

The RICARDIAN HERALD

Connecting our global community



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

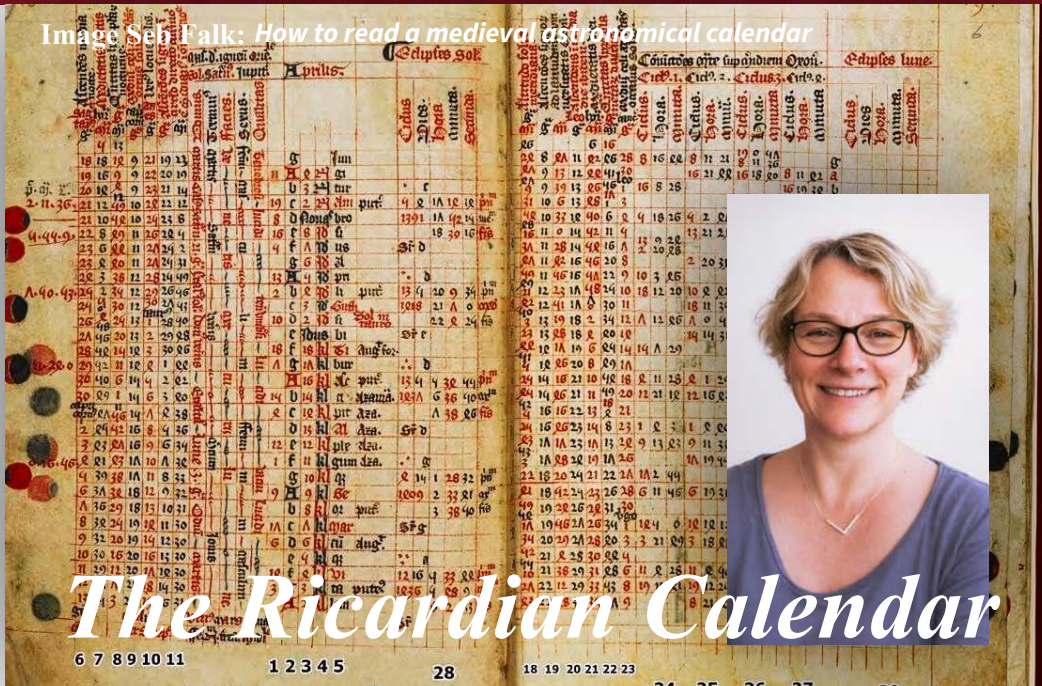
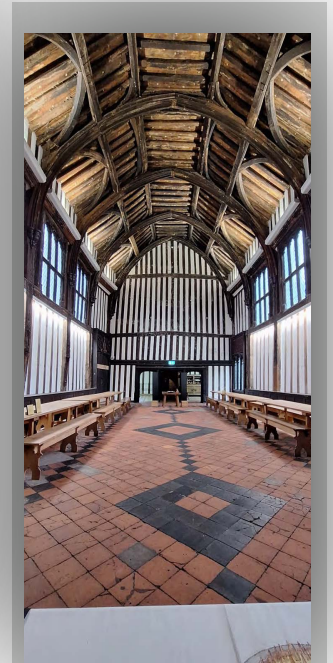


Image Set 1: Talk: How to read a medieval astronomical calendar



Medieval great halls across England followed a remarkably consistent layout, and Canadian SHEILAH O'CONNOR'S travels reveal how these shared features appear in different halls. Pages 7-10.



The greatest knight who ever lived. Pages 11-15

The Ricardian Calendar

Awards, events, and editorial cut-offs in one place

The fast-growing programme of talks, meetings, projects, and international initiatives hosted by the Society parent body, and branches & groups, has prompted two major improvements to how we plan and participate. **Gloucester & Bristol Branch Chair Cynthia Spencer, above,** has created the first central calendar of publication deadlines and Society awards — an accessible, continuously updated tool designed to help branches and groups better prepare submissions for the *Bulletin*, *Herald*, and submissions for major awards.

Cynthia's initiative works with the Society board events calendar compiled by **board member Graham Mitchell.** This featured in the February issue of the *Herald*. The combined calendar will be published in every issue of the *Herald*, as well as the members' section of the Society website.

Story Page 6; Calendar on Pages 29-35

p 3 - 5

MEET THE BOARD

Board members of the Richard III Society met more than 50 members from throughout the world at the first Zoom gathering recently.

p 16-18

CARSON'S UNSPUN THREAD

A fresh theory about Stony Stratford — including why Lord Hastings' actions suddenly make a lot more sense.

p 19-21

THE LAST ECHO

The Gunpowder Plot — England's first act of domestic terrorism — may trace its roots back to unresolved loyalties from the Wars of the Roses.

Face-to-face with the board...

Be there or be square!

As an international organisation with members scattered across hemispheres, continents, and time zones, the Richard III Society has long needed communication tools that match its global reach.



We now operate in a world where meaningful connection no longer depends on geography, and where members in Yorkshire, Sydney, Toronto, and Dunedin can meet in the same “room” with a single click. Covid accelerated this transformation. During those difficult years, the board, headed by Matt Lewis, pushed through the adoption of Zoom for presentations and meetings at astonishing speed, ensuring that the Society not only stayed connected but expanded its ability to reach members everywhere. That legacy continues to shape how we communicate—and it made the first quarterly Meet the Board Q&A forum this March not just possible, but genuinely successful.

The event showed immediately why this new initiative is both worthwhile and valuable.

With more than 50 members joining from around the world—some at 12.30am or even 3am—the session proved how constructive it is to meet the board and each other “face-to-face,” even via Zoom.

The format created a sense of connection that written updates simply can’t match, and it offered a rare chance for members to raise issues directly, hear clear answers, and exchange ideas across continents.

As the meeting report on **pages 3-5** of this issue notes, the chat allowed participants to jot down and debate their ideas and thoughts.

Matters discussed included an update of procedure following the sudden resignation of several board members in February; Yorkshire Branch secretary Graham Mitchell will be acting chairman until the 2026 AGM. We explored transparency around board recordings, the selection of Zoom lecture speakers, and the temporary move of *The Ricardian* to digital-only.

The board outlined an active programme for 2026; we discussed Facebook moderation, and the balance between academic and accessible work.

What stood out most was the tone: appreciative, candid, and engaged. Members thanked the board for its openness, and Graham Mitchell reaffirmed the commitment to quarterly meetings. In my view, this first forum demonstrated exactly why these gatherings matter—they strengthen global ties, humanise the Society’s leadership, and give members a meaningful voice.

For me personally, Zoom has been transformative. Living in New Zealand these online events have given me access to brilliant presentations I could never have attended otherwise.

I’ve been able to listen to respected authors and historians speak with authority and passion on subjects ranging from the life of William Marshal, arguably the greatest knight who ever lived (**see pages 11-15**), to the mysteries of Stony Stratford and the fate of Lord Hastings (**pages 16-18**). These sessions have been intellectually rich, deeply engaging, and, above all, a reminder of how modern technology can bring our far-flung Ricardian community together in ways that were once unimaginable.

So, please sign up for the next Zoom forum with the board **in July - details on Page 5**. It is open and honest and well worth it. You won’t be disappointed. And in terms of any time differences, if I can do it at 3am, it’s going to be much easier for everyone else on the planet!

Sue Grant-Mackie
Branches & Groups Officer

Email: branches.groups@richardiii.net

Global Ricardians connect...

A bright start for new quarterly forum

By Sue Grant-Mackie

Board members of the Richard III Society met more than 50 members from throughout the world at the first question and answer Zoom gathering recently.

It was the first in what is planned to be a regular event designed to allow members to meet, and chat, with the board. And while it was 2pm in England, Australian and New Zealand members were already well into the future - taking one for their teams at 12.30am and 3am respectively.

Members brought a wide range of issues to the table, and acting chairman Graham Mitchell and other board members addressed each one with clarity. The “chat” option offered on Zoom allowed all participants to jot down and debate their ideas and thoughts. And just to say ‘hi’.

Only twice did the technology glitch – Graham’s place suffered a power outage for a bit – though at first one participant thought they heard that “his roof had gone down”.

Confused that no-one else seemed at all worried, this participant relaxed a bit when it was explained his “router had gone down”.

The other glitch involved the same participant in New Zealand losing the connection for a few moments. It happens.

The event was also a brilliant opportunity to “meet” fellow members in person.

Starting the meeting, Graham introduced himself, and offered an update of the February issue in which several board members resigned, citing bullying on the part of other board members.

“ An investigation by a panel of three persons independent of the matter under review, empowered by the board under the exact conditions of the society’s Complaints & Grievances Policy, is now active and working. We do not know how long the investigation will take but we ask members to trust that the panel will do its work thoroughly and competently.”

Graham, who is secretary of the Yorkshire branch, confirmed that as acting chairman he holds full powers of the role until the 2026 AGM.

The first set of questions from members focused on elections, resignations, and board procedure. Deputy Chair Sue Ollier confirmed that elections to fill vacancies would take place in the usual cycle before the 2026 AGM, with all members eligible to vote.

She noted that if fewer than 15 candidates stand—the maximum allowed under the Articles—those candidates are elected unopposed.



Acting chairman Graham Mitchell

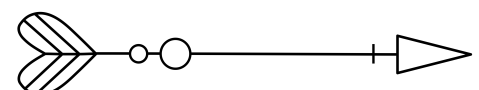


Deputy chair Sue Ollier

Graham urged members to become more involved in the business of the Society and to put themselves forward as candidates at the AGM.

Governance questions

A question about board meeting recordings prompted society secretary Jane Trump to explain that meetings are recorded solely to assist minute-taking and that recordings are deleted once minutes are approved.



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Under Article 51, she reminded members, Society documents are not automatically open to inspection.

This sparked debate. One member described the practice as “somewhat 19th century,” arguing that members, as “owners of the undertaking,” should have access.

Zoom lectures

Member Catherine Crawley asked how the society selects speakers for its popular Zoom lecture programme. Julia Langham, who has run the programme since 2020, explained that she sources speakers herself—academics, authors, heritage specialists, musicians, food historians, and others.

She emphasised that she welcomes suggestions from members and that the programme’s strength lies in its variety and accessibility.

The Ricardian

One of the most emotionally charged exchanges concerned the temporary shift of The Ricardian to digital-only format for 2026, with printed copies available only by paid pre-order.

Treasurer Neil Trump explained the financial reality. He said printing a small run of hard copies would cost £18.50 per copy because the minimum print run was around 50. Neil stressed that the digital edition ensured the journal could still be produced at all.

Member Sandra Pendlington spoke on behalf of offline members—often older, long-standing Ricardians—who would now be unable to access the journal.

Neil acknowledged the difficulty but insisted the Society had no viable alternative. Sandra and Neil agreed to continue the discussion privately.

Projects for 2026

Despite financial constraints, board members outlined several active projects.

Podcasts

Following the success of last year’s *Bulletin*-linked podcasts, a new standalone episode featuring Matt Lewis, Annie Garthwaite, and Ken Hillier will focus on Richard III himself.

The Milles Wills Project

After 11 years of transcription and translation work by trained volunteers, the first volume of nearly 700 wills is expected to go to press later this year.

New Richard III Convention

Replacing Members’ Day for 2026, the convention aims to attract not only Ricardians but also friends, family, and newcomers through interactive programming. Member feedback will determine whether it becomes a regular event.

Middleham Festival

The Society and the Yorkshire branch will each run a full day of speakers and presentations, strengthening the Society’s presence at the event.

Facebook

Several questions addressed the society’s Facebook page, where posts had recently been removed. It was explained that the page is moderated by Matt Lewis, Jane Trump, and Neil Trump.



Membership Officer Julia Langham

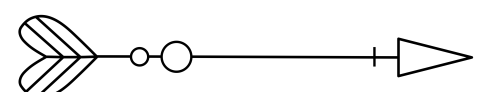


Treasurer Neil Trump



Secretary Jane Trump

Former society communications manager and chair Amanda Geary noted that Facebook sometimes automatically deletes comment threads when a problematic post is removed, which may explain why some members’ posts disappeared unintentionally.



