

## KING RICHARD III & THE RISE OF THE HOUSE OF TUDOR



*King Richard III*

In June 1944 a spirited debate took place between His Royal Highness, King George VI, and the Prime Minister, Sir Winston Churchill. The reluctant inheritor of the throne insisted he should be in the vanguard of the forces about to invade the Continent; that he should be—and be seen to be—the leader of his army in battle. Fearful that the King might be killed, and so soon after the abdication crisis, Churchill had the greatest difficulty in dissuading him.

The last king to have performed such a service for his people and die in battle for them was King Richard III, 460 years before in the Battle of Bosworth, as he strove to resist the usurper, Henry Tudor. That he was overcome there was not due to want of courage or of consideration for his troops or for the English people, but to the treachery of those in whom he had placed his trust.

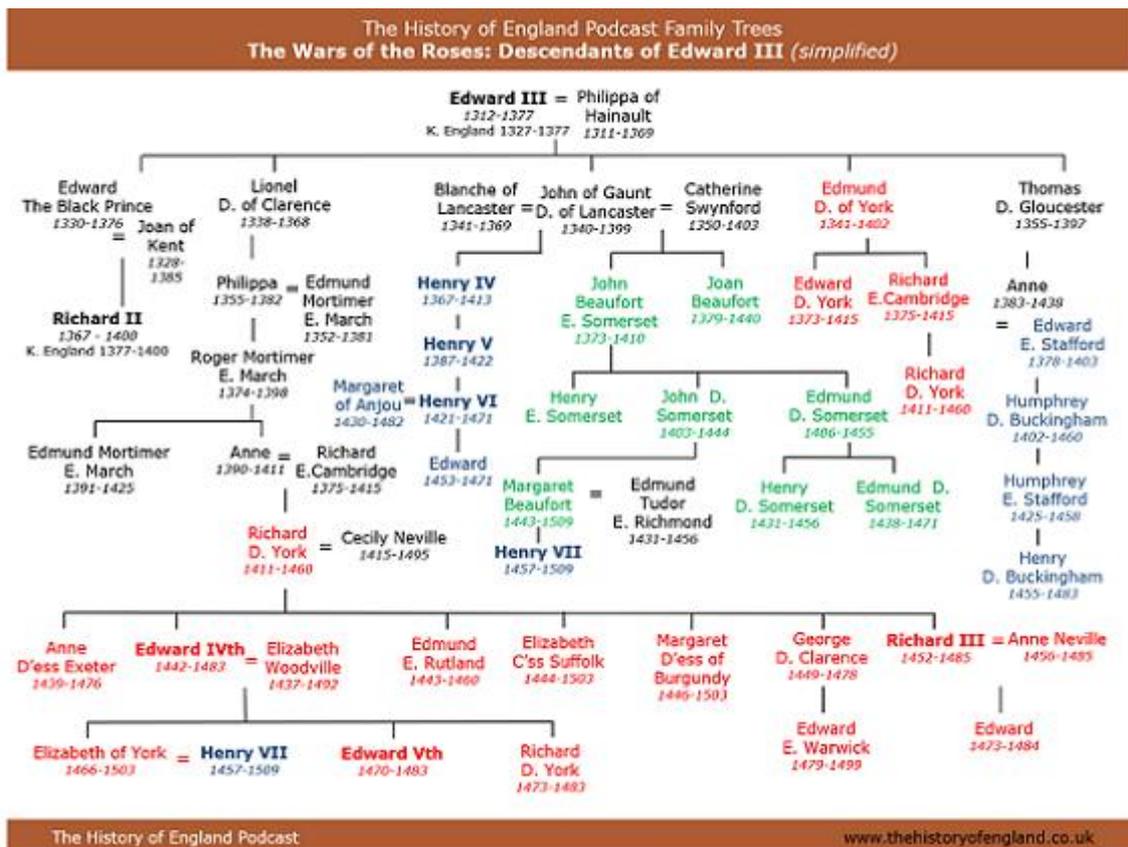
In September, 2012, researchers employing excavators in a city centre car park in Leicester discovered skeletal remains within the site of the former Greyfriars Friary Church destroyed by Henry Tudor's son in his revolt against the Catholic Church. The remains, remarkably well preserved, proved to be those of the late King. Evidence of lumbar scoliosis associated with King Richard's known bodily deformity supported by DNA analysis confirmed their identity.

