Jeremy Potter, "Richard III's Historians: Adverse and Favourable Views"

*This text, by former chairman Jeremy Potter, was prepared for the Society's exhibition (1991), **"To Prove a Villain,"** which was on display in the foyer of the Olivier Theatre in London during Sir Ian McKellen's production of Shakespeare's "Richard III" and, later, at Warwick Castle. Keyboarding, HTML markup, and proofreading by Heather von Stackelberg, Tina Cooper, and Laura Blanchard. Text used with permission of the author.*

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The Croyland Chronicle

The relevant part of this chronicle was written in the Benedictine abbey at Crowland in Lincolnshire in April 1486. Internal evidence suggests that the anonymous author was a secular cleric (a doctor of canon law) and a member of the royal council. He is exceptionally well-informed, but not wholly reliable.

The work is imbued with the chronicler's strong dislike of Richard. He is shocked at Richard taking the crown from his nephew, disapproves of his executing Buckingham on a Sunday, believes that only the objections of his northern supporters dissuaded him from marrying his niece (Elizabeth of York) and denounces him as a profligate spender. So far from being hailed as a great victory, Richard's capture of Berwick from the Scots is deplored because of the cost.

Sometimes the chronicler is not above a misstatement of fact in order to convict the king of deceit and hypocrisy. Richard won popularity by putting an end to the forced payments, known as benevolences, levied by Edward IV. When he was forced to raise taxes himself the chronicler reports that he reimposed the benevolences which he had made such a point of abolishing. But another source makes it plain that, as the chronicler must have known, Richard's taxes were of a quite different kind. They were loans, repayable on a specified date.

In his account of the battle at Bosworth the chronicler concedes that Richard 'fell in the field like a brave and most valiant prince', but he transforms Richard's famous last charge (as recorded by the king's enemies and therefore hardly to be doubted) into a charge by Henry Tudor against Richard, for which there is no other evidence.

The Croyland Chronicle certainly provides indisputable evidence of contemporary, pre-Tudor hostility towards Richard felt by members of the southern establishment from whom his 'rude northerners' had seized so much power and influence. But, although written after his death when any accusation of evildoing could be safely made and would have been welcomed, this antiRichard source is most notable for the absence of what would have been its most important item of information. It does not report that Richard was responsible for killing his nephews – nor even that they were known to be dead. It also specifically clears him of any involvement ìn the death of his brother Clarence.

Dominic Mancini

The Italian scholar, Dominic Mancini, was in England for the first six months of 1483. He seems to have come on a diplomatic mìssion to gather information for the French court. His report, written in December 1483 (in Latin), was discovered in the Lille municipal library in 1934. Its short title is *De Occupatione Regni Anglie Per Riccardum Tercium*, which has been mistranslated as *The Usurpation of Richard III*.

The difference between *usurpatio* and *occupatio* is the difference between seizing wrongfully and seizing (whether rightfully or wrongfully), and the scholarly Mancini nowhere uses the word *usurpatio* in relation to Richard's accession. Indeed he fairly sets out the case, made by Buckingham, arguing the legitimacy of Richard's claim. But his honesty as a reporter is offset by ignorance of English affairs, customs and geography and probably the English language too and vitiated by his consequent reliance on a limited number of not necessarily reliable sources.

Mancini's objectivity about Richard is seriously qualified too by the assumption – unproven and far from certain – that Richard was aiming for the throne from the moment he learned of his brother's death. It appears that Mancini never even glimpsed Richard (who was in the north until May), nor talked with anyone close to him. Yet his account confirms the acceptance even by those hostile to Richard that he was indeed named as Protector in his brother's will (which has not survived), and he places the responsibility for Clarence's execution squarely on Edward IV and his queen. On the other hand, he believed that the Hastings conspiracy was invented by Richard as an excuse to rid himself of an opponent.

