

The RICARDIAN HERALD

Connecting our global community



The magazine for the worldwide branches and groups of the Richard III Society

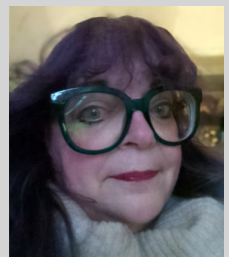


American Branch members gathered in Santa Fe recently.



New chair

Meet Amanda Geary, the new chair of the Richard III Society. Page 2



Jules Welch

Jules Welch is the new Branches & Groups Liaison Officer. She introduces herself on Pages 5-8



The rookie Ian Fryer has been a member of the society for a year. Pages 12-13

Richard and the Americans

Back in the 18th century the Americans made it clear how they felt about English monarchs. So why is there an American Branch of the Richard III Society?

A country that Richard never knew existed, and most certainly never signed up to be part of the Commonwealth, is home to a busy, vibrant and passionate group of people. They gather to honour him regularly, have a busy and vibrant online presence, and do phenomenal work in the interests of historical research. The branch's work with the Edward IV Rolls is an example of this.

So, what do America and Richard have in common? Branch chair Susan Troxell offers an answer that, while surprising at first, makes a lot of sense. American Branch coverage Pages 9-11.

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Meet the team

New Board members Cris Reay Connor and Graham Mitchell

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Wakefield 2024

The horror of battle and childhood scars

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Speaking out

Maria Grazia Leotta inspired a man to apologise to Richard III. Here she discusses the power of the word.

Amanda Geary is the new chairperson of the Richard III Society. She says that while the Society has accomplished much, a recent TV documentary suggests there's still much to do. She also points out that this year is the 10th anniversary of Richard's reburial.

'We have much to do'

I hope it's not too late to wish you all a very Happy New Year!

Now that the Christmas decorations have been packed away for another year, it's time to reflect on what an amazing centenary year the Society has had – and so much of that is down to you, the members of our wonderful Branches and Groups. You really are the ones at the coal face, and we so appreciate all your hard work and your commitment to making our Society what it is. We also start the New Year with a new Branches and Groups Liaison Officer, Jules Welch, who I know will be a huge asset to the Society. It would be remiss of me not to also take this opportunity to pay tribute to Jules' predecessor, Jane Trump, who has worked tirelessly for the Branches and Groups throughout her tenure.

Before taking over the role of Chair in December, I spent a couple of months as Acting Chair following Matt's departure at the AGM (talk about a hard act to follow!), and one of my first acts was the very enjoyable task of emailing the *Herald's* editor, Sue Grant-Mackie to inform her that she was the very worthy recipient of this year's Jeremy Potter Award. That this award was presented is a testament not only to Sue's hard work and skill in producing this fantastic publication, but also to the importance the Society places on its Branches and Groups. Matt was always a huge supporter of the B&Gs, and I fully intend to continue that support.



2025 sees the 10th anniversary of King Richard's reburial. I can't believe that it is already 10 years since that remarkable week. Who would possibly have thought that people would stand in line for hours at a time to walk past the King's coffin? Or see thousands of people stand in the cold as the horse drawn carriage went past, white roses being thrown towards it?

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Meet the new team

Branches and Groups Liaison Officer Jules Welch, and new board members Graham Mitchell and Cris Reay Connor introduce themselves on Pages 3, 4, 5-8.

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The image of Richard's statue, newly moved to outside the Cathedral, completely covered in white roses and messages from all over the country, and the world, still has the power to give me goosebumps.

It was heartening to see so many people realise what we Ricardians have always thought – that here was a king who was not the monster that Tudor history has traditionally told us he was. I hope that the Society has helped to change that view.

However, recent events, in particular a documentary shown in December on Channel 5 here in the UK, shows that we still have much to do.

There are likely to be many commemorations in Leicester of that special week 10 years ago. I hope to see many of you there – as well as at other events such as the increasingly popular Middleham Festival in July (for the coronation weekend) and of course our AGM in October. Please come and say hello – I'm looking forward to meeting you!

