee discharged of making to the kynges subside...wee dyd ovr best to move...the clergie assembled In this conuocation to aylowe the pryuyleges and chartres wuch wher exhybytyt In the conuocation as suffycynnt for discharge...but aysuredlie the clergie wold In noo wyse consent.³²

In an earlier letter then, Cromwell had requested that the Crown's ecclesiastical agents in the north make arrangements in Convocation for an exemption from the praemunire fine, which might just be used to support the notion that Cromwell was overseeing the whole matter. It will be remembered, however, that Cromwell had been one of four councillors who had concluded terms with St John's of Jerusalem, London, for a land exchange on the king's behalf on 30 May 1531.³³ It would be better therefore to see Cromwell's request to Higdon and Strangways as an agreement which the prior of St John's had extracted when negotiating the terms of this exchange. Cromwell was neither formulating nor executing the arrangements of either clergy's pardon during these months; instead he was a middle-ranking councillor who could secure concessions from influential figures who were. Cuthbert Marshall's letter to Cromwell thanking him for 'laboring to the Kinges highnes' that he should not be exempt from the pardon granted to the York Convocation in April 1531 similarly supports these conclusions.³⁴ Cromwell's first notable involvement with these matters did not in fact occur until August 1531, when several of the

also cited *LP* V 225 alongside this letter. This is correctly dated to 1531, but does not refer to Cromwell, being a summary of the meeting of the northern Convocation.

³² TNA, PRO, SP 1/65 f. 244 (*LP* V 327).

³³ TNA, PRO, SP 1/66 ff. 13-17 (*LP* V 264). This indenture is corrected by Cromwell. For the details of this see above, p. 100.

³⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 1/237 f. 25 (*LP* Add, I, i, 732).

instructions which the king ordered him to deliver to the Council concerned the conclusion of individual clerical fines for praemunire offences.³⁵ From December 1531 onwards Cromwell then began to receive some of these personal fines on the king's behalf.³⁶

The important role Cromwell has been accorded in the break with Rome is largely based on the fact that he drafted, corrected or amended a great deal of the parliamentary legislation which would help to implement it. Cromwell's first involvement with this, however, did not occur until 1532, after he had worked his way up to a prominent position on the Council. It was early in that year that Edward Hall recollected that an act had been made in parliament 'that Bysshops shoulde pay no more Annates or money for their Bulles to the Pope'.³⁷ These annates (or first fruits) were payments made to Rome when bishops were appointed to their sees. Although they usually amounted to little more than £4,500 p.a.,³⁸ the threat to cut this revenue off was a clear attempt to provide the king with a financial and symbolic bargaining chip in his struggle with the papacy. A parliamentary petition, lamenting the 'uniuste exactions' of annates, had ostensibly initiated this legislation. The petition even urged the king to withdraw himself and his people from obedience to Rome entirely should the pope launch any process in retaliation.³⁹ Given the eventual opposition to the annates bill in both the Lords and the Commons, this petition was almost certainly a government initiative, promoted in parliament by the king's men, among whom Cromwell was probably one.

Nevertheless, the idea of using annates as a means of enacting financial pressure had not emerged with Cromwell. As early as December 1529, well before Cromwell had started to work for the king, Henry had remarked to

³⁵ BL, Cotton MS, Titus B I ff. 483-484 (*St. P. I.*, p. 380; *LP V* 394).

³⁶ See above, pp. 145-147. Also see TNA, PRO, SP 1/69 f. 143 (*LP V* 849); SP 1/72 f. 8 (*LP V* 1506); SP 1/78 f. 100 (*LP VI* 960), for examples of Cromwell dealing with problems of collecting this fine from 1532 onwards.

³⁷ Hall, *Chronicle*, p. 785; *Statutes of the Realm*, iii, 23. Henry VIII. c. 20.

³⁸ J. J. Scarisbrick, 'Clerical Taxation in England, 1485 to 1547', *JEH*, 11 (1960), pp. 44-49; Elton, *Reform and Reformation*, pp. 148-149.

³⁹ BL, Cotton MS, Cleopatra E VI ff. 274-275 (Wilkins, iii. 760-761; *LP V* 721 [5]).

Chapuys that 'He was...about to undertake the annats',⁴⁰ hinting that the idea of threatening papal revenue was already being mooted. Cromwell's involvement in 1532 was patently that of a legal draughtsman. Corrections in his hand can be found alongside others on an early draft of the act,⁴¹ while Elton also drew attention to a draft clause, wholly in Cromwell's hand, which he thought was probably the 'origin' of the act itself.⁴² Given that this draft clause delayed the decision on the cessation of paying annates to Rome until Easter 1533, it might be more logical to see this as a subsequent amendment to the bill, conceded in order to ease its passage through parliament in the face of opposition. Cromwell himself was unsure about the bill's chances, remarking to Gardiner in January how 'thys day was Redd in the higher house a bill touching the Annates of busshopriches to what ende or effecte it will succede suerlie I know not'.⁴³ Chapuys similarly reported opposition to it in both Houses,⁴⁴ and Henry VIII had to personally attend parliament on three occasions to ensure the act's passage. Several of those in opposition 'for fear of the King's indignation went over to the King's side, and in this manner was a majority obtained'.⁴⁵ No doubt Cromwell, sitting as MP for Taunton, was vocally active on the king's behalf. But nothing suggests his involvement with the annates act was anything more than as the executor of the royal will, drafting and amending the legislation, and helping to secure its passage through parliament.

Far greater importance, both in terms of the practical resolution of the royal divorce, and in Cromwell's own rise under the king, is often placed on his role in the Commons' Supplication against the Ordinaries. This began in the same parliamentary session as the annates, and, according to Hall, emerged from spontaneous grievances in the lower house against ecclesiastical officials who exercised jurisdiction in church courts (Ordinaries). Hall recounted how,

⁴⁰ CSP, Spanish, IV, i, 224.

⁴¹ TNA, PRO, E175/7 ff. 1-12 (LP VI 721 [6]). Cromwell's corrections, which are not noted in LP or by Elton, can be found on ff. 11 & 12.

⁴² BL, Harley MS. 6849 ff. 60-61; G. R. Elton, 'A note on the first Act of Annates', *BIHR*, 23 (1950), pp. 203-204.

⁴³ TNA, PRO, SP 1/69 f. 40v (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 343; LP V 723).

⁴⁴ CSP, Spanish, IV, ii, 907, 922, 926.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 926.

After Christemas the. xv. Daye of January the Parliament began to sytte, & amongst dyuers griefes which the Commons were greued with, they sore complained of the crueltie of the Ordinaries...this matter and other Exactions done by the Clergy in their Courtes were long debated in the Common House.⁴⁶

Yet the chronicler's recollections were dismissed by Elton, who argued that Chapuys remark that 'nothing had been done in parliament' at the end of February suggest these grievances did not emanate from the Commons.⁴⁷ Instead, Elton put forward a detailed argument that Cromwell, having witnessed first-hand the anti-clerical sentiment in parliament during 1529, kept the petitions produced in the first session, and resurrected them in the third in 1532.⁴⁸ On Elton's reading, the Supplication was a government initiated masterminded by Cromwell, and its overriding purpose was to illicit a response from the clergy, which would culminate in the loss of their independent law-making jurisdiction.

Chapuys' silence, however, is insufficient proof of the goings-on in parliament. After all, he was still unaware of the Supplication on 20 March, again writing that no important measure had been discussed besides the annates act.⁴⁹ Yet this was two days after the Supplication had in fact been presented to the king. Moreover, Elton's proof for Cromwell's role largely rested on the basis that his hand was to be found on drafts of the Commons' complaints, several of which he also argued should be re-dated. Five drafts

⁴⁶ Hall, *Chronicle*, p. 784. The duke of Norfolk's remarks about 'the Infenye clamors of the temporaltie here in parl[a]ment agaynst the mysusyng of the sprytuell juriesdiccion' at the end of February 1532 also adds some support to Hall's account. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/69 f. 121 (*St. P. VII.*, p. 349; *LP V* 831).

⁴⁷ *CSP, Spanish*, IV, ii, 907. Bernard has noted that the original manuscript housed in Vienna is slightly different to the summary given above, and reads 'nothing had been settled in their Parliament'. See Bernard, *King's Reformation*, p. 61. Also see similar remarks from Chapuys about little occurring in parliament in *CSP, Spanish*, IV, ii, 899.

⁴⁸ G. R. Elton, 'The Commons' Supplication of 1532: Parliamentary Manoeuvres in the Reign of Henry VIII', *EHR*, 66 (1951), pp. 507-534; reprinted in Elton, *Studies*, ii. 107-137. Also see Elton's later comments on these events in *Reform and Reformation*, pp. 150-6.

⁴⁹ *CSP, Spanish*, IV, ii, 922.

survive, which Elton designated A, B, C₁, C₂, D, and E.⁵⁰ Drafts A, B, C₁ and C₂, which all contain corrections by Cromwell, were claimed by Elton to belong to the 1529 session.⁵¹ D and E, by contrast, were thought to have been produced by the government in 1532. D, in particular, contained corrections by Cromwell, and Elton believed this preceded the first appearance of the Supplication in parliament, having been produced in Cromwell's office from the earlier petitions.⁵² According to Elton, 'Cromwell himself took up the idea of attacking the church through its courts', and having seen 'where Henry's actions were leading him', Cromwell 'prepared a plan which he put into practice as soon as he convinced the king of its efficacy'.⁵³

The problem with Elton's argument is that there is no convincing reason to date drafts A and C₁ to the first session of the Reformation Parliament, or to think that D was produced before these matters emerged in the Commons in 1532.⁵⁴ Drafts B and C₂, however, are more difficult to date with certainty. Corrected by Cromwell, B was concerned with the excessive fees charged by the officials of ecclesiastical courts for probate of testaments, and would fit with the anti-clerical grievances aired in the first session of the Reformation parliament.⁵⁵ So, too, would C₂, a copy of B, incorporating Cromwell's corrections, and containing further amendments by him.⁵⁶ The complaints in these regarding the excessive charges for probate of wills might suggest both

⁵⁰ A = TNA, PRO, SP 2/L ff. 181-182 (*LP V* 1016 [3]); B = SP 1/56 ff. 39-42 (*LP IV*, iii, 6043 [7]); C₁ = SP 6/7 ff. 93-101 (*LP V* 1016 [4]); C₂ = SP 6/7 ff. 102v-105 (*LP V* 1016 [4]); D = SP 2/L ff. 171-180 (*LP V* 1016 [2]); E = SP 6/1 ff. 86-95 (*LP V* 1016 [1]).

⁵¹ Elton, 'Commons' Supplication', p. 520.

⁵² *Ibid.*, pp. 511 & 520.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 521 & 523.

⁵⁴ J. P. Cooper, 'The Supplication against the Ordinaries Reconsidered', *EHR*, 72 (1957), pp. 621 & 629. Certainly the reference in C₁ to Henry as 'the onely hed souereigne lorde protectour' (TNA, PRO, SP 6/7 f. 100v; *LP V* 1016 [4]) makes it highly unlikely that this was composed before 1531 when the king had extracted the title 'supreme head'. Elton argued that A was of 1529 because of its reference to an act 'lately devised' limiting the number of proctors in the Court of Arches to ten. See SP 2/L f. 181 (*LP V* 1016 [3]). An ordinance to this effect was made by Warham in March 1528, and Elton thought the remarks 'lately devised' made more sense if written in 1529 rather than 1532 (Elton, 'Supplication', p. 518). Although this would seem a reasonable conclusion, C₁ and D, both of which were drawn up in 1532, also refer to Warham's ordinance devised 'now of late'. See SP 6/7 f. 94v (*LP V* 1016 [4]); SP 2/L f. 75 (*LP V* 1016 [2]).

⁵⁵ TNA, PRO, SP 1/56 ff. 39-42 (*LP IV*, iii, 6043 [7]); Hall, *Chronicle*, p. 766.

⁵⁶ TNA, PRO, SP 6/7 ff. 102v-105 (*LP V* 1016 [4]). It is printed in Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 109-111.

were written before the 1529 act which tried to regulate this.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, a date of 1532 cannot be ruled out, particularly if the act of 1529 was ineffective. Indeed, this would be a prerequisite in accepting Elton's wider argument: it is difficult to see how Cromwell could have resurrected grievances about probate from 1529 if these were not still perceived to be a genuine problem. Ultimately, the drafts of the supplication are frustratingly inconclusive, but, with no convincing reason to discount Hall's testimony about the spontaneity of these complaints, Elton's assertions require a tremendous leap of faith for acceptance.

Despite this, however, they have enjoyed notable support. Haigh, Ives and Redworth have all broadly endorsed Elton's conclusions.⁵⁸ John Guy went even further, arguing that the king himself was unaware of Cromwell's plan, and suggested that the minister tricked parliament into believing that Henry supported the grievances, not only to deprive the Church of its independence, but also to enable Cromwell to personally triumph over his conservative opponents on the Council.⁵⁹

But Cromwell's role is better understood not as some scheming politician but as one of those who helped compile what were spontaneous grievances in 1532, before they were submitted to the king. Hall recollected that after the Commons had raised these matters 'it was concluded & agreed, that all the griefes...shoulde be putte in writyng and delyuered to the Kyng, whiche by great aduyce was done'.⁶⁰ As one of the king's councillors, who also sat in parliament, Cromwell was ideally placed to act as a channel of communication between the Crown and the lower chamber. It is also significant that Cromwell's close associate, Thomas Audeley, the Speaker of the Commons, acted in a similar capacity. Audeley corrected draft D, before personally delivering the final petition to the king before Easter.⁶¹ That both Cromwell and Audeley made corrections to the drafts very much suggests that they were

⁵⁷ *Statutes of the Realm*, iii, 21 Henry VIII. c. 4; 21 Henry VIII. c. 5.

⁵⁸ Haigh, *English Reformations*, pp. 111-115; Redworth, *In Defence of the Catholic Church*, p. 35; E. Ives, *The Life and Death of Anne Boleyn* (Oxford, 2004), p. 153. So too did Beckingsale, *Thomas Cromwell*, pp. 33-36 and Williams, *Cardinal and the Secretary*, pp. 11-115.

⁵⁹ Guy, *Public Career*, p. 175-201.

⁶⁰ Hall, *Chronicle*, p. 784. My italics for emphasis.

⁶¹ TNA, PRO, SP 2/L ff. 171-180 (LP V 1016 [2]); Hall, *Chronicle*, p. 784.

