

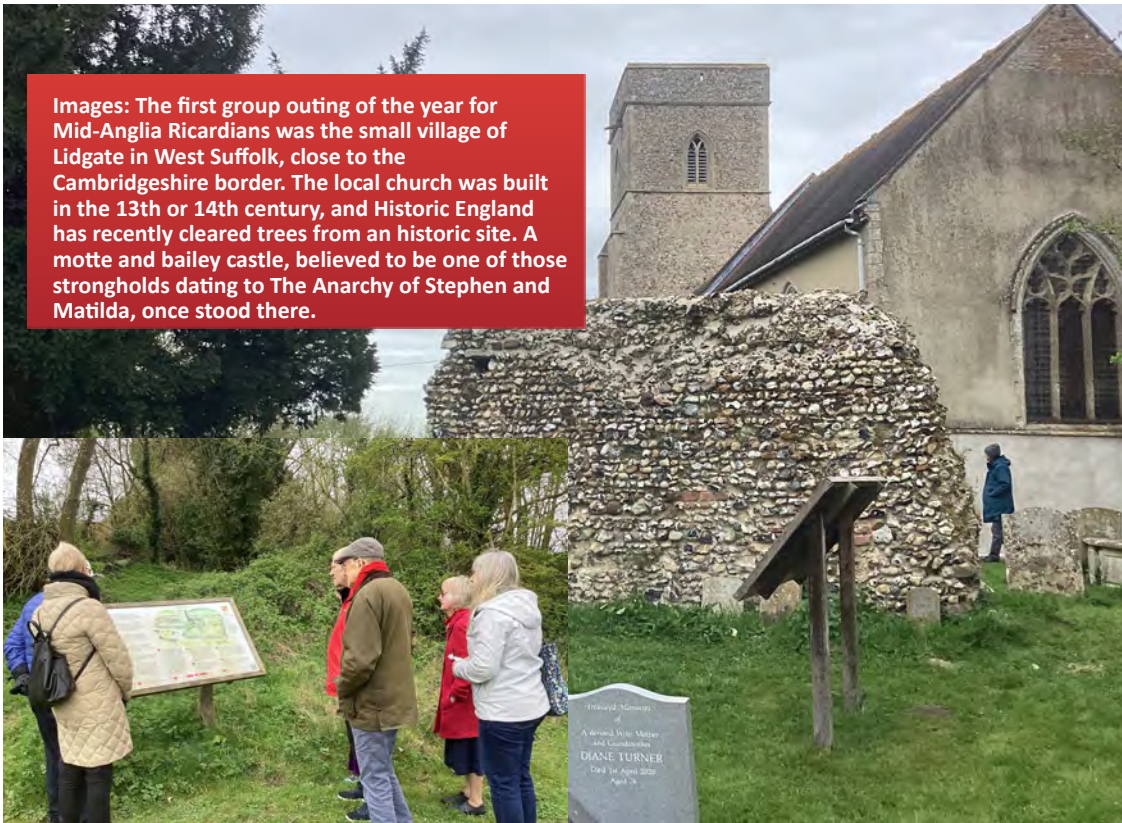
The RICARDIAN HERALD

Connecting our global community



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

Images: The first group outing of the year for Mid-Anglia Ricardians was the small village of Lidgate in West Suffolk, close to the Cambridgeshire border. The local church was built in the 13th or 14th century, and Historic England has recently cleared trees from an historic site. A motte and bailey castle, believed to be one of those strongholds dating to The Anarchy of Stephen and Matilda, once stood there.



MEET OUR MEMBERS



Meet Margaret Byrne (above) and Michael and Victoria Liffe. Margaret is stepping down as secretary of the Merseyside & West Lancashire Group. Pages 14-15



Michael and Victoria have been members of the Victoria Branch for 40 years. An honorary life member, Michael became interested in Richard after being told off for mocking him. Page 16

Celebrating our events and bold collaboration

This issue of the *Ricardian Herald* celebrates amazing Ricardian events and their organisers. These skilled and dedicated organisers craft experiences that make the 15th century feel vividly present. Two successful multi branch and group collaborations recently proved the value of sharing the workload; Mid-Anglia events organiser Moira Walshe reveals what makes a successful calendar of events; and Devon & Cornwall Branch shares the latest local activities in the pages of its amazing newsletter.

p 2

THE SOCIETY NEEDS YOU

The society is looking for candidates to stand for election and join the board.

p 4

B&G LEADERS MEET IN AUGUST

The inaugural zoom gathering for branch and group leaders is August 15.

p 26-29

JUSTICE IN THE 15th CENTURY

Victoria Branch member Mercia Chapman offers a snapshot of the often surprising world of early English justice.



Shape our future — consider standing for the board

When I stepped into the role of society Chairman, it was during a particularly challenging moment for the society.

We had seen the resignation of several directors, followed by the co-option of new ones, and then the deeply sad death of one of those co-optees, Stephen York.

Stephen was a long-standing society member, a senior leader, and a friend to many of us. Over more than 30 years he served the society in numerous central roles, including Deputy Chairman and Business Manager, and for 11 years he was the technical editor and production lead for *The Ricardian Bulletin*. He stepped down from that role in 2021.

Stephen was awarded a Fellowship at our centenary AGM in 2024 — a fitting recognition of his extraordinary service. Outside the society, he ran a respected freelance editorial and proofreading business in the UK. It was an honour for members to work alongside him for so long, and his contribution to the society is highly valued.

As we look ahead, we are now seeking prospective candidates for the new board for 2026/27 at the next AGM. In accordance with the society's rules and articles, one third of the current board - four directors - must step down and if they wish, also seek re-election. This includes all co-opted board members who automatically stand down at the AGM, though they may choose to offer themselves for re-election as well. So, there is ample opportunity for society members, especially those who may be critical of the actions of the current board, to stand for election and to join the board.



More information about this, and the forthcoming AGM, can be found in the June *Bulletin*. Until the AGM, I will continue to serve as society Chairman and ensure that the society's work continues smoothly.

On a more personal note, one of the great privileges of this role has been hosting several of our society-organised zoom lectures.

The first "Meet the Board" session proved especially valuable, giving our international members the chance to speak to the board "face-to-face" and raise questions directly. The second meeting was held on July 18. A report on this will be in the *Bulletin* and *Herald* later this year.

I also had the great pleasure of hosting Annie Garthwaite's well-attended talk on May 30 on Cecily Neville and Richard of York — a highlight for many of us. I first met Annie in The Wave of Nostalgia bookshop in Haworth Main Street, just across the valley from where I live in Oakworth, and I was subsequently privileged to host her at the Middleham Festival 2025 when she gave a mesmerising presentation on the powerful women in Richard's life. She is indeed one of the foremost modern authors writing about powerful 15th century noble women.

Graham Mitchell

Chairman

Richard III Society



VAT costs hit branches and groups by 20%

Leicestershire Branch Secretary Sally Henshaw says the branch annual meeting recently discussed an issue having a huge impact on running costs.

Lloyds Bank began charging for small group accounts in January of 2025.

"This means that the cost of every meeting is increased by 20% which has made an impact on running costs. So, presently each year is currently bringing a new financial challenge!"

She says it will be impacting other UK branches and groups.

Richard's burial site re-glazed

Sally Henshaw reports:

Re-glazing work took place in the original 1485 burial site of King Richard III in early July.

The King's burial place now falls within the King Richard III Visitor Centre (KRIIIVC) and in December 2024 a visitor accidentally damaged the glazing.

The grave site has been a scheduled ancient monument since 2017. Therefore, it was important that it was preserved while the work was undertaken.

It has taken a while for the repair to be made due to the detailed planning required, and the approvals process, with it being an ancient monument. Specialist contractors were appointed to conduct the complex repair.

Glazing replacement work was then completed followed by reinstating the stone cladding and timber seating.

The gravesite was covered by tarpaulin to protect it. Before the glass could be removed both the timber seating and the stone cladding beneath the seating had to be taken out. A crane was then used to remove the heavy glass panel.



Work such as this does not come without significant cost. Fortunately, most of the £29,830 repair cost will be met by an insurance claim.

A spokesperson for Leicester City Council said: "The replacement of the glass was successfully carried out with no impact on the precious archaeology.

KRIIVC manager Phil Hackett commented "I'm glad to say it is now looking as good as new and the grave has been unaffected."

Society of Antiquaries seeks volunteers

The Society of Antiquaries of London is looking for remote volunteers to help with a range of tasks – cataloguing a small collection of correspondence, indexing 18th and 19th century minute books of the society (where various historical subjects and artefacts were discussed) and cataloguing thousands of early-20th century glass slides, mostly of architecture and archaeological sites and finds. No prior knowledge is necessary, and no commitment required – try it out and see if you like it! Please email the archivist for more details at archives@sal.org.uk



Worldwide branch & group leaders meet August 15

Back in June, American Branch Chair Susan Troxell, and Canadian Branch Chair Tracy Bryce, floated an idea that was welcomed by many branches and groups.



“It has been proposed that a working group comprising leaders of all branches and groups, both national and international, be established.” The response was wonderfully encouraging with a shared sense that this could be something extremely useful.

So, with that support behind them, Tracy and Susan are ready to take the next step. The first, inaugural meeting will be held on August 15, and I’ll be sending out the zoom invitation shortly. Susan and Tracy are looking forward to seeing familiar faces, meeting new ones, and bringing everyone together in one friendly online space.

The group also aims to offer a gentle support network for new leaders, connecting them with experienced hands who can answer questions and help them find their footing.

One of the first agenda items will be choosing a formal name for the group. Several suggestions have already come in — Ricardian Roundtable, and Branches & Groups Forum among them — and we’ll enjoy settling on something that captures the spirit of collaboration Susan and Tracy are building.

They also point out that the idea definitely does not imply more “work”. The gathering will involve no minutes, or notes — only if you want to. It’s designed to be like a relaxed fireside chat.

Members have pointed out that Annette Carson has a zoom presentation on that same date. It will be hosted by society Chairman Graham Mitchell. However, he will also be attending the branches and groups gathering as secretary of the Yorkshire Branch. He says the events do not clash — with the branches and groups gathering 11am in the UK, and Annette’s presentation at 2pm.

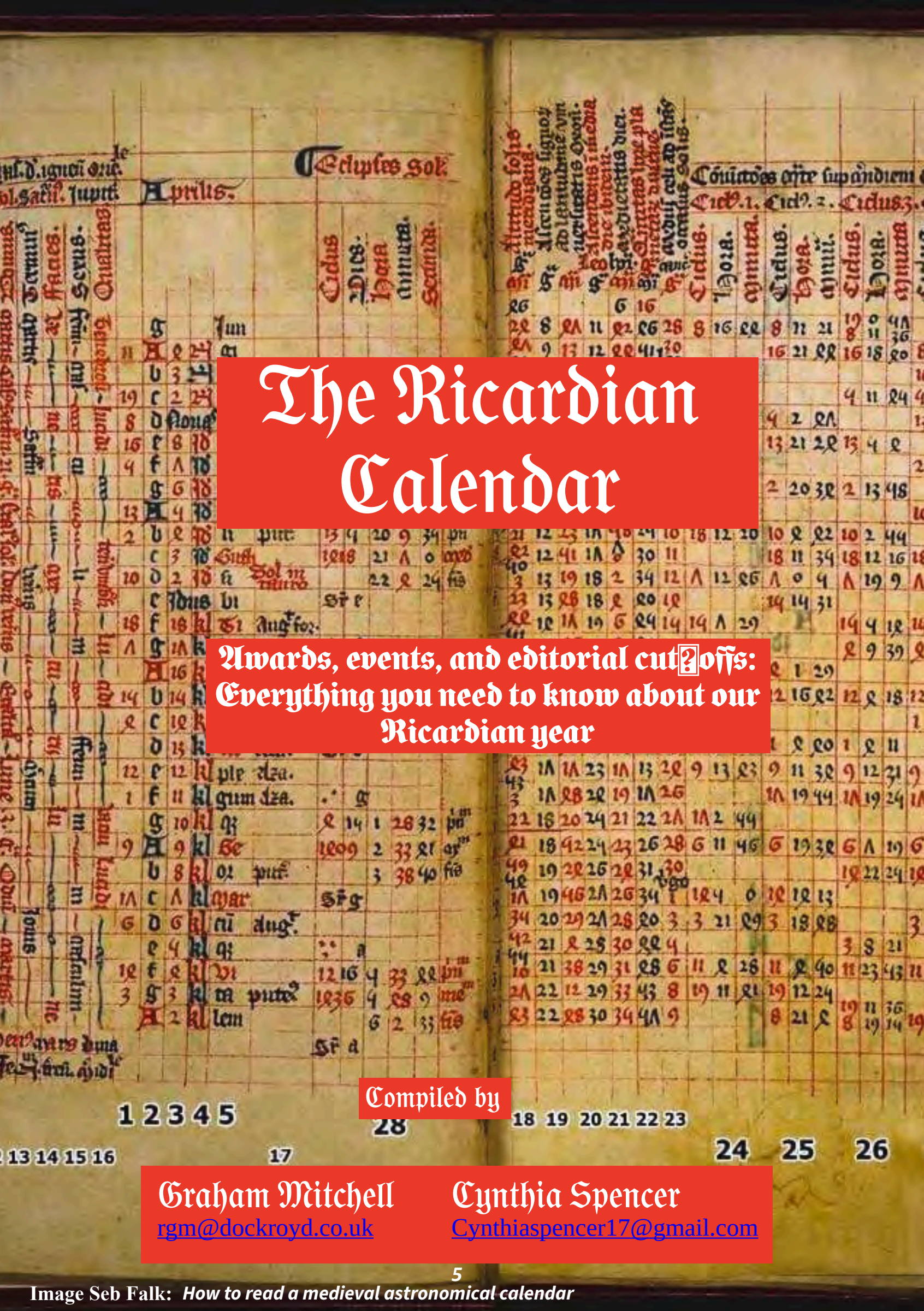
SUSAN GRANT-MACKIE
RICARDIAN COMMUNITY LIAISON
OFFICER
branches.groups@richardiii.net



Ricardians without borders

New Zealand Branch secretary Annette Parry, left, with Kate Skegg, a Ricardian from Chicago. They met in Chicago and Kate and her chapter hosted Annette to lunch and a museum visit.