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Terminology

Member Pat Oxley raised concerns about whether the Society was prescribing terminology—for example, insisting that “Perkin Warbeck” be called “Richard of England.” Graham Mitchell reassured her that members were free to express historical opinions respectfully.

Strategy

Member Jayne Adams raised substantial questions about the society’s long-term strategy, member involvement, and the balance between academic and non-academic work.

Sue Ollier explained that the board had conducted a strategy session in 2020 and had previously surveyed members, with another survey planned. She and Graham Mitchell emphasised that members can submit motions to the AGM and vote online—though turnout remains low.

Treasurer Neil Trump described a three-year stabilisation plan. The society’s reserves, once bolstered by £300,000 in legacy funds, had been depleted by 2024. The goal now is to rebuild reserves sufficient for six months’ operating costs.

Sandra Pendlington offered a succinct defence of academic work:

“If we wish to convince historians... we have to work at an academic level.”

But she also stressed the need for balance and accessibility.

Closing reflections

Graham reaffirmed the board’s commitment to quarterly meetings and open communication as the society navigates a challenging period.

As the meeting ended, members expressed appreciation for the board’s efforts under pressure. Several thanked Graham Mitchell personally for stepping into the breach.

If you couldn’t make this meeting, absolutely attend the next one which is in July. It is well worth it. It offers a rare chance to ask questions, or share opinions, with the board personally, and you get to meet, sort of, fellow Ricardians from throughout the world.

MEET THE BOARD IN JULY

The next Meet the Board Members’ Q&A session has now been confirmed for Saturday July 18, with registrations to attend the meeting and submit questions closing a week earlier on Saturday July 11.

Invitations will be sent to all members around May 30, giving everyone a comfortable six-week window to register and prepare their questions.

And should anyone wonder why the session isn’t being held in June—as originally hoped—the explanation is straightforward. Every single Saturday in June 2026 is already spoken for, with Ricardian events filling the calendar from start to finish.

With not a single free weekend to be found, July became the first realistic opportunity to gather everyone together.

Calendars promote events, publication deadlines

The society's calendar is expanding rapidly, with dozens of talks, branch meetings, outings, projects, and national initiatives now taking place across the year. To help members keep pace with this growing activity, two complementary projects are supporting how we plan, promote, and participate.

Gloucester & Bristol Branch Chair Cynthia Spencer, pictured right, has led the charge on publication-deadline transparency. Noting that she "couldn't find a one-stop-shop of society publication deadlines," she set out to create one. Her aim is simple but transformative: a central, easily accessible calendar of *Herald*, *Bulletin*, and other submission dates so branches can better plan their contributions. As she explains, "easy and independent access to this information in one place could be a really beneficial planning tool."

Already in existence was the society board events calendar (as featured in the February *Herald*) produced by board member Graham Mitchell.

Together, these two initiatives—one focused on what's happening, the other on when to contribute—represent a significant step forward in coordination, visibility, and member engagement.

Cynthia Spencer has been a member of the Society and the Gloucester & Bristol Branch since 2010.

"Our branch has evolved over the years to include the former Bristol Group and is fairly widespread with members from as far away as Somerset and Wales.

"We normally meet in Cheltenham but also meet for outings.



Cynthia Spencer: Her aim is simple but transformative: a central, easily accessible calendar of Herald, Bulletin, and other submission dates so branches and groups can better plan their contributions.

"At Bath our working schedules were dictated by a central calendar that outlined institutional deadlines".

She says ready and independent access to a similar document showing Society deadlines would help the branches and groups better anticipate and prepare to submit copy for the *Herald* and *Bulletin* publications, which are important ways to promote branches.

"I'm sure most or all branches work as we do - volunteers contributing our time and skills to fit around otherwise busy lives, working more independently than in a conventional work setting - and therefore easy independent access to this information in one place could be a really beneficial planning tool."

"In addition to the digital role, I took over as Chair of the branch in October 2024, a somewhat daunting path to follow in the footsteps of long standing Chair Keith Stenner.

After joining the branch committee I was soon asked to assume management of the branch website; this remit exponentially grew during the pandemic to encompass the creation and management of digital platforms on Zoom, Facebook and ticketing platforms such as Eventbrite and TicketSource.

"Originally from New England, I have lived in and around the Cotswolds for 40 years. The latter half of my career was spent as an academic administrator at the University of Bath.

From Scandalous Liaisons to the Middleham Festival, it's all in the new calendar. Check pages 29-35. It is also available on the members section of the website: www.richardiii.net

Medieval great halls across England followed a remarkably consistent layout, and SHEILAH O'CONNOR'S travels reveal how these shared features appear from Crosby Hall to Gainsborough Old Hall. Her illustrated tour highlights the enduring elements—passages, pantries, lofty windows, and central hearths—that shaped these communal spaces for nearly two centuries.

An illustrated tour of...

Medieval halls

When travelling around England over the years, I started to notice that many Great Halls were very similar. For almost 200 years or so, there was a basic pattern that was followed.

Image 1 shows a floor plan of Crosby Hall before it was moved. In the centre is the Great Hall, highlighted in yellow. On the right side is a through passage. It is part of the Hall, as you will see, but with doors on either end allowing people to pass through. That is the lower end of the hall. On the higher end is where the owner sat. It often had much better lighting which is what I believe you can see here in the semi-circular section.

Image 2 shows Minster Lovel from the other side, with the high end on the right. The passage is clearly visible on the left and beyond it are suggestions of another key feature of these halls – the buttery and the pantry, which led to the kitchen. As the sign indicates, **(Image 3)** the hall was lit by many tall windows. The sign also mentions a fireplace in the middle of the hall. While these were eventually replaced by chimneys, many halls kept this central fireplace longer than expected.

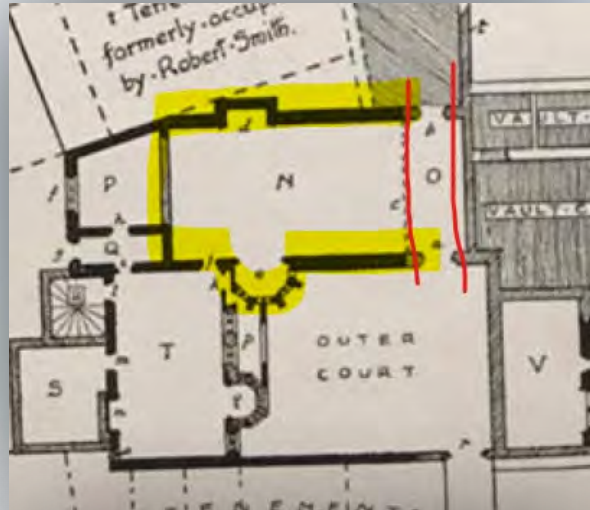


IMAGE 1



IMAGE 2



IMAGE 3



From previous page...

Image 4 Barley Hall in York is one such building. It was restored to what it would have looked like in the late 15th C. Clearly visible on the left is the passage, which now is a public path and in the centre is the fireplace. The bricks are original although not to Barley. The large window would have lit up the high end of the hall.

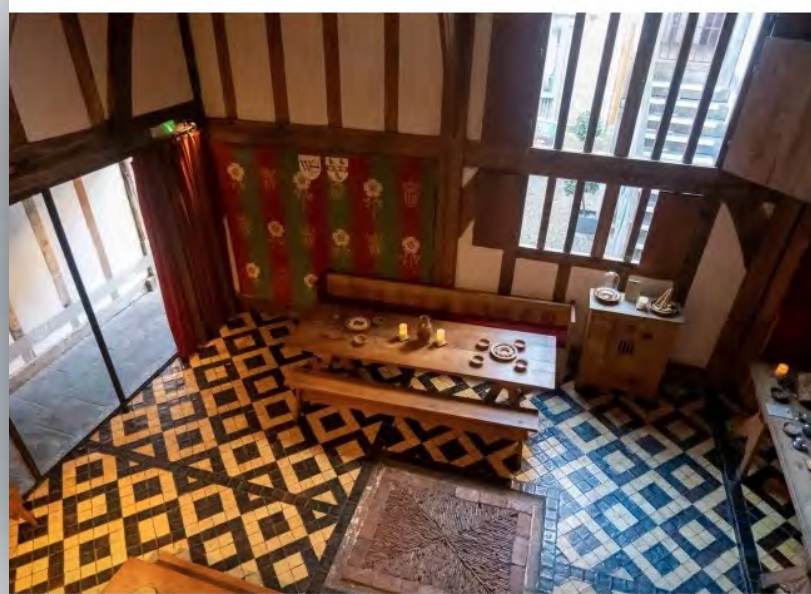


IMAGE 4

Image 5. The 14th C Bedern Hall, also in York shows the 2 doors of the passageway and the bricked up remains of one of the 2 doors leading to the buttery and the pantry. The 2nd door has been blocked by large stones.



IMAGE 5

Penshurst was built for a Lord Mayor of London who wanted a place outside of the city. The now called Barons Hall (**Image 6**) shows the central fireplace and the lower end of the room with the doors to the buttery and pantry just visible beyond the partition.

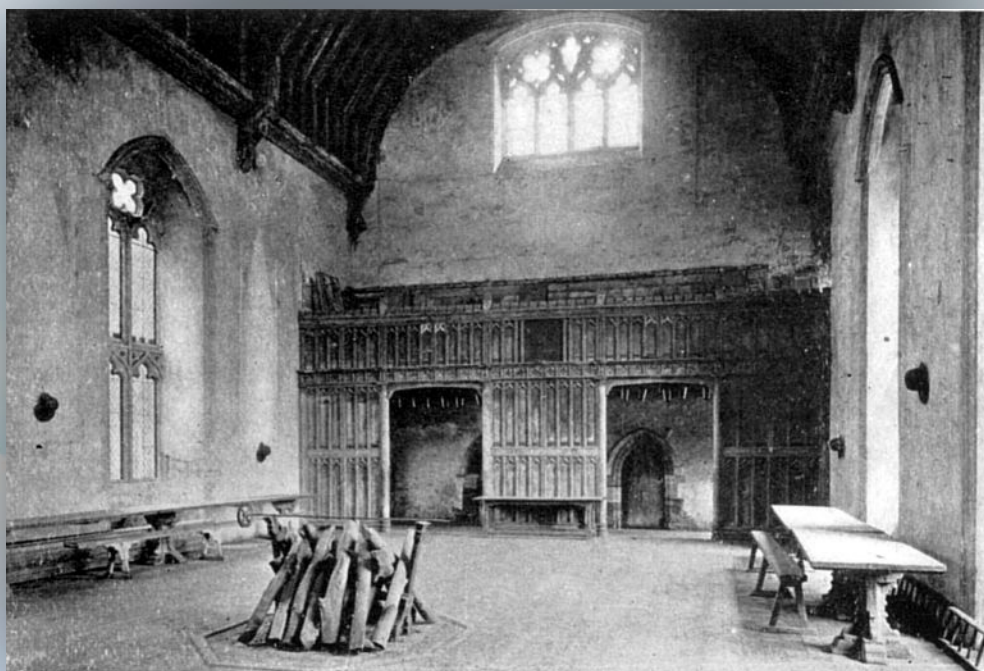


IMAGE 6

This partition, whether of wood or stone hid the passageway and kept the Hall a little warmer in winter. Not all halls did this but many did although few details survive.



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And finally, my best example. Gainsborough Old Hall, which as I am sure you all know, was visited by Richard III.

Image 7, right, is taken from the High Table looking down the Hall. The Fireplace would have been in the closest set of black tiles. The two doors to the pantry and buttery are clear and in this case, really do lead to the 15th C kitchen. A door can be seen on the left – the last signs of the passageway. The door that would have been on the right is now a window.