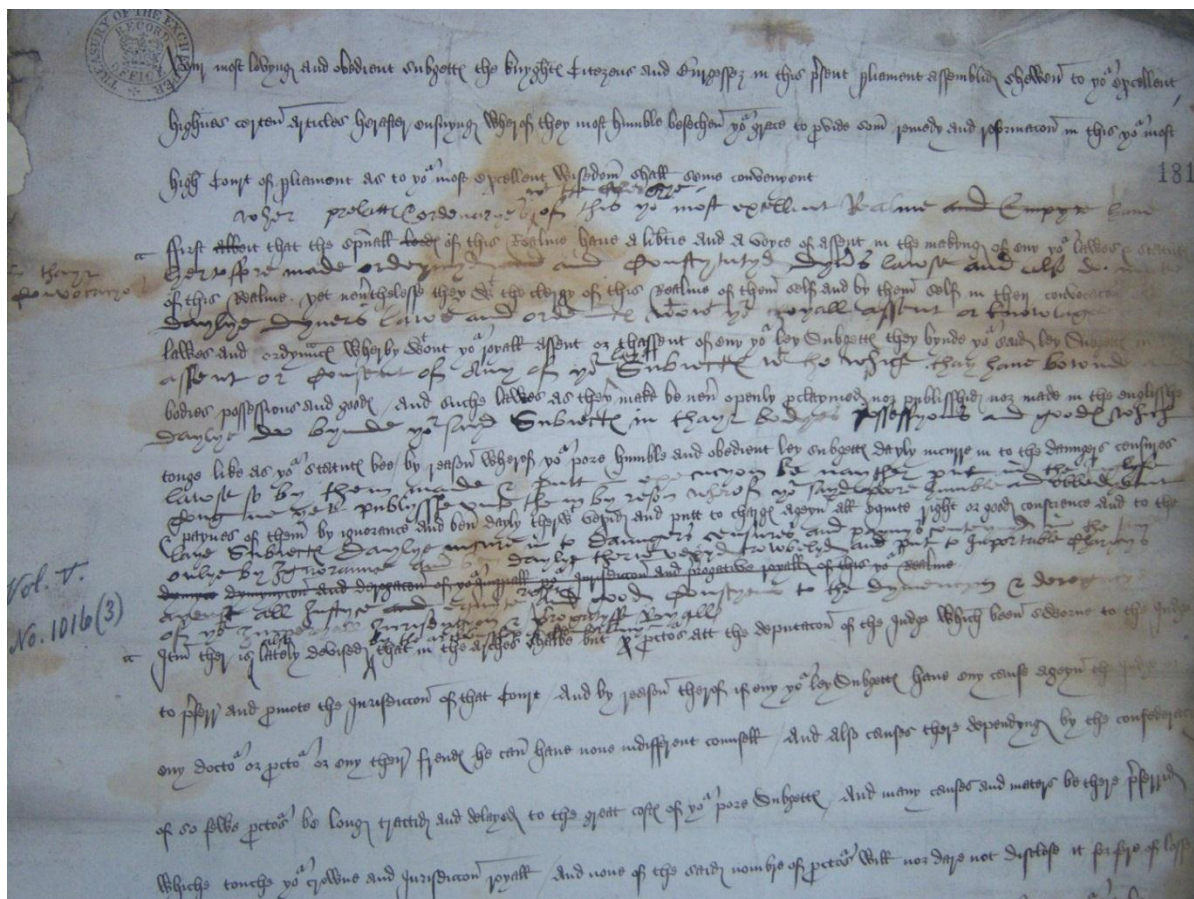


Figure 9: Clerical grievances corrected and amended by Cromwell. It is interesting to note that Cromwell wrote and then struck out the work 'Empyre'

TNA, PRO, SP 2/L f. 181 (LP V 1016 [3]). Elton's draft A.

reacting to the issue as it arose, rather than producing the Supplication themselves [see Figure 9].⁶² An analysis of Cromwell's alterations also strengthens this conclusion. In draft B, for instance, when Cromwell amended part of the petition complaining of the excessive fees charged by officials of ecclesiastical courts for probate of testaments, he softened some of the language used, presumably to make the petition more palatable to the king.⁶³ Indeed, the claim that church officials took bribes was subsequently dropped entirely by Cromwell in C₂. Above all, despite Cromwell's modifications, the Supplication in its final form remains a 'remarkable miscellany of grievances'.⁶⁴ If the principal aim of the Supplication was to deprive the clergy of their independent law-making jurisdiction, it was a poor attempt at making this case.

The king's reaction to the Supplication adds further weight to the argument that it was not a government initiative. What has not been sufficiently recognised is that, on receiving the petition from Audeley, Henry did not seize on it and proceed against the Church; instead he agreed to act as an arbitrator between the Commons and clergy, but *only* if the Commons would look favourably on the contentious bill of uses.⁶⁵ Bernard suspects that Henry's unenthusiastic stance on receiving the Supplication was 'play-acting', and that the king quickly realised how the Commons' grievances might be turned to his advantage in his struggle against the Church.⁶⁶ But what is striking is just how much emphasis Hall placed on Henry's concern for the passage of the statute of uses, suggesting that this was of far greater importance

⁶² Bernard, *King's Reformation*, p. 60.

⁶³ For instance, Cromwell amended the following passage to read as follows: 'So many judges scribes apparitours somoners...and other mynistres for the approbation of testaments ~~which like a sorte of Rauenous Wooluys nothing elles attending but~~ *which coueting somoche there onelie pryuate Lucre and the satisfaction of the couetous and Insatiable* of the appetites of the said prelates and ordinaries...take... ~~suche~~ *suche* so large excessiue fees bribes and rewardes for the same...ayenst all Justice law equitye and good consciens'. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/56 f. 39v (LP IV, iii, 6043 [7]). Italics signify additions in Cromwell's hand.

⁶⁴ Bernard, *King's Reformation*, pp. 60-61; Kelly, 'Submission of the Clergy', p. 105. The Supplication in its final form is: TNA, PRO, SP 6/1 ff. 85-95 (LP V 1016 [1]). It is printed in A. Ogle, *The Tragedy of the Lollards' Tower: Its Place in History, 1514-1533* (Oxford, 1949), pp. 324-330.

⁶⁵ Hall, *Chronicle*, pp. 784-785.

⁶⁶ Bernard, *King's Reformation*, p. 62.

to him at this point.⁶⁷ It might be misleading to view every royal action during these years as being one-dimensionally focused on the divorce. The salient point is that it was only *after* receiving Convocation's reply to the Supplication that the king became concerned with the matter, remarking to Speaker Audeley that 'we thynke their answeare will smally please you, for it semeth to vs very slender'.⁶⁸ Perhaps Henry and his closest councillors, including Cromwell, were again reacting to events when they subsequently took action against the Church. After all, the clergy had not only denied the charges brought against them, but they also went further, defending Church liberties and their right of clerical independence.⁶⁹ Such a resolute defence would have alarmed an unsuspecting king, undermined the acknowledgement Henry had extracted in 1531, and alerted him to the likelihood that his clergy were not yet sufficiently submissive.

On such a reading, Cromwell's role in the Supplication itself appears limited. Yet his close involvement in the government's response cannot be doubted. In early May, having been enraged by the clergy's reply, Henry sent demands to Convocation that they were not to enact laws without the royal assent.⁷⁰ At the same time pressure was increased on the Church in parliament, with the king telling eight members of the House of Lords, a dozen members of the Commons and Speaker Audeley how

we thought that the clergie of our realme, had been our subiectes, yea, and scace our subiectes: for all the Prelates at their consecracion, make an othe to the Pope, clene contrary to the othe that they make to vs, so that they seme to be his subiectes, and not ours.⁷¹

John Foxe associated this useful argument with Cromwell, who he thought had made it

⁶⁷ Hall, *Chronicle*, pp. 784-785.

⁶⁸ Hall, *Chronicle*, p. 788.

⁶⁹ Wilkins, *Concilia*, iii. 750-752.

⁷⁰ TNA, PRO, SP 6/9 ff. 104-104v (LP VI 276 [2]).

⁷¹ Hall, *Chronicle*, p. 788.

manifest vnto his highness, how his princely authoritie was abused within his owne realme, by the Pope and hys Clergie, who beyng sworne vnto hym, were afterward dispensed from the same, and sworne a new vnto the Pope, so that he was but halfe a king, & they but halfe his subiectes.⁷²

Given the scepticism already raised over the reliability of Foxe, these assertions alone would carry little weight, and the likelihood is that the king's actions were in response to the bishops, who had told Henry they could not support his divorce because they were sworn not to oppose the pope.⁷³ Foxe's claim does, however, find some support from Cromwell's own papers, among which were at least two copies of 'the othes of the prelates made to the pope'.⁷⁴ Evidently if Cromwell did not personally formulate this argument, he was certainly one of those involved in deploying it in parliament, and the intent behind this was to persuade its members to 'inuent some ordre' so that the king 'bee not thus deluded' of his spiritual subjects.⁷⁵ The 'ordre' envisaged was probably a bill, two drafts of which survive, both corrected by Cromwell, which the government presumably introduced following the clergy's oath having been read there. The bill was similar in tone and intent to the articles of submission sent to Convocation simultaneously in May.⁷⁶ In particular, it specified that no ordinance made in Convocation would take effect unless ratified by parliament, and also contained incidental remarks about Convocation being 'called by the kynges wrytte...as hathe be acostumed'.⁷⁷ The introduction of this bill hints, as Kelly has suggested, that the government intended to proceed simultaneously against the clergy in both Convocation and parliament, before abandoning the

⁷² Foxe, *Acts and Monuments* (1570 edn.), p. 1348.

⁷³ CSP, *Venetian*, IV, 761.

⁷⁴ TNA, PRO, E36/143 ff. 28, 35 (LP VI 299).

⁷⁵ Hall, *Chronicle*, p. 788.

⁷⁶ TNA, PRO, SP 2/L ff. 72-74 (LP V 721 [1]), this draft also contains additions by Audeley; SP 2/P ff. 10-12 (LP VII 57 [2]), misdated in LP, it is of 1532. Also note the similarity in passages of these drafts with the wording of the famous preamble to the appeals act: 'the said prelatis rulers ~~and~~ mynistres and other spirituall subiecttes to gethers with the nobelles nobylite and lay comens of this realme...make and contayne but one body poletik lyving vnder the alegyauns obediens tucion and defens of the kinges Roiall maiestie being ther only suppreme Emperiall hede and souerayn...', SP 2/P f. 10 (LP VII 57 [2]).

⁷⁷ TNA, PRO, SP 2/P f. 12 (LP VII 57 [2]); SP 2/L f. 74 (LP V 721 [1]).

latter following their submission on 16 May.⁷⁸ Cromwell, who was present as one of five councillors who witnessed the clergy's surrender to the king, was patently closely involved with these events.⁷⁹ Frustratingly, his precise role, beyond that of parliamentary draughtsman, remains unclear.

For both Elton and Guy the Supplication against the Ordinaries and the surrender of the clergy were crucial in Cromwell's becoming Henry VIII's chief minister. It was through these events, Elton argued, that 'Cromwell had gained the king's ear, and for the next eight years he was to be, next to Henry, the most powerful man in England'.⁸⁰ Similarly for Guy, Cromwell had not only won 'the factional battle for control of...Henry VIII's policy', but he had also eliminated a political rival in Sir Thomas More, who resigned as Lord Chancellor within hours of the clergy surrendering to the king.⁸¹ But the suggestion that by the end of May 1532 Cromwell was established as Henry's leading minister is incorrect, as the concluding chapter of this thesis will show. Similarly, the notion that Cromwell had deliberately planned the removal of his alleged rivals not only exaggerates the factional divisions among Henry's councillors, but also suggests a level of prescience on Cromwell's part which is patently unlikely, and certainly unsupportable from the evidence.

Nevertheless the Supplication, or perhaps more specifically, the clergy's response to it, was significant in the development of Cromwell's own career in one notable respect. It severely diminished the king's trust in Stephen Gardiner, bishop of Winchester, who had been acting as the king's secretary since 1529. It was Gardiner who had drafted Convocation's initial response to the Supplication, and either as a result of a severe misunderstanding of Henry's attitude toward his clergy, or perhaps through a genuine belief in the need to stand up for the Church's independence, Gardiner produced a resolute answer which was met with strong royal disapproval.⁸² As a result the bishop went into

⁷⁸ Kelly, 'Submission of the Clergy', p. 113, esp. n. 3.

⁷⁹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/70 ff. 29-31v (LP V 1023).

⁸⁰ Elton, 'Commons' Supplication', p. 533.

⁸¹ Guy, *Public Career*, pp. 201-202.

⁸² *The Letters of Stephen Gardiner*, ed., J. A. Muller, (Cambridge, 1933), pp. 48-49.

exile from court and took some time to regain Henry's trust.⁸³ It is not an endorsement of the view that the Henrician Court was riddled with factional scheming to say that Cromwell undoubtedly benefited from Gardiner's temporary loss of royal favour. In early 1532 Cromwell was a leading member of the King's Council and one of the royal servants charged with managing parliament. Gardiner, by contrast, was a far more significant figure about the king, and was even allowed to amend royal dispatches as he saw fit.⁸⁴ In January 1532, while Gardiner was in France on a diplomatic mission, Cromwell wrote to the bishop telling him how the king deeply regretted Gardiner's absence, which Henry lamented as 'the lacke of my right hand for I am now so moche pestred with busynes and haue no bodie to rydde ne depeche the same'.⁸⁵ Not only do these remarks reveal that Gardiner had been handling many of the king's closest matters, but they also show that Cromwell was not yet Henry's man-of-business. By losing Henry's trust during the Supplication, Gardiner would offer the ambitious and hard-working Cromwell the opportunity to replace him as one of the king's most trusted servants.

And certainly by 1533, Cromwell had succeeded in doing so. From the beginning of that year the minister was overseeing the final stages of Henry's quest for a divorce. On 5 February the Imperial Ambassador reported that 'one of the principal members of the Privy Council' had assembled a number of doctors, churchmen and lawyers, and had showed them a document asserting that Queen Catherine had been 'cognue' by Arthur, and so her second marriage to the king was null and void.⁸⁶ Chapuys did not mention Cromwell by name in this dispatch, and in fact never did so until 15 February 1533. Nevertheless it was almost certainly Cromwell whom he was referring to here. Had it been another leading figure on the Council, such as Norfolk or Wiltshire, both of whom the ambassador frequently mentioned by name, Chapuys would undoubtedly have said so. This meeting had been convened by Cromwell to prepare the way for the new archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer, to pronounce on the

⁸³ TNA, PRO, SP 1/70 f. 35 (*St. P.* VII., p. 370; *LP* V 1025).

⁸⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 1/69 ff. 67-67v (*LP* V 742).

⁸⁵ TNA, PRO, SP 1/69 f. 41 (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 344; *LP* V 723).

⁸⁶ *CSP, Spanish*, IV, ii, 1047.

king's marriage to Catherine. Its outcome was that those assembled agreed 'that the King, by the authority of the archbishop of Canterbury, legate of England, ought to carry out his undertaking at once'.⁸⁷

Debates were also held in the southern Convocation toward the end of March to prepare the way for Cranmer to do this. Conclusions were passed there in favour of the king on several thorny questions on which the divorce had long hinged.⁸⁸ Cromwell was presumably closely involved with these debates; he certainly oversaw the passage of parallel conclusions on the same matters in the northern synod in April and May. Thomas Magnus, archdeacon of the East Riding, told him on 21 April how Rowland Lee had 'shewed vnto me the kinges mooste gracious pleasure and your aduertisementes for my going northwards to the convocacion at yorke'.⁸⁹ Magnus was to assist Lee there in getting the northern clergy to agree to the same conclusions as its southern counterpart had, and he continued to keep Cromwell informed on his progress in doing this.⁹⁰ Brian Higdon, dean of York, and Cuthbert Marshall, archdeacon of Nottingham, were two other prelates whom Cromwell instructed to ensure Convocation's compliance.⁹¹ Marshall, in particular, told Cromwell how 'acordingly to your desir I haue not onli condescendid...to ye passing of certain conclusions in the conuocacion...but also did sollicit other takyng and remouing scrupilles out off ther consciens'.⁹² In all of this Cromwell's involvement as the Crown's executive agent is clear. What is interesting are the methods he employed. Several royal agents based permanently in the north worked under his direction cajoling other clergy, while books and carefully prepared writings were sent there in an attempt to persuade reluctant members of the validity of the Henry's case.⁹³ Cromwell dispatched one of his

⁸⁷ CSP, *Spanish*, IV, ii, 1047.

⁸⁸ H. A. Kelly, *The Matrimonial Trials of Henry VIII* (Stanford, 1976), pp. 198-200. These included: whether it was lawful for a man to marry his deceased brother's wife; had Catherine's marriage to Prince Arthur been consummated; and did the pope have any dispensing powers in these matters?

⁸⁹ BL, Cotton MS, Cleopatra E VI f. 257 (LP VI 361).

⁹⁰ BL, Cotton MS, Caligula B III f. 169 (LP VI 486).

⁹¹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/75 f. 179 (LP VI 398); SP 1/65 f. 239 (LP VI 431); SP 1/76 f. 25 (LP VI 452); SP 1/76 f. 46 (LP VI 487).

⁹² TNA, PRO, SP 1/76 f. 46 (LP VI 487).

⁹³ TNA, PRO, SP 1/76 f. 25 (LP VI 452); SP 1/76 f. 46 (LP VI 487).

most trusted associates, Rowland Lee, to oversee these affairs personally.⁹⁴ He also used a promotion as a reward for a man who had greatly assisted Lee in these matters.⁹⁵

During the early months of 1533 Cromwell was also busy preparing the famous act in restraint of appeals. Introduced in parliament on 14 March, and finally passed in April,⁹⁶ this act has long been seen as another important stage in the break with Rome, and one in which Cromwell played a formative part. 'The act against appeals was his act', argued Elton, 'it embodied his political thought': namely, a belief in the 'theory of the imperial crown of England sovereign within its own realm over both laity and church'.⁹⁷ It is certainly true that Cromwell was instrumental in drafting and correcting much of the appeals act. His handwriting can be found on several early versions of it,⁹⁸ and he also presumably played some part in navigating the bill through parliament, although Elton's claim that he devised a meeting with leading churchmen in order to appease them on points likely to generate hostility seems unlikely.⁹⁹ But it does not necessarily follow that the draughtsman of an act need be the originator of the concepts and ideas embodied within it.¹⁰⁰ More recent scholarship suggests that the concepts which Elton claimed came uniquely

⁹⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 1/76 f. 49 (*LP VI* 491).