The Ricardian Calendar

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

Compiled by

Graham Mitchell
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Cynthia Spencer
Cynthiaspencer17@gmail.com

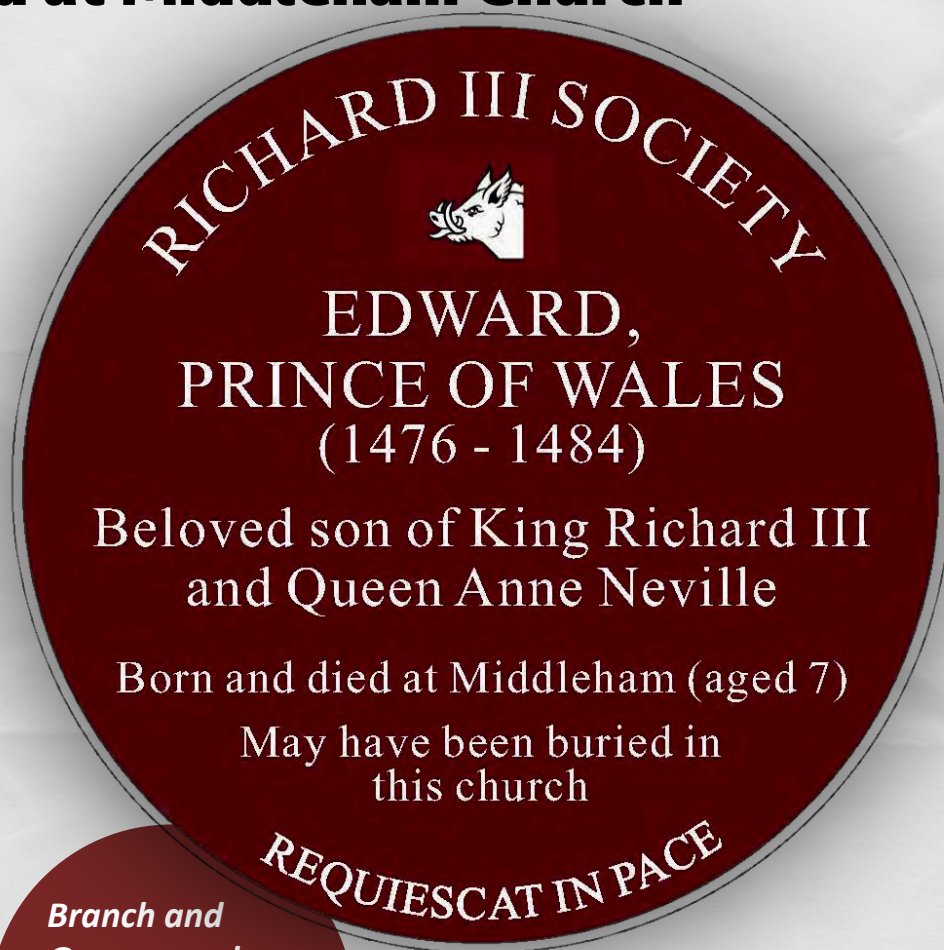
Unveiled in 1934, this window commemorates Richard's transformation of the Church of St Mary & St Alkelda at Middleham, in North Yorkshire, into a collegiate foundation in 1478 during his time as Duke of Gloucester. He is praying with his son Edward of Middleham.

New plaque to honour Edward of Middleham to be unveiled at Middleham Church

The Richard III Society is delighted to announce that agreement has been reached with Anglican Church authorities to unveil a new society plaque to Edward of Middleham.

The event will take place in the Church of St Mary & St Alkelda at Middleham in North Yorkshire at **1pm on Tuesday, September 8**, which is the 543rd anniversary of Prince Edward's investiture as Prince of Wales in York Minster in 1483.

The new society plaque will be unveiled by Revd Jeff Payne, Co-Rector at St Mary & St Alkelda's Church, Graham Mitchell, Chairman of the Richard III Society and society Fellow Philippa Langley MBE.



Branch and Group members are encouraged to attend the unveiling.

Prince Edward was the only son of King Richard III and Queen Anne Neville, born at Middleham Castle in 1476. He tragically died there at the age of only seven years in 1484.

The wooden oak plinth on which the plaque will rest is being constructed at Keighley in West Yorkshire by the retired skilled volunteers of the Lion's Den Men's Shed workshop.





**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/annual report deadline
Society events/award deadlines/Ricardian Bulletin deadlines
Festivals

AUGUST 2026

Sat 1	Gloucester & Bristol Branch Lecture (Mancini)	2.30 Zoom	richardiiiigloucester.co.uk
Fri 2 to Sun 4	North Mercia Branch Weekend Away		tedandbess1943@gmail.com
Mon 3	Motions for AGM to be received by Secretary		Jane Trump
Mon 3	Deadline for all nominations, including the ROBERT HAMLIN AWARD		Jane Trump
Sat 8	Society Board Meeting	10.00 Zoom	Jane Trump
Sat 15	Society Lecture (6 months in 1483)	2.00 Zoom	Julia Langham
Sat 15	Inaugural Branches & Groups Forum	11am UK time (British Summer Time) Zoom	Susan Grant-Mackie - branches.groups@richardiii.net
Sat 22	Choral Evensong Leicester Cathedral	5.30 Leics Cath	sallyoftarahill@gmail.com
Sat 22	“Richard III: night before Bosworth	7.30 Sutton Cheney	sallyoftarahill@gmail.com
Sat 22/Sun 23	Bosworth Medieval Festival	Bosworth	Battlefield Heritage Centre
Sun 23	Memorial Service St James’s Church	1230 Sutton Cheney	sallyoftarahill@gmail.com

SEPTEMBER 2026

Sat 5	North Mercia Branch Social Day	2.00 Nantwich	tedandbess1943@gmail.com
Sat 5	Gloucester & Bristol Branch (Medieval Sanctuary)	2.30 Leckhampton	richardiiiigloucester.co.uk
Sat 5	Society Lecture (Peasants’ Revolt)	2.00 Zoom	Julia Langham
Weds 9	Manchester Branch Zoom Lecture (Coldridge)	7.15 Stockport	plclarke17@gmail.com
Sat 12	Zoom Debate on AGM Member Motions		Jane Trump
Thurs 17	Leicestershire Branch Lecture (Bayeux Tapestry)	7.00 Leicester	sallyoftarahill@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	2.00 Zoom	Julia Langham
Fri 25	Members’ Social Evening	Nottingham	John Langham
Sat 26	Richard III Convention	Nottingham	Sue Ollier
Sun 27	Society Board Meeting	Nottingham	Jane Trump



OCTOBER 2026

Thurs 1	Proxy Votes for AGM to be received by Secretary		Jane Trump
October 1	Copy deadline for the <i>Ricardian Bulletin</i> - December issue.		Alec Marsh - editor.bulletin@richardiii.net
October 1	Copy deadline for the <i>Ricardian Herald</i> - October issue		Sue Grant-Mackie siriaandponcho@gmail.com
Fri 2	Wreath laying at King Richard's Tomb	Leicester	sallyoftarahill@gmail.com
Sat 3	Society AGM	2.00 Zoom	Jane Trump
Sat 3	Gloucester & Bristol Branch Lecture (Siege of Leckhampton London)	2.30 Leckhampton	richardiiigloucester.co.uk
Sat 10	Devon & Cornwall Branch AGM Lecture	Plymouth	ednacoles1@gmail.com
Sat 10	North Mercia Branch Lecture (Saints & Relics)	2.00 Nantwich	tedandbess1943@gmail.com
Sat 10	Society Lecture (Battle of Edgecote)	2.00 Zoom	Julia Langham
Weds 14	Gloucester & Bristol Branch AGM	7.30 Zoom	richardiiigloucester.co.uk
Weds 14	Manchester Branch Lecture (Heraldry)	7.15 Stockport	plclarke17@gmail.com
Thurs 15	Leicestershire Branch Lecture (Groby Old Hall)	7.00 Leicester	sallyoftarahill@gmail.com
Thur 15 to Sun 18	Ricardian Visit to Bruges	Bruges	Christine Headley r3@chps.co.uk
Sat 24	Society (New Board) Meeting	10.00 Zoom	Jane Trump

NOVEMBER 2026

Fri 6 to Sun 8	Australasian Ricardian Convention	Lower Hutt NZ	emmaandian@xtra.co.nz
Sat 7	North Mercia Branch Lecture (Childbirth)	2.00 pm Nantwich	tedandbess1943@gmail.com
Sat 7	Gloucester & Bristol Branch Lecture (Rebellions)	2.30 Leckhampton	richardiiigloucester.co.uk
Weds 11	Manchester Branch Podcast & Discussion (Cold Case)	7.15 Stockport	plclarke17@gmail.com
Thurs 19	Leicestershire Branch Lecture (13th C Manor)	7.00 Leicester	sallyoftarahill@gmail.com
Sat 21	Society Lecture (Towton)	2.00 Zoom	Julia Langham



DECEMBER 2026

Sat 5	North Mercia Branch Christmas Lunch	Nantwich	tedandbess1943@gmail.com
Sat 5	Gloucester & Bristol Branch Lecture (Tapestries)	2.30 Zoom	richardiii@gloucester.co.uk
Weds 9	Manchester Branch Christmas Social	7.15 Stockport	plclarke17@gmail.com
Sat 12	Society Lecture (Elizabeth of York & Henry VII)	2.00 Zoom	Julia Langham
Sat 12	Lunch & Carols at Fotheringhay	Fotheringhay	sallyoftarahill@gmail.com
Tues 15	Leicestershire Branch Christmas Meal	7.00 Leicester	sallyoftarahill@gmail.com

JANUARY 2027

January 1	Copy deadline for <i>Ricardian Herald</i> - January issue		Sue Grant-Mackie siriandponcho@gmail.com
January 1	Copy deadline for the <i>Ricardian Bulletin</i> - March issue.		Alec Marsh - editor.bulletin@richardiii.net
Sat 16	Anne Sutton Memorial Lecture (TBC)	2.00 Zoom	Julia Langham

FEBRUARY 2027

February 1	Branch & Group annual reports for the board		Sue Grant-Mackie branches.groups@richardiii.net
Tues 2	Society Lecture (Agincourt)	2.00 Zoom	Julia Langham

MARCH 2027

Thurs 18	Leicestershire Branch Lecture (King's College)	7.00 Leicester	sallyoftarahill@gmail.com
Sat 20	Society Lecture (Women of Middle Ages)	2.00 Zoom	Julia Langham

APRIL 2027

April 1	Copy deadline for <i>Ricardian Herald</i> - April issue		Sue Grant-Mackie siriandponcho@gmail.com
April 1	Copy deadline for the <i>Ricardian Bulletin</i> - June issue.		Alec Marsh - editor.bulletin@richardiii.net
Thurs 15	Leicestershire Branch Lecture (Murder & Mayhem)	7.00 Leicester	sallyoftarahill@gmail.com
Fri 16/Sun 18	Triennial Conference	Newark	Research Committee

MAY 2027

Thurs 20	Leicester Branch AGM	7.00 Leicester	sallyoftarahill@gmail.com
Sat 29	Society Lecture (New World Settlement)	2.00 Zoom	Julia Langham



Memorial Lecture for Dr John Ashdown Hill

By Marion Moulton

The third Memorial Lecture to Dr. John Ashdown Hill took place at the Crown Hotel in Nantwich on April 11.

Ideally, we would have liked to have held it on the first Saturday in April as this year it was actually John's birthday that day. He would have been 77. BUT the first Saturday was Easter weekend and Nantwich was incredibly busy with a jazz festival; a food festival and a bank holiday weekend, as if that wasn't enough! So we had to settle with the next Saturday.

We were privileged this year to have as our guest speaker Yvonne Morley Chisholm (pictured right) with all the latest findings of her unique project *A Voice For Richard*. Her talk was entitled *A Voice For Richard – A King and A Prayer*.

This is because we were to see King Richard III speaking his own prayer, through the amazing technology of Professor Caroline Wilkinson's team at the John Moore's University of Liverpool and the voice of the talented actor Thomas Dennis.

It was a personal privilege to me that Yvonne drove all the way from Yorkshire to be with us, but then drove all the way back home after the meeting. There is great fascination among members with the idea that we are hearing what Richard III would have sounded like.

In keeping with tradition, we served refreshments with a special connection with John. Cheese scones, tea cakes and eccles cakes. For those of you reading about this event for the first time here is the story of the refreshments.



We serve cheese scones, because John used to order them whenever he visited his local garden centre. John came to Nantwich three times to speak to my group as it was then – the North Mercia Group – and stayed in my Richard III bedroom of course.

He asked if he could make himself a drink during the night as he did not sleep well, so I told him to make himself at home.

