

2014

Richard, son of York: the life and northern career of Richard III

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RICHARD, SON OF YORK:
THE LIFE AND NORTHERN CAREER OF RICHARD III

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University
and Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

in

The Department of History

by
Clara E. Howell
B.A. Louisiana State University, 2011
August 2014

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are many people to thank for their help and support throughout the process of researching and writing this thesis, as well as through the three years of graduate school. First, I would like to thank my committee in the Department of History. My advisor, Victor Stater, has been a constant source of guidance and support since my days as an undergraduate. It was his undergraduate lectures and assignments that inspired me to continue on to my Masters degree. His graduate seminars and continuous encouragement and advice have made me a better historian and writer. The profoundly enjoyable and rewarding thesis writing experience would not have been the same without him. The other committee members have been extremely helpful and encouraging as well. Suzanne Marchand has been an extraordinarily valuable instructor and provided me with the tools necessary to become a better historical writer. She has been a great source of support and advice throughout my graduate school career. Working with Maribel Dietz has been a delight and her guidance and understanding throughout this process has been invaluable. Thank you all.

I must also thank my fellow graduate students who became my support system during the last three years. Most particularly I want to acknowledge Megan Spruell, Caroline Armbruster and Michael Lane who all started the program with me. I will be forever grateful for our shared experiences and for their friendship and encouragement. Additionally, I want to thank Jason and Ali Wolfe, Nik Overtoom, Kat Sawyer, Wade Trosclair and numerous others for their support and for making the entire graduate school experience extraordinary and exceptionally pleasant.

Lastly, I want to thank my family. My love of English history began when I would listen to my father tell tales of his favorite English monarch, Richard III. His passion for all history and teaching inspired me to pursue a career in the same field. He was very happy that I decided to go

to graduate school and would have been very proud that I have finished. He would also have been extremely happy about my thesis topic. I dedicate my thesis to the memory of Henry Clay Howell IV. Without his inspiration, I would not have accomplished any of this. I also must give my great thanks to my mother, Melinda Howell. She has been a vital source of motivation and strength throughout these very difficult three years. Without her support, I would not have finished my Masters degree. I also must thank my grandmother, Betty Rawls, my brother, Henry Clay Howell V, and Michael and Barbara Howell for their love and encouragement.

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the early life and career of King Richard III of England. Richard III is arguably the most controversial monarch in English history and the recent discovery of his burial place and remains has revitalized the debate, both in academia and in popular culture, over his reputation and character. Was he a villain or a maligned king? This study argues that an examination of Richard's character and total contributions to English history must concentrate on his career as Lord of the North during the reign of King Edward IV, not on his short reign as king of England. The result of such an examination presents Richard as the model of a good medieval lord, a capable general and a loyal brother to the king. This study will also address the debate over the location of his reburial and argue that, based on Richard's affiliations in north and close relationship with the city of York, Richard should be reinterred in Yorkminster Cathedral in York.

INTRODUCTION

Richard III is one of the most puzzling and controversial monarchs in English history. The recent discovery of his burial place and remains has only heightened interest in and debate over the character of this often maligned king. Many historians have attempted to evaluate the actions and motivations of Richard as Lord Protector and eventual king and conclusions from most assessments of this period of his history often describe an erratic and tyrannical character. However, a study of his protectorship and kingship depicts just the last two years of his life. In order to fully understand Richard's actions as king and the total of his contributions to English history one must examine his early life as a soldier and leader in battle, his service to Edward IV as the Duke of Gloucester and, most importantly, his service as Lord of the North.

Richard's kingship is often over emphasized. Any examination of his earlier career displays a stark contrast to his supposed motivations and actions during his kingship. This short period of his life has been subject to the most radical versions of Tudor propaganda and therefore is the most controversial. With controversy comes inconsistencies and frequently Richard's true character is lost. Historians have often focused solely on events such as those leading to Richard's ascent to the throne and later the disappearance of the princes in the Tower without giving much consideration to the life that led up to these events. It has been argued that Richard did not usurp the throne from his nephews, but rather accepted it willingly from Parliament when in June 1483 Parliament enacted the *Titulus Regius* which declared Edward IV's children illegitimate.¹ The fact remains that there is no evidence whatsoever that Richard was responsible for his nephews' disappearance.

¹ H.G. Hanbury "The Legislation of Richard III" *The American Journal of Legal History*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (April 1962) 96.

Richard's history and life should be judged by his career in the north of England from 1471-1483. His efforts to establish a fair judicial system, his dealings with the city of York and the loyalty he claimed from his affinity in the north all prove him to have been a good and popular governor. His relationship with the city of York, in particular, best demonstrated Richard's governing strategies and value as a magnate. It during this period of his life, not his reign as king, that his lasting contributions to fifteenth-century English history were made.

This thesis will attempt to evaluate Richard's career as Lord of the North and shed light on his life before his kingship. It will examine how the events of his early life and career shaped his contemporary reputation and controversial historiography. It will also emphasize his popularity and lasting influence on the city of York and will argue, based on the accounts of Richard's close relationship with city of York, a case for Yorkminster Cathedral as the site of his reburial.

CHAPTER ONE: SOURCES AND HISTORIOGRAPHY

Any evaluation of the life and career of Richard III must begin with an examination of the available sources from which an account of his life can be acquired. Practically all of the sources for Richard's life are full of biases and inconsistencies. Appreciating how and why these sources are flawed is the first step to forming an accurate understanding of his life. As a result, Richard's legacy has been subject to great debate.

Historians have varied opinions as to the character of Richard III. Historical and cultural representations of him have fluctuated dramatically since his death. The evolution of Richard's historical character from the time of his death in 1485 to the beginning of the seventeenth century features incredibly drastic changes. During his lifetime, especially before he became king, he was represented in most accounts in a positive light. By the time the Stuart dynasty came to the throne in 1603, Richard was widely known as one of the most devious and wicked kings in English history. The main cause of this character disparagement was, of course, the fact that victors often write their recent history. In Richard's case, the care of his legacy was left to his vanquisher, Henry VII. Had the Tudor dynasty only lasted a few years and ended with Henry VII, Richard's good reputation may have been restored enough so that Shakespeare's most notorious villain might never have been imagined. Unfortunately for Richard, the Tudors did rule for the whole of the sixteenth century and by the time James I became king, his villainous reputation was so firmly established that it seemed to be damaged beyond repair.

Shakespeare did not invent his villain all by himself. Chroniclers and historians at the Tudor court, and those who wanted to appease the new dynasty, quickly began to portray Richard as an outrageous tyrant who was rightfully defeated by Henry Tudor. The Tudor claim to the English throne was fairly weak and legitimizing the dynasty was the first challenge that the

new King Henry VII faced. Richard had to have been a villain for Henry's reign to be accepted and successful. Shakespeare drew from Tudor sources which had vilified Richard from the moment he died at the Battle of Bosworth. While these sources are extremely useful records of the events of the late fifteenth century, it is exceedingly important to acknowledge that some of these histories were manipulated and used as propaganda to legitimize the new Tudor dynasty.

Contemporary legal documents and personal correspondences often provide more impartial and accurate accounts of Richard's career, but even in these, prejudices against him can be found. Richard's contemporary reputation varied from his northern home to southern England where he had spent less time and had fewer connections. Supporters of the Woodville faction also tended to view Richard as a possible threat and therefore could be counted on to discourage his popularity spreading too far south. When Richard came to London to take control of the government following the death of King Edward IV, he permanently entered the world of a Court which was dominated by magnates from southern England. He had not labored to establish a reputation of good lordship in the south as he had done in the north and may have been relatively unknown to the people of London. All these factors, such as the date when the sources were written and the geographical location and court connections of the author, should be considered when attempting to assemble an accurate account of Richard's contemporary reputation and later legacy.

The Sources versus the Records

One of the first to vilify Richard's reputation was John Rous. Rous was a priest in Warwickshire who may have seen King Richard on his royal progress, but probably never met him. After the ascension of Henry VII, Rous wrote a biography of Richard in his *Historia Regum Angliae*, or *History of the Kings of England*. His descriptions of Richard's birth crossed over into

realms of the supernatural. Rous wrote that Richard was, “retained within his mother’s womb for two years, with his teeth and hair to his shoulders.”¹ The impossibilities of this birth aside, this negative portrayal was not consistent with Rous’s earlier and much more flattering accounts of Richard. During Richard’s reign Rous had written,

The most mighty Prince Richard...all avarice set aside ruled his subjects in his realm full commendably, punishing offenders of his laws, especially extortioners and oppressors of his commons, and cherishing those that were virtuous by which discreet guiding he got great thanks of God and love of all his subjects, rich and poor, and great praise of the people of all other lands about him.²

This is one of the best examples of how chroniclers changed their perceptions of Richard from one regime to the next. Before 1485 Richard was a ruler to be praised. After his death and the Tudor take-over, the defeated king was made to seem like the most villainous figure of the fifteenth century; even worse than the she-wolf, Margaret of Anjou. Whether or not Rous’s actual opinion had changed is unknown, but it is more likely that his livelihood depended on his change of attitude toward and representation of King Richard.

It is in Rous’s history that Richard is first described as “small of stature, with a short face and unequal shoulders, the right higher and the left lower.”³ Throughout the next century this depiction would be repeated and exaggerated. By the time Shakespeare wrote his play, it was widely accepted that Richard was a disfigured hunchback with a withered right arm. Rous had proved willing to depict Richard as a monster at birth; therefore it is reasonable to assume that if Richard had indeed been had a hunchback, Rous would not have hesitated to portray him as such. Rous’s rendering of Richard became a source of inspiration for other Tudor chroniclers.

¹ John Rous, *Historia Regum Angliae*, written towards the end of Rous' life, i.e. after 1485; translated in Alison Hanham's *Richard III and his early Historians 1483-1535*, 1975, pp. 120-121.

² John Rous, *The Rous Roll* (1859, reprinted Gloucester, 1980) cap. 63.

³ Ibid.

Sir Thomas More's account in *The History of Richard the Third*, written in 1513, is considered by most to be a work of historical-fiction. Thomas More had neither ties to the affairs at Court nor the monarchy during Richard's short reign. He was in fact a young child when the Battle of Bosworth was fought and wrote his account almost thirty years after Richard's death. When More, who studied law and philosophy, wrote his biography of Richard he was working his way up the administrative ladder of the Tudor government and into the Privy Council of Henry VIII. He had every reason to further satisfy the king's rightful claim to the throne. Therefore More depicted Richard as an unscrupulous and power-hungry fiend. He wrote, "He was close and secret, a deep dissembler, lowly in countenance, arrogant of heart, outwardly companionable where inwardly hated, not hesitating to kiss whom he thought to kill, pitiless and cruel, not for the surety or the increase of his estate."⁴ While the main purpose of this biography was to vilify Richard, More also meant it to be a treatise against tyranny. Richard III became More's model of a malevolent Tyrant. More likely read Rous's account of the king and very willingly embellished his negative portrayal of Richard. It is More's great villain which most inspired Shakespeare's *Richard III*.

Italian Humanist Polydore Vergil offers a far more comprehensive and valuable account of Richard's life and reign. With the direct patronage of Henry VII, Vergil had unparalleled access to the noblemen and bishops at the Tudor Court. He consulted those who remembered and were involved in government during the Yorkist period. He also relied heavily on a series of narrative histories known collectively as the London Chronicles. The author of these histories is unknown, but the chronicles were put together during early years of Henry VII's reign and he would have certainly been approved of their representation of Richard. Despite having access to more sources than anyone before him, Vergil still depicted Richard mostly negatively. To him

⁴ Thomas More, *The History of King Richard III*, ed R.S. Sylvester (Complete Works, Yale edn, 11, 1963) 8.

Richard was fundamentally dishonest and motivated by an unequaled desire for power. He wrote that Richard was involved in the death of Edward, the Lancastrian Prince of Wales after the battle of Tewksbury and accused Richard alone of the murder of Henry VI in the Tower of London.⁵ These killings were done to secure the crown for York and, to Vergil, perhaps one day, for Richard himself.

Vergil did acknowledge some good qualities in Richard, mainly his courage and military skill, but with any compliment often came some sort of denigration. He wrote,

Truly he had a sharp wit, provident and subtle, apt both to counterfeit and dissemble; his courage also high and fierce, which failed him not in the very death, which when his men took forsook him, he rather yielded to take with the sword than by foul fight prolong his life.⁶

Vergil credited Richard with the reconciliation of the Duke of Clarence and King Edward in 1471. However, it was Vergil who added even more sinister elements to Richard's villainy. Vergil claimed that beneath his public appearance of goodness and benevolence, Richard intentionally concealed his ambitions for power and eventually the throne. Vergil's negative portrayal was undoubtedly caused by the fact that most of his sources held Tudor prejudices and also his desire to gratify his patron the ruling Henry VII. In spite of his bias against Richard, Vergil's history of the late Yorkist period is immeasurably valuable.

Dominic Mancini was an Italian cleric who came to the English court during the summer of 1482. At the request of his patron Angelo Cato, Archbishop of Vienne, he left England shortly after Richard's coronation in July of 1483. While in London Mancini observed life at Court during the war with Scotland, experienced the grief of the death of King Edward and witnessed the events that led to Richard's ascension to the throne. His manuscript *The Usurpation of*

⁵ Polydore Vergil, *Three Books of Polydore Vergil's History of England*, ed. H. Ellis (Camden Society: 1844) 155-156.