⁹⁵ TNA, PRO, SP 1/78 f. 46 (*LP VI* 912); SP 1/78 f. 47 (*LP VI* 913).

⁹⁶ *CSP, Spanish*, IV, ii, 1056.

⁹⁷ G. R. Elton, 'The Evolution of a Reformation Statute', *EHR*, 64 (1949), pp. 195, 197. Reprinted in Elton, *Studies*, ii, 82-107.

⁹⁸ The drafts corrected by Cromwell are as follows: TNA, PRO, SP 2/N ff. 48-58 (*LP VI* 120 [7]), Elton's draft C; SP 2/N ff. 59-67, 69 (*LP VI* 120 [7]), Elton's draft D; SP 2/N ff. 70-82 (*LP VI* 120 [7]), Elton's draft E; SP 2/N ff. 83-95 (*LP VI* 120 [7]), Elton's draft F; SP 2/N ff. 96-101 (*LP VI* 120[8]), Elton's draft G; SP 2/Q f. 115 (*LP VII* 1611 [2]), Elton's Fig. 3. The remaining drafts are: SP 2/N ff. 28-38 (*LP VI* 120 [7]), Elton's draft A; SP 2/N ff. 39-47 (*LP VI* 120 [7]), Elton's draft B; BL, Cotton MS, Cleopatra E VI ff. 185-200 (*LP VI* 120 [6]), Elton's draft H; SP 2/N ff. 102-104 (*LP VI* 120 [9]), Elton's Fig. 1; SP 2/N ff. 105-106 (*LP VI* 120 [9]), Elton's Fig. 2; SP 2/N ff. 67a-68 (*LP VI* 120 [7]), Elton's Fig. 4.

⁹⁹ Elton claimed a list of abbots and prominent members of the clergy, drawn up by one of Cromwell's clerks, was intended for Cromwell to choose the members of this alleged meeting. The list offers no indication of its purpose, or why it was drawn up, but Elton tried to link it with the meeting Cromwell convened on 5 February discussed above. Chapuys was clear enough on why this meeting was called, and his assessment fits the context of the events which unfolded. Nevertheless Elton felt the ambassador's information 'misleading or incomplete', and claimed that this meeting must have been devised to discuss the appeals act. See Elton, 'Evolution', pp. 190-192; the list is TNA, PRO, SP 1/74 f. 150 (*LP VI* 150). D. MacCulloch also accepted Elton's argument, *Cranmer*, p. 85.

¹⁰⁰ Bernard, 'Elton's Cromwell', pp. 111-113; Guy, 'Intellectual Origins', p. 220.

from Cromwell were already part of the wider intellectual discourse of the time.¹⁰¹ Moreover, it was Henry VIII himself – and not Cromwell – who on one early version of the appeals act, re-inserted remarks previously removed which stated that both temporal and spiritual jurisdiction proceeded ‘off and frome the sayd imperiall crowne’.¹⁰² The king’s remarks were again removed in a subsequent draft.¹⁰³

Another intriguing point which Elton was quick to play down was that the earliest version of the act of appeals was not drafted by Cromwell at all, but by his close associate, Thomas Audeley.¹⁰⁴ This ‘abortive predecessor’ was written wholly in Audeley’s hand, in contrast to the later drafts of the appeals act which are merely corrected by Cromwell. Audeley’s draft would have enabled the two English archbishops – or ‘oon of theym’ – to pronounce on Henry’s first marriage domestically, and it specified that if the pope issued any censures in response, these were ‘not [to] be obeyed allowed Accepted admytted nor executed within this realme’. Moreover, any person who appealed to Rome against the archbishops’ decision was liable under the statute of provisors.¹⁰⁵ Audeley’s bill even referred to ‘the Imperiall crown of this realme’.¹⁰⁶ Many of these points would of course have echoes, not only in the act of appeals itself, but also in how the king’s great matter was finally resolved. If responsibility can be proportioned solely on the basis of drafting legislation alone, then perhaps Audeley deserves similar credit to that which Elton accorded Cromwell.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰¹ Guy, ‘Intellectual Origins’, pp. 213-233; M. R. J. Everett, ‘Without recognisance of any superior’: Henry VIII and Imperial Kingship, 1509-1533’ (University of Southampton MA thesis, 2009), pp. 8-23.

¹⁰² TNA, PRO, SP 2/N f. 84 (LP VI 120 [7]), Elton’s draft F; BL, Cotton MS, Cleopatra E VI f. 185 (LP VI 120 [6]), Elton’s draft H. Cf. Elton, ‘Evolution’, p. 183.

¹⁰³ TNA, PRO, SP 2/N f. 60 (LP VI 120 [7]), Elton’s draft D; cf. Elton, ‘Evolution’, p. 184.

¹⁰⁴ See Elton’s comments on *Ibid.*, pp. 177-178.

¹⁰⁵ TNA, PRO, SP 2/N ff. 148-154v (LP VI 311 [4]). The editors of *Letters and Papers* wrongly describe this draft, and that which follows it, SP 2/N ff. 155-156v (LP VI 311 [5]), as being in Cromwell’s hand. They were both written by Audeley.

¹⁰⁶ TNA, PRO, SP 2/N f. 149 (LP VI 311 [4]).

¹⁰⁷ It should also be noted that Audeley was not only involved with the appeals act, but also with several other bills connected with the Anglo-papal schism. It will be recalled that he had also drafted part of the Supplication against the Ordinaries and personally delivered these grievances to the king. Like Cromwell, he had also amended the bill introduced in parliament following the clergy’s oath to the pope being read there. In August 1533 he was also instructed

Contrary to previous thought, Cromwell's formative part in the appeals act was in the detail of the act itself. Although Elton was greatly concerned with the novel theory of empire he believed it proclaimed, it is all too easily overlooked that the appeals act was intended for a fundamentally practical purpose. It prevented all 'Causes of Matrimony and Divorces, rightes of Tithes Oblacions, and Obvencions' from going to Rome, in order to inhibit Catherine of Aragon from appealing there, and thereby enabling the validity of her marriage to the king to be settled in England.¹⁰⁸ As a result, a new appeals procedure was needed to replace that which the act revoked, and, unsurprisingly, much of the act outlined the process intended to replace the traditional appeals procedure to the papal curia. What seems significant is that, judging by the extent of Cromwell's corrections and amendments, it was these details with which he was mainly concerned. The drafts containing the famous preamble and the justification for the act only possess a few additions in Cromwell's hand, and these mainly served to tighten or re-word some of the phrasing [Figure 10].¹⁰⁹ By contrast, several detailed alterations were made by him to the new appeals process erected by the act.¹¹⁰ In one draft, for instance, an entire clause was devised and added by Cromwell specifying that matters affecting the king or his realm were now to go to the Convocation of the

to make the 'ratifications' to the act of annates, and in that year he drafted a parliamentary bill declaring that the clergy in Convocation had declared Henry's first marriage invalid. See TNA, PRO, SP 2/L ff. 171-180 (*LP* V 1016 [2]); Hall, *Chronicle*, p.784; SP 2/L ff. 72-74 (*LP* V 721 [1]); SP 1/78 f. 174 (*LP* VI 1049); SP 2/N ff. 155-156v (*LP* VI 311 [5]), this bill is written entirely in Audeley's hand, not Cromwell's, as specified in *LP*.

¹⁰⁸ *Statutes of the Realm*, iii, 24. Henry VIII. c. 12.

¹⁰⁹ There are only three drafts containing the famous preamble which also have corrections somewhere on the draft by Cromwell. Only in one of these drafts did Cromwell amend the preamble itself. In Elton's draft E, Cromwell corrected the spelling of the word 'stories' thus: 'Wher by dyuers sundry old autentike ~~stores~~ storyes and cronicles it is manifestlie declared...'; he also inserted the two words 'or provocation' into the phrase 'without restraynt apeale or provocation to any foreyn prynces' [Italics signify Cromwell's additions]. See TNA, PRO, SP 2/N f. 70 (*LP* VI 120 [7]). These were hardly notable inclusions or changes. Moreover, in the other two drafts which contain amendments by Cromwell, none were made by him to the preamble which supposedly embodies his political beliefs. See SP 2/N f. 48 (*LP* VI 120 [7]), Elton's C; SP 2/N f. 59 (*LP* VI 120 [7]), Elton's D. The only detailed amendment Cromwell made to the beginning of the act was in Elton's draft C, where he inserted a fairly lengthy piece of rhetoric justifying it. See SP 2/N f. 51 (*LP* VI 120 [7]), Elton's C.

¹¹⁰ TNA, PRO, SP 2/N ff. 91, 92, 93 (*LP* VI 120 [7]), Elton's draft F; SP 2/N f. 54 (*LP* VI 120 [7]), Elton's draft C; SP 2/N f. 67 (*LP* VI 120[7]), Elton's draft D.

province concerned [Figure 11].¹¹¹ As Elton himself noted, it was only when Cromwell got to work on the procedural part of the act ‘that real changes were made’.¹¹² And yet, despite outlining Cromwell’s changes in great detail, Elton did not grasp the significance of all this.¹¹³ If responsibility for any aspect of the act can be proportioned solely to Cromwell, then it was for the administrative and technical details erected by the act, rather than for some intangible theory of national sovereignty.

Once the appeals act was in place, archbishop Cranmer could finally pronounce on the validity of Henry VIII’s first marriage. A court was held by Cranmer at Dunstable to do this, and Cromwell was kept regularly informed on its proceedings.¹¹⁴ Once a verdict declaring the king’s marriage invalid had been reached, Cromwell then began preparations for the coronation of Henry’s new queen, Anne Boleyn. Spread over four days, and including a water pageant, processions through the City and a great banquet in Westminster Hall, the queen’s coronation must have been an operational and logistical nightmare.¹¹⁵ Hall records that ‘great preparacion was made for all thynges necessary for suche a noble triumph’,¹¹⁶ and Cromwell himself was engaged with much of this. One of his remembrances from 1533 reminded him ‘to devyse for the coronacyon and to see presendmenttes for the same’,¹¹⁷ while several letters suggest he was arranging the guest list, and ordering the preparation of presents.¹¹⁸ The reconstruction of new royal apartments at the Tower of London, where the king and queen would lodge during these festivities, had also been overseen by him.¹¹⁹ He even recorded ‘the coronacyon of queen Anne’ on his list

¹¹¹ TNA, PRO, SP 2/N f. 93 (LP VI 120 [7]).

¹¹² Elton, ‘Evolution’, p. 186.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 186-189.

¹¹⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 1/75 f. 84 (LP VI 333); BL, Cotton MS, Otho CX f. 165 (LP VI 496); SP 1/76 f. 57 (LP VI 501); BL, Cotton MS, Otho CX f. 163v (LP VI 461); BL, Cotton MS, Otho CX f. 164 (LP VI 497); BL, Cotton MS, Otho CX f. 165 v (LP VI 527); TNA, PRO, SP 1/76 f. 82 (LP VI 525); SP 1/75 f. 153 (LP VI 368). Also see the note among Cromwell’s remembrances, which reminded him to have ‘the judgement...preparyd...In the Kynges gret matyr’. See SP 1/76 f. 4v (LP VI 423).

¹¹⁵ Hall, *Chronicle*, pp. 798-805; Ives, *Life and Death of Anne Boleyn*, pp. 172-183; Bernard, *Anne Boleyn*, pp. 67-71.

¹¹⁶ Hall, *Chronicle*, p. 798.

¹¹⁷ TNA, PRO, SP 1/76 f. 4v (LP VI 423).

¹¹⁸ TNA, PRO, SP 1/76 f. 62 (LP VI 505); SP 1/76 f. 81v (LP VI 521); SP 1/76 f. 119 (LP VI 554).

¹¹⁹ Colvin, *King’s Works*, iii. 266-267.

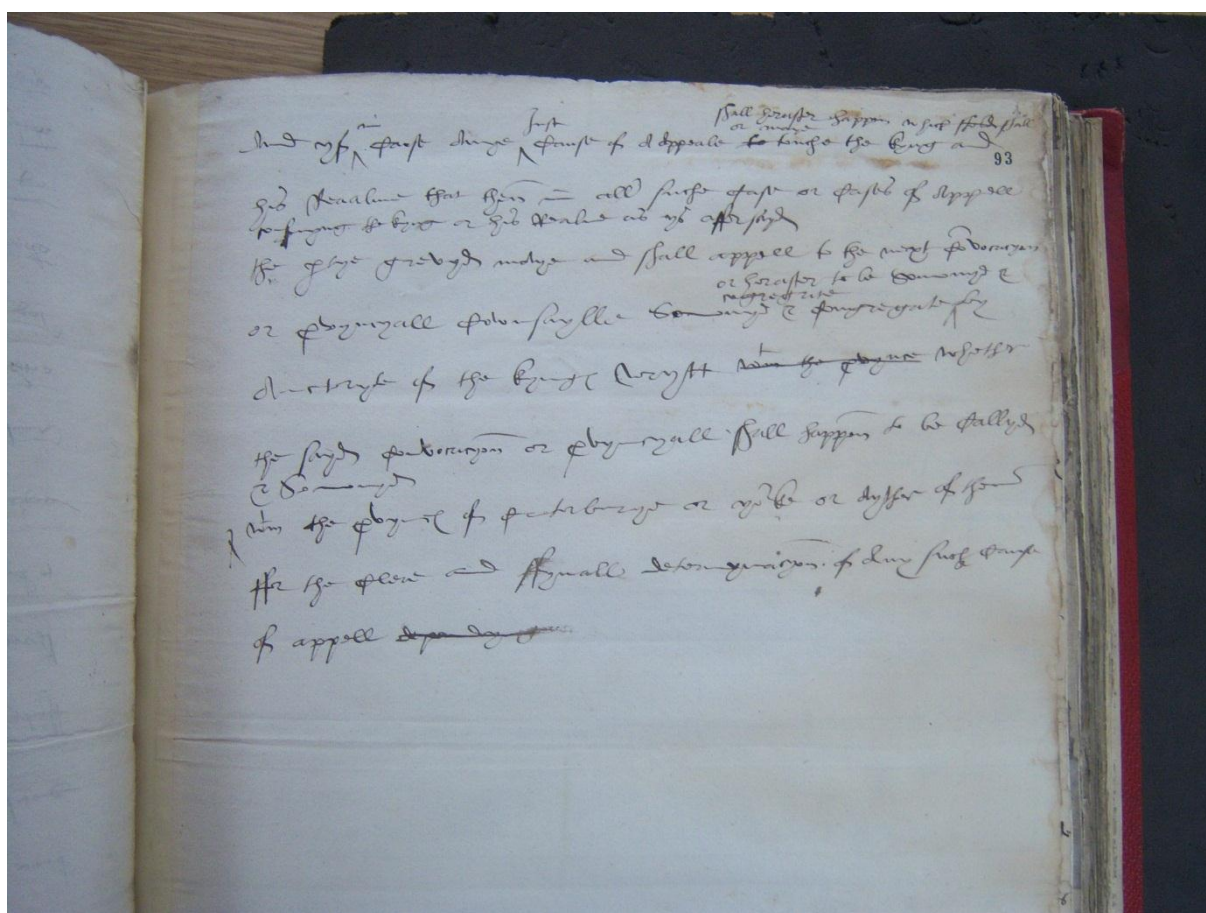


Figure 11: A clause added by Cromwell to the act of appeals relating to the new appeals process (Elton's draft E).

TNA, PRO, SP 2/N f. 93 (LP VI 120 [7]).

of things done since entering the king's service.¹²⁰ Of course, Cromwell was not responsible for all of this single-handedly; hundreds of people were involved, including many of the City of London's guilds and corporations.¹²¹ Nevertheless, Sir Anthony Browne, writing to Cromwell only days after these events, noted that

the honorablle crowen[ing] of the Qwens grace, wych was so honorably doon, that lycke has not byn sene be fore...was not a lyttyl to your prayes in my myend / for I am sewer ther was none that had the payen and trabell that yow...have.¹²²

Judging by Browne's remarks, Cromwell was thought responsible for much of the coronation's success. The event is therefore further proof that he was by then Henry's factotum, and a testimony to his organisational abilities.

