

Anne Elizabeth Morley

A Biography

Good morrow good reader! Prithy, allow me to tell you my story. My name is Anne Elizabeth Morley. I am a Gentlewoman of the Privy Chamber for Her glorious Majesty Queen Elizabeth, and her personal scribe. Mind you, Her Majesty has beautiful handwriting in the Italian style, but does not always want to take the time to write letters for herself. I am blessed to be of assistance to her in this matter. But I jump ahead of myself. Let me tell you who I am.

I was born Anne Elizabeth Carver on Christmas Day in the thirty-sixth year of the reign of good King Hal, Anno Domini 1545. My parents, William and Elizabeth Carver have three living children, William, born in 1540, Edmund, born in 1542 and me. My father is a prestigious judge in the Star Chamber, knighted by Queen Elizabeth for his great service in the year 1570, and so we may live comfortably even though he is far away in London much of the time. Our home is in Norwich in the English county of Norfolk, about three day's journey from London by coach. We live on a narrow lane far from the centre of the city, and very pleased I am to avoid the noxious smells of the heart of Norwich. Ours is a very comfortable two storey house which I am told is of wattle and daub construction. (Wattle and Daub construction) We have very fancy leaded glass windows and fireplaces and both ends of the house. They keep us comfortably warm, unlike the houses of many of our neighbours. The ground floor has two rooms, a large hall with the kitchen at the other end. Outside the kitchen my mother is proud to have a small kitchen garden which produces wonderful herbs. She is learned in the use of herbs for our health, and our cook uses many of the herbs in our food, making it so much tastier than that of the local inns. We have a privy built especially behind the kitchen, so do not have to go down to the bottom of the garden in winter's cold.. The first storey holds three rooms, a bedroom for my parents, one for my brothers and the cook

and one for me and our housekeeper. As a young girl I liked sharing a room with Susan Hardy, our housekeeper, as she was a warm and friendly woman who treated me as her own child.

When I was at the age of six or so, my mother began teaching me the arts that I would need as an adult woman and wife. (Emerson, Kathy Lynn. *The Writer's Guide to Everyday Life in Renaissance England*. p. 178) I learnt to play the virginal, the recorder and to sing. I love music, so worked very hard to improve my skills and enjoy what I was learning. I was told that I had a clear, bell-like voice, just like the young boys in the cathedral choir. I wished that I could sing with them, I even imagined putting my hair up under a hat and wearing boy's clothes to do so. My parents were scandalised at that notion.

Needlework was also a daily occupation. Mother showed me how to sew with very careful, even stitches. I enjoyed making some of our clothing, but what I really enjoyed was embroidery. The Spanish work, sometimes called black work (Fall, Cheryl. *Blackwork Embroidery*) by those who hate Queen Mary's Spanish husband, began as enjoyable but then turned tedious once I got good at a particular pattern. My favourite was working the flowers, birds and other creatures in silk and gold threads. I have become quite good at that! Mother allowed me to make my own coif on which I put many of my favourite flowers, especially the red and white rose of the Tudor family, and fun birds with worms, and the beetle of Our Lady, the ladybird.

My mother also had me learn the running of the household. Sometimes I got to choose the menus for the week. Of course I had my favourites: Coffin of Baked Chicken, Capon with Oranges, Stewed Meates, Pye of Aloes and Minst Pyes. (Breverton, Terry. *The Tudor Cookbook*.) I still love these, the combination of savoury meats and sweet fruits is especially appealing. I also love the colourful sallats with greens and colourful flowers. Will Cross, our cook, taught me how to make Marchpane and Candied Flowers. Candied Violets were and still are my favourite. Their delicate fragrance

and flavour is heavenly. Of course many of these dishes were only served on feast days or when my father invited guests. Of a normal day pottage served for our morning meal, a simple stew on a trencher for dinner and some bread and cheese for supper. We always drank small ale, (small ale had a lower alcohol content) and we were allowed to have wine on very special occasions. Some sort of fish was always served on Sundays and sometimes on Wednesday by requirement of the Church. (Emerson, Kathy Lynn. *The Writer's Guide to Everyday Life in Renaissance England*. p. 28)

Although we had to hide our worship during the reign of that bastard queen Mary, our family are members of the new faith, the Church of England. Father and mother both feel strongly about having services using the new *Book of Common Prayer* (*Book of Common Prayer*) so that we could all understand what was being said. Father had a special cabinet built where no one would suspect for our 'heretical' Bible. As I said, Henry VIII was King when I was born, but he died only two years later. Then his only son, Edward became our sovereign. Edward kept the new faith going, pulling further away from the papists. The Act of Uniformity, passed in 1549, made many who were comfortable in the ways of the Roman church very uncomfortable. (The Act of Uniformity, 1549) Far away from us in Norfolk there was a rebellion over the use of the *Book of Common Prayer*, but my family greatly approved of the new worship and were not involved in the papist rebellion.