⁶ Vergil, 227.

Richard III was probably written very soon after Mancini left England, but the work was lost until 1936. The fact that he was an outsider without later ties to the Tudor court makes Mancini's work immensely valuable. It presents probably the most unbiased account of Edward's reign and Richard's ascension to the throne, but it is important to consider that he may not have spoken English and his knowledge of England outside of London was probably minimal.⁷ The fact that all of Mancini's sources were likely Londoners indicates there may have been representations of only southern opinions in his work.

It is also unclear if Mancini ever met Richard. He provides a thorough and lively character sketch of Edward IV, but his descriptions of Richard are much less detailed. Mancini's portrayal of Richard's personal and public life in the north is very positive, but his treatment of Richard's later years is less flattering, which may suggest that he had less contact with the more important courtiers or his contacts were from the old York regime rather than from Richard's inner circle. Nevertheless, Mancini's work is the most valuable source for the events from the summer of 1482 to July of 1483.

The *Crowland Chronicle Continuation* was written at the Benedictine Abbey of Crowland in Lincolnshire in April 1486. This was an addition to a series of histories that dated as far back as the Seventh century. The author of the continuation is anonymous but some historians argue the most likely candidate was John Russell, bishop of Lincolnshire and Richard's former Chancellor, whose dioceses included Crowland Abbey. Russell was known to have been there in April of that year.⁸ He is also a good match because the chronicler had a great knowledge of both canon law and intimate connections to the Court and the king's council during both the reign of Edward IV and Richard III. The continuation was written in the very earliest days of Henry VII's

⁷ Keith Dockray, *Richard III: A Reader in History* (Gloucester: Sutton, 1988) 6.

⁸ Pronay, Nicholas and Cox, John editors. *The Crowland Chronicle Continuations 1459-1485*, (London: Sutton Publishing, 1986) 78.

reign. If Russell was the author, his abrupt dismissal as Richard's chancellor in 1485 may have left him harboring resentment. This chronicle is very unique in that it remained unknown until the end of the sixteenth century. Therefore, More, Rous and Vergil were not influenced by this history of events and the chronicle offers a history mostly uncontaminated by Tudor propaganda.

Though Richard is by no means vilified in the *Crowland Chronicle Continuation*, the author did seem to write with hindsight. Like Mancini, there also may be an element of southern bias in this history. This is perhaps why the chronicle referred to Richard's victory in Scotland as a "trifling gain" despite contemporary records, such as the *Rolls of Parliament*, which documented that Edward greatly rewarded Richard for this success and praised his "diligent efforts." This is a prime example of how formal records and legal documents written during Richard's life conflict directly with those accounts written after his death.

Beyond these sources and histories intended for posterity, there are personal letters that also record important events in late fifteenth-century England. The Paston family of Norfolk and Plumpton family of West Riding in Yorkshire left behind numerous letters that historians have used to piece together events and perceptions of Court politics. Correspondences from the 1460s to the 1480s are some of the most valuable records of the time because they were not consciously recording history for posterity. Letters are not necessarily wholly unbiased but are less likely to contain significant politically motivated exaggerations.

The Paston letters offer only glimpses of Richard as Duke of Gloucester and even less of him as king, but they do provide accounts the earl of Warwick and cover the events during Warwick's rebellion. Richard's conflict with Clarence over his marriage to Anne Neville is also mentioned in at least four letters that survive. The value of the Plumpton correspondence is much greater because these letters provide great insight to the relationship between Richard and the

earl of Northumberland. In this series are letters from Northumberland writing of the conflicts with Scotland and charging his Squire Robert Plumpton and his men to join him in September of 1480.⁹ The northern perspectives in the Plumpton letters are uniquely important as most sources from this period are written in the south of England and only report on northern events secondhand.

An ideal source of Richard's career as Lord of the North would have been a northern chronicler. It is unfortunate for Richard and for his historians that such a chronicle does not exist. Though most contemporary chronicles and sources depict Richard's years in the north in a positive, or at the least more neutral light, they became critical or even hostile towards him during his protectorship and reign. This, of course, can be credited to the events by which Richard came to the throne or perhaps some resentment caused by the fact that Richard was a northern magnate who now had power over them.

When evaluating Richard's true legacy and contributions it is necessary to rely most heavily on contemporary or as near contemporary records as possible. The most unbiased sources are, of course, legal records. For late fifteenth-century England the *Chancery Patent Rolls* and records such as those from the Court of the King's Bench and the *Rolls of Parliament* offer the most important information about the activities of the government giving specific administrative details and identify leaders at Court and in battle. In regards to Richard, these legal documents provide detailed accounts of the grants awarded to him and the military campaigns of which he was directly involved or led. The *York Civic Records* provides a relative wealth of information of Richard's contributions to and relationship with the great city of the north.

⁹ *Plumpton Correspondence*. edited by T. Stapleton (Camden Society 1839, reprinted Gloucester, 1990) 40.

The Historiography

While the *Crowland Chronicle Continuation* and Dominic Mancini's biography are probably the most reliable contemporary sources, it was More's work which became widely accepted as the history of Richard III. This paired with Shakespeare's play helped to solidify the prejudice against Richard and ensured the villainous representation of the last Plantagenet king would last for centuries.

The first to offer a complete alternative to the Tudor history of Richard was Sir George Buck. He had grown up in Elizabethan England and recognized the propagandized version of Richard's life. During the reign of James I, who he served as Master of the Revels, Buck chose to counter that history through a tedious examination of the *Crowland Chronicle Continuation* and wrote his own *History of King Richard the Third* in which he concluded that Richard was,

a valiant man, and a just, bountiful and temperate; and an eloquent and magnanimous and pious prince; and a benefactor to the holy church and to his realm. Yet for all this, it has been his fortune to be aspersed and fouled and to fall into this malice of those who have been ill-affected towards him and who have been ready to plunge and vilify his fame and good name and noble memory in their blackest and Stygian reproaches and calumnies...¹⁰

Buck provided the first revisionist history of Richard and is often considered one of the first well-known, so-called Ricardians who devote themselves and often their work to the redemption of Richard's reputation.

The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries saw both more critics and defenders of Richard's character. Historian Keith Dockray quotes Michael Drayton, Sir Walter Raleigh, and Francis Bacon describing Richard as 'vile,' a 'monster' and 'prone to wickedness,' respectively.¹¹ Dockray also quotes Scottish Philosopher and historian David Hume who in 1762

¹⁰ Sir George Buck, *The History of King Richard III*, ed. A.N. Kincaid (Gloucester, 1982) 201.

¹¹ Dockray, 14.

saw no reason to question More's "singular magnanimity, probity and judgment" and concluded that Richard was "hump-backed and a very disagreeable visage."¹²

Some of Richard's defenders were William Winstanley, Huguenot refugee Paul Rapin de Thoyras and Horace Walpole. He quotes Winstanley who in 1684 wrote:

...as honour is always attended on by Envy, so hath this worthy Prince's fame been blasted by malicious traducers who, like Shakespeare in his play on him, render him dreadfully black in his actions, a monster by nature, rather than a man of admirable parts.¹³

Paul Rapin de Thoyras took special offence to the claim that Richard was responsible for the murder of Prince Edward of Lancaster following the battle of Tewksbury in 1471, but also later admitted that Richard, though likely a good man, was ultimately corrupted by ambition. In 1767 Walpole's *Historic Doubts on the Life and Reign of Richard III* emphasized the weaknesses and inconsistencies in portrayals of Richard during the Tudor period. Walpole went as far to declare "...Henry (VII's) character, as we have received it from his own apologists, is so much worse and more hateful than Richard's, that we may well believe Henry invented and propagated by far the greater part of the slanders against Richard."¹⁴ He goes on to assert that Henry VII, not Richard, was likely responsible for the murders of Edward IV's sons.

The first half of the nineteenth century saw a revival and romanticizing of medieval history. Richard's history was subject to more debate and the number of Ricardians seems to have increased. Most notably among these was Caroline Halsted whose giant two-volume work *Richard III as Duke of Gloucester and King of England* was published in 1844. Halsted's defense was drawn from contemporary records and she argued, "A close examination into the earliest records connected with his career will prove that, among all the heavy and fearful

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Dockray, 26-27.

charges which are brought against him, few, if any, originate with his contemporaries.”¹⁵

However Halsted’s massive work is often dismissed as hagiography.¹⁶

In the late nineteenth century James Gardiner and Sir Clements Markham debated the character of Richard publically through the *English Historical Review* of 1891. Gardiner’s *History of the Life and Reign of Richard the Third* supported More’s and Shakespeare’s Richard while Markham’s *Richard III: His Life and Character* dismissed all crimes and unattractive physical descriptions as completely false. These two versions of the history represented the extremes of both sides of character debate.

While the defenders of Richard’s reputation existed and their work was often published, the sixteenth-century version of Richard’s history remained the most well-known and widely accepted. Only very early in the twentieth-century have there been more extensive attempts to redeem Richard’s reputation. The Richard III Society was founded in Liverpool in 1924 and its mission has been to reclaim the damaged reputation of the king. In 1974 an American branch of the society was established and other branches across the world have followed. The society boasts a membership of several thousand, mostly amateur historians, and supports scholarly research through grants to students researching late medieval England. The Society, which is patronized by the current Duke of Gloucester, also helped to fund the 2012 dig and is partially responsible for the discovery of Richard’s grave. The mission statement of the Society is that it “aims to promote, in every possible way, research into the life and times of Richard III, and to secure a reassessment of the material relating to this period, and of the role of this monarch in English history.”¹⁷ Members believe, “that many features of the traditional accounts of the

¹⁵ Caroline A. Halsted, *Richard III as Duke of Gloucester and King of England*, 2 vols (1844, reprinted Gloucester, 1977) 504.

¹⁶ Dockray, 16.

¹⁷ Richard III Society Mission Statement, <http://www.richardiii.net/aboutus.php#origins> [accessed March 24, 2014]

character and career of Richard III are neither supported by sufficient evidence nor reasonably tenable..” and would probably agree that Richard was a successful ruler of the north, loyal brother to King Edward IV and did what he thought was necessary to insure the legitimate Plantagenet rule of England.¹⁸

The twentieth century saw more histories of Richard written than ever before. This, of course, can be attributed to the ease of publishing and printing, but also due to growing interest in the great debate and perhaps popularized by groups such as the Richard III Society. In 1955 arguably the most effectively defensive and comprehensive biography of Richard was Paul Murray Kendall’s *Richard the Third*. Despite being an American and professor of English literature, Kendall’s work is still one of the most well-researched and popular histories of Richard. In 1983 the celebration of the five-hundredth anniversary of Richard’s accession to the throne was marked by the publication of two contrasting studies. The first was that of Desmond Seward who reaffirmed the Tudor portrait of Richard and the second was Jeremy Potter’s defensive works *Good King Richard?* and *Richard III’s Reputation 1483-1983*. Rosemary Horrox’s *Richard III: A Study of Service*, published in 1989 offered a positive yet more balanced portrayal and argued that Richard probably did harbor ambitions for the throne, but did not submit to these ambitions until the Yorkist regime was threatened by the Woodvilles faction after the death of Edward IV.

The last decades of the twentieth century and first decade of the twenty-first century have seen much of the same reputational tug-of-war. The debate on Richard’s character has waged for the last five-hundred years and it appears it would have continued in the same vein for the next five centuries. Fortunately events of September 2012 have once again brought the subject to the forefront of both culture and academia and offer new information about the controversial king.

¹⁸ Ibid.

However, in order to truly appreciate the discovery of Richard's remains, an understanding of the time period in which he lived and his role in English history must be firmly established.

CHAPTER TWO: “THE CRADLE OF VIOLENCE”

Any analysis or biography of Richard must be done with a clear understanding of the chaotic and ruthless world in which Richard grew up. The wars between the House of York and House of Lancaster are generally dated from 1455 until 1485, but the origins of the conflicts lie with the legacy left by King Edward III. When Edward died in 1377 he left his ten-year-old grandson, Richard, as his heir. King Richard II was unfortunate in that he inherited the crown at such a young age. Edward III had thirteen children, five of whom were sons. First was the Black Prince Edward, the heir apparent. For his other sons King Edward created the first dukedoms of Clarence, Lancaster, York, and Gloucester. The Black Prince Edward predeceased his father and left his young son Richard as heir to the throne. Richard’s uncles were all powerful men who soon began to vie for control over their nephew, the king.¹

King Richard II grew into adulthood and slowly began to take control of his government. The extravagance of his court, a series of unpopular taxes, and a very unpopular alliance with France created a threatening discontent with the king’s rule. Richard himself displayed erratic behavior and bouts of mental instability. He became paranoid, and perhaps rightly so, of his many powerful uncles and cousins. He sent certain powerful courtiers, including his cousin Henry Bolingbroke, son of the Duke of Lancaster, into exile. The terms of Henry’s exile were very harsh; he was not even allowed home to attend his father’s funeral.²

Henry was banished for nine years and when he returned to England in 1399 his initial intentions were only to reclaim his inheritance of the Dukedom of Lancaster and his father’s property. When he arrived home he quickly became a rallying point around which the

¹ Trevor Royle, *Lancaster against York: the Wars of the Roses and the foundation of modern Britain*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008) 3.

