

FOTHERINGHAY, MARCH 1975

One of the Society's most ambitious projects reached a fitting conclusion on Sunday, March 9 1975 when the memorial window to the House of York in the Collegiate Church of St. Mary the Virgin and All Saints at Fotheringhay, donated by members, was dedicated by the Assistant Bishop of Peterborough, the Right Reverend Archibald Campbell (formerly Bishop of Colombo) in the presence of H.R.H. The Duke of Gloucester and H.R.H. Princess Alice, Duchess of Gloucester. After the dedication the Duke laid a wreath beneath the window in honour of the memory of Richard III, born in the castle a few hundred yards away, and of the three Plantagenet Dukes of York and other members of the family commemorated in the window. The countryside was rain-swept beneath the eye of the gilt falcon perched inside his fetterlock above the church and the river Nene, the mediaeval highway to Fotheringhay, had flooded its banks, but the church was filled with local dignitaries and with Ricardians from London, Yorkshire, Leicester and further afield.

The royal duke and duchess, descendants of Elizabeth of York; were received at the lych-gate by Lieut.-Colonel Chandos Pole, Lord Lieutenant of Northamptonshire, who introduced the President and Chairman of the Society and their ladies. Before the royal party entered the church the youngest Ricardian present, Richard Ginn, presented the duchess with a bouquet of white roses. The service was conducted by the Vicar of Fotheringhay assisted by the Rector of Sutton Cheney (the Reverend Teddy Boston, Hon. Chaplain to the Society). Other clergymen present included the Dean of Lincoln (patron of the living), the Archdeacon of Oakham, the Rector of Barnwell (chaplain to H.R.H. the Duke of Gloucester), Canon J. L. Cartwright and the Precentor of Peterborough Cathedral, who brought with him the full cathedral choir.

Lay members of the congregation included the Chairman of the Northamptonshire County Council, the Chairman of the East Northamptonshire District Council, the Chairman of the Fotheringhay Parish Meeting, the Secretary of the Parochial Church Council, the vicar's warden, the people's warden, the diocesan architect, the artist who made the window and the glazier who installed it. Special mention must be made, too, of Mr. Ralph Herold of Fotheringhay, but for whose perseverance the project could well have foundered, of Mrs. Vera Legg, the member of the Society who more than anyone made it her own, and to the various members of the committee who had spent so many hours on it: Geoffrey Wheeler (responsible for the heraldry and so many alternative designs), Phyllis Hester (Hon. Secretary), Elizabeth Nokes (fund-raiser extraordinary) and Joyce Melhuish (who organised the day's proceedings with exemplary efficiency).

The service began punctually at 3 p.m. with *Praise to the Holiest in the Height* followed by Psalm 84 *How amiable are Thy dwellings, thou Lord of hosts.* The lesson was taken from the Wisdom of Solomon and splendidly read by the President: *'But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and there shall no torment touch them. In the sight of the unwise they seemed to die, and their departure is taken for misery. And their going from us to be utter destruction: but they are in peace. For though they be punished in the sight*

of men; yet is their hope full of immortality. And having been a little chastised they shall be greatly rewarded: for God proved them and found them worthy of Himself. As gold in the furnace hath He tried them, and received them as a burnt offering. And in the time of their visitation, they shall shine and run to and fro like sparks among the stubble. They shall judge the nations and have dominion over the people and their Lord shall reign forever'. The Society's chaplain read a prayer from Richard III's own book of hours: 'Free us from the sorrows which we endure . . . even as Thou didst save Susannah from false accusation'. After a prayer of commemoration and commendation ('Let us remember before God the founders and benefactors of this Collegiate Church'), a prayer for the Queen's Majesty and the prayer of St. Richard of Chichester, the cathedral choir sang an anthem and the dedication and wreath-laying ceremony took place. The service concluded with the hymn: 'Once to every man and nation Comes the moment to decide, In the strife of Truth with Falsehood, For the good or evil side'.

When the ceremony was over and the press and television cameras had departed, members of the Society adjourned to Barnwell Mill, which stands on the river Nene outside Oundle, where they enjoyed the honour of entertaining Their Royal Highnesses and the other distinguished guests to tea. The party numbered 179, and the duke and duchess endeared themselves to members by their charm and informality and by their desire to meet members and talk about the Society and Richard III. The Society is deeply indebted to them for their interest and for making the occasion a national event.

Members who have attended the Society's previous ceremonies of dedication will have been gratified by the size and scope of this occasion, indicating as it does the growth of concern for the honour and reputation of the bravest, most wronged and most English of the kings of England. Whereas the dedications and presentations of the altar frontal at Middleham, the tablet to Queen Anne Neville in Westminster Abbey and the illuminated vellum in the showcase for the chapter house at York Minster were all intimate affairs, this event in a remote little Northamptonshire village was hugely attended and publicised. The President of the Society brought a moving day's proceedings to a conclusion with the following words:

"Your Royal Highnesses, My Lord Lieutenant, My Lord Bishop, Other Ladies and Gentlemen, I have the privilege of trying to express the sincere thanks and sense of honour felt by this gathering to-day for the presence of Your Royal Highnesses and for the seal which you have set upon our York Memorial in the church of Fotheringhay. If I may say so, Sir, we have already had evidence last September on Bosworth Field of your deep and lively interest in late Plantagenet affairs. But on this occasion Your Royal Highnesses and our other distinguished guests are here for another reason, of which we, the Richard III Society, are very conscious.

"Our purpose in meeting to-day has been to honour the Family House of York. It is a point worth making, so far as we are concerned. For we cannot disguise the fact that our Society is dedicated to the study of one man and his reign and he—Richard Duke of Gloucester, later King Richard III—represents only one of the four generations of the York family remembered in the window. The heraldic design covers a period of 144 years and is

designed to honour all members of that great Family of York which played such a distinguished role in English mediaeval history. Historical controversy is stilled to-day; we who explore and reveal truths about one King and one reign rightly approach our subject at least as much from the head as the heart. But to-day we are all of us governed by the heart.

"I hope that I may speak for you all, and make it no mere form of words, in listing some of those whose personal contributions have made this memorial and this day come true. We owe a special debt of gratitude to the Lord Lieutenant of the County for steering us through this day. Without him I shudder to think. . . . The Right Reverend Bishop has generously given us of his time and dedicated the window. The Reverend Boyd Parsons, Vicar of Fotheringhay, and Mr. Ralph Herold of the Church Restoration Committee have been a constant aid and inspiration in their separate ways. Finally, but in terms of time it should be firstly, may I tell those of you who might wish to know, how this memorial came into being.

"The original idea for a Fotheringhay church memorial was mooted by a member of this Society who lives in Harrogate. Mr. Reginald Bunnett—a distinguished archaeologist—thought that some memorial to the House of York in the place which was its family mausoleum was overdue. Mr. Bunnett sends his sincere regrets that he cannot be with us to-day. He is 96—one of the only two living founder members of our 50-year-old Society. Mr. Bunnett's idea was taken up with great enthusiasm by another member, Mrs. Vera Legg who lives in deepest Kent but who is here to-day. She started the fund in a small way but, under her drive, it snowballed steadily and, when our Committee took it up officially and launched a world-wide appeal among our members, the money poured in. The very first donation came, I believe, from Canada, our youngