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King Richard III



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Thoughts on Bosworth

Jonathan Hayes

Having read *The Search for Richard III: the King's Grave* with its conjectured description of Bosworth, I thought my own observations might be of some value.

Full disclosure: I wasn't at Bosworth 22 August 1485. So I don't *know*; I am speculating. I think my speculations are pretty well justified, but I'm probably wrong to some degree. We all are.

CAVALRY CHARGE: I don't think there is any question that Richard's fatal charge was an *ad hoc* affair. Henry Tudor's actions, which precipitated the charge, were fortuitous; they could not have been foreseen or planned for. I feel that an impetuous streak is something I share with Richard—mine has gotten me into trouble many times in the past and undoubtedly will do so in the future. His resulted in Hastings' execution and his fatal charge at Bosworth.

Was there ever an intention to mount a cavalry charge at all? It would certainly have been a *coup de theatre* and would appeal to an observer's romantic side. But it seems most unlikely. A cavalry charge against an English army of that period with its close ranked longbowmen would have been a suicidal act. That had been amply demonstrated in the past. Although the plate armor of the period was proof against arrows except at very short range, the same wasn't the case for cavalry horses, even if they were fully barded, which almost none were, and it wouldn't take very many downed horses to break up a charge. The arrow storm had proven devastating time and again. Cavalry charges were obsolete.

An interesting observation in Prescott's *History of the Reign of Ferdinand and Queen Isabella* tells how, in 1488, Lord Scales, then fighting with the Spanish, dismounted and fought on foot to show "the English way of fighting". The English rode to the fight but then dismounted and fought on foot and had been doing so for over a hundred and fifty years. A cavalry charge would have been un-English.

That's not to say cavalry didn't have a place. A cavalry reserve would be maintained for ambushes (as at Towton and Tewkesbury) or to plug holes in the line or take advantage of gaps in the enemy's lines. That would have been the force Richard led.

We also have to consider the relative size of the opposing forces. By all accounts Richard had a strong numerical advantage (even remembering a large part of his potential forces hadn't come up yet). Numbers by themselves do not mean much; it's how many you can get onto the battlefield that counts. With a narrow frontage large numbers can actually be a hindrance as had been shown at Dupplin Moor and Agincourt. There was also a large Stanley wild card. A conservative battle plan would have been best. The initial fight wasn't going well for him and he would have been foolish to throw everything into the hazard until he knew which way the Stanleys were going. He'd had enough battle experience to know that no battle plan survives contact with the enemy. His trump card was Northumberland's forces. A wise general—and Richard wasn't stupid—would plan on holding back. While it would have been nice to have killed Henry Tudor, it wouldn't have been strictly necessary. A thoroughly beaten Henry, even if he personally escaped, would have had his political fangs pulled and no longer be a credible threat. My own guess is if he'd committed Northumberland against Oxford instead of his fatal charge, he would have had an outstanding victory. "The saddest words are 'might have been'".

FRENCH PIKEMEN at BOSWORTH: Livia Visser-Fuchs ("Phantom Bastardy and Ghostly Pikemen"—The Ricardian 2004) takes care of this pretty well and I find her analysis compelling. Nobody of that ilk was there. But let's assume, for a minute, that they were

there and were well-trained and see where that gets us.

There was nothing new or original about the use of pikemen against cavalry in the fifteenth century. That steady infantry could repel a cavalry charge was well known throughout history. The following describes the Battle of Gaugamela in 331 BC:

“Thousands of fresh, heavy cavalry thundered forward, threatening to swamp and sweep away Alexander’s heavily engaged right flank. It was here that training came to the fore and the professional Macedonians proved their mettle. Steady infantry blunted the Persian charge, for when it comes to breaking a line of spearmen rooted in place, the bravery of the rider counts for nothing. It is the bravery of the horse that decides, and no horse will ever willingly impale itself on a spear for the greater good of any cause.” (*Moment of Battle: The Twenty Clashes That Changed the World*, Lacey/Murray, 2013)

The tactic was used by Richard Lionheart at the battle of Jaffa in 1192 to repel Turkish cavalry. It was used by the Welsh and Portuguese in the Middle Ages as well as by many others. The Duke of Wellington used it against Ney’s cavalry at Waterloo. It is inconceivable that Richard would not have known of it. The Scottish schiltron formation was specifically designed for this purpose.

“The schiltron was a circle or a square of infantry, armed with spears, facing outwards. Nothing would induce a cavalry horse to pitch itself against this hedgehog of glistening iron spikes and, barring an archery attack, the schiltron was pretty well impenetrable, provided it held its formation.” (*The Highlander*, May/June 2014, pg. 15/16)

As the narrative says, whether it is spears against Persian, Turkish (or English) cavalry or Brown Bess muskets with bayonets fixed against French cavalry, no horse will charge that line.

Which only shows horses are smarter than people. But we already knew that.

So what really happened? This is just my speculation, but I think it fits the facts as we know them. Richard was sitting with his cavalry reserve waiting for the right moment to send in Northumberland’s men when he spotted Henry Tudor out on his own. How did he know who it was? This is an important point. Henry Tudor was accompanied by his standard bearer, William Brandon.

The post of standard bearer was a very honorable one—and very dangerous (funny how the two seem to go together). One hand on your horse and one hand on the standard—you can’t defend yourself, yet you are the focal point of the enemy’s actions. This is very significant.

Richard sees the opportunity; impetuosity overcomes generalship. Spurs to the horse’s ribs and he’s away. It takes a couple of seconds for his retinue to react, but they are behind him as fast as they can—but behind.

At 1200 pounds, the destrier plus the weight of Richard’s armor is sufficient to bowl over Sir John Cheney, who probably isn’t moving very fast—he hasn’t had all that much time to react. And then Richard kills William Brandon, Henry Tudor’s standard bearer.

A standard bearer’s job is to stick close as possible to the commander; Richard at this point is within a *few short feet* of Henry Tudor. So what about those French pikemen?

Even if they had been there and superbly trained, could they have interposed themselves between Richard and Henry Tudor and set 16 foot long pikes in those few short seconds? I don’t believe it.

Remember also the spear/bayonet line doesn’t stop the cavalry charge; it redirects it to flow out seeking an open flank (the whole point of the square formation at Waterloo was to not have an open flank). Richard’s charge was not redirected, however; it was *stopped*.

This is shown by his death.

I believe it was marshy ground that did it. Henry Tudor was moving at a walking pace; marshy ground would not have been a hazard to him. He could move off easily. Not so Richard at a full gallop. When his horse hit the marshy ground, the horse went down and Richard was unhorsed, probably losing his helmet in the process. Most of his followers were sufficiently behind him to rein in and avoid it—many of them survived the battle. And then Stanley's men came in and that's all she wrote.

At any rate, that's my take. It was a battle that could have been and should have been won if only Richard had remembered that his role was to be a general and not a *beau sabreur*. But maybe that's too much to expect of a medieval monarch, the brother of Edward IV and a man of Richard's character.

It is interesting to speculate that Henry Tudor may have filled his underdrawers during that encounter. Would have been very embarrassing for him.

~ToC~

The Road to Crecy: The Evolution of Longbow Tactics

Jonathan Hayes

“A longbow is defined as the traditional type with stacked [i.e. “D” sectioned] belly, horn nocks, and limbs made of wood only. All surfaces shall be convex. The length between nocks, measured along the back of the bow, shall not be less than 5 feet for arrows up to 26 inches long, and not less than 5 foot six inches for arrows over 26 inches long. The thickness of limbs, measured from the belly [inside bend] to back [outside bend] shall at no point be less than $\frac{3}{4}$ of the overall width of the limb at the same point. At the arrow-plate the bow shall not be narrower than at any other place on the top limb. There shall be no arrow-rest built into or attached to the bow. The stele [shaft] of the arrow shall be of wood, the fletchings of feathers.”