At the High Table end (**Image 8, on the following page**) is an elaborate bay window which is a later addition but probably replaced a more modest version. **Image 9, on the following page**) is the view from the outside where the window that was once a door is clear. And finally, Gainsborough also has several examples of the lantern that would be in the roof above the open fire. **Image 10** shows one that was removed and is now on display.



From previous page...



IMAGE 9



IMAGE 10



IMAGE 8

All pictures are mine except for images 1 & 6 taken from old books. There are many similar halls throughout England such as Igham Mote, Rufford, Hadden Hall and others, but I haven't visited them yet!

An international Zoom crowd of Ricardians gathered in March to hear bestselling medieval novelist ELIZABETH CHADWICK talk about medieval knight William Marshal, first Earl of Pembroke, known as “the greatest knight who ever lived”. With NEW SOUTH WALES co-ordinator MARNIE LO hosting and historical fiction author FELICITY PULLMAN moderating, the session brought together fans across continents for a lively presentation.

William Marshal: The making of a medieval giant

Elizabeth Chadwick said William Marshal’s life is so vast, so densely packed with drama, danger, and political tightrope-walking, that trying to fit it into a single book feels like sitting on an overstuffed suitcase and hoping the zip will hold.

His story begins in the mid-12th century, in the chaos of England’s civil war between King Stephen and the Empress Matilda—a world of shifting loyalties, besieged castles, and families forced to gamble everything for survival.

Chadwick said Marshal’s father, John FitzGilbert, the royal marshal, was a man of iron will and unshakeable nerve. His job combined security, logistics, and military organisation: overseeing royal horses, armour, prisoners, and the smooth running of the king’s household.

The word “marshal” itself comes from marescal, meaning horse-servant, and the family’s identity was steeped in horsemanship and ironwork.

John even kept forges in Winchester to shoe his men’s horses and supply the royal armoury.

John’s first marriage was annulled for political reasons, and he remarried Sibylla of Salisbury—an advantageous match that connected the family to powerful European networks, including French royalty and the influential Tancarville family of Normandy.

William was their second son, born around 1146 or 1147, though the exact place remains uncertain. Tradition claims Hampstead Marshal, but Chadwick says that Marlborough—John’s strongest fortress—seems more likely.

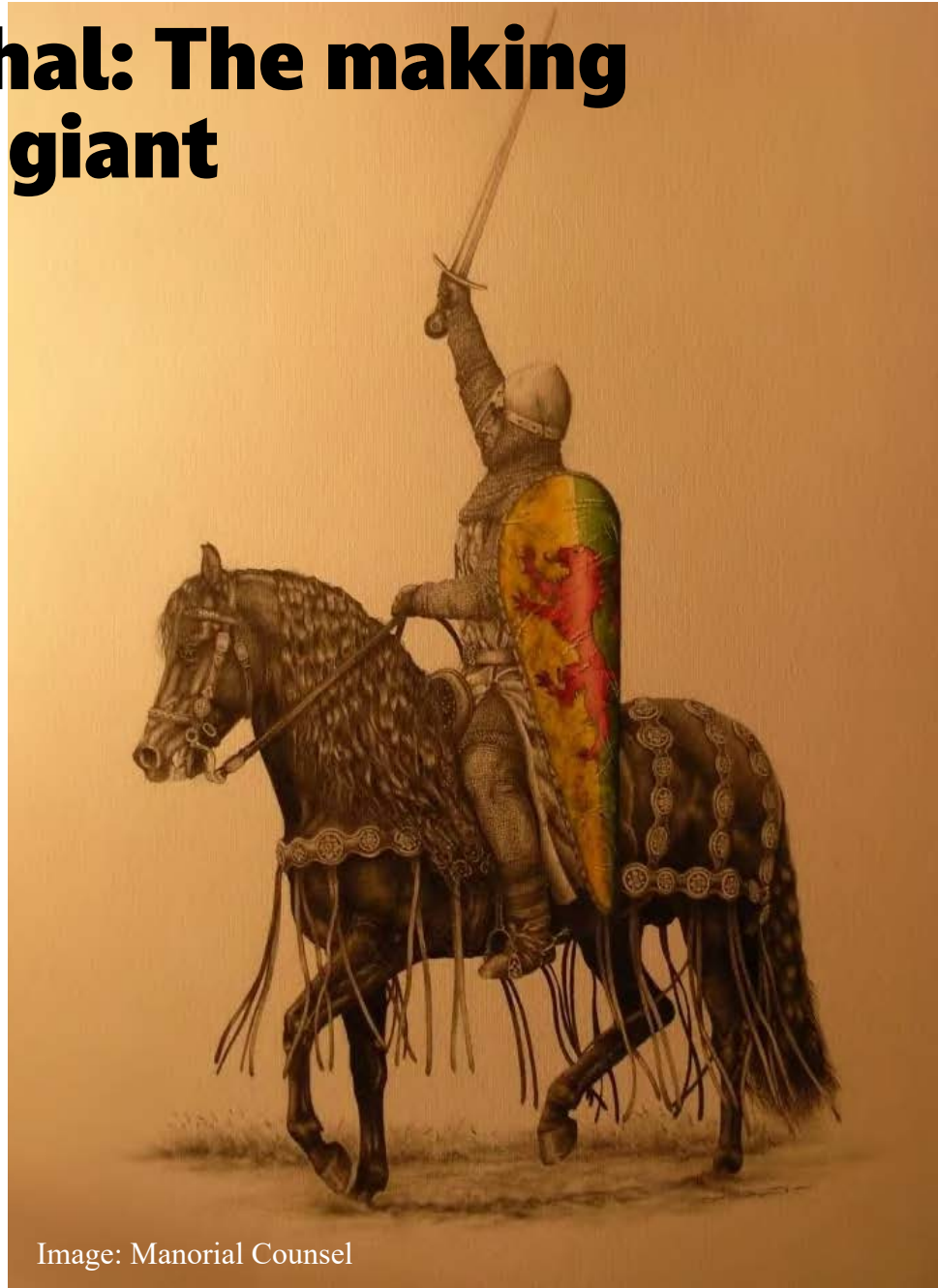
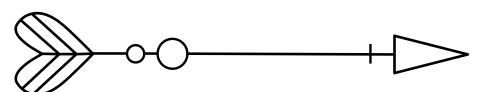


Image: Manorial Counsel

A Child Hostage in a Civil War

William’s first appearance in recorded history is dramatic. Around the age of five, he was handed over as a hostage to King Stephen during a standoff at Newbury Castle. Stephen demanded John surrender the castle; John refused without permission from the Empress. To buy time, he offered hostages—including little William.



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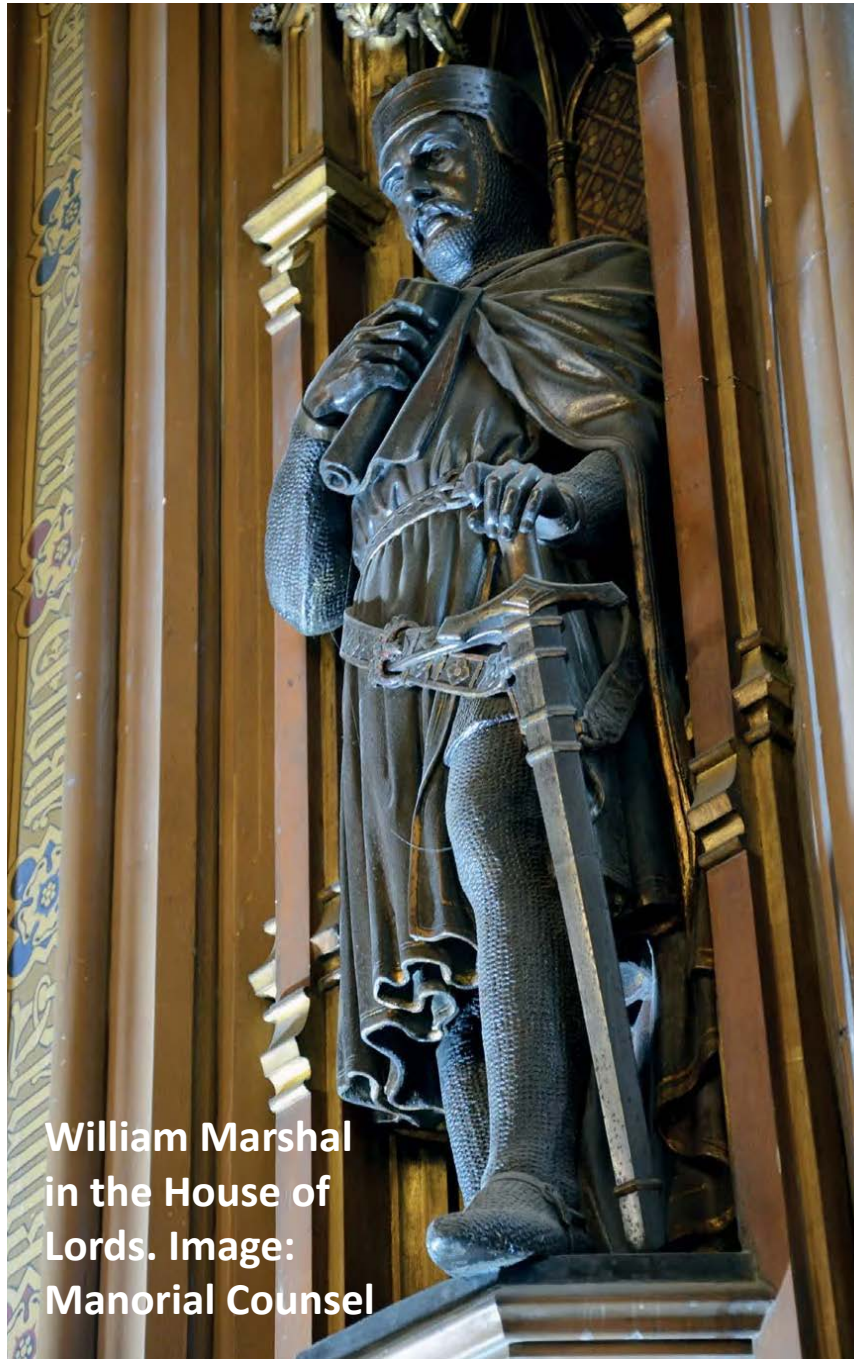
Stephen soon realised John had no intention of yielding. Furious, he threatened to hang the boy, crush him under a mill wheel, or even fling him from a trebuchet. The *Histoire de Guillaume le Maréchal*, the family's epic biography, claims William thought the trebuchet sounded like a marvelous swing. Whether or not John truly uttered the famous line—"I have the anvils and hammers to forge better sons"—the story captures his reputation for unflinching resolve.

Stephen could not bring himself to kill the engaging child who played games with him in camp, and William survived the war. He returned home, grew into a handsome, athletic youth, and—according to the *Histoire*—possessed a "large crotch," meaning a superb seat in the saddle rather than anything more scandalous.

**Training in Normandy:
Guzzleguts and Grit**

In his early teens, William was sent to Normandy to train in the household of his relative William de Tancarville, Chamberlain of Normandy. There he earned the affectionate nickname "Guzzleguts" for his prodigious appetite and love of sleep. Critics muttered he would amount to nothing, but Tancarville insisted the boy had steel in him.

Knighted with ceremony and gifted a fine cloak and warhorse, William seemed set—until war with France swept through Normandy. In a skirmish he lost his horse and was badly wounded by a thatching hook that tore into his shoulder. When peace returned, he found himself an unemployed young knight with no horse, no income, and no prospects.