John Argentine, the royal physician, was a fellow Italian, and he seems most likely to have been the source of the passages for which this work is best known. Mancini describes how, after the execution of Hastings, Edward V and his brother were at first deprived of their attendants, then withdrawn into inner apartments in the Tower, then seen more and more rarely, until they vanished from sight altogether. Of Edward V he wrote: 'He had such dignity in his whole person, and in his face such charm, that however much they might gaze he never wearied the eyes of beholders. I have seen many men burst forth into tears and lamentations when mention was made of him after his removal from men's sight; and already there was a suspicion that he had been done away with.'

This passage is often quoted as proof of Richard's villainy. But Mancini, with a strict regard for truth, concludes it with a disclaimer: 'Whether, however, he has been done away with, and by what manner of death, so far I have not at all discovered.' Nor did he subsequently, leaving England while the princes were most probably still alive.

Polydore Vergil

Polydore Vergil was an Italian cleric and scholarly friend of Erasmus who came to England on a papal mission in 1502 and stayed for nearly fifty years, becoming a naturalised Englishman. Commissioned by Henry VII to write a History of England, with a view to adding a much needed veneer of respectability to Tudor claims and pretensions, he took twenty-six years to complete the twenty-six books of his *Anglica Historia*, which was first published in 1534.

The diligent author of this influential work has been called the father of English history. It has been said that he 'was no official hack. Equally he could not afford to be wholly detached and impartial.' The enemies of Henry VII and Henry VIII – Richard and Wolsey (after his fall) – were his villains: 'From the wicked uncle to the grasping prelate, Vergil's story has become part of the national myth,' born out of the requirements of Tudor self-justification. The two kings would have been well satisfied with their protégé's account of Richard. It included these items of abuse in just two of his sentences : spiteful practice, subtlety, sleight, malice, fraud; graceless, wicked, mischievous, frantic and mad.

Artistic licence and poetic justice feature prominently in Vergil's method of writing history. Events are embroidered and turned into good stories. Hence the tale of the sudden display by Richard of a withered arm not otherwise noticed. Hence the proof of his villainy in his defeat and death at Bosworth: 'It is divine justice that the wicked provoke the punishment they deserve.'

Like Mancini, Vergil condemns Richard as a hypocrite on the (arguable and unknowable) assumption that he was aiming for the throne from the moment of Edward IV's death. Since Richard was then 'kindled with an ardent desire of sovereignty, all his subsequent actions become deceitful. Even his good deeds as a king bring him no credit because his motives are unworthy. They are, however, conceded. After his coronation he is said to have presented the show and countenance of a good man and to have made a determined effort to merit God's pardon and procure popularity by acts of generosity and piety such as the founding of a college for a hundred priests at York.

Vergil finds Richard guilty of the murder of his nephews, but does not support More's tale about Black Will Slaughter and the smothering with pillows. He does not attribute any responsibility to Richard for the death of Clarence, but he makes two new suggestions: that Richard personally executed Henry VI and that he poisoned his own wife. Both these tentatively reported smears later hardened into established facts as the Tudor demonology developed.

Thomas More's History

Sir Thomas More's *History of King Richard III* is a masterpiece and has been used as the standard antiRichard text. It is not a history, but a literary exercise in the dramatic presentation of villainy: versions were written in both Latin and English. Despite the vivid and carefully crafted writing, they contain many errors and absurdities, but the work was never completed: it covers only the period between the spring and autumn of 1483. A third of the whole is in the form of imaginary dialogue.

More never sought to publish this work, which was written for the private amusement of himself and his friends and published only after his death. He was known as an intellectual joker, and it seems that his character assassination of Richard is largely ironical, intended as a parody of history, a jest at the expense of historians like Polydore Vergil and the implausible tales which they retailed as historical facts. Here his most improbable statements are slyly qualified by phrases such as 'some wise men think', 'they that thus deem', 'it is for truth reported' and 'as the fame runs', evidently signaling that they are really no more than worthless tittle-tattle.