British Long Bow Society

This short piece is an attempt to examine how and why the longbow, an unremarkable part of European life for centuries, if not millennia, became a devastating and dominating weapons system in English hands by the 1300's. It's an amazing story.

I regularly shoot a yew wood English longbow. My bow has an arrow rest, but otherwise meets the Society's criteria. Without an arrow rest, the arrow lies on your index finger knuckle in shooting. After a couple dozen rounds, you will have a bloody knuckle—I know. My bow has a 45 pound draw; *Mary Rose* bows were 100—150 pound—three times the weight of mine. Draw weight is the number of pounds of pull required to fully draw the bow; it's measured by attaching a spring scale to the bow string and drawing it to full draw. Medieval archers would draw the bow to their ear; nowadays we generally draw it just to the face. Only very strong men could swiftly make a 100-150 pound draw to the ear and do it repeatedly. My bow is 76 inches long, which works right for my height and arm reach. The nocks (where the bowstring is attached at the ends of the bow) are made of horn. This is traditional; yew is too soft a wood to take the force of the drawn bowstring at that point on its own.

Yew wood: Yews were considered sacred trees, and frequently grew in churchyards, a result of the new Christian religion appropriating the sacred places of pagan beliefs. Yew wood bows are selfbows—one piece of wood. It's cut so the heartwood is on the side of the bow facing the archer. This side is under compression when the bow is drawn; the yew heartwood resists compression very well. The sapwood is on the outward-facing side, the

side which is under tension when drawn. Yew sapwood resists tension quite well also. The best yew came from the Baltic (via the Hanseatic League), Spain and Dalmatia (via Venice). Yew grown at higher elevations had much finer grain and hence better quality. English yew was considered to be inferior (how ironic—"the yew wood, the true wood, the wood of English bows" was imported!). The Pacific Northwest coastal area of the United States and Canada is the only current world source of bow quality yew wood.

My arrows meet the Society's criteria. They are 29 inches long, which is the right length for my draw. Arrow physics: force is applied to the nock at release. However, it takes a measurable amount of time for the head to start moving. Result: the arrow actually bends when leaving the bow and wobbles for the first few feet before straightening out. Obviously a 120-pound draw will give a much greater force than a 45-pound draw. If my arrows were attempted to be shot from a 120-pound draw bow, they would shatter on leaving the bow. Medieval war arrows had much heavier shafts to take that force.

The type of arrow head depended on the usage. The bodkin point would easily punch through mail and also plate at short range. Broad heads were used in hunting or against cavalry horses. I have one shape of arrow head that is a crescent; it was used for cutting ropes, which shows you how accurate the archers could be.

The longbow's history in Britain: "That when the Saxons came first into this realm in King Vortigern's day, when they had been here a awhile, and at last began to fall out with the Britons, they troubled and subdued the Britons with nothing so much as with their bow and shaft, which weapons being strange, and not seen here before, was wonderful terrible unto them." Sir Thomas Elyot quoted in *Toxophilus* (Roger Ascham)

The Vikings had a strong tradition of bow shooting; individual prowess is related in the sagas. Yew bows dating from the eighth century have been found in Germany. They were possibly not widely used in England as the AngloSaxon word for arrow also means "throwing spear". Harold used archers at the Battle of Stamford Bridge in 1066, but they were apparently part of the local levies, not part of the professional army that marched south to Hastings. Use of archery at Hastings seems to have been mostly on the Norman side—traditionally, Harold is supposed to have been killed by an arrow. Regulations in the 1282 Assize of Arms specified required weapons ownership: yeomen or townsmen with less than 40 shillings of land or 9 marks in chattels had to have a bow and arrows. Yeomen with between 40 and 100 shillings of land and townsmen with between 9 and 40 marks of chattels had to have bow and arrows and sword and dagger. Sharp hunting or broadhead points could only be used outside Royal Forests—the King's deer were for the King, but this shows that hunting with bow and arrow was fairly common—of course even more common in the outlaw areas around Nottingham and Derby.

It is thought that the Vikings introduced the longbow into Wales during the Dark Ages. They certainly impressed the Normans—there is one story (probably in the tall tale category) of a Welsh arrow penetrating 4 inches of oak. Interestingly, there had been considerable Norman colonization of the Welsh Marches before the Conquest, during the Confessor's time. Anglo-Saxon England had had its own problems with the Welsh, and saw the more warlike Normans as being useful in that regard.

Edward I's Reforms: Edward I, a highly talented military man, sought to reform English military practices. Armies in his day were still feudal and amateur. Nobles brought their own retinues under feudal obligation and were highly undisciplined. If a noble felt he'd been insulted or if he believed he'd fulfilled his obligation, he might leave in the middle of a campaign, taking his troops with him. Or, if he didn't like the way the battle was going, he might make an attack on his own.

Edward worked to change that transitioning from unpaid feudal levies to paid professional soldiers. Under the systems that he introduced, military leaders contracted to provide specific numbers of soldiers. There was also conscription by means of Commissions of Array. Soldiers generally marched to the borders of their native county unpaid. From there to the port of embarkation, their county paid them. Once at the port, the king paid them, even during the frequent delays in sailing. Recruits were generally countrymen used to unremitting hard physical labor and hard living conditions. However, they were also well nourished: wheat bread and meat had replaced the barley and cheese of earlier times. Obviously these changes did not take hold overnight; it took many years to implement them, and the king had to face resistance from nobles who felt (correctly) that they were being usurped. Even after 20 years of Edward I's work at making them more professional, an ill-timed charge at Falkirk nearly lost the battle.

Edward realized the potential of the longbow and greatly increased the proportion of bowmen in his armies, recruiting archers from Wales (in 1277 Gwent and Crickhowell supplied 800 longbowmen and Macclesfield 100). The longbow wasn't widely used in England during Edward's life and it took a generation of training to produce the archer armies that he envisioned. At Falkirk in 1298, most of the archers were Welsh. At Crécy in 1346, most were English—the result of Edward's patient emphasis on training. Poachers and criminals who volunteered for army service would also receive pardons—another source of experienced bowmen (probably 10% of Edward III's armies in France). Edward I was the first to introduce uniform ID for his troops—a red cross of St. George on an armband. There is no report on what the Welsh archers thought of that!

“In my time, my poor father was as diligent to teach me to shoot as to learn me any other thing, and so I think other men did to their children. He taught me how to draw, how to lay my body in my bow, and not to draw with strength of arms as other nations do, but with strength of the body. I had my bows made me according to my age and strength; as I increased in them, so my bows were made bigger and bigger, for men never shoot well, unless they be brought up to it.” Bishop Latimer, 1549

At Falkirk the English horse couldn't prevail against the Scottish schiltrons (the schiltron formation had been specifically designed to counter cavalry), but they did break up the Scottish archers, allowing their own archers to break up the schiltrons.

Edward II's ineptitude largely negated Edward I's advances, resulting in Bannockburn. The lessons of Bannockburn were absorbed, however. Organization and discipline are everything. Cavalry without archers is useless against steady spearmen, and archers without men-at-arms support are very vulnerable to cavalry. These lessons resulted in the tactical formations used at at Boroughbridge and Dupplin Moor

Boroughbridge—1322 and Dupplin Moor—1332: Boroughbridge was a battle in the Despenser Wars (Edward II). The Royalist commander, Sir Andrew de Harcla, Constable of Carlisle, held the bridge and ford crossing at Boroughbridge against the rebel forces of Thomas of Lancaster. De Harcla's forces were mainly spearmen (which he arranged in the schiltron (shield) formation borrowed from the Scots) and longbowmen. The schiltron seems to have been deployed at the bridge and the archers at the ford. Lancaster's heavy cavalry charged the ford, but did not even make it to the water's edge; the arrow storm from the archers stopped them cold. The schiltron also effectively held the bridge. Lancaster, caught by the main Royal army coming from the south, surrendered the next day.