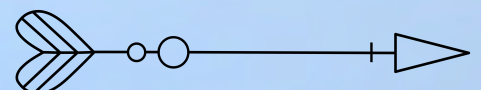
When he came to stay the second time I told him the same thing, and so the story of the tea cakes was born.

When I got downstairs the next morning, he was eating a tea cake and drinking black coffee, sitting cross legged on the hearth. So, I always say: "There's not many women who can come downstairs the next morning and find the man who discovered Richard III's DNA curled up in the hearth and eating a tea cake and drinking black coffee".

The story of the eccles cakes arises from the third time he visited Nantwich and, sadly, the last time. I asked him what he wanted for his breakfast, and he said, "An Eccles cake would be nice". So, I thought: "Right! Chatwins! Four for the price of three"!

When I came downstairs the next morning, he'd already eaten two! So I gave him the other two to eat on his journey home.

Lovely memories of a very special man and his memory need to be kept alive because without him Richard III would not have been found, and it was John who dispelled the legend that Richard's bones had been thrown into the River Soar. We owe him a great legacy and to hold a memorial lecture in his memory is a great honour.



From previous page...

Meanwhile, at our latest lecture in John’s honour, Thomas Dennis (pictured on the right) demonstrated that not does he sound like King Richard, but if you study the portrait of Richard from the Society of Antiquaries in London, Thomas is the best living physical representation of Richard III. His connection with Richard III dates to a five-year-old Thomas – far too long to mention here.

The lecture was held in the 18th century ballroom of the Crown Hotel. It features a long room with a high roof, so Thomas’s voice echoed throughout, and it really did seem as if King Richard was with us. Naturally as it was John’s Day my thought’s strayed to wondering what John would have thought to hear the voice of his king echoing round the room of a hotel built on the land owned by the dreaded Stanleys in Richard’s time.

Sadly, the hotel of Richard’s time was destroyed in the Great Fire of Nantwich in 1583. About 80 percent of the town was destroyed. But thanks to the generosity of dare I say it - the last Tudor Queen Elizabeth I, the town was rebuilt and a new Crown Hotel built; the one we know today with 18th century additions.



After the lecture we partook of refreshments all connected to John’s story. Cheese scones: tea cakes and Chatwin’s famous eccles cakes. There was a lovely, warm friendly atmosphere – a wonderful tribute to the memory of a very special man.

NEXT PAGE: A warm, quietly joyful tradition continues in Nantwich, where the North Mercia Branch gathers each summer to honour Dr. John Ashdown Hill not with solemnity, but with stories, laughter, quizzes — and three very particular baked treats.



Do you want to make a difference?

The society is now actively seeking prospective candidates for the new board for 2026/27 at the next AGM.

So, there is ample opportunity for society members, especially those who may be critical of the actions of the current board, to stand for election and to join the board.

More information about this, and the forthcoming AGM, can be found in the June *Bulletin*. The digital copy is online in the members’ section of the society’s website.



Dr. John Ashdown Hill Social Day

A friendship remembered

A warm, quietly joyful tradition continues in Nantwich, where the North Mercia Branch gathers each summer to honour Dr. John Ashdown Hill not with solemnity, but with stories, laughter, quizzes — and three very particular baked treats.

By Marion Moulton

The North Mercia Branch held the fourth Dr. John Ashdown Hill Social Day in July.

There were 25 in attendance. John was a very good friend to the North Mercia Group as we were then. He visited us in Nantwich three times, so after he died, we wanted to record this special friendship in a way in which John would have approved.

Instead of having a memorial lecture every year we thought it would be nice to celebrate John's friendship with the group as well as his scholarship, hence the Dr. John Ashdown Hill Social Day.

Initially we thought of alternating the memorial lecture one year and the social day the next year as we didn't want things to get too 'samey', but after the first social day members reported that they had enjoyed it so much they requested one every year.

The cheese scones were his favourite when he visited his local garden centre and paused to drink black coffee and a cheese scone on each visit. The other two treats relate to his visits to Nantwich and the North Mercia Group. He was always my guest when he visited Nantwich as we were a much smaller group then and 'not so well purveyed of money as it behooved us to be' so he stayed in the Richard III bedroom at my home.

I'd told him to make himself at home and make himself drinks when he wanted, which he did. The second visit I came downstairs the morning after the meeting and found him curled up next to the hearth drinking black coffee and eating a tea cake.

So, I say: 'There's not many women who can come downstairs in a morning and find the man who discovered Richard III's DNA sitting on the floor drinking black coffee and eating a tea cake!'

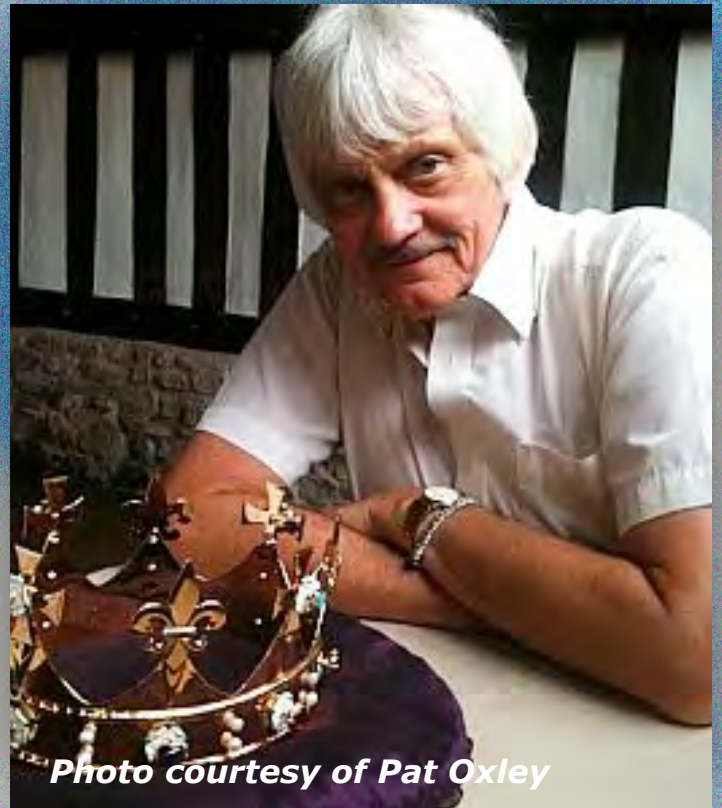


Photo courtesy of Pat Oxley

On his third visit I asked him what he wanted for his breakfast, so he said, 'An eccles cake would be nice' I immediately thought 'Chatwins – four for the price of three!'

Lovely memories of a very special man and his memory needs to be kept alive because without him Richard III would not have been found, and it was John who dispelled the legend that Richard's bones had been thrown into the River Soar. We owe him a great legacy and to hold a memorial lecture in his memory is a great honour.

The social days take the forms of quizzes, puzzles, general knowledge topics as well as Ricardian themes and members enjoy taking time to talk to other members, old and new in a relaxed friendly atmosphere. We hold the meeting in the Parish Hall of Nantwich Parish Church usually in one of the summer months.



Stepping down after a lifetime of Ricardian dedication

After decades of passionate involvement — from childhood curiosity to founding and leading a thriving regional group — Merseyside and West Lancashire Group secretary MARGARET BYRNE is now stepping down, leaving behind a legacy shaped by commitment, community, and an unwavering respect for Richard III. Here she tells her story:

I have been interested in Richard III and the mystery of the princes in the Tower for as long as I can remember. When I was very young, I used to read *Treasure* which was an educational magazine for children (1963 – 1971). I do distinctly remember a feature on the princes which piqued my interest. I have since discovered it was in issue 77 published mid-1964.

Fast forward to the teenage years and I persuaded my English Literature class to study *Richard III* as our Shakespeare play instead of *Romeo and Juliet*. The story of so many murders committed by one man just did not ring true. I read Rosemary Hawley Jarman's books (*We Speak No Treason*, *The King's Grey Mare*) and Josephine Tey's *The Daughter of Time* and my conversion to the Ricardian cause was complete.

A couple of years later I found a reference to the Richard III Society in a book, got in touch with the secretary who was Phyllis Hester at the time and joined. Life got in the way – I was working and studying and raising a family, so I let my membership lapse until 1996 when we visited the commemoration of the Battle of Bosworth.

In those days it took place on the top of Ambion Hill and we all had to dodge the arrow storm which started the battle. We rejoined the society as family members and have been members ever since.



"The story of so many murders committed by one man just did not ring true." Margaret Byrne at the Tewkesbury Medieval Festival.

In 2012 I attended my first Triennial Conference in Loughborough, following the discovery of the location of Bosworth battlefield.

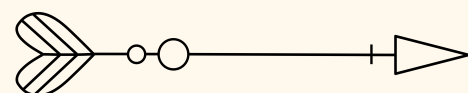
Later that year thanks to Philippa Langley and the Looking for Richard team, the remains of Richard III were found.

I knew the search was going ahead but I promised myself I wouldn't get too excited because it would be like looking for a needle in a haystack. I had no idea at the time that the research of Philippa and Dr John Ashdown-Hill had pinpointed exactly where that needle was.

My son managed to tune into the press conference for me when the discovery was announced and I could not believe it. They had found Richard III. The battle injuries, the scoliosis. Of course!

In late 2014, members of the Richard III Society were invited to take part in a ballot to attend events that had been planned during the week of the reinterment of King Richard. In January 2015, I received an e-mail from Susan and David Wells, the Secretaries of the Richard III Society.

My name had been drawn to attend the service of reinterment on Thursday March 26. There were more than 930 applications for the 25 places available. I still have to pinch myself that I was there



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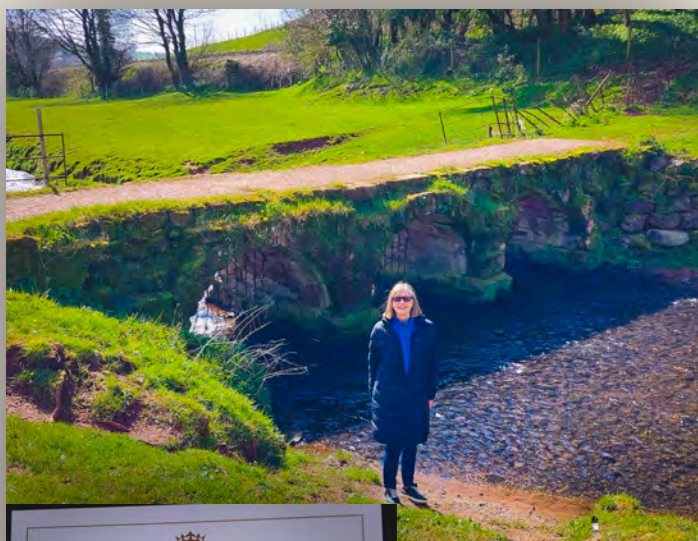
It was a wonderful week and the Richard III Society laid on talks, meetings, cake in the Guildhall (thank you) and the performance of *The Middleham Requiem*. I got to meet Philippa and John who will always be my heroes; they were unfailingly patient and polite with the hundreds of people who wanted to speak to them and have their photo taken with them.

I enjoyed the society conferences and looked to join a branch or group near me. There was definitely a gap in the market for a group in my area so in late 2015, with the support of Branches and Groups Secretary Jacqui Emerson, I put an advertisement in *The Ricardian Bulletin*.

The four founding members of the Merseyside and West Lancashire Group had our first meeting in my home the following January. The group grew quickly so the following year we began to meet at Southport Old Links Golf Club and we stayed there until the group outgrew the room in 2024.

We have had some amazing speakers and I have learned so much from them all, including our own members who gave talks to the group – Jean, Ray, Pat, Norma and Lesley.

We have had memorable visits to places including Lathom Park, Lancaster, Norton Priory, London, Carlisle, Coventry, Furness Abbey, Eton and Windsor.



Margaret Byrne at the 15th Century bow bridge at Furness Abbey. Below: Her invitation to Richard's reinterment.



Jean gave us a tour of the Stanley effigies in Ormskirk Parish Church in 2016 and 2024; Norma gave us a tour of York in 2017; Lesley and Gabriella, of The Citty of London Group, gave us a fabulous tour of Southwark and Richard's London when we visited in 2018.

Sue of the Penrith and North Lakes Group met us at Carlisle Castle to give us a tour which included a close up viewing of the carvings which are believed to date from c. 1480. We met up with them again a few years later when we visited Penrith, and Marjorie gave us a tour of St Andrew's Church. After lunch together at Dockray Hall we walked to the castle.

In 2018 some of us visited Ludlow when Mike of the Ludlow Historical Research Group and the Mortimer History Society gave us a tour with a difference. His tour was conducted in the guise of John Turnor who was present at Ludford Bridge, at the Battle of Mortimer's Cross and the Battle of Tewkesbury.

Mike lives in what was John Turnor's home. He showed us all around Ludlow through the eyes of a fifteenth century resident, dressed in murrey and blue and – still in character - ate his lunch with his own knife and spoon.

Afterwards he took us to his amazing home, pointed out where dendrochronology had been carried out, gave us all a glass of mead and showed us his crossbow collection. I also particularly enjoyed the 2024 Richard III Society Worldwide Day of Celebration when Andy at our local award-winning Bijou cinema agreed to show *The Lost King* with an introduction and Q & A session with our members.

The best thing about being in the Richard III Society is meeting people who share the aims of the mission statement. The discovery of the remains of King Richard and the ongoing research has been amazing. I have been on so many interesting visits, I have listened to so many learned speakers, and I have made so many wonderful friends.