New board member

Cris Reay Connor

A Ricardian since the 1970s, I volunteered at York City Archives under the Archivist, Rita Freedman. Rita had a great interest in the medieval records the city held, and had a pop-up exhibition of the various Ricardian documents, which could be accessed for any visiting Ricardian or someone who was interested in Medieval York. I therefore came into close contact with Richard in York, via the records.

I obtained a degree in History in York, and continued with research projects for various groups and authors.

I attended many meetings with the Yorkshire Branch, with Moira Habberjam, Arthur Cotterill and John Audsley. I am a member of the North Staffs Group, which is a very active and friendly group.

I have been involved in the Wills Project for the Society, for more than 30 years now.

Several volumes have been published, including the Logge Wills. We are preparing the first volume of the Mills Wills for publication and are continuing with the transcription and translation of the Doggett Roll.



Reburial sparked new interest in Richard

Graham Mitchell was elected to the Board of the Richard III Society at the last annual meeting in York.

Graham was born and grew up in Keighley West Yorkshire and took a Geography degree at Leeds University, followed by a PGCE at Bristol University. He taught at Dudley Boys' Grammar School in the West Midlands and was Head of Geography at Stonyhurst College in Lancashire from 1974 to 1995. A Founder Member of the Keighley & Worth Valley Railway where he worked as a volunteer guard for 33 years, Graham served as Railway Society Chairman from 1987 to 1999 and is now a vice-president. He was elected to Keighley Town Council in 2002 and served twice as Keighley Town Mayor, standing down in 2015.

Graham joined the Richard III Society originally in the 1970s but lapsed under career pressures. He re-joined both the Society and the Yorkshire Branch in 2015, following his viewing of the cortege of King Richard as it passed through the streets of Leicester. He was elected to the committee of the Yorkshire Branch in September 2022 at a time when the Branch had 57 paid-up members. At the Branch AGM of September 2023 Graham was elected Branch Secretary and Membership Officer and is currently also Branch Treasurer. The Yorkshire Branch currently has 174 members.

Graham is a chorister and reader at St Anne's Catholic Church in Keighley where The Bosworth Requiem Mass was celebrated on August 22, 2024.



Graham is not a professional historian, and neither an author nor historical researcher, but works to advance a reassessment of the period and the role in history of Richard and his life as Duke and King by presenting illustrated lectures to interested and receptive 'not-yet Ricardian' audiences (local history societies, u3a groups and rotary clubs). As source material he draws principally on the research of Matt Lewis, Annette Carson, Philippa Langley, John Ashdown-Hill and other noted Ricardian authors.

Fair criminal justice system among Richard's legacies

Jules Welch was recently elected to the position of Branches and Groups Liaison Officer. Here she introduces herself, and explains why she is a Ricardian.

What makes a Ricardian?

A very good question and one which I have often asked myself, as well as being asked by family and friends alike, in varying degrees of sarcasm and short temper! I'm sure most members of the Society will have stories to tell of visiting a place which has even the most tenuous association with Richard III and holding forth, at length, to those who have accompanied them about exactly when and why the King was there, only to have their efforts to educate and inform met with cries of "Not that man again?!"

My first knowledge of King Richard III came when I was studying for my A-levels at an all-girl grammar school not, as might be supposed, History A-level, but, rather, English. The set text, or at least one of them, was Shakespeare's play *The tragedies of Richard III* and I was later to realise that it was indeed a tragedy, although perhaps not quite how the Bard of Avon had intended.



"...nothing would stop me until I understood more about King Richard and why history had treated him so unfairly."

Jules Welch

As supporting reading my English mistress, a wildly eccentric unmarried lady of a certain age, gave us what she described as one of her favourite reads - the Josephine Tey novel *A Daughter of Time*.

I have to say that it is now one of my favourite books too and, back in my sixth form days, I read the book from cover to cover over the weekend and a Ricardian was born. Not only did the story appeal to me because it created a mystery out of Shakespeare's certainty that Richard had killed his nephews, as well as several other people in fact,

but I also had experience of being bullied, in my case for the crime of having long red hair. But, having read about the historical question marks that hang over the story Shakespeare would have us believe, nothing would stop me until I understood more about King Richard and why history had treated him so unfairly. I joined the Richard III Society in my twenties having discovered a copy of *Bulletin* discarded at my local library.



