

The Branches & Groups of the Richard III Society

The Mission Statement of the Richard III Society

In the belief that many features of the traditional accounts of the character and career of Richard III are neither supported by the evidence nor reasonably tenable, the Society aims to promote in every possible way research into the life and times of Richard III, to secure a reassessment of the material relating to this period and to raise awareness of the role in history of this monarch.



The Richard III Society has an international membership and Branches and Groups in Australia, Canada, Continental Europe, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. Branches and Groups, their officers and members are asked to accept the Society Mission Statement.

Groups are locally based Society members who have got together and successfully applied to the Board for authorisation to become a Group and an Affiliate of the Society. Branches are formed when Groups decide they wish to become a Branch. This happens when Groups have been established for some time, have more formal operating arrangements in place and have increased in size.

All Branches and Groups are of equal importance to the Society; they are an integral part of it, providing a local focus for Society members and playing a crucial role in promoting the Society's work in their area. Branch or Group members are usually already members of the Society but Branches and Groups may also accept new members from their local area who are not Society members. All members have the freedom to join more than one Branch or Group if they wish.

The role of Branches and Groups Liaison Officer (BGLO) is as an interface between the Parent Society and the Branches and Groups, someone they should feel comfortable liaising with. However, more than that, the BGLO takes an active interest in the Branches and Groups, encouraging them in their plans and activities and being someone to turn to should they have any issues. It is important that Branch and Group activities reflect their own independent membership but also important for them to feel the Parent Society is inclusive and values what they are doing. That is an integral part of the BGLO's role.

Benefits and responsibilities

There are many benefits attached to being a member of a Branch or Group. They provide opportunities to hear talks, discuss and carry out research, as well as to visit places of interest and meet socially. Branches and Groups also benefit from support from the Society through the Branches and Groups Liaison Officer (BGLO) and may apply for practical assistance and financial grants from the Society to enable projects in their local community. A full list of benefits is in Appendix 1.

How are Branches and Groups aligned to the Society?

The Richard III Society is now a Company Limited by Guarantee. It is a non-profit organisation and is formally legally constituted by its Articles of Association (AoA). These are supplemented by the Society's Rules to cover most operational aspects; the Branch and Group Rules are regarded as part of the main Rules.

Branches and Groups are recognised in the Society's AoA as Affiliates of the Society. However, as the Society is now a Company Limited by Guarantee, existing and new Branches and Groups need to 'apply' for this affiliation. This is a formal but simple procedure and a requirement brought about by the change to the Society's legal status. For Branches, the application needs to be supported by proof of a constitution, along with a set of accounts and confirmation of member numbers to prove financial viability. The BGLO takes the applications forward to the Society's Board for approval and can work with the Branches and Groups to complete the affiliation procedure, if required.

Once the application process is completed, each of the Society's Branches and Groups has an official status as an Affiliate. They are also recognised in the Rules of the Society. Relevant extracts from AoA and Society Rules are set out in Appendix 2.

These Rules are for all members of Branches and Groups and together with Branch or Group constitutions, where applicable, give the procedures that govern the running of the Society's Branches and Groups. The Society's Articles, Rules and Procedures govern the running of the Society and do not apply to members of Branches and Groups who are not members of the Society. They were approved at the October 2021 AGM with some small amendments approved at the October 2022 AGM.

The Richard III Society Rules for Branches & Groups

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PART A: FOUNDING A GROUP AND BECOMING A BRANCH

Rule 1: The naming of a Branch or Group

The name of a Branch or Group of the Society is defined by where it operates. The area is reserved for that Branch or Group.

Rule 2: Formation of a Group

2.1 A Group may be established in the following ways:

- a) Any Society member, discovering that there is no Branch or Group in or near their location and wishing to found a Group, should contact the Branches and Groups Liaison Officer (BGLO).
- b) The Society may also initiate the formation of a Group.

2.2 The BGLO will place a notice in the Ricardian Bulletin asking interested members to contact the person who wishes to establish the new Group.

2.3 If there is interest in forming a new Group, a suitable meeting place should be sought.

2.4 When ready, the Group may apply for authorisation to be recognised as a Group of the Society and to be an Affiliate of the Society. One member should be named as the primary contact with the Society. That member will inform the BGLO that the Group:

- i) wishes to become an authorised Group of the Richard III Society;
- ii) agrees to support the Mission Statement of the Society;
- iii) agrees that the Group will adopt a code of conduct for their members to follow (See Rule 4.2);
- iv) completes the Affiliation form;
- v) provides contact details, which must include an email address.

