

that by this stage Wolsey was intent on destroying the power base of those he perceived as rivals for the King's favour.

Conclusion

Faction was an inevitable part of any European court, but the sheer monopolisation of political power by Wolsey for fifteen years meant that latent faction was not really in evidence. One can be sure that Wolsey guarded his position and status fiercely and made sure that he was well informed of any political manoeuvring by ambitious young men. The extent to which Wolsey purposefully isolated these nobles has been keenly debated but it is indisputable that power rested on the will of the King. As we have established already, Wolsey's pre-eminence could last only as long as Henry saw fit. As long as Henry believed that Wolsey was serving his interests effectively, the Cardinal was effectively untouchable. What Wolsey did in terms of building up his wealth and adding to his titles and positions merely confirmed his status. It must be remembered that Henry made Wolsey and Henry had the capacity to break him also.

Key text: *The King's Cardinal*, by Peter Gwyn

Published in 1990, Gwyn's work attempts to rehabilitate Wolsey's reputation in history. Gwyn views Wolsey as a loyal servant of the Crown who did not go out of his way to antagonise nobles nor ruthlessly monopolise power at the expense of other courtiers. Gwyn believes that Wolsey served the King diligently and effectively until circumstances conspired against him in 1529. Some historians criticised Gwyn for taking a rather rosy view of Wolsey's political dealings.

Did Wolsey carry out any meaningful reform of the Church?

What was the impact of the Hunne Affair?

The 1515 parliamentary session was dominated by the Hunne Affair (see page 20), and the anti-clerical backlash from this controversy impacted upon Wolsey. Richard Hunne was a prosperous London merchant, who had challenged the Church through the law courts over the high rate of mortuary fees that he had been forced to pay on the death of his infant son. In response the Church had allegedly trumped up charges of heresy against Hunne and he was imprisoned while awaiting trial. Hunne was subsequently found dead in custody and his demise caused uproar in the City of London. The case fuelled anti-clericalism in London, as the Church was accused of making up charges of heresy, murdering a well-to-do merchant and then convicting him of all charges after his death in order to seize his property. The case is widely cited by historians as evidence of widespread dissatisfaction with the Church, and subsequently one of the reasons why Catholicism crumbled under Henry's later attacks.