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I'd taken the magazine home, devoured every page and happily discovered that there was an entire society devoted to righting the wrongs done to this king. At the time I didn't join a group or branch, but I did join one of the London branches on their trips out to see places linked with Richard III. Middleham and Bosworth, of course, but I also recall going to Minster Lovell and 50 or so of us all cramming into a bedroom at the local pub to view a white boar wall decoration which had recently been found.

On moving to Coventry, I then found that Bosworth was only an hour's drive away and so many free days would find me scouring the displays in the old visitors centre or tramping around what was then thought to be the battlefield site. On August 22 I would join other Richard supporters in laying white roses at the memorial stone which then stood at the spot Richard was thought to have fallen. However, all of this would come to an end once I moved to Wales.

"You inherit your nationality through your mother - by birth Henry wasn't Welsh"

Wales is an undeniably beautiful country but Richard III territory it is not!

Due to Henry Tudor claiming Welsh ancestry and even using the Welsh National symbol of Cadwallader or Y draig coch, the red dragon, most Welsh people if they have an opinion would claim Tudor as their own. But Tudor had an English mother and a Welsh father and in Wales you inherit your nationality through your mother - try joining the Welsh Guards with an English mother! and so by birth, Tudor wasn't Welsh.

He did indeed spend his teens at Raglan as a squire to the Earl of Pembroke, but he spent the vast majority of his life pre-1485 as a fugitive, exiled abroad to the continent for his own protection. Unfortunately for Richard supporters in Wales the real problem isn't Henry Tudor but Rhys ap Thomas,

the decidedly Welsh nobleman who is credited with having actually killed Richard III at the battle of Bosworth.

So with, at least superficially, no real support for Richard III in Wales I had no option other than to put up with there being no branch or group to join and, at the merest mention of his name, hearing King Richard spoken of in, shall we say, not the kindest way possible.

Eventually enough was enough and I decided to contact the Society to discuss how I might go about actually forming a group. I'm not going to say that the Society bit my hand off, but it did seem like a remarkably short time after my tentative enquiry that I found myself in a pub in Brecon discussing the catchment area for the newly formed South Wales Group of the Richard III Society.



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Incidentally my choice of venue for that meeting was far from accidental but with hindsight was one which has come back to bite me. The Castle in Brecon is now a popular hotel and restaurant, but it is built upon and even incorporates some of the remains of the original Brecon or Brecknock Castle (Brecknock is the old English name for the town whereas the Welsh call it Aberhonddu or town at the mouth of the river Honddu). This castle was, of course, home to Henry Stafford Duke of Buckingham who set out from here on his failed attempt at rebellion against Richard. His plans were scuppered by the Welsh weather, a violent storm and flooding which made his journey into England impossible.

I was to remember this outcome a couple of months ago when, having been appointed as BGLO, I was without power, WiFi or mobile signal for several days, twice in quick succession, following the two worst storms in living memory which caused chaos and destruction that Wales is still recovering from.

"...my choice of venue for that meeting was far from accidental but with hindsight was one which has come back to bite me"

I just hope that my outcome will be cheerier than Harry Buckingham's. The other point of interest about Brecon Castle is that the surviving tower is now the official residence of the Bishop of Swansea & Brecon. Its name is Ely Tower and is where Henry Stafford housed the Bishop of Ely when he had him in custody following the Bishop's involvement in a failed rebellion. Whatever it was that the two of them chatted about it certainly wasn't how to run a successful rebellion.

Having formed and named the new group, "all" I needed now were some members. The inaugural meeting was booked to be held in Brecon Guildhall and I advertised this in every local newspaper, magazine, library and historical group that I could find but could hardly shake off the awful feeling that I was going to be alone at the meeting.

I needn't have worried because more than 20 people turned up for that first meeting, many of whom were not Society members although some were. The group is still meeting regularly and has a membership of 24 with seven or eight regularly attending meetings. My first objective was to ensure that everyone had, more or less, the same level of knowledge and understanding of Richard III and so our bi-monthly meetings involve us choosing a topic linked to the life or times of Richard, going away and doing our reading and research and then feeding back to the group at the next meeting.