2.5 The BGLO will approach the Board for formal authorisation of the Group as an Affiliate of the Society.

2.6 Once the authorisation has been given, the new Group and its contact's details will be published in the Bulletin, on the Society's website and in the introductory letter to new members in the area covered by the Group.

2.7 At this stage a Group may have informal, if any, finance arrangements. If the Group remains small, there may be no need for subscriptions or a bank account. Further information about operation of a Group is in Part B.

Rule 3: Changing from a Group to a Branch

- 3.1 If membership of the Group grows, a Group may want to open a bank account. The name of the bank account must include both the name of the Group and the name of the Society, e.g. *'The xxx Group of the Richard III Society'*.
- 3.2 When a bank account is opened, the Group will need to elect officers and hold an AGM. The Group may then consider adopting a constitution and applying to become a Branch.
3. The following conditions must be met by Groups when applying for Branch status.
 - a) have been in operation for at least a full year;
 - b) if it has a bank account, it follows Rule 5.2;
 - c) have a committee with 3 officers: a Chair, who must be a member of the Richard III Society, and a Treasurer and a Secretary, who should be members of the Richard III Society if possible;
 - d) a constitution that aligns with the Society Rules.
4. The application should be sent to the BGLO and must include:
 - a) the number of members;
 - b) the names of the officers;
 - c) the latest annual account;
 - d) a copy of the Group's Constitution.
- 3.5 The Board will authorise the change from a Group to a Branch when the BGLO confirms that all the conditions have been met.

PART B: OPERATING A BRANCH OR A GROUP

Rule 4: Members

4.1 Membership

- a) All members of the Branch or Group must support the Mission Statement of the Society.
- b) Members may belong to as many Branches and Groups as they wish.
- c) It is desirable, but not mandatory, for members of Branches and Groups to be members of the Society. The benefits of Society membership can be pointed out to non-members.

4.2 Constitution and Code of Conduct

- a) All members of Branches should abide by their Branch constitution, which should align with the Rules of the Society, and the Branch code of conduct. This also applies to all members of Groups that have a constitution.
- b) All members of Groups that do not have a constitution should abide by their Group code of conduct.
- c) Branches and Groups are expected to have a Code of Conduct. They may develop their own (the Society's Code of Conduct for members can be used as a template) or resolve to adopt the Society's Code of Conduct (adapted to suit their situation).

Rule 5: Administration

5.1 Committee

- a) A Branch must have and a Group may have a Committee as its governing body
- b) The Committee must have three designated officers - Chair, Secretary and Treasurer – and may have other members. The three officers should preferably be three individuals.
- c) The Chair must be a member of the Richard III Society. The Treasurer and Secretary should preferably be members of the Richard III Society.
- d) The officers and other Committee members should be elected annually at an Annual General Meeting of the Branch or Group.

5.2 Finance

- a) Branches and Groups must be financially self-supporting. The Society will accept no responsibility for any debts incurred by a Branch or Group or for bank accounts opened by the officers of a Branch or Group.
- b) If a branch has a bank account, the bank account name must include the name of the Branch or Group and the name of the Society, e.g. 'The xxx Branch of the Richard III Society' and be administered by the Branch or Group Treasurer.
- c) The bank account must have at least 2 signatories, preferably more, one of whom must be the Treasurer.
- d) The Treasurer, if appointed, must produce annual accounts for the Branch or Group and arrange for them to be examined. The accounts will then be approved by members at the Branch or Group AGM.

5.3 AGM

- a) Branches, and Groups which have a bank account, must hold an AGM on a date determined by their constitution or the Committee.
- b) All persons who are fully paid-up members of the Branch or Group will be entitled to take part in and vote at the Branch or Group AGM.

5.4 Annual Return

All Branches and Groups must submit an annual form for the year to 31 December, detailing the number of members, names of committee members, and giving information about their publications, research and activities during the previous year (if applicable) to the BGLO by 28 February.

5.5 Interacting with the public and the media

The purpose of this rule is to protect the good name of the Society and that of the Branch or Group. If Branch and Group officers need help or advice, the PR & Media Officer is available.

- a) When interacting with the public at events, all Branch or Group members must make sure that what is said or done is legal, will not bring the Society into disrepute or show Richard III in a bad light.
- b) If a Branch or Group is representing the Society at a public event, written consent to do so must be obtained from the BGLO in advance.
- c) If a Branch or Group intends to publish printed material under the name of their Branch or Group, the Society will offer, through the BGLO, a factual accuracy check with historical information.
- d) If a Branch or Group intends to publish printed material in the name of the Society itself, they must have the approval of the Board before it is published.