Michael & Victoria Lliffe

Although born in England, Michael Lliffe had no interest in Richard III. It wasn't until he was on the other side of the world, and only by chance, that he discovered the existence of our society.

During a supper break at a hi-fi club meeting in a member's home, he noticed a portrait. "Ah! That's Richard huckaback", says he, and instantly bore the brunt of a verbal assault by a very staunch Ricardian lady.

It was her spirited defence which piqued his interest, so he and Yvonne attended a meeting of the Victoria Branch, which happened to be an AGM, at the English-Speaking Union, where the late Stuart Soul made them welcome.

In the more than 40 years since then, and Michael is now an Honorary Life Member of the branch. He has served on the committee as Secretary, Chairman and Treasurer, and Yvonne has been Sales Officer. They both maintain that they have met many lovely people and attended many interesting talks and events.

Yvonne was the first to suggest a National Convention, the results of which have been four conventions in Melbourne, and 14 altogether, all over Australia and New Zealand. As Michael says, "Clever lady my wife".

Although claiming not to be a scholar, Michael has prepared and presented nearly 40 talks, including talks on *The Tower of London*, *The Battle of Ferrybridge*, *The Battle of Towton* and *An Interview with Richard III*.

With thanks to the Victorian Branch newsletter *Ricardus Rex*, and editor David Bliss.



Michael and Victoria Lliffe: "Ah! That's Richard huckaback", says he, and instantly bore the brunt of a verbal assault by a very staunch Ricardian lady.

He has been involved with martial arts for many years, including Tai Chi. He also plays lawn bowls. His other interests include gardening (as an observer), painting (the walls and ceiling) and cricket (the Ashes of course). More recently Michael and Yvonne have taken up four-wheel driving.

Michael and Yvonne will celebrate their 50th anniversary this year. Both are valuable members of the branch, although like many retired people they are busier now than they ever were.



Bringing Richard's world to life



Behind every memorable Ricardian event stands a storyteller with a historian's eye and a host's heart. These organisers craft experiences that make the 15th century feel vividly present. Pictured: Moira Walshe is the events organiser for the Mid-Anglia Group.

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Branches collaborate on standout study day

Story courtesy of the study day organisers



From left: Prof Nigel Saul, Stephen David, Philippa Langley and Matt Lewis.

A study day on the topic of “disappearing kings” was held in Bath in June. It was jointly organised by the Somerset and Gloucester/Bristol Branches of the society. While both branches had previously organised study days, it was felt that a joint venture would have many benefits, including fostering a closer working relationship between the two neighbours.

Sharing the administrative and organisational load between the branches, as well as making the most of a wider expertise, made it a less demanding undertaking than if one branch alone had shouldered the burden.

In particular, having a larger pool of potential attendees from across the two branches meant an increase in potential revenue and thus the resources to bring in high quality speakers.

Bath was chosen as the venue as a mid-point between the two branch homes of Wells and Cheltenham. It was more attractive to a wider audience, and we were delighted to welcome society members from as far apart as Scotland, Yorkshire (including the current society Chair) and the Home Counties among the 90+ audience.

Several visitors took the opportunity to enjoy more than one day in the Georgian city, resplendent as it was in the summer sunshine.

The theme of the day was intended to highlight the fact that the disappearance of Edward V – indeed, both “Princes in the Tower” – was not necessarily a one-off event and both Edward II and (arguably, to a lesser extent) Richard II had met less than conventional ends to their reigns.

The first speaker was Nigel Saul, Professor Emeritus of Medieval History at Royal Holloway College. He gave us an overview of kingship in the centuries between the Conquest and Bosworth.

He noted the relative stability with which power was transferred between monarchs in the first half of that period, with even bad kings like John seeing out their reigns in a conventional manner followed by a smooth succession to a well-established heir.

In contrast, from the mid-1300s onwards kings “had less job security than the manager of a relegation-threatened Premier League club”, to paraphrase Nigel. Paradoxically, the main reason for all the depositions was the sheer strength of English kingship in this period, the product of more than two centuries' administrative development.

By the 14th century the potential for a tyrannical or inadequate king to damage the interests of the governing and political class was so great that, if it proved impossible to control, the only course was removal.

In the 15th century a new element of instability was introduced with the dynastic question, a consequence of Henry of Lancaster's usurpation in 1399; the Yorkists' view was that they were restoring the rightful line of succession.

Stephen David, a well-known contributor to the lecture programmes of the two branches, then spoke to us about the reign of Edward II, and in particular his murder in Berkeley castle in 1327.



From previous page...



While Richard II almost certainly died of starvation in Pontefract Castle, it did not stop the emergence of pretenders claiming to be him after his death.

While this and its gory detail involving red-hot pokers has become widely-accepted as “fact”, there is now a body of evidence that casts doubt on this, as Stephen related. The very small number of people who saw the body meant that identification should no longer be accepted without reservation and it at least raises questions about who is actually buried in Gloucester Cathedral.

More importantly, particularly regarding the emerging documentary evidence in relation to Edward V, is the letter sent to Edward II’s son (Edward III) by the Italian priest Manuel Fieschi. It was only discovered in 1878. It claimed that Edward escaped Berkeley Castle with the help of a servant and lived out his life as a hermit in the Holy Roman Empire. While the veracity of the content of this letter is still debated, the parallels with the fate of Edward V and the challenges to accepted orthodoxy are highly relevant.

The afternoon session brought to the podium two stalwarts of the society, Matt Lewis and Philippa Langley. Matt talked us through Richard’s reign – no, not the usual one but Richard II. While Richard almost certainly died of starvation in Pontefract Castle, it did not stop the emergence of pretenders claiming to be him after his death.

While far from being credible, there are still echoes here of Simnel and Warbeck some 180 years later, which led nicely to the final talk of the day in which Philippa talked us through the methodology by which The Missing Princes Project went about (and is still going about) the process of discovering the fate of the sons of Edward IV.

As in the case of Edward II, she highlighted there is still documentation to be found that challenges the accepted orthodoxy, and as Ricardians are well aware, the onus of proof is now moving to the Tudor historians justifying their position concerning Richard III and the disappearance of the princes.

The day finished with a lively panel Q&A, in which the four speakers shared their views – not always in harmony – on questions posed by the audience.

Overall, the theme of the day took Ricardians out of their regular comfort zone and placed the fate of Edward V in the wider context of two other medieval monarchs. The day ended with thanks to Manvers Street Baptist Church who had allowed us to use their church hall as a venue and provided the sale of welcome refreshments throughout the event, alongside faultless AV support. The final thanks were reserved for the four exceptional speakers, for their contributions to an outstanding day of history lectures.



Turning Ricardian history into real-world journeys

MOIRA WALSH organises events for the Mid-Anglia Group. She keeps a busy and diverse diary, ensuring group members are not lacking in interesting outings over the year. Here Moira describes her Ricardian journey. Two of her most recent events are covered in the following pages.

As a young adult, my favourite reading genre was historical fiction, and I enjoyed reading novels by Jean Plaidy and Cynthia Harrod Eagles. In 1984, I came across a new, thick paperback called *The Sunne in Splendour* by Sharon Penman. It was Penman's book that piqued my interest in Richard III as it showed him sympathetically and although a work of fiction, it was clear the author had completed an enormous amount of research.

Some 13 years later, I joined the Richard III Society after picking up an information leaflet I came across while visiting a church, and I've been a member ever since. In the early 2000s, I joined the Mid-Anglia Group of the society, then led by John Ashdown-Hill.

I went to several events including a walk in Colchester and a talk at Moyses Hall in Bury St Edmunds. The installation of the plaque at Clare Priory in 2002, in recognition of Richard's ancestors who are buried there, was perhaps the most memorable society event I attended in those early years of membership.

After the years of John's leadership, eventually Stephen Larke took over to reform the local group. I renewed contact and attended several more visits Stephen arranged before Covid. With Stephen's untimely death at the age of 55, remaining members wondered whether we would continue.

I offered to take the role of visits co-ordinator for the group, as I have a wide knowledge of historical places within the area to visit and enjoy arranging events, of which I have previous experience going back to my youth. I'm very pleased to see the group thriving today.



Moira at Richard's reburial week in March 2015.

I have a passion for history in general. I completed a degree with the Open University in 2014 in Humanities with Art History and Classical Studies after six years of part time study whilst working full time.

I've also been a family historian for 35 years which led me to write and publish my own book in 2022 for both relatives and those interested in Victorian history.

I spend several hours a month organising events, mainly sending emails to our group members, venues and pubs or other places that offer hospitality whilst we are on the trip. I'm new to this, but plan to make three events a year available.



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On June 27, 10 members of the Mid-Anglia Group met in Norwich, Norfolk for lunch at the Woolpack Inn. It was a very hot day and the last day of the second heatwave of this summer. The temperature was in the low 30s, so well done to everyone for facing the heat!

After food and chat, we headed across the road to the Castle site in readiness for our guided tour of the Keep and Gallery of Medieval Life.

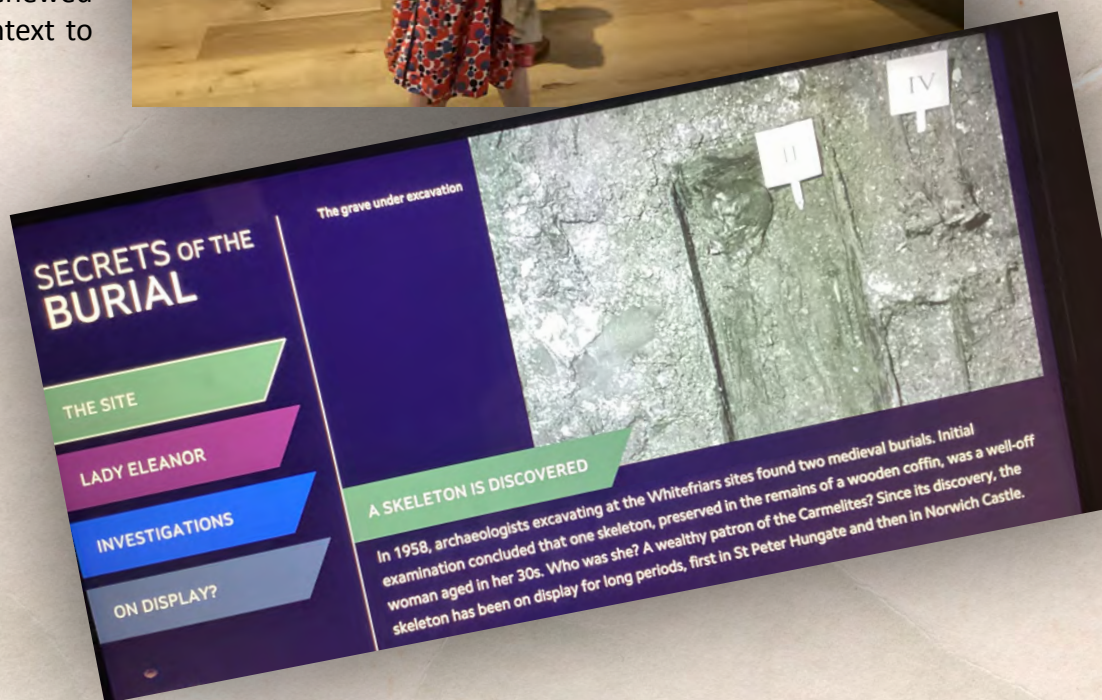
The Keep and new Gallery only opened last August. It was closed for more than five years for a re-generation project to strip back the layers to the original Norman structure. Once inside, we met our tour guide, Sophie Cabot. Sophie worked as a curator whilst the castle was being refitted so she was an ideal person to reveal the renewed architecture, content and context to us.

We started the tour in the basement where we saw a deep well, column bases and lights overhead representing the missing arches.

There was an intriguing model of the entire site as it was believed to have appeared at the height of its life. Sophie then took us up to the next level which now holds the Gallery of Medieval Life.

It houses an amazing 900 objects dating from the Norman Conquest to the Dissolution of the Monasteries in the 1530s.

Many of these were found in East Anglia and a map on the wall recorded the site of the find. The displays themselves are organised into three distinct areas of medieval life: *Those who Pray, Those who Work and Those who Fight*. An examination of all of the artefacts would probably take much longer than the amount of time left that afternoon.



We were next lead to what is probably the most significant display for Ricardians in the entire Gallery, a skeleton set in the floor.

Sophie explained that up to 2017, it had been thought that these remains, excavated at the Carmelite Priory known as Whitefriars in the city, could belong to Lady Eleanor Talbot. However, scientific tests that year had found that the skeleton was male and from the previous century, or even the late 13th century.



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Lady Eleanor Talbot was of subject of special interest to John Ashdown-Hill and he held two study days at the castle in 2016-17 about her life and the possibilities of this skeleton being hers. He was hoping that the study days would raise funding for the research.

It was claimed in 1483 that Lady Eleanor was pre contracted in marriage to Edward IV, a claim then used to invalidate his marriage to Elizabeth Woodville. Lady Eleanor died at Whitefriars in 1468 and was believed to have been buried there.

Sophie also showed us a seal of Richard III whilst Duke of Gloucester, in the form of a ship to represent his position as Admiral of England, Ireland and Aquitaine in 1462 when he was 10.

Moving upwards to the state rooms of the Keep, which have been returned to the appearance of a 12th century Norman interior, the sumptuous palace of King Henry I.