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This way those with less knowledge have been able to catch up and those with more knowledge openly admit to learning something new each time and to enjoying being able to share what they know. As well as our regular meetings our group has had stalls at both the Royal Welsh Show and the Brecon County Show, we've been into a high school to give a talk focusing on the princes and last year we went to Bosworth on August 22 to lay a wreath of white roses next to the "Coin" monument outside the visitors' centre, although the advisability of writing on the wreath's message card in Welsh only dawned on us on our way home.

So, that's what makes me a Ricardian - the sense that this man was lied about for political means after his death and the wish to share his story with like-minded people. My favourite passing time game is "what if Richard had won at Bosworth?" His reign was cut cruelly short, but even in the little over two years that he had, he achieved things that still affect us today. I sit as a Magistrate in Wales and, when a defendant is granted bail, I long to stand up and tell them that they owe their liberty to King Richard III!



Jules Welch and the team flying the flag at the Brecon County Show.

His work in making the criminal justice system fairer and more accessible for the common man can still be seen today in trial by jury, the way defendants are treated following arrest and in what we now call the Bail Act all of which was unheard of before the changes made by King Richard.

Who knows what else this much maligned monarch could have gone on to accomplish?

He was never meant to be a king as he was neither the heir, the spare or the spare's spare when he was born and yet, by the twists of fortune, he found himself being offered the throne.

In two short years he put an end to the common people being held in custody without charge, arrested on the whim of wealthy landowners and kept in prison indefinitely, often not knowing what it is they were alleged to have done.

What a start to a reign and what a legacy and yet to many people his name is a by-word for the murder of children and other evil doings. It's a lot worse than being bullied for having red hair, I know, but it's the thought of being wrongly blamed for something that you had no part in, nor could do anything to prevent, that makes me want to try and set the record straight and that, in my opinion, is what makes a Ricardian.

Why are Americans so curious about Richard III? Considering they kicked out the English monarchy in the 18th Century, what could possibly attract Americans to the cause of an English monarch who died in the 15th Century? American Branch chair Susan Troxell offers an answer...

Elected ruler championed lawful due process

As chair of the American Branch of the Richard III Society, I get asked this question a lot and have often struggled to answer it.

It may seem odd that an American would have any interest in a medieval king, seeing that we overthrew the English monarchy in the 18th Century.

Like citizens of other Anglophone countries, many Americans first come to Richard III through researching their family genealogy and wanting to know more about their ancestors. Others simply love British history, the compelling story of Richard III's life, and the enduring mystery of what happened to the princes in the Tower. Many have been captivated by Philippa Langley's research and achievements.

But there is something unique about Richard III that appeals to an American sensibility. We see in Richard III a man who came to power without the horrific cost to human lives that occasioned other transfers of power like the battles of Towton and Bosworth.

We see in his legislation early signs of lawful due process. We see him as an elected ruler whose competency far surpassed a 12-year-old boy's, and we see competence being rewarded over birthright inheritance



Finally, we see in the Tudor propaganda machine a bully who is beating up on someone no longer able to defend themselves. Of course, Americans often say we treasure certain values and then proceed to act differently.

The US is still in its infancy in terms of age, and we are now facing questions about our own origin story and how we tell the history of the real people who lived back then. We struggle with mythologizing, demonizing, or politicizing America's past.

We can look at Richard III as an example of how these forces dominated and distorted his story for too long, and vow to try to do better with the telling of our own. Seen this way, Richard is always relevant to the pursuit of historical honesty – whether we live in the “Old” or “New” World.



Ricardians gather at Santa Fe

More than 50 members of the American Branch gathered virtually and in person in Santa Fe recently for the biennial General Membership Meeting.

For many, this was their first trip to the Southwest and to New Mexico, but of course, the most anticipated part was re-connecting with Ricardians who otherwise live thousands of miles away.

Members began arriving at the hotel on Friday night, but the big day was Saturday, November 2, which kicked off with Philippa Langley appearing through Zoom to answer questions from branch members about her life, her research, and her future projects.

Christina Smee, a historic guide to Tamworth Castle and former reenactor at the Bosworth Battlefield Centre, gave a lively talk about the medieval and earlier origins of Tamworth, its castle, and its significance to English history.



Musicians Scott and Johanna Hongell-Darsee from Finland playing medieval instruments and singing ballads from earlier centuries.