While this was not the first use of archers in combination with dismounted men at arms and spearmen, the battle's significance lies in the fact that armies copied and refined the combined arms tactics in subsequent battles to become the battle-winner of Crécy.

Dupplin Moor was an invasion of Scotland by Scottish exiles and English. After their Scottish estates had been confiscated by the Scots government, the invaders aimed to depose the infant king David II and replace him with Edward Balliol. Since the English were prohibited from crossing the Tweed, Edward III required them to invade by sea. The force wasn't large; their 500 men at arms and 1,000 archers were very heavily outnumbered by Scots forces, so it should have easily been disposed of.

On the eve of the battle, both armies camped near Perth with the Scots holding the bridge over the river Earn. However, the English crossed the river at a ford during the night. Their effective commander, Henry Beaumont, was an experienced leader and took up a position in a narrow passage which, only having a 200-yard front, counterbalanced his numerical inferiority. He refined the Boroughbridge tactics, creating the basic tactical formation which English armies would subsequently use throughout the age of the longbow. His dismounted men at arms were in the center, backed by a row of spearmen. The archers were on the flanks; there was a small force of mounted German mercenaries in reserve.

The Scots attack was uncoordinated due to Lord Robert Bruce and the Earl of Mar having an altercation over who should have the honor of leading the assault—resulting in both starting their forces at the same time. This is a good example of the indiscipline which had been common in medieval armies prior to the reforms initiated by Edward I.

The result was slaughter. The English lost about 35 in the center (no archer casualties); Scottish bodies were said to have been piled to the height of a spear.

Halidon Hill—1333: Edward III wasn't at Dupplin Moor, but his subordinate commanders at Halidon Hill had been there. He took their basic formation and modified it slightly. He had three divisions composed of men at arms and knights; all dismounted and separated by longbowmen slightly advanced in a defensive wedge formation. For this to work, you had to get the enemy to attack. Both the French and Scots very obligingly did, though at Agincourt, the English had to advance their line to within bowshot of the French before they could be goaded into attacking.

The arrow-storm destroyed the Scots army. Bannockburn had been avenged and Edward had a battle winning combination.

All able-bodied Englishmen in this era had grown up shooting. Practice at the butts was mandatory on Sundays after church. Other sports were forbidden—a ban which wasn't always effective. They had practiced at shooting at marks set at different distances, had learned to judge range accurately and to have good aim at all different ranges. After Crécy, there was no problem finding recruits; the prospects of easy loot in France were extremely tempting. However, the Black Death hit just a couple of years later and resulted in a much smaller pool of recruits; later armies were not as large as Edward could muster at Crécy.

Crécy—1346: Crécy was the first time continental Europe experienced the new army formed by the efforts of Edward I & III. It was a great shock. Edward went to France in 1346 with 14,000 men, 7,500 of whom were archers. 2,500 were mounted and paid 6d a day, 5,000 foot paid 4d a day. The difference in pay scale suggests the mounted archers were capable of shooting while mounted; there is speculation that this capability enabled Edward to force the crossing of the Somme prior to Crécy. We know the names of some of the archers: William Jodrell fought at Crécy; his son fought at Agincourt. On the Continent, the crossbow was used; the crossbow of the time had a shorter range and much slower rate of fire than the longbow. Only professionals used it. The Genoese were considered the best. The French king wasn't going to let his peasants get their hands on crossbows. A crossbow could kill a knight and required no training.

We're not sure what formation Edward III used at Crécy; probably the same as at

Halidon Hill, but Froissart says it was a “hearse” which seems to indicate a hedgehog-type. The front rank may have shot from a kneeling position. The archers would have stuck their arrows in the ground in front of them for easy access. A point of detail—since the volume of arrows fired is critical, speed in nocking is vital; nocking the arrow is the slowest part of the process. I suspect that the archers would have aligned the arrows so that when they bent over to pick them up, the bowstring could easily fit into the nock. An archer could shoot 16 arrows a minute (compare that to the 15 aimed rounds a minute the British Regular Army rifleman could fire at the beginning of World War I in 1914)—it was the “machine gun of the Middle Ages” and the term “arrow storm” is more than appropriate.

The French were charging uphill. Michael Loades, an English medieval warfare expert, rode the distance—it took him 40 seconds, but he wasn’t on a war horse nor was he wearing armor. Robert Hardy estimates it took them 90 seconds. Even at 40 seconds, those 7,500 archers could fire 90,000 arrows. The effect was devastating. The crossbowmen had been destroyed (at Poitiers the French didn’t use crossbowmen) and the cavalry slaughtered. A new era had started. The English would be undefeated from then until Joan of Arc, and their archer companies would be much in demand as mercenary companies in Italy.

How effective was the English war bow? A 120-pound draw war bow shooting a quarter pound arrow would penetrate all but the best armor available within about 100 yards. It was not until the American Civil War that infantry weapons would have the accuracy and range of the longbow.

With such a dominant weapons system, it is a bit surprising that other countries did not adopt it. There were obstacles, of course. Shooting the longbow required training from early youth; you couldn’t just pick up a warbow and start shooting effectively. The easiest and quickest means was to hire English mercenaries. The Italian city states were quick to adopt this. English mercenary bands, such as that most famously led by Sir John Hawkwood, were prominent in the Italian wars of this period. It also didn’t fit in easily with the Continental life style. There was a half-hearted effort by the French to develop longbow archers, but they never seriously pursued it. French monarchs did not like the idea of weaponry in the hands of their peasants and preferred to concentrate on gunpowder weapons which were beyond the economic resources of their peasantry. James I of Scotland enjoined the English practice of requiring all able-bodied men to regularly practice at the butts (and especially not engage in the pernicious practices of playing football or golf), but that didn’t survive his death. The spear, which was replaced by the 16 foot Continental pike, remained the national weapon. However, a legacy remained in the Gardes Écossaise, the Scottish archers forming the French royal guard.

Logistics: As Shakespeare puts it in *King Henry V*, “Now thrive the armourers....” The immense numbers of arrows and bows required couldn’t be put together overnight, of course, and the evidence shows a regular purchase program in peacetime as well as war. This would have created a stockpile of weapons ready for use when needed. They were carefully packed, as the weaponry recovered from *Mary Rose* shows. In 1341, the King received 7,700 bows and 312,000 arrows. In 1342 and 1343, the sheriff of each county was required to supply 500 bows and 12,000 arrows. In 1346, 2,380 bows and 133,200 arrows were produced. In 1359, the Tower received 20,000 bows, 50,000 bowstrings and 850,000 arrows.

Edward IV decreed that every ship from Venice had to bring 4 bow staves per ton, with a fine of 6s 8d for every missing staff. He fixed the maximum price for a bow at 3s 4d. Richard III decreed that each merchant ship from Venice bring 10 good staves per butt of malmsey or Tyre wine. This was something all English monarchs in this period took very seriously.

Although the army expected to live off the land in France, that obviously wasn't the case in England while waiting to embark. Even in France, commanders had to allow for the possible lack of provender in a given locality. Victualling of the army was a major concern; I wish we had better records! However, in 1346, the county of Lincoln sent 552 ½ quarters of flour, 300 quarters of oats, 135 carcasses of salt pork, 213 carcasses of sheep, 32 sides of beef, 312 stone of cheese and 100 quarters of peas and beans. The ale ration was one gallon per man per day.

The End of the Longbow: Gunpowder weapons were in increasing use throughout the era of longbow ascendancy. Edward III had some at Crécy and we know Richard III was well supplied with field artillery and handguns at Bosworth.