² Royle, 35.

discontented and powerful northern lords gathered. Henry was soon persuaded to depose the unpopular King Richard. While King Richard was away in Ireland, Henry and his supporters seized the opportunity to take power. Richard hastily returned to England to defend his throne, but found very little support. Richard had no choice but to broker an agreement.³ Parliament was summoned and Richard was deposed. Henry Bolingbroke was crowned King Henry IV. Richard was imprisoned and in 1400 he died, most likely of starvation. Historian Trevor Royle explains that Richard's fate cast a long shadow over the rest of the fifteenth century. He writes, "Whatever he had been, he was a usurped king, and it proved difficult for Henry and his successors to gloss over the fact they had come to the throne not by inheritance but by deposing and perhaps killing one of their close relatives."⁴

The fact remained that Henry IV was a usurper king. His reign was plagued with revolts led by other credible claimants to the throne. He successfully put down these revolts and much of this success was credited to King Henry's son Henry, Prince of Wales. The future Henry V had already displayed great promise as a military commander. When Henry IV died in 1413 his kingdom was finally at peace and his son faced no challengers to the throne. This legacy left the new King Henry V a solid foundation upon which to rule.⁵ His legacy also provided a significant precedent for future usurpers to vie for the throne.

Henry V ruled for only nine years, but he is remembered as one of the greatest monarchs of English history. During his reign England experienced relative peace and stability at home and great military victories abroad. Henry's great victories in France signaled his legitimacy as king and displayed God's favor for England. The Battle of Agincourt was the defining moment in Henry's career and further legitimized his claim to the French throne. Unfortunately for England

³ Royle, 39.

⁴ Royle, 40.

⁵ Royle, 68.

King Henry V died in 1422 at the young age of 36 leaving, once again, a minor to inherit the throne.

King Henry VI was only a few months old when he was proclaimed King of England and France. A regency council was established for the infant-king. In 1429 Charles VII was crowned king of France in direct violation of Henry V's Treaty of Troyes. As a result the council approved a renewed war with France. This war was very costly for England and without a commander like Henry V the results were less than satisfactory. Henry VI came of age and took control of his government in 1437 and was determined to have peace with France.⁶ One way to accomplish this was through a marriage alliance. Thus, Henry married Charles VII's niece, Margaret of Anjou, in 1445 and in exchange he relinquished some of England's holdings in France, an unpopular decision at home. Henry VI was undoing much of what his father had accomplished.

The Wars of Richard's Birth

It is during the controversial reign of Henry VI that the Wars of the Roses truly began. Divisions within the king's council led to disorder and corruption in Henry's government. The Duke of York and the king's favorite advisor, the very unpopular Duke of Somerset, clashed. York blamed Somerset for the mishandling of the government and pressured King Henry to dismiss Somerset from court, but the king, with the urging of Queen Margaret, refused and Somerset remained on the council. In 1453 Henry experienced his first bout with mental illness. He was incapacitated for more than a year and was not even aware of the birth of his son, Prince Edward, in October 1453.⁷ With King Henry unable to protect him, Somerset was soon ousted and the council proclaimed York Protector and Defender of the Realm for the duration of the

⁶ Royle, 113.

⁷ Royle, 145.

king's incapacity or until his infant son came of age.⁸ York owed much of his ascendancy to his politically influential supporters and allies such as the powerful Richard Neville, earl of Warwick.

When the Duke of York returned to England from Ireland in 1450 the new earl of Warwick, Richard Neville, gave York his support and greatly increased York's military power. York's Protectorship lasted until February 1455 when the King returned to his senses and brought Somerset back to power. By May 1455 York was gathering forces to overthrow the rule of Somerset for good. The earl of Warwick joined forces with his father, the earl of Salisbury, and the Duke of York, who was accompanied by his eldest son Edward, marched towards the capital. The Yorkist forces met the Lancastrian forces at St. Albans just north of London. They appealed to the king to remove his hated advisors and to restore York as leader of the council. King Henry refused and the battle ensued. This was the first open conflict of the Wars of the Roses. Somerset was killed in the battle and the Yorkists were victorious.⁹ The Yorkists soon took control of the English government.

Henry VI's reign was growing ever more unpopular. Queen Margaret exercised great influence at Court and began to gather support to oust York and his cohorts once and for all. In 1459 the earl of Warwick returned to England from Calais to help defend his allies and relatives against the Queen's faction.¹⁰ The Yorkists' forces gathered at Ludlow and were defeated by the King's army. York and his eldest son Edward were forced to flee to Ireland and Warwick returned to his captaincy in Calais.

⁸ Royle, 147.

⁹ Paul Murray Kendall, *Warwick the Kingmaker*, (New York: Universal Library, 1968) 30.

¹⁰ Kendall, *Warwick*, 56

From Calais, Warwick gathered a force large enough to return to England, defeat the Lancastrian forces and capture King Henry in July 1460.¹¹ Within a year of the disaster at Ludlow, York returned from Ireland and took control of the government. York's intentions seem to have shifted during his exile in Ireland. Initially he had openly acknowledged Henry VI as the rightful king, but wished to remove his unpopular and dangerous councilors. By the end of 1460 York had made his ambitions for the crown clear. In November he was proclaimed the heir to the throne, displacing the young Prince of Wales, and was once again appointed Protector of England.¹² Warwick's popularity contributed much to York's acceptance as ruler. A surviving letter from the Paston family records, dated October 21, 1460, reads, "There is great talk in this country of the desire of my Lord York...the people report full worshipfully of my Lord Warwick...they have no fear here but them that have been rulers of this country before time."¹³

York probably understood that it was highly improbable that he would actually become king, but his son Edward of York might be king if he secured and stabilized the realm before his son's ascension.¹⁴ The Lancastrians did not accept the new government and supporters rallied behind Margaret of Anjou and her recently disinherited son, Edward, the former Prince of Wales. Margaret's forces moved southward on the capital. In late December York and Salisbury went north to meet them near the city of York; Warwick remained in London to oversee the Yorkist government.

A few days into the New Year Warwick received the devastating news that the Yorkist army had been defeated at Wakefield and the Duke of York had been slain.¹⁵ Warwick was left

¹¹ Royle, 172.

¹² Royle, 175.

¹³ Norman Davis, *The Paston Letters and Papers of the Fifteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) 61.

¹⁴ Royle, 175. .

¹⁵ Kendall, *Warwick*, 84.

as the sole master of the king and government. His recent inheritance of the earldom of Salisbury swelled his power and resources greatly. In February 1461 Warwick and his army rode out of London to block the Lancastrian army's move southward.¹⁶ The two armies met at St. Albans and the Lancastrians won a second decisive victory. Warwick escaped the battle unharmed. He rode westward to meet with the new Duke of York, and new Yorkist heir to the throne, Edward.¹⁷

London remained loyal to the Yorkists and in the first days of March Warwick and Edward of York returned to the capital.¹⁸ There they consolidated their power base while Margaret of Anjou and the Lancastrian forces regrouped at York. The conflict had reached a fever pitch and was now a full-blown war for the crown. King Henry had been freed by the Lancastrians following the Yorkist defeat at Wakefield and was assumed to be too feeble-minded to rule. London called for a new king. On March 4, 1461 Warwick summoned the people to St. Paul's Cross. There Edward of York was proclaimed King Edward IV and Warwick became the Kingmaker.¹⁹

Warwick and King Edward then marched northward to meet the Lancastrians. The armies met near the town of Towton on the 29th of March. Together the rival armies had mustered around 50,000-60,000; the largest show of force ever seen in England.²⁰ The result was a dramatic Yorkist victory and Margaret and her son fled to Scotland. King Edward returned to London to establish his government and solidify control and was officially crowned King in June 1461. Warwick chose to remain at his home in the north to keep a close watch on the Scottish

¹⁶ Kendall, *Warwick*, 92.

¹⁷ Royle, 187.

¹⁸ Royle, 190.

¹⁹ Kendall, *Warwick*, 98.

²⁰ Royle, 190.

border.²¹ For the next three years Warwick continued to suppress Lancastrian resistance in the north.²²

The peaceful reign of Edward IV did not last long. The relationship between Warwick and King Edward slowly began to deteriorate. In Edward's eyes Warwick had become an archetypal "over-mighty subject" and gave himself too much credit for Edward's ascension to the throne.²³ Warwick's desire to connect himself to the throne through the marriage of his daughters was unwelcome to the king and his new queen. Edward openly refused to let his brother George, Duke of Clarence, marry Warwick's eldest daughter Isabel. Clarence was the heir presumptive and Edward did not wish to have the powerful Nevilles gain even more influence at Court.²⁴ The refusal of the marriage was Edward's attempt to put an end to his dependence on Warwick. He wished to establish a court of his own choosing.²⁵ Edward, probably without realizing it, was creating a dangerous enemy.

Edward also made an unpopular decision in his choice of queen which further drove a wedge between him and his strongest supporters. In 1464 Edward revealed that he had married the widowed daughter of a squire, Elizabeth Woodville, whose family had fought for Henry VI. His choice shocked the Court because it was assumed by many that Edward would marry a foreign princess, which would have further legitimized his claim to the throne. There also existed a rumor that Edward was already married or at least engaged to Eleanor Talbot, daughter of the earl of Shrewsbury. Without a proper divorce, this marriage or engagement contract would have voided Edward's marriage to Elizabeth. Nevertheless, the circumstances of the king's marriage were not questioned until after his death.

²¹ Kendall, *Warwick*, 104.

²² Kendall, *Warwick*, 109.

²³ David Hipshon, *Richard III*, (New York: Routledge, 2011) 62.

²⁴ Royle, 205.

²⁵ Hipshon, *Richard III*, 62.

The king forgave the Woodvilles and bestowed lands and power on the large family as they joined his court. Soon the Woodvilles became the dominant faction at Court, overshadowing even the Nevilles. This created conflict and distrust for the anti-Woodville advisors and those who had supported the king against the Lancasters. Warwick decided it would be prudent to ally himself even more closely with Clarence. He was undeterred by Edward's refusal of the match of Clarence and his eldest daughter and secretly sought the necessary papal dispensation that would permit the marriage.²⁶

Tensions between the Nevilles and the king increased over the next few years. Edward was determined to conduct foreign policy in the way he thought necessary, often against Warwick's advice. Edward was determined to have himself as the only chief minister.²⁷ Clarence was envious of the Woodvilles' influence at Court and turned to Warwick, who he looked upon as a mentor and father-figure, for support and guidance.²⁸ Warwick still remained the wealthiest and arguably the most powerful peer in the realm. For these reasons the marriage to Isabel was very appealing to Clarence. As Warwick had no sons, his daughters were to inherit his vast fortune and estates. By 1468 Warwick was so dissatisfied with his diminishing role and influence in Edward's government that he began to consider alternative means in which to regain power.

The emergence of the Warwick-Clarence partnership came at the same time as renewed outbreaks of rebellion by pro-Lancastrian sympathizers.²⁹ Margaret of Anjou was still in communication with her husband's supporters in England. In March 1469 Clarence and Isabel Neville's long sought-after dispensation was granted. Warwick, his daughter and Clarence sailed

²⁶ Royle, 205.

²⁷ Kendall, *Warwick*, 237.

²⁸ J.A. Giles, ed, 'The Manner and Guiding of the Earl of Warwick at Angers', in the *Chronicles of the White Rose of York*, (London: 1845), accessed February 2, 2012, http://www.archive.org/stream/chronicleswhite00unkngoog/chronicleswhite00unkngoog_djvu.txt.

²⁹ Royle, 208.

for Calais and there on July 11th Isabel and Clarence were finally married.³⁰ The next day Warwick and Clarence issued a manifesto stating their intentions of “remedying the evil government.”³¹ This was a direct attack on the Woodville faction at Court and was seen as a summons for Warwick’s supporters to prepare for war.³² It is possible that Warwick simply wished to remove the Woodvilles’ influence but he may also have considered placing Clarence on the throne.

Warwick returned from Calais and assembled his troops. He and Clarence marched to London under the pretense of “joining their sovereign.”³³ But King Edward was in Nottingham. Warwick and Clarence then marched northward to join with the northern rebels. The Court faction led by Edward’s favorites, the earls of Pembroke and Devon, gathered their own forces and rode to meet Warwick and his supporters. On July 26, 1469 the Battle of Edgecote ensued and the King’s forces were defeated. After the battle, Warwick ordered the executions of Pembroke and leading members of the Woodville faction and family.³⁴ The king was taken into custody by Warwick. With the leading “evil councilors” dead the goals of the manifesto were accomplished.³⁵ Warwick planned to make himself the king’s chief councilor.

The King’s imprisonment only lasted until September when Warwick’s support wavered and he was forced to release Edward. Edward was resolved to forgive his brother and Warwick. Warwick’s position at Court had not changed and he grew ever more restless. When Edward received word of another rebellion in the north, Warwick and Clarence promised their support. Edward rode north and suppressed the rebellion, but Warwick’s forces never arrived. There were

³⁰ Michael Hicks, *False, fleeting, perjurd Clarence : George, Duke of Clarence, 1449-78* (Gloucester: A. Sutton, 1980) 45.

³¹ Hicks, *Clarence*, 46.

³² Hicks, *Clarence*, 47.

³³ Kendall, *Warwick*, 279.

³⁴ Hicks, *Clarence*, 49.