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Dom Smee, the “king’s body double” who was featured in the TV show *Secrets of the Dead*, gave the last educational presentation about the late fifteenth-century clothing made specifically for him by one of the UK’s most respected historic costume designers.

The costume featured a long gown, hose, doublet, hat, and shoes made to order. Dom also talked about the Voice for Richard project and his participation in that study. The business meeting followed, and the evening wrapped up with our traditional medieval banquet, complete with musicians Scott and Johanna Hongell-Darsee from Finland playing medieval instruments and singing ballads from earlier centuries.

Mary Miller gave a moving speech about why she became a member of the society.

The next day, the meeting wrapped up with a walking tour of downtown Santa Fe by Ana Pacheco, a local historian. In all, members expressed their delight with the whole weekend, and said they’d happily attend another one.



Merseyside and West Lancashire Group member Ian Fryer is a rookie in the ranks of Ricardians. He joined the society in 2023, inspired by Philippa Langley's documentary about the missing princes. Here Ian shares his lifelong interest in history, and his feelings about the "sainted" Thomas More...

Bosworth flowers reveal the truth

It is now 12 months since I finally decided to join our society.

My only regret is that I didn't join 30 years ago when I was first interested in the true story of the last English King to die in battle!

I have always loved history since my father, who was a fanatic about Nelson, started reading me *A Child's History of England* when I was about six years old.

My history schoolteacher was very keen on the Wars of the Roses, but I was more interested in the English Civil War, the Tudors and Stuarts. I remember my father describing the Tudors as "a bad lot" but that was as far as it went.

My interest was sparked when I visited the Bosworth battle site.



Ian Fryer: I remember my father describing the Tudors as "a bad lot" but that was as far as it went.

I was staggered to see the stone marking the site where Richard was killed decorated with flowers saying "Good King Richard". Because I had accepted the Shakespeare drama as the truth, I was perplexed.

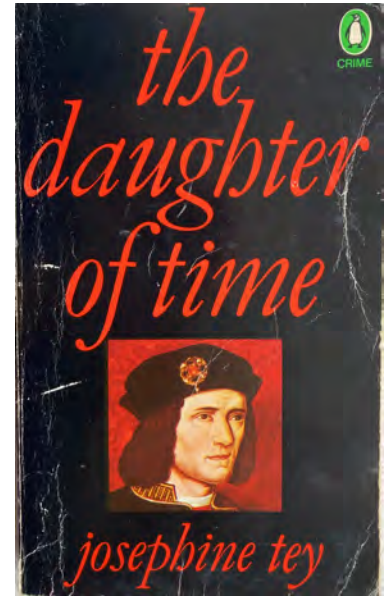
Soon after this, I found an audio copy of *The Daughter Of Time* by Josephine Tey. My interest was particularly spiked when Inspector Grant kept referring to the "sainted" Thomas More. I had always disliked Thomas More, who I thought was a cruel bigot.



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At that time, I had no idea that this book had inspired so many Ricardians to seek the truth and question the Tudor version. I picked up any old copies of the Ricardian or relevant books, and I was enthralled when the King's bones were found in the Leicester car park. However, it was only in December 2023 that I decided to join the society after watching Philippa Langley's fantastic Channel 4 documentary on the missing princes.

When I received my first copy of the *Bulletin* as a member, I couldn't believe how good a journal it was! Then I was frankly amazed that there was a local group meeting every month and only about 15 minutes away from my home. I felt so comfortable from my first meeting onwards and I am delighted with the organisational skills of our dedicated leader Margaret Byrne.



We have had wonderful guest speakers, including Matt Lewis, as well as a memorable trip to the Preston Archives. In January Julia Langham invited me to join some wonderful Zoom talks. I just hope all my fellow Ricardians enjoy our society and get as much enjoyment and pleasure from it as I do.