The description of Richard's deformity and monstrous birth, for example, concludes with the comment: 'Either men out of hatred report above the truth or else nature changed her course…' The famous account of the murder of the princes in the Tower, which might be thought to strain any reader's credulity, is prefaced by: 'I shall rehearse you the dolorous end of those babes, not after every way that I have heard, but after that way I have so heard by such men and by such means as methinks it were hard but it should be true.'

More was a child when Bosworth was fought and the *History* was written thirty years later. His sources – 'such men' – were Richard's victorious enemies who badly needed to justify their acts of treason and regicide and excuse the Tudor usurpation which resulted. Among them were Morton, said to be 'not without inveterate malice towards Richard (and in whose household More had lived), and Stanley, who had turned his coat at Bosworth. More did not, as is sometimes claimed, invent the myth of the monster king so necessary to the Tudor establishment. His contribution, like Polydore Vergil's, has been to publicise and perpetuate the version of Richard current at the court of Henry VII, and his genius and Shakespeare's have ensured that it is an enduring one. As a master of irony, More would perhaps have appreciated how he – and his canonisation – have helped to endow a legend with an aura of authenticity. For can the word of a saint be doubted? It is a further irony that in his martyrdom he joined Richard as a fellow victim of the Tudors. The day of his execution was the anniversary of Richard's coronation.

Shakespeare's Richard III

Shakespeare made the worst of Richard III, and Richard III brought out the best in Shakespeare. Except perhaps for *Hamlet*, this is the most popular play and role in the canon, and Shakespeare's characterisation of this king has become generally accepted as an authentic, even if somewhat exaggerated, historical portrait. From the opening

soliloquy when he announces his own wickedness this 'lump of foul deformity' positively delights in the invective hurled at him: hog, dog, toad, hedgehog, spider, swine, etc. He is evil incarnate and by no means ashamed of it. His hunchback and withered arm are outward and visible proofs of villainy. After committing eleven murders he is temporarily unnerved when visited by the ghosts of his victims, but recovers to go down fighting in a burst of defiance and panache, game to the last.

The play, which was first published in 1597, was probably written some six years earlier and first performed in 1593. In gathering material for his dramas Shakespeare habitually lifted from others. On this occasion he borrowed from Holinshed, whose *Chronicles* were based on Hall, who had published a translation of Polydore Vergil and copied from More. Through this chain the Tudor myth reached its apogee, as Shakespeare's genius transmuted historical distortions into the gold of legend. What he learned from Holinshed formed an ideal plot for a melodrama. The real character of Richard was not his concern. If it had been, the play would not have survived the Elizabethan censorship and he would have faced imprisonment. For any questioning of the monstrously evil nature of the last Plantagenet would have cost a man his life or liberty so long as the Tudors reigned.

Hailed as the 'showpiece of the Theatre Theatrical,' *Richard III* has been a favourite with audiences and actors since its first performance. Every leading actor has aspired to the title role, which has been most notably played by Burbage, Cibber, Garrick, Kemble, Kean, Macready, Irving and Olivier. The version staged between 1700 and 1870 was an adaptation by Colley Cibber, who deleted the parts of Edward IV, Clarence, Hastings and Queen Margaret to give himself a bigger role. Two-thirds of Shakespeare's lines disappeared with them, and he substituted more than a thousand of his own, including the famous 'Off with his head! So much for Buckingham!', retained in Olivier's film.

Richard III is what has come to be known as historical fiction or, more recently, faction or docu-drama. Yet the first Duke of Marlborough's remark that all the history he knew came from Shakespeare can be echoed by many; so that while a playwright of genius and the most talented actors of each generation combine to present him as the classic anti-hero extraordinary, there can, it seems, be little hope for the reputation of 'the last English king of England.'

James Gairdner: The Victorian AntiRichard

The cause of revisionism inspired by Buck, Walpole and Halsted suffered a severe rebuttal at the hands of the Victorian scholar, James Gairdner. His influential *Life and Reign of Richard the Third* was published in 1878. As the traditionalists' bible, it dominated the Great Debate for three-quarters of a century.