We enjoyed being in these recreated spaces of the Great Hall, Royal Bedroom and Chapel and admiring their lavish, ornate furnishings such as tapestries, cloth, and furniture especially made for the newly formed keep.

Moving upwards to the state rooms of the Keep, which have been returned to the appearance of a 12th century Norman interior, the sumptuous palace of King Henry I.

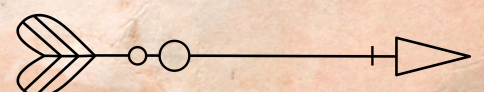
We enjoyed being in these recreated spaces of the Great Hall, Royal Bedroom and Chapel and admiring their lavish, ornate furnishings such as tapestries, cloth, and furniture especially made for the newly formed keep.



A seal of Richard III whilst Duke of Gloucester, in the form of a ship to represent his position as Admiral of England, Ireland and Aquitaine in 1462 when he was 10.



Here the tour ended and some of us explored the Medieval Gallery and the rest of the museum before meeting up again in the cafe for a welcome cuppa. All agreed it had been an exceptional visit!



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The first group outing of the year took place on a rather chilly mid-spring day when 13 gathered at the small village of Lidgate in West Suffolk, close to the Cambridgeshire border.

Here, we were greeted at the gates of the church by Anthony Foreman, village historian and author. Anthony explained that Lidgate was already a place of some standing before the Middle Ages - a Roman villa was discovered here in 1970.

Anthony expanded on the history once we were all seated inside the nicely heated church. A motte and bailey castle was built here, predating the church. The castle is believed to one of the strongholds dating to The Anarchy of Stephen and Matilda.

At this time, Lidgate had the status of a planned borough with a market. The castle's life was short-lived as it appears to have been abandoned in the 1260s. The church was built in the 13th or 14th century.

We heard that the Hastings family held the manor of Lidgate during the life of the castle and also the early life of the present church, a succession of Lords holding power from the 12th to 14th centuries. Later on, William Hastings, who was executed on Richard III's orders, was a descendant of this family.



Lidgate is perhaps best known as the birthplace of John de Lydgate (1370-1451). He was a prolific poet, a monk at Bury Abbey and a favourite at the courts of Henry IV, Henry V and Henry VI.



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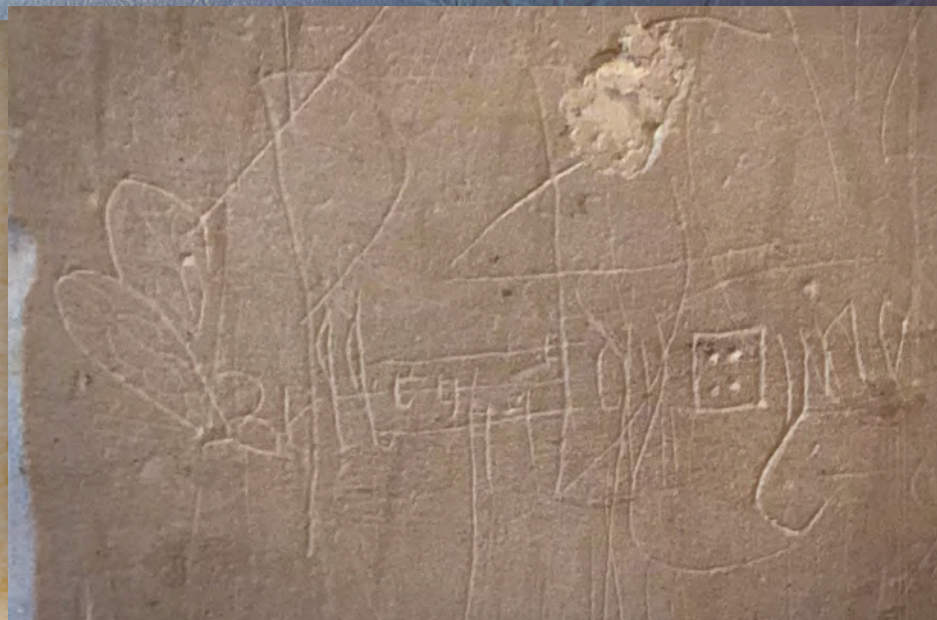
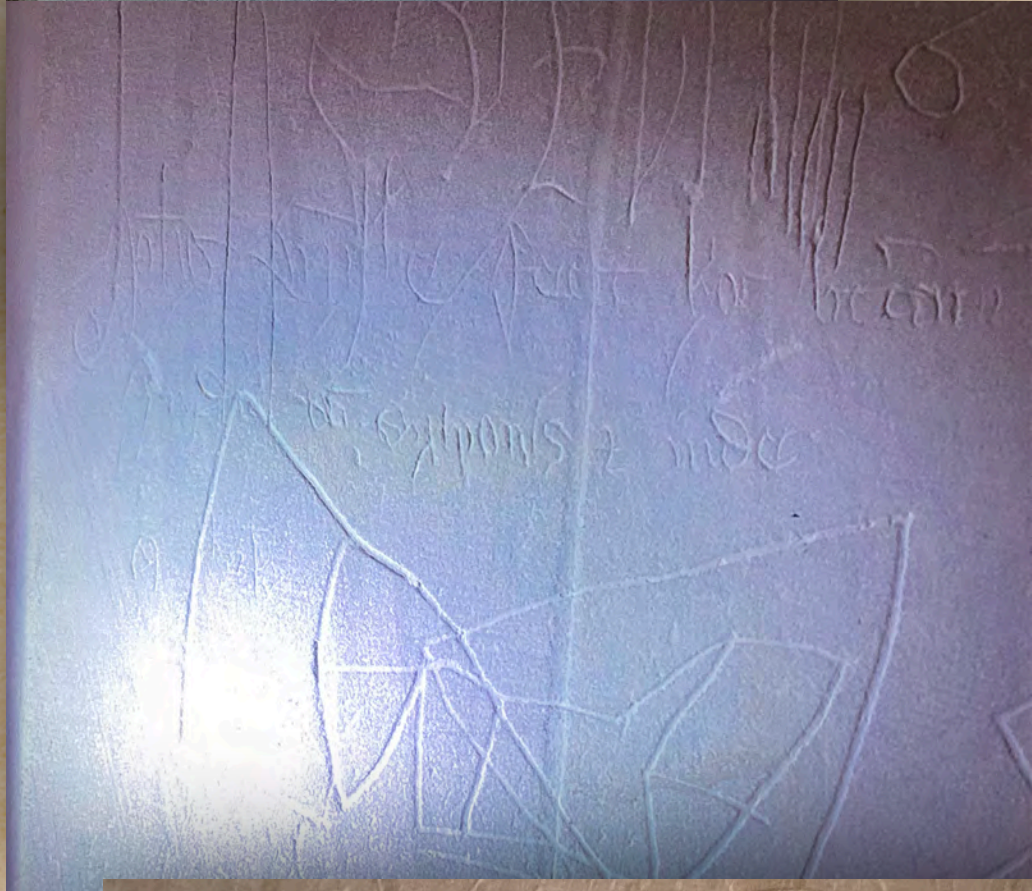
In 2014, medieval graffiti experts visiting Lidgate church concluded that John Lydgate was responsible for some of the extensive graffiti found on the columns and walls in the church.

Anthony told us what to look out for, including what could be his signature contained in the Latin text 'Johannes Lydgate fecit hoc licencia in die santi Symonis et Iude' which translates as John Lydgate made this by licence on the day of Saint Simon and Jude (October 28).

There is also an exciting Rebus, a coded device here set on a musical stave, which some believe to be a message dedicated to Queen Catherine of Valois, it reads as 'Fare ye well my lady Catherine'. The jury is still out on the connection with the Queen, as it could just have been created to demonstrate the poet's skill and talent for language in general.

Apart from the graffiti attributed to Lydgate, the church columns are adorned with windmills, comical faces and even a man wearing a fashionable hat! There are daisy wheels and a swastika etched into the stone, a common motif in the middle ages, not to be confused with the later hate symbol we know today. A muster roll dated 1583 during the late Elizabethan era, summoning local men to enlist is of great interest.

"...the church columns are adorned with windmills, comical faces and even a man wearing a fashionable hat! "



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We then walked round the outside of the castle boundary, read the information boards and viewed the extensive earthworks. Historic England has recently cleared a number of trees from the site which improved visibility of this important landmark.

When our time at the church was over, we retired to The Star Pub, a 16th century timber-framed building in the village. We were grateful for the two lovely fires blazing in the inglenook fireplaces.



A motte and bailey castle was built here, predating the church. The construction is believed to be one of the strongholds dating to The Anarchy of Stephen and Matilda.

Tudors, treachery, and a touch of royal derring-do!

DEVON & CORNWALL BRANCH THE RICHARD III SOCIETY
BRANCH TALKS
MAY & JUNE

Although our principal interest is, and always will be, King Richard III, the Devon & Cornwall Branch also enjoys exploring other fascinating periods of British history. During May and June our members were treated to two outstanding presentations covering the Tudor period and the dramatic escape of King Charles II following the Battle of Worcester.

MAY TALK – DAUGHTERS OF DEVON
by Rosemary Griggs (The Tudor Lady)

Our May speaker, Rosemary Griggs, better known as ‘The Tudor Lady’, is a researcher, historian, seamstress, award-winning author and engaging public speaker. I first heard Rosemary at the Edward V Window rededication at Coldridge last year and immediately invited her to speak to the Branch. We were delighted that she accepted.

Before her talk, we were treated to a surprise introduction – Lady Katherine Champenowne entered in a striking Tudor gown and introduced herself in the Tudor language before transforming into our modern-day speaker. This entertaining approach was repeated at intervals throughout her talk, keeping us enthralled.

Rosemary brought Tudor Devon vividly to life with a fascinating blend of local history – chiefly the Champenownes of Modbury Court and Dartington Hall – costume, her own research, historical writing and much more. She also brought along items, photographs and her books, which were available to purchase.

Following her talk, Rosemary welcomed many questions from an eager audience and was happy to share details and to receive information of interest from our members.

Rosemary’s first three novels – *A Woman of Noble Wit*, *The Dartington Bride* and *Mistress of Dartington Hall* – are historical fiction, but in August she will publish her latest book with Pen & Sword: a biography of Kat Ashley (Née Champenowne), governess to Queen Elizabeth I.



Rosemary Griggs as Lady Katherine Champenowne introducing her presentation.



The Tudor Lady bringing sixteenth-century Devon vividly to life.

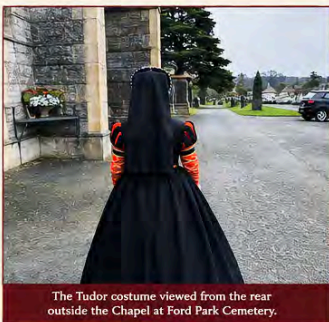


Members browsing Rosemary's books and Tudor display after the talk.

I am pleased to say that Rosemary and her husband thoroughly enjoyed her visit to Plymouth. Rosemary remarked that it was a delight to give a presentation to such a knowledgeable audience who share her passion for history.

Rosemary has kindly agreed to visit us again in November 2027 when she will present her most popular talk, ‘A Tudor Christmas’. Join us at the Christmas feast of Sir Philip Champenowne at the Court House, Modbury, where we will discover the etiquette, menu and customs of the twelve days of a sixteenth-century Christmas – with songs from the peasant David (her vocalist husband!).

I know that the word ‘Tudor’ may be anathema to many Ricardians, but if you do get the chance to listen to Rosemary giving one of her talks, I strongly recommend that you take it.



The Tudor costume viewed from the rear outside the Chapel at Ford Park Cemetery.

JUNE TALK – THE GREAT ESCAPE OF KING CHARLES II
by Shirley Stapley

In June we were treated to a talk by our much-respected Branch Chairman for many years until her recent retirement – Shirley Stapley.

Shirley’s excellent presentation took us far beyond the age of Richard III and into the dramatic events following the Battle of Worcester (3 September 1651), when the young King Charles II – only 21 – escaped capture and embarked on a breathtaking journey.

Shirley led us through the six weeks of danger, disguises and loyal support that carried the King from hiding in Boscombe, through Whiteladies, Madeley and Trent Manor, to his final escape by sea from Shoreham on 15 October 1651.

Her talk was richly illustrated with detail and brought to life the courage, resourcefulness and loyalty of those who risked everything to help the King.



Death warrant (facsimile) of King Charles I.



Henry, Lord Wilmot.



The Surprise.

A TIMELINE OF COURAGE AND LOYALTY

- 3 September 1651 – Battle of Worcester: Royalist defeat; the King escapes.
- 3–4 September – Hides at Whiteladies in Boscombe Wood, then spends the night in the wood with Richard Penderel. Helped by Francis Yates and the Penderel brothers.
- 5–6 September – Attempts to reach Wales, then decides to go to London. Hides in an oak tree in Boscombe Wood while Cromwell’s soldiers search the area.
- Mid-September – Disguised as ‘Will Jackson’, the King travels with Jane Lane and Henry Lascelles.
- 17–18 September – Arrives at Trent Manor, home of Colonel Francis Wyndham, where he stays hidden.
- 6 October – Attempts to escape by sea from Chatham but the plan fails.
- 14 October – Sets out again, reaching Shoreham.
- 15 October 1651 – Flees to France aboard *The Surprise*.
- 16 October 1651 – Safely lands in France, where he is greeted by his mother Queen Henrietta Maria and his brother James, Duke of York.

