

The Tudor Occupation of Boulogne

In 1544, Henry VIII led the largest army then ever raised by an English monarch to invade France. This book investigates the consequences of this action by examining the devastating impact of warfare on the native population, the methods the English used to impose their rule on the region (from the use of cartography to the construction of fortifications) and the development of English colonial rule in France. As Murphy explores the significance of this major financial and military commitment by the Tudor monarchy, he situates the developments within the wider context of English actions in Ireland and Scotland during the mid-sixteenth century. Rather than consider the plantations established in mid-sixteenth century Ireland as the ‘laboratory’ for a new form of empire, this book argues that they should be viewed along with the Boulogne venture as the English crown’s final attempt to establish colonies through the use of state resources alone.

Neil Murphy is Associate Professor in History at Northumbria University. He has authored two books, *The Captivity of John II, 1356–60: The Royal Image in Later Medieval England and France* (2016) and *Ceremonial Entries, Urban Liberties and the Negotiation of Power in Valois France, 1328–1589* (2016), as well as nearly twenty articles and chapters. He is the reviews editor of the journal *Archives*.

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The Tudor Occupation of Boulogne

*Conquest, Colonisation and Imperial Monarchy,
1544–1550*

Neil Murphy

Northumbria University, Newcastle



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To my daughter Evie

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Preface

On 18 September 1544, Henry VIII entered the French town of Boulogne – which had surrendered five days earlier – in triumph. The manner of the Tudor monarch’s entry was important because it showed how he intended to rule the town and its region, the Boulonnais. When Henry conquered Tournai in 1513, he allowed the townspeople to greet him as king of France using the customary ceremonial greeting they accorded to visiting French monarchs. While the type of ceremonial entry Henry made into Tournai showed its population that he intended to rule them as the rightful king of France rather than turn the town into an English colony, he entered Boulogne in 1544 as a conqueror who had come to annex the city to his English crown. The English chronicler Edward Hall writes that Henry ‘having the sworde borne naked before him, by the Lord Marques Dorset, like a noble and valyaunt conquerer rode into Bulleyn, and the Trompetters standyng on the walles of the toune, sounded their Trompettes, at the time of his entring, to the great comfort of al the kynges true subjectes’, following which Charles Brandon, duke of Suffolk, ‘delivered unto him the keyes of the toune’. Rather than staging an entry designed to highlight his ancestral right to the throne of France, Henry VIII entered Boulogne as a ‘noble and valyaunt conquerer’, and all the elements of the ceremony, from the use of an unsheathed sword to the presence of royal trumpeters, proclaimed that he was laying claim to Boulogne by the right of conquest.

Henry had good reason to present himself as a military conqueror. He had raised what was then the largest army ever led overseas by an English monarch and invaded France in the summer of 1544. The Tudor military force of approximately 36,000 men was divided into two armies, each of which had a separate objective. The first army left Calais in June under the command of Thomas Howard, duke of Norfolk, and laid siege to Montreuil, the strategically important town on the east bank of the River Canche. The second army, which was under the command of Charles Brandon, duke of Suffolk, arrived in Calais in early July and proceeded to lay siege to the important Channel port of Boulogne.

Despite being in poor health, Henry VIII crossed the Channel and joined the siege of Boulogne on 26 July. English artillery bombarded the town, while the digging of extensive trenches brought Henry VIII's soldiers close enough to the walls of Boulogne to assault the place. While these attacks met staunch resistance from the French defenders, the captain of Boulogne, Jacques de Coucy, lord of Vervins, saw that the town could not sustain a further assault, and he surrendered to the duke of Suffolk on 13 September.