Archeologists were amazed at the speed at which hardly-hoped-for objectives were achieved and the success that attended the enterprise. Archeologist Richard Buckley had told Philipa Langley who commissioned the excavation that the odds were "fifty-fifty at best for [finding] the church and nine-to-one against for finding the grave". The *Wikipedia* entry notes:

“[T]he excavators found the remains in the first location in which they dug at the car park. Coincidentally, they lay almost directly under a roughly painted 'R' on the tarmac. This had existed since the early 2000s to signify a reserved parking space.”

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King Edward III (1327-1377) had had five sons and the disputes between the descendants of these sons over the succession to the kingdom—aided and abetted by their wives, mistresses and hangers-on—from 1399 to the Battle of Bosworth are known to history from the emblems marking the claims of descendents of the third and fourth sons as the Wars of the Roses.<sup>1</sup>



Simplified family tree of Edward III courtesy

<https://thehistoryofengland.co.uk/resource/wars-of-the-roses-family-trees/>

Edward III’s eldest son, Edward, the Black Prince, predeceased his father but left an heir who was crowned Richard II (1377-1399). Only 10 years old when he succeeded his grandfather, Richard fell under the control of others, notably his uncle the Duke of Lancaster. His reign was not helped by a series of difficulties—war with France, border conflicts with Scotland, economic enervation resulting from the Black Death (1349-1351) and landlords’ demands that ignored the sufferings of their tenants and led to the Peasants’ Revolt in 1381. In 1387 control was wrested from the King by a

<sup>1</sup> John of Gaunt, the third son, Duke of Lancaster. His emblem was a red rose. The emblem of the fourth son, Edmund, Duke of York, was a white rose.

group of aristocrats but by 1389 he had resumed command and the eight years that followed were relatively harmonious. In 1397, however, he had his revenge and executed, or exiled, many of them.

In 1398 John of Gaunt died and the King disinherited his son, Henry Bolingbroke, previously exiled from the kingdom. But in June 1399 Henry returned with a force and quickly found supporters. He deposed Richard and had himself crowned as Henry IV (1399-1413). Richard died in captivity shortly after.

Henry IV was succeeded by a son, Henry V (1413-1422), the soldier-king who defeated the French at Agincourt. His son by his wife, Katherine de Valois, became Henry VI (1422-1461) on his father's early death. He suffered periodic insanity inherited apparently from his mother, which in his later years, left his kingdom in the hands of his French wife, Margaret of Anjou.

Now, the fourth son of Edward III, Edmund, Duke of York, (+1402) had left two sons, one of whom was the sire of Richard, the third Duke of York (+1460), who produced four sons the eldest of whom, Edward, bested Henry VI in the Battle of Towton and became Edward IV (1461-1483). Richard's second son, Edmund, was killed in 1460. Those that remained were George, Duke of Clarence and Richard, Duke of Gloucester. These married sisters, respectively, Isabel and Anne Neville, descended from John of Gaunt's extra-marital indulgence with Katherine Swynford, whom (his two previous wives having died) he later married. Clarence was an unstable character whose loyalty to his eldest brother vacillated under the influence of his father in law, the Earl of Warwick ('the Kingmaker'). Clarence was eventually attainted for treason, at the instance it is suggested, of the family of King Edward's wife, Elizabeth Woodville, and executed in 1478.

Richard and Anne assumed the care of Clarence's orphaned children, Margaret, Countess of Salisbury (born 1473), and Edward, Earl of Warwick (born 1475), whose right to the succession had been barred by of the King's attainting of their father. Richard sent them to Yorkshire to Sheriff Hutton Castle with their cousin John de la Pole, Earl of Lincoln (son of his elder sister Elizabeth), in charge.