Although by 1533 Cromwell was overseeing almost every aspect of the king's great matter, it is important to note that other royal councillors were also highly active, and worked closely with one another. From the very beginning Henry VIII's quest for a divorce had been a 'team' effort. Virginia Murphy has shown that a group of scholars were working on arguments in support of the king's position as early as 1527, while Guy has argued a similar group was behind the production of the *Collectanea Satis Copiosa*, a piece of research used to substantiate many of Henry VIII's bold claims toward the English Church.¹²³ That collaboration continued, and was pervasive among many of the king's closet servants and councillors, is neatly illustrated by a letter sent to Cromwell in 1533. In this Thomas Audeley informed him how

my lord of norffolk required me to wryte to you / For the Instrument concernyng the opynyons of doctors And other lerned men in the Kynges great

¹²⁰ TNA, PRO, SP 1/103 ff. 220v-221 (*LP* X 1231). See appendix 3.

¹²¹ Hall, *Chronicle*, p. 798.

¹²² TNA, PRO, SP 1/76 f. 198 (*LP* VI 631).

¹²³ V. Murphy, 'The Literature and Propaganda of Henry VIII's First Divorce', in D. MacCulloch, ed., *The Reign of Henry VIII: Politics, Policy and Piety* (Basingstoke, 1995), pp. 135-158; Guy, 'Intellectual Origins', pp. 215-216.

case he hath wrytten to my lord of Canterbury but it seyeth by report of my lord of Wiltshire that he hath them no[t] And if they be not with you / then they be supposed to be at yorke place or ells with doctor lee...the kynges pleasure ys that they shod with spede be sent to my lorde of Wynchester And if ye can Fynde them...send them to the court with spede.¹²⁴

What is noteworthy here is the high level of involvement of several notable figures – Norfolk, Audeley, Cromwell, Cranmer, Wiltshire, Lee and Gardiner – all of whom were so closely embroiled in Henry's great matter that no one was quite sure who possessed the sought after material. Another letter to Cromwell from Thomas Bedill, suggesting that the determination of the universities be looked over by Gardiner and Edward Foxe before being sent overseas for diplomatic purposes, also reinforces the impression of royal servants working together.¹²⁵ So too does a brief correspondence between Norfolk and Cranmer,¹²⁶ and a letter from Cromwell to Audeley in 1533 in which he had instructed the Lord Chancellor to make 'the ratificacions' to the act of annates.¹²⁷ All this is significant for two reasons. First, it helps to place Cromwell's role within its proper context. The divorce campaign was not simply a matter of king and minister working together; it had very much been a collective effort. More generally, however, it suggests that any factional division between councillors was not as pronounced during these years as previously thought. Although there plainly was a split between those who were prepared to follow official policy and those who would not, men such as Norfolk were prepared to work with Cromwell during the early 1530s.

Justifying and Enforcing Schism

Alongside his work drafting the statutes which would enable the break with Rome, Cromwell was also involved in the propaganda campaign which attempted to justify it. Since the beginning of his efforts to secure a divorce, the

¹²⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 1/75 f. 151 (*LP VI* 366).

¹²⁵ BL, Cotton MS, Otho CX f. 167v (*LP VI* 1062).

¹²⁶ *Works of Thomas Cranmer*, ii. 255, 256.

¹²⁷ TNA, PRO, SP 1/78 f. 174 (*LP VI* 1049).

king had employed scholars and polemicists to produce written works in favour of his position.¹²⁸ These were intended to persuade Henry's own subjects, and other European rulers, of the righteousness of his case.¹²⁹ Cromwell himself supported scholars who were producing official propaganda for these purposes. In December 1531 John Hastings remarked how 'yit hathe pleside you to be so gude to me that ye haue gote me a rowme yn the kings college in oxford off the kings grace'.¹³⁰ The following year he reminded Cromwell that 'y promyste to wrytte sumwhatt in the kynges matter...ye shall haue yit...sumtyme thys weyke or the nexte att the ferthyste'.¹³¹ Cromwell paid William Marshall for the production of the anti-papal tracts the 'Donation of Constantine' and the *Defensor pacis*.¹³² S. W. Haas has also claimed that Cromwell was 'almost certainly involved' with the treatise *A Document of the year 1531 on the subject of the Pope's supremacy*,¹³³ and with several tracts delivered to Convocation in February 1531.¹³⁴ Although there is no evidence connecting Cromwell to these works, the link is at least plausible given that Cromwell's first involvement with the attacks on the Church saw him working with Stephen Vaughan to locate useful writings which might support Henry's position.¹³⁵ It was Rochford, however, and not Cromwell, who introduced these works in Convocation,

¹²⁸ Murphy, 'Literature and Propaganda', pp. 135-158.

¹²⁹ Elton, *Policy and Police*, pp. 171-217; T. Sowerby, "'All our books do be sent into other countreys and translated": Henrician Polemic in its International Context', *EHR*, 121 (2006), pp. 1271-1299.

¹³⁰ TNA, PRO, SP 1/68 f. 96 (*LP V* 605).

¹³¹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/72 f. 57 (*LP V* 1575).

¹³² Above p. 184.

¹³³ S. W. Haas, 'Martin Luther's "Divine Right" Kingship and the Royal Supremacy: Two Tracts from the 1531 Parliament and Convocation of the Clergy', *JEH*, 31 (1980), p. 319. The *Document* is printed in N. Pocock, *Records of the Reformation: the Divorce, 1527-1533* (2 vols., Oxford, 1870), ii. 100-103.

¹³⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 6/2 ff. 81-83 (*LP V* 1022), misdated to 1532. See Lehmborg, *Reformation Parliament*, p. 114.

¹³⁵ TNA, PRO, SP 1/68 ff. 51-52 (*LP IV*, iii, 6429); SP 1/66 f. 47 (*LP V* 303); BL, Cotton MS, Titus B I ff. 373-373v (*LP V* 532); SP 1/68 ff. 51-52 (*LP V* 533); SP 1/68 f. 85 (*LP V* 585); BL, Cotton MS, Galba B X f. 2 (*LP V* 739); SP 1/69 f. 75 (*LP V* 753); BL, Cotton MS, Galba B X f. 37v (*LP V* 843); SP 1/80 f. 106 (*LP VI* 1448). It would appear English diplomats abroad more generally were also given instructions to source foreign works of potential use by the Crown. Nicholas Hawkins, Henry's ambassador in the Low countries, recollected how 'it was youre hines commandement, that we shuld seke owte suche bookis, as be found here de potestate papae. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/72 f. 48v (*St. P.* VII., p. 386; *LP V* 1564). In December 1532 he sent the king 'for youer Inglishe Dialogue [*Glass of Truthe*], a Dialogue for in smale eloquence latinised', while in 1533 he reported a book he had seen in Barcelona with an exposition on the crucial passage of Leviticus central to Henry's divorce. See SP 1/72 f. 154 (*LP V* 1660); *St. P.* VII., p. 487; *LP VI* 903.

underlining once again that Cromwell was still at that point a middle-ranking councillor.¹³⁶

Haas more credibly links Cromwell with the printing of the *Disputatio Inter Clericum et Militem* in mid-1531.¹³⁷ This had emerged in France during the thirteenth century, but by the sixteenth was mistakenly attributed to William of Ockham.¹³⁸ Stephen Vaughan had sent Cromwell 'The dyaloge of Okham' at the end of January 1531 as part of his official efforts to secure useful books.¹³⁹ By June of that year Chapuys was reporting to Charles V that 'After all the...defying of Papal authority...these people have only caused a small book to be printed in the form of a dialogue'.¹⁴⁰ The likelihood that this was the same work is clearly strong. Admittedly, the *Disputatio* was an anti-clerical tract, which called for the clergy to contribute to the defence of the realm, and advocated that if they did not, the privileges of the Church should be revoked by the secular ruler. But the 1531 and 1533 versions were deliberately edited to 'bolster the royal *imperium*'.¹⁴¹ Whether Cromwell had much role in its printing and promulgation, beyond acting as a middle-man between Vaughan in Antwerp and the royal Court in England, is unclear.

Cromwell's involvement with Henry VIII's *A Glasse of the Truth* the following year, however, cannot be doubted.¹⁴² Unlike the *Disputatio*, which was initially published in Latin before being re-printed in English, *A Glasse* was published in the vernacular from the outset, and was clearly intended for a much wider domestic audience. Along with the *Determination of the Universities*, published in November 1531,¹⁴³ *A Glasse of the Truth* was the most significant piece of propaganda produced by the government during these years. It outlined to its readers how the pope did not have the authority to dispense from divine scripture, or the right to settle a matter in Rome which

¹³⁶ Haas, 'Two Tracts', p. 318.

¹³⁷ STC 12510; S.W. Haas, 'The *Disputatio Inter Clericum Et Militem*: was Berthelet's 1531 edition the first Henrician polemic of Thomas Cromwell?', *Moreana*, 14 (1977), pp. 65-72.

¹³⁸ Haas, 'The *Disputatio*', p. 66.

¹³⁹ BL, Cotton MS, Galba B X f. 46v (LP V 65 [ii]).

¹⁴⁰ CSP, *Spanish*, IV, ii, 753.

¹⁴¹ Haas, 'The *Disputatio*', p. 67.

¹⁴² STC 11919; Pocock, *Records*, ii. 385-421.

¹⁴³ STC 14286.

should be heard in England. Instead, the *Glasse* advocated that parliament and the English archbishops should resolve the royal divorce.¹⁴⁴ This work was most likely in production by mid-1532.¹⁴⁵ On 17 September Cromwell was written to by Richard Croke, the sub-dean at Oxford, and told

after my departing vnto to yow Bartelot the printer shewed me that master Gooddrycke shulde aduertise hym to aduertise the kinge off certayne errors in the glasse of treuthe how beyt Bertelat tolde me that he wolde not...forasmuche as that he had mouyd the kinge in sutche mater aforetyme and perceuyd that his grace was not contente therewith.¹⁴⁶

Croke added that 'I thynke yt better to get ouht [sic] by policye the thynges that master goodrycke noteth whiche I dou[g]ht not but yowr wysdome can right wel do',¹⁴⁷ suggesting that Cromwell was closely involved with its production. Perhaps he had played some part in organising its printing; print was certainly a medium with which Cromwell was familiar.¹⁴⁸ A second letter from Croke also suggests that Cromwell was giving direction on the distribution of the polemic, having told the sub-dean to distribute copies at Oxford in order to persuade members of the university of the merits of the king's case.¹⁴⁹

Although Cromwell was by no means alone in these attempts to produce government propaganda,¹⁵⁰ by mid-1532 he was notably associated with these efforts. The warden of New College, Oxford, informed him in May that he had made 'serche in all the libraries in our contrie' for further learned opinions on

¹⁴⁴ Pocock, *Records*, ii. 385-421.

¹⁴⁵ For disagreements over the dating of the *Glasse* see: S. W. Haas, 'Henry VIII's *Glasse of Truthe*', *History*, 64 (1979), pp. 353-362; R. Rex, 'Redating Henry VIII's *A Glasse of the Truthe*', *The Library*, 7th Series, 4 (2003), pp. 16-27.

¹⁴⁶ TNA, PRO, SP 1/71 f. 36 (*LP V* 1320).

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ In 1523 Cromwell had arranged for the printing of 4,000 briefs from Richard Pynson, the king's printer, on behalf of Cromwell's friend John Robinson of Boston. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/27 f. 286 (*LP III*, ii, 3015). It was also in that year that he amended an indenture between John Palsgrave and Pynson for the printing of books. See SP 1/69 ff. 134-135v (*LP III*, ii, 3680 [1]). Also see SP 1/53 f. 176 (*LP IV*, iii, 5459).

¹⁴⁹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/71 ff. 48-48v (Ellis, 3rd Series, ii. 198; *LP V* 1338).

¹⁵⁰ The *Collectanea Satis Copiosa* and the *Determination of the Universities* are two of the most obvious examples of literature compiled by other royal servants.

the validity of the king's marriage, and his subsequent comment that Cromwell had 'herde many great lernyd men spek in thys cause and...redd manye of theyr doings wherby your gudde masterschipp ys riperlye instructe in thys mater' underlines that Cromwell was now close to the centre of attempts to justify the king's position.¹⁵¹ By the beginning of 1533 Cromwell was managing this battle for heart and minds. Thomas Berthelet, the king's printer, felt that Cromwell was a figure who might be in need of his particular skills, asking him to 'accept me...to your mastershipes seruice' in January of that year.¹⁵² Among the papers in Cromwell's possession was 'a boke resityng the powers of the pope made and noted with figures and handes' and 'iii rolles knyrt with a red silke point concernyng the kynges matter', along with many others which were produced to justify the king's position.¹⁵³ The actions of Sir George Lawson, treasurer of Berwick, are equally interesting. In May 1534 he had come across 'a table hangyng apone the walle' in York Cathedral on which were inscribed 'the reigne[s] of diuers kinges of this realme'. Amongst these Lawson 'found one lyne of a king that took this kingdom of the pope by tribute to hold of the churche of roome'. That Lawson sent Cromwell 'the ~~said~~ title therof as it was in the said table' underlines that contemporaries saw him as a figure responsible for collecting useful material.¹⁵⁴ Similarly when Nicholas Hawkins, the king's ambassador to the Low Countries, sent Henry foreign books on the pope's power in November 1532, he added that 'Crumwol' would need 'to finde an interpreter' for this.¹⁵⁵ Again, Cromwell was evidently perceived to be at the centre of these operations. Hawkins' remarks also explain why Christopher

¹⁵¹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/70 f. 41 (*LP V* 1032).

¹⁵² TNA, PRO, SP 1/74 f. 68 (*LP VI* 72).

¹⁵³ TNA, PRO, E36/143 ff. 2, 22 (*LP VI* 299). Other papers in Cromwell's possession by 1533 on these matters included: 'ii little bokes concerning the [kin]ges high matter', 'a mynute drawne by my master concernyng the kynges gret cause', 'a paper of articles resityng what power the pope hath', 'a paper of de potestate pape', 'a boke made with figures concernyng the kynges power Royall', 'a boke concernyng the popes power and whether one may applie from hym', 'the reason of sence of the bishop of winton concernyng the kynges cause', 'a boke written de potestate eccliastica', 'a paper concernyng the kynges high matter', 'a paper of Remembraunces concernyng the kynges gret cause', 'the opyneons and sayinges of Bisshopes written with there owne hands concernyng the kynges high matter'. See TNA, PRO, E36/143 ff. 2, 3, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 22, 23 (*LP VI* 299).

¹⁵⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 1/88 f. 142 (*LP VII*, app. 23).

¹⁵⁵ TNA, PRO, SP 1/72 f. 48v (*St. P. VII.*, p. 386; *LP V* 1564).

Mont was at work in Cromwell's house translating foreign works.¹⁵⁶ That he was paid by Cromwell using the king's money confirms these translations were for official reasons.¹⁵⁷

How effective were these propaganda efforts? To such a question, no straightforward answer is possible. Certainly efforts were made to ensure that favourable material was widely disseminated. Henry Falsted referred to 'certeyn bokes of the kynges print...putt forth among the kinges louyng subiectes' in March 1533.¹⁵⁸ Proclamations outlining the act of appeals were specified to be made throughout the realm, and the act itself was to be printed and pinned on every church door.¹⁵⁹ A preaching campaign which Cromwell was planning, with 'Deuyces' intended 'for the Bishshoppes to set fourth and preache the kings grete cause and also ayenst the censures',¹⁶⁰ seems likely to have been the most effective propaganda tool - at least in terms of the number of people who would actually hear the Crown's message. How all of this was received, however, is difficult to gauge. Richard Croke did tell Cromwell that when he had dispersed *A Glasse of the Truthe* at Oxford 'many by the reding off thys boke hathe here alteryd theyr stouburne and affectionate mynde towarde the contrarye'.¹⁶¹ But it is all too easy to assume that Crown propaganda was passively accepted. When Cromwell sent books north to persuade the northern clergy to pass conclusions in Convocation, Cuthbert Marshall told him 'i was not mouyd be [the] argumentes or reasoning' contained in these.¹⁶² There has been a tendency to see the sixteenth-century audience 'in a patronising way as mere objects to be manipulated, rather than as human beings to be coaxed and persuaded'.¹⁶³ In many cases, the king's subjects actually opposed what he was

¹⁵⁶ TNA, PRO, SP 1/80 f. 106 (LP VI 1448).