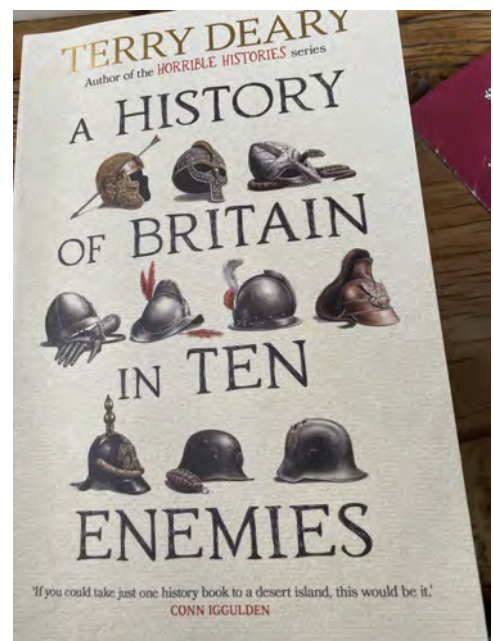
BOOKS

A History of Britain in Ten Enemies

By Terry Deary. Penguin Random House, 2024
Reviewed by Susan Grant-Mackie

Horrible enemies...

Terry Deary authored the *Horrible Histories* series, which made history by being interesting to children and adults who used to be bored, or scared, of the whole thing. In this brilliant, funny, and intoxicating book, Deary says Britain is what it is today because of its enemies. There's the Italians, who built a wall to keep out illegal immigrants, and invented the name Britannia. There's Saxony, famous for inventing Angle-land and most of the English language we speak today. And of course there's Scandinavia. Responsible for 10% of the average British person's DNA; Vikings who had a lot to answer for (see the bit about DNA); and the first king who united England into a single kingdom.



For me, one of the many astonishing takeaways of this history is the rehabilitation of King John. Deary sets the record straight and explains why John got such a bad reputation – “because he upset the media”. Maybe there's room for a King John Society? This is a must read for anyone interested in the history of Britain.



A legacy of childhood trauma

Words: Graham Mitchell Photos: Dr Alison Harrop

A special, decades old tradition was honoured at Wakefield last month.

On December 30 Ricardians gathered to remember and commemorate the deaths of Richard, Third Duke of York, his second son Edmund, Earl of Rutland and hundreds of others who died at the battle of Wakefield 564 years ago.

Men and boys alike died on the open land midway between Sandal Castle and the town of Wakefield fighting hand to hand, maiming and killing and dying.

What later came to be called the Battle of Wakefield was a huge setback for the Yorkist cause. I asked those present to consider its effect upon an eight-year-old boy, the future Richard Duke of Gloucester. I then read from an account by Society and Yorkshire Branch member Wendy Johnson, published in the December *Bulletin*:

“At eight years old, it is difficult to comprehend the loss of a close family member, particularly that of a parent. Richard’s father met a violent end; branded a traitor, his head placed, like that of a felon, atop Micklegate Bar in York.



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“It is not known how, and when, young Richard learnt the full horror of these events, but it is safe to imagine that such a revelation would have shocked the boy to the core. This, and the uncertainty of the following months when he and his 11-year-old brother George, were forced to take refuge in a strange land, must have stayed with Richard for the remainder of his childhood, and quite possibly beyond.”

I asked those present to consider how these emotional scars might have affected Richard’s residual attitude to his father? Over 500 years on, nothing can be certain, but we know that Richard’s instructions for his Collegiate foundation at Middleham included weekly masses where his father was specifically to be remembered. And we do know that although he was the youngest of the three Sons of York present, Richard was the chief mourner in the ceremonies for the re-burying of both Duke Richard and Earl Edmund at Fotheringhay 16 years later in 1476.

Although Richard the father and Richard the son knew each other for only a few short years, the younger Richard always felt a strong bond to his powerful father, killed here on this very ground on December 30,1460.

Members and friends present then observed a short silence to remember Duke Richard and Earl Edmund, and all others who suffered and died on that fateful day.

Bouquets of white roses were laid at the foot of the pillar with the ancient prayer: “May the souls of the faithful, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Grant them eternal rest O Lord and let perpetual light shine upon them - amen”



The party then travelled the short distance to the Medieval Chantry Chapel on Wakefield Old Bridge where further roses were laid on the altar by the memorial plaques to Duke Richard and Earl Edmund.

In the previous issue of the *Ricardian Herald*, Maria Grazia Leotta discussed her book *Riccardo III: Il Re piu amato (Richard: The Beloved King)* which was published in Italy recently. Maria, who works for the Yorkshire and Scotland Branches, is also busy on the Ricardian speaking circuit. Intrigued that this was a thing, the *Herald* editor asked Maria to share more about how it works, and why it's so valuable.