While the siege of Montreuil began before that of Boulogne, Howard was still far from winning the town by the time Vervins surrendered to Charles Brandon. Howard was beset by numerous difficulties, including squabbles with his commanders, inadequate supplying arrangements, and disease and atrocious living conditions amongst the soldiery, while his army's inability to completely surround the town meant that they could not prevent the defenders from receiving supplies. His situation was made more difficult when Emperor Charles V – who had allied with Henry VIII in the war against France – made peace with Francis I on 18 September. As well as losing the support of thousands of Imperial soldiers, many of Howard's English troops were diverted to Boulogne to defend the town against a French counter-attack. The siege of Montreuil was now unsustainable, and Howard withdrew to Calais in early October and disbanded the army – much to the anger of Henry VIII, who wanted him to remain in the field. While the war dragged on for another eighteen months, it became for the English one of defence rather than conquest, and Henry VIII was forced to pour vast sums of money and resources into defending Boulogne until peace with France brought an end to the conflict in June 1546.

War broke out again in August 1549, when Henry II (who had ascended to the French throne after Francis I's death in 1547) led a military campaign to recover the lands his father had lost to the English during the war of 1544–6. While he failed to retake Boulogne, the campaign was not without success, and the Valois monarch managed to bring New Haven, the second-most important English settlement in the region, under his rule, which isolated Boulogne from Calais and severed the Pale in two. As with the English campaign of 1544, Henry II's reconquest of the Boulonnais involved great violence. French soldiers massacred the English garrison of Senlecque and killed civilian residents of these lands. So great were these scenes of slaughter that Nicholas Nicolai, Henry II's geographer and *valet de chambre*, who wrote an account of the campaign, sought to shift the blame for this violence away from the king and attributed it instead to the actions of low-born French soldiers acting with an animal-like ferocity. Sir John Grey, the commander of New Haven,

initially insulted the herald Henry II sent to offer terms. Yet when it became clear that New Haven would fall, Grey performed an honourable amend before the French king and appealed to his mercy to avoid a massacre. Henry II agreed to spare the inhabitants of New Haven, both soldiers and civilians, and permit them to leave for Calais. He ordered his troops to stop harassing the population and to release any prisoners they had taken upon pain of death, following which he lined his army up along the sides of the road to watch the 700–800 men, women and children leave the settlement.

While England and France remained at war for another seven months, there were no more major military encounters, and Tudor rule at Boulogne came to an end by treaty rather than by conquest. By the terms of the Anglo–French treaty made in March 1550, the Valois monarch was to receive the town and its surrounding forts in return for paying Edward VI 400,000 *écus*. On 25 April 1550, Edward Fiennes de Clinton, the last English governor of Boulogne, ceremonially handed over the town's keys to the French king's representatives, François de Montmorency and Gaspard de Coligny. Following the English garrison's exit from Boulogne, Montmorency and Coligny entered the town and took possession of it on behalf of their master, Henry II. Coligny's participation in the event was symbolically important, as he had received the surrender of Tournai in January 1519 and – like Henry VIII in 1544 – he entered Boulogne like a military conqueror. Like his father's actions at Tournai three decades earlier, Henry II portrayed his recovery of Boulogne as a conquest rather than as the result of a negotiated settlement. In September 1550, for instance, Henry II instructed his ambassador in Istanbul to inform the sultan that he had driven the English out of Boulogne. Following the French king's ceremonial entry into Boulogne in August 1550, Claude d'Annebault, governor of Normandy, informed Rouen's civic administration that Henry would make his inaugural entry into the city the following month. In response, the town council prepared an entry which celebrated the monarch's self-presentation as a conqueror in the wake of Boulogne. The English ambassador Sir John Mason, who was travelling with the French court, informed the privy council that 'amonge sondrye pageants that were represented therein the plotts of Bulloigne and all those peces were carryed a lofte uppon longe poolys' (which were diplomatically removed when the queen made her entry after). Yet while the English ambassador may have complained about how the return of Boulogne was represented in Valois propaganda, the loss of the town was not unwelcome to many in England, including John Dudley, earl of Warwick and duke of Northumberland, then ruling England as Lord Protector, as the defence of Boulogne was draining vast

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sums of money from the royal coffers. Yet the willingness with which Northumberland's regime was prepared to end the war with France and return the town to Valois rule belies the importance Henry VIII attached to his conquest, which was one of the most significant events of his reign. This book examines the conquest and colonisation of Boulogne, an enterprise which formed one of the last great efforts to establish English rule overseas through state resources alone.

