

of his household held authority over an extent of twelve miles from the monarch's place of lodging and had the right to commandeer provisions, etc., as necessary. It seems that the authority of Gloucester's mayor was not to be superseded even during royal visitations.

The Charter concludes with a special reservation regarding the freedom of the burgesses of Tewkesbury from paying tolls and other dues.

Why did Richard do so much for Gloucester? The older Gloucester historians, being wedded to the Tudor tradition, are hard put to it to make usurping murderer equal civic benefactor—the King's visit to Gloucester and his liberality there *must* be found to have some connection with the death of the princes. Both Samuel Rudder (1779)²² and Thomas Fosbroke (1807)²³ believe he came to be out of the way while his plans were carried out but Fosbroke uses the phrase '*says the historian absurdly enough*' about More's assertion that the King devised his nephews' murder at Gloucester or while on his way there. Richard's magnanimous concessions are regarded by many—even to-day—as evidence of a desperate bid for popularity. He was undoubtedly given to impulsive generosity but there is no proof that he scattered charters throughout the length and breadth of the kingdom.

It has also been suggested that he decided spontaneously to reward the town for the warmth of its welcome but Gloucester's charter was, in fact, long overdue and he was probably aware of the town's problems from his past association with the borough. His close relationship with York has been much publicised; unfortunately, the relevant Gloucester Council minute books have mysteriously disappeared and there are gaps for this period in all the ecclesiastical records so that we do not know how much or how little Richard interested himself in the Duchy's affairs. Only the Charter remains to bear witness. There is no record extant of the King's visit to Gloucester although those of Henry VII and Henry VIII are quite well documented.

As an able military strategist, Richard may have been aware that a grateful Gloucester would be a valuable bastion against the Tudor menace from Wales but, as we know he was a man who formed strong personal attachments, it is probably because Gloucester was *his* town that he conferred such special benefits. A note on Bowen's Map of Gloucestershire (1777 or earlier) says '*Richard the 3rd who had been Duke of Gloucester, had such a respect for it that he made it a County incorporate under a Mayor and Alderman*' (sic), and this seems to be the most reasonable explanation.

Annex: THE GLOUCESTER CIVIC SWORDS P. W. HAMMOND

There is a persistent story in histories of Gloucester that Richard III gave to the borough its first civic sword—in fact Thomas Niblett, writing in 1877, goes so far as to say that the King gave his own sword to the town.²⁴ This cannot be proved but there is circumstantial evidence to show that it could well have been at least the gift of the King. Richard had a long association with Gloucester of course, bearing its name for some twenty-two years, and sentiment alone might have dictated the move. There were also local precedents for such royal generosity. King John, when Earl of Gloucester, is said to have presented

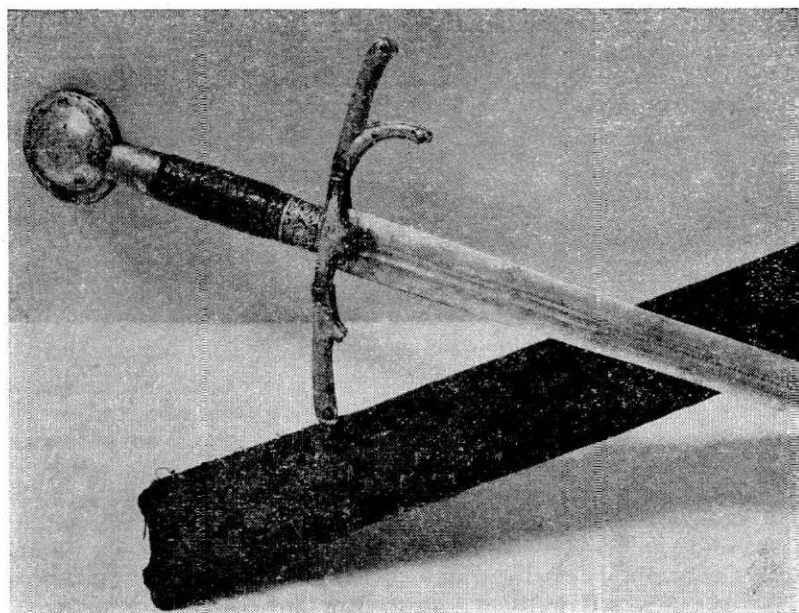


Figure 2. *The Mourning Sword*

Photo: *Brian Waters*

a sword to Newnham (twelve miles from Gloucester) and it is very possible that Edward III gave to Bristol the sword bearing his arms when he made that city a county in 1373.

