



³Adult Learning Within Reach

Member Lecture – 17 June 2021

The Field of the Cloth of Gold, aka when Henry VIII went glamping!
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Questions answered post-lecture

Q1 What was the original purpose of the event / meeting?

It was proposed as a tournament to celebrate the Treaty of Universal Peace, 1518. Tournaments were frequently held to celebrate peace treaties. I think the idea of mock warfare was supposed to illustrate that each side did have the strength and capability to go to war if they chose to do so.

Q2 Who would have been responsible for the design of the tents?

Design in those days was a very casual affair. There is quite a lot of information in the Glenn Richardson book. He says that Master tent-makers were brought from Lyon, an area with a lot of cloth manufacturers to make the French tents. Cardinal Wolsey and Henry himself are thought to have had a hand in the design of the English tent. But of course, Henry had teams of people who would have come up with the practical ideas, and a Royal Wardrobe department too to supply fabrics etc. There was a chap called Richard Gibson, who held titles such as Yeoman of the Tents, and Master of Revels, who they think was probably responsible for much of the decoration of Henry's tent.

Q3 Are there any medieval buildings still standing in the area?

This **frieze** (created soon after the event) detailing the Field of the Cloth of Gold is still there in a nearby medieval building. It's now a Marriott Hotel. Not sure how much of the hotel is old though.

I think there are some ruined castles nearby, perhaps even the one Henry stayed in, in the area, but I have not investigated this. Would like to go there now!

Q4 What year was the 2nd follow-up meeting?

That meeting took place in 1532. It was smaller meeting, and apparently all about Anne Boleyn, who had in fact attended the first event, in a minor role.

Q5 Henry VIII was supposedly an accomplished musician. Might he have done any entertaining or singing during the event?

It is very probable that he did. He and Francois are recorded as participating in the masques (which included singing and dancing), dressing up in (fancy dress we would call it) costumes to do so, so I am sure he must have been singing and dancing.

Q6 Is it correct that the event sowed the seeds of the end of Henry's marriage to Katherine of Aragon?. Henry and Francois were so competitive that comparisons were made between their wives. Katherine was older and had not produced a male heir.

You are right. It certainly didn't help that Queen Claude was young and had given birth to two sons already. That was a slap in the face! However, Henry's mistress had also given birth to an illegitimate male child the year before, so no doubt it was already very much on his mind. The son's name was [Henry Fitzroy](#) (he's on Wikipedia). All very sad, as they had quite a companionable marriage until this issue ruined things.

Useful links and further reading

[The Field of the Cloth of Gold](#) – Glen Richardson, 2013

[1520: The Field of the Cloth of Gold](#) – Amy Licence, 2020

[Contemporary illustrations of tents & costumes](#) – British Library