The Devon and Cornwall Branch offers its members a newsletter with a bright, engaging layout and crisp photography that draw the eye. This issue, showcasing history with flair, covers two recent events: Rosemary Griggs brought Tudor Devon to life in full costume as ‘The Tudor Lady,’ while Shirley Stapley whisked members through King Charles II’s daring escape after the Battle of Worcester—each a spirited celebration of history, loyalty, and storytelling.



Courts, communities, and legal lives of the Yorkist era

"The first thing we do, let's kill all the lawyers." Shakespeare, Henry VI Part 2 Act IV Scene 2"

by Mercia Chapman

In the 21st century people recognise that personal freedom and the right to property depends on the law of the land, but the overt importance of law in everyday life is slight.

It was quite different under the Yorkist Kings: English society was intensely law minded, obsessed with legal considerations, legal rights and legal remedies. Even the mutual obligations of the family were put into legal form.

Spouses were tied to each other and to the terms of the marriage settlement as tightly as the law allowed. The disposal of children in employment or wedlock called for bonds, indentures and legal obligations.

English men and women resorted to the law regularly. With a population of just over two million, the main central courts alone handled in the order of 3,000 new law suits every year. This does not include those that were settled in their early stages. Society at that time depended on the law as administered in the courts.

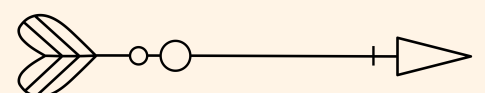


English society was intensely law minded, obsessed with legal considerations, legal rights and legal remedies.

Not only were property rights tested in the courts but the routine buying and selling of land was also effected through a court, as were contracts, agreements, and liabilities to the monarch.

Government of the country was effected though the legal system.

Even the chief financial organ of central government was a court – the Court of Exchequer - before it became a fully organised government department.



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Parliament was a court and during the time of the Yorkist and Tudor monarchs more courts were produced – such as Star Chamber, the Court of Requests and the councils at York and Ludlow.

The same concurrence of law and administration was found in county government. The most powerful officer was the justice of the peace and the most important organ was the court of Quarter Sessions. Crime and county council business were dealt with side by side.

Assisting the justices were juries. Juries were empanelled and witnesses summoned regularly to collect information or investigate claims.

In the 15th century in local communities the management of the open fields, the destruction of a dangerous dog or the price of bread and beer were all the concerns of the Courts of Law.

...the destruction of a dangerous dog or the price of bread and beer were all the concerns of the Courts of Law.

In the towns, courts regulated the quality of manufactured goods, the rate of wages and conditions of employment. Flood control and coastal protection were in the hands of commissions which functioned as courts under the supervision of Kings Bench.

In the 15th century litigation was commonplace. Even someone like Margaret Paston needed to be familiar with the law and the court system, and books to assist them were being produced from 1422. As well as the owner, those who assisted in running an estate also needed legal knowledge.

If I fought the law in the 15th century, would the law win?

By Susan Grant-Mackie

Inspired by Mercia Chapman's detailed overview of the law in the 15th century, I asked Copilot this question: As a commoner, if I fought the law in the 15th century, would the law win?

Short answer: yes — almost certainly. Longer answer: the law wouldn't just win; it would win fast, publicly, and with very little interest in your personal sense of justice.

You weren't dealing with a tidy, unified legal system. You were facing a tangle of overlapping jurisdictions — royal courts, borough courts, manor courts, ecclesiastical courts, Chancery, the Exchequer, the Star Chamber. And almost all of them leaned heavily toward protecting the interests of the Crown, the Church, or wealthy landowners.



Prisoners could expect no mercy from the dreaded Court of the Star Chamber. Image: Lookandlearn.com

Some courts were astonishingly fast — Piepowder courts could seize your goods within hours.

On the next page Mercia Chapman offers a brief summary of the structure of the legal system during Yorkist and Tudor periods.



The swift, strange machinery of 15th-century justice

Handshakes as contracts, judges on the move, merchants calling the shots, and equity battling common law—medieval England’s courts were anything but dull. Victoria Branch member **MERCIA CHAPMAN** offers a sharp snapshot of the fast, fierce and often surprising world of early English justice.

Medieval England’s legal system was a complex network of local, royal, ecclesiastical, and specialised courts, each serving distinct functions shaped by custom, commerce, and royal authority.

Local courts

At the local level, justice was administered through County, Borough, Manor, Fair, and Staple courts. **Borough courts** handled informal contracts—often sealed only by a handshake—enforcing agreements the King’s courts would not recognise: “contracts for the sale of goods... made by a handshake or the giving of some pledge.” Boroughs such as London became hubs for commercial litigation, especially for merchants.

Courts of the Fair, or Piepowder courts, were notable for their speed and broad jurisdiction. They dealt with disputes arising during fairs and markets, often resolving cases within hours. A 1458 Colchester case illustrates this efficiency: “judgment was given... at the 12 o’clock session... [and] the goods were delivered to the plaintiff” the same afternoon. Their importance declined in the late 15th century but they survived until 1897.

Courts of the Staple, located in major trading towns, applied the international Law Merchant to disputes involving staple goods such as wool, tin, and leather.



The King’s courts

The King’s courts—Common Pleas, King’s Bench, and Exchequer—formed the core of the common law system. **Common Pleas**, fixed at Westminster Hall, heard disputes between subjects and held exclusive jurisdiction over real property.

Courts of King’s Bench, originally mobile, evolved into a powerful court handling criminal matters, appeals, and cases involving the Crown.

The Court of Chancery developed as a court of equity, offering remedies unavailable at common law, such as injunctions and specific performance. It expanded rapidly in the 15th century, addressing oral contracts, land disputes, and early trust arrangements known as “uses.”

Chancery also oversaw estates, charitable land, guardianship of infants, and the welfare of lunatics. The Lord Chancellor, often a clergyman, presided with assistance from the Masters in Chancery.

To compete with the increasingly popular **Court of Chancery**, King’s Bench adopted faster procedures in the 15th century. **The Exchequer**, the oldest of the royal courts, focused on revenue matters, hearing cases involving royal debtors and Exchequer officials.



From previous page...

The Star Chamber emerged in the late 15th century as a flexible, powerful tribunal intended to curb abuses by influential individuals. Over time, however, it became associated with arbitrary justice and political oppression, developing offences such as conspiracy and criminal libel. It was abolished in 1640.

Admiralty Courts

These courts were formed during the reign of Edward III. Initially there were three courts, appointed by admirals responsible for waters to the north south and west of England. In 1483 they were amalgamated into a single High Court of Admiralty administered by the Lord High Admiral of England. He appointed the judges and could remove them at will. From 1483 it sat in a disused church in Southwark until 1657. It applied the *Ordinamenta et consuetudo maris* or ordinances and custom of the sea, a convention governing maritime trade promulgated in Italy in 1063.



Sir Julius Caesar, (c. 1557 – 1636). He was a judge in the Admiralty Court from 1584. Image: Admiraltybar.org

Ecclesiastical Courts

Ecclesiastical courts, staffed by clergy, handled moral offences, marriage, divorce, succession, and cases involving clerics. Their broad jurisdiction caused controversy, as many individuals could claim protection under church law.

The lawyers

The legal profession evolved significantly during this period. Serjeants-at-law held exclusive rights of audience in Common Pleas and were the only lawyers eligible to become judges.

Barristers, trained in the Inns of Court, rose in prominence as advocacy demands increased. Advocates practised in ecclesiastical and civil law courts, while attorneys, solicitors, and proctors served in common law, equity, and ecclesiastical jurisdictions respectively. Over time, reforms merged these roles into the modern solicitor profession.

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A witty take on Lambert Simnel

The Pretender

by Jo Harkin

2025

Bloomsbury Publishing

Reviewed by Jan O'Brien

At our May meeting, we discussed the branch's latest book selection, *The Pretender*, a fictional account of Lambert Simnel, by Jo Harkin.

We discussed the plot, the historical inconsistencies, the characters, the themes, and Harkin's use of ancient and medieval literature. The novel uses much language, a lot of it "earthy" to portray the characters' standings in society, and to portray a sense of the times, much like Chaucer does in *Canterbury Tales*; the miller speaks more coarsely than the prioress, and northerners speak differently than southerners.

This is a fictional story about a farm boy in Oxford who becomes a pawn in a deadly political game in the late 15th century.

The title character, John Collan, believes he is the son of widower Will Collan, also living with two brothers on a small but successful dairy farm in Oxfordshire. One day, a strange nobleman in shabby clothes arrives to inform him that he is really Edward Plantagenet, Earl of Warwick, the son of George of Clarence.

He is taken away to Oxford to study with Maister Simons where he studies Latin and literature and is known as Lambert Simons, a poor cousin of the Maister. He learns his lessons until the Maister and his mistress are murdered and Lambert is now transported to Margaret of York's court in Burgundy.

Here, Edward as he is now known, befriends Margaret's step-grandson, Philip (later known as Philip the Fair) and they continue their learning, now including intricate etiquette and state governance.



Finally, as the penultimate stage of his training, he is sent to the Irish court of the Gerald Fitzgerald, Lord Deputy of Ireland, Earl of Kildare, where he learns the darker machinations of politics and how to survive within it. He is swept up in the rebellion as its figurehead with his supposed cousin, John de la Pole, the Earl of Lincoln. The rebellion ends badly for the rebels as they are defeated at the Battle of Stoke, which many regard as the last large battle of the Wars of the Roses, and the Earl of Lincoln is killed.

At this point, Edward, now dubbed Lambert Simnel, is forgiven his part in the rebellion and becomes a kitchen boy in Henry VII's court, learning the lessons of humility after defeat. Here, Lambert takes all of the teachings from his previous postings and eventually becomes a falconer and a spy for Henry, until he is able to gain his freedom as a young man, exact revenge, and finally to set off on his own.

In terms of the history, there are several inconsistencies. The biggest is perhaps his age. The writer has Edward as a teenager of 14 going into the Battle of Stoke; however, the picture provided to us is one of a boy of 10, which would be consistent with Henry forgiving him for his part in the rebellion since he was just a boy.



From previous page...

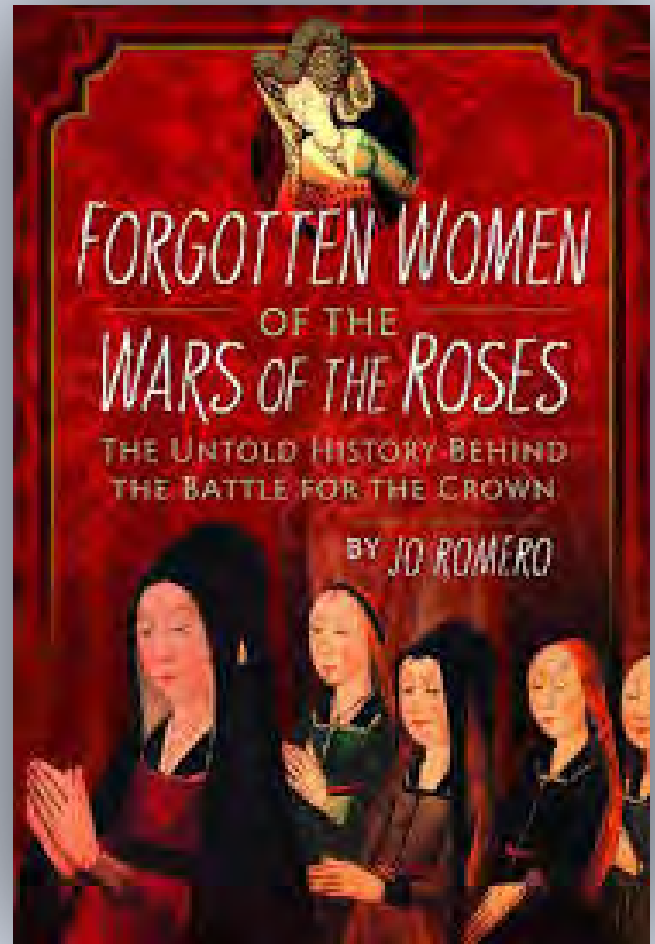
Had Edward/Lambert been a teenager, Henry would likely have been much less forgiving and Lambert would have likely ended up jailed or hanged for treason. But killing a young Lambert would have been unseemly and too much like another prince accused of killing boys. However, the author makes this change to advance the plot of his love interest in Lady Joan of Kildare.

There were a couple of Lady Joans of Kildare around this time, but none lined up for the dates in the book. Lady Joan FitzGerald, Countess of Kildare, died in 1486 at 56, the wife of the Earl noted in the book, and Lady Joan FitzGerald, Countess of Ormond and Desmond lived from 1514 to 1565, too late for the novel. Likely, the author's Joan is a blend of these and other characters. Again, this is a work of fiction, and as with historical fiction, dates and characters can be tweaked to fit and forward the plot.

The Pretender is described as a coming-of-age book, and this is probably the main theme presented in the novel as the main character grows from a young boy to a man. Another theme of the book is identity. The title is *The Pretender*, and this is a theme that runs throughout. He starts with an identity as a third son of a farmer, then a student of literature at Oxford, then a prince and warrior, and finally a spy until he can cast off all of these pretensions and seek out who he really is.

The author, Jo Harkin studied both psychology and English literature at university which show in her story telling of *The Pretender*. The references to literature, and the wisdom contained, are woven into her story. Some of the ancient and medieval works include: *Piers Plowman*, *The Ulster Red Branch tales*, *Le Morte D'Arthur*, and others.

We think the book club group generally found the novel entertaining and humorous. The discussion was good with one comment stating that the reader wouldn't have normally read something like this but enjoyed it. This is one unintended but happy outcome of the club.