Gairdner had started life as a revisionist, but after a religious experience which converted him to Anglo-Catholicism be developed an excessive respect for authority and the value of tradition. 'I cannot but think the sceptical spirit a most fatal one in history,' he wrote; and this way of thought led him to make an emphatic restatement of Richard's villainy, while at the same time conceding that 'the testimony to Richard's crimes is scanty.'

Gairdner even repeated the story of Richard's monstrous birth (a full set of teeth and shoulder length hair after two years in the womb) without any suggestion of disbelief. He admitted that contemporary sources attached no responsibility to Richard for the death of Henry VI's son at Tewkesbury, but thought it 'not at all improbable' that Richard murdered him. That Richard had been instrumental in the execution of Clarence was the view taken by Shakespeare, 'whose judgment on any point it is certainly impossible to ignore'. Hastings's execution was affirmed to have taken place exactly as described by More and Shakespeare, and on the fate of the princes Gairdner found no reason to doubt that 'the dreadful deed was done'.

He believed, nevertheless, that Richard did not invent the conspiracy against him which precipitated Hastings's death and Richard's seizure of the crown. He believed, too, in the truth of Edward IV's marriage pre-contract on which Richard's claim to the crown was based, and was unsure about calling Richard a usurper. 'A usurpation it certainly was in fact… Yet in point of form, one might almost look upon it as a constitutional election… Indeed, it was rather a declaration of inherent right to the crown, first by the council of the realm, then by the City and afterwards by Parliament.'

Gairdner's reputation as a specialist in the fifteenth century was such that all the widely read late-Victorian authors of general histories of England – Green, Stubbs, Ramsay, Oman – took their cue from him. In the 1930s he was still being described as the chief modem authority on Richard's reign. But, to a revisionist, Gairdner's work 'reveals an historian of great eminence, integrity and industry desperately wrestling in public to reconcile the opposing forces of his scholarly conscientiousness and his emotional predispositions.' Starting with a closed tradition instead of an open mind, Gairdner set out to maintain the essential validity of a myth which had been exposed for what it was by the new sources and research available to him.

Favourable Views

Sir George Buck: The Pioneer Revisionist

When the last of the Tudors died more than one hundred years had passed since Richard's death. During that century it would have been an act of treason to speak well of the man officially condemned as a monster. So by the end of the 16th century the facts of his appearance, character and deeds had been buried under a great mound of tradition. He had become the archetypal tyrant king. The first to challenge the validity of this tradition was Sir George Buck, politician, courtier and antiquarian who served as James I's Master of the Revels from 1607 to 1618. An associate of Camden and Stow, he shared their interest in the past and their passion for the truth and he came from Yorkshire of a Yorkist family. John Buck, an ancestor, had fought and died for his King at Bosworth.

The history of King Richard III by Sir George Buck was written in 1619 but the manuscript remained unedited and unpublished when he died three years later. A corrupt version (by his great nephew of the same name) appeared in 1646/7. The authentic text was not published until 1979 when the true scholarship of the real author was revealed for the first time.

Buck's championship of Richard was announced as follows : 'Because he hath been accused of great crimes and slanderously (as I verily believe) I shall make endeavour to answer for him and to clear and redeem him from those improbable imputations and strange and spiteful scandals and rescue him entirely from those wrongs and to make truth…present herself to the light.' He castigated chroniclers who pandered to the ignorant public which took its history from pamphlets, ballads and plays. They were the trumpeters and echoes of Morton, who was guilty of malice and secret and treacherous practices and More who peddled stories and romances.

Buck set out to refute one by one the accusations made against Richard, including his alleged deformity. He listed Richard's virtues and good works but was not blind to his faults: a misguided leniency towards traitors (he should have beheaded Morton and Stanley along with Hastings) underrating his enemies and rashness on the battlefield.