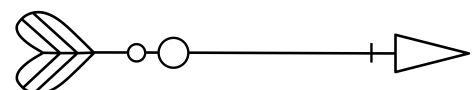


**William Marshal
in the House of
Lords. Image:
Manorial Counsel**

He sold his cloak to buy a cheap riding horse and tried his luck on the tournament circuit. When a new shipment of horses arrived at Tancarville's estate, all the good ones were taken before he arrived—except a troublesome white horse with a painful mouth. Drawing on his family's horsemanship, William adjusted the bridle, solved the problem, and transformed the animal into a superb mount. With it, he began winning tournaments and building a reputation.

**Aquitaine, Ambush, and
the Golden Ticket**

A visit home changed everything. William's uncle, Patrick, Earl of Salisbury, was assembling a retinue to escort Queen Eleanor of Aquitaine. William joined him—and rode straight into an ambush by the Lusignan family. Patrick was killed before he could mount his warhorse, and William fought desperately until he was speared through the thigh and captured.



From previous page...

A sympathetic woman smuggled him bandages hidden in a loaf of bread, and he survived long enough for Eleanor to ransom him. Grateful for his loyalty, she drew him into her household. From that moment, William's fortunes soared. He admired Eleanor deeply, and the *Histoire* even claims he interpreted her name as meaning "pure gold."



Queen Eleanor by Frederick Sandys.
Image: National Museum of Wales

Tutor to a King and Champion of the Tournament Field

Eleanor and Henry II appointed William as tutor and marshal to their eldest surviving son, Henry the Young King. Handsome, charming, and restless, the young king adored the glamour of tournaments. William trained him in arms and courtesy, and together they became the superstars of the tourney circuit—leading teams, capturing opponents for ransom, and earning fame across France and Flanders.

But the Angevin family was a nest of rivalries. Young Henry rebelled against his father twice. William remained loyal to the prince, though he kept diplomatic channels open with Henry II. During the second rebellion, William helped the prince plunder church treasures to pay mercenaries—a stain he later sought to atone for.

Young Henry died of dysentery in 1183. On his deathbed he begged William to fulfil his vow to go on crusade.

William agreed, taking the prince's cloak to Jerusalem and spending three years in the Holy Land.

No one knows exactly what he did there, but he returned with silk burial shrouds gifted by the Templars and a private vow linking him to their order.

Return, Renewal, and Loyalty in a Dying King's Service

Back in England, William rejoined Henry II, who was now at war with his son Richard. At Le Mans, William famously confronted Richard as he charged after his father. Richard wore only light armour; William warned him to turn back. When Richard refused, William struck down his horse but spared the prince's life—a decision that would shape his future.

Henry II soon died, abandoned by many of his household. William found the king's body stripped by servants and restored his dignity before escorting him to burial at Fontevraud.

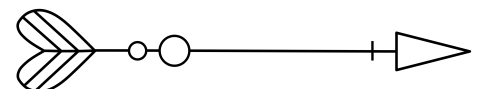
Richard, now king, forgave William instantly. "You could have killed me," he said. William replied simply that he knew exactly where to place a lance. Richard rewarded him with marriage to Isabel de Clare, heiress to vast estates in Ireland, Wales, and England.

Their marriage was affectionate and fruitful; their first son was born nine months after their honeymoon at Stoke D'Abernon.

Service Under Richard and John

William served Richard loyally as a commander in Normandy. After Richard's death in 1199, the succession lay between his nephew Arthur of Brittany and his brother John.

William supported John—a choice the Archbishop of Canterbury warned he would regret.



From previous page...

John rewarded him with the long-delayed title of Earl of Pembroke, but their relationship was uneasy. William eventually withdrew to Ireland, where he founded the port of New Ross and strengthened his estates. John demanded his sons as hostages—a painful concession William accepted with characteristic pragmatism.

Despite John's erratic rule, William remained a stabilising force. He helped negotiate during the crisis that led to Magna Carta, though his exact role remains uncertain. When the French invaded in support of the rebel barons, William's own eldest son fought on the opposing side.

Regent of England: Saving a Kingdom

John died in 1216, leaving a shattered kingdom and a nine-year-old heir, Henry III. The barons elected William Marshal—now in his seventies—as regent of England. According to the *Histoire*, he wept at the enormity of the task.

He set to work immediately:

- **Reuniting the kingdom, persuading rebels (including his own son) to return to the fold**
- **Restoring finances and reissuing *Magna Carta* in a more workable form**
- **Rebuilding military strength despite empty coffers**

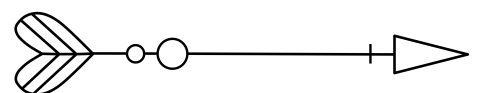
The French army held much of the southeast, and their forces were split between besieging Dover and occupying Lincoln. William marched north and won a decisive victory at the Battle of Lincoln in 1217—a triumph chronicled in detail by modern historians.



He helped negotiate during the crisis that led to Magna Carta, though his exact role remains uncertain. When the French invaded in support of the rebel barons, William's own eldest son fought on the opposing side.

Soon after, a French fleet attempted to bring reinforcements. At Sandwich, the English navy destroyed them. William watched from the cliffs as the notorious pirate Eustace the Monk was captured and beheaded. The spoils were so rich that William funded a hospital from the proceeds.

With their hopes dashed, the French negotiated peace. William insisted the Dauphin appear in his shift—a symbolic humiliation—and paid him to depart. England was saved.



From previous page...



Effigy of William Marshal, with legs crossed.

"...the greatest knight of his age, a diplomat, warrior, statesman, and peacemaker who held a kingdom together when it most needed him."

"Stephen threatened to hang him, crush him, even fling him from a trebuchet—and the boy thought it sounded like a marvellous swing."

"I am still strong enough to know where to plant a lance," William told Richard, "and if I'd wanted you dead, you would be."

"At seventy, he wept at the task before him—then set about saving England anyway."

"Bring me the silks I left in the Temple," he said. "I have kept them thirty years for this moment."

By early 1219, William was gravely ill, likely with cancer. Refusing to die in the Tower of London, he travelled by boat to his manor at Caversham. Over several months he settled his affairs, advised the young king, and prepared his soul.

He sent a trusted knight to retrieve the silk burial shrouds he had hidden for thirty years. His family were astonished. He then revealed a set of Templar robes he had secretly commissioned the year before. At last he took the Templar vows he had long delayed.

In his final days, he asked his daughters to sing to him.

His youngest, Joanna, was shy, and he gently coached her through the song with what breath he had left. On 14 May 1219, holding a cross, William Marshal died with his family around him.

He was buried in the Temple Church in London, wrapped in his silk shrouds. His effigy still lies there today—a stone knight with crossed legs, serene and resolute.

Twenty years after his death, his tenants still spoke of him with affection. The *Histoire*—20,000 lines long—preserves the memory of a man who rose from a hostage child to become the greatest knight of his age, a diplomat, warrior, statesman, and peacemaker who held a kingdom together when it most needed him.

In late February, historian and author ANNETTE CARSON spoke to a global Zoom audience of about 60 Ricardians. In a talk drawn from her new book *Richard III Unspun*, Carson explained her own take on what might have happened during the political earthquake that began at Stony Stratford and ended with the fall of Lord Hastings. The meeting was the result of a collaboration between the Scottish Branch's SANDRA PENDLINGTON and the Mid-Anglia Group. Mid-Anglia's MICHAEL O'GORMAN acted as chairman.

Carson's unspun thread: Pulling apart the yarn of 1483

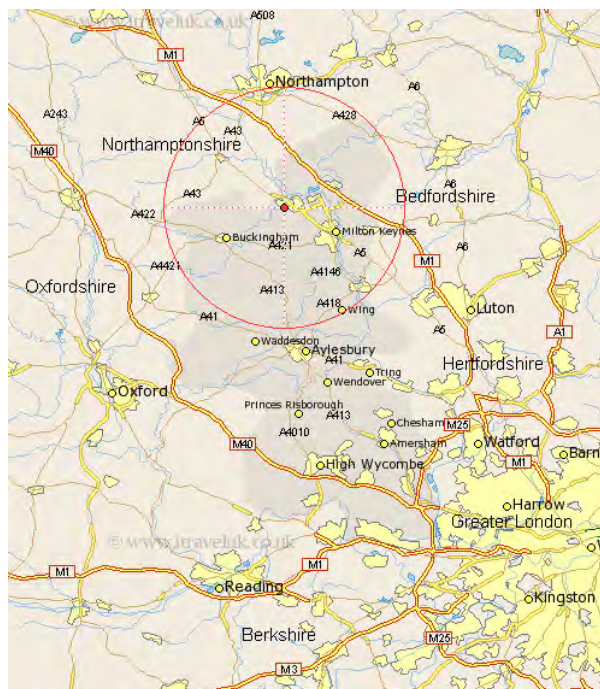
When Edward IV died suddenly in April 1483, a tussle for power was ignited. His heir, the 12-year-old Edward V, was still at Ludlow. The boy's uncle Richard, Duke of Gloucester, was far away in the north. And in London, the Woodville family—relatives of the queen—moved with startling speed to seize the machinery of government.

What followed over the ensuing weeks was a political drama of manoeuvre, mistrust, and miscalculation.

It began on the road to Northampton and ended in the Tower of London with the execution of one of the most powerful men in the realm. Thanks to the Italian observer Domenico Mancini—and the likely testimony of the king's own physician, Dr John Argentine—Annette Carson suggests a reconstruction of these events with clarity.

Richard's journey south began in mourning. He gathered a modest escort and set out to meet the young king so they could enter London together in a show of unity.

But in Westminster, the Woodville-dominated council had already begun ruling without the king. They levied unauthorised taxes, emptied the treasury to fund a naval venture, and appointed their own men to national commands that properly fell under Richard's authority.



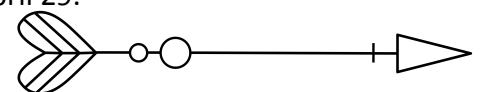
Bullseye on Stony Stratford: This is a modern map, but illustrates how important the events of Stony Stratford were to the fate of England on April 29, 1483. Image iTravelUK.com

Most significantly, they declared there would be no protectorate, as Edward IV had desired. Edward V, they insisted, would be crowned immediately and rule with many advisors, which effectively meant Woodville control.

Richard wrote urgently, reminding the council that precedent existed for a reason. But the Woodvilles pressed ahead. The stage was set for confrontation.

The detour that changed everything

The royal party left Ludlow with a 2,000-strong escort—capped only after Lord Hastings protested. Richard and the Duke of Buckingham agreed to rendezvous with the king at Northampton on April 29.



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But as Mancini records, something extraordinary happened.

Instead of the king's retinue proceeding to Northampton, Earl Rivers diverted them to Stony Stratford, a small roadside township. The king's household spent the night not in the great walled town prepared to receive him, but—very probably—at the Woodville manor at Grafton, just a few miles away from their Welsh escort camped at Stony Stratford, ready to march at dawn.

Rivers meanwhile remained to “explain” the change to Richard at Northampton.

Richard accepted the explanation with outward courtesy, dining with Rivers in what Mancini calls a “feast.” But the snub was unmistakable. And when Buckingham arrived later that night with news of the Woodvilles' actions in London, Richard's suspicions hardened.

He had been manoeuvred behind the king. He was being forced to ride 15 miles before dawn down unfamiliar by-roads through the Woodville estates. And he remembered all too well how, on a similar route, his brother Edward IV had once been ambushed near Northampton.

Richard takes control

Before leaving Northampton, Richard arrested Rivers. On the road to Stony Stratford, he encountered Richard Grey, the queen's son, unexpectedly arrived from London with an unauthorised contingent that now exceeded the cap of 2,000 men. Grey and a few others were detained.

Richard then dismissed the entire Welsh escort. The boy king, now safe from factional manipulation, travelled with Richard to London.

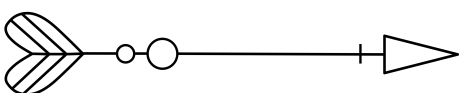
The Woodvilles attempted to raise an army but failed. On May 8, the council formally appointed Richard Protector. For a moment, the kingdom steadied.