Fighting with the power of words

How do you get referred to interested groups?

I started to give talks about Richard III after the publication of my book. After almost five years researching Richard III, I felt ready to be a speaker and I finally was brave enough to face audiences that could ask tricky or nasty questions, and I wanted to be ready and well prepared to answer them all. I was first asked by a priest of my parish, but the first talk was for a Y5 group in a primary school close to York. Of course, that talk was very simplified as they were all children aged 10, but I was very happy when teachers sought my permission to use the talk in school and share with others. That was exactly what I wanted so they stopped using an old-fashioned lesson based on More and Shakespeare.

After this first experience, my friend Joanne Larner, author, painter and speaker and above all a true and staunch Ricardian, encouraged me to put my profile on some websites for speakers and I started to receive invitations. Now, I have a lot of booked talks thanks to word of mouth too. Sometimes, I deliver online talks as well.



Why do you think groups want to hear about Richard?

Groups invite me to give talks for a variety of reasons. Some are interested in history, others just obsessed with the princes in the Tower so, as I am a member of the Missing Princes Project, I am hired especially for this reason. People are curious about this topic so they hope I can give them some answers.



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What topics do you like to concentrate on?

I give talks about several topics including Mount Etna in Sicily (I lived just 15 km away), English travellers to Sicily (the topic of my first degree's dissertation) and many others but my favourite topic is, of course, Richard III. I speak about his life, his family, and I close with the princes in the Tower and all the new evidence. This last is my favourite part because I might help rehabilitate the King's reputation, as well as attract more people to the cause.

What sort of reactions do you get?

Every audience has a different reaction, but they have one thing in common: they are really hooked, and nobody falls asleep, yawns, or leaves and this is a great result. At the end of each talk, I give them the chance to ask questions at the end and they always do, which means they have really listened.

The best and the worst questions you have been asked?

The best question someone asked me was "Why do some people even think Richard III killed his nephews? It doesn't make any sense to me". The guy was indeed a very intelligent person. The worst question: "Why do some people still care about the reputation of a medieval king?" My response was that lies and slander are always bad. It doesn't matter if they originated yesterday or five centuries ago.

"I am converted, I lived all my life judging a person without knowing anything about him. I hope Richard will accept my apology. I would say he was the best king we ever had"

Has anyone had a change of heart about Richard after your presentation?

Always! At the end of each talk there are always some "conversions". In particular, I remember one man. He was the president of the group that had invited me. Before I started, he declared he thought Richard was a usurper and a murderer of children. I asked why he had invited me and he replied it had been someone else's idea but he had agreed only because the club was a men's club so a lady speaker would have been a gentle presence.

I just replied, "fair enough" and started the talk. He took notes and didn't miss a word. At the end of the talk, he clapped and stood saying: "I am converted, I lived all my life judging a person without knowing anything about him. I hope Richard will accept my apology. I would say he was the best king we ever had". I felt emotional and thanked God for putting the right words in my mouth.

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What do you most enjoy as a speaker?

The main reason I am a speaker is I really want to spread good words about King Richard III. I want to bring people a different message from the one history has left to posterity. I also want to present the Tudors for what they did: destruction of heritage, persecution and torture of innocent people for their beliefs, assassination of the true heirs to the English throne, usurpation of the crown and for being liars, just to mention a few things. I also like to speak to people and love challenges, so to be a speaker is definitely one of the best things I can do.

When I give talks, I am really pleased because it is a job I love. It is a passion, the best way to communicate and it gives me the opportunity to speak about different topics.

The one I prefer is Richard III, the existence of the Richard III Society, the new evidence about the princes and the incredible research behind it. I am proud to be part of the Missing Princes Project and in some cases, I am chosen to speak because of this reason. When I go back home after a talk (I am available from London to Edinburgh) I feel I did the right thing, and this makes my day.

Do you think speaking and public presentations are important to the Ricardian movement?

Absolutely! Richard was killed by swords and shamed with words. We need to fight back with the same weapon: words, this is what he really needs now and if we can help him, as Ricardians we should do. The power of words is incredible and we have that power. We have to use it.