Buck was the first to use as source material that recently discovered *Croyland Chronicle* and the hitherto suppressed Titulus Regius which stated and legitimised Richard's claim to the Throne. He also recorded a letter from Richard's niece, Elizabeth of York, declaring her love for her uncle the King. She was his in heart and in thoughts, in body and in all. That such sentiments should have been expressed about a man responsible for the murder of her infant brothers seems so improbable that most historians have chosen to doubt the letter's existence, although Buck stated categorically that he had seen it with his own eyes.

Horace Walpole's Historic Doubts

Horace Walpole is the most famous of Richard III's defenders. His *Historic Doubts on the Life and Reign of King Richard the Third*, published in 1768, is a landmark in the Great Debate. Many of the arguments advanced by modern Ricardians are echoes from this work.

Living in the Age of Reason and a declared enemy of injustice, Walpole was outraged by the ignorance and misrepresentations of historians and, in particular, their 'partiality, absurdities, contradictions and falsehoods' towards Richard. Of Sir Thomas More's account of the murder of the princes in the Tower he wrote: 'It is difficult to crowd more improbabilities and lies together than are comprehended in this short narrative.' He noted especially More's admission: 'Some remain yet in doubt whether they were in (Richard's) days destroyed or not.'

Walpole denied that he intended to write a vindication of Richard. He was not the man to replace one dogma with another. What he set out to demonstrate was that, although Richard may have been as bad as he was painted, 'we

have little or no reason to believe so'. The Seven Supposed Crimes of Richard the Third are itemised: the murders of the Lancastrian Prince of Wales, Henry VI, Clarence, the princes in the Tower and Queen Ann Nevill, and the executions of Hastings and Rivers, Grey and Vaughan. Walpole examines each of these accusations and three other allegations designed to blacken Richard's name: his intended marriage to his niece, the penance of Mistress Shore and his physical deformities. In closely reasoned argument he dismisses most of the evidence against Richard on all counts.

Many palpable hits are scored. How is it, for example, that even the Tudor chroniclers, Hall and Holinshed, do not accuse Richard of being behind Clarence's death? And why does More report that Richard claimed the crown through the illegitimacy of his nephews because Edward IV was secretly contracted to marry the courtesan Elizabeth Lucy (a charge which no one would take seriously) when the real lady in question was the daughter of the renowned Earl of Shrewsbury? And if Richard decided to seize his nephew's crown as soon as he learned of Edward IV's death, why did he proclaim Edward V in York and come south so slowly and with such few men?

There were also some palpable *mis*-hits, notably Walpole's belief that Edward V attended Richard's coronation; leading to the supposition that Richard intended to return the crown to his nephew when he came of age. The evidence was a set of Wardrobe accounts which Walpole had discovered but misunderstood: they did not refer to the coronation. This mistake provoked cries of 'Whitewash!' from antiRichards, but *Historic Doubts* has well served its author's purpose, which was not whitewashing but the removal of mud.

Caroline Halsted

'The purport of this memoir,' wrote Caroline Halsted in 1844, 'is not unduly to exalt Richard of Gloucester, either in mind or in person, still less to invest him with qualifications and personalities more fitted to embelish a romance that to find a place in the plain, unvarnished statements of historical research; its design is simply to rescue his memory from unfounded aspersions.'

Early in the nineteenth century many historical documents which had remained in manuscript were printed and published for the first time. Miss Halsted, a scholarly Victorian bluestocking, was therefore able to base her two-volume, thousand-page biography, *Richard III as Duke of Gloucester and King of England,* not on hearsay and tradition but on 'far truer guides than those chroniclers who made their elaborate narratives the vehicles of their own prejudices rather than the means of perpetuating the truth.'

Her starting point is the untrustworthiness both of the early chroniclers and of the descriptions and actions of Shakespeare's characters. Those were 'the mere imaginings of the bard'. Despite recognising that 'the lofty position of the bard of Avon' was 'inseperably interwoven with national pride and national affection', she nevertheless launched a bold assault on Shakespeare's shortcomings as an historian.