But another crisis was already brewing.



"Only recently have I realized that the Stony Stratford and Hastings incidents belong together, though the former has been sadly under-examined and the latter vastly over-dramatised."

Annette Carson



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The Hastings Problem

Lord Hastings had been one of Edward IV's closest companions—a man who rose through proximity to the king's private life and who had made many enemies. Mancini describes him as a participant in Edward's "private gratifications," and his long feud with the Woodvilles had earned him public rebuke.

With Edward IV gone, Hastings' position was precarious. Richard's stricter moral standards already left little room for a courtier of Hastings' reputation. Then suddenly Edward IV's bigamy was revealed.

In Carson's timeline, the first indication of this took place at a Great Council on Monday June 9. It would demand far-reaching investigations together with legal arguments under Church law and common law. Hastings acted four days later on June 13. Carson dismisses the idea that Hastings' actions at such an early stage were to prevent Richard stealing the Edward V's throne. She proposes a more subtle reason.

In this situation the reality was that all eyes would turn against Hastings, who had facilitated Edward's debauchery, arranged meetings, concealed liaisons, or enabled his behaviour. Hastings, who had been at the king's side for years, would be targeted by his enemies and blamed for putting the succession in jeopardy. His honours, his influence, could be stripped away and he faced a wilderness of humiliation.



"The contemporary evidence suggests something far simpler:

Hastings gambled on a coup. And he lost."

Pictured left: Hastings' garter stall plate, invested in 1462.

A coup in the making

Cornered, he made a desperate choice.

Mancini reports that Hastings entered into secret meetings with Bishop Morton and Archbishop Rotherham. Carson, uniquely, has considered what the conspiracy might have planned. She proposes that the action to strike at Richard had to take place at the Tower of London because of the proximity to the king nearby in the royal apartments.

If Richard were seized or killed, Hastings could present himself as the saviour who had thwarted a plot and claim the protectorship for himself.

But Richard had been warned.

When the conspirators entered the council chamber, Hastings was found to be carrying concealed weapons. Richard immediately called in his guards.

Hastings was tried in the Constable's Court—an accepted legal process for treason—and executed.

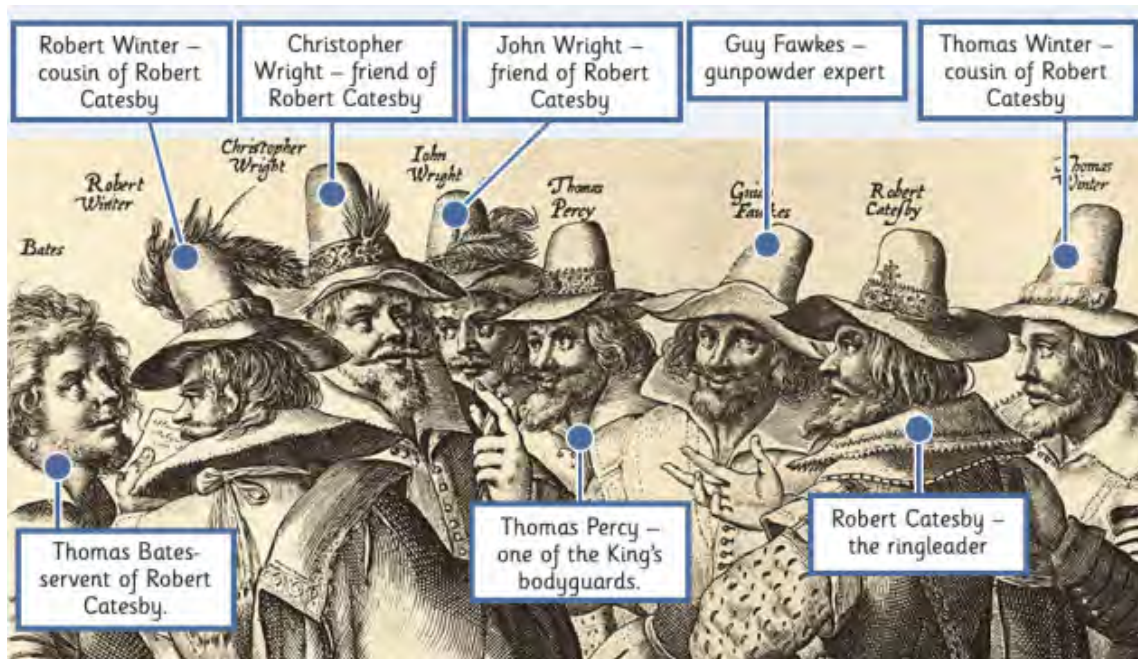
The bishops and others were arrested but later released. Richard ensured Hastings was buried honourably near Edward IV at Windsor and treated his widow generously.

In the aftermath, Hastings' supporters claimed he had acted to prevent Richard from seizing the throne. But this was a narrative based on political assumptions and propounded by later chroniclers—especially Thomas More—who relied heavily on Bishop Morton's self-exonerating version of events.

The contemporary evidence suggests something far simpler:

Hastings gambled on a coup. And he lost.

The Gunpowder Plot...



Many of the men who planned or supported the plot...were bound not only by recusant Catholicism but by blood, marriage, or loyalty to families whose fortunes had risen under Richard III and fallen under the Tudors.

Last echo of the Wars of the Roses

New Zealand Branch member MARK PATRICK argues that the first major act of domestic terrorism in English history was not only a Catholic uprising but the final Ricardian-rooted attempt to overturn a Tudor-Stuart succession.

The Gunpowder Plot of 1605 is usually remembered as a violent confrontation between militant English Catholics and a Protestant state.

Yet beneath the religious narrative lies a deeper, older fault line: the long shadow of the Plantagenets, the contested Yorkist legacy, and the political memory of Richard III.

Many of the men who planned or supported the plot—and several who joined the earlier Essex Rebellion of 1601—were bound not only by recusant Catholicism but by blood, marriage, or loyalty to families whose fortunes had risen under Richard III and fallen under the Tudors.

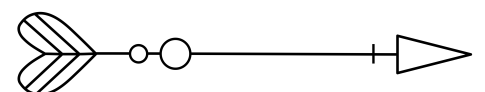
The starting point is the question of the “Ricardian heir”—a hypothetical succession line based on Richard III’s own reckoning in 1485...

The plot can therefore be read as the culmination of a century-long struggle over legitimacy, succession, and identity, in which Ricardian loyalties and grievances helped shape what became the first major act of domestic terrorism in English history.

The starting point is the question of the “Ricardian heir”—a hypothetical succession line based on Richard III’s own reckoning in 1485, excluding the children of Edward IV and Elizabeth Woodville and the attainted line of George, Duke of Clarence.

Under this logic, the senior heirs in 1600 were not the Tudors, nor even Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex—though he believed himself descended from Richard’s sister Isabelle of Cambridge—but the Manners family, Earls of Rutland, descended from Anne, Duchess of Exeter, sister to Edward IV, George, and Richard III.

The 5th, 6th, and 7th Earls of Rutland could have been considered as such; descended from Richard’s sister, Anne, Duchess of Exeter. These same earls were implicated in Essex’s Rebellion, a political rising that foreshadowed the Gunpowder Plot in both personnel and purpose.



From previous page...



The Essex Rebellion in 1601. Some of the men who supported this were also involved in the Gunpowder Plot four years later.

Image: A depiction of Essex's men and their London mob allies (Wordpress)

The Ricardian thread becomes clearer when we examine the families at the heart of the plot. Robert Catesby, its architect, was the great-great-grandson of William Catesby—Richard III's Chancellor of the Exchequer, Speaker of the House of Commons, and one of the king's closest advisors. William Catesby died for Richard's cause at Bosworth in 1485, and the family never regained its former influence under the Tudors.

Some of the men who supported the Essex Rebellion in 1601 were also involved in the Gunpowder Plot four years later.

Robert Catesby was fined over a million pounds in modern value after the Essex Rebellion and his family had long suffered under the recusancy laws. The Catesbys thus carried both a political and a confessional grievance: a sense of dispossession dating back to 1485, compounded by the punitive anti-Catholic measures of Elizabeth's reign.

The Throckmortons of Coughton Court—another central family in the plot—also had deep Ricardian and Plantagenet associations.

They claimed to own a chair reputedly made from the bed slept in by Richard III the night before he died, a symbolic relic of loyalty.

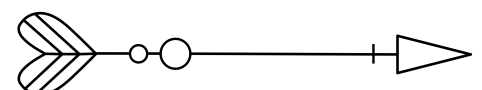
Their kinship network linked them to the Poles (descendants of George, Duke of Clarence), the Courtenays, and the Ardens, all families disadvantaged or destroyed by Tudor policy.

The Throckmortons produced multiple conspirators across the 16th century, including Francis Throckmorton (executed 1584) and the mothers of both Robert Catesby and Francis Tresham. Coughton Court itself became the Midlands base of the Gunpowder Plot—it could be said that the latter was a second attempt of the former.

The Wright brothers, John and Christopher, were Yorkshiremen educated at St Peter's School, York—a region and institution with strong Catholic and residual Ricardian sympathies. The North had rebelled twice against Tudor rule, in 1536 and 1569, in part because antipathy for the Tudor's Protestantism may have caused Northerners to remember Richard III's Government.

Many in the North still believed Edward IV's marriage to Elizabeth Woodville had been invalid, and thus saw the Tudor line as usurping. The Wrights' involvement in the Essex Rebellion and later the Gunpowder Plot reflects this blend of regional identity, religious grievance, and inherited political memory.

Thomas Percy, another key conspirator, was connected to the Wrights by marriage and to the Earl of Northumberland by blood. The Percys had been powerful northern magnates under the Plantagenets and had a long history of rebellion against Tudor centralisation. The 9th Earl's mother was a Neville—another great northern house tied to Richard III—and the family had shown sympathy to earlier Catholic plots. Percy's role in the Plot thus continued a tradition of northern resistance rooted in both faith and dynastic memory.



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The Wintours, cousins of Catesby, were similarly embedded in this network of recusant, Plantagenet-connected families. Their grandmother Katherine Throckmorton linked them to the same Ricardian-descended kinship web that produced Catesby and Tresham. The document emphasises that many of the plotters' fathers had been heavily fined and imprisoned for being Roman Catholics in Queen Elizabeth's reign, reinforcing the sense of generational persecution.

Even the Devereux family, though Protestant, carried Ricardian echoes. Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex, believed himself the senior descendant of Isabelle of Cambridge, Richard III's sister. His ancestors had fought and died on Richard's side at Bosworth, and his rebellion in 1601 drew in the Earls of Rutland—those same Ricardian heirs by blood. Essex's circle overlapped heavily with that of the gunpowder conspirators: the Wrights, Tresham, Catesby, and others had been involved in or imprisoned after the Essex Rebellion. The Gunpowder Plot thus grew from the ashes of Essex's failed rising, inheriting its personnel, its grievances, and its underlying challenge to the Tudor-Stuart succession.

The political context of the 1590s intensified these older loyalties.



Image AI generated

Elizabeth I's refusal to name an heir, the death of Ferdinando Stanley (a leading claimant through Mary Tudor), and the exclusion of the Grey line created a volatile environment in which succession debates revived dormant Plantagenet claims.

Shakespeare's history plays—Richard II, Richard III, Henry VI—emerged in this climate, dramatising contested legitimacy and the fall of rightful kings. The document notes that Shakespeare's Richard III was written around the time of Ferdinando Stanley's suspicious death, and that the play's depiction of scoliosis echoed the condition of Robert Cecil, Essex's rival.

These cultural currents reinforced the sense that the Tudor settlement was fragile. When James VI of Scotland succeeded Elizabeth in 1603, many English Catholics hoped for toleration. Instead, recusancy fines continued, and the government—led by Robert Cecil—remained suspicious of Catholic loyalty. The plotters' aim was to blow up Parliament, killing King James 1st and others, to make Princess Elizabeth Queen.