¹⁵⁷ TNA, PRO, SP 2/O f. 28 (LP VI 717).

¹⁵⁸ TNA, PRO, SP 1/83 f. 35 (LP VII 406).

¹⁵⁹ BL, Cotton MS, Cleopatra E VI f. 326v (LP VI 1486).

¹⁶⁰ BL, Cotton MS, Titus B I f. 420v (LP VII 418 [2]); SP 6/3 ff. 85v, 86v (LP VI 1487 [2])

¹⁶¹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/71 ff. 48-48v (Ellis, 3rd Series, ii. 198; LP V 1338).

¹⁶² TNA, PRO, SP 1/76 f. 46 (LP VI 487). Chapuys also reported that the Scottish ambassador was unimpressed with the anti-papal tract which Cromwell had shown him in January 1534, and claimed that rather than justifying himself in the eyes of his people, Henry had only succeeded in stirring up 'those among his subjects who were a little contaminated by Lutheranism' by circulating anti-papal tracts. See CSP, *Spanish*, V, i, 1.

¹⁶³ C.S.L. Davies, 'Representation, Repute, Reality', *EHR*, 124(2009), p. 1444.

doing, and, by implication, the arguments that the Crown put forwarded to justify it. Other, more coercive, methods were therefore required to ensure the break with Rome was successful.

Cromwell's role in enforcing the Anglo-papal schism is amply testified to by the contents of his correspondence. Reports of seditious speech and copies of books attacking the king were sent to him.¹⁶⁴ He was also kept informed on prisoners held in the Tower, and maintained a close eye on the licensing of preachers.¹⁶⁵ His efforts in doing all of this were once seen as the opening stages of a reign of terror which spanned the entire decade. R. B. Merriman, in particular, claimed that 'Early in 1532 Cromwell began to create a system of espionage, the most effective that England had ever seen...It was impossible to tell who the government spies were: impossible to know when or against whom the next accusation would be made'.¹⁶⁶ Such claims are insufficiently supported. Although it is true that in July 1533 Cromwell told the king that 'the Freres obseruantes that were with the prynces dowager...were first espied at ware by such espialles as I leyd for the purpose', this, and Norfolk and Cromwell's responsibility for sending spies to Scotland, are the only documented instance that Cromwell used spies.¹⁶⁷ By contrast Cromwell was written to by a variety of people who acted as informants, and no system, or even any obvious affiliation, emerges from the letters sent to him.¹⁶⁸ Instead, the picture which emerges is

¹⁶⁴ BL, Lansdowne MS 116 f. 53 (LP V 1142); TNA, PRO, SP 1/70 f. 142 (LP V 1143); SP 1/70 f. 180 (LP V 1208); SP 1/70 f. 220 (LP V 1259); SP 1/70 f. 221 (LP V 1260); BL, Cotton MS, Cleopatra E IV f. 12 (LP V 1371); BL, Cotton MS, Otho CX ff. 214-215 (LP VI 1253); BL, Cotton MS, Cleopatra E IV f. 34 (LP VI 116); SP 1/79 f. 51 (LP VI 1122); SP 1/81 f. 118 (LP VI 1664); SP 1/81 f. 131 (LP VI 1677); SP 1/82 f. 131 (LP VII 140); SP 1/83 f. 83 (LP VII 480); SP 1/83 f. 87 (LP VII 497); SP 1/77 f. 94 (LP VI 726); SP 1/78 f. 75 (St. P. VII., p. 489; LP VI 934); SP 1/78 ff. 34-35 (LP VI 899); SP 1/78 f. 36 (LP VI 900); SP 1/69 f. 77 (LP V 757); LP VI 1385.

¹⁶⁵ CSP, Spanish, IV, ii, 984, 986; SP 1/71 f. 133 (LP V 1458); SP 1/71 f. 106 (LP V 1432); SP 1/71 f. 143 (LP V 1467); Cranmer, *Complete Works*, ii, 252 (LP VI 868).

¹⁶⁶ Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i, 99, 116. This was a view shared by Innes, *Ten Tudor Statesmen*, p. 140; and Wilding, *Thomas Cromwell*, pp. 59, 89.

¹⁶⁷ TNA, PRO, SP 1/78 f. 25 (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i, 360-361; LP VI 887); BL, Cotton Cleopatra E VI f. 327v (LP VI 1487 [1]).

¹⁶⁸ Indeed, only two of those who wrote to Cromwell over the maintenance of law and order had an obvious association with him, and neither wrote on matters connected with the break with Rome. Simon Mountfort, who had known Cromwell since at least the mid-1520s, told him of a man whom was suspected of 'robyng' churches. William Popley of Bristol, another long-standing acquaintance, told him of the 'the felow that can coyne grotes' in 1533. For Mountfort

that the government was relying, as it always had, on the cooperation of magnates and gentry to maintain order in the regions, and report opposition. Such cooperation was of course mutually beneficial for the maintenance of law and order. Yet what motivated many in the localities to report ‘cedycyus & heynous wurdes’ spoken ‘Ayenst the kynges highness as Ayenst the quenes grace’ in the years surrounding the break with Rome was often a sense of allegiance and obligation toward the Crown itself.¹⁶⁹ When Sir Edward Guildford, lord warden of the Cinque ports, wrote to Cromwell about a ‘lewed prist’ who had been examined before the mayor and jurats of Rye, he referred to the words used by the priest ‘contrarie to his duetie of his allegiaunce to the kings highenes’.¹⁷⁰ Similarly when Sir Giles Strangway told Cromwell of people accused of speaking ill of the king and his new queen, he had felt it his ‘dewtye...to enforme yow as one of the kings moste honorable cowncell’.¹⁷¹

Murmurs of dissent in the regions and localities, however, were difficult to eradicate. Cromwell ordered Sir Piers Edgecombe to punish ‘by pyllory and stockes in markett places’ any person who spoke seditiously or opprobriously about Henry’s new queen, and this would have served as a warning as much as a punishment.¹⁷² Yet grumblings in the regions had to be reluctantly tolerated by a government which lacked the means to enforce its position there more thoroughly. In the debate over Cromwell’s wider ability to control and direct the efforts of the gentry in the localities, it is Helen Speight who convinces when arguing that the degree of control central government had was small, and that Cromwell often had little choice but to defer enforcement to local governors, who operated there with considerable independence.¹⁷³ Dissent in

see TNA, PRO, SP 1/66 f. 171 (*LP V* 360); SP 1/235 f. 2 (*LP Add I*, i, 465); SP 1/235 f. 70 (*LP Add I*, i, 490). For Popley see TNA, PRO, SP 1/75 f. 169 (*LP VI* 384); SP 1/76 f. 50 (*LP VI* 492); SP 1/23 f. 271 (*LP III*, ii, 1963); SP 1/236 ff. 344-354 (*LP Add I*, i, 705); SP 1/25 f. 140 (*LP III*, ii, 2461); SP 1/26 f. 57 (*LP III*, ii, 2577).

¹⁶⁹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/80 f. 10 (*LP VI* 1329).

¹⁷⁰ TNA, PRO, SP 1/238 f. 125 (*LP Add I*, i, 871). Guildford would ensure that the man ‘remayned in warde by my commaundment & at my cost & charge these iii wekis’, and would remain so until he knew Cromwell and the king’s pleasure. See SP 1/238 f. 155 (*LP Add I*, i, 879).

¹⁷¹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/83 f. 83 (*LP VII* 480).

¹⁷² TNA, PRO, SP 1/80 f. 171 (*LP VI* 1503).

¹⁷³ Robertson, “The art of the possible”, pp. 793-816; Speight, ‘Politics of Good Governmence’, pp. 623-638; Robertson, ‘A Reply to Helen Speight’, pp. 639-641.

the localities became a significant cause for alarm only if it became concentrated under local leadership. Regional magnates might provide this, although the nobility presented no such threat during the early 1530s.¹⁷⁴ Priests and friars preaching in villages and towns, and the religious orders more generally, were another group capable of inciting a more concentrated level of opposition. This explains why a high number of reports sent to Cromwell were concerned with seditious words spoken by preachers, and with the goings-on of suspected monastic houses.¹⁷⁵ It was also overwhelmingly recalcitrant priests and monks whom Cromwell instructed were to be 'put in safe keypyng' or 'commyttyd...to warde' by the Crown's agents.¹⁷⁶ In April 1534 he instructed one Henry Huttoft and the mayor of Southampton to arrest a Friar Observant preaching there, and to send him up to Cromwell in London.¹⁷⁷ Many more priests and monks were sent to him for examination and interrogation.¹⁷⁸ The suspicion must remain that dissenting members of the clergy were a significant cause for concern, given both their standing in society and their ability to quickly convey their opinions to a wide audience. The efforts to silence and discredit Elizabeth Barton, the Nun of Kent, are perhaps the most striking illustration of this.¹⁷⁹

There can be no doubt that when examining those sent to him, Cromwell was an extremely effective interrogator. Richard Gwent, a chaplain to the king, remarked to Cromwell in August 1533 that 'yff your interrogatories

¹⁷⁴ P. Williams, *EHR*, 88 (1973), pp. 594-595.

¹⁷⁵ TNA, PRO, SP 1/81 f. 131 (*LP VI* 1677); SP 1/82 f. 131 (*LP VII* 140); SP 1/83 f. 83 (*LP VII* 480); SP 1/238 f. 125 (*LP Add I*, i, 871); SP 1/80 ff. 10-10v (*LP VI* 1329); BL, Lansdowne MS 116 f. 53 (*LP V* 1142); BL, Cotton MS, Cleopatra E IV f. 34 (*LP VI* 116); SP 1/81 f. 118 (*LP VI* 1664); SP 1/81 f. 131 (*LP VI* 1677); SP 1/70 f. 142 (*LP V* 1143); SP 1/70 f. 180 (*LP V* 1208); SP 1/70 f. 220 (*LP V* 1259); SP 1/70 f. 221 (*LP V* 1260); BL, Cotton MS, Cleopatra E IV f. 12 (*LP V* 1371); SP 1/71 f. 172 (*LP V* 1497); SP 1/73 f. 114 (*LP V* 1738); SP 1/73 f. 114 (*LP V* 1739); SP 1/82 f. 130 (*LP VII* 139); SP 1/83 f. 175 (*LP VII* 580).

¹⁷⁶ TNA, PRO, SP 1/80 f. 10 (*LP VI* 1329); SP 1/80 f. 171 (*LP VI* 1503).

¹⁷⁷ TNA, PRO, SP 1/83 f. 70 (*LP VII* 448); SP 1/83 f. 71 (*LP VII* 450); SP 1/83 f. 81 (*LP VII* 472); SP 1/83 f. 82 (*LP VII* 473).

¹⁷⁸ TNA, PRO, SP 1/79 f. 80 (*LP VI* 1169); BL, Cotton MS, Titus B I f. 494 (*LP VI* 1194); SP 1/78 f. 25 (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i, 360-361; *LP VI* 887); SP 1/79 f. 62 (*LP VI* 1149); SP 1/82 f. 14 (*LP VII* 17).

¹⁷⁹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/78 ff. 25-25v (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i, 360-361; *LP VI* 887); SP 1/78 ff. 106-106v (*LP VI* 967); SP 1/79 f. 61v (*LP VI* 1148); BL, Cotton MS, Titus B I ff. 493v, 494 (*LP VI* 1194); SP 1/79 f. 161 (*LP VI* 1256); SP 1/80 f. 15 (*LP VI* 1333); BL, Cotton MS, Titus B I ff. 464, 464v (*LP VI* 1382); SP 1/80 f. 97 (*LP VI* 1422); BL, Cotton MS, Cleopatra E VI ff. 154-154v (*LP VI* 1467); BL, Cotton MS, Cleopatra E IV f. 96 (*LP VI* 1512); SP 1/82 f. 14 (*LP VII* 17).

had not byn' then the Nun of Kent 'wold [haue] confessyd no thyng'.¹⁸⁰ Christopher Hales also told Cromwell that he could find nothing to implicate the parson of Aldington with the Nun, and that he found him 'a man of gode Fame'. 'Neuerthelesse', Hales added, 'your industry herin to make the matter opine in gode or evyll, as truthe it is, shalbe moche laudable'.¹⁸¹ Writing to the king, Cromwell himself also advocated using torture during an interrogation, remarking that several monks 'wolde confesse sum grete matier if they might be examined as they ought to be that is to sey by paynes'.¹⁸² Such comments might make uneasy reading under modern eyes, but it is interesting that neither Gwent nor Hales reveal any disapproval at Cromwell's interrogatory abilities or methods. All this prompts questions about how these interrogatory efforts were understood. Those whom Cromwell wished to examine under 'paynes' were suspected by him of being 'moche gyuen to sedycyon'. Perhaps the use of physical force was deemed acceptable if it ensured obedience, good public order and the harmony of the realm.

Some of Cromwell's wider practices for combatting dissent are worthy of further comment. In 1533 he informed the king that two friars had entered the realm with 'pryuy letteres' and intended to meet with Catherine of Aragon. Cromwell's advice was that

in my poore oppynyon it shalbe right well done that thaye might be sent For by sum trustye persone howbeit yt were best that theye Fyrst sholde be sufferyd to speke with her and suche other of hers as wolde preaduenture delyuer to them anything wherbye theyr Farther practysys might be persayuyd and so thayr cankyrd Intenttes might be therbye dysyfferyd.¹⁸³

Although there is no evidence that Cromwell was a disciple of Machiavelli, as some historians have alleged, there was clearly a degree of hardnosed calculation in his counsel that the friars should be allowed to make contact,

¹⁸⁰ TNA, PRO, SP 1/78 f. 106 (LP VI 967).

¹⁸¹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/79 f. 80 (LP VI 1169).

¹⁸² TNA, PRO, SP 1/78 f. 25 (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 361; LP VI 887).

¹⁸³ TNA, PRO, SP 1/80 f. 50 (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 370-371; LP VI 1369).

reveal additional information, and perhaps implicate themselves further. In the same letter he also reported a London merchant who was assisting the friars, adding that 'yf it be trew he ys worthye to suffer to make other beware'.¹⁸⁴ Clearly Cromwell saw the benefit of using forceful punishment to coerce people more widely.

Finally, did Cromwell deal lawfully with those whom he suspected of sedition or treason? Although historians disagree about the tyrannical nature of the regime, most are in agreement that the numbers executed for treason between 1532 and 1540 were not 'unduly high'.¹⁸⁵ Cromwell himself spoke 'amyable wordys' before the Council on behalf of Richard Masters, parson of Aldington, over his involvement with the Nun of Kent, and obtained a pardon for him.¹⁸⁶ The implication here must be that having examined the parson, Cromwell did not think there was sufficient evidence to condemn him. Nevertheless to conclude that Cromwell dealt judiciously with those suspected of crimes would leave an overly favourable impression of him. Cromwell's letter to bishop Fisher, who had failed to report the revelations of the Nun in 1534, was threatening and menacing, and makes uncomfortable reading.¹⁸⁷ Cromwell's close involvement with the Crown's attempts to enhance the treason legislation, which culminated in the new treason act of 1534, and extended its scope to now include words spoken maliciously against the king, is an equally damning reflection of his willingness to act unscrupulously in order to secure obedience.¹⁸⁸ Indeed, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that the government was altering the law to suit its own immediate needs.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 1/80 f. 50-50v (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 370-371; LP VI 1369).

¹⁸⁵ Elton, *Policy and Police*, pp. 383-400; Williams, *Tudor Regime*, pp. 386-387.

¹⁸⁶ TNA, PRO, SP 1/82 f. 67v (LP VII 71); SP 1/81 f. 121 (LP VI 1666); LP VII 1026 [10].

¹⁸⁷ BL, Cotton MS, Cleopatra E IV f. 101-104 (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 377; LP VII 238).

¹⁸⁸ *Statutes of the Realm*, iii, 26. Henry VIII. c. 13.