Miss Halsted's principles did not permit her to approve of Richard's assumption of the crown. It was an evil hour when he yielded to temptation; yet, once the charge of illegitimacy had led to Edward V's deposition and an empty throne, his acceptance of the invitation to fill the vacancy accorded with the due process of the law. The author then makes a determined effort to 'unravel the tangled web of falsehood and deceit' surrounding the subsequent fate of Edward V and his brother, making much of Polydore Vergil's statement that it was generally reported and believed that the princes were still alive during Henry VII's reign, secretly conveyed out of the Tower and 'obscurely concealed in some distant region'.

Miss Halsted's whole work has been unfairly dismissed by some male historians as hagiography, but she does become vulnerable to this charge in her romantic account of Richard's wooing Anne Nevill. When Anne was discovered disguised as a kitchen maid, did the ruthless tyrant of tradition take advantage of her situation and compel her by force or stratagem to become his wife? No; he behaved strictly according to Victorian etiquette, escorting her to sanctuary in St Martin's and then 'openly and honourably' seeking the king's consent to the marriage. 'The most imaginative mind could scarcely have desired a hero of romance to act a nobler or more chivalrous part, one more dignified towards the object of his attachment…more wothy of his hitherto irreproachable character.'

Sir Clements Markham

James Gairdner's attack on Richard provoked a memorable clash between two Victorian heavyweights. The king's champion in a bruising encounter for both parties was Sir Clements Markham, who was not a professional historian but the greatest geographer of his time. Both a man of action and a man of letters, Markham had served in the Royal Navy and travelled the world. He had written accounts of expeditions and numerous biographies and histories. For twenty-five years from 1893 he was Secretary of the Royal Geographical Society and later became President for a further twelve.

His *Richard III: His Life & Character Reviewed in the Light of Recent Research* was not published until 1906, being preceded by some twenty-four years of painstaking research and consultation with 'the most eminent historians in England'. As a first step, in order to test reactions and flush out critics, he had much earlier (in 1891) published an abstract in the form of a long article in the *English Historical Review*. This created the furore in historical circles and the fierce counterblast from Gairdner which Markham had expected and to which he responded with the relish of a seasoned campaigner.

In the Preface of his book he stated his conviction that 'the caricature of the last Plantagenet king was too grotesque, and too grossly opposed to the character derived from official records. The stories were an outrage on commonsense…My own conclusions are that Richard III must be acquitted on all counts of the indictment.'

The chapter acquitting Richard of the murder of the princes was followed by another convicting Henry Tudor. The story of their fate was said to be true except for the date: they were killed, not in the autumn of 1483, but during the summer of 1486. (The *History* attributed to More was, Markham insisted, really written by the malicious Morton.) His last chapter was devoted to a full scale assault on Gairdner's work.

Attribution of motive is a safe method of libelling the dead, and Markham is scathing about the use of this weapon by propagators of the Tudor myth. 'If Richard performs kindly acts, and many such are recorded, he is trying "to get unsteadfast friends". If he punishes treason he is a "venomous hunchback". If rebellion is put down in his reign he is an inhuman tyrant. His ability is cunning, his justice is cruelty, his bravery is fury, his generosity is artfulness, his devotion is hypocrisy.'

In passgaes such as this Markham succeeded to some extent in redressing the balance in the Great Debate so sharply tilted against Richard by Gairdner. But it is hard to avoid the conclusion that both sides of the case were over-stated in the argument between these two distinguished protagonists.

The Modern Controversy

Twentieth-century Traditionalists

During the second half of the twentieth century traditionalists became divided between diehards and moderates. In the van of the diehards is A.L. Rowse, for whom Richard remains substantially the Shakespearean Richard of the Tudor saga. To the revisionist Kendall, Rowse's *Bosworth Field* (1966) was 'non-history'. Nor did it find favour with Charles Ross, the doyen of the moderate traditionalists, who noted in a review that 'inaccuracies and misconceptions abound'.