This was not merely a religious coup but an attempt to reset the succession and restore a political order more favourable to the old northern and midland families whose fortunes had declined since 1485. In this sense, the Gunpowder Plot was the final, desperate expression of a Ricardian political identity that had survived underground for over a century.

It fused dynastic memory, regional resentment, and religious persecution into a single catastrophic act. The conspirators were not simply Catholics—they were the descendants of men who had fought for Richard III, suffered under the Tudors, and maintained interlinked family networks of resistance.

Yet the deeper story—of how Richard III's legacy shaped the loyalties, grievances, and identities of the men who tried to destroy Parliament—reveals the enduring power of dynastic memory in shaping political violence.

Without John of Gaunt, there would have been no Richard III, no Henry Tudor, and no Wars of the Roses in the form we know. His actions and legacy shaped the royal family lines that followed, making him one of the most important figures in England's political history. In Part 2 of her series, New Zealand member KAYE BATCHELOR summarises his importance through the conflicts, politics, social and cultural forces that shaped him and his legacy.

The forces that shaped the Red Prince

Conflicts

John campaigned in France and Spain, taking part in major operations such as the 1367 effort to restore Pedro I to the throne of Castile and León and the 1373 campaign (called a *chevauchée*) through France. He commanded forces, undertook sieges, and sustained the martial reputation expected of a royal prince. His wealth enabled him to rely on paid troops rather than depending solely on traditional feudal service from knights, retainers, and locally raised men.

By marrying Constance of Castile, John claimed the Castilian throne and led an expedition in the 1380s to enforce that claim. Although the campaign failed to win him the crown, it secured important dynastic marriages and kept a Plantagenet presence in Iberian politics. His efforts also strengthened England's ties with Castile and Portugal, shaping diplomatic and family alliances that lasted long after the military venture ended.

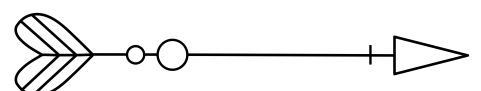
John also played an active part in England's naval and coastal warfare. He was involved in the maritime fighting during the wars with Castile, including clashes at sea and efforts to protect English shipping.



A portrait commissioned c. 1593 by Sir Edward. Probably modelled on Gaunt's tomb effigy in Old St Paul's Cathedral. Image Wikipedia.

He also took part in raids and siege operations along the French coasts, supporting wider English campaigns in the Channel and on the continent. These actions show that his military experience extended beyond land and reflected the growing importance of naval power in fourteenth-century warfare.

Fighting along the English - Scottish border continued throughout the 1370s and 1380s, with raids and counter-raids a constant feature of life in the north. John was regularly involved in managing this tense frontier and often took part in diplomacy as well as military planning.



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Political role, power, and influence

As the Black Prince grew ill and Edward III aged, John took on major responsibilities in government and became one of the most influential figures at court. His wealth and status made him the leading nobleman of his generation. After Edward III's death, he remained central to politics during Richard II's minority and early reign. He worked between rival court factions, sometimes acting as a mediator between the king's favourites and the wider nobility, and he kept significant control over administration and patronage. These roles show how deeply involved John was in running the kingdom during a period of political uncertainty and transition.

John often faced rivalry from courtiers, nobles, and senior churchmen, and at times he aligned himself with reformers like John Wycliffe to push back against clerical influence in politics. His long absence from England during the Castilian campaign (1386 - 1389) left a major gap in royal politics and contributed to the instability that followed. Without his moderating presence, tensions at court grew, leading to the Merciless Parliament, where the Lords Appellant (a group of powerful nobles that included John's own son, Henry of Bolingbroke) moved against Richard II's advisers and favourites. John's absence, and the political crisis that unfolded in it, shows how central he had become to the balance of power in late fourteenth-century England.

Although John took part in northern commissions and helped organise military defences, he also worked actively as a diplomat with Scottish leaders.

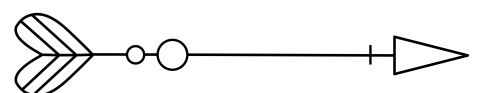


Image courtesy Inspirational Christians

John often faced rivalry from courtiers, nobles, and senior churchmen, and at times he aligned himself with reformers like John Wycliffe to push back against clerical influence in politics.

He played a key role in negotiating truces and border agreements at times when a full-scale war would have been ruinously expensive for both kingdoms. His efforts helped limit violence along the frontier, protect local communities, and keep the peace long enough for more stable settlements to be discussed. This mix of military readiness and careful diplomacy shows how John tried to manage the northern border through both force and negotiation, depending on the situation.

John's income from his estates gave him the financial strength to maintain large personal retinues, which in turn reinforced his authority across the regions he controlled. This wealth allowed him to influence local government, reward loyal supporters, and place Lancastrian allies in important positions throughout the kingdom. His resources were therefore not just a sign of status but a practical tool that helped him build and sustain a powerful political network.



From previous page...

Key social events

The first major force shaping John's world was the Black Death. The great outbreak of 1348–50, followed by later recurrences, caused severe labour shortages, rising wages, and growing tension between lords and peasants. It also increased the Crown's need for revenue at a time when traditional feudal structures were weakening.

John grew up and built his career in this unsettled environment, and many of the political challenges he faced, from taxation debates to local unrest, were rooted in these long-term social and economic shifts.

Edward III's long wars in France added further strain. Heavy military spending led to repeated tax demands, including the poll taxes of 1377, 1379, and the notorious third poll tax of 1380-81. These levies fuelled widespread resentment toward the king's government and toward prominent nobles seen as responsible for royal policy. As one of the most visible and powerful magnates in the realm, John became an obvious target for public frustration, even when he was not directly responsible for the decisions being criticised.



Richard II meeting with the rebels of the Peasants' Revolt of 1381 | Jean Froissart | Public Domain | cropped from original

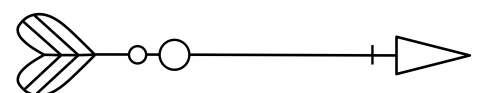
This resentment reached its peak during the Peasants' Revolt of 1381. John was widely blamed for misgovernment and heavy taxation, and his wealth and his grand Savoy Palace made him a symbol of elite excess. While he was away in the north negotiating with the Scots, rebels led by Wat Tyler attacked and burned the Savoy and damaged other Lancastrian properties. Although John had no part in triggering the uprising, contemporaries and later chroniclers often singled him out as one of Richard II's "evil counsellors", turning him into a convenient figurehead for the anger that drove the revolt.

Culture and patronage

John invested heavily in Leicester Castle and in the town's administration, and he became closely linked with local generosity and hospitality.

Leicester kept strong memories of him and his household, and places named "John O'Gaunt's" show how lasting that connection was. As Duke of Lancaster, he oversaw a wide network of estates across England, run through a well-organised administrative system. Surviving records show his careful attention to local offices, manorial rights, and income, all of which supported stable local government and provided work for many of his tenants and dependants.

John's household in Leicester and his other residences became gathering places for poets, clerks, diplomats, scholars, administrators, and churchmen. This shows how actively he supported both local culture and the wider courtly world.



From previous page...



His life overlapped with the long aftermath of the Black Death, the growing power of Parliament, new lay ideas that pointed toward later religious reform, shifts in warfare and lordship, and the move away from French and Latin toward English as a language of culture and public life.

His patronage created jobs, learning, and opportunities for the towns he ruled, and his wider network of followers - his affinity - became a lively centre for people involved in literature, government, and religious life. Geoffrey Chaucer was among John's best-known visitors, helped by the fact that his wife, Philippa, was the sister of Katherine Swynford. Through these networks, John helped foster a cultural environment that linked provincial centres like Leicester to the intellectual and artistic life of the royal court.

John opened Parliament in 1363 using English instead of Anglo-Norman or Latin, reflecting the recent shift in royal government toward using the vernacular in public and legal settings. This followed the 1362 Pleading in English Act, which recognised English as the language most people understood and required it for court proceedings. By speaking English in Parliament, John put this new policy into practice and made government business easier for the Commons and local representatives to follow. The choice also helped strengthen a sense of English political identity, marking a move away from the older, French-influenced culture of the elite.

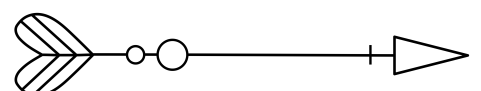
Dynastic importance and legacy

John founded the House of Lancaster and, through his son Henry IV, began the Lancastrian rule of England. His Beaufort children, once legitimised, went on to play major roles in fifteenth-century politics. His marriages created important international links, especially with Castile and Portugal, giving the Plantagenets influence across the Channel and into Iberia. The wealth, alliances, and patronage John built up over his lifetime helped make Henry IV's seizure of the throne in 1399 possible and laid the groundwork for the later struggles between the Lancastrians and Yorkists.

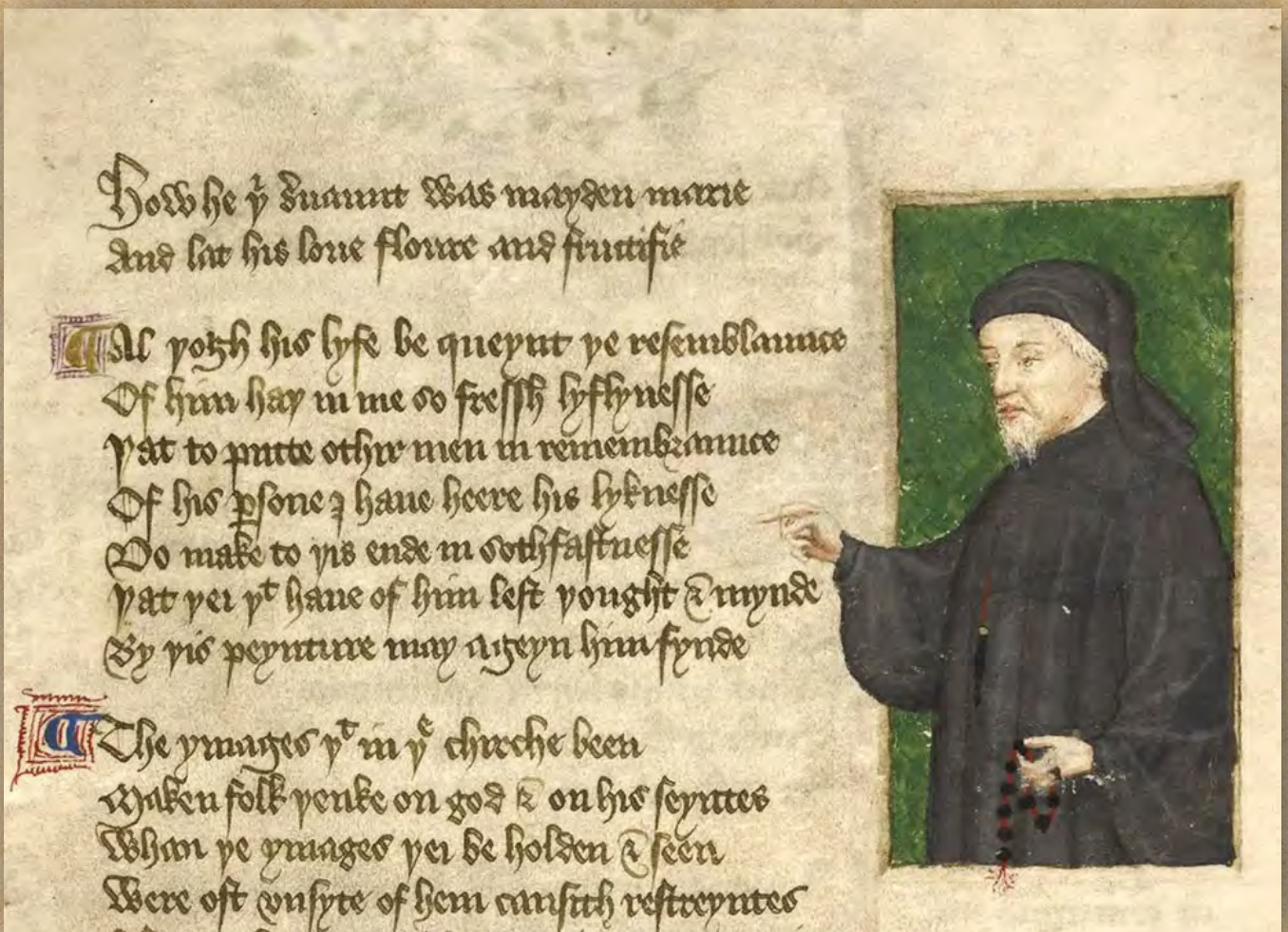
Conclusion

John of Gaunt lived at a time of major social, cultural, and political change in England. His life overlapped with the long aftermath of the Black Death, the growing power of Parliament, new lay ideas that pointed toward later religious reform, shifts in warfare and lordship, and the move away from French and Latin toward English as a language of culture and public life.