¹⁸⁹ Cromwell was closely involved with the drafting of the new treason law, and Elton claimed that it was he who was responsible for the innovative decision to enhance the new law so that words spoken 'maliciously' against the king became treasonous. The evidence which Elton gave for this rests on a slip of Cromwell's pen. See Elton, *Policy and Police*, p. 276 and BL, Cotton MS, Titus B I f. 425 (LP VII 51) for Cromwell's memorandum relating to this. It is interesting to note, however, that the hand of Thomas Audeley is once again also to be found on the treason drafts. Indeed, Audeley's hand is far more evident on the drafts prepared in 1533

In this chapter the first comprehensive account of Cromwell's role in the break with Rome has been established. Despite the considerable consensus among historians who have thought otherwise, Cromwell was not involved in the attacks against the Church in late 1530, and only became notably involved in the king's 'great matter' in 1532. Moreover, Elton's claim that Cromwell was the innovative force behind the break with Rome appears incorrect. Cromwell has emerged less as the formulator of the Crown's policy, and more as its principal executor. At times, such as during the Commons' Supplication against the Ordinaries, Cromwell was working in response to events, rather than implementing a pre-conceived plan. He has also been shown working alongside others when drafting many of the acts which enabled the schism. Indeed, one of the most significant conclusions to emerge from this chapter is that Thomas Audeley played a much bigger role in all of this than is generally acknowledged; his role was very similar to that claimed by Elton for Cromwell.

Nevertheless, if Cromwell was not the innovative force behind the break with Rome once supposed, he was nonetheless still a significant figure. Through sheer hard-work, efficiency and thoroughness, Cromwell helped devise and put in place the necessary legislation which would help Henry VIII to resolve his conundrum. Significantly, this was how Cromwell himself recollected these events in 1536, telling Chapuys how he had 'paved the way' for the king to marry Anne.¹⁹⁰ Cromwell also played an important role in the management and unfolding of this policy, as well as playing a crucial role in defending and enforcing the momentous changes he had helped bring about. It has been an emerging argument of this thesis, however, that it was not, as previously thought, one single responsibility which Cromwell undertook that was crucial in his securing of the king's confidence. Instead, it was Cromwell's

– the point at which it was decided to make spoken words treasonous – and the changes Audeley made generally were far more substantial than the seemingly minor alterations made by Cromwell. See Cromwell's changes on TNA, PRO, SP 1/65 ff. 87-90 (*LP* V 52 [2]); SP 2/Q ff. 81a-87 (*LP* VII 1381 [5]), this was prepared in 1532, not 1534 as in *LP*; SP 2/Q ff. 76, 77 (*LP* VII 1381 [4]). Audeley's alterations include: SP 1/65 ff. 82-86 (*LP* V 52 [1]); SP 1/65 ff. 87-90 (*LP* V 52 [2]); SP 2/Q f. 77 (*LP* VII 1381 [4]); SP 2/Q ff. 81-81v (*LP* VII 1381 [5]).

¹⁹⁰ *CSP, Spanish*, V, ii, 43.

increasing workload which gradually saw him emerge as Henry's factotum. The analysis of Cromwell's role in the break with Rome offered here has not modified or altered this conclusion. Instead, it has seemingly reinforced it, by demonstrating further responsibilities that Cromwell oversaw on the king's behalf, which contributed to him becoming the king's leading councillor. All that remains to be seen now is exactly when Cromwell succeeded in achieving that position. It is to this question that the conclusion of the present thesis will now turn.

Conclusion

King and Minister

In this thesis, the full extent of Cromwell's responsibilities and interests between 1520 and 1534 has been examined for the first time. In doing so Cromwell has emerged not as the fervent evangelical, Machiavellian schemer or innovative administrator which Foxe, Merriman and Elton have respectively portrayed him as, but rather as a highly efficient government minister who worked cooperatively with other Crown servants to fulfil the royal will. Moreover it has become clear that Cromwell emerged as Henry VIII's chief minister as a result of the ever-increasing workload that he had gradually been entrusted with. Such an interpretation runs counter to the longstanding and widely accepted view that Cromwell's role in the break with Rome was crucial in enabling this. Instead, it has been shown here that if any one aspect of Cromwell's work was responsible for his meteoric rise, then it was his various responsibilities connected with the Crown's lands. It was these which consumed the majority of Cromwell's attention during his initial year in the royal service. And it was the skills which Cromwell then demonstrated through this that showed the king his qualities.

The most obvious of these qualities was Cromwell's organisational efficiency. Again and again, Cromwell has emerged from this study as a highly competent and efficient royal servant: somebody who got things done and resolved problems quickly. Alongside this, and closely linked to it, were Cromwell's administrative and financial talents. These were acquired and sharpened during his careers as a lawyer, merchant and as Wolsey's man of business in the 1520s. These were then exhibited during his work on the Crown's lands.

Other factors, however, also contributed to Cromwell's entry and rise in the king's service. Throughout the period of Wolsey's disgrace, Cromwell had relied greatly on the good will of those close to the king for his survival. Luck played its part, with Henry VIII needing someone familiar with Wolsey's college lands to manage their legal transfer into his possession. Once in the royal service, Cromwell worked cooperatively and effectively with other royal ministers, a point often obscured by previous studies which adopt a focus purely on the minister. All of these factors and qualities contributed to Cromwell's rise, but none was more significant than his competence and efficiency. It was this which resulted in more and more work being entrusted to him, including the management of the English Church and the routine work of government. Gradually, through the accumulation of this enormous workload, Cromwell assumed the role of Henry VIII's chief minister.

But when exactly did Cromwell become chief minister? Previous studies have tended to circumvent attempts at pin-pointing this; most usually allude to his rise as part of a general narrative of the break with Rome.¹ May 1532, following the surrender of the clergy and Cromwell's supposed triumph over More and Gardiner, is a frequently implied date of significance.² Merriman opted for the beginning of 1533, however, as did Robertson, although both felt his position was secured much earlier.³ Elton ostensibly offered the most definite dating, but he very much hedged his bets, and subsequently changed his mind, before also apparently settling on May 1532.⁴ Here a slightly different

¹ Dickens, *Thomas Cromwell*, pp. 47, 48, 52-59; Beckingsale, *Thomas Cromwell*, pp. 29-41; Williams, *Cardinal and the Secretary*, pp. 162-169; H. Leithead, 'Cromwell, Thomas (c. 1485-1540)', *ODNB*.

² Guy, *Public Career*, pp. 175-201; Haigh, *English Reformations*, pp. 111-116.

³ Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 91, 112. Merriman claimed that the 'mask was finally thrown off' in 1533, but felt that the 'ground was thoroughly prepared' (p. 91). Robertson, largely following the chronology outlined by Elton in *Tudor Revolution*, claimed that 'Three years after entering the king's service he had reached the top: in April 1533'. In 1532, however, she claimed Cromwell 'had a hand in policy-making'. See Robertson, 'Thomas Cromwell's Servants', p. 66.

⁴ In 1949, for instance, Elton was arguing that Cromwell emerged as Henry's chief minister around April 1533, following his success with the act of appeals. See Elton, 'Evolution', p. 197. In 1953 he repeated this claim but immediately qualified it by adding that 'He had been very nearly that for about a year', being 'supreme' in the king's 'circle of advisers on policy' from

date is offered. A letter from Philip Champernon suggests that as late as the end of July 1532, Cromwell's standing with Henry had not notably changed. Champernon was writing to Sir George Carew about treasonous activities which he wanted declared to the king and his councillors. Of interest here are his instructions that if Carew 'cannott speke with my lord marques / then I wyll desyr yow / to schew thys letter...to my lord of norffolke / or master Cromwell / or master controllerr'.⁵ What seems revealing is that Champernon did not specify that Cromwell alone should be informed. He listed a number of prominent figures whom he thought could be, suggesting that Cromwell was not yet seen as Henry's factotum.

Cromwell's correspondence with the king also supports this deduction. Six letters sent from Cromwell to Henry VIII survive for the period 1531 to April 1534. Two of these were sent in May and June 1532, the commonly asserted point of Cromwell's ascendancy. These, however, are notably short, and the matters on which Cromwell wrote can hardly be described as 'high policy'.⁶ They merely show Cromwell receiving general news from abroad and summarising this briefly for the king. By contrast, a letter Cromwell sent to Henry in September was somewhat longer, and begins to hint that he was now working in closer proximity.⁷ True, the matters on which he wrote still appear relatively minor, but Cromwell can at least be seen implementing the king's instructions. The remaining letters, all sent from July 1533 onwards, confirm that Cromwell was by then executing 'high policy'. He was interrogating monks, dealing with the threat posed by the Nun of Kent and reporting affairs in

early 1532. (*Tudor Revolution*, pp. 96-97.) In an article the following year, Elton then suggested that the duke of Norfolk's use of the term 'empire' in January 1531 'Possibly...reflects the beginning of Cromwell's real influence'. ('King or Minister', p. 229.) By the late 1970s, however, Elton was claiming that Cromwell was influencing policy as early as the middle of 1530. (*Reform and Reformation*, pp. 135-137, esp. p. 136) Then, in one of his final pieces on Cromwell in 1994, Elton implied that Cromwell became the king's chief minister in May 1532, having won 'the battle for ascendancy in the king's Council'. (*Thomas Cromwell*, p. 11.)

⁵ TNA, PRO, SP 1/70 f. 176 (LP V 1199).

⁶ TNA, PRO, SP 1/70 f. 59 (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 344; LP V 1055); SP 1/70 f. 112 (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 344-345; LP V 1092).

⁷ TNA, PRO, SP 1/71 ff. 17-18 (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 348-349; LP V 1298).

parliament.⁸ All this suggests that Cromwell's position did not change until some point between September 1532 and July 1533.

A perceptible change in Cromwell's position is indeed detectable at the beginning of October 1532. It was during that month that he accompanied the king to Calais and Boulogne for his meeting with Francis I.⁹ That Cromwell was part of the king's entourage suggests in itself that he was by then increasingly indispensable to Henry VIII. This point is confirmed, not only by evidence that Cromwell could now be found amending the royal warrant ordering provisions for the trip, but also by the observations of Cromwell's close associates.¹⁰ When making arrangements for accommodation in Calais, Christopher Hales revealingly remarked to Cromwell that '*consideryng that ye must nedes haue dayly accesse vnto the kynges persone ye shall...lye in a Frenches house of myne where no persone shall inquyet you*'.¹¹ On 11 October Thomas Audeley wrote informing Cromwell that the king would receive letters detailing the Council's work in England, before adding 'I do not dowt but that ye shal haue knowlegg by the sight of the same lettres'.¹² What is striking here is that both men now recognised that Cromwell was working closely with Henry: according to Hales, Cromwell had '*dayle accesse*', while Audeley thought that the two were so close that Cromwell was shown the king's correspondence. Other men were also aware of Cromwell's elevated position and increasing favour. Thomas Winter, Wolsey's illegitimate son, requested Cromwell's help on 20 October, believing that Cromwell was '*now placed in that position which I and all your friends have long wished for*'.¹³ Thomas Alvard remarked to Cromwell on 2

⁸ TNA, PRO, SP 1/78 ff. 25-25v (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 360-361; LP VI 887); SP 1/80 ff. 50-50v (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 370-371; LP VI 1369); SP 1/82 ff. 82-82v (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 373; LP VII 73).

⁹ LP V App., 33. The royal party left Dover on 12 October and were in Calais from 12th-21st of that month. Between 22nd-27th Henry met with Francis I at Boulogne. On 27th he was back in Calais, and the royal party returned to Dover on 14 November. See TNA, PRO, OBS, 1/1418 pp. 61, 67. For the details of the meeting see Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII*, pp. 306-307; G. Richardson, 'Eternal Peace, Occasional War: Anglo-French Relations under Henry VIII', in S. Doran and G. Richardson, eds., *Tudor England and its Neighbours* (Basingstoke, 2005), pp. 57-58.

¹⁰ TNA, PRO, SP 2/M f. 43 (LP V 1297 [2]). TNA, PRO, C82/660 (LP V 1297 [1]) is the final warrant.

¹¹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/71 f. 85 (LP V 1398). My italics for emphasis.

¹² TNA, PRO, SP 1/71 f. 91 (LP V 1408).

¹³ TNA, PRO, SP 1/71 f. 124 (LP V 1452).

November that he had heard 'howe the kynges grace hath you in so great Favour / And the Frenche kyng also'.¹⁴ Sir Thomas Elliot similarly referred to 'the kings goode opinion & favor towards you' in a letter on 18 November.¹⁵ This recognition continued. In late December Cromwell was complimented on his progress in the king's favour.¹⁶ Another man noted that Cromwell was increasingly busy.¹⁷ All this is in stark contrast to his position just a few months earlier, and it suggests that from October 1532 Thomas Cromwell was Henry VIII's chief minister.

Re-dating Cromwell's emergence as Henry's leading minister to October rather than May 1532 or April 1533 may seem like splitting hairs, particularly as the period in question is only a matter of months. Yet a more precise outline of the chronology of Cromwell's rise is important if the correct conclusions are to be drawn about his role and influence during this period. Not only is there little evidence in support of claims that a factional battle was taking place around May 1532, but, significantly, Cromwell's own position did not change at that point. This supports the inference drawn in the previous chapter: namely, that Cromwell was a less important figure during the struggles against the Church in Easter 1532 than is generally assumed. A conclusion more attentive to the evidence would be that the removal of More and Gardiner provided Cromwell with the opportunity to proceed further in Henry's favour by taking on further work which might have gone elsewhere. This, however, took a number of months, but was recognised as having occurred by October.

Cromwell's position as Henry's chief minister was even more widely perceived early the following year. In January 1533 there was the first of many mistaken assumptions that the king had made Cromwell a knight.¹⁸ On 15

¹⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 1/72 f. 10 (*LP V* 1509).

¹⁵ TNA, PRO, SP 1/72 f. 32 (*LP V* 1554).

¹⁶ BL, Cotton MS, MS, Vitellius B XIII f. 227 (*LP V* 1657).

¹⁷ TNA, PRO, SP 1/73 f. 126 (*LP V* 1751).

¹⁸ TNA, PRO, SP 1/74 f. 44v (*LP VI* 50); SP 1/74 f. 199 (*LP VI* 104); SP 1/75 f. 31v (*LP VI* 250); SP 1/75 f. 54 (*LP VI* 272); SP 1/75 f. 61v (*LP VI* 288); SP 1/75 f. 157v (*LP VI* 372); SP 1/79 f. 195v (*LP VI* 1312); SP 1/80 f. 92v (*LP VI* 1410); SP 1/78 f. 131v (*LP VI* 994); SP 1/79 f. 53v (*LP VI* 1124); SP 1/238 f. 61v (*LP Add*, I, i, 839); BL, Cotton MS, Titus B I f. 426v (*LP VII* 51); SP 1/82 f. 125v (*LP VII* 124). The large number of people who believed Cromwell had been made a knight might suggest that he had in fact become one. As the editors of *LP* recognised, however, he continued to style himself merely as Thomas Cromwell in all the government documents he worked on in 1533

February the Imperial Ambassador mentioned Cromwell by name for the first time in his despatches, and by April he confirmed that Cromwell was 'the man who has most influence with the King just now'.¹⁹ In May John lord Scrope remarked that Cromwell was 'soo busye with gret matters of the kinge' that he had 'no laysour' to finish a matter of his.²⁰ This sentiment was reiterated again in November by Chapuys, who noted he could not meet with Cromwell because the minister was 'very much engaged' with business.²¹ Evidently Cromwell was now heavily preoccupied with the king's affairs. This explains why towards the end of 1533 Cromwell took temporary possession of the signet from the absent secretary, Stephen Gardiner.²² The signet was the king's personal seal, used to authenticate Henry's instructions and official correspondence. That it was given to Cromwell confirms that king and minister were now working closely together. By April 1534 Cromwell held the signet permanently, having formally replaced Gardiner as royal secretary.²³ As Elton noted,

Cromwell was never more powerful, more ubiquitous in the administration, more completely in control of the day-to-day government of the country, than he was through the office of principal secretary.²⁴

This appointment was a reflection of his emergence into a position of extraordinary political influence, and marked the culmination of his early career under the king.

and 1534. He was not made a knight until 1536. See W. A. Shaw, *The Knights of England* (2 vols., London, 1960), ii. 50.

¹⁹ CSP, *Spanish*, IV, ii, 1048, 1061.

²⁰ BL, Cotton MS, MS, Vespasian F XIII f. 218 (LP VI 484).

²¹ CSP, *Spanish*, IV, ii, 1144.

²² TNA, PRO, SP 1/81 f. 116 (LP VI 1661); SP 1/79 f. 96 (LP VI 1177); SP 3/7 f. 160 (LP Add I, i, 886).