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Abbreviations

<i>AC</i>	Archives communales
<i>AD</i>	Archives départementales
<i>A&M</i>	John Foxe, <i>Actes and Monuments of These Latter and Perillous Days, Touching Matters of the Church</i> (London, 1583).
<i>AM</i>	Archives municipales
<i>ANF</i>	Archives Nationales de France, Paris
<i>APC</i>	<i>Acts of the Privy Council of England: New Series</i> , ed. J. R. Dasent et al., 46 vols (London, 1890–1964).
<i>Bellay</i>	<i>Mémoires de Martin et Guillaume Du Bellay</i> , ed. V.-L. Bourrilly and F. Vindry, 4 vols (Paris, 1908–19).
<i>Bindoff</i>	S. T. Bindoff, <i>History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1509–1558</i> , 3 vols (Woodbridge, 1982).
<i>BL</i>	British Library, London
<i>Brésin</i>	<i>Chroniques de Flandre et d'Artois par Louis Brésin. Analyse et extraits pour servir à l'histoire de ces provinces de 1482 à 1560</i> , ed. E. Mannier (Paris, 1880).
<i>CCM</i>	<i>Calendar of the Carew Manuscripts, Preserved at the Archiepiscopal Library at Lambeth (1515–1624)</i> , ed. J. S. Brewer and W. Bullen, 6 vols (London, 1867–73).
<i>Chron. Henry VIII</i>	<i>Chronicle of Henry VIII</i> , ed. M. S. Hume (London, 1889).
<i>CP</i>	'Calais Papers, 1547–1552' in <i>CSPFEd</i> , 292–358.
<i>CPREd</i>	<i>Calendar of the Patent Rolls Preserved in the Public Record Office. Edward VI</i> , ed. H. C. Maxwell Lyte and R. H. V. Brodie, 6 vols (London, 1924–9).
<i>CPREliz</i>	<i>Calendar of the Patent Rolls Preserved in the Public Record Office. Elizabeth I</i> , ed. J. H. Collingridge et al., 9 vols (London, 1939–86).

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| <i>CPRPM</i> | <i>Calendar of the Patent Rolls Preserved in the Public Record Office. Philip and Mary</i> , ed. M. S. Giuseppi, J. C. Walker and A. C. Wood, 4 vols (London, 1936–9). |
| <i>CSPDEd</i> | <i>Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, of the Reign Edward VI</i> , ed. C. S. Knighton (London, 1992). |
| <i>CSPDM</i> | <i>Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, of the Reign of Mary I</i> , ed. C. S. Knighton (London, 1998). |
| <i>CSPFEd</i> | <i>Calendar of State Papers, Foreign Series, of the Reign of Edward VI, 1547–1553</i> , ed. W. B. Turnbull (London, 1861). |
| <i>CSPFEliz</i> | <i>Calendar of State Papers, Foreign Series, of the Reign of Elizabeth</i> , ed. J. Stevenson et al., 23 vols (London, 1863–1950). |
| <i>CSPFM</i> | <i>Calendar of State Papers, Foreign Series, of the Reign of Mary, 1553–1558</i> , ed. W. B. Turnbull (London, 1861). |
| <i>CSPI, 1509–1547</i> | <i>Calendar of State Papers, Ireland, Tudor Period, 1509–1547</i> , ed. S. G. Ellis and J. Murray (Dublin, 2017). |
| <i>CSPI, 1547–1553</i> | <i>Calendar of State Papers Ireland, Tudor Period, 1547–1553</i> , ed. C. Lennon (Dublin, 2015). |
| <i>CSPI, 1509–1573</i> | <i>Calendar of State Papers Relating to Ireland: of the Reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary, and Elizabeth, 1509–1573</i> , ed. H. C. Hamilton (London, 1860). |
| <i>CSPSp</i> | <i>Calendar of Letters, Despatches, and State Papers Relating to the Negotiations between England and Spain Preserved in the Archives of Simancas and Elsewhere</i> , ed. G. A. Berengoth et al., 13 vols (London, 1862–1934). |
| <i>CSPVen</i> | <i>Calendar of State Papers and Manuscripts Relating to English Affairs, Existing in the Archives and Collections of Venice and Northern Italy</i> , ed. R. Brown et al., 38 vols (London, 1864–1947). |
| <i>ECHR</i> | <i>Economic History Review</i> |
| <i>EHR</i> | <i>English Historical Review</i> |
| <i>Foedera</i> | T. Rymer, <i>Foedera, conventiones, literae, et cujuscunque generis acta publica</i> , 20 vols (London, 1704–35). |
| <i>Grafton</i> | <i>Grafton's Chronicle; or, History of England. To which is added his table of the bailiffs, sheriffs, and mayors, of</i> |