John's career unfolded at a time when Parliament, especially the Commons, was becoming more confident and demanding greater control over taxation and royal officials.



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A portrait of Geoffrey Chaucer from the Regiment of Princes, c1400-1450. Courtesy the British Library

He worked within this changing political world as a major noble and an experienced royal administrator. His long service on the king's council, his involvement in raising and defending taxes for war, and the way he became a target of public anger during financial crises all show how the crown, the great lords, and the Commons were renegotiating power in new ways.

Some nobles, including John, were open to early ideas of religious reform. He supported John Wycliffe when church authorities tried to prosecute him and helped shield those who criticised papal and clerical power. At the same time, the social and economic changes of the fourteenth century, especially after the Black Death, weakened old feudal ties and changed how war was fought.

John's use of paid troops shows how warfare was becoming more organised and money-driven, even though older chivalric ideals and personal loyalties still mattered. His households and patronage also linked him to writers and to the growing importance of English as a literary language. As a major patron, he helped spread new tastes that favoured English for poetry and public expression.

John's family and alliances show how noblewomen were becoming more visible and active in public life. His wives and daughters made international marriages and played real roles in courts and households. Their experiences reflect wider changes in the late fourteenth century, when aristocratic women gained more education, more political influence, and a greater part in diplomacy.



From previous page...

John's reputation differed sharply depending on who was writing about him. Some chroniclers were openly hostile, while many people who knew him valued his good management and local generosity. Writers like Jean Froissart painted him as a wealthy, self-interested lord and one of the king's "evil counsellors". Modern historians point out that this harsh image often reflects political rivalries and public resentment rather than John's actual record.

His great wealth, his prominent London home, and his involvement in royal finances made him an easy target for wider frustrations.

John of Gaunt's life shows how he stood between two worlds. He was a powerful feudal lord, with great wealth and large followings that reflected older forms of authority, yet he also worked confidently in newer political, intellectual, and cultural settings.

Through his support of reform-minded thinkers, his increasingly professional approach to warfare and administration, and the far-reaching careers of his children, he played a central part in England's shift from the medieval world toward the early modern one.

In the end, John of Gaunt stands at the crossroads of late-medieval English history. His political power, his vast estates, his children and their marriages, and the networks he built shaped every major royal claim of the fifteenth century.



Left: Geoffrey Chaucer reciting *Troilus and Criseyde* to the court of Richard II. Early 15th-century manuscript of the work. John of Gaunt is probably among the courtiers. It has been suggested that Katherine is the woman in blue, bottom left. But Katherine's biographer Alison Weir doubts it.

Through his daughter Joan Beaufort, he became the grandfather of Cecily Neville and therefore the great-grandfather of Richard III himself. The Lancastrian dynasty rose through his son Henry IV; the Yorkist cause drew strength and legitimacy from his descendants; and the Tudor line existed only because of the Beaufort family he fathered and legitimised.

Without John of Gaunt, there would have been no Richard III, no Henry Tudor, and no Wars of the Roses in the form we know. His actions and legacy shaped the royal family lines that followed, making him one of the most important figures in England's political history.

Impressive breadth of research

Normal Women: 900 Years of Making History
By Philippa Gregory

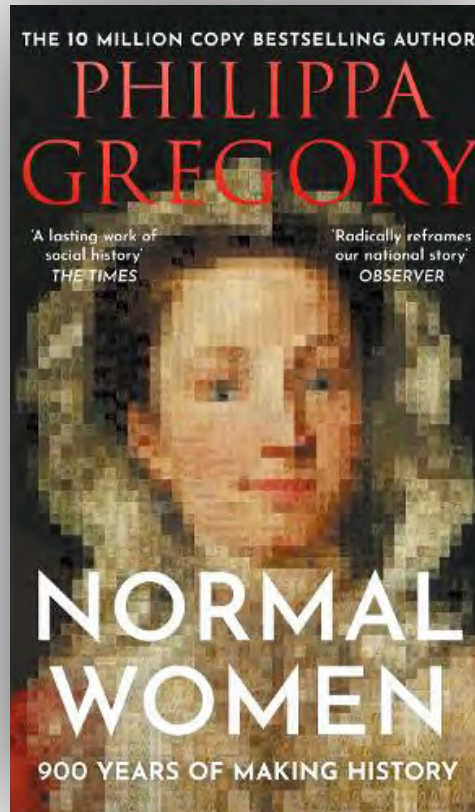
Reviewed by Annette Parry

This “weighty tome” - perfect for the beach, an airport, or the train commuting to work - illustrates British history with snippets of the lives of ordinary women.

Some of their lives are just illustrated by a quick line in a will, or a court-case, but Philippa shows us that women have been more powerful over some times in history than we have thought.

I was most impressed at her comments about the Peasants’ Revolt – we know it was a revolt against a poll-tax, but it started more because married women were to be taxed as if they were femmes sole, instead of a married couple only paying tax on the husband. There were many times when being married was an advantage in that you were not responsible for your debts or bad behaviour - your husband was.

It did get a bit tedious as Philippa rages against the patriarchy – see the Restoration where men were restored as the head of the land – and Mary II and Anne did nothing to advance women. It is very broad in reach and we zoom quickly through the centuries, illustrated by women working in many professions, or marrying (or not), competing or co-operating with other women, fighting or being victims of violence.

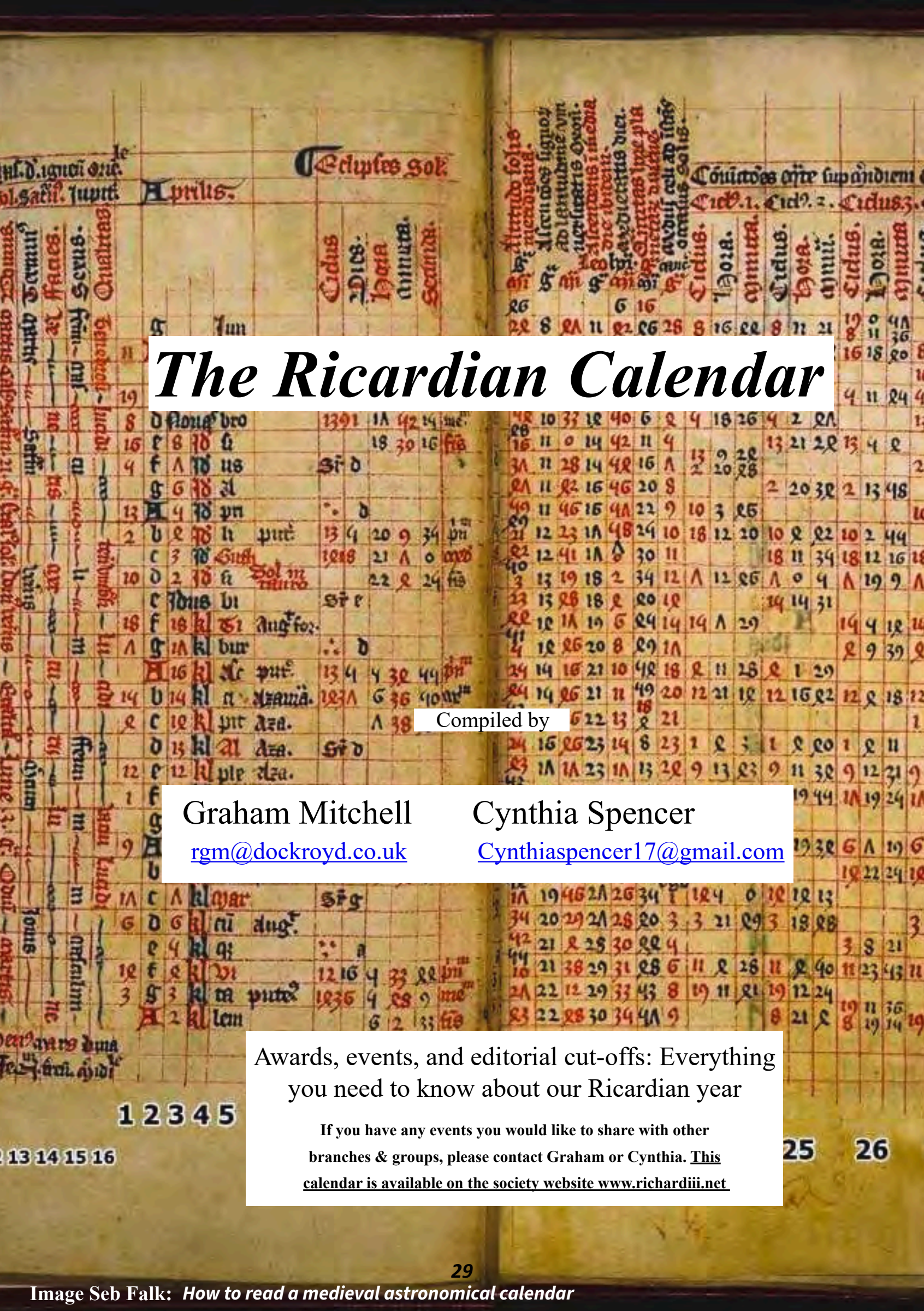


I spent most of the book going “Gosh, I didn’t know that” - which was better than going “I’m sure that’s not right”, even if she said William III had no right to the throne (he did have a claim, but not as good as Mary’s or Anne’s and she uses it to illustrate men’s control over women).

Misogyny seemed to be less in Anglo-Saxon times, before 1066, than later, but there were shifts later on when women’s rights were reduced. Men and women were both accused of witchcraft until about the 17thC when women were more likely to be “witches”, because men had formed professional guilds for medicine and surgery and could rubbish herbalists and “cunning women”.

The big thing about this book is the sense of injustice for women over the centuries. This is upsetting reading about “olden times” but much worse when Philippa tackles issues of the last 20 years up to the present day. I know UK law is different than ours but some of these issues have still been an issue in New Zealand recently. And the roll-call of murdered women in one calendar year in the UK was very upsetting. Sisters, the struggle has not finished - unfortunately.

As it is a book to dip into, there is quite a bit of repetition and she is a bit obsessed with cross-dressing women, whatever the reason that they chose to dress as men. But I was impressed at the breadth of her research.



Eclipses Sol.

Aprilis.

Cidus.
Dias.
Loria.
Anima.
Secunda.

Altitudo solis
et meridiana.
Ascensioes signoz
ad latitudine vni.
uerſitatis Oxoni.
Alcentiois i media
die ibidem.
Loci arietis dicit.
Orbitas hinc pla
nities dicitur.
Abduz celli ap istis
omnis solis.

