**Sofia H-S (Year 7) – written in the style of historian, Miranda Kaufmann**

Stepping outside into the cold air, I wrapped a coat around my body and braced myself for the talking to I was about to get from the Master of the Horse for coming to the Abbey when he said he was busy, especially when he’d “already made up his mind” about me staying in town instead of in the Abbey with everyone else. I turned round the corner, a fake smile already plastered onto my face and a ready argument waiting on my lips, when my grin faltered, a frown gently nudging it out of the way. There was no one here! Looking around me as I edged forward nervously I wondered if this was some kind of joke?

Suddenly I heard a noise. Terrified I dived behind a bush. “I see no reason not to, your Majesty” Master of the Horse? “Very well”. Was that King  Henry? Frozen solid, I let out a gasp and the voices stopped. Oh no. Had they heard me? I could hear footsteps coming in my direction. I had to get out of here. If they found me, the fletcher, eves dropping on one of the Privy Council’s private meetings, I could lose my life.

This is set on the 22nd of August 1540. 20 years earlier, in 1520, Reading Abbey - one of the top ten richest monasteries in England at the time - appointed a new abbot. Hugh Faringdon. That same year Henry VIII visited the Abbey and was said to be “contented with the new Abbot here”. This proved to be true, as Henry VIII referred to Hugh Faringdon as “his own Abbot”. They even exchanged personal gifts! Henry gave Hugh cups, a goblet, a bowl and gilt cruses ( ). In return, Hugh gave Henry a £20 note (now £8, 825.54) in a white leather purse.

When Henry VIII wanted a divorce from Catherine of Aragon, it was Hugh Faringdon who petitioned the Pope for annulment. And perhaps because how close Henry and Hugh Faringdon were, Reading was firmly on Henry’s side. As if to prove this to greet Henry, bells were rung to announce his arrival to every town. However, on one visit by Catherine of Aragon in 1529, the town was silent. No bells greeted here, and as a result a fine of 8 pence (now much more) was paid.

Henry had much entertainment here in Reading that he did with Hugh, such as plays, and hunting in Whitley Woods. But not all trips were for fun.

On the 22nd August 1540, Henry took the Privy Council to Reading. The Privy Council were a group of the King’s closest advisors so this was likely a business trip. The Mayor and the Burgesses of Reading (Burgesses are free citizens in a town) petitioned him for Reading to be under the control of them, instead of the Abbey - this was after the dissolution of the Monasteries, so there was no Abbey to control everything. This was granted in 1542. There was also a petition for a fulling mill (to work with cloth) which was accepted.

Henry’s entourage mostly stayed in the hospitium - part of the Abbey - and likely in tents. Other people also stayed in houses, for example the fletcher (as previously mentioned - the arrow maker) stayed in town.

The fact that King Henry VIII brought a fletcher with him shows that his entourage must have been huge! Every person that worked for him, however indirectly or insignificant, must have been brought along. In 1522 Henry’s purveyors enquired into wine supplies when told that 914,483 bottles could be produced, they lamented their concern that this would not be enough!

Henry VIII came to Reading at least 9 times over his Reign. Whether this was because of Hugh Faringdon, Whitley Woods or simply because he liked the town, we may never know.