

## The Norreys Family in Tudor Ewelme

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### The connection of Sir Henry Norreys to Ewelme

The historic area of Ewelme attracts a constant stream of visitors interested in its heritage, and naturally, the church holds clues to intriguing events from centuries long ago. One such is a small brass tablet on the floor of the nave (adjacent to the font). This is a memorial to a 5 year old boy Edward Norreys who died in 1529 which reads - *Here lyeth Edwarde Norryys late the svede son of Henry Norreys Esquier and Mary Ffynes his wife, daughter of the Lord Dacres. Which Henry was secude son of Sir Edwarde Norryys Knight and of Dame Fulwith his wife and sister to the Lorde Lovell. Which Sir Edward wzs son and heyer to Sir Wylim Norryys Knight. The sayde Edwarde deceasyd at his age of five years the xvith day of July in the yere of our Lord God mcccxxix.*



Edward belonged to a family whose male members had influential connections with the Tudor Court and his father, Sir Henry Norreys, was at times Keeper of the Kings Purse, Keeper of the Kings Park in Ewelme and Constable of Wallingford Castle. Sir Henry's downfall was caused by his being a close friend and supporter of Queen Anne Boleyn. When Henry VIII was seeking an excuse to rid himself of his turbulent Queen to clear his path for a union with the more pliable Jane Seymour, improbable charges of adultery were trumped up against Anne. Henry VIII accused her of infidelities with such disparate characters as her minstrel, her own brother and two noblemen, one of whom was Henry Norreys.

On 1st May 1536, Norreys took part in a tournament at Greenwich where allegedly the King told Norreys he was suspected of an intrigue with Queen Anne and urged him to confess when his life would be spared. The story says Norreys refused to impugn the name of an innocent lady. He was arrested and taken to the Tower and tried on 12th May in Westminster Hall where he pleaded not guilty. However, Henry VIII was not to be thwarted and Norreys was found guilty and executed on 17th May and buried in the churchyard of the Tower of London.

Co-incidentally the Norreys family had also been instrumental in the downfall of the de la Pole dynasty some 50 years earlier. Sir Henry's grandfather, Sir William Norreys, commanded Henry VII's army at the Battle of Stoke in 1487 as Henry VII was no warrior. Duchess Alice's grandson, John Earl of Lincoln, onetime heir to his Uncle Richard III's throne, invaded in an attempt to defeat the Tudor conqueror and re-establish the Plantagenet line, but he was killed, and the de la Pole's regal ambition was ended.

*Ewelme Archive*