Couitioes ante sup andiem

The Ricardian Calendar

Compiled by

Graham Mitchell
rgm@dockroyd.co.uk

Cynthia Spencer
Cynthiaspencer17@gmail.com

Awards, events, and editorial cut-offs: Everything you need to know about our Ricardian year

If you have any events you would like to share with other branches & groups, please contact Graham or Cynthia. [This calendar is available on the society website www.richardiii.net](http://www.richardiii.net)

1 2 3 4 5

13 14 15 16

25 26

Scandalous Liaisons

There are still places available for *Scandalous Liaisons*, the Leicestershire Branch Study Day on May 16, 2026. It will be held at Richard III Visitor Centre, 4A St. Martins, Leicester. LE1 5DB

The programme will feature talks on –

A Questionable Marriage? by Dr. Lynda Pidgeon

The Oil of Ulay Lady by Frances Sparrow

The Black Prince and Joan of Kent by Dr.

Michael Jones

Edward III and Alice Perrers by Gemma Hollman FHistS

Tickets are £27 (cheques payable to Richard III Society Leicestershire branch) and include morning and afternoon refreshments.

Own arrangements for lunch.

A booking form was in the December *Bulletin* or contact the branch secretary for more details and a booking form:

Sally Henshaw, 28 Lyncroft Leys, Scraptoft, Leicestershire. LE7

9UW sallyoftarahill@gmail.com Tel : 01162433785

We are unable to offer refunds for this event.



**The RICHARD III
SOCIETY**

**YORKSHIRE
BRANCH**



MIDDLEHAM FESTIVAL - SATURDAY 4 JULY

**The Church of ST MARY &
ST ALKELDA, Middleham**

Hosted by the Yorkshire Branch of the Richard III Society

Our renowned presenters:

11.00 am Andrew Slade in his one-man drama ...

"1 King, 2 Princes & Shakespeare's Lie"

1.00 pm Richard Goddard Chair of the Tewkesbury Battlefield Society

"The Route to, and the Battle of Tewkesbury"

2.30 pm Actor-Director Thomas Dennis & Author Matt Lewis

"A Taste of Loyalty: Richard at the Battle of Barnet"

Day Tickets: £25

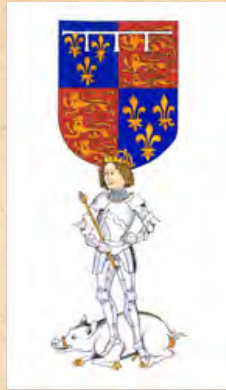
Gives admission to all three presentations
Individual Presentation Tickets: £10

Please note: refreshments are not permitted in the Church

**Tickets may be booked from the Yorkshire Branch
Secretary:**

rgm@dockroyd.co.uk or on 01535 645 454

Don't miss what promises to be a fascinating and memorable day !



MIDDLEHAM FESTIVAL - SUNDAY 5 JULY

The Richard III Hall, Key Centre, Middleham

CELEBRATING PRINCE EDWARD OF MIDDLEHAM

Join us for a special day marking the probable 550th anniversary of the birth of Prince Edward, the only son of King Richard III and Queen Anne Neville

Our outstanding speakers include:

- ✿ **Philippa Langley MBE, writer and producer** will be speaking about Prince Edward himself, his life and the great personal loss from his death.
- ✿ **Matt Lewis, author and broadcaster** will be exploring Edward's role and historical context, including the constitutional crisis his death caused.
- ✿ **Toni Mount, historian and author** will be discussing the realities of medieval childhood, looking at baby care, early years and preparation for adult life which began at around 7.

Hosted by the Richard III Society, this fascinating event will explore the life of the young prince, his role—however brief—on the political stage and what childhood was like in the medieval world.

Event Details Time: 11:00 am – 4:15 pm

Tickets: £35 (pre-booking only)

Tickets can be booked using the form obtained from the Secretary at: secretary@richardiii.net.

Includes:

- Two servings of tea, coffee and biscuits
- Buffet lunch with tea and coffee

Places are limited so don't miss out. Secure your place and make a day of it!



**Richard III Society
Australasian Convention**

Wellington New Zealand
6-8 November 2026



Hosted by the New Zealand Branch of the Richard III Society

Presentations include:

Medieval embroidery

Isabelle of Cambridge & the Gunpowder Plot

Lady Anne Mowbray

“Ham & Cheese”

Expressions of interest by potential presenters are welcome

Our central hotel is a gateway to the city's vibrant life, with easy access to transport, shopping, and stunning waterfronts. It's perfect for those eager to explore alongside family and friends, who are warmly invited to join our social events.

The conference welcomes all curious minds, not just Richard III Society members. Registration is NZD260 and includes delightful catering, culminating in a grand Convention Dinner. Enjoy a welcoming reception on Friday, followed by an optional dining adventure at one of Wellington's fantastic restaurants!

We've secured special hotel rates for Friday and Saturday nights, but rooms are limited! Book directly with the hotel. For details and the registration form, reach out to us. Remember, this is an in-person event!

Contact: Emma Holmes – Branch Chair & Convention Co-ordinator

Email: emmaandian@xtra.co.nz

Website: www.richard3nz.org

Colour code: Branches & Groups events/Ricardian Herald deadlines
Society (parent body) events/award deadlines/Ricardian Bulletin deadlines
Festivals

DATE	EVENT	LOCATION	ORGANISER
APRIL			
Thurs 30	Notts & Derby Group Lecture (P. Langley)	Huthwaite	ajayres1485@gmail.com
MAY			
Sat 2	North Mercia Branch Lecture (Turning Point)	2.00 Nantwich	tedandbess1943@gmail.com
Sat 9	Milles Wills Study Day	York	r3board@yahoo.com
Sat 9	Society Board Meeting	Zoom	Jane Trump
Sat 9	Devon & Cornwall Branch Lecture	Plymouth	ednacoles1@gmail.com
Sat 16	Leicestershire Branch Study Day (Scandalous Liaisons)	KRIIIVC	sallyoftarahill@gmail.com
Weds 20	Gloucester & Bristol Branch Field Visit	Chepstow	richardiiigloucester.co.uk
Thurs 21	Leicester Branch AGM	Leicester	sallyoftarahill@gmail.com
Sat 23	Yorkshire Branch Lecture (Matt Lewis on Barnet)	2.00 Zoom ?	rgm@dockroyd.co.uk
Sun 24	Canada Branch Book Club (<i>The Pretender</i>)	Zoom	Canada Branch
Sat 30	Society Lecture (The Power Couple)	Zoom	Julia Langham
JUNE			
Sat 6	Norfolk Branch Study Day (Illness & Family)	Norwich	annmarielouise04@gmail.com
Sat 6/Sun 7	Barnet Medieval Festival	Barnet	
Sat 13	Devon & Cornwall Branch Lecture	Plymouth	ednacoles1@gmail.com
Sat 13	North Mercia Branch Lecture (Assheton Church)	2.00 Nantwich	tedandbess1943@gmail.com
Sat 13	G&B / Somerset Branches Joint Study Day	10.00 Bath	dick.manns3105@gmail.com
Sun 14	Canada Branch Lecture (topic TBC)	Zoom	Canada Branch
Thurs 18	Leicestershire Branch Lecture (Royal Peterborough)	7.00 KRIIIVC	sallyoftarahill@gmail.com
Sat 20	Society Board Meeting	Zoom	Jane Trump
Sat 27	Society Lecture (Pilgrimages)	Zoom	Julia Langham

JULY			
July 1	Copy deadline for SEPTEMBER Bulletin		alecmarsh@hotmail.com
July 1	Copy deadline for JULY Herald		siriandponcho@gmail.com
Sat 4	R III Festival Middleham (Yorkshire Branch)	St Alkelda's Church	rgm@dockroyd.co.uk
Sun 5	R III Festival Middleham (Society)	Key Centre	secretary@richardiii.net
Mon 6	Wreath laying at King Richard's Tomb	Leicester	sallyofarahill@gmail.com
Sat 11	Devon & Cornwall Branch Lecture	Plymouth	ednacoles1@gmail.com
Sat 11	Registration deadline for Meet the Board Q & A		rgm@dockroyd.co.uk
Sat 11/Sun 12	Tewkesbury Medieval Festival	Tewkesbury	Tewkesbury Volunteer Team
Thurs 16	Leicestershire Branch Visit (St Mary de Castro Church)	6.00 Leicester	sallyofarahill@gmail.com
Sat 18	North Mercia Branch Lecture (Wars? Roses?)	2.00 Nantwich	tedandbess1943@gmail.com
Sat 18	Sat 18 Meet the Board Q&A for Society Members	Zoom	rgm@dockroyd.co.uk
Sat 25	Society Lecture (Silver Groats)	Zoom	Julia Langham
AUGUST			
Sat 1	Gloucester & Bristol Branch Lecture (Mancini)	2.30 Zoom	richardiiigloucester.co.uk
Fri 2 to Sun 4	North Mercia Branch Weekend Away		tedandbess1943@gmail.com
Monday 3	Deadline for AGM motions		Jane Trump
Monday 3	Deadline for all nominations, including the ROBERT HAMLIN AWARD		Jane Trump
Sat 8	Society Board Meeting	Zoom	Jane Trump
Sat 15	Society Lecture (6 months in 1483)	Zoom	Julia Langham
Sat 22/Sun 23	Bosworth Medieval Festival	Bosworth	Battlefield Heritage Centre
SEPTEMBER			
Sat 5	North Mercia Branch Social Day	2.00 Nantwich	tedandbess1943@gmail.com
Sat 5	Gloucester & Bristol Branch (Medieval Sanctuary)	2.30 Leckhampton	richardiiigloucester.co.uk
Sat 12	Pre-AGM meeting to debate motions submitted	Zoom	rgm@dockroyd.co.uk
Thurs 17	Leicestershire Branch Lecture (Bayeux Tapestry)	7.00 Leicester	sallyofarahill@gmail.com
Sat 19	Devon & Cornwall Branch Lecture	Plymouth	ednacoles1@gmail.com
Sat 19	Yorkshire Branch AGM	York	rgm@dockroyd.co.uk
Sat 19	Society Lecture	Zoom	Julia Langham
Fri 25	Members' Social Evening	Nottingham	John Langham
Sat 26	Richard III Convention	Nottingham	Jane Trump
Sun 27	Society Board Meeting	Nottingham	Jane Trump

In the last issue of the Herald, JANE CLARKE looked at companion dogs, and how important they have been over the centuries. Recently Jane was intrigued by the discovery of two sets of dog remains, both of which suggested dogs were treasured companions for nearly 2,000 years. In the July issue of the Herald, she will investigate the history of working dogs.

Echoes of loyalty: What ancient dog burials reveal about us

I've just been watching a programme called Digging for Britain, which looks at archaeological projects taking place around the UK. This episode focused on animal remains, particularly dog skeletons unearthed in Worcestershire and Oxfordshire, dating back to the Iron Age and Roman periods. Two discoveries were especially striking.

The first was the skeleton of a large dog, roughly the size of a Labrador. From the bones, archaeologists estimated it to have been about ten years old—a remarkably good age for the period. Even more telling was evidence of a broken leg that had healed cleanly. This suggests the dog had been well cared for and nursed back to health rather than simply discarded when it could no longer work. Its stomach contents were still in place: a sheep's foot, indicating it had been well fed.

Ironically, this generous diet may have contributed to its death, as a fragment of bone was found lodged in its throat, suggesting it may have choked. Despite its age, its teeth were in excellent condition—likely the result of a diet free from sugar and cereals.

I found this quite a revelation; I would have expected that a dog unable to work or hunt would simply have been euthanised. Perhaps it was a status symbol—the owner could afford to keep the animal even while it was “off sick”.

After its death, the dog had been buried respectfully.



All of this points to the fact that, even nearly 2,000 years ago, people valued their animals and cared for them, tending them through illness and injury.

The second discovery consisted of tiny bones from the Roman era, belonging to a dog about the size of a chihuahua.

Such a small animal could only have been a pet or lapdog, almost certainly the cherished companion of a wealthy Roman. It's fascinating to think that people were keeping pets purely for companionship 1,800 years ago.



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.'