- e) A Branch or Group representative may make a statement to the media but should say that the statement is being made in *'my personal capacity'*. The Society's PR & Media Officer should be informed as soon as possible. In your own interests, it is wise to record the conversation.
- f) The Chair or Leader is responsible for ensuring that copyright law is adhered to and that where required an acknowledgement is included in any material.

5.6 Dissolution

- a) Members of a Branch may resolve at their AGM or a SGM to return to Group status. The Branch should inform the BGLO of the proposed move; the BGLO will offer assistance in taking the matter forward.
- b) If a Branch or Group with a constitution wishes to dissolve, a SGM must be called for the remaining members to agree the dissolution. Leaders of Groups who do not have a constitution should call a meeting so the Group can be dissolved. The BGLO should be informed and will offer assistance.
- c) If a Branch or Group dissolves, members will decide how any monies remaining after payment of debts should be disbursed.

Rule 6: Membership Records and Data Protection

Members' records must be gathered and kept securely in accordance with the applicable Data Protection Regulations.

Rule 7: Insurance

Branch and Group Committees should ensure that venues have a suitable insurance policy for their events, including the position regarding accidental damage caused by a member whilst attending the event.

APPENDIX 1: Benefits of becoming a Branch or Group

The benefits of becoming a Branch or Group of the Richard III Society include the following:

- a) Support by the Branches and Groups Liaison Officer (BGLO) and the Board of Directors in Branch and Group activities, research and publications, particularly in disseminating their work.
- b) Support by the BGLO to facilitate communication between Branches and Groups, and between the Branches and Groups and the Board of the Richard III Society.
- c) The Board may authorise a grant to a Group to assist with their initial administration in their transition from a Group to a Branch.
- d) Eligibility to apply for grants from the Society towards an event, project, or activity undertaken by the Branch or Group which is of value to the Society. In all such cases the written approval of the Board must be obtained in advance. It is a condition of such grants being made that the Branch or Group reports back to the Board on the results of the event, project or activity.
- e) Provision of information by the Society about new members in their area who have agreed to have their name and contact details shared with their nearest Branch or Group. Only one person from each Branch or Group can apply for the information.
- f) Listing of Branch and Group contact details in the Ricardian Bulletin and on the Society website, with links to the Branch's or Group's website.
- g) Free advertising for events via the Ricardian Bulletin, including booking forms where appropriate.
- h) Branches and Groups can officially represent the Society at local level with the approval of the Board of the Society.

- i) Branches and Groups have the freedom to organise local events under the Branch or Group name.
- j) Branches and Groups will have input into the development of the Society's 5-year strategy plan.

APPENDIX 2: Branches and Groups Article of Association & Society Rule

Article of Association of the Richard III Society in Part 2: Members

12. Branches and Groups

- (a) The Company may authorise the establishment of branches and groups to encourage a local focus for members.
- (b) Branches and groups enable the furtherance of the aims and Objects of the Company*.
- (c) Once authorisation has taken place, such branches and groups will be termed affiliates of the Company.
- (d) The Company may develop rules for the formation and operation of its branches and groups.

* Article 3. Objects

The objects for which the Company is established are to promote and encourage in every possible way research and education regarding the life and times of King Richard III and to further reassessment of the material relating to this period and the role in history of this monarch.

(See also the Society's Mission Statement)

The Richard III Society Rules: extract from Part 2 – Members

8. Branches and Groups

- 8.1 The Directors may authorise the establishment of Branches and Groups.
- 8.2 Each Branch or Group authorised by the Society may call itself '*The XXX Branch or Group of the Richard III Society*'. The Board reserves the right to withdraw the authorisation if the Branch or Group fails to uphold the principles and objects of the Society or, by its actions, brings the Society into disrepute.
- 8.3 Each Branch and Group must be financially self-supporting. The Society will accept no responsibility for any debts incurred by a Branch or Group, or for bank accounts opened by the officers of a Branch or Group.
- 8.4 Authorised Branches and Groups are termed affiliates of the Society. This does not affect the membership positions of individual Branch and Group members but does give the Branch or Group the ability to send a representative to the Society's AGM.
- 8.5 When authorising a new Group, the Directors will take account of:
 - (a) geographical concerns, to ensure that the proposal does not contravene the Branches and Groups Rules; and
 - (b) the views of other Branches and Groups close by in the area where the proposed new Group will operate.
- 8.6 When approving the application of a Group to become a Branch, the Directors shall ensure that the conditions set out in the Branches and Group Rules are met.
- 8.7 The Directors may, in consultation with Branch and Group representatives, develop rules for their operation which may be amended from time to time in further consultation with Branches and Groups. The results of Branch and Group consultation shall be determined by majority agreement. The rules for Branches and Groups may be published in a separate document from these Rules but are to be regarded as part of them.