³⁵ Hicks, *Clarence*, 49.

rumors that Warwick and Clarence had had a hand in starting the rebellion and it was meant as a trap for the King. Edward was no longer willing to forgive and he condemned them both as “rebels and traitors.”³⁶

Warwick and Clarence fled to France and found refuge under Louis XI.³⁷ Louis encouraged an alliance between Warwick and the exiled Margaret of Anjou, who was there under French protection. Warwick needed French military and financial support to return to England and therefore considered the alliance with his once bitter enemy. Louis went to great lengths to insure that the alliance was acceptable to both parties. He would back Warwick and the restoration of Henry VI and in exchange France would gain England as an ally. An agreement was reached that Henry’s heir, Edward Prince of Wales, would marry Warwick’s youngest daughter Anne thus securing the crown for the Nevilles.³⁸

Warwick had his brother-in-law, Lord Henry Fitzhugh, stage another rebellion in the North to lure Edward out of London. Warwick and the Lancastrian forces landed in England and took London. Warwick moved north to meet Edward and as he did men flocked to his cause.³⁹ Edward had never been popular in the North, where Warwick’s loyalty was strongest, and the Lancastrian magnates soon renewed their support for Warwick by joining him. In September of 1470 the Warwick-Lancastrian army crushed the King’s forces and Edward and his supporters were forced to flee to the Low Countries.⁴⁰ Warwick had succeeded in restoring Henry VI and the Lancasters to the throne of England.

³⁶ Royle, 217.

³⁷ Royle, 218.

³⁸ *The Crowland Chronicle Continuations*, 131.

³⁹ Royle, 220.

⁴⁰ Michael Hicks, *The Wars of the Roses*, (New Haven: Yale Press, 2010) 5.

Anne Neville and the restored Prince Edward, age seventeen, were married in France in December 1470 and she became Anne, Princess of Wales.⁴¹ It was agreed that in the event that Anne and Edward had no children, Clarence would have been the heir presumptive. Henry VI was no longer mentally stable and therefore unfit to rule. Prince Edward was to be his regent.⁴²

The Lancaster restoration lasted for only six months. In early March Edward and his forces departed from the Low Countries for England. They landed on the coast of Yorkshire on March 14, 1471.⁴³ Edward, who was accompanied by his brother Richard, Duke of Gloucester, marched southward gathering support and troops along the way. Warwick moved to meet the Yorkists, but many of the Lancastrian magnates wavered. They distrusted Warwick and preferred to wait for the arrival of Queen Margaret. In addition, Clarence, who was not satisfied with the rewards of his alliance with Warwick, began weighing his options. Ultimately, with some persuasion from his younger brother Richard, Clarence decided that his best interests lay in supporting his older brother Edward. Together the three York brothers led their armies to London to reclaim the throne for the House of York.

Once in London Edward easily captured the Lancastrian King Henry and placed him in the Tower and then secured the city. Edward prepared to defend the capital against Warwick who was marching south on London. The two armies collided just north of London and a chaotic battle ensued. Ultimately the Yorkists were victorious and Warwick the Kingmaker was killed.⁴⁴ His body was taken back to London and put on display to prevent rumors of his survival.

Prince Edward of Lancaster and his mother gathered his support and led the march to London. Meanwhile King Edward of York had mustered all the men he could find and prepared

⁴¹ Giles, *Chronicles of the White Rose of York*.

⁴² Helen Castor, *Blood and Roses*, (New York: Harper Collins, 2006) 281.

⁴³ Royle, 226.

⁴⁴ Davis, *Paston Letters*, 197.

for battle. On May 4, 1471 the two armies met near Tewkesbury.⁴⁵ The result was the victory of King Edward of York and the death of Edward, Prince of Wales.⁴⁶ Margaret of Anjou was captured and taken to the Tower. With the Victory at Tewkesbury, Edward had taken complete control of England and solidified his position as king.

Richard was greatly affected and directly participated in the battles of his family. These are the events of his early life which shaped his actions and intentions as the Duke of Gloucester. This biography will examine his contributions to the Yorkists' cause, his role as brother to a usurper king and his career as powerful magnate his brother's reign.

Early Years and Becoming the Duke of Gloucester

Richard of York was born at Fotheringhay Castle in East Northhamptonshire in 1452. He was the youngest of the four sons and three daughters of Richard, Duke of York, and Cecily Neville. Most of Richard's brothers and sisters were not well known to him. The first years of his life were spent with his mother, mostly at Fotheringhay, while his father, the Duke of York, was off fighting for his rightful influence in the King's council or were exiled in Ireland. Historian Paul Murray Kendall accurately describes the first years of Richard's life as growing up in the "cradle of violence."⁴⁷ During these years Richard must have witnessed the great hardships his mother experienced due to his father's political ambitions.

After the death of his father at the battle of Wakefield in December of 1460 the Duchess of York fled with her youngest children, who included Richard and his brother George, to the safety of the Netherlands while Edward and the earl of Warwick continued to fight for the throne. In March 1461 Edward was proclaimed king of England in London. Later that month the Yorkists successfully defeated the Lancastrian forces at Towton. The exiled York family

⁴⁵ Royle, 233.

⁴⁶ Pronay and Cox, March 1471-December 1476.

⁴⁷ Paul Murray Kendall, *Richard the Third*, (New York: Norton, 2002) 27.

returned to England for the coronation of Edward IV. Later that year eight-year-old Richard was made Duke of Gloucester to signify his importance as the king's brother and to solidify the Yorks' prominence among the nobility.

Once Edward was securely on the throne, Richard and Francis Lovell, the son of loyal Yorkist Lord Lovell, were sent to the stronghold of Middleham Castle to be the wards of the earl of Warwick.⁴⁸ Medieval tradition often called for younger sons of the nobility to be sent to other aristocratic families during their formative years for their education as military training. There is no doubt that Richard's love of the north began at Middleham. It was also at Middleham where he met and likely became close to Anne Neville.⁴⁹ There is little known about this period of Richard and Anne's lives. Warwick, who had no sons, was seen as the model of a powerful nobleman. It was probably hoped that Edward's younger brothers would learn important lessons of war and of ruling from Warwick.⁵⁰ The childhood relationship among the Neville sisters and the York princes was most likely one of mutual affection. Their families were great allies so there is no reason to believe the children would not have interacted favorably with one another.

Richard came of age at sixteen and was then able to take up an independent household. He left Middleham and entered the world of his brother Edward's court. His departure from his mentor coincided with the deterioration of Warwick's relationship with the king. While Warwick and Clarence became allies against the Woodvilles, Richard remained loyal to the King. Though he too distrusted the Woodvilles, he refused to go against Edward. Richard did not enjoy the company of the Woodvilles, nor that of his brother Clarence and therefore he spent a great deal

⁴⁸ Hipshon, 57.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Wendy Zollo, "Royalty and Daughters: The Lives of Isobel and Anne Neville" Trivium Publishing, last modified 2002, accessed February 10, 2012, <http://www.triviumpublishing.com/articles/daughters1.html>

of time with King Edward to whom he was closest of all.⁵¹ By this time Richard was reaching manhood and was displaying great prowess as a knight and a military commander. This was not lost on King Edward. Almost immediately after his arrival at Court in October 1469, Edward appointed seventeen-year-old Richard Constable of England which was the highest military appointment in the realm, and charged him with the suppression of an uprising in Wales.⁵² The king's promotion of his youngest brother surprised some as it was assumed the queen's brother was to be given this appointment since his father, earl Rivers, had previously held the position.⁵³

By the time Warwick and Clarence led their rebellion against Edward in 1470, Richard had also gained more titles: President of the Court of Chivalry and Courts Marshall, Chief Justice of North Wales, chief steward, approver and surveyor of the principality of Wales and the earldom of March in England, Wales and the Marches.⁵⁴ In putting down rebellion in Wales, he had proven himself an effective and loyal lieutenant to the king. Richard gathered Welsh troops and fought with his brother against Warwick and Clarence. When Edward was forced to flee England in October of 1470, his brother Richard and the most loyal members of the king's council fled with him. For the second time in his life Richard found himself in exile. Edward appealed to his brother-in-law Charles, duke of Burgundy to fund his campaign to retake England. Richard supervised the equipping of Edward's Burgundian fleet and by March of 1471 Edward and company were ready to regain his throne.⁵⁵ Upon Edward's return to England Richard continued to serve his brother faithfully and successfully.

⁵¹ Hiphson, 57.

⁵² *Calendar of Patent Rolls Edward IV, 1467-77, Edward IV-Edward V-Richard III, 1476-85.* (London Public Record Office, 1899, 1900, 1901) 178.

⁵³ Kendall, *Richard the Third*, 89.

⁵⁴ *Calendar of Patent Rolls*, 180.

⁵⁵ Kendall, *Richard the Third*, 101.

In the first days of April, Edward and Richard met their traitor brother George, Duke of Clarence outside of Banbury where the three brothers reconciled. George threw himself at the mercy of Edward who pardoned him and the meeting ended with Richard embracing Clarence.⁵⁶ The reunited sons of York entered London, where Edward had always been popular, and the Londoners once again declared Edward their king. Just a few days later at the foggy early morning Battle of Barnet, Richard led the right wing of Edward's army against Warwick's forces. Richard held the right flank despite being greatly outnumbered and was eventually able to advance, pushing the enemy back and meeting with King Edward's central line bringing the battle to an end.⁵⁷ Warwick was defeated and killed. Later that day Richard rode back to London at the side of the victorious King. At the age of eighteen Richard had proven to be a competent and brave commander.

Two days after Warwick's defeat word reached London that Margaret of Anjou had landed in England. The Yorkists and Lancastrian armies met again at the Battle of Tewkesbury. Richard again played crucial role as the commander of the right wing of Edward's army. The Lancastrian Prince of Wales was killed and King Edward was victorious. The Lancastrians seemed, at last, to be completely defeated. Some of the Lancastrian commanders, including the Duke of Somerset, had taken sanctuary in a nearby Tewkesbury Abbey. Edward had the duke and his soldiers forcibly removed from the abbey and Richard, in his capacity as Constable of England, and the Duke of Norfolk, Marshal of England, presided over the trial of the rebels.⁵⁸ The men were found guilty of treason and swiftly executed in the marketplace at Tewkesbury.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Kendall, *Richard the Third*, 104.

⁵⁷ Kendall, *Richard the Third*, 113.

⁵⁸ Hipshon, 89.

⁵⁹ Kendall, *Richard the Third*, 120.

Margaret of Anjou and Prince Edward of Lancaster's young widow Anne Neville were also captured and escorted back to London with the victorious York King and his brothers.

Days after Edward returned to London, former King Henry VI was found dead in the Tower where he had been held. Henry's death was and still is subject to much debate. According to the *Arrival of Edward VI*, when Henry realized the severity of the Lancastrian defeat and learned of the death of his heir, he "took it to such great hatred, anger and indignation that, of pure displeasure and melancholy, he died the 23rd day of the month of May..."⁶⁰ Other accounts insist Henry met a more sinister end, either under the direct orders of Edward IV or even at the hands of Richard himself.

Within two years of joining his brother the king at Court, Richard suppressed rebellion in Wales, assisted the king in defense against his traitorous brother and cousin, fled into Burgundy to gather support to retake England, returned to England to serve as commander in his brother's victorious army and finally may have participated in the murder of a former king in order to finally end any Lancastrian claim to the throne. Through all of this Richard established himself as perhaps the most loyal and capable subject of King Edward. He next faced the challenge of finding a suitable bride and creating for himself a powerful position from which to further serve the ambitions of the House of York.

Marriage and the Origins of a Northern Affinity

Richard had likely developed a love of the North, particularly Yorkshire, during his time as the young ward of Warwick. The years spent at Middleham were the only peaceful times he had known and governing a northern domain was probably the most appealing option for Richard. Once Edward had regained total control of the crown Richard was reinstated as Constable and Admiral of England and was also made Great Chamberlain, a position recently vacated by

⁶⁰ *Historie of the Arrivall of Edward IV*, ed. J. Bruce (Camden Society Series, 1838) 38.

Warwick's death.⁶¹ He also was granted various lordships and manors in Essex, Cambridge, Hertford, Suffolk, Kent, Buckingham, Oxford, Cornwall, Lincoln and Nottingham.⁶² King Edward was facilitating his youngest brother's ambitions to become one of the most powerful nobles in the kingdom. Despite his many estates in the midlands and southern England, Richard, it seems, wanted to replace Warwick as the most influential lord in the north of England.

This gathering of northern estates began in June 1471 when Richard took over the Duchy of Lancaster in northwest England. That summer he also was granted the former Neville estates in Yorkshire and Cumberland. Next, he sought the hand of Anne Neville. Though the bulk of Warwick's estates had been seized by the crown and most already given to Richard, the Despenser inheritance was to be divided between his daughters, Anne and Isabel, upon the death of their mother the widowed Countess of Warwick.⁶³ Anne, however, was the sole heiress to the Beauchamp estates and revenues.⁶⁴ The estates were primarily located in Derbyshire and Hertfordshire, but Richard later exchanged these lands for the lordships of Cottoningham near Hull and Scarborough on the east coast of Yorkshire.⁶⁵ Anne, being the daughter of Warwick and a Neville, could also be expected to bring with her the loyalty of her father's former tenants and soldiers in the north. It is possible that Richard did not marry her for her inheritances alone. Warwick had probably intended Anne to be Richard's wife for most of Anne's life. As children the two may have been aware of their probable marriage and may have even formed an attachment to one another during their time together at Middleham.⁶⁶ Whatever Richard's

⁶¹ *Calendar of Patent Rolls 1467-77*, 262.