Whatever its origin, Gloucester certainly had a sword as early as 1486, when it was ordered that the swordbearer be paid twenty shillings annually.²⁵ Towards the end of the next century the city had an 'owld swerde' and a 'beste sworde.' The former was also called the Mourning Sword, and the latter was probably that described later as inscribed with a figure of Queen Elizabeth I, the city arms, and 'E.R. 1574.' It has since apparently disappeared. By 1636, when an inventory was taken of goods belonging to the burgesses, the city owned three swords, as it did until at least 1819.²⁶ It now has two, one of which is identifiable as the Stuart sword, and one now known as the Mourning Sword (from being used on occasions of civic mourning such as a memorial service for a town dignitary). It is now encased in a black velvet scabbard, too large for the present sword, and used to be painted black. (See figure 2).

The Mourning Sword is a most interesting survival, and in view of the above facts it might be thought to be a fifteenth-century sword, even one presented by Richard III. This, unfortunately, is not so, or not entirely. The blade, which is German, of Solingen or Passau make, is of the late sixteenth century, and the design of the quillons is consistent with this date. So far then the facts

show that the Mourning Sword was probably made in the second quarter of the sixteenth century. Were it not for the fact that it is not inscribed 'E.R 1574' it might be identified as the missing Tudor sword.

However, the intriguing fact about this sword is that the pommel is of a more archaic type, typical of the fifteenth century in fact. This may not be significant since civic processional swords were often made archaic in form. The Mourning Sword is not a typical purpose-made civic sword though. It has a most unusual style, quite unlike the usual ceremonial type. It seems possible therefore, that the present 'Mourning Sword' of Gloucester is a hybrid, made up in the sixteenth century from other weapons, including the original sword of the city, and that here we have a remnant of the sword originally provided in accordance with the terms of the Charter. Perhaps a sword given by Richard of Gloucester.

The authors wish to acknowledge gratefully the help given by Mr. Claude Blair, Keeper of the Department of Metalwork at the Victoria and Albert Museum, who kindly examined the sword and gave his opinion on it; and by Mr. N. J. Cooper, of the Guildhall, Gloucester, who arranged for both ourselves and Mr. Blair to see the sword and for us to see the Charter.

NOTES

1. C. S. Taylor: *Domesday Survey of Gloucestershire*, p. 126.
2. *Calendar of the Patent Rolls (1461-1467)*, p. 244.
3. *British Museum Harleian MSS 433*, f. 111.
4. J. R. Green: *Town Life in the Fifteenth Century*, Vol. 1 (1894), p. 211.
5. R. Davies (ed.) *York Records (1843)*, pp. 167-9; 174; Green: *Town Life*, Vol. 1, p. 28.
6. B. M. Harl. MSS 433, ff. 48b, 72, 91, 94.
7. *ibid.* York: ff. 38, 81; Chester: f. 54; *Cal. Pat. Rolls (1476-1485)*, p. 409.
8. P. Tudor-Craig, Richard III: catalogue of the exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery (1973), p. 22. Neither of them is a full achievement of arms of course.
9. *Cal. Pat. Rolls (1476-1485)*, p. 427.
10. *Calendar of Gloucester Corporation Records*, Nos. 7333-4.
11. *Cal. Pat. Rolls (1476-1485)*, p. 513 and B. M. Harl. MSS 433, f. 67b.
12. *Cal. Pat. Rolls (1461-1467)*, p. 214.
13. *Historical MSS Commission Vol. 12 and App. IX, 1487-8*, p. 406.
14. *Hockaday Abstracts*, p. 206.
15. *H.M.C. Vol. 12*, p. 409.
16. *Cal. Pat. Rolls (1467-1477)*, p. 239 and *Records Borough Leicester (1489)*, p. 319.
17. *Cal. G.C.R.*, No. 1185 and *Calendar of the Close Rolls (1476-1485)*, No. 1043.
18. R. Atkyns: *Ancient and Present State of Gloucestershire (1712)*, p. 50.
19. *Cal. G.C.R.*, p. 48. Charter of Charles II, 1672.
20. *Glos. Notes and Queries*, Vol. 2, p. 68.
21. Green: *Town Life*, Vol. 1, p. 233.
22. S. Rudder: *A New History of Gloucestershire*, p. 103.
23. T. Fosbrooke: *The County of Gloucester*, p. 158.
24. For example see article by T. Niblett in the *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society*, Vol. 2, p. 237.
25. *H.M.C.*, Vol. 12, p. 431.
26. C. H. Dancy, *Trans. B.G.A.S.*, Vol. 24 (1901), p. 310; and T. D. Fosbrooke: *Original History of the City of Gloucester (1819)*, p. 404.