Still, since the gunpowder weapons which replaced the longbow weren't nearly as effective, it is interesting to speculate why they did supplant it. Perhaps the requisite quality bow wood was no longer available. Yew grows slowly and most Continental stands of bow quality wood had probably been harvested. Perhaps the human quality had deteriorated. The enclosure movement resulted in many fewer agricultural workers with the requisite background of hard physical daily work. The plague and "sweating sickness" had also taken its toll on the population. It is much easier to train someone in gunpowder arms than in a longbow. There is also a certain amount of snob appeal. Gunpowder was modern—not your grandfather's boring old weaponry.

It didn't happen instantly, of course. Indeed, the longbow was still of prime importance—as evidenced by *Mary Rose* finds—well into the reign of Henry VIII (himself a keen archer). However, by 1595, all bows were ordered to be replaced by muskets.

An era was over; what had been accomplished? In the long run, nothing. At the end of the Scottish and French wars, the respective borders were about where they had been at the beginning. However, it did usher in the age of predominantly missile warfare conducted at a distance. Hand-to-hand combat did not vanish, but would have a lesser importance than previously.

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Bows & Arrows of the Native Americans, Jim Hamm, 1989, Lyons Press—This book has a variety of excellent information on construction of "self" bows—such as the yew wood longbow.

~ToC~

From the Editor

Due to the low number of articles submitted for publication, the number of *Ricardian Register* issues published will now be two per annum instead of four. The new schedule is to publish in March and September. To ensure there is sufficient time to prepare the files for printing, the new schedule for all submissions is: January 2 for the March issue; and July 1 for the September issue.

In anticipation of a move, Susan Higginbotham notified us that she will not be able to continue to be our Non-Fiction and Audio Visual Librarian. Since 2009, when Susan acquired the position, she has grown the library into the valuable resource that it is today. Fortunately, Susan Troxell, who many will recognize from her contributions to the Register—including the one in this issue—has volunteered to fill the position.

The Reputation of Richard III

Regional Variations and Prejudices

Susan L. Troxell

This paper explores the reputation of Richard III in the North and elsewhere in England. Primary sources from the North, Midlands, East Anglia, and London will be presented and assessed for their underlying influences. But first, it is important to understand that an anti-North animus existed in 15th century England.

The roots of the “Northern stereotype” were economic, political and historical. The North was sparsely populated, comprising 25% of England’s land mass but only 15% of its total population. It was a very poor region, having the lowest bracket of taxable wealth per square mile. The 15th century witnessed a growing divide between the poverty of the North and the burgeoning wealth of the South. Despite this, “the north had a political significance out of all proportion to its wealth”¹ and it played a central role in politics. English kings provided for the defense of the Scottish border while they pursued war in France. Northerners had to contend with cyclical raids along the Scottish Marches, maintain a state of armed preparedness, and grow hardened to the ravages of perpetual war. To Southern eyes, men from the North represented poorly disciplined, unchivalric thugs. Such was their reputation that even Richard Neville, the “Kingmaker” (himself a Northerner) sent out tracts warning of their encroaching march south following the second battle of St. Alban’s. Clement Paston wrote: “the pepill in the northe robbe and styl and ben apoynted to pill all thys contre, and gyffe away menys goods and lufflods in all the southe country”.²

Against this background, Richard became associated with the North by virtue of his acquisition of lands from the dead (and attainted) Kingmaker in 1471. His marriage to Anne Neville sealed his reputation as the heir to the vast Neville affinity. He was an energetic lord, using his royal connections and his own abilities, to build the “largest noble affinity of its day”.³ He was a popular arbiter and justiciar of disputes. He responded to the economic difficulties of the city of York by reducing its fee farm. He responded to the plight of peasants by forbidding the abuse of fish garths. He was hailed as a military leader, the first to lead English troops to Edinburgh and to win back Berwick. He developed a special attachment to the parish of York Minster, which provided an “administrative and ideological springboard for his political ascendancy in the north and his eventual ascent to the English throne.”⁴ Richard’s reputation in the North reflected these achievements and he enjoyed great popularity there. Bishop Langton from Westmorland wrote: “God has sent him to us for the weal of us all”.⁵ In October 1485 the York city council pronounced him “the most famous prince of blessed memory”.⁶

However, a history of friction with other great magnate affinities adversely shaped his reputation. An example of this can be seen in the *Ballad of Lady Bessie* (quoted below), believed to have originated in Cheshire or Lancashire, as it exalts the Stanley family who maintained a longstanding sphere of influence there. The *Ballad*, probably written during the reign of Henry VII, presents Richard as having a bad reputation.⁷ In the poetic words of Elizabeth of York, Richard was a villain, not of woman born, who had slain Henry VI and others of the royal blood:

*“helpe, ffather stanley, I doe you pray!
for of King Richard wroken I wold bee.
he did my brethren to the death on a day*

in their bedd where they did lye;—7.28
“he drowned them both in a pipe of wine;
itt was dole to heare and see!
& he wold haue put away his Queene
for to haue lye[n] by my bodye!—8.32
“helpe, father Stanley, I you pray!
for on that traitor wroken wold I bee;
& helpe Erle Richmond, that Prince
soe gay, that is exiled ouer the sea!—11.44
for Richard is no righteous Kinge,—14.56

Richard had a history of clashing with the Stanleys. Edward IV had to intervene in a dispute between young duke Richard and Lord Stanley over certain offices in the duchy of Lancaster. As king, Richard was believed to be leaning towards re-opening a dispute over Hornby castle in a way that was contrary to Stanley interests.

Richard’s reputation met with a different treatment in the writings of John Rous, who lived in the Midlands county of Warwickshire. In the Rous Roll, written during the reign of Richard III, he praised the monarch as a "good lord" who punished "oppressors of the commons". He reversed himself when he wrote *Historia Regum Angliae* under Henry VII, portraying Richard as a freakish individual born with teeth and shoulder-length hair after his mother’s two-year pregnancy. His body was stunted and distorted, one shoulder higher than the other. Rous attributes the murder of king Henry VI to Richard, and claims he poisoned Queen Anne. While Rous was undoubtedly writing a history that pleased the current monarch, there is no evidence that Richard ever played a vital role in Warwickshire as duke, although as king he made improvements to Warwick Castle. Christine Carpenter notes that during the reign of Richard III, Warwickshire experienced outbreaks of lawlessness and disorder, and his neglect of this geographical region helped spur along a negative reputation there.

Richard’s reputation similarly suffered in East Anglia/Lincolnshire, another area with few connections to him. This can be seen in the *Croyland Chronicle (Second Continuation)*, possibly written by bishop Russell of Lincoln or another cleric from that abbey. There, Richard makes his first appearance after the battle of Tewkesbury. Richard is portrayed as a “crafty” suitor to Anne Neville and a forceful advocate of his interests in obtaining her inheritance. The writer mocks Richard’s military achievements in the 1482 Scots campaign, saying they were frivolous and a drain on Crown finances: “This trifling, I really know not whether to call it ‘gain’ or ‘loss’ for the safe keeping of Berwick each year swallows up ten thousand marks.” Following Richard’s accession to the throne, the continuator describes rampant plots and uprisings in the west and south, with rumors percolating that the sons of Edward IV had met a violent death.

Throughout the *Croyland Chronicle*, there is a contemptuous tone for Northerners: “these ingrates in the North, whence every evil takes rise”. Richard’s scheme of planting his Northern men in the south represented a form of “tyranny” and was a “disgrace” prompting a “lasting and loudly expressed sorrow of all the people in the south” who “daily longed more and more for the hoped-for return of their ancient leaders”. Richard is portrayed as taking and holding the throne as a matter of personal greed and “without the aid of God”; the death of his son is presented as a form of divine castigation, falling near the anniversary of Edward IV’s demise; and his “incestuous passion” for and intended marriage contract with Elizabeth of York met with universal disapproval and shock. Margaret Beaufort and her mother patronized Croyland Abbey, as both became “sister[s] of our chapter” and

received the prayers of their monks. Thus, it is quite possible that the continuator was writing, in part, to please his illustrious Tudor patroness by blackening the reputation of Richard III.