It was Professor Ross's *Richard III* which, from 1981, displaced Professor Kendall's as the standard biography. This swung the pendulum back towards the Richard of tradition, but not all the way. Ross recognised that 'the most persistently vilified of all England's kings' was a genuinely pious man and a concerned and well intentioned ruler as well as the product of an age of violence. So far from representing the lowest depth of the monarchy, 'Richard proved himself an energetic and efficient king' with a proper concern for justice and the impartial administration of the law. 'No one familiar with the careers of King Louis XI of France, in Richard's own time, or Henry VIII of England in his own country, would wish to cast any special slur on Richard, still less to select him as the exemplar of a tyrant'.

In his *Edward IV* (1974) Ross laid responsibility for the events of April to June 1483 more heavily on Edward than on Richard. It was Edward's policy which had made Richard an unchallengeably over-mighty subject. It was Edward's indulgence of the avarice of the Woodvilles which made a regency dominated by the queen's unpopular family unacceptable to the rest of the nobility. But if Edward's 'lack of political foresight is largely to blame for the unhappy aftermath of his early death' Richard was to be condemned for 'carving his way through slaughter to a

throne' – to which revisionists responded that four deaths hardly amount to 'slaughter' and were a small price to pay for the avoidance of a renewed outbreak of civil war.

Characteristically, Ross left little doubt that he believed Richard guilty of murdering his nephews but refrained from saying so in so many words for lack of evidence. Other modem historians have not been so reticent, and Ross's argument that 'far too much of the proRicardian stance rests on hypothesis and speculation' is no less applicable to the antiRicardian.

Today Richard is widely regarded as a much maligned monarch, but to some – even among historians – he remains the wicked uncle and evil hunchback of legend. Hard evidence is scanty, but traditionalists believe that there can be no smoke without fire. Legends are indestructible, and history (so it is said) is the winners' version of what happened.

Twentieth-Century Revisionists

The revisionist movement became organised for the first time with the foundation of The Fellowship of the White Boar in 1924. Re-formed in 1956 as the Richard III Society, its membership rose between 1960 and 1985 from 200 to 4,500.

On a popular level these Ricardians, as revisionists now called themselves, were influenced by Josephine Tey's *The Daughter of Time*. First published in 1951 and continually reprinted, this classic detective novel was based on Sir Clements Markham's solution to the mystery surrounding the fate of the princes in the Tower.

From the academic world came strong support in the form of a sympathetic biography by the American historian, Paul Murray Kendall, who took the view that the vitality of the Tudor myth was a tribute to art, but a misfortune for history. Published in 1955, Kendall's *Richard the Third* held the field for the next twenty-six years as the most authoritative modern work on the subject.

The Kendall version of Richard would have astonished readers of earlier histories, as the blackest blot on the fair face of England became credibly transformed into a paragon of justice and mercy and a determined friend of the poor and the oppressed. Richard's excellent record as an administrator and soldier when 'lord of the north' for eleven years under his brother, Edward IV, was emphasised. So too was his insistence throughout his reign on law and order, on equality before the law and on justice without delay. Kendall held Richard responsible for the death of the princes in the sense that they became doomed when he took the crown; but his chief murder suspect was Buckingham.

The high tide of revisionism was reached in 1983 when Ricardians, now under the royal patronage of H.R.H. the Duke of Gloucester, celebrated the 500th anniversary of Richard's accession. In that year the Chairman of the Richard III Society, Jeremy Potter, published *Good King Richard ?*, a survey of the Great Debate subtitled *An Account of Richard III and his Reputation 1483-1983*.

In 1984 members of the Society prepared evidence and appeared as defence witnesses in a television trial of Richard for the murder of the princes.*The Trial of Richard III*, a London Weekend Television production, was transmitted on Channel 4 for four hours on a Sunday evening. The script, edited by the producers, Richard Drewett and Mark Redhead, was published as a book under the same title. The jury, which had been chosen to represent a wide cross-section of the educated public, returned a unanimous verdict of 'not guilty.'

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