Our next book club meeting is in December, and our next book is a non-fiction title: The Forgotten Women of the Wars of the Roses, a book about uncommon commoners and their place in history.

Our next book club meeting is in December, and our next book is a non-fiction title: *The Forgotten Women of the Wars of the Roses*, a book about uncommon commoners and their place in history. This choice was influenced by feedback to the first book, *The Brothers York* - that we try to include more stories about women in the time period. So, as usual, if you read *The Forgotten Women* and wish to discuss, or if you are not able to read it in time, please join us in December as we will present our ideas about the book and invite discussion.



Elizabeth Woodville's quiet farewell

Medieval funerals was the topic of the day for New Zealand Branch members this month.

The topic inspired a wide-ranging discussion that ranged from the importance – or otherwise – of funerals over the centuries; who got to attend funerals and a jolly emphasis on whose bodies were treated with less than respect – William the Conqueror among them. Though Henry VIII got a mention, as well.

Branch Secretary ANNETTE PARRY presented an in-depth analysis of the funeral of Elizabeth Woodville.

Elizabeth Woodville slipped out of the world on 8 June 1492, two days before Whit Sunday, after five years of seclusion at Bermondsey Abbey. Her deathbed will was heartbreakingly simple. With “no worldly goods to do the Queen’s Grace, my dearest daughter, a pleasure with neither to reward any of my children,” she could offer only her blessing.

Her retreat to Bermondsey has long been coloured by rumour. Polydore Vergil hinted she was banished by Henry VII for supposed involvement in the Lambert Simnel rising, though Sutton and Visser-Fuchs argue she likely chose the abbey herself. Henry did seize her lands, granting her a pension from 1 May 1487—her wedding anniversary.

Bermondsey Abbey, a Cluniac house on a Thames islet, was known for its miraculous Rood of St Saviour, its library, and its tradition of sheltering “distressed queens.” Katherine of Valois died there; Dame Anne Arundel lived out her grief in its close. Elizabeth’s residence fits this pattern of quiet refuge.



Bermondsey Abbey, a Cluniac house on a Thames islet, was known for its miraculous Rood of St Saviour, its library, and its tradition of sheltering “distressed queens.”

Yet her funeral was nothing like Katherine’s grand progress through London. Katherine had an effigy, a royal lying-in-state, and burial in Westminster Abbey. Elizabeth, by contrast, asked to be buried at Windsor beside Edward IV “without pompes or costly expenses.” And that is precisely what happened.

On the late evening of Whit Sunday, her coffin was taken by river to Windsor with only five companions: two clerics, a male kinsman, her step-daughter Grace, and a single gentlewoman. The herald who witnessed it was appalled by the simplicity. No tolling bells, no reception by St George’s clergy—just one priest and one clerk meeting the coffin at 11pm. She was buried immediately, without Dirige or Mass. When Edward IV’s vault was opened in 1789, fragments of her wooden coffin still lay atop his.

Only the next day did the ceremonial machinery creak belatedly into motion. Bishop Edward Audley arrived, followed by heralds from the College of Arms. A low hearse was built—four wooden candlesticks and four silver-gilt ones with tapers “of no great weight.” The herald sniffed that it was fit only “for a common person.” A black cloth-of-gold pall was laid over the coffin, with two paper escutcheons of her crowned arms pinned on. Even this struck him as inadequate for a queen.



From previous page...

The Last Will and Testament of Elizabeth Woodville. She asked for no pomp, and in the end, she received exactly the farewell she chose.



Image: thefreelancehistorywriter.com

Over the next three days, her daughters and kin gathered: Princesses Anne, Katherine, and Bridget; Cecily Bonville; nieces from the Woodville and Herbert families; and noblewomen connected through marriage and loyalty. They knelt around the hearse for Dirige and attended the requiem Mass on 13 June, where the herald again grumbled about “a dozen old men holding old torches and candle ends” instead of properly attired mourners.

Dorset provided the dole and a modest 40 shillings to an unnamed recipient—possibly the heralds.

It was a small sum, reflecting both Elizabeth’s reduced circumstances and her explicit wish for simplicity. The narrator ended with a prayer, then spoiled his solemnity by wondering whether the pregnant queen had worn the customary blue mourning.

On 14 June, three Masses were sung. Dorset, her son, offered gold at each and stood as chief mourner—an unusual role normally reserved for a woman. During the offering ceremony, Princess Anne represented her pregnant sister, Queen Elizabeth of York, kneeling at the head of the hearse with carpet and cushion. The ladies followed with their offerings; the lords, clergy, and household officers after them. There was no cloth laid across the body, prompting the herald to speculate—perhaps hopefully—that an effigy lay beneath the pall.

The branch discussion concentrated on this question: had the queen been able to attend, would her mother’s funeral have been grander? Perhaps. But Elizabeth Woodville asked for no pomp, and in the end, she received exactly the farewell she chose.



THEATRE REVIEW:

Boleyns reimagined with wit, colour and drama

THE OTHER BOLEYN GIRL, presented by Wellington Repertory Theatre at Gryphon Theatre, Wellington

Reviewed by Emma Holmes

Wellington Repertory's most recent production was a theatrical version of Philippa Gregory's book *The Other Boleyn Girl*.

The play was presented extremely well with a minimum of scenery; the whole floor of the theatre was painted like cobbles and the smell of incense greeted the audience on entry.

Players entered the stage area via one of a row of gothic type entrances with different coloured LED surrounds delineating between locations.

This version of the story concentrated on Mary Boleyn, showing her as a young girl pushed into a marriage and then an affair with the King by her family, while trying to remain faithful to Queen Katherine and a mother to her children.

She pushes back when Norfolk and her parents realise that Henry wants to rid himself of Katherine and will be looking for a new Queen and she seems to be the natural successor. When she becomes pregnant and removes from court, her sister Anne catches the King's eye and she maneuvers herself into the position of King's wife, behind her family's back and against their wishes.

Following her marriage and coronation, things between Henry and Anne turn badly and after the birth of a daughter and 2 miscarriages, Henry begins to think he has again married badly and looks towards Jane Seymour as wife number 3.



Anne's downfall ends with the deaths of her and her brother George.

The family is desperate for Anne to have a male heir and regain the King's favour, but he will not be persuaded and Anne's downfall ends with the deaths of her and her brother George.

It is some time since I read the book, or saw the film, so I am not sure how accurate this version is to the source material, but some comments:

- **Henry was only a minor figure. In the first half he was seen but not heard. In the second half he had two lines in one scene and then his highlight was a scene following his jousting accident.**

- **George and Francis Weston were obvious (and very campy) lovers. One of two slightly comedic turns. I am not sure that this tone worked.**

- **The other rather comedic turn was Thomas Boleyn who was portrayed as a put-upon husband, ridiculed by Norfolk, while his wife was the major player in the drama, working closely with her brother, Norfolk. He was played pretty dastardly - but then he was!**



BOOK REVIEW:

What is admirable in a “winner” is weird in a “loser”

***Richard II: A True King's Fall*, by Kathryn Warner, Amberley Books.
Thanks Porirua Public library.
Reviewed by Annette Parry**

I enjoyed her biography of Edward II and she writes well.

Kathryn admits that she is fascinated by the “unsuccessful deeply flawed and deposed kings” and sees the similarity between Richard and Edward; much like Richard himself did. But he didn't learn from Edward's mistakes.

She's really into genealogy and decided not to change people's names and titles as they changed, so she does confuse me with “Henry of Lancaster” even when he was better known as the Earl of Derby or the Duke of Hereford as he aged.

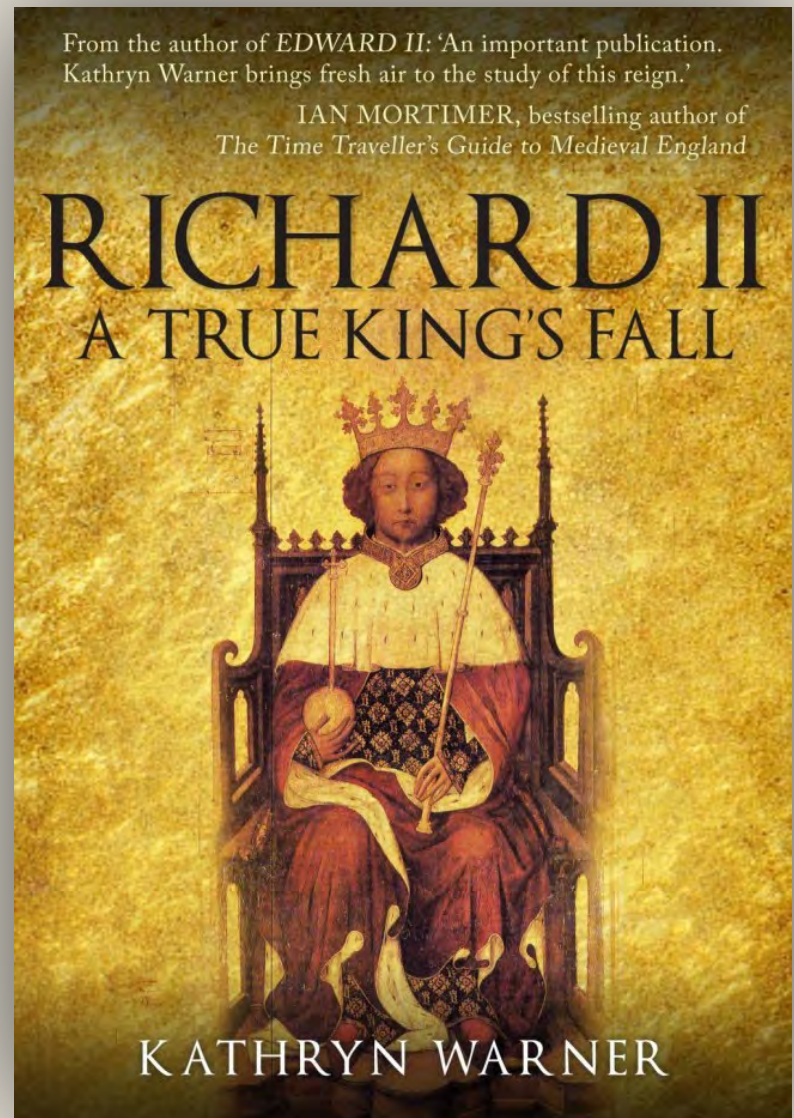
She has helpful tables at the front. She does keep referring to people as “his half-cousin, Joan of Kent's grandson” which makes the book wordy but clear.

I do have sympathy for Richard, even though sometimes you just want to say, “calm down”, and I still respect what he did during the Peasants' Revolt.

And he was a generous person and had to be aware of his dignity and future role from such a young age.

Understandable that he had an attitude of superiority. And some of this came from his trying to imitate his father in Aquitaine when the prince expected visitors to admire him in silence on bended knee.

It's worth a read. It can be slow going if you puzzle over each name as I did - “Which John Holland was that? Oh, right, that one!” - through most of the book. And I'm sorry that we know so little about Anne of Bohemia/Anna of Luxembourg. Kathryn gives her two other titles as well!



***Understandable
that he had an
attitude of
superiority.***



Fog, fury, and a future King: The battle that shaped Richard III

By Alison Harrop

Matt Lewis and Thomas Dennis discussed their short film *A Taste of Loyalty* at the Yorkshire Branch Arthur Cockerill Memorial Lecture recently.

The film covers the Battle of Barnet and its aftermath.

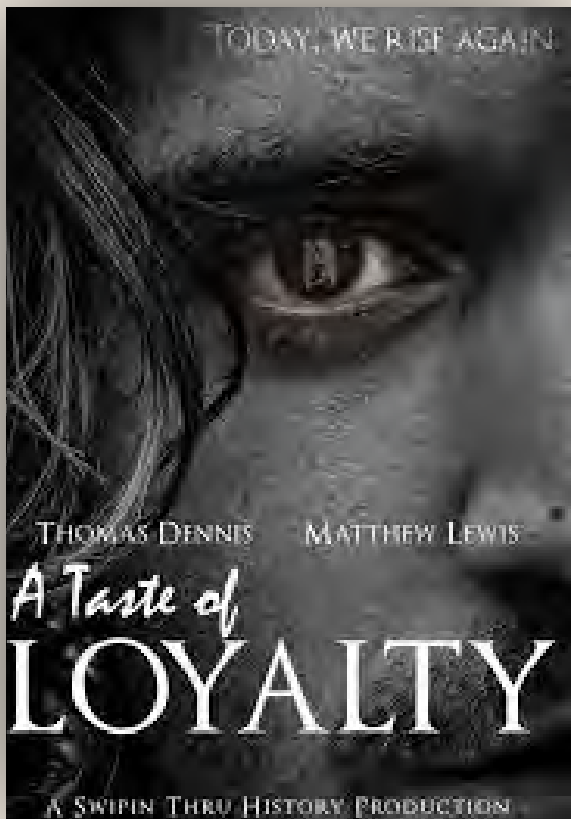
Matt gave us a recap of the historical events leading up to the battle and emphasised how young Richard was and yet how much responsibility he already held. His first recorded letter was written on 24th June 1469 and requested a drawdown of £100 from the Duchy of Lancaster for the North which he promised to pay back.

A year later he was appointed Constable of England at the age of 17. This gave him the power to summon a court martial for treason with no right of appeal. Richard was idealistic and making significant enemies even now, notably the Griffiths and Rhys ap Thomas in South Wales and the Stanleys when he intervened on the side of the Harringtons in a dispute over Hornby Castle.