Richard's reputation from a Londoner's point of view was recorded by Robert Fabyan, an Alderman, in *The Great Chronicle of London* and *The Concordaunce of Hystoryes*. Fabyan's account portrays Richard as a dissembler who disguised his "wicked purpose" to take the throne from Edward V. He murdered the Princes, and fell into "greate hatred of the more party of the nobles of his realme" who by virtue of his usurpation "murmured and grudged against him in such wise that fewe or none fauoured hys party, except it were for drede or for greate giftes that they receaued of him". Fabyan, like the Croyland continuator, portrays Richard III as a spendthrift of Edward IV's treasury, making futile attempts to purchase allies. It is in Fabyan's writings that the infamous rhyme by Colingbourne is recorded: "The Cat, the Rat, and louel our Dogge, Ruleth all Englande vnder a Hogge", for which he was hanged, drawn and quartered, much to the consternation of Londoners. In sum, Fabyan depicts Richard as living with "dishonor, as one who reaped what he had sown" and "if he had suffered the children to have prospered as he was held to do by his allegiance and fidelity, he would have been honourably lauded before all men. As it is, his fame is tarnished and dishonoured wherever he is known".

In conclusion, Richard was held in high esteem in the North, as he had exercised good lordship there for over 12 years. In other areas, however, his reputation fared poorly for three main reasons: (1) he was an unknown quantity as an individual or as a lord effectively and humanely managing an affinity; (2) his lordship in the North irritated neighboring magnates; and (3) he was victim of a widespread negative stereotype about Northerners. Those who were not familiar with him as a lord were more likely to attribute to him a series of infamous crimes and nefarious motivations.

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- ² Pollard, p. 389, citing *The Paston Letters*, ed. J. Gairdner, I (London 1872), p. 541.
- ³ Rosemary Horrox, *Richard III: A study of service* (Cambridge 1989), p. 27
- ⁴ Dobson, *Richard III and the Church in the North*.
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~ToC~

Message from American Branch Chairman

Jonathan Hayes
Chairman, American Branch, Richard III Society
Vice President, Richard III Society (UK)

Depending on how rapidly the Pony Express operates in your neck of the woods, Richard's reburial may have already occurred by the time you are reading this.

It's an exciting time; Ricardians from around the world, and a great many of you, will have gathered in Leicester for the solemnities. A monarch's funeral carries a great deal more ceremony than an ordinary citizen's does and, from the program schedule the Cathedral has published, Richard is getting the full treatment. It's the funeral he should have had 500 years ago.

Your Society is in a transition period. We have a new Treasurer and Lisa Pince is getting her teeth into the job. Susan Higginbotham is resigning as Non-fiction Librarian. Over the years she has done a great job not only in the Librarian position but in other aspects of the Society. We will miss her hard work. We are delighted to welcome Susan Troxell to the position. Many members will recognize her from the many fine articles she has contributed to this publication.

There will not be an AGM this year. The Board has noted the low and falling attendance at past AGMs and will be considering other options. Since any change would require a Bylaw change, any Board recommendation will be submitted to the membership as a whole for approval.

Ricardian Review

Myrna Smith

Eglentyne had what it took to become prioress or head of the convent: a sweet disposition, upper-class connections, and nice table manners.

4,000 YEARS OF UPPITY WOMEN—Vicki Leon, MJF Books, NY, 2011

Ms. Leon, who has written several *Uppity Women* books (*of Ancient Times, of the Renaissance, of Medieval Times, of Shakespearean times*) and others (*Working IX to V*) is living proof that some feminists do have a sense of humor. Her examples range from anonymous musicians in ancient Mesopotamia to a balloonist in the 19th century. A few samples below and in the headings will demonstrate what I mean.

Suddenly short one husband around 1300..Margery Russell gamely stepped up to the plate as head of her late lammended's import-export business in Coventry...one of her ships...got attacked in route. It had to be Spanish pirates...Margery marched into court, demanding letters of marque...After Mrs. Russell got her letters, she tagged and took two Spanish ships...proof that even with a late-inning start, this game dame knew how to play business hardball.

Christina [of Denmark] also loved hunting, card playing, and other Henry hobbies... "If I had two heads, I'd be happy to offer King Henry one of them!" was her possibly apocryphal but much-repeated reply.

THE KING'S CURSE—Philippa Gregory, Touchstone, NY, 2014

This is being referred to as the last of Ms. Gregory's Cousins' War series, but since she hasn't always adhered to strict chronological lines, perhaps it is not. She may still go back to cover the story of Catherine Gordon, for instance, the wife of 'Perkin Warbeck.' The current novel tells the story of Margaret Pole, the 'last Plantagenet' and daughter of George of Clarence, recounted in her own words, as in most (all?) of Gregory's historical novels. She reveals Margaret's less admirable side: her snobbery, her hard bargaining in e.g. marriage contracts; but also her undoubted courage and loyalty.

Perhaps she was a little too loyal. Catherine of Aragon, whose household as Princess of Wales she managed, confesses to Margaret that her marriage to Prince Arthur was consummated, but she intends to lie and say it was not. Margaret backs up the lie, causing herself a lot of trouble, first with Margaret Beaufort and later with Henry VIII. She need only say, "I don't know," as she indeed did not. She only knew what Catherine told her, and Catherine had already shown herself to be ready and able to lie. Of course, this did not cause all her family's troubles. Religion, politics, their own actions, and just plain bad luck also had an effect.

Much is made of a very detailed curse Elizabeth of York and her mother unknowingly put on the Tudor family. Margaret believes in it, though neither she nor Elizabeth will live to see its complete outworking in the two barren queens. In her afterword, Philippa Gregory cites research by Catrina Whitley and Kyra Kramer into the Kell antigen. Ms. Kramer says "the numerous miscarriages suffered by Henry's wives could be explained if the king's blood carried the Kell antigen...the king's partners had a total of at least 11 and possibly 13 or more pregnancies. Only four of the eleven known pregnancies survived infancy. ..Even in an age of high child mortality, most women carried their pregnancies to term, and their infants usually lived at least long enough to be christened." Since in any case here is a 50/50 chance of a healthy child, it is difficult to make definite second-hand diagnoses.

Kyra Kramer speculates that the Kell antigen may have been introduced into the royal family by Jaquetta of Luxembourg, and was transmitted through Elizabeth of York. Elizabeth's obstetric history does not suggest this. Of her seven children, only the youngest, Katherine, died near birth, and this was probably due to prematurity. Edmund died at approximately 8 months, Elizabeth at 3, and Arthur as a teen-ager.

Jaquetta and her daughter, Elizabeth Woodville, had an enviable record of raising most of their huge families. The history of Jaquetta's other children and grandchildren is difficult to trace, since so many of those who survived childhood died without issue and in any case fall under the 50/50 rule. (Kramer also believes that Richard III was a murderer, though how she arrives at this conclusion through forensic hematology is undetermined.) But the idea is fascinating to anyone with a detective bent, and deserves more investigation.

The researchers seem on firmer ground in depicting Henry VIII as a sufferer from McLeod's Syndrome, which often accompanies the Kell antigen. Among other symptoms, it can cause "damage to the heart muscle, muscular disease, psychiatric abnormality and motor nerve damage" And the onset is usually in early middle age.

Gregory points out that the symptoms of these disorders might well have seemed to Elizabeth of York and Margaret Pole like the working out of a curse. Yes, if there had been a curse of this kind, other than the one invented by the author. The author and Margaret do give due attention to the real Tudor Curse, the sweating sickness, which came to England with the first Tudor king and died out with the last one.

To sum up: exciting events and mostly historically accurate, but almost no sex. Margaret just isn't that interested. She respects her husband, Sir Richard Pole, as a 'good man,' but never forgets his relatively humble birth. Her continual bragging on her family, and her repetition of the 'I'm a Plantagenet, everyone else is trash' theme gets a bit wearing, but we accept it as part of her character. Overall, a good read.

Throwing on some low-cut gilded armor, rounding up a few thousand vassals... and riding off to the Crusades was just another lark for Eleanor of Aquitaine, easily the most glamorous household name...in the 12th century. Soon there were eight little Plantagenets running around....The marriage turned out to be no bed of roses either, as Eleanor watched Henry get fatter and more faithless.

THE WARS OF THE ROSES: The fall of the Plantagenets and the rise of the Tudors—Dan Jones, Viking, NY, 2014

Though the author denies it is a sequel, this book continues the story begun in *The Plantagenets*. (Dan Jones, Penguin, NY, 2014, revised) This volume highlights Margaret Pole's horrific execution in the first paragraph, before flashing back to the events described in the subtitle.

Before the Plantagenets could fall, they had to rise, and they rose to glorious heights at the battle of Agincourt. Jones elides some of Henry V's negative qualities—his bigotry and his cruelty to vanquished foes—to concentrate on his undeniably positive ones. He gives full attention to Henry VI's qualities, good and bad. "He may have been chaste, generous, pious and kind, but these were not very useful qualities in a king..." This leads to what Jones names as "the second phase of the story [which] examines the consequences of one man's decision that the best solution for this benighted realm was no longer to induce a weak king to govern his realm more competently, but to cast him aside and claim the crown for himself." (Richard, Duke of York) The author describes the Duke as "a great soldier but a poor politician." The same could not be said of his son, Edward IV, whose political accomplishments seem the more remarkable because he had seen no example of how an astute king/politician should behave during his lifetime. And then there was Richard

III, who brought disaster on his line by being a usurper and a murderer—and also by being “simply unlucky.” Jones does not portray Richard as being entirely evil. Indeed, he considers him to have been a “relatively enlightened” man who had maneuvered himself, or had been maneuvered “into a corner where simple self-preservation “took over.

“The third part of our story asks a simple question: how on earth... did the Tudors end up kings and queens of England?” Where did the Tudors come from? And why did they behave as they did? Why, for instance, was the 18-year-old Henry Tudor so sure that Edward IV was going to kidnap him that he faked an illness, or possibly worked himself into a real illness, yet at 25 he was apparently ready to accept Edward’s offer to restore his English titles and provide him with a royal bride? Surely Henry had not grown less suspicious in the intervening seven years. Why did Henry launch his first invasion in the miserable weather of November? Surely Jasper Tudor knew better, if Henry did not.

It must have been at about this time that Henry decided he must be king or nothing. Being a pretender, especially a failed one, was a poor choice for a lifetime career. As it would prove to be for the pretenders who plagued the Tudors: Simnel, Warbeck, and various de la Poles, who are given due coverage in the later chapters.

This is a bare-bones outline. There are many more characters, from Joan of Arc to the Duke of Suffolk, to one ‘half-hanged’ Keever, who lived to tell his tale. But there are a few lapses. Jones lists “Margaret, born in April 1472” as one of Edward’s children, and says that all except George, dying at age two, “survived their earliest years.” Yet obviously Margaret did not. More seriously, he believes Richard ordered the death of his nephews as early as July 1483, yet according to the Great Chronicle, they were seen in the garden of the Tower on September 29. He also reports that rumors of their deaths were rife by the end of September. A lie can famously, ‘get halfway round the earth before Truth gets its boots on,’ but one day does seem speedier than average.

Margaret Pole’s execution perhaps had as much to do with her religion as with her ancestry, and the blood shed during the reigns of Henry VIII’s daughters was principally on religious grounds, rather than political or dynastic. (Does that make it better?) But they continued to use rose iconography liberally, even lavishly. The term “Wars of the Roses,” by the way, was not coined by Sir Walter Scott, but by Maria, Lady Callcott, in Little Arthur’s History of England.

The 362 pages of Dan Jones’ opus are thorough and well-written, and mostly reasonable in tone, but should be taken with saltshaker ready to hand.

...Christopher Columbus [had] hung out at the court for eons, wheedling for funds to find a shortcut to “the Indies.” The queen and Chris had much in common: both were tall, blue-eyed and had grandiose regard for their God-ordained roles. King Ferdinand let Isabella spend he own money on this crossing-the-ocean notion.

ISABELLA, THE WARRIOR QUEEN—Kristen Downey, Doubleday, NY, 2014

Isabella of Castile was a near-contemporary of Richard III, a little over a year older. In many ways, their lives followed similar paths. Like Richard, Isabella was a brave officer and a good strategist. Her sex did not hold her back for a minute. Like Richard, Isabella gained the throne by bastardizing the previous claimant, though Juana la Beltránjera was simply forced into a convent. Richard was at one time mentioned as a suitable husband for Isabella. It didn’t work out, and Ms. Downey seems regretful about this, having much sympathy /empathy for him. Maybe they were too much alike to make a happy married couple. Isabella’s marriage with the man of her choice, Ferdinand of Aragon, was not an altogether happy one, mostly because of his affairs and her jealousy. But they were well

matched in other ways. Isabella's conscience was fairly elastic, but there were some things it would not stretch to cover. Ferdinand could be relied on to take care of those.

Certainly Isabella was a devoted mother, but was this healthy for her children? Her daughter Isabel went into hysterical grief and anorexia after the death of her husband, and Catherine had spells of it, since Henry VIII felt he had to ask the Pope to order her to eat. Juana, so far as we know, did not have any eating disorder, and was most probably sane, except for her uncontrollable, though certainly not inexplicable, jealousy of her husband, Phillip of Burgundy.

In a period when all European rulers were Catholic, it took some doing to be called *the* Catholic monarchs (*los Reyes Catolicos*). Downey gives a clear and dispassionate picture of the religious situation. "The Turks were admirable in many ways... For many men [the Muslim world] would have been a fairly easy transition, assuming they were not deeply committed Christians or Jews. People who wished to retain their own religious belief could do so by paying extra taxes and accepting... being treated as a despised infidel... But people in other lands who resisted Turkish domination for religious reasons or because they preferred self-rule or feared life under the Turks, found themselves facing an entirely different prospect: enslavement, pedophilia, theft of children, robbery, death and annihilation." If the men of the three major religions had a grudging respect for each other, they had none for their women and even less for the children. If the Jews, because of their smaller numbers, weakness and vulnerability and the non-proselyting nature of their faith, were less prone to indulge in rape and enslavement, they were as ready to make common cause with either of their foes who were, against the third. All sides were prepared to use a dagger or sword as a theological or political argument. Isabella and her family had some narrow scrapes.

Isabella's death, of natural causes, was devastating to her surviving children, and to the Great Captain, Christopher Columbus, as well. Ferdinand no doubt mourned her. Where would he find another woman like her? That didn't keep him from looking. If he promised Isabella not to remarry, he didn't keep that promise for long.

A rather amusing side note: Ms. Downey gives a lengthy transcription of the negotiations for the dowry of Catherine of Aragon. She lays it to Henry Tudor's 'penuriousness,' but it seems to me to be as much bargaining for the joy of bargaining. Henry was probably sorry he couldn't dicker in person, but had to rely on ambassadors. He would have recognized a kindred soul in Rick Harrison of *Pawn Stars*.

Another side note, about Isabella's son-in-law, Manuel de Beja, Manuel I of Portugal, who was a possible suitor for the hand of Elizabeth of York. Manuel was three years younger than Elizabeth, and eventually married two daughters of Isabella in succession, and then their niece. In order to win his coveted marriage prize, Manuel had to promise to persecute the Jews, and he kept to the letter of his promise, forcing them to convert. However, he promised not to enquire into the sincerity of their conversion for thirty years, and later extended this period. He also prosecuted the murders of the crypto-Jews. So he may be considered as a fairly enlightened ruler for his times. However, if Elizabeth of York's life course followed that of his first wife, Isabel of Aragon, she would have died in childbirth several years before she actually did. Maybe she was better off with Henry after all.

In Renaissance times, being identified as a witch was normally the best way to shorten your life span. Not so with Mother Shipton. She lived well into her 70s...she was a weird-looking individual. Ursula had an unusually long head, fiery eyes, and a crooked nose, colored with what was described by awed contemporaries...as "multi-colored phosphorescent warts."

SACRED KING—J.P. Reedman, Herne's Cave Publishing, 2014

The subtitle of *Sacred King* is *Richard III, Sinner, sufferer, scapegoat & sacrifice*.

This novella opens shortly before Bosworth. Richard III is not sleeping well at night, and it is only partly due to his bad back. He is also seeing visions by day: of Herne the Hunter, of banshees, of figures from his past. He goes to his inevitable death on Redemore plain—and at this point the second half of the book begins. Richard finds himself in what he thinks is Purgatory, but is in fantasy-fact Elf land, where he meets the Queen of Faerie. There people, or their simulations, may drink but still be thirsty, eat but still be hungry, make love but just be going through the motions. Rejecting the queen's advances, he leaves there to wander in a sort of in-between land which contains real landmarks, such as a restored Stonehenge. There he encounters more revenants, including Buckingham, the Princes in the Tower, and the hag Black Annis. The last chapter brings us down to the car park in Leicester. Richard has apparently won his redemption.

In his (or her) afterword, the author admits being inspired by legends of the “ ‘Sacred King’ or Year king who is sacrificed to the land in time of war or famine, while another takes his place. Evidence of these primitive kingship rituals may well be found in Iron Age bodies such as Ludlow Man in England, and Old Croghan and Clonycavan man in Ireland. All...seem to be high status men who suffered ‘overkill’ multiple wounds...before being deposited naked in bogs...Many of them had physical defects or an attribute that made them ‘different’....Ludlow III had an extra thumb while Old Croghan man was 6ft 6, a virtual giant in his time. Although not male...a female bog body from the Netherlands who underwent similar sacrificial rites suffered scoliosis, as did King Richard III. [But see my comments below.] I could see echoes, undoubtedly coincidental but mythically strong, of this rite in the death of Richard, who was slain in the heart of England, in the marshy bogs on Redemore, suffering humiliation injuries as his naked body was taken away over a horse's back.”

Fantasy, especially serious or ‘dark’ fantasy, is not everyone's cup of chamomile tea. But if you have an admiration for the paintings of Hieronymus Bosch, if you cut your teeth, as I did, on *Percy's Reliques*, or if you have a favorite mummy (as I do, and I don't consider myself a morbid person), you will likely enjoy this.

A number of folk songs, like *John Barleycorn* and *Lavender's Green*, are worked into the story, sometimes with slightly changed lyrics. Strangely, the book is unpaginated, but is quite brief, somewhere between a long short story and a novella.

Unexpected defenses of Richard dep't: an English friend sent me a copy of a British equivalent of our *TV Guide*, featuring an article about a young man who is Richard III's ‘body double.’ Dominic Smee, who has an almost identical spinal deformity, ‘agreed to train for four months to take part in a series of experiments with a group of historians.’ He found that his custom-made suit of armor was ‘not like being in a tin can...You feel like a juggernaut. You can do anything...I actually rode my bike around in the garden in the armour.’ He found that it was also physically liberating, functioning as a sort of back brace. Though there may not be many with that specific type or degree of curvature, scoliosis is more common than you might think. One of my sons has it, higher up and less pronounced than Richard's. His was also adult-onset—at least I never noticed it when he was a teen-ager. And a friend of several years' standing recently told me that she has a double curvature. I had no idea.

From 1462 on, Ilona Szilagi kept finding marriage proposal with a Transylvania postmark in her mailbox...The mystifying proposals were from sadist and social climber Vlad “my friends call me Dracula” the Impaler. Ilona was

contemptuous...However, politics—or cousinly payback—intervened, and in 1467, King Matthias gave the green light for Ilona to wed the dread Vlad...In late 1476, Ilona had a tremendous stroke of luck. Mr. Impaler died in battle...and soon had his own head displayed on a stake...Ilona moved back to Buda to enjoy her favorite leisure activity—succession intrigues.

THE DREAMS OF KINGS—David K. Saunders, Shadenet Publishing, UK, 2014

This novel explores at length (486 pages, plus maps and tables) the lives and loves of two boys/young men, Lancastrian Simon Langford, AKA Robert Furneys, secret agent, and Yorkist John Tunstall, companion and protector of Richard of Gloucester, between 1455 and 1474. Their lives will sometimes intersect, and both will have dealings with a mysterious character called the Great Controller, who does have a name, which is given, but he always thought of and referred to by that title. Simon will love above his station, John below, but both truly and faithfully—usually.

There is a fine sense of irony exhibited in having a couple of tough characters discuss the killing of ‘the two boys in the Tower.’¹ As we discover, the tower is not in London but in Bamburgh, and the boys are Richard and John.

This is dude-lit, yet it gives nearly equal time and equal attention to the lives and feelings of the female characters, particularly Marguerite of Anjou, whom the author obviously admires and sympathizes with—though it’s hard to imagine her giggling and flirty. And Mr. Saunders is sentimental enough to provide happy endings for his major protagonists. Since there are gaps in the historical records about the real-life characters, he feels free to fill in these gaps with invented incidents, as he details in his afterword. Some of these events might have happened, as for instance the kidnapping of John and Richard, but some seem unlikely. For example, one setting is a room elaborately decorated with ‘Chinese tables and chairs.’ Not impossible, but since this is the 15th century and not the 18th, improbable. And Richard has his first sexual experience in Paris in the summer of 1464, together with his companions, some of whom are younger than he is. He is not quite 12 years old at the time.

The chief failing of the story is in the character development, or non-development, of Richard of Gloucester. He starts as a fairly average, normal boy, a little hard and cold with his family’s enemies, but loyally devoted to his friends, brave, chivalric, and even playful on occasion. He is matter-of-fact about his deformity, but sensitive about it also. By the end, he has become a near-monster, prepared to execute a pregnant woman who has committed no crime. That was simply not done in the 15th century, nor today, even by the most extreme of Muslim extremists. Nor is that the only crime he is willing to commit, even if he is prevented from actually committing them. What changed him? Was it the malign influence of the Earl of Warwick? Of Edward IV, who is shown as approving of such actions? Of witchcraft, which is treated as real by the author, and which is avidly practiced by Jaquetta and three of her daughters? And this brings up another objection. There are a number of supernatural elements, which might pass in a fantasy or science-fiction novel, or even in a romance, but seem out of place in a realistic, naturalistic story. By naturalistic, I mean ‘blood-and-guts,’ which this definitely is.

Full disclosure: I read this in piecemeal fashion, a few chapters at the beginning, a few at the end, alternating until meeting in the middle. I thought it would seem shorter that way. This may tell you something about me, but also something about the book. If there was a moment when Richard turned from a flawed human being to a near-monster, I may have missed it. I say ‘near-monster’ because he never does become 100% evil, only about 95%.

He still maintains kindly feelings for his friends, and apparently truly loves his mistress, Katherine Haute.