²³ It is not clear exactly when Cromwell became the king's secretary, as the office was not confirmed by patent. On 7 April the appellation 'Good Master Secretarie' was used when addressing him, however, and the first warrant Cromwell signed as secretary is dated 19 April 1534. See BL, Cotton MS, Vespasian F XIII f. 178, 178v (LP VII 446); BL, Cotton MS, Vespasian F XIII f. 266, 266v (LP VII 451); TNA, PRO, SP 3/6 f. 102 (LP VII 483); TNA, PRO, C82/681 (LP VII 587 [26]).

²⁴ Elton, *Tudor Revolution*, p. 127.

The relationship between Cromwell and Henry VIII has featured heavily in many chapters of this thesis. Can any firm conclusions be drawn about the nature of this relationship? Over the last sixty years, a broad interpretational division has emerged between those who see Henry VIII as the puppet or puppeteer of his ministers. One of the benefits of the sharper focus adopted here is that it has allowed a more detailed scrutiny of the work which Cromwell was doing for the king, which, in turn, has enabled a more rounded conclusion of his role and influence to be made. Certainly Henry VIII was a king willing to allow his ministers to rid him of the daily toils of government.²⁵ And several chapters of this thesis have illustrated that there were areas over which Cromwell had very real influence – even a measure of independence. With regards to the Crown lands, for example, on at least one occasion Henry would make no decision without first having taken Cromwell's advice. Cromwell clearly operated with a degree of independence during the dissolution of Christchurch, and he has also been shown promoting legislation in parliament of which the king had little or no knowledge. But more often than not, Cromwell's independence was over the execution of policy, not its formulation. The significant point to emerge from many chapters here is that during the years 1531 to 1534, Cromwell was working for, and taking his lead from, his royal master. Repeatedly his remembrances reminded him 'to speke with the kinges highness' or 'to knowe the kinges pleasure' touching all manner of matters on which he was engaged.²⁶ As these are private memoranda, it is hard not to conclude that these are a revealing reflection of Cromwell's actions and intent.

²⁵ See, for instance, Stephen Gardiner's remarks to Cromwell in mid-1531 that the king was 'wel pleased' with a minute Cromwell had drawn up, and that 'It shall not be necessary further to molest his highness ther in'. BL, Cotton MS, Vespasian F XIII f. 257 (*LP V* 302 [ii]).

²⁶ See, for example, Cromwell's memoranda reminding him to 'speke with the kinges highnes touching the duke of Bavyers Ambassador for his depechee and what shalbe the effecte of the kinges lettres', 'to declare to the kinges highness the saying of Augustyne touching the French Ambassador', 'to knowe whether the king will haue all the rest of the monkes and Freers sent for' and 'to know what the kyng will haue done with none [sic] and her complycys'. See TNA, PRO, E36/143 f. 55 (*LP VI* 1371); BL, Cotton MS, Titus B I f. 422 (*LP VII* 52). Also see 'to knowe whom the king will appoint to go with Doctor Lee to Lubeck, BL, Cotton MS, Titus B I f. 428v (*LP VII* 48 [2]); 'to know what dyettes the kyng wyll gyue master doctor lee and master hethe and pagett, BL, Cotton MS, Titus B I f. 430 (*LP VII* 52); 'to Remembre master hakkettes dyettes and to make sute to the kyng for the same, BL, Cotton MS, Titus B I f. 456 (*LP VII* 143 [2]).

Decisions and policies were not, however, formulated in a vacuous environment purely between Cromwell and the king. Practical realities and particular circumstance heavily influenced any decision. Other councillors were also comprehensively involved - an obvious point, but one frequently obscured by the survival of Cromwell's papers. The king or minister debate is therefore somewhat misleading because it conceals the multi-dimensional reality of policy making. An illustration of this can be seen during the greatly neglected Anglo-Scottish war of December 1532 to May 1533. Other than letters to Henry and Cromwell, no correspondence survives regarding the war for any other 'central' government figure. This very much reinforces the impression that Henry and Cromwell were at the centre of everything. Yet Cromwell's correspondence, closely scrutinised, hints at the role and involvement of others. There is a brief allusion to Stephen Gardiner's participation.²⁷ Sir John Gage, Henry's vice-chamberlain, was also sent to the borders; on his return it was felt he was capable of discussing matters with the king and Cromwell.²⁸ Most significantly of all, the duke of Norfolk was kept closely informed on affairs in the north, and much of this was in a capacity very similar to that of Cromwell himself. It was Norfolk who had told Henry of the need for better border defences in Easter 1532.²⁹ In early December Sir George Lawson, the treasurer at Berwick, with whom Cromwell was in constant communication, had also written 'a letter to my lord of Norffolkes grace' concerning the damage done to the walls and towers of the castle of Berwick.³⁰ Norfolk also emerges as a man who, like Cromwell, was concerned with the war's finances. Cromwell was sent accounts of all the receipts and expenditures on the borders,³¹ but at some

²⁷ On 1 January 1533 the bishop instructed Lord Chancellor Audeley, at the king's behest, to cause a commission to be sent to the earl of Northumberland, enabling him to levy as many men as he deemed necessary to go up against the Scots. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/74 f. 5 (*St. P. IV.*, p. 631; *LP VI* 8).

²⁸ TNA, PRO, SP 1/74 f. 12 (*LP VI* 16).

²⁹ Hall, *Chronicle*, p. 785.

³⁰ TNA, PRO, SP 1/237 f. 266 (*LP Add, I, i*, 801). In a letter sent to Cromwell in February 1533, Lawson highlighted to Cromwell the 'gret costes and charges' that he was put to by the war, and asked Cromwell to get the king to clarify the position on Lawson and his servants' wages. He had also written to Norfolk on this matter. See SP 1/74 f. 144v (*LP VI* 145).

³¹ Three complete accounts were sent to Cromwell during the latter stages of the war. The first two accounts can be found together. They were sent together around mid-April, the second

point before 14 December Norfolk had asked that Lawson keep the king separately informed of the need for money, while the duke himself was similarly kept up-to-date.³² On at least two occasions when writing to Cromwell detailing payments to the garrison, Lawson requested that he show his letters to both Henry *and* Norfolk.³³ He also sent a servant to the duke, informing him of affairs on the borders, and when sending Cromwell the war's financial accounts, he requested 'the kinges highness and my lord of Norffolkes grace maye see the same'.³⁴ The conduct of the war, then, was not decided in a one dimensional dialogue between Henry and Cromwell. Other figures were kept up-to-date, and discussed matters with a well-informed king. All this makes it difficult to see how Cromwell could have manipulated or led Henry in ways some historians seem to suggest. It also makes apportioning responsibility for actions or policy exclusively even more unlikely.

Perhaps rather than interpreting events during the 1530s as being the product of either the king or Cromwell, it would be more reasonable to see the two men working with one another to deal with matters as they unfolded. This is very much the impression drawn from several chapters of this thesis. It is also something particularly visible in the two men's conduct of foreign policy during these years. Memoranda frequently reminded Cromwell to 'remember to shew the king the lettres' which came from ambassadors abroad,³⁵ and 'to speke with the kyng For Answer' to these.³⁶ During the war with Scotland both Henry and Cromwell were kept informed on events on the borders, and were often sent simultaneous accounts.³⁷ None of this was because Cromwell was

being a copy of the first with amendements. See TNA, PRO, SP 2/M ff. 123-124 (*LP V* 1670 [ii]). The final account, which was sent on 25 June, is SP 2/O ff. 20-22 (*LP VI* 664). See also SP 1/75 ff. 133-135 (*LP VI* 343); SP 1/238 ff. 79-80 (*LP Add I*, i, 853) for the dating of when they were sent.

³² TNA, PRO, SP 1/72 f. 129 (*LP V* 1630).

³³ TNA, PRO, 1/74 f. 212 (*LP VI* 217); SP 1/75 f. 133 (*LP VI* 343).

³⁴ TNA, PRO, SP 1/75 f. 133 (*LP VI* 343).

³⁵ BL, Cotton MS, Titus B I f. 427v (*LP VII* 48); BL, Cotton MS, Titus B I f. 493v (*LP VI* 1194).

³⁶ BL, Cotton MS, Titus B I f. 463 (*LP VII* 108). Also see TNA, PRO, E36/143 f. 55 (*LP VI* 1370), 'to speke with the king for the depechee of the gentilman of Poloma; BL, Cotton MS, Caligula B I ff. 453-454v (*LP VI* 1381); BL, Cotton MS, Titus B I f. 427v (*LP VII* 48), 'to remember to shew the king the lettres cum from master Hackett'.

³⁷ In one letter, for instance, it was remarked to Cromwell that 'I wrote vnto the kinges highness of late of suche newes as was occurunt in thies parties', before it was promptly repeated to Cromwell. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/74 f. 173 (*LP VI* 174). On 11 July 1533 similar accounts

seen as an *alter rex*: those conducting the war in the north continually looked to Henry when decisions were needed.³⁸ Cromwell was kept up-dated to ensure that he was capable of discussing, recommending and, at times, of briefing a king who could not possibly hope to remain on top of all the information he was sent – whatever his attitude toward government work may have been. It is highly revealing that when the English commissioners were meeting with their Scottish counterparts to negotiate an end to the conflict, many of the letters they sent to Cromwell were notably brief. The reason for this was stated openly to him:

Vpon Tuesdaie next I truste we shall haue woorde frome the king of Scottes and suppoos the same shalbe good / As it shall chaunce ye shalbe aduertised / yet neuertheles I doubte not but ye ar and shalbe prevea to such oure letteres as doe and shall come to the kinges highness / soe that therfore I shall not nede to write further in this behalue vnto you.³⁹

Those in the north expected Cromwell and Henry to read and work from the same letters. And was this was certainly no isolated case.⁴⁰ Cromwell even

of the peace negotiations were sent to both king and minister on the same day. See and compare BL, Cotton MS, Caligula B III ff. 164-165v (*St. P. IV.*, p. 648; *LP VI* 802) & BL, Cotton MS, Caligula B III f. 167 (*LP VI* 801). When repairs were needed to a captured fortification, a description and plan of what was needed was sent to both men. See *SP* 1/74 f. 200 (*LP VI* 205). And when the English commissioners proposed an amendment to an earlier Anglo-Scottish treaty, intended as the basis for the new peace, copies were sent to both Henry and Cromwell. See BL, Cotton MS, Caligula B III f. 164v (*LP VI* 802); BL, Cotton MS, Caligula B III f. 168 (*LP VI* 744). On an unrelated foreign policy matter, see the simultaneous letters sent to king and minister by ambassador Hawkins, *SP* 1/78 ff. 13-13v (*LP VI* 855); *SP* 1/78 ff. 15-15v (*LP VI* 856).

³⁸ See, for example, TNA, PRO, *SP* 1/237 f. 266 (*LP Add I*, i, 801); *SP* 1/74 f. 130 (*LP VI* 124); *SP* 1/74 f. 20 (*LP VI* 29); *SP* 1/74 f. 127 (*LP VI* 117). This list could be considerably lengthened.

³⁹ BL, Cotton MS, Caligula B III f. 167 (*LP VI* 801).

⁴⁰ In an earlier correspondence Cromwell was told that the commissioners had had 'written all at large vnto the kinges highness. Whernto I doubte not but your mastership shalbe made priuea'. On 27 July, when letters were sent to the king concerning the Scots response to his terms, the commissioners added they 'doubte not but your mastership shalbe priuea to the same'. Sir George Lawson, the treasurer at Berwick, also informed Cromwell on 28 July of the 'aunsuer cummen from the Scottishe commissioners as I trust ye shall perceyue by the letters now send to the kinges highness'. He also believed Cromwell would have seen his latest letters regarding a captured pelehouse. Writing on an unrelated matter, ambassador Hawkins also felt Cromwell would 'vnderstond [affairs] bi that I haue writin vnto the kingis highnes'. See BL, Cotton MS, Caligula B III f. 168 (*LP VI* 803); TNA, PRO, *SP* 1/78 f. 43 (*LP VI* 908); TNA, PRO, *SP* 1/78 f. 44 (*St. P. IV.*, 657; *LP VI* 909); *SP* 1/78 f. 142 (*LP VI* 1010).

occasionally received letters for the king, before forwarding these on.⁴¹ Again, this very much reinforces the argument that the two men were working with one another.⁴²

But if it is possible to speak of a partnership, then it was one in which Henry was not merely the dominant partner, but also a highly active one. That Cromwell forwarded letters on to Henry suggests he expected him to read them. Similarly one of Cromwell's remembrances, which relates to the year-long truce finally agreed with the Scots, reminded Cromwell to discover 'what order the kings highness will take if the Scottes do not sew for peace after the treues and what provision shalbe made because the treues lastith but for a yere'.⁴³ This neatly underlines that the two men discussed policy, but that decisions were ultimately taken by the king. During the years 1531 to 1534 Thomas Cromwell was very much the king's hardworking and efficient agent.

Over the next six years, Cromwell would continue to progress further in the royal service. In October 1534 he became Master of the Rolls. This was followed by his appointment as the king's vicegerent in spirituals in 1535, Lord Privy Seal in 1536 and the earl of Essex and Great Chamberlain in 1540. Then, in June of that year, Cromwell's meteoric career would culminate in an equally spectacular fall. The sharper focus on Cromwell adopted here has meant it has not been possible to examine his career in its entirety. Nevertheless, although Cromwell's relations with the king and other courtiers would naturally

⁴¹ TNA, PRO, SP 1/78 f. 25 (Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, i. 360; LP VI 887). Cromwell's letter was dated 23 July and written from London. Henry was at Windsor on 22 July, and presumably remained so on the 23rd. See TNA, PRO, OBS 1/1418 p. 42.

⁴² Frustratingly, what is not revealed is whether Cromwell had opened these letters. That would provide a fascinating insight into the extent of the partnership. Others letters, however, do offer something on this question. Thomas Winter, Cardinal Wolsey's illegitimate son, had written to Cromwell on unrelated matters in 1533. Enclosed in his letter to Cromwell were also letters for the king – 'unsealed', so that Cromwell might read them. The implication here, surely, is that he did not expect Cromwell to open sealed ones. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/71 f. 124v (LP VI 172). It is also interesting that Audeley, when writing to Cromwell during the royal visit to Calais in 1532, remarked that 'the Counsell here be not yet aduertysed of the kynges pleasure / wether they may breke open eny lettres that may happen to come from Scotland in the kinges absens'. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/71 f. 121 (LP V 1450). What is striking here, especially given that this was a period of anticipated war in which prompt response might be necessary, is that the Council still had to request permission to open letters received in the king's name.

⁴³ TNA, PRO, SP 1/78 f. 110 (LP VI 977).

continue to evolve, the conclusions drawn here about his early career must cast serious doubts on the uncomplicated picture of the minister as an independent formulator of policy during the later 1530s. The rounded examination of Cromwell's political career adopted for this study offers a model through which this could then be determined. It is interesting, however, that the final verdict on Cromwell given by Henry VIII himself echoes the conclusions drawn in this thesis. Lamenting on Cromwell's execution less than a year after its occurrence, the king acknowledged that he 'had put to death the most faithful servant he ever had'.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ *LP* XVI 590.

Appendix 1

Indentures and agreements relating to King Street, Westminster

TNA, PRO	Date	Description	Amount paid by the Crown for the Lease
E40/1526	18 May 1531	Indenture between Thomas Cromwell and Thomas Brightman, Yeoman. The said Thomas sells all right and title to a tenement called the 'Berehowse', Westminster, with all houses, cellars, chambers, gardens and stables, to Cromwell and John Islip, abbot of Westminster, for the king's use. The said Thomas had previously leased this from St Peter's, Westminster, in 1520 for forty nine years, paying yearly five marks.	£106 10s
E40/1536	18 May 1531	Indenture between Thomas Cromwell and Richard Hampkin, Buckler maker, and his wife Agnis. The said Richard and Agnis sell all their right, title and interest in three tenements in King Street, Westminster, to Cromwell and John Islip, abbot of Westminster, for the king's use. The said Agnis had previously leased these tenements from St Peter's, Westminster, in 1527 for thirty seven years, paying yearly 53 ^s 4 ^d .	£30
E40/1559	18 May 1531	Indenture between Thomas Cromwell and John Henburie, brewer. The said John sells all right and title to certain tenements, curtilages, closes and gardens set and within King Street, Westminster, and three cottages	£160

in Charing Cross, to Cromwell and John Islip, abbot of Westminster, for the king's use, always excepting certain houses and tenements lying in 'theving lane'. The said John had previously leased the tenements in King's Street from St Peter's, Westminster, on 25 July 1508 for fifty four years, paying yearly £5 12^s 8^d. The said John leased the cottages in Charing Cross from the same on 19 December 1519 for thirty years, paying yearly 50^s.