⁶² *Calendar of Patent Rolls 1467-77*, 297.

⁶³ Kendall, *Richard the Third*, 124.

⁶⁴ Giles, *Chronicles of the White Rose of York*. ??

⁶⁵ Hipshon, 96.

⁶⁶ Jeremy Potter, *Good King Richard? : An Account of Richard III and his reputation, 1483-1983*, (London: Constable, 1983) 200.

intentions the two were very good catches for one another in both material and personal terms. George, Duke of Clarence, however, did not wish to divide the Neville inheritance.

After the death of her first husband, Edward Prince of Wales, Anne was placed in the household of her sister Isabel, Duchess of Clarence. Clarence intended keep Anne away from Court so as not to risk a division of the inheritance. Richard took his case before King Edward who played the role of mediator between his two younger brothers. Edward ultimately agreed that Richard and Anne should marry. To placate his brother Clarence, Richard surrendered his title of Great Chamberlain of England so that Edward could appoint Clarence to the position.⁶⁷ Romantic rumors circulated that Richard sought out and found Anne dressed as a maid in the home of one of Clarence's supporters; Richard rescued Anne and the couple escaped together to be married.⁶⁸ Richard and Anne were married in February of 1472 and settled at their childhood home of Middleham Castle where both had probably spent the happiest years of their lives. Though Richard had fathered two illegitimate children before his marriage to Anne, he seems to have remained faithful to her for the rest of their lives.⁶⁹

Rather than wait until the Countess of Warwick died, in 1474 King Edward had parliament pass a bill which declared the countess legally dead so that his brothers' could immediately inherit their wives' fortunes and estates.⁷⁰ This left the Countess of Warwick, who had been in sanctuary at Beaulieu Abbey since the death of her husband, with virtually nothing.⁷¹ From this arrangement Richard officially inherited the estates of Middleham, Sherriff Hutton, and the rest of Warwick's former lands in Yorkshire; Clarence received Clavering in Essex and

⁶⁷ *Calendar Patent Rolls 1467-77*, 344.

⁶⁸ *The Crowland Chronicle Continuations*, 133.

⁶⁹ Anontia Fraser, *The Lives of the Kings and Queens of England* (New York: Random House, 1975) 159.

⁷⁰ *Calendar of Patent Rolls 1467-77*, 455.

⁷¹ *The Crowland Chronicle Continuations*, 133.

Warwick's London home of *Le Herber*.⁷² Richard then insisted his mother-in-law leave sanctuary and the Countess of Warwick joined the household of her daughter and son-in-law at Middleham.

With his wife's inherited estates in the north came the loyalty and obedience of Warwick's former troops and tenants. This coupled with King Edward's abundant support and benevolence, Richard was poised to assert himself as the greatest magnate in the north. The task of accomplishing this goal would prove cumbersome. Tensions with the earl of Northumberland and unrest on the border with Scotland threatened Richard's attempts to create peace in the north for his brother the king.

⁷² Kendall, *Richard the Third*, 132.

CHAPTER THREE: LORD OF THE NORTH

When news of King Richard III's defeat at the Battle of Bosworth reached York in August of 1485, the city went into great mourning. While other cities across England accepted Henry VII as their new king and began to distance themselves from Richard's memory, York and much of the north remained loyal or at the very least maintained a favorable and sympathetic memory of their once great magnate. An entry from August 23, 1485 in the York City House Book best describes the city's reaction to their former lord's death, "King Richard late mercifully reigning upon us was through grete treason of the Duke of Northfolk and many othres that turned against him, with many othre lordes and nobilles of this north parties, was pitiously slaine and murdred to the great hevynesse of this citie."¹ Richard's direct association with the north, even though by then he had been king for two years, is clearly evident in this entry. It seems he was, at least to the city of York, a beloved and respected king. Richard earned this adoration during the reign of his brother Edward IV through his good lordship as the Duke of Gloucester.

Establishing a Northern Affinity

Richard has often been accused of being an ambitious man who constantly plotted for power and ultimately aimed for the throne, but the circumstances of his rise to prominence in the north do not reflect such ambitions. While Richard did consolidate his power in the north rapidly and somewhat stealthily, he did not seek to expand his power in East Anglia, Lincolnshire or Wales despite holding significant lands in each of those regions. A close examination of his holdings throughout England shows that he frequently abandoned his interest in the south of England in deference other magnates.

¹ York City Archives. House Book B2—4f. 169v. 23rd August 1485, transcribed by Dr Lorraine Attreed (<http://www.silverboar.org/deathentry.htm>) [accessed March 24, 2014]

For instance, in 1471 Richard was granted vast holdings in East Anglia including all of the earl of Oxford's Cambridgeshire lands, all but one of the Suffolk manors and all but four of those in Essex.² There he demonstrated good lordship but did not seek to establish himself as the heir to the earls of Oxford, who had lost these lands because of their Lancastrian support. Richard kept some of Oxford's men, such as John Coke of Beaumont and Sir James Tyrell, to run the estates but he did not involve himself in the politics and administrative duties in this region as he did in the north.³ To the nobles and people of East Anglia, Richard was a distant and relatively uninterested lord. They knew him mostly by his royal reputation, not by any local affiliations. Much of the same can be said about his lands in Wales, where he often deferred to the Woodvilles. If Richard was overly ambitious or power-hungry, his interests were solely in the north and it was there he built his home and established his rule.

Throughout the 1470s and early 1480s Richard worked tirelessly to balance his responsibilities at Court with his career as leader and sometimes tamer of the northern country. In 1472 he established his home at Middleham Castle in Yorkshire. In December of the next year he and his wife welcomed a son, Edward of Middleham. Richard's estates, wardenships, stewardships, constableness and dukedoms were vast and this required him to rely on others to help him govern efficiently. His two greatest offices were the Constableness and Admiralty of England. He delegated the running of these offices to Dr. William Godyer who heard admiralty and the Court of Constable cases in London. Godyer was sometimes referred to as "lieutenant of commissary" to the Duke of Gloucester.⁴ Richard's northern council consisted of nobles such as Sir Francis Neville, Lord Scrope of Bolton, Baron Greystoke, Sir James Harrington, Sir William

² Rosemary Horrox, *Richard III A Study of Service* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989) 72.

³ Horrox, 76-77.

⁴ Kendall, *Richard the Third*, 151.

Parre and Sir Richard Nele.⁵ Many of these men had served the earl of Warwick and fought against King Edward, but through fair dealing and benevolence Richard won their allegiance. They were now devoted supporters of the new Lord of the North. This council eventually developed into the greatest judicial body in northern England and served as a court of requests, equity and arbitration.

Richard next faced the crucial task of striking a peace between himself and the lords, some former Lancastrian supporters, who were displaced by his rise to power. Henry Percy, earl of Northumberland, was chief among these magnates unhappy with Richard's dominance. In the early years of the 1470s tension ran high between Richard, Northumberland, Ralph Neville, earl of Westmorland, and Thomas Lord Stanley. For decades these men had shared the ruling of the northern counties with the earl of Warwick and now had to share those responsibilities with his appointed heir, the king's brother. Resentment of Richard's newly established position was inevitable.

In July 1474 Richard initiated negotiations with the earl of Northumberland and soon an agreement was reached. Northumberland recognized Richard's predominance in the region and in return the earl would once again control Northumberland and the East Riding.⁶ Richard ruled Cumberland, Westmorland, and the rest of Yorkshire.⁷ Northumberland had almost complete control of the border with Scotland. Once Northumberland pledged to serve Richard as a 'faithful servant,' Westmorland had no choice but to follow suit.⁸ From 1474 onwards, Richard, the Percies, and the Nevilles worked well together.

⁵ Kendall, *Richard the Third*, 152.

⁶ A.J. Pollard, *North of England in the Age of Richard III*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996) 30.

⁷ F.W. Brooks, *The Council of the North*, The Historical Association Pamphlets, London. (London: Cox and Wyman, 1966) 10.

⁸ Hipshon, 107.

Unlike the earls of Northumberland and Westmorland, Thomas Lord Stanley was able to keep in good favor with King Edward which meant his ancestral lands in the northwest were not as threatened by Richard's growing authority. Additionally, Stanley was a steward of the royal household and though he spent much of his time in London with the king, this position secured his role as a strong and effective ruler in the northwest.⁹ Richard did not attempt to spread his power westward and was careful to remain on good terms with Stanley. The two men might not have ever completely trusted one another, which became fatally evident once Richard was king, but seemed to put suspicion aside to work relatively well together while Richard was Lord of the North.

Through this cooperation and sharing of judicial duties, Richard, Northumberland, Westmorland, and Stanley all reached a truce and began to establish an administrative system that was the foundation of what would later become the Council of the North during Richard's kingship. This time of peace between the noble houses in the north was very welcome to the war-weary northerners. Richard set about the task of proving himself to be a true man of the north and further reinforce his authority in the region.

When Richard looked to fill the many administrative posts within his dominion he did not bring men from the southern court but rather employed well-respected northerners. For steward of Middleham he re-appointed and doubled the wages of Sir John Conyers who had been Warwick's deputy of lordship and one of the principal lieutenants in the northeast. By trusting Conyers with the command of his most-beloved estate, Richard proved himself willing to look past old alliances. This particular appointment appealed to the people of Richmondshire, where Conyers was well-liked. For his legal counsel Richard relied most heavily upon Sir Robert Danby who was the Chief Justice of Common Pleas at Thorp Perrow in north Yorkshire. On

⁹ Ibid.

legal matters he also retained Richard Pigot and Robert Clifford who were veterans of Warwick's service. A.J. Pollard writes, "By bringing these men into his service, many of them old fellows of Warwick, most of local stature, one or two old enemies of his family, the duke was able quickly to establish his position in Middleham and Richmondshire."¹⁰ These are the best documented instances of the appointments of local men to offices of great standing with Richard's retinue. Other examples are the appointments of Richard Ratcliffe, made constable of Barnard Castle, and Sir James Harrington as Steward of Pontefract Castle.¹¹ These men were well established in the communities and their appointments only strengthened Richard's claim on the loyalty of the northerners.

Three indispensable northern allies to the house of York were Sir Richard Fitzwilliam of Sprotbrough and Wadworth near Doncaster (constable of Tickhill and Conisbrough), Sir John Pilkington of Sowerby and Sir John Saville of Thornhill (steward of Wakefield and constable of Sandal). Richard recognized the importance of recruiting them to his service. As knights of the body these men were first and foremost answerable to the king, but during the 1470s all three developed close ties to Richard. Their heirs became even closer to Richard, serving him loyally in almost all of his military campaigns and later supported him as king.¹²

It is clear that serving Richard was very appealing to the northern peerage. He was a uniquely active duke who kept himself in constant high favor with the king. By the mid 1470s lesser gentry also sought to attach themselves to Richard. Men such as Sir John Huddleston, sheriff of Cumberland and steward of Penrith offered their loyalty to Richard exchange for his protection and benevolence. Richard offered opportunities for elevation to these men and their children. Richard later appointed Huddleston's son Richard Huddleston, receiver, master forester

¹⁰ Pollard, 324.

¹¹ Horrox, 63, 69.

¹² Pollard, 328.

and steward of Cumberland and Lancashire.¹³ Duke Richard did not demand the loyalty of his growing affinity but earned it through the bestowal of favors and the appointments of worthy men to essential offices.

Richard used generosity to both further reduce rivalries among the northern noble families and to recruit loyal subjects. He recruited Ralph Lord Neville, nephew and heir to the earl of Westmorland and George Lumley, the son of Lord Lumley, retainer to the earl of Salisbury.¹⁴ This alliance put an end to a feud within the Neville house that had persisted for decades. He proved himself to be the mender of old wounds by making marriage alliances between the retainers of the Percys and Nevilles. These acts ensured that he was welcomed as the rightful successor to Warwick's affinity and subdued the long-standing hostilities between the Percy and Neville families.¹⁵ Additionally, settling feuds between the noble families of the region only further secured the stability of the north and of York, which in turn secured the city's loyalty to Richard.

Richard and the City of York

The northern counties of England had suffered long periods of lawlessness and disorder for much of the first half of the fifteenth century and even more so during the civil wars. The region craved stability and order and Richard took up the mantle to do whatever necessary to secure peace for the north. His ambitions went beyond simply ending the quarrels of the nobles, and he sought to facilitate domestic tranquility through both economic and judicial reforms in Yorkshire and most particularly in the City of York.

York's geographical location was militarily significant, especially during the intermittent Scottish Wars and the Percy-Neville power struggles of the 1450s and 1460s. It was the largest

¹³ Hipshon, 104.

¹⁴ Horrox, 65

¹⁵ Ibid.

city in the north of England which meant it came into contact with the royal government, through military levies and taxes, more than any other northern town or city.¹⁶ During the wars of the 1460s, York had supported the House of York and citizens took an active part in the campaign against Lancastrian lords in Scotland and along the borders in 1462. For their support King Edward IV granted the city 40 pounds per year in recompense for any damage suffered. The city once again supported the house of York when Edward returned from exile in 1471. He landed on the Yorkshire coast and then moved to the city where he reclaimed the duchy of Lancaster and began gather troops to reclaim the throne.¹⁷ After Edward secured the crown once more, all of the Neville lands of the earl of Warwick were given to Richard. Richard's position and relations to the king certainly secured him the respect of the men of York, but it was his fair dealings and steady guidance that earned him the city's sincere admiration and trust.