MUSIC

To the castle ruins of long ago

A song honouring Wigmore Castle is soon to be released by musician Ian Churchward. It has been composed with Ashley Mantle for Ian’s latest album *The Further Adventures Of the Legendary Ten Seconds*. It is due for release on Spotify and Apple music etc on January 31, 2025.

<https://hearthis.at/ian-churchward/wigmore-castle/>



North Mercia Branch member Jane Clarke is researching medieval dogs, and their relationships to humans. She says that in Richard's time, dog breeds were closely associated with the place of their humans in society's pecking order. This is the first in a series of articles for the Ricardian Herald.

Living social history

I'm enjoying this look into this aspect of medieval life - and the thing that is becoming obvious to me is that the rigid hierarchy and one's defined 'place in the world' applied not only to humans but also to the animal world.

For humans your 'rank' defined what you could wear, who you must defer to and who deferred to you; but it also dictated which 'hawks and hounds' you could own.

Those animals seem to have taken on the status of their owners - with dogs such as greyhounds becoming the 'aristocrats' of the canine world - and others taking on the status of their 'common' owners. The Duc de Berry and his greyhound had, comparatively, a very nice life, as did Lady Cassy and Terri, who we will meet in future articles.

But the peasant with his working dog maybe had a hard and uncertain life.



Jack Clarke, the lurcher. Lurchers were bred to be hunting dogs for the 'common people'. Photo Jane Clarke.

Nobody at the time thought that that wasn't fair because everyone and everything had their place; kings were born to rule, knights were born to fight, the clergy were the spiritual guardians and educators and everyone else had to just get on and play the hand they were dealt.

If your life was poverty and hard work that was just your fate - you just had to have faith that the 'afterlife' would be better.

It's a bit hard for us to rationalise but that's what makes history so interesting.

We share so much with our ancestors. Like us they all had hopes and fears, friends and foes, ambition and setbacks - but they also had a very different world view, and we have to get to know them in that context.

I love the medieval period - but I wouldn't want to have lived it.

Because our dog Jack, a lurcher, is a proud descendant of generations of hunters, I thought it appropriate to begin with this breed.





Richard III had three lymers with his hart-hounds

The lymer was a scent-hound that was used to locate large prey. They were held on a leash, (lyme). One could maybe compare these with the more modern bloodhound.

Image and words courtesy of The Medieval Hunt blog and Murrey and Blue website.

Lurchers are quite interesting. The breed evolved slightly later than the medieval period. They are a cross between any 'sighthound' (greyhound/saluki/whippet etc) and a working dog(usually border collie/terrier). As companions they are both a hilarious handful and lazy hounds. But they are also living social history. Greyhounds were expensive and were for the aristocracy, so lurchers were bred to be the hunting dogs of the 'ordinary' people, particularly those people who needed a rabbit for their dinner. This was often called "poaching" so lurchers were sometimes called 'poachers' dogs'. And Jack loves this part of his history.

Lurchers are still popular in rural areas, so Jack is totally at home in rural North Wales. The breed is also popular in the traveller community.

Being a cross breed does have advantages; Alan and I are also 'horsey people' and we live near the racecourse at Bangor on Dee. A few years ago, we were there with Jack and a group of Irishmen spotted him. They were obviously experts and admired and appraised him. They confirmed our opinion that he is greyhound-border collie cross which is a usual choice for the 'working dog' element.

But they also said that in Ireland there is also often a terrier in the mix somewhere along the line - and they reckoned Jack probably had some bedlington in his DNA. But then they delivered the ultimate validation that lurchers are better than greyhounds. Jack's 'wrist' is articulated differently from a greyhound because of the working dog DNA. This would allow him to run and work at full speed on rough and uneven ground without damaging his legs, something that unfortunately might happen to greyhounds. Jack's friend Moira, a retired racing greyhound, disputes this and says he's just made that up.

In this series, we will meet medieval dogs of all kinds. Hunting dogs for the rich and poor; working dogs, guard dogs, companion dogs and perhaps the 'dark side' blood sports such as dog fighting and baiting. Hunting dogs will be first up in the April issue of the *Ricardian Herald*.

Jack reckons it's going to be pawsome.



Mission Statement

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