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Edward IV died, of his excesses it is said, at the early age of 40. Richard had supported him faithfully in the course of his reign, had accompanied him when he was forced into exile in Holland and, at eighteen, had distinguished himself in battle at Tewkesbury in 1471. Moved by this fidelity, he appointed Richard the sole guardian of his children and Protector of the Realm during the minority of his son Edward. He directed that neither Elizabeth, his wife, nor her family was to have any part in the governance of the kingdom. Historian Hugh Ross Williamson comments—

"It was as if, freed at last from her influence, [Edward] had made what amends he could from beyond the grave. Richard was in York when the news of his brother's death reached him. He called together the nobility of the district, made them swear allegiance to the twelve-year-old Edward V and, with six hundred followers, all attired in mourning,

set out for London, intending on the way to meet his nephew at Northampton and conduct him in state to the capital.”<sup>2</sup>

The members of the Woodville camp moved quickly to secure power. The young Edward was in Ludlow in the custody of Elizabeth Woodville’s eldest brother, Lord Rivers, of her younger son, Sir Richard Grey, and of her nephew, Sir Robert Haute. Elizabeth’s other son, the Marquess of Dorset, commanded the Tower. Richard soon discovered what was afoot and acted with his customary despatch. Rivers and Grey had sent the young King to London while they sought to delay Richard’s progress in Northampton but he arrested them, intercepted the King and brought him back to Northampton. The Marquess of Dorset, meanwhile, had seized the arms and treasure of the Tower to fund a naval force to command the Channel. The Woodvilles, it seemed, intended to kill Richard but he was too fly for them. He consigned the conspirators to prison and, in due course, had them executed. Elizabeth fled to sanctuary in Westminster.

On May 4<sup>th</sup>, Richard entered London in state with Edward V and sent him to stay at the Bishop of London’s palace. He, himself, went to stay with his mother, Cicely, Duchess of York. He fixed the coronation for 22<sup>nd</sup> June and arranged for parliament to be summoned on 25<sup>th</sup> June. But, between 4<sup>th</sup> May and 22<sup>nd</sup> June something intervened to change all he had proposed.

On 8<sup>th</sup> June the Bishop of Bath and Wells, Robert Stillington (1420-1491), revealed to the Council, a matter to the secrecy of which Edward IV had compelled him, namely, that the King had been secretly married by ‘troth-plight’, a binding engagement recognised as lawful marriage by the Church, to the Lady Eleanor Butler before his secret and unpopular marriage to Elizabeth Woodville in 1464. This meant that the seven children of his union with Elizabeth, including the young Edward V, were illegitimate.

“Questioned before the Three Estates, Bishop Stillington further stated that... he had been sworn to silence by the late King. It was known that he had for a short time actually been imprisoned for ‘uttering words prejudicial to the King and his state’ and had only been released on his giving his solemn promise not to repeat the offence. It is worthy of note here that the Duke of Clarence had been charged with a similar offence... hence the hostility between Clarence and the Woodvilles, who were universally blamed for his death. It is thus possible... that it was fear of revenge for Clarence’s death which caused the Woodvilles to plot against Richard as Protector.”<sup>3</sup>

According to Williamson, this was the issue that had led to Clarence’s death.

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<sup>2</sup> Hugh Ross Williamson, *Who Was The Man In The Iron Mask? and Other Historical Enigmas*, Penguin, 2002, p. 49; ) originally published sub tit. *Historical Whodunnits*, Phoenix House, 1955. Cited hereafter as ‘*Historical Enigmas*’.

<sup>3</sup> D. M. Kleyn, *Richard of England*, Oxford, 1990, p. 10. Hugh Ross Williamson adds this: “[T]he French chronicler, Philippe de Commines, says that Robert Stillington... who drew up the contract and witnessed the troth-plight, told him that he afterwards actually married Edward and the Lady Eleanor. Whether or not this was true, it did not affect the legal situation, since the betrothal alone was sufficient to invalidate the subsequent Woodville marriage...” (*Historical Enigmas*, p. 47)

“The apparent charges [against Clarence] are so obviously not the real charges. On them alone even his uxorious thralldom to Elizabeth Woodville would not have made Edward actually kill his brother. And those writers are surely correct who see in the action the king’s fear that Clarence, in his hatred of the queen and in the headiness of his increasing popularity, would play as his trump card the Butler pre-contract. No sooner was Clarence secretly done to death in the Tower of London... than Stillington was arrested and sent to the Tower on the vague charge of ‘uttering words prejudicial to the King and his state’. The coincidence is, at least, remarkable. But the Bishop of Bath and Wells had no desire to share Clarence’s fate. He gave the necessary assurances and was released after three months imprisonment. For the rest of Edward’s reign, the dangerous matter remained a secret.”<sup>4</sup>

His illegitimacy declared, it was impossible for young Edward to be crowned King. There was no one with title to the Crown prior to Richard. It remained, therefore, that he must claim the Crown for the English people. For this logical act, history, driven by Tudor propaganda, has vilified him ever since. Diana Kleyn remarks:

“Gloucester had proved himself in war and in the peace that followed, a brave and brilliant general in war, and a just and honourable viceroy in the North, whose people loved him and trusted his equitable judgments. Whether he wanted it or no, he was arguably the best man for the job.”<sup>5</sup>

Richard reigned a little over two years, parrying a number of attempts to overthrow him. The first, promoted by the Woodville-Beaufort forces with the Duke of Buckingham (at the instigation of John Morton, Bishop of Ely) as its nominal head, failed and Buckingham was attainted and executed. Richard endeavoured by diplomatic means to counter the threat posed by Henry Tudor in Brittany (to whom Morton fled thereafter) but was unsuccessful. He bestowed Buckingham’s estates on Lord Thomas Stanley and rightly expected his fealty and support.

Henry attempted to invade in October 1484 but his efforts were disrupted by a storm. His mother, Margaret Beaufort who had married Stanley, advised Henry that he could rely on Stanley and his brother, Sir William. Henry’s second attempt involved a landing at Milford Haven on 7<sup>th</sup> August, 1485 but he could muster little support among the Welsh. Richard met Henry’s forces with a force of his own at Bosworth. Adopting his customary despatch, he sought to attack Henry directly to limit the bloodshed, and he might have succeeded but for the treachery of the Stanley forces. And so Henry Tudor became King.

“The first weeks were spent in rewarding his followers for their treachery to Richard; appointing suitable men to administrative posts and making preparations for his Coronation and for his first Parliament. One of his first acts was a typical one: he decreed that his reign was to be dated from the day before Bosworth, so that he could indict King Richard and most of his followers of treasonable rebellion against their lawful Sovereign, thus neatly bringing a vast number of estates and honours into the Royal exchequer by attainder. ‘O God!’ recorded the Croyland Chronicler, ‘What security shall our kings have henceforth, that in the day of battle they may not be deserted by their subjects?’”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Hugh Ross Williamson, *‘Historical Enigmas’*, p. 48.

<sup>5</sup> *Richard of England*, op. cit., p. 11.

<sup>6</sup> *Richard of England*, op. cit., pp. 31-2.

Whatever else may be said against Henry Tudor in the pursuit of his interests, his recourse to this lying device was utterly dishonourable.

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Let us, then, weigh Henry Tudor's provenance and his claim to the Crown. His father, Edmund, was the illegitimate son of Katherine de Valois (wife of the late King Henry V) by Owen Tydder, the Clerk of her Wardrobe.<sup>7</sup> There is no Lancaster blood in this line. His mother, Margaret, was the granddaughter of the illegitimate John Beaufort, Earl of Somerset, son of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, the third son of Edward III, by Katherine Swynford, his mistress. Henry's claim, as Diana Kleyn rightly remarks, was grounded in a double adultery.

Shakespeare's play, *Richard III*, is a Tudor justification exercise, fine drama but defective history. The assertion, for instance, that its subject connives at the death of Clarence, his brother, is nonsense. Williamson remarks how Richard rushed back from the North where he was keeping the Marches to remonstrate with Edward against his contemplated act of fratricide but the King was adamant.

Shakespeare portrays the Duke of Gloucester as devious, his bodily disfigurement, featuring a withered arm, a sign of a defective character, so possessed by venality and the desire for power that on the King's death he took to himself the title that belonged by right to Edward's eldest son, just twelve years old; that to secure his position he contrived the murder of the boy and of his nine year old brother in the Tower; that he ruled in a fashion which reflected the disturbance of his conscience and, after two years, that he was bested and killed by a better man, Henry Tudor, at the Battle of Bosworth.

The play is based on an unfinished narrative of Sir Thomas More written in the early part of the sixteenth century. Those familiar with the life of the man martyred by Henry VIII, St Thomas More, by E. E. Reynolds (*The Field Is Won*, 1968) will recall the author's description of the early, and abiding, influence on the young man of John Morton (c.1420-1500), Archbishop of Canterbury, quondam Bishop of Ely. At the age of twelve More had been placed by his father as page in the Archbishop's household and he spent two years there. Reynolds quotes More's description of Morton—

"[A] man of great natural wit, very well learned, and honourable in behaviour lacking in no wise to win favour... thus living many days in as much honour as one man might well wish, ended them so godly at his death, with God's mercy, well changed his life".<sup>8</sup>

The Archbishop, recognizing the boy's potential, had nominated him for a place at Oxford University.

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<sup>7</sup> "Whether any marriage took place between them... is a somewhat academic question (the College of Arms has no record of any such marriage), for in 1427-8 Parliament passed an Act making it illegal for any man to espouse the widow of a King of England... Queen Katherine died in 1427, and only after her death did her 'marriage' with Owen Tudor come to light." D. M. Kleyn, *Richard of England*, op. cit., p. 2.

<sup>8</sup> E. E. Reynolds, *The Field Is Won*, Bruce Publishing Co., Milwaukee, 1968, p. 22, quoting More in his *Richard III*.

Born in February 1477 or 1478, More was seven or eight years old at the time of the Battle of Bosworth. Hence Morton is his authority for what occurred.

"[W]hether Morton dictated it or whether More 'worked up' Morton's memoirs as a literary exercise—the work bears little relation to any kind of historical truth. A third of it consists of conversations and speeches which have no source but the author's imagination. Its relationship to ascertainable facts may be gauged from its first statement that 'Edward IV lived fifty and three years, seven months and six days' when in point of fact he lived forty years, eleven months, and twelve days. Its tone is so blatantly tendentious that even Professor Pollard<sup>9</sup> refers to it as 'that flaming piece of Tudor propaganda' and Sir James Ramsey dismisses it as 'as a mere historical romance'."<sup>10</sup>

Accordingly, the character of the man who became John Cardinal Morton is crucial to the issue of the truth or otherwise of what More had written.

Morton had supported the Lancastrian cause in the struggle between the two houses. History is at odds with Thomas More's benign assessment of him.

"A lawyer who took priest's orders for financial reasons, John Morton became one of the greatest pluralists known to ecclesiastical records under Henry VI. After the defeat of the Lancastrians, he quickly changed sides and offered his services to Edward IV, who made him Master of the Rolls and Bishop of Ely, and employed him on a diplomatic mission in the course of which he accepted a bribe of 2,000 crowns a year from the King of France. On his return he attached himself to the Woodville faction, whose 'brains' he became. At Ludlow on Edward's death, he was the architect of their plan to seize power. It was he, again, who inspired the second rebellion and the overture to Henry Tudor. Though he was one of Richard's deadliest enemies, Richard forgave him the first time—after a short imprisonment—and on the second occasion Morton managed to escape to the Continent where he attached himself to Henry Tudor and intrigued on his behalf for the rest of Richard's reign. After Bosworth his services were rewarded. He was made in rapid succession, Lord Chancellor, Archbishop of Canterbury, and (through Henry's petition to the Pope, Alexander Borgia) Cardinal. In his lifetime he was hated and feared by all classes, both because of his 'avaricious and grasping' conduct and because he so disgraced the priesthood that he did not scruple to reveal to Henry 'the confessions of as many lords as His Grace listed'; and, for posterity, he is enshrined in history as the inventor of 'Morton's fork'—the argument that those who spend little must have saved much and those who spend much must have much. On his word rests the effective charge that Richard had murdered his nephews."<sup>11</sup>

Henry's device of pre-dating his reign has the smell of the lawyer about it and one may reasonably suspect Morton, especially when the consequences of its inherent dishonesty are appreciated, the forfeiture of the estates and honours of those who had supported their lawful King. Francis Bacon said of Morton that he had 'an inveterate malice against the House of York'.<sup>12</sup> Better for Morton, it seemed, a bastard Lancastrian than a legitimate York.

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<sup>9</sup> Albert Frederick Pollard, Professor of Constitutional History, University College, London, who wrote a political history of the Tudors.

<sup>10</sup> *Historical Enigmas*, p. 44.

<sup>11</sup> Williamson, *Historical Enigmas*, p. 51.

<sup>12</sup> Quoted to that effect in D. M. Kleyn, *Richard of England*, op. cit. p. 163

That whoever killed the princes (if indeed, they were killed) it was not Richard is established, ironically, as a consequence of Henry's device.

"[T]here is one piece of evidence against it which is as conclusive as anything can be in such a matter. In the Act of Attainder which Henry drew up after his victory, King Richard is reviled for every kind of cruelty and tyranny. No slander is omitted which might help to justify Henry's usurpation. *But there is no mention in it of the murder of the princes.* As the Tower was in the new king's possession in less than a week after Bosworth, it is surely a legitimate deduction that this startling omission was due to Henry's knowledge that they were still there, alive and unharmed."<sup>13</sup> (emphasis added)

Diana Kleyn exposes a further aspect of Richard's character that militates against the assertion he killed the princes.

"... Elizabeth Woodville, for so long incarcerated in her self-inflicted sanctuary at Westminster, was finally persuaded to come out and to release her five daughters into Richard's care; he received them at court and took an oath on March 1<sup>st</sup> 1484 to treat them honourably and to provide suitable husbands for them. 'Dame Elizabeth Grey', the former Queen-Mother, went further: she not only accepted from Richard a pension for herself, but she wrote to her elder son by her first marriage, the Marquess of Dorset (who had fled to France to join Henry Tudor), advising him to come home, and assuring him that Richard would treat him well. He evidently preferred Richard's word to the more doubtful promises of Henry, for he attempted to escape to England, but was intercepted by Henry's furious emissaries who 'persuaded' him to return to Henry's little court. There can surely be only one conclusion to all this: that Elizabeth Woodville had received the news she most wished to hear—that her sons, or one of them, were alive and in hiding abroad. Henry certainly never forgot that she had trusted Richard with her daughters; he was later to make it the excuse for sending her to a nunnery and confiscating all her goods. Greedy and ambitious she certainly was, but to pretend that she could come to terms, and so soon, with the man she believed had murdered her two sons, is surely straining credulity beyond even the most partisan limits..."<sup>14</sup>

### *Cui Bono?*

Only one man stood to profit by the death of the princes: Henry Tudor. He intended to marry Anne, the eldest of Edward IV's children, in an endeavour to legitimise his claim and he strove throughout his reign to suppress the truth that Edward's heirs were not entitled to the Crown.

"One of Henry's first acts was to order that the original act proclaiming the illegitimacy of Edward IV's children should be removed from the Rolls and burnt and that, on pain of imprisonment during his pleasure, every copy of it was to be surrendered. Stillington was imprisoned and, though he was pardoned, he was rearrested later, and never emerged from his captivity. Richard's illegitimate son, John of Gloucester, was similarly imprisoned and—if not actually murdered—left to die. Clarence's son, Warwick (whose attainder Richard had reversed and who was therefore, after the princes in the Tower, indisputably Edward IV's heir), was arrested, imprisoned in the Tower, and eventually executed... [I]n the February of 1487 Elizabeth Woodville had all her lands and possessions confiscated and was immured in a nunnery for the rest of her life. Even Bacon, the great apologist for the Tudors, comments on this action of Henry's that it was 'probable there was some greater matter against her which King, upon reason of policy,

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<sup>13</sup> Williamson, *Historical Enigmas*, p. 52.

<sup>14</sup> *Richard of England*, op. cit., p. 26.

would not publish'. The reason for this treatment of her which, even at the time, was 'taxed as rigorous and undue' may have been that she realised that Henry had killed her sons."<sup>15</sup>

Perhaps. But there are other possibilities which the reader may plumb in Diana Kleyn's *Richard of England*.<sup>16</sup> Eight years after Henry seized the throne a young man who had been living in Flanders appeared to challenge him. He claimed he was the second of the two princes, Richard Duke of York, born in 1473. The name he went by, Perkin Warbeck (Pierrehon Werbecque), derived from that of his foster parents in Tournai to whose care he said he had been commended. He wrote to Isabella, Queen of Spain, in Latin in August 1493, a letter whose preamble sufficiently sets the ground of his claim:

"...Whereas the Prince of Wales, eldest son of Edward formerly King of England, of pious memory, my dearest lord and father, was miserably put to death and I myself, then about nine years old, was also delivered to a certain lord to be killed, it pleased the Divine Clemency that that lord, having compassion on my innocence, preserved me alive and in safety, first, however, causing me to swear on the Holy Sacrament, that to no-one should I disclose my name, origin or family, until a certain number of years had passed..."

A sketch of Warbeck's features shows remarkable resemblance to those of Edward IV. He enjoyed the patronage of his putative aunt, Margaret (1446-1503), sister to Edward IV and Richard III, who had married Charles the Bold, Duke of Burgundy, killed in battle in January 1477. The Dowager Duchess funded an attempt by Warbeck to garner support in England. He endeavoured to do so, first landing in England in September 1496, and again in 1497, but inadequate organisation brought about his capture by Henry VII's forces. He was held in custody and later endeavoured to escape with Warwick, Clarence's son. Either that or, which seems more likely, 'an escape' was facilitated by agents of the King to provide an excuse for punitive action. In any event the two were recaptured. On 23<sup>rd</sup> November, 1499, after a written confession had been exacted from him admitting that he was an impostor, Warbeck was hung. Warwick was executed five days later.

The body of Warwick was interred with his ancestors in Bisham Abbey in Berkshire, while that of Warbeck was placed in the Church of the Austin Friars in Old Broad Street in the City of London under the name 'Perkin Warbeck'.<sup>17</sup> Their severed heads had been placed on London Bridge. One can only wonder whether they were interred with their respective bodies.

There is enthusiasm among those critical of the Tudor mythology to analyse Warbeck's remains. Should they be positively identified, the miracles of modern scientific analysis may add to our knowledge of the lengths to which Henry, and those who supported him, had gone to hide the illegitimacy of the Tudor claim.

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<sup>15</sup> Williamson, *Historical Enigmas*, p. 52.

<sup>16</sup> D. M. Kleyn, *Richard of England*, Oxford, 1990. The eponymous subject of her study is not Richard III but Edward's allegedly surviving second son.

<sup>17</sup> D. M. Kleyn, *Richard of England*, op. cit., p. 157.