He was loyal to his brother Edward but also remained close to George (and Margaret) and was probably instrumental in the reconciliation with George at Nottingham prior to Barnet when George’s army abandoned Warwick’s cause.

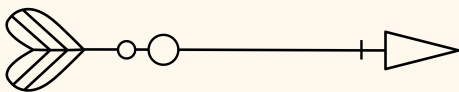
Edward (and Richard) had been in exile in the Low Countries due to Warwick’s changing allegiance but returned in 1471, landing at Ravenspur and moving south, with Edward initially claiming he only wished to regain his Dukedom of York and not the throne in an echo of Bolingbroke. That changed when people flocked to his cause however and after taunting Warwick at Coventry Edward was received as King again in London placing Henry VI in custody.

The film is true to history and shows that Richard is wounded. This was presumably only a minor injury (Matt suggested the possible loss of a fingertip as shown in the National Gallery portrait) as Richard fought again at Tewkesbury leading the vanguard, shortly afterwards.



Richard fought on the right opposite the Duke of Exeter. In the meantime Oxford on the left had pushed Hastings’ men back and they fled. When Oxford’s men returned to the fray they were mistaken for Edward’s ranks and chaos ensued.

The Battle of Barnet followed on 14th April 1471. The armies camped in darkness quite close to each other the night before when Warwick fired his cannon overnight. Edward replied in the morning which was foggy with poor visibility.



From previous page...

An unknown source wrote the following poem :-

*'The Duke of Gloucester
that noble prince,
Young of age and
victorious in battle,
To the honour of Hector
that he might come,
Grace him followeth,
fortune and good speed.'*

This was Richard's first taste of a real battle and although we believe Edward wanted to spare Warwick he was slain. This was the man who had basically brought Richard up and trained him at Middleham so Richard must have felt conflicted.

But loyalty bound him as his personal motto states. The first written record of the use of this motto was in 1483

The 'binding' implies a duty even if the outcome is not desired and continued to inform Richard's high moral compass, including when he became Lord Protector of the Realm and subsequently King.

Barnet was the first test of this loyalty, hence the title of the film which was now screened for us, showing Richard's conflicted feelings.

Our meeting was also on Zoom and it was challenging to transmit the volume from the film but Steve Bowen, who expertly facilitates the Zoom for us, was able to improve this somewhat by placing the handheld mike next to the screen.



Matt and Thomas then held a discussion and hosted a question-and-answer session which lasted almost an hour regarding their choices with respect to the film. Matt wrote the script which is based on his novel *Loyalty Binds Me* which also begins at Barnet with the eighteen-year-old Richard.

Thomas explained the importance of using real armour instead of rubber accoutrements to accurately capture the weight and sound of medieval armour, sharing his experience wearing it for 10 hours straight during filming. He also trained on horseback.

The discussion covered practical aspects of filming in armour, including limited visibility through the visor which explains why many combatants partially raise this during the fighting.

Thomas also explained how Warwick's death was staged. Warwick's identity was kept intentionally obscure (although his banner was shown) until the end when he was killed. The physicality of the battle (including brutal punching) was very authentically staged even though this slowed down the action in comparison to Hollywood scenarios.

Experienced re-enactors with their own costumes were used, the only professional actors being Thomas as Richard and Tristan Alexander as Edward IV, both young men. The re-enactors also provided the props for the tent scenes. The dog in the tent deserves a credit too though Matt confided in real life he had an issue with his name being Stanley! The musical score was original and played by a live cellist, adding to the atmosphere.

The whole production was filmed on a tight budget of £17,000 and lasts 17 minutes. It is in fact a visual pre-runner for the whole script to show its potential. After it has been tightened it will be sent out to directors and producers some of whom who have already shown interest so the hope is it will be taken on as a feature length film and prove popular. But Matt and Thomas are determined it will be made within their red lines and retain its authenticity and humanity.

With thanks to Alison Harrop and the Yorkshire Branch newsletter *Blanc Sanglier*.



Walking beside Richard: The power of imaginative truth

***The Untold Stories: History, Fiction and Imagination* 2025**

By Maria Grazia Leotta

Reviewed by Susan Grant-Mackie

In her foreword to *The Untold Stories*, Joanne Larner, a Ricardian and author, rightly says Maria's stories evoke an emotional response, because they are believable.

I was certainly surprised, and challenged, by the incredibly relatable and human scenarios she presents. Maria has an amazing way of not following the path well-travelled; in fact, she creates a new path, particularly in *I Will Be Queen*. Maria's profile of Elizabeth of York makes complete sense because it's very human.

Maria's stories are most certainly not medieval fairy tales; they are real, intense, and incredibly sad sometimes, precisely because, as a reader, you know things could have easily happened that way.

Many of the stories cover the impact on Richard of key events in his life. Including his father's death; heading into battle with his brother Edward; sitting for THE portrait; Buckingham's betrayal and meeting an illegitimate son just before Bosworth.

The reader is surrounded by the sensory, emotional, and psychological atmosphere of the moment. You feel the cold of a battlefield morning, the smoky closeness of a medieval tavern, the quiet dread before execution, and the fragile tenderness of private conversations that history never recorded but could so easily have happened.



Maria's work is well-researched and historically accurate. With intense atmosphere it introduces a very believable humanity to Richard's life and to some of the people in his life, particularly Elizabeth of York, and the Duke of Buckingham.

Particularly challenged by Maria's profile of Elizabeth of York, I invited her to explain where she got the inspiration for that, and several other stories.



MARIA GRAZIA LEOTTA shares the inspiration behind some of her work in *Untold Stories: History, Fiction and Imagination*.

Elizabeth of York interpretation “controversial”

The Untold Stories is a work of fiction inspired by a dream. I wrote down the dream to remember every detail and eventually I added the stories.

Every story was inspired by something - a place, a situation or an event.

The first story *Father* is about the death of the Duke of York. I imagined how an eight-year-old boy would have reacted to that. This event was traumatic for young Richard who was deprived of both his father and childhood. I have assumed that this event shaped his personality making him the determined man he was.



With *The Loyal Boar* I imagined what could have happened in the royal tent before Richard's first battle and what the two brothers would have said to each other. The inspiration came after reading a book about the battles of Barnet and Tewkesbury.

The Portrait was inspired by the exhibition of Richard's portrait at Yorkshire Museum some years ago. I was lucky enough to be the last visitor of the last day of the exhibition. The room was empty and I was sitting alone in front of the portrait and it was at that point I started to write.

The Path of Destiny is based on historical facts as are the first two. How did Richard hear of the pre-contract? How did he react to Stillington's revelation?

For the Weal of Us All was inspired by the letter Bishop Langton wrote to the Prior of the Cathedral Church of Canterbury and also by documents held in York, the city where I live.

The Most Untruwe Creature Lyving recalls the tone in the letter Richard III wrote to the Duke of Buckingham. Was Richard present at Buckingham's execution? Did Buckingham repent of his treasonable act? In this story, I investigate Buckingham's thoughts.

I Will Be Queen is probably the most controversial of all the stories. When I wrote it, I had in mind a beautiful, ambitious, young lady who had inherited her mother's greed, and was feeling resentful about the pre-contract situation.

When Elizabeth arrives at her uncle's court, she realises he is not the bad man her mother hated, but a handsome and just lord who had accepted his fate and treated her fairly.

Her dream is love and power combined: she is determined to marry her uncle for love, and replace her mother as Queen of England. Remembering what her mother had always taught her about men, she misunderstands her uncle's kindness and when he refuses her, she resorts to her Plan B: she will marry Henry Tudor who had made an oath in France to marry her and become king of England if he had defeated Richard.

Was she sorry when her uncle died? We don't know but I already have enough material to write a novella about this.



JANE CLARKE introduces a lively cast of shepherds, terriers, mastiffs and corgis in an exploration of medieval working dogs — the tireless, intelligent, often invisible partners who shaped daily life far more than courtly lapdogs ever did. From ancient Greek flock guardians to Welsh drovers’ “dwarf dogs,” their stories reveal a world where every paw had a purpose.

Working dogs: the unsung heroes of the medieval world

'Working dogs' is a rather all-encompassing term - and covers a wide spectrum of activities.

The category represents a variety of types of dogs who often multi-tasked across different roles. The farmers’ sheepdog - bred for its stamina and intelligence - would also be required to guard the flock.

Terrier type dogs could be used as 'pest controllers' but also used to hunt small game.

Mastiff type dogs would be used as guard dogs - but would also be used for hunting and blood sports.

Working dogs did not usually participate in the everyday lives of the aristocracy - consequently they are under represented in the art and literature of the medieval period. They would be bred for certain desirable characteristics - but the modern breeds that are closely associated with certain activities did not evolve until much later. However, we can identify some of their ancestors - and some modern breeds which were known in the middle ages.

One of the most iconic working dogs of the modern era is the 'sheepdog'... but their origins are in the ancient world. An early reference to shepherd dogs comes from Plato (*Republica*). These dogs were the ancestors of the modern 'Greek shepherd dog' which closely resembles them in appearance and character. Famed for their ability to guard the flock they gained a reputation for being rather overzealous - as many an unfortunate traveller who came too close to the sheep often found out - rather painfully!

The dogs had abundant stamina to undertake the seasonal movement of the sheep across large areas in search of grazing. Across the Balkans there are other very similar breeds which are almost certainly descended from the sheep dogs of ancient Greece.

Modern terriers (hi Bella!) come in many shapes and sizes - but are all thought to be descended from the Agassaeus - a small shaggy hunting dog - renowned for its scenting and tracking ability.



Greek sheep dog



Welsh Pembroke corgi



Bosnian tornjak



Cardigan Welsh corgi



From previous page...

The second century poet Oppian described them in his work '*Cynegetica*' (The Chase) as being a dog of the Britons, small and lean with powerful claws and teeth!

There are, however, modern dogs which were known in the medieval period - probably the best known might be the Cardigan and Pembroke corgi.

Famed for their ability as drovers' dogs they were considered a single breed until 1934 when they were recategorised as two distinct breeds. Cattle dogs are mentioned in the Domesday Book and corgis are certainly ancient breeds.

The name derives from the Welsh *cor ci* - meaning dwarf dog. They may be small but they are intelligent little power packs, historically valued for their droving and herding ability - they can excel at modern 'disciplines' such as agility and flyball. Their small stature was extremely useful when droving cattle - they would move the large beasts along with the occasional 'nip' to their heels.

Their size ensured that any retaliatory kick did indeed 'go over their heads'! Their origins have long been the subject of debate. With links to both the 'northern spitz' (such as the Swedish vallhund) or the 'teckel' types (such as the dachshund) being explored.

One theory suggested that they were brought to Wales by the Vikings - understandable given their similarity to the vallhund.

However it is now accepted that the older of the two breeds - the Cardigan corgi was brought to Wales by migrating Celts about 3,000 years ago, while the Pembroke corgi was introduced to the south west of Wales during the 'Flemish plantations' in the early 12th century.

During the reign of Henry I, Flemish nationals who were living in England were encouraged to move to Pembrokeshire - bringing these dogs with them. The migration began in 1105 and lasted until 1111.



Swedish vallhund

Jack's predecessor in our household was a collie/corgi cross breed called Penny. Her intelligence was amazing - as was her ability to 'keep an eye' on everyone and keep her 'flock of humans' together. She was also incredibly agile - her chosen form of 'greeting' was to run and jump straight into our arms!

Whilst working dogs are not featured in art or literature as often as hunting dogs or companion animals there are some examples that give us a glimpse of their lives.



From previous page...

The *tres riches heures* features working dogs on three of the months. February (right) shows a very wintery scene - but the peasants still have work to do. However, some are taking the opportunity to get warm and dry. They are joined by an animal who has the prime position in front of the fire. This is sometimes identified as a cat - but is almost certainly a dog - probably the sheepdog having a rest because the sheep are penned.

It certainly looks like a dog to me - with powerful hind quarters. The likelihood of it being a dog is confirmed by the discourse that this illustration is a 'compare and contrast' with January which depicts the Duc de Berry's epiphany feast.

That illustration shows the well fed and finely dressed aristocracy enjoying a sumptuous celebration accompanied by their dogs. At the opposite end of the social hierarchy February shows the harder lives of the duke's workers - they have rather poor clothing for the weather and have to keep going despite the snow - but they do have moments of rest in front of the fire with their canine assistant!

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A sheepdog having a rest in front of the fire because the sheep are penned.



From previous page...

The illustration for March (right) shows a hive of springtime activity. A variety of farming practises is featured - in the top left corner the shepherd and his dog are shown. They have been tending the sheep and seem to be in a hurry to complete their tasks before a large black cloud blows in a shower of rain.

November (bottom right) shows a very autumnal scene. The peasants are beating the oak trees with sticks to dislodge the acorns which can be fed to the pigs. The swineherd and his dog feature prominently - he appears to be about to throw his staff at a tree while the dog looks on with a rather 'knowing' expression!

In the next issue

As we come towards the end of our exploration of medieval dogs, Sir C has been doing his own research and has come up with some fun facts and landmark dates which he will share over the next few *Heralds*.

His first revelation concerns the evolution of dogs; when exactly did wolf become dog? Well - a lot earlier than we thought - about 5,000 years earlier! so that's about 15,000 years ago! He will tell you more in the next *Herald* out in October!

Right: The swineherd and his dog feature prominently - he appears to be about to throw his staff at a tree while the dog looks on with a rather 'knowing' expression!



A shepherd and his dog hurry before it rains.





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.'