Away from religion but closer to home, in 1549 an angry fellow by the name of Robert Kett decided that the Lord Protector Edward Seymour, 1st Duke of Somerset, who had caused enclosures around common lands in Norfolk, had inflicted great hardship on the farmers. (Kett's Rebellion) It was said that Kett gathered 16,000 men who then blockaded the city of Norwich. On the first day of August they stormed Norwich and took control of the city; however, John Dudley, the Earl of Warwick brought in his well trained troops who crushed Kett's rebellion. Robert Kett was tried and then hanged from the top of the castle, left for all to see. Our father, home from the Star Court, kept a close watch on my eager and reckless

brothers who were then nine and seven years old during the rebellion. He had us stay within the confines of our home during the rebellion, but when Kett was executed father took my brothers to show them what happens to criminals. They came home very shaken, but would not tell me why. I was very put out not to have been included even at the great age of four.

As I grew my parents noticed that I was not a typical lass. I learnt to read easily and spent much time reading the *Book of Common Prayer*, and any of the books that my father kept at home. They were complicated so I asked many questions. He was always surprised at my questions, but very patiently explained all that he could. I also learnt to write in the Italian style, and took great pride in my letters. My writing was so clear that my father joked that he should have me as one of his clerks!

When it was time for my brothers to have tutors I begged to be allowed to listen in on their lessons. My mother thought it a great waste, but my father felt otherwise. Although I was still made to keep up my needlework, I was allowed to sew near their lessons so I could learn as well. Their lessons included Latin, French, Rhetoric, Sciences and Law. I enjoyed learning French and Latin, but did not like rhetoric as much. I was very shy, and could not think to speak in front of many people. The sciences were interesting, particularly geometry and astronomy. I was oft allowed to write assignments for my older brother William as his handwriting was terrible! Writing the lessons helped me understand them better, and gave me extra practice in refining my letters. Even so, Mother required me to continue my studies of music as well. My skills at the virginal were excellent. When my father had guests he would always ask me to play for them. The music of William Byrd in *Queen Elizabeth's Virginal Book* (*Fitzwilliam Virginal Book*, originally known as *Queen Elizabeth's Virginal Book*) was my favourite; the dances were enjoyable, the Alman, Galliard, Pavan and the exciting La Volta, but my favourite was Byrd's 'The Woods so Wild.' (*Fitzwilliam Virginal Book*, originally known as *Queen Elizabeth's Virginal Book Vol 1*) It sang to my heart. Sometimes he had me sing little ditties, ballads that were we oft heard sung, but only if they were pure of heart.

When I became of an age to marry my father wanted to find a husband for me who could not only provide a comfortable living but also accept and value my intelligence and learning. Such a man would be rare, but he found that man in Stephen Morley, the young silk merchant. Master Morley was a journeyman for Samuel Reed, and when Master Reed died suddenly Morley took over his silk business. Morley was a bright fellow who could have done most anything, but his father, a brewer of fine quality, wished for him to step up as a merchant and so apprenticed him to Master Reed. Master Morley had seen me when mother took me to choose fabric for our clothing, and had heard that I was very talented at the virginal and had a fine voice. Music was in his family; his brother Thomas was beginning to make a name for himself as a composer. (ancestry.com; and *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*) Stephen went to my father to ask for my hand. Happy with the match, my father gave him a good dowry for me and we were married in Norwich Cathedral on the first of June in Anno Domini 1564. Although I had met Stephen, I did not know him well. The prospect of being his wife was frightening even though he was a handsome man with dark hair and surprisingly blue eyes which twinkled when he looked at me. He was certainly the most interesting prospect for a husband in my opinion. I suppose I was lucky as so many girls have to marry men whom they do not like or even despise. (Taylor, James. *Marriage and Marriage Practices in Renaissance England*)

The day of our wedding turned out to be a sunny, beautiful day. I was extremely happy with the gown that I, my mother and 2 seamstresses made. It was of a medium green silk, embellished with gold work vines from which sprouted green leaves, yellow daffodils and pink roses. The white silk forepart had more of the same with the addition of blue columbines and colourful birds. The ruffs around my neck and wrists were edged with gold. My coif matched the forepart and my hat was of deep green velvet with a white plume. My chemise was of fine white linen with much blackwork of which I was especially proud. It would make a fine nightdress for our first night together. The kirtle was dark green and the bodies and farthingale were of red silk. I felt almost regal, but as the

wedding day was hot, I nearly swooned. Stephen looked particularly dashing with his bodkin beard and dressed in dark red and black Venetians with red stockings, black doublet trimmed in red and gold, ruffs at his collar and wrists and a black velvet hat with a black plume. I thought him to be a very handsome husband.

I was surprised and saddened when no baby came, and even more saddened when the dreaded sweating sickness took Stephen from me only a year after our marriage. (Harris, Rowan. *Sweating Sickness of Tudor England*. Although the Black Plague overshadowed sweating sickness, it was a major killer in Tudor England.) He awoke in damp sheets and was dead by dusk. Our maidservant kept me away from him that day, but then she died of the sickness the following day. I was very thankful to have been spared. Stephen left me the silk business, and I was thankful to be able to leave the running of the business to his journeyman, William Skyte, a very honest and capable man.