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- the City of London. From the year 1189, to 1558, inclusive*, 2 vols (London, 1809).
- Grey Friars *Chronicle of the Grey Friars of London*, ed. J. G. Nicholas (London, 1852).
- Gruffydd *Elis Gruffydd and the 1544 'Enterprises' of Paris and Boulogne*, ed. J. Davies and trans. M. B. Davies (Farnham, 2003).
- HJ *Historical Journal*
- HMC Hatfield *Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Most Hon. the Marquis of Salisbury ... Preserved at Hatfield House*, Historical Manuscripts Commission, 24 vols (London, 1883–1976).
- Holinshed *Holinshed's Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland*, 6 vols (London, 1807–8).
- HP *Hamilton Papers*, ed. J. Bain, 2 vols (Edinburgh, 1890–2).
- HR *Historical Research*
- JAH *Journal of American History*
- JEH *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*
- LP *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII*, ed. J. S. Brewer, 21 vols (London, 1862–1932).
- Morin A. Morin, 'Chroniques du siège de Boulogne, en 1544', *Revue des sociétés savantes de la France et de l'étranger*, 4th series, 2 (1875), 244–61.
- ODNB *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and B. Harrison, 60 vols (Oxford, 2004).
- PAPS *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*
- Paradin 'Récit du siège et de la prise de Boulogne par les anglais en 1544, et de la reprise de cette ville par le roi Henri II, en 1550, par Guillaume Paradin', ed. D. de Haigneré, *Mémoires de la Société académique de l'arrondissement de Boulogne-sur-Mer* 15 (1889–90), 285–304.
- Patten William Patten, 'The Expedition into Scotland, 1547', in *Tudor Tracts*, ed. A. F. Pollard (London, 1903), 53–157.
- Précis P. J. B. Bertrand, *Précis de l'histoire physique, civile et politique, de la ville de Boulogne-sur-Mer et des ses environs*, 2 vols (Boulogne, 1828).

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- Rosny* 'Documents inédits ou rarissimes, concernant les sièges de Boulogne 1544–1549', ed. A. de Rosny, *Mémoires de la Société académique de l'arrondissement de Boulogne-sur-Mer* 27 (1912), 380–540.
- Selve* *Correspondance politique de Odet de Selve, ambassadeur de France en Angleterre (1546–1549)*, ed. G. Lefèvre-Pontalis (Paris, 1888).
- SR* *The Statutes of the Realm*, 10 vols (London, 1810–28).
- StP* *State Papers Published under the Authority of His Majesty's Commission: Henry VIII*, 11 vols (London, 1830–52).
- TNA* The National Archives, Kew
- TRP* *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, ed. P. L. Hughes and J. F. Larkin, 3 vols (New Haven and London, 1964–9).
- Wriothesley* *A Chronicle of England during the Reigns of the Tudors, from A.D. 1485 to 1559 by Charles Wriothesley, Windsor Herald*, ed. W. D. Hamilton, 2 vols (London, 1875–7).