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The passage through parliament by King Richard of the *Titulus Regius Act* had given posited legal force to the reality of the moral law, that the sons of Edward IV were illegitimate. It formalised the protocol accepted by the mores of the time that they had no title to the Crown. Henry's action of removing the statute 'legitimised' his future wife but it 'legitimised', also, the two princes whose title to the Crown was substantially better than his own. In removing the Act from the statute books, Henry thought he could remove the force of the moral law. Here, in seed, we see the Tudor principle, the principle which was to ground the Protestant Revolt in England forty years later, that *moral truth is not determined by reality, but by what the king says it is*. The subjectivism that followed underpins the intellectual chaos that has afflicted the world ever since, a chaos reaching its apotheosis in our own age when moral evils such as contraception, abortion and homosexual conduct are legitimised on no other ground than that the (ruling) majority *says* they are acceptable.

There was no passage of arms, as Shakespeare portrays, between Henry and the King at the Battle of Bosworth.

"Henry's participation in the [battle] was restricted to observation, surrounded by a posse of faithful knights including the gigantic Sir John Cheyney and Sir William Brandon, who bore in consummate defiance of his true Sovereign the Royal Standard. King Richard's call for volunteers to ride with him down Ambien Hill to attack Tudor himself and thus avoid vast numbers of casualties, was answered by nearly a hundred knights and squires; the Stanley brothers and their armies were poised on either side of the opposing main forces, ready to throw their weight on whichever side it became safest to support. (Caroline Halsted, *Richard III*, 1844, vol. II, pp. 439-475) Northumberland, slightly to Richard's rear, returned an equivocal answer to Richard's request for support, and he and his army remained inactive. The gallant band of heroes led by their Sovereign thundered down the hill and clashed with Tudor's posse. Down went the huge Cheyney, unhorsed by the small, slight King. Down went Brandon, the Royal Standard soaked in his blood. It was a horrifying moment for Henry: local legend says he wheeled his horse about in the breathing space Richard's attack on Brandon had given him, and rode off to the south-east towards Stoke Golding. But fate had decreed that he should be King; three thousand men under Sir William Stanley to the right of Richard, rode to Tudor's rescue and crashed into Richard's small band, literally hacking them to pieces, together with their King. (Paul Murray Kendall, *Richard III*, 1955, p. 369)... King Richard's golden circlet, which he had worn upon his helmet, was retrieved from a bush where it had fallen in the conflict..."<sup>18</sup>

Nor did Richard utter a cry such as "My kingdom for a horse", as Shakespeare avers. What he cried as he was beset by those whom he trusted was "Treason! Treason!"

After the bones in the Leicester car park were proven to be those of King Richard, specialists performed an analysis of the injuries he had suffered and compared them with those manifest on the skeletons of soldiers known to have fallen in the Battle of Towton (29<sup>th</sup> March, 1461). The injuries support the assertion of treachery.

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<sup>18</sup> D. M. Kleyn, *Richard of England*, op. cit., pp. 30-1.

“In just about every detail, the wounds are different from those on the Towton soldiers. [Richard] was attacked from behind, not the front...”<sup>19</sup>  
There was, incidentally, no evidence in the bones that he had had a withered arm.

It is the victors in a war who write the history. Henry’s assertion that Richard was a traitor was the very reverse of the truth. It was Henry Tudor, aided and abetted by Bishop John Morton, who was the traitor. One hundred years later Sir John Harington summarised the issues in a couplet:

*Treason doth never prosper, what’s the reason?  
For if it prosper, none dare call it treason.*

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One final matter deserves our consideration. The betrayals of Catholic and moral principle by prelates such as Cardinal Wolsey and the last (nominally) Catholic Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer, that disposed and facilitated the Protestant Revolt in England in the sixteenth century, had their source in the betrayal of his oath by the bishop who became John Cardinal Morton. A good argument can be mounted that Morton bears a greater responsibility for the disaster than them.

Michael Baker

7<sup>th</sup> March 2018—*St Thomas Aquinas* (in the Extraordinary Rite)

(Revised shortly 7<sup>th</sup> March 2019)

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<sup>19</sup> Mike Pitts, *Digging For Richard III, How Archeology Found The King*, London (Thames & Hudson), 2014, p. 165.