Since I did not spend my time running the business I had much time and little to keep me occupied. My father suggested that he introduce me to our Queen, Elizabeth in the ninth year of her reign hoping she would take me as one of her Gentlewomen of the Privy Chamber. (Anna Whitelock. *Elizabeth's Bedfellows*) He felt that she would appreciate my wit and my writing ability. Such a thought made me excited as our Queen is intelligent and musical, but it frightened me as I am shy and uncertain around people. Indeed, the thought of being introduced to the Queen was frightening, but the prospect of being in Her Court was terrifying. My parents and friends encouraged me greatly, which gave me strength and hope. I thought that my wedding gown would suit the occasion, but my mother was adamant that we make a new gown. Considering that my hair is light brown and my skin very pale she chose a rich russet silk. As time was short we chose a closed bodice with black and gold trim, homage to my late husband. The forepart was black damask with gold embroidery and red beads. I wore the coif from my wedding, and a black velvet hat and plume. The outfit

reflected red to my cheeks. What would it look like when I blushed, as I was certain to do?

Her Majesty was in residence at Hampton Court Palace that October day I would meet her. As it was several days journey, my father planned a day for me to recover from the long trip. I was grateful that father hired a coach so that we were by ourselves on the journey. It had rained very little, so the roads were rutted and dusty. Each night I had carefully brushed the dust out of my clothing and that of my father, and washed as much dirt from my body as possible. Once near the Palace we took rooms at the Swan Inn. It was a comfortable place, but the eve was with revellers downstairs. We took our meals in father's room to avoid being seen prior to my introduction in Court. To allay my nerves I wrote pages about the journey. I had never travelled so far, and was amazed at all I saw.

All too soon the fateful day was upon us. Breakfast was brought up but I could hardly eat. I took great pains in dressing and pinning up my hair. It was fine and never did like to stay in place so I used extra pins to try to keep it from straying. I also pinned my coif to my hair to make certain it would not be awry when the time came. Our ride to Hampton Court was very brief. The Palace was so beautiful, rich red brick with black bricks forming a criss cross pattern, statues leading up to the great gate and chimneys, so many chimneys of many different shapes! (Personal visits, 2019 and many in the 1970's) I had thought our castle in Norwich beautiful, but this was amazing.

Alighting from the coach we walked to the great gate through the statues of our royal heritage. I recognised the lion and shield of great King Henry the Queen's father, but the others were unknown to me. Father pointed out the leopard and shield of King Henry's favourite wife Jane Seymour. (Hampton Court Palace Guide) I was not surprised that those of his other wives were not present. Once past the guards and under the heavy portcullis we took the staircase on our left. It was wider than any staircase that I had ever seen. It turned to the right, and all of the sudden we were in the Great

Hall. There were beautiful Flemish tapestries on all of the walls, a dark beamed roof, and so many people all talking at once. On the far side of the room I could see the red and gold trappings over the spot where Her throne would be. It seemed a great distance through all of these chattering people.

Father led me through the throng of courtiers. He spoke with a few on the way, introducing me as he went. The butterflies in my stomach turned to ravens. Finally, there she was, Gloriana herself. She was beautiful in her black silk French gown with a garde of black velvet embroidered with unicorns. (Janet Arnold. *Queen Elizabeth's Wardrobe Unlock'd*) I have never seen so many pearls. And her long, delicate hands were adorned with many rings. She was speaking to Lord Burghley (I knew only because she addressed him so). Glancing around, her dark eyes fell upon my father. She dismissed Lord Burghley and motioned for my father to approach.

'Sir William, We see that you have brought your daughter to Court' she said as he walked towards the dais with me one step behind. 'Yes, Your Majesty, this is Mistress Anne Elizabeth Morley.' (A widow would have been addressed as Mistress. (Forms of Address in Tudor England) This form of address does not apply to me in the SCA) 'Come hither Mistress Morley. Let us look at you.' Seeing the paper in my hand she added 'We see you have brought Us a sampling of your writing.' 'Yes, Your Majesty' I replied, handing it to her. She took a brief look at my work, then looked me up and down. I was certain that I had failed in her view. 'You will join our Gentlewomen of the Privy Chamber, and work as my private scribe for personal correspondence.' She waved the paper at a nearby woman who took it and promptly led me away. I had passed, I am now a member of her women, and have been to this day. My duties are to write personal letters that the Queen dictates, and, of course, to be at her beck and call. She oft invites me to join her in deep conversations and in music. She occasionally will speak to me of her ideas before she presents them to her Council. I have always been a good listener, but also am allowed to respond with my own impressions of her choices. I am proud to become one of her confidants,

and it is my belief that we enjoy a deep mutual respect. And at this point Her Grace has not had occasion to box my ears as she has with so many of her women!

I thank you, dear reader, for taking the time to learn of me. My life has been more than that of most women, which many men, and women, eschew. But I am grateful for my learning as it has brought me to this present situation.

Please note: All spellings are traditional English spelling. The more unusual spellings of food are as given in the original manuscripts. Although a person writing in Tudor England would not use any consistent form of spelling, I chose to keep to modern English spelling for ease of reading.

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