E40/1560	18 May 1531	Indenture between Thomas Cromwell and John Benet, citizen and grocer. The said John sells all right and title to the brewhouse called the Lion set and being in Charing Cross, to Cromwell and John Islip, abbot of Westminster, for the king's use. The said brewhouse had been leased from St Peter's, Westminster, on 15 November 1525 by John Pomfret and his wife, both deceased, for thirty years, paying yearly £6 6 ^s 8 ^d . John Benet received his title to the brewhouse in Pomfret's will.	£66 13 ^s 4 ^d
E40/1563	18 May 1531	Indenture between Thomas Cromwell and Jeffrey Tull, Tiler, of Westminster. The said Jeffrey sells all right and title to the 'June hofery' called the Rose on the west side of King's Street to Cromwell and John Islip, abbot of Westminster, for the king's use. The said Rose was previously leased by William Tull from the Fraternity of Our Lady within the parish church of St Margaret's, Westminster, on 24 March 1494 for fifty years, paying yearly £4.	£50 ¹
E40/1565	18 May 1531	Indenture between Thomas Cromwell and John Kellet. The said John sells all right and title to a tenement in King's Street, Westminster, to Cromwell and John Islip, abbot of Westminster, for the king's use. The	£88

¹ On Cromwell's account of the sums of money he paid for these properties he has amended this amount to £53 6s 8d. See TNA, PRO, SP 1/67 f. 66 (LP V 408).

said John had previously leased this tenement from St Peter's, Westminster, on 17 July 1528 for forty years, paying yearly 26^s 8^d.

E40/13086	18 May 1531	Indenture between Thomas Cromwell and William Russell, yeoman. The said William sells all right to a tenement called 'the bell' to Thomas Cromwell for the king's use. The said William had previously leased this tenement from St Peter's, Westminster, on 25 September 1524, for forty years. He paid 41 ^s 8 ^d for the first thirty years, and 45 ^s for the last ten.	£128
E40/1566	18 May 1531	Release by William Huchen, yeoman, mercer, to Christopher Hales, Thomas Cromwell and Thomas Alvard of a messuage called 'Copped Hall' and a garden adjoining in Westminster.	
SP 1/67 ff. 70-72 (LP V 409)	1531	Indenture between Thomas Cromwell and Thomas Cornish and Robert Norton, masters and wardens of the Fraternity and Guild of St Mary of Westminster. The said Thomas and Robert have sold their tenement called the Rose, with all tenements and gardens set and within the lane or alley called Rose Alley, to Thomas Cromwell for the king's use.	Sum not fully specified.
E40/13406	18 May 1531	Indenture between Thomas Cromwell and John Russell, carpenter. The said John sells all rights to a tenement called the bell, with a garden, to Thomas Cromwell for the king's use. The said John had previously leased this tenement from St Peter's, Westminster, on 26 September 1524 for 40 years, paying yearly 3 ^s 4 ^d .	£20
E40/13077	12 May 1531	Indenture between Thomas Cromwell and Thomas Rawlyns, gentleman. The said Thomas has sold six tenements, one acre of arable land and one parcel of meadow lying in 'Gyfelde and in Gymere' by Westminster,	£20

and a manor and gardens set and lying against the White Cross, to Thomas Cromwell for the king's use. Robert Wood and his wife, Elizabeth, had previously leased these tenements from Hugh Marble, goldsmith, on 30 May 1525, for forty one years, paying yearly £4 13^s 4^d. Thomas Rawlyns now holds the right to title of these lands.

E40/13446	18 May 1531	Indenture between Thomas Cromwell and John Garlonde, yeoman, and Elayn his wife. The said John and Elayn sell a tenement being parcel of a great messuage called the Bell to Thomas Cromwell for the king's use. The said John and Elayn had previously leased this from St Peter's, Westminster, on 24 September 1524, for forty years, paying yearly 20 ^d .	£13 6s 8d
E40/12837	18 May 1531	Indenture between Thomas Cromwell and Elizabeth Palle, late wife of Nicholas Palle, carpenter. The said Elizabeth sells seven tenements, gardens and meadows in King's Street, Westminster, to Thomas Cromwell for the king's use. These tenements had previously been leased by Nicholas Palle from the monastery of Hendon on 3 November 1507, for thirty-nine years, paying yearly £7 6 ^s 8 ^d .	£80
E40/6071	18 May 1531	Indenture between Thomas Cromwell and William Salcote, carpenter. The said William sells divers cottages lying at Charing Cross to Thomas Cromwell for the king's use. The said William had previously leased these from St Peter's, Westminster, on 20 June 1524, for forty-eight years, paying yearly 3 ^s 4 ^d .	£76 13s 4d
E40/13447	18 May 1531	Indenture between Thomas Cromwell and Guy Gascoyn, carpenter and his wife Jane.	£33 6s 8d

The said Guy sells one tenement parcel of a great tenement called the bell to Thomas Cromwell for the king's use. The said Guy had previously leased this from St Peter's, Westminster, on 4 September 1524, for forty years, paying yearly 3s 4d.

E40/12383	18 May 1531	Indenture between Thomas Cromwell and Edmund Ingham. The said Edmund sells all right to one messuage called the Rose with one shop situated in King's Street, Westminster, along with several gardens, to Thomas Cromwell for the king's use. The said Edmund previously leased the messuage from St Peter's, Westminster, on 24 October 1523 for thirty five years, paying yearly £4 16 ^s 8 ^d .	£15
E40/1560	18 May 1531	Indenture between Thomas Cromwell and John Benet, citizen and grocer. The said John sells a tenement, a brew house and barn, at Charing Cross, to Thomas Cromwell for the king's use, except the tenement called the Lion which is reserved to John Benet. The tenements were previously leased by John Pomfret and his wife from St Peter's, Westminster, on 15 November 1525, for thirty years, paying yearly £6 6 ^s 8 ^d .	£66 13s 4d
E40/13448	18 May 1531	Indenture between Thomas Cromwell and John Rede. The said John sells three tenements with a garden, near the lane called Endif in King's Street, Westminster, to Thomas Cromwell for the king's use. The tenements were leased by Johanne Crower, now wife of the said John, from St Peter's, Westminster, on 17 October 1516, for thirty eight years, paying yearly 40 ^s .	£66 13s 4d
SP 1/67 f. 67 (LP V 408)	18 May 1531	Thomas Cromwell and John Islip, abbot of Westminster, paid Richard Walker, otherwise known as Richard Hampstede, smith of Westminster, for his right and interest in a tenement and garden, and a tenement with a	£20

		chamber, near 'Endyff lane', in King's Street, Westminster. [Indenture lost]	
SP 1/67 f. 68 (LP V 408)	18 May 1531	Thomas Cromwell and John Islip, abbot of Westminster, paid Thomas Gladwin for his right and title to 'coppyd hall and Swalloyse house. [Indenture lost]	£40
SP 1/67 f. 68 (LP V 408)	18 May 1531	Thomas Cromwell and John Islip, abbot of Westminster, paid master Fox for his right and title to a stable and a chamber. [Indenture lost]	£9
SP 1/67 f. 68 (LP V 408)	18 May 1531	Thomas Cromwell and John Islip, abbot of Westminster, paid Henry Heyse, Chandler, for his house which he dwells in. [Indenture lost]	6os
SP 1/67 f. 68 (LP V 408)	18 May 1531	Thomas Cromwell and John Islip, abbot of Westminster, paid Sir Henry Wyatt for his right and title in four tenements next to the 'lambe' in King's Street, Westminster. [Indenture lost]	£25
SP 1/67 f. 69 (LP V 408)	Unkno wn	Thomas Cromwell paid Hugh Marble for his right and title in messuage called the 'Rosse', seven tenements, a garden, an orchard and seven acres of land. [Indenture lost]	£92
SP 1/67 f. 69 (LP V 408)	Unkno wn	Thomas Cromwell paid 'hochyn' for his interest in 'Copt halle', otherwise called John Hyllys' house, with a garden and an orchard. [Indenture lost]	£20
SP 1/67 f. 69 (LP V 408)	Unkno wn	Thomas Cromwell paid the wardens of St Margaret's, Westminster, for their interest in the 'syngne' [?] of the Rose and twenty two tenements with gardens 'in parte of payment'. [Indenture lost]	£66 13s 4d

Appendix 2

TNA, PRO, SP 1/103 ff. 220-222 (*LP X 1231*)

Thinges done by the Kynges highness sythyn I came to his seruyse

Fyrst ~~he~~ his highness hat[he] purchasyd Hampton court

Item ~~he~~ his highness purchasyd the more

Item ~~he~~ his highness hathe purchasyd Saynt Jamys in the Felde and
all the grownd wher of the new parke of Westminster ys now made

Item ~~he~~ his hignes hathe purchasyd all the olde tenementtes in
Westmynster wher as now is byldyd the new garden the tenys
playes & cokffeyght

Item ~~he~~ his highness hathe purchasyd the manor of Pyssow of the
lorde Skrope

Item ~~he~~ his highness hathe purchasyd the manor of Weston
bald[ock?]

Item ~~he~~ his highness hathe purchasyd the manor & parke of
coppydhall

Item ~~he~~ his highness hathe purchasyd certain landes of Thomas
Roberttes the Audytour lying besydes ~~walsing~~ Waltham

Item his highness hathe purchasyd landes to A gret valew of the
Erlle of Northumberlande

Item ~~he~~ his highness hathe purchasyd the lorde audeleye the
manors of Lanamoverey & kendys in wales

Item his highness hathe purchasyd the manor and certain other
landes in chombham wherof a parke is made...of the Abbot of
Chertsey [f. 220v]

The manor of alderbroke in the Forest of Waltham of gylys heron

The manor of Chugwell hall in the Forest of Waltham of[f] Manoke

Item the manor ~~of Edmonten of Edwardes northe & William brown~~
in the cowntie of Myddelsix

Item ~~he~~ his highness hathe repayryd the towre of London to his gret
charge

Item he hathe newlye made the marye Rosse the peter powngarnerd
the lyon the Katheryn galye the barke the mynyon [?] the
sweepstake

Item the manor of coggeshall & esterfforde purchasyd of master
Southwell

Item he hathe purchasyd the woodes besyddes portsmowthe in
hampshyre suffycyent For new making of the henrye grace a dew &
the gret gayle

Item landes purchasyd of barett ling [sic] in lee besides eltham
parke

Item he hathe bowght and made within the Towre of new
Bowres ~~xxxii~~ M^{li}

Item he with a gret & chargeable trayn passyd the ~~Realme~~ sees in
hys own person to Caley and Bolayn

Item he hathe ~~hathe~~ newlye byldyd Hampton cowrt

Item he hathe newlye bylded the place at Westminster with all the
Tenys Tennysplays cokffygthes and wallyd in the parke ther with a
somptyo[u]s wall

Item he hathe newlye bylded Saynt Jamys in the Field a
magnyffycent and goodlye howse

Item he hathe purchasyd the manors of Donnyngton Ewelme &
hoknorton & other of the dewke of Suffolke

he hathe made A gret dealle of new ordenance of brasse her in
Englande

he hathe newlye edeffyed a gret parte of the wallys of Caley

he hathe ~~new~~ newlye made A gret quanty[ty] of new ordenance
within the Town of Caley

he hathe most costlye werryys in Scottlande

he hathe also hadde gret & costelye werryys in Irland

he hathe borne and most costlye charge [f. 221] at the coronacyon of
queen Anne

he hathe mayntaynyd the gret and sumptuous howse of the ladye
katheryn dowager

~~he hathe also maynteyne [sic] A gret sumptuous howse of my the
ladye marye~~

Appendix 3

An itinerary of Cromwell's and Henry VIII's known whereabouts between May 1530 and April 1534.¹

DATE	CROMWELL'S WHEREABOUTS	HENRY VIII'S WHEREABOUTS
5 May 1530	St James, Westminster	Unknown, possibly Hunsdon
3 June 1530	London ²	Unknown, possibly Hampton Court
30 June 1530	London	Hampton Court
24 July 1530	London	Guildford
18 August 1530	London	Unknown
December 1530	London	Unknown
18 June 1531	London	Hampton Court
1 October 1531	London	Waltham
3 October 1531	London	Waltham
25 April 1532	London	Greenwich

¹ Cromwell's itinerary has been constructed from the letters sent by him, taking into account those which have been re-dated in this study. Henry VIII's whereabouts have been obtained from the itinerary of the king found in TNA, PRO, OBS, 1/1418.

² London almost certainly refers to Cromwell's house next to the Austin Friars, London.

13 June 1532	London	Eltham
14 June 1532	London	Eltham
19 June 1532	London	Eltham
19 July 1532	London	Ampthill
20 July 1532	London	Ampthill
23 September 1532	London	Unknown, but probably Hampton Court
24 November 1532	Eltham, Kent	Eltham
December 1532	London	Unknown
6 April 1533	London	Westminster
26 June 1533	London	Greenwich
9 July 1533	London	Unknown, but probably Chertsey
18 July 1533	London	Windsor
19 July 1533	London	Windsor
20 July 1533	London	Windsor
23 July 1533	London	Unknown
25 July 1533	London	Oaking

26 July 1533	London	Unknown
1 September 1533	London	Unknown
15 September 1533	Stepney	Greenwich
21 September 1533	Stepney	Greenwich
24 October 1533	London	Westminster
8 November 1533	London	Greenwich
11 November 1533	London	Greenwich
6 December 1533	London	Greenwich
5 January 1534	London	Greenwich
28 March 1534	London	Westminster
1 May 1534	Stepney	Greenwich
4 May 1534	London	Greenwich
13 May 1534	Stepney	Greenwich
24 May 1534	Richmond	Richmond

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Cotton MS Appendix L
 Appendix XXVIII
 Caligula B VI
 Caligula B III
 Cleopatra E IV
 Cleopatra E VI
 Faustina C III
 Faustina E VII
 Galba B IX
 Galba B X
 Otho C X
 Otho E IX
 Titus B I
 Titus B IV
 Vespasian F XIII
 Vespasian C XIV
 Vitellius B X
 Vitellius B XIII

Egerton MS 2886

Harley MS 368, 442, 6148, 6849, 6989

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A. I. 61, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71 [1-2], 75

A XII 121

Charter X

MB/ I C (Court of Assistants Minutes, 1543-1553)

The National Archives, Public Record Office, Kew

C1	Court of Chancery: Early Proceedings: Richard II to Philip and Mary
C36	Chancery: Ordinary and Appeal Petitions
C131	Chancery: Extents for Debts, Series I
C142	Chancery: Inquisitions Post Mortem, Series II, and other Inquisitions, Henry VII to Charles I
C244	Chancery: Petty Bag Office: Files, Tower and Rolls Chapel Series, Corpus Cum Causa
C66	Chancery, Patent Rolls
C82	Chancery, Warrants for the Great Seal: Series II
E24	Exchequer: Treasury of Receipt: Deeds relating to Cardinal Wolsey's Colleges in Oxford and Ipswich
E30	Exchequer, Treasury of Receipt: Diplomatic Documents

E36	Exchequer: Treasury of the Receipt: Miscellaneous Books
E40	Exchequer, Treasury of Receipt: Ancient Deeds, Series A
E41	Exchequer, Treasury of Receipt: Ancient Deeds, Series AA
E101	Exchequer, King's Remembrancer: Accounts Various
E135	Exchequer: Miscellaneous Ecclesiastical Documents
E175	Exchequer: King's Remembrancer and Treasury of the Receipt: Parliament and Council Proceedings, Series II
E179	Exchequer: King's Remembrancer: Particulars of Account and other records relating to Lay and Clerical Taxation
E407	Exchequer of Receipt: Miscellaneous Rolls, Books and Papers
OBS 1/1418	State Paper Office: Itinerary of Henry VIII
PROB 11	Prerogative Court of Canterbury and related Probate Jurisdictions: Will Registers
REQ2	Court of Requests: Pleadings
SC6	Special Collections: Minsters' and Receiver's Accounts
SC7	Special Collections: Papal Bulls
SC12	Special Collections: Rentals and Surveys, Portfolios
SP 1	State Papers, Henry VIII: General Series
SP 2	State Papers, Henry VIII: Folios
SP 3	State Papers, Lisle Papers
SP 6	Theological Tracts Henry VIII
SP 60	State Papers, Henry VIII: Ireland Series
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