Since the action stops in 1474, I scent a sequel or sequels upcoming. It would be interesting to see (spoiler alert) who Anne Neville's son (but not Richard's) will turn out to be. Or if Richard will undergo a reformation and become a better person. This happens sometimes in real life, if not fiction. After all, he could hardly become worse. It might be worthwhile to follow the story just to satisfy that curiosity. Other reasons remain problematic.

Covering the same period and some of the same persons as the preceding, but non-fictional, is the following:

THE THRID PLANTAGENET: GEORGE, DUKE OF CLARENCE, RICHARD III'S BROTHER—John Ashdown-Hill, The History Press, Stroud, Gloucestershire, 2014

Why does the Black Bull of Clarence, reproduced in *The Third Plantagenet's* illustration section, look exhausted and starved? Why would any lord, especially one with George, Duke of Clarence's reputation for ambition, display an image of weakness rather than an strength? Is there a traditional story that bonded the men who wore that badge? Was tradition so strong that it prevented George from replacing this oddly proportioned creature—that seems about to drop dead—with a vigorous, well-proportioned bull in the prime of life? Who wrote the caption that calls this weary animal “George's rather apt emblem”? A 21st century author, or a member of his publisher's team, might consider it “rather apt.” Shakespeare's memorable phrase, “false, fleeting, perjured Clarence” may well influence anyone who studied his plays before seeing this badge. But what did any of the medieval dukes of Clarence and the men who wore their badges think? Can 21st century explorers of the boundaries between fiction and fact be sure they know? What did the gorget emblem mean to George and his men? Is it a clue to George's personality and actions?

Are any of the bones left in the Clarence Vault in the 21st century those of the duke and duchess it was built to accommodate? If not, whose bones are they? What happened to George and Isabel's bones? If the identity of the Clarence Vault bones is uncertain, how can anyone be certain that the bones in Westminster Abbey are those of Edward IV's sons?.

Surviving documents raise as many questions as do emblems, bones, missing coffins and unprotected vaults. Was the Crowland Chronicler misinformed, or was he deliberately concealing facts in his version of Thomas Burdet's trial? Ashdown-Hill's comparison of “the fullest surviving account”—represented in *Reports of Sir George Croke.....Select Cases* (Dublin, 1793)—with the Crowland version suggest that it omits many thought-provoking facts. Why haven't more historians discussed Croke's version during the last 200 years? Do the documents Sir George Croke reported from still exist?

The Act of Attainder against George, Duke of Clarence doesn't include his abduction and execution of Ankarette Twynyho. If it doesn't, why have many historians connected Clarence's execution with Twynyho's? Why does this attainder refer to conspiracies against Edward IV and the many problems and disturbances in his reign? “Did Edward IV wish to present his reign as a series of disasters—or is this simply an example of the standard practice in such documents?...Why does the act of attainder describe the distribution of Clarence's properties in great detail, yet omit Clarence's death sentence?”

Questions about Richard III arise throughout. Could Richard have injured his spinal discs during the stormy crossing to Burgundian exile in 1461? Could his scoliosis have originated in a bad fall? Did 8-year-old Richard's normal height make 11-year-old George look like a 9-year-old? Did he grow up to be taller than George? Did Richard pay the remaining debts for Clarence's burial vault? “Could Jasper, Earl of Pembroke—who never

met Richard, but who for nearly a year (summer of 1470 to the spring of 1471) knew and worked with Clarence—have been the source for such characteristics of George, which were later imported by ‘Tudor’ writers into descriptions of his brother, Richard III?” How does George, Duke of Clarence compare to William Cecil, Lord Burghley, Henry Stafford, Duke of Buckingham, Margaret Beaufort, and her son, as a model for Shakespeare’s caricature of a ruthlessly ambitious power-grabber? What combinations of disinformation and misrepresentation have blurred the boundaries between fictions and facts about Richard III?

John Ashdown-Hill has fought Leicester University’s attempt to replace fact with self-serving fictions. Its effort to deny him credit for his correct identification of Richard’s gravesite is a telling example of processes which may have distorted facts about Richard’s motives and actions. Maybe George’s motives and actions have been distorted as well. *The Third Plantagenet* gives its readers many opportunities to reconsider existing versions of Clarence’s personality, actions, and appearance. Although it cannot resent indisputable evidence in support of its author’s suggestions, it guides its readers along the foggy boundaries respectfully. Readers with a high tolerance for uncertainties and an appreciation for good questions can benefit from reading this book.—Marion Davis

Aud the Deep-Minded was a new breed of Viking—a kinder, gentler Norsewoman...Born in 855, Aud grew up in the Scottish islands of the Hebrides, getting her spiritual depth from her mother, a Celtic Christian, and her direction-finding ability from her dad...a Norwegian Viking. ...At her request, this best and brightest of the Viking matriarchs was buried on Iceland’s coast, in the salty land below the high-water mark.

SCOTTISH HISTORY FOR DUMMIES—William Knox, John Wiley & Sons, Chicester, UK, 2014

“...Scotland has been a unitary state only since 1470,” says Dr. Knox (no relation to John Knox, as far as I know). That is, it had assumed its present boundaries at that time, but was still divided geographically into Highlands and Lowlands, plus the Hebrides (closely allied to the Highlands) and the Orkneys (more like Scandinavia South). He tells his readers: “This isn’t a textbook, and it doesn’t pretend to be. It reflects my views as a historian (just as most histories reflect their authors’ points of view). I leave things out, I skip over things that seem irrelevant and include things that I hope you enjoy.” Since he is upfront about his attitudes, the reader knows what to expect, and can sit back and enjoy. What the reader can also expect is a breezy, conversational recounting of the main events of Scottish history, going back to earliest times - the Celts and the Beaker people, who did not ‘sit around all day drinking beer and making pottery.’ (but why not?)—down to the 2000’s. By the time Knox gets around to the battle of Flodden Field (“The Scots never do well when they’re favorites, as our national football team has shown on more occasions than it would be polite to mention!”), we are still only at page 120 out of approximately 300. Then there is an addendum of Top Ten lists: places to visit, “little known Scottish people who are worth knowing about,” and things that Scotland has given the world, including the flush toilet, fingerprinting, and Dolley the sheep.

In the very last line, Dr. Knox says “...this is us; this is our story; this is where we come from.” An indication, perhaps, that he expects this book to be read mostly by Scots, including those of the Scottish diaspora in the U.S., Canada, Australasia, and elsewhere in the so-called ‘English-speaking’ world. One of many sidebars is entitled “If you can’t beat ‘em, marry ‘em.” Although this refers to Viking Scotland, it has remained true through the centuries. Probably more Americans can claim to be a little bit Scots or Scots-Irish than

English or German, which does not preclude overlap. One of my grandmothers was a Buchanan, but our extended family heritage includes people from every continent except Antarctica. But even if his or her background is, maybe, Polish, any American owes something to Scotland, because of the links between our Declaration of Independence and their Declaration of Arbroath (14th century).

For as long as one hundred men remain alive, we shall never under any conditions submit to the domination of the English. It is not for glory or riches or honours that we fight, but only for liberty, which no good man will consent to lose but with his life.

I couldn't have said it better myself. Only Thomas Jefferson could.

William Knox says that he has made some 'foolish assumptions' about his readers: That they have studied some Scottish history, but were 'put off by the way it was taught,' or have simply forgotten a lot of it; or they haven't studied Scottish history; or that they 'enjoy a good story.' I think we fit in there somewhere!

For auld lang syne, my friends!

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~ToC~

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King Richard III by **Jamal Mustafa**

Stained Glass Studio, Birmingham UK , stainedglassic.com, email: theportraitartist@gmail.com

Richard III

Photo of reconstruction from skeleton taken by Joan Szechtman from display at York Museum

Richard III Forever



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