The City of York is where Richard was, and arguably still is, most popular. During his reign as Lord of the North, Richard gladly took the role of patron and special lord to the boroughs of north-eastern England and in York. In 1477 he and Anne joined the important Corpus Christi Guild and that same year the city fathers appointed Richard's deputy chief steward for the duchy of Lancaster, Miles Metcalf, the city's Recorder.¹⁸ This year marked a strengthening of Richard's bond with the city and from 1477 onward Richard influenced much of civic government including the appointments of senior administrative posts and settled disputes such as the mayoral election of 1482.¹⁹

Throughout the second half of the fifteenth century York had suffered a prolonged period of economic decline which was blamed on the unfair competition with London for North Sea

¹⁶ D.M. Palliser, *Medieval York 600-1540* (Oxford: Oxford Press, 2014) 244.

¹⁷ Palliser, 245.

¹⁸ Palliser, 246.

¹⁹ Pollard, 332.

trade and the obstruction of waterways in Yorkshire which were the main source of local trade for the city. Richard acted on the city's behalf on both of these issues. He supported the establishment of a separate northern organization in the Low Country that would have secured equal trade between London and York. Richard took this idea to the king who, unfortunately, did not agree, and instead of following Richard's advice he issued a simple proclamation urging fairer trade.²⁰ Though he was unsuccessful in this affair, the act of taking the matter before the king showed him to be a willing servant of York's interest.

Richard was a more successful champion for York when it came to unblocking York's major rivers, which were the arteries of internal trade. In November 1477 Richard petitioned the king on behalf of the city of York in reference to Goldale fishgarth in the River Aire which was a part of the Crown's lands. Fishgarths were systems of nets set into the rivers to trap fish, chiefly salmon.²¹ This particular fishgarth not only made river navigation difficult and the shipment of goods for trade near impossible, but also made it more difficult for poorer men to fish. The people of York appealed to Richard who brought the case to the king. Despite the many other responsibilities before him, including the trial of his brother the duke of Clarence, Richard responded to York within a few days:

[According] to your desires [regarding] Goldale garth or any others, we have moved the king's grace on the matter and [he] has commanded us at our next meeting to take a view of oversight of such garths and weirs, and, [if they] have not been allowed before the justices eyre, see that they be pulled down; the which, or any other thing we may do for the welfare of your city, we shall put us in our utmost devoir and good will...²²

In 1482 Richard successfully championed another economic reform for York by supporting the free-farm system which freed trade from tolls and enabled a revival of the struggling Yorkshire

²⁰ Pollard, 333.

²¹ Kendall, *Richard the Third*, 157.

²² York Civic Record, Vol 1, ed. A. Raine (Yorkshire Archaeological Society Record Series, 1933) 24.

markets.²³ Acts such as these not only endeared Richard to the city fathers, but made him popular with the poorer men and laborers in the region. He was a lord who recognized the struggles and acted on behalf of the people of Yorkshire and this contributed significantly to his reputation of good lordship.

Richard's responsibilities as magnate were vast. Not only was he the Constable and Admiral of England, but his offices in the north included Warden and Justice of the forest north of Trent, and High Steward of the Duchy of Lancaster. He took his judicial responsibilities very seriously and was greatly concerned with the administration of impartial justice. A.J. Pollard explains that though the documentation of his judicial dealings is not very substantial, the two or three cases that are recorded prove that Richard was not acting out of immediate self-interest, but rather a genuine concern for impartial justice. In March 1476 Richard came to York with an impressive retinue to enforce law and order when the city's inhabitants were unhappy with Edward's abrupt withdrawal from France.²⁴ In April 1482 Richard oversaw the trial and punishment of one his own servants, Thomas Redhead, who had committed an offence against a citizen of York.²⁵ This act is most revealing. Richard put his desire for a fair judicial system in the north before his favor for his retinue and showed that he was willing to upset the nobles in order to set a precedent of impartial law. Richard's attitude towards the law was unique for the period and in the north. For most of the previous decades Warwick and other leading magnates had notoriously intervened on behalf of their retainers or had simply turned a blind eye to the corrupt legal system.

²³ Pollard, 334.

²⁴ Pollard, 335.

²⁵ York Civic Record, 53-54.

Conflict with France and the Treasonous Duke of Clarence

Richard split his time between his northern lordships and the Court where he was increasingly needed to counsel the king on deteriorating relations with France. Though Richard always remained loyal to his brother the king and their relationship was more than amicable, he did disagree with King Edward's dealings with France in 1475. While Richard was consolidating his rule in Yorkshire, Edward looked to assert his power as legitimate king and planned to reclaim former English provinces in France that his predecessor, Henry VI, had lost. Edward called upon his magnates to gather soldiers and prepare to launch war with France. This included troops of his brothers' the dukes. Clarence and Richard each pledged 120 men-at-arms and 1,000 archers to the king's service.²⁶

By June of 1475 Edward's forces were crossing the channel into Calais in numbers close to fifteen hundred men-at-arms and roughly eleven thousand archers.²⁷ There they met with Edward's brother-in-law Charles, Duke of Burgundy who quickly proved an erratic and unreliable ally. Without the dependable support of Burgundy and the fact that he was quickly running out of money, Edward weighed his options. The king decided to make it clear to King Louis XI that he would consider peace negotiation before any major battles were even fought. The French and English ambassadors met in the town of Amiens and Edward's terms were agreed upon. In return for the immediate withdrawal of the English army from France, Louis agreed to pay Edward 75,000 gold crowns immediately and 50,000 per year.²⁸ The seven-year truce was agreed upon, on condition that the Dauphin of France would marry Edward's eldest daughter. A private amity was also signed which ensured assistance from either king against rebellion.

²⁶ Kendall, *Richard the Third*, 132.

²⁷ Kendall, *Richard the Third*, 134.

²⁸ Kendall, *Richard the Third*, 136.

Richard, for probably one of the first times in his life, disagreed with his brother's decision and was among the minority of nobles who did not support the peace with France. He so disliked the situation that he initially refused to partake in the celebrations hosted by Edward and Louis in Picquigny. This does not mean that Richard desired a brutal war, but probably thought his brother's actions could be perceived as irresponsible and deceptive. Edward had levied high taxes and mustered thousands of troops for his war and after dragging his large army to France, he changed his mind and sought an easy peace. The king's promises to recover England's rightful claim to the French crown were broken. However, Richard could not remain at odds with Edward and did not display his disapproval for long. One of Louis's advisors, Philippe de Commines, noted that those who had opposed the peace eventually, "reconciled themselves to it and shortly afterwards the Duke of Gloucester came to visit the king [Louis XI] at Amiens and he gave him very fine presents, including plate and well-equipped horses..."²⁹ Richard overcame his disapproval of Edward's decision and played the role of amicable supporter to the king of France. This is yet another example of Richard's unwavering loyalty to his brother King Edward.

Once Richard and his men returned home to Middleham, he resumed his duties governing Yorkshire and the West Marches. There he endeavored to establish a normal routine of lordship and surely hoped to spend time with his wife and son, Edward of Middleham. This period of familial tranquility was not to last long. In the autumn of 1477, he was summoned back to court when King Edward finally had the Duke of Clarence arrested for treason.

Richard's second oldest brother had been for many years and grew evermore discontented with his role as duke. His behavior during Warwick's rebellion proved him to be man of questionable character and dangerously ambitious. Clarence, after all, had once been heir

²⁹ Philippe de Commines, *Memoirs: The Reign of Louis XI 1461-83*, transl. M. Jones (London, 1972) 259.

to the throne, but with the birth of Edward's sons, he was forced to settle for the secondary roles of brother and leading councilor to the king. In early 1477 an opportunity for elevation presented itself. Clarence's wife had died the previous December and he looked to marry again. In January his brother-in-law Charles, Duke of Burgundy died leaving his only daughter, Mary, as the greatest heiress in Europe. Immediately Louis XI took his chance to take Burgundy for France. Edward's peace with Louis was to be tested.

Clarence and his sister the Dowager Duchess of Burgundy conspired that Clarence should marry his niece Mary and bring Burgundy back under English control.³⁰ Edward promptly discarded this proposal and instead suggested Mary wed the Queen's brother Anthony Woodville, earl Rivers.³¹ Clarence was enraged by Edward's favor for his brother-in-law over himself. Though Mary did not marry Rivers, Clarence was resolved to seek vengeance on the Woodvilles.³² He tried and brutally executed a servant, Ankarette Twynyo, of his dead wife who he believed worked for the Woodville faction and who had been placed in his household by the queen. Ankarette was accused of poisoning the Duchess and was hastily hanged. This was a thinly veiled accusation of murder directed at the queen and her family. Clarence had inadvertently sealed his own fate and his downfall was soon to follow.

In May 1477 a member of Clarence's household, Thomas Burdet, was accused of predicting the king's death and tried for treason in front of the King's Bench at Westminster.³³ The execution of Burdet may have been a warning sent by the king his brother Clarence. Clarence declared Burdet's innocence before king's council. He was not only at odds with the queen and her faction, but he was now publically opposing the king. Clarence then began to give

³⁰ *Crowland Chronicle Continuations*, 143.

³¹ Kendall, *Richard the Third*, 144.

³² Kendall, *Richard the Third*, 144.

³³ *Crowland Chronicle Continuations*, 145.

credence to the rumor that had circulated for years, and had probably been started by the earl of Warwick, that Edward was illegitimate and therefore had no right to the crown.³⁴ Edward could no longer ignore his brother's disloyalty and that summer Clarence was arrested and placed in the Tower of London.

Richard rode down to London to advise the king on what was to be done with their treacherous brother. Richard must have acknowledged his brother's guilt, but he nevertheless pled with Edward to show lenience towards Clarence. Edward had forgiven Clarence many times before, but was resolved to no longer show clemency. In January 1478 parliament met to try the Duke of Clarence for high treason and in early February he was sentenced to death. Perhaps in one last act of brotherly favor, Edward spared Clarence the humiliation of a public execution. According to many accounts, Clarence was secretly put to death in the Tower on February 18th; he was drowned in a vat of malmsey wine.³⁵

According to Dominic Mancini, an Italian chronicler who lived in England during the reign of Richard III, Queen Elizabeth played a major role in the downfall of the Duke of Clarence. Mancini writes that she believed, "her offspring by the king would never come to the throne unless the Duke of Clarence were removed; and of this she easily persuaded the king."³⁶ Mancini goes on to assert that Richard therefore blamed the queen, at least in part, for his brother's trial and execution. This could have only further fueled his dislike for the queen and her family.

After Clarence's death, Richard retreated back to his sanctuary in the north and according to Mancini seldom returned to London and chose to distance himself from the Woodvilles as

³⁴ Hipshon, 102.

³⁵ Vergil, 167.

³⁶ Dominic Mancini, *The Usurpation of Richard III*. ed. and transl. C.A.J. Armstrong (Oxford 1969, reprinted Gloucester, 1984) 63.

much as possible.³⁷ Richard did have to return to London on occasion to advise the king and attend special sessions of parliament. His southern estates and his position as Great Chamberlain, which he inherited upon the death of his brother Clarence, required him to journey southward regularly. It is therefore clear that he must have maintained relatively close ties in the south and Court, perhaps despite his desire to remain away in the north.

When Richard was at home in the north he split his time between his castles and responsibilities at Middleham, Pontefract, and Sheriff Hutton. For the next few years Richard worked diligently to bring peace and contentment to his dominion. Mancini notes,

He kept himself within his own lands and set out to acquire the loyalty of his people through favours and justice. The good reputation of his private life and public activities powerfully attracted the esteem of strangers. Such was his renown in warfare, that whenever a difficult and dangerous policy had to be undertaken, it would be entrusted to his direction and his generalship. By these arts Richard acquired the favour of the people, and avoided the jealousy of the queen, from whom he lived far separated.³⁸

This account describes the very definition of good lordship. There are hardly any negative contemporary accounts of Richard during this period of his life. It is clear that he took his rule and duties very seriously and there is no reason to believe he had ambitions for anything more.

War with Scotland

Throughout the 1470s a thirty-year truce between England and Scotland had held firm. Even so, maintaining and keeping the peace at the Scottish border was one of Richard's and Northumberland's main points of concern. The death of the Duke of Burgundy and the shift in relations with France soon ended the peace with Scotland. Louis's ambitions for Burgundy had not diminished and he intended to seize the dukedom for France. In order to distract Edward, Louis enlisted the help of James III of Scotland. In the winter of 1479-80 the Scots showed signs

³⁷ Mancini, 65.

³⁸ Mancini, 77.

of breaking the truce and by the spring they had launched large-scale border raids.³⁹ To Edward, this was an especially harsh betrayal. The Crowland Chronicler wrote, “King Edward had for long paid a yearly sum of one thousand marks as a dowry for Cecily, one of his daughters, who had earlier been promised in marriage to the eldest son of the king of the Scots...”⁴⁰ James’s willingness to aid the French had to be dealt with.

In May 1480 Edward appointed Richard his Lieutenant General in the north and authorized Richard and Northumberland to issue Commissions of Array throughout Yorkshire, Westmorland, Cumberland, and Northumberland in order to gather a force large enough to invade Scotland.⁴¹ By June the Scots had entered deeper into England than ever before and “burnt townships and dwellings in the marches and imprisoned and slain the king’s lieges.”⁴² By end of the summer Richard began readying his men for war. Eventually he would have at his command one of the largest armies of the fifteenth century which included the leadership of not only Northumberland, but also Thomas Lord Stanley and James III’s brother, the Duke of Albany, who swore allegiance to the English crown and promised to claim the Scottish throne for himself. Edward, who had time and time again proven himself as a capable warrior king, entrusted the generalship of this war to his younger brother. This speaks volumes to Edward’s confidence in Richard’s abilities as a commander as well as his extreme loyalty to the crown.

In September 1480 Richard received word of another planned raid by the Scots and he enlisted the aid of soldiers from York. He wrote:

The Scots in great multitude intend this Saturday night to enter into [the] marches of these northern parts... We trusting in God to... resist their malice... desire and require you to send unto us at Durham, on Thursday next, a servant of yours accompanied with such

³⁹ Kendall, *Richard the Third*, 162.

⁴⁰ *The Crowland Chronicle Continuations*, 147.

⁴¹ *Calendar of Patent Rolls 1476-85*, 205, 213-14.

⁴² *Calendar of Patent Rolls 1476-85*, 213-14.

certain number of your city defensibly arrayed, as you intend and may deserve right special thanks from the king's highness and us...⁴³

With his small raiding force, Richard entered Scotland and met the Scots with such determination and success that Scottish incursions into England stopped for the remainder of that year.⁴⁴ Edward and his council intended the large-scale invasion of Scotland for the summer of 1481. Richard spent the time leading up to the planned invasion fortifying the garrisons along the border, repairing the walls at Carlisle, conducting a military census and traveled back and forth between the north and London to advise and perfect the plans for war. To pay for this enormous army, in March Edward exacted a parliamentary tax. The city of York was the only exception to this tax because of its contribution of men and arms during the September raid of the previous year and also, likely, because Richard had made sure Edward was well aware of its continued sacrifice of troops and material sent to secure the borders.⁴⁵

The English invasion of Scotland did not occur until the spring of 1482. The time it took to collect taxes and the king's health were probably the main reasons for the delay, but in the meantime Richard and Northumberland dealt swiftly with the irregular skirmishes and successfully defended the border. Finally in May circumstances were right for Richard to lead the invasion.

In a letter dated May 14th, King Edward informed the city of York of their lord's plan to enter Scotland and asked them for their continued aid. He wrote:

The Duke of Gloucester [intends] to enter Scotland on Wednesday next [for] subduing the king's great enemy the king of the Scots and his adherents. And, since the duke at all times has been benevolent, good and gracious lord to this city, it was thought...speedful and also thankful...to send to him certain people well and defensible arrayed...⁴⁶

⁴³ York Civic Records, 34-35.

⁴⁴ Kendall, *Richard the Third*, 162.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 163.

⁴⁶ *York Civic Record*, 60.

The city was able to send Richard an additional eighty soldiers in time to join the invading army. York would not disappoint its favorite Duke.

The English army entered Scotland and burned the town of Dumfries and other smaller villages. This first foray was likely meant to gauge the readiness of James's forces and to prove to him that Edward was very well-prepared for war. By June Richard's and Stanley's forces were at the gates of the Scottish stronghold of Berwick. Richard left Stanley to take the city and he moved on to face James's army in the north. James avoided battle and by the end of July, Richard had captured the capital of Edinburgh without the loss of a single man.⁴⁷ One indicator of Richard's sense of just war was his treatment of the city. Though his troops had burned many towns and villages on the march to the capital, he left Edinburgh entirely unharmed.⁴⁸

During the invasion, it had become clear to Richard that the Duke of Albany had neither the support nor the inclination to claim the Scottish throne and he therefore decided a peace must be negotiated with James III.⁴⁹ Richard met with the city magistrates and a truce was agreed upon. Richard and his army then rode back to Berwick which was completely taken under English control by mid-August "without the loss of many men."⁵⁰ The capture of this essential city significantly strengthened the security of the northeast border.

Though most accounts, including Polydore Vergil's and letters from King Edward to the city of York, depict the campaign in Scotland as a speedy English victory which secured the border and prevented a drawn out war, in contrast The Crowland Chronicler's account did not praise Richard's performance as a leader. The Chronicler first criticized Richard for not seizing

⁴⁷ Kendall, *Richard the Third*, 168.

⁴⁸ *The Crowland Chronicle Continuations*, 149.

⁴⁹ Vergil, 169.

⁵⁰ Vergil, 170.

and keeping Edinburgh and then claims that the expense of keeping Berwick secure for England came at too high a cost. The entry read:

This trifling gain, or perhaps loss, for the maintenance of Berwick costs 10,000 marks a year, diminished the resources of the king and kingdom by more than 10,000 [pounds] at the time, King Edward was grieved at the frivolous expenditure of so much money, although the recapture of Berwick alleviated his grief for a time.⁵¹

The facts remain that the maintenance of Edinburgh would have come at a much higher cost and, perhaps despite being so grieved; in January 1483 the king rewarded his brother's "diligent labours" before parliament. Edward praised and acknowledged that Richard had:

subdued a great part of the west borders of Scotland, adjoining England, by the space of thirty miles or more...and has [secured] divers parts thereof under the obedience of [the king] to the great surety and ease of the north parts of England and much more thereof he intends and with God's grace is likely to get and subdue...⁵²

He then granted to Richard and his male heirs the Wardenship of the West Marches, the office of sheriff of Cumberland and the constableness of Carlisle which also secured for Richard the fortress Castle of Carlisle. Edward also decreed "And the Duke and his heirs forever shall have large power, authority, jurisdiction, liberty and franchise [there] as the Bishop of Durham has within the bishopric of Durham."⁵³ These grants made Richard the most influential nobleman in England and gave him all but his own principality. It is clear from these royal rewards that the king was not unsatisfied with his brother's leadership in the war with Scotland.

The good news of peace with Scotland was dampened by news from France. Louis XI had finally beaten Maximilian of Burgundy, who had married the heiress Mary. Louis arranged the betrothal of the Dauphin of France to Maximilian's daughter Margaret. This marriage would finally bring Burgundy under the rule of the French crown. With the alliance, Louis cast off his

⁵¹ *The Crowland Chronicle Continuations*, 149.

⁵² *Rotuli Parliamentorum*, ed. J. Strachey and others, Vol. VI. Pp. 204-5

⁵³ *Rotuli Parliamentorum*, Vol. VI. Pp. 206

son's engagement to Edward's Princess Elizabeth which had been set in place with the Treaty of Picquingny in 1475. Edward's peace with France had lasted less than eight years.

With his new offices and lands, Richard's importance in the King's Council and at Court grew. Richard remained in London throughout the winter of 1482-83 to counsel his brother on the situation with France. King Edward and Richard knew retribution was impossible without the aid of Burgundy and resolved, for the time being, to focus on securing peace in England. Once peace with Scotland was secured and the February parliament was closed, he returned to his beloved North Country. There he prepared to stay and settled into his most recently appointed offices and lordships. Richard had known very few times of peace in his life and may have hoped the next few years would offer an opportunity for him to secure stability throughout his dominion without the distraction of war. This was not to be.

During Easter of 1483, King Edward fell ill and on April 9th he died.⁵⁴ The king's unexpected death meant the Richard's world had forever changed. His life's ambition to justly govern the North of England, above all other duties, was snuffed out when news of his brother's death reached him. This news was not only a personal tragedy for Richard, but meant his authority in the north might soon be challenged.

On his deathbed Edward delegated the protection his realm and the guidance of his young successor Edward V to his most trusted advisor and loyal brother, Richard. Richard's dominance at Court and his role as the most powerful magnate in England made the ever-ambitious Woodville family see him as their greatest threat. Edward's last act as king solidified the rivalry between the Woodvilles and the supporters of Richard. Soon the court was split between the two factions and the chaos of the next months proved to disrupt Richard's life and ultimately end his

⁵⁴ *The Crowland Chronicle Continuations*, 151.

northern career as he knew it. It was his unsurpassed northern affinity who supported him most loyally during the turbulent years that followed.

Richard's dominance in the north was unique in not only the fifteenth century but was also unique to the whole of middle ages. Rosemary Horrox explains the novelty of his position was apparent when the Parliament of winter 1482-83 created a northern county palatine for Richard.⁵⁵ This region was meant to include all Scottish dales, recently conquered by Richard, along the West March he Richard where already served as hereditary warden for life. The grant was the first of its kind and scale since Lancashire was made a county palatine in 1351. This was Edward's last contribution to Richard's northern realm and was to meant further strengthen royal authority in the north. Many other men might have accepted such a grant and the turned their ambitions to the throne. Therefore, such an enormous grant demonstrates Edward's unwavering trust that Richard desired nothing more than the rule of the north. For Edward, no other noble could be relied upon to rule such a large dominion. It is also clear that without his brother Richard's faithful and successful service, Edward IV's reign would not have been as successful nor possible as long. Richard's own reign would be less successful, possibly because he had isolated himself and his affinity to the north of England. This fact supports the argument that during Richard's rule of the north, he made no plans to expand his power in England or eventually seize the crown.

⁵⁵ Horrox, 70-71

CHAPTER FOUR: CONCLUSIONS - FINDING RICHARD III & REBURIAL

The great debate over the character of Richard III has reached a turning point. Finally historians have undisputable evidence to disprove, or in some cases support, physical descriptions of Richard found in both contemporary and Tudor sources. This evidence is, of course, Richard's skeleton which was found in September 2012 and through DNA analysis was positively identified as the king's in February 2013. The campaign to research and locate the burial place was led, not by any leading late-medieval historians, but by a screenwriter who was fascinated by Richard's varying histories. Philippa Langley founded, and serves as Secretary for, the Scottish Branch of the Richard III Society. While writing a screenplay about Richard's life, Langley attempted to gauge his true character. Through her research she became captivated by the idea of locating his grave. Langley soon embarked on what would be a six-year project to find the lost burial place of King Richard III.

Finding Richard's Grave

After his death at the Battle of Bosworth on August 22, 1485, Richard's corpse was brought to the nearby city of Leicester and most sources agreed that he was buried in the Church of the Greyfriars. In her book, which was co-authored by historian Michael Jones, *The King's Grave: the Discovery of King Richard III's Burial Place and the Clues it Holds* Langley recounts her mission to find the grave. The first task she faced was to determine the exact location of the medieval church which now lay under the modern city of Leicester. Another challenge that she would face, if she found the church and a grave, was how to verify Richard's identity if his body was found.

A series of fortuitous events occurred right around the time Langley decided to search for the grave. The first was in 2004 when Dr. John Ashdown-Hill, genealogist and historian, in

partnership with Professor Jean-Jacques Cassiman at the Center for Human Genetics of Leuven, Belgium, isolated the female mitochondrial DNA sequence of Richard's older sister, Anne of York. This particular DNA sequence was very rare. Then Ashdown-Hill was the able to trace the all-female line of descent from Anne of York to a living relative, Joy Ibsen, in Canada. This discovery would enable the identification of Richard if he were exhumed. In 2005 Philippa Langley recruited Ashdown-Hill to join the search for the grave. The two began to further research the possible locations of the Church of the Greyfriars in Leicester.

Another fortunate event happened in the summer of 2007 when an excavation was done in Grey Friars Street in Leicester to make way for new building construction. The findings at this dig indicated there was a medieval Church in the vicinity, but otherwise were dismissed as being of little importance. Langley insisted this information indicated the possibility that the Church of the Greyfriars was located further west of where it had previously been believed to be located.

The last timely breakthrough occurred as Langley and Ashdown-Hill poured through the archives collected by the Richard III Society, of which they were both members, and in 2009 they found a map of medieval Leicester. This particular map placed the Church of the Greyfriars directly opposite St. Martin's Church, which is now Leicester Cathedral. This meant the church was probably located under the north side of what is now the Leicester Social Services parking area. A relatively bare surface such as parking lot is a prime location for an archeological dig. Circumstances seemed to fall right into place for the search for the church. There were, however, substantial obstacles to overcome before an excavation could happen.

A consistent rumor had circulated for centuries which claimed that during the Dissolution of the Monasteries Richard's body had been dug up and thrown in the River Soar. The source of this story was probably John Speed, a cartographer from the Stuart period, who first searched for

Richard's grave in 1611 and concluded that Richard's remains must have been removed in 1538. If this were true there would be no body to find. Therefore, if the excavation of the Social Services parking lot was to take place, this rumor had to be reasonably disproven. In 2008 John Ashdown-hill examined the map used by Speed in his search for the grave and discovered that Speed had searched the Church of the Blackfriars instead of the suggested location of the Church of the Greyfriars. Ashdown-Hill then concluded that Richard's grave probably still lay undisturbed.

The next step in what was now called "The Finding Richard Project" was to seek permission from the Leicester City Council and the parking lot's owner to excavate the area. By 2010 both parties had given their permission for the dig. Langley also faced the daunting task of convincing the University of Leicester Archaeological Services that finding the church was probable and then convincing their team to conduct the excavation. In May of 2011 the University finally agreed that there was enough evidence for the dig. However, the University only committed to search for the church and the leading archeologists agreed that the chances of finding the grave were very small. The last step was to find the funding. In the terrible economy of 2011 and 2012 Langley found raising the funds quite difficult. Finally she turned to the Richard III Society who issued an international appeal to its members. Donations raised by the society accounted for over half of the funds needed for the initial Leicester dig.

Finally on August 25, 2012, just after the 527th anniversary of Richard's death, the dig began. The excavation plan determined two trenches were to be dug in different sections of the area. The first trench, which was located on the northern end of parking lot, was dug within the first few hours of the first day. Almost immediately human leg bones were uncovered. It was not until days later, after evidence was found in the other trench suggesting a medieval church had

existed there, that the archeologists started to examine the grave more closely and began the process of exhumation. Once the skeletal remains were completely visible it was clear this was a hastily-buried body with an extreme curvature of the spine. Langley and Ashdown-Hill, who were present at the dig, were convinced they had found Richard.

Late in the evening on September 5, 2012 the skeleton was exhumed from the grave and transported to University of Leicester where carbon-dating tests were done on fragments of the bones and attempts to isolate DNA samples from the teeth commenced. The samples were compared to the DNA of Anne of York's confirmed descendant, Michael Ibsen, who was the son of the now late Joy Ibsen. Luckily Canadian-born Ibsen lived in London and was willing to participate. By end January of 2013 the results were in and on February 4, 2013 University of Leicester announced they had identified the skeleton as Richard III.

What the Bones Revealed

The unearthing of the burial place of King Richard III and examination of his remains has enabled nearly all of the most infamous assertions about his physical appearance to be disproved. Some descriptions, however, were confirmed. John Rous's initial description of Richard as small of stature and having one shoulder higher than the other was proven to be relatively true. Richard did suffer from severe scoliosis, which would have made one shoulder appear slightly higher than the other.¹ This may have or may not have been extremely noticeable. Richard's role as a military general would have required him to wear a thick suit of armor and which would have been very difficult if his scoliosis had been too extreme. The results of his skeletal examination concluded that he probably would not have appeared to have a hump or to be hunchbacked.

The examination also proved him to be five-foot eight-inches tall, which was above the average height for a male in the fifteenth century, but the scoliosis may have taken two or more

¹ Michael Jones and Philippa Langley, *The King's Grave* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2013) 171.

inches from that.² This would have left Richard at an average or just below average height. When standing beside his famously handsome brother Edward IV, who was over six feet tall, Richard may have paled in comparison. Richard's skeleton also showed that both his arms were same length and completely symmetrical disproving all rumors of a withered arm.

This evidence contradicts some of the great exaggerations of which Richard has been a victim. These misrepresentations of Richard's physical appearance appeared first in the works of Thomas More and Polydore Vergil, but were embellished further and made popular by Shakespeare. Though Shakespeare's Richard III is a fictional character, this depiction of the king was popularly accepted as fact by most English subjects for centuries after the play's debut. The disputes over Richard's character portrayal were mostly limited to scholarly debates which meant that most of the population did not question the Tudor representation of the king as a great villain. The discovery of Richard's skeleton has brought this debate into popular culture more than any previous event. For now, a new debate has taken the place of a character dispute: where the king should be finally laid to rest.

The Legal Battle

As Langley gathered support and sought permission from the Leicester City Council in 2011, she agreed that, if found, King Richard III would be reburied in Leicester Cathedral.³ Langley sought the proper licenses and also signed agreements with the university that the king would remain in Leicester. Additionally, before the actual excavation began Langley met with the Dean of Leicester Cathedral and discussed a location in the Cathedral where Richard's tomb could be placed. Once it was confirmed that the skeleton found was in fact Richard, plans for an honorable reburial in the Cathedral began to be made.

² Langley and Jones, *The King's Grave*, 173.

³ Langley and Jones, 16.

The announcement that Richard III had been found sent shockwaves through both the academic world and popular culture. The media frenzy, which had begun when rumors of a dig to find the king surfaced in August 2011, seemed to reach its climax with this announcement. Ricardians across the globe rejoiced and a surge of new people, intrigued by this find, joined groups such as the Richard III Society and the debate over the King's legacy was revitalized. Almost immediately concerns over a Leicester burial were voiced by those who believed Richard should be laid to rest in York, where he was arguably most popular during his lifetime.

A group of self-declared descendants of Anne of York formed the Plantagenet Alliance Limited and challenged the authority of the Secretary of State for Justice, who had granted the Exhumation license to Langley and the University of Leicester archeological team, to issue such as license and determined that the king was to be reburied in Leicester. In August of 2013, the Plantagenet Alliance filed an application for Judicial Review which would determine the validity of the license. The application claimed that a discovery such as this one was without precedent and was accepted on the basis that, "it is plainly arguable that there was a duty at common law to consult widely as to how and where Richard III's remains should appropriately be re-interred."⁴ The Judicial Review was originally scheduled for a November 2013 hearing, but was postponed until March 13, 2014. The hearing at the Royal Courts of Justice in London concluded the following day and a ruling will be announced in the coming weeks. The Judicial Review will only determine if the Leicester City Council and the Secretary of State have a valid license to rebury Richard in Leicester. If it is decided that they do not have that authority, the issue of who should be consulted on the matter of reburial will be the next question to be answered.

The fate of Richard's remains has sparked passionate debate among historians and Ricardians alike. One of the strongest arguments, of course, is to keep him in Leicester where

⁴ High Court of Justice, Queen's Bench Division Administrative Court, CO Ref: CO/5313/2013

has been for the past five hundred years. Another equally strong argument could be made for his reburial at York Minster Cathedral in York. Depending on the outcome of the Judicial Review, the wait to rebury the once king of England in befitting honor and glory may be a long one.

A Case for York

There are three reasons one can argue as to why York should be the final resting place of Richard III. First is that Richard spent most of his life in the north of England and he considered it his home. His father was, after all, the Duke of York. This leads to the second argument that Richard probably would have preferred to be laid to rest in the north rather than in the nearest city to site of his death. Lastly, York is where Richard was most beloved during his lifetime and is arguably most popular today.

As previously established, Richard made his home in the north. He spent much of his adult life securing control in the north, worked tirelessly to institute an impartial judicial system and bring peace to the northern counties. It was at Middleham Castle in North Yorkshire where he established his main residence with his wife Anne and it was there that his son Edward was born. Middleham is also where he met Anne while under the wardship of her father the earl of Warwick. Richard learned his military skill there as a child and later chose to return there with his family. This was apparently his most favored castle. He also spent time at his castle of Sheriff Hutton, also in North Yorkshire, and Barnard Castle in the northern county of Durham. Though Richard had estates in the south of England and Wales, he rarely visited them. It is therefore not an unreasonable assumption to think that Richard would have wanted to be buried in the north of England.

Richard's meticulous care taken to organize the ceremonial procession and reburial of his father at the Church of Saint Mary near their ancestral home of Fotherghay in 1476 indicates that

Richard very much valued honor in death and cared deeply about where his father was laid to rest.⁵ The Duke of York had been hastily buried, after his death at the Battle of Wakefield in 1460, at the Franciscan priory at Pontefract. King Edward and Richard agreed that their father deserved to be brought home. The funeral procession and ceremony reflected that of the burial of a rightful king of England. It can be assumed that Richard may have expected to be brought back to his home for burial, possibly even re-burial years after his death, as he had done for his father.

York was capital of the north of England during the reign of Edward IV. It is where Richard was most popular. This capital of the north was all important to Richard. When he became king of England in 1483, he chose York Minster Cathedral, not Westminster Abbey, as the holy site where his son Edward was invested as the Prince of Wales. This can be interpreted as Richard's simple preference for York over London or may have been Richard's way of signifying his thanks and continued devotion to his city in the north. Either way, this event emphasized Richard's attachment to York and to the cathedral.

The people of York, time and time again, showed their love for Richard through their continuous support, both militarily and financially. The men of York answered the Lord of the North's call to fight many times. Their extolling references to Richard in letters and declarations are overwhelming. During the war with Scotland the city wrote that, "It is agreed that for the great labour, good and benevolent lordship that the right high and mighty prince the Duke of Gloucester has at all times done for the welfare of this city, [he shall receive] praise and thanks"⁶ This is typical praise for Richard found in the York Civic Records during his lifetime. Perhaps the city's admiration for him is exemplified best in their reaction to his death. The entry reads,

⁵ Hipshon, 113-114

⁶ *York Civic Records*, March 12, 1482.

“King Richard late mercifully reigning upon us was through grete treason of the Duke of Northfolk and many others...was piteously slaine and mured to the hevynesse of this cite”⁷

Some consider Richard to have been England’s only northern king. Richard was not a well-liked king in the south of England, but much of the north and especially York had always remained loyal to him. It would therefore be most befitting for him to be laid to rest in the city of York. Any reburial at Leicester Cathedral would surely be dignified and worthy of a king, but it would only be as a result of his dying nearby. Even today soldiers who are killed in battle are, if at all possible, sent home to be buried. This same logic, some argue, could be applied in Richard’s case. Of course, the reburial of a king of England is unprecedented in recent time. The question of who should be consulted and ultimately decide where his burial site will be, is one of great importance and controversy. This argument for York Minister Cathedral is one of many. When this controversial debate is resolved, whether it is in the coming weeks or months, Richard will finally be laid to rest with honor. It is the hope of many Ricardians that his final resting place will be in the city of York.

Changing Legacy?

The great debate over Richard’s character and contributions persists and will probably continue to be discussed for centuries to come. Though finding his grave and examining his remains has answered the questions of exactly how he died and what he may have looked like, the questions regarding his personality and morals remain. However, it is important to note that recent decades have showed a shift in popular cultures’ presentations of the king. Historical-fiction authors, such as Sharon Kay Pennman, seem to be reshaping popular perceptions of Richard, just as Shakespeare’s play did over four hundred years ago. The archetypical villain is still represented in some histories and on the stage, while some novels and television series have

⁷ *York City Archives*, August 23, 1485

recently depicted him as sympathetic or even admirable. One writer sought to find the real, and what she thought was maligned, character of Richard III. Six years later she found herself standing at the grave of the king and it was her relentless pursuit for Richard's redemption that resulted in the grave's discovery. Will this discovery inspire more alternative or positive popular representations of Richard?

In academia, however, Richard's entire life and character are often judged on the issue of whether or not he was responsible for the murder of the princes in the Tower. It is this supposed act, above all others, that has painted Richard as the most infamous king of England. While historical debate over this issue has become more varied, most historians still agree that Richard was probably responsible for the princes' disappearance. There is, however, no direct evidence that he ordered their deaths. It is possible that the boys were killed to prevent conspiracies and rebellions in their names but this would be just as true for Henry Tudor, the Duke of Buckingham, or others who had intentions of claiming the throne.

There are many arguments that have been put forth as a defense against the claims that Richard killed his nephews. First is the fact that parliament had declared Edward's marriage to Elizabeth Woodville invalid and their children illegitimate. Therefore elimination of the boys would have been relatively unnecessary for Richard. If Richard had ordered the boys' deaths he would have surely displayed their bodies as confirmation. Otherwise pretenders could claim to be them and lead rebellions in their names. There is also the matter of the Duke of Clarence's son Edward, earl of Warwick. If Richard was weary of rebellions in the name of the younger sons of York, why would he allow this legitimate royal nephew to survive? The little earl of Warwick's claim to the throne was much stronger than Henry VII's claim. As a result King Henry put the boy in the Tower of London when he took the throne in 1485. The young earl of

Warwick represented such a threat to Henry that he remained prisoner there for the rest of his short life. Henry then ordered his execution in 1499 to secure his hold on the crown of England.

It is even more interesting that in 1484, Elizabeth Woodville made her peace with Richard despite her sons' disappearance. She remained loyal to Richard even after his death and helped support the rebellion led by Lambert Simnel during the reign of Henry VII, despite her daughter's marriage to Henry.⁸ If Elizabeth had believed Richard killed her sons, it is odd that she would not declare it after his death and even more strange that she should stand against Henry VII.

It is also important to consider, if indeed Richard did order the deaths of his young nephews, that an act such as this was not without precedent in Medieval England. Sources report that Henry VI, who was mentally ill and hardly a threat to the new Yorkist regime, was probably also put to death in the Tower, very likely on the orders of Edward IV. Fear of those who would rise against Edward IV in the name of the former king, was cause enough to have Henry eliminated. Before Henry, Richard II had met a similar fate. After his abdication in favor of Henry IV, he was sent to Pontefract Castle where he either was left to starve to death or was possibly poisoned to prevent further uprisings in his name. The bodies of these former kings were presented to the public to confirm their deaths and to prevent any questions possible survival. Additionally, The murder of two innocent boys, though horrifying to our modern sensibilities, would not have been such an atrocity in the fifteenth century, especially if it meant securing peace in England. This is perhaps evident by the fact that Henry VII did not immediately investigate the disappearance of the princes. Henry benefitted from their deaths just as much as Richard.

⁸ Langley and Jones, 245.

Ultimately, Richard's life should not be judged by the possibility of his committing or ordering these murders. Neither should he be judged by his brief, turbulent reign. Richard's true legacy should be drawn from his contributions during his career as Lord of the North; his establishment of a fair judicial system and his campaigns for peace in the north during the reign of his brother. A study of those years of his life results in a portrait of a good lord, a loyal brother, and a skillful warrior. His time in the north was the most important time of his life and is there where he is best remembered. It is for this reason among others that he should be returned to York; the city that loved him and that he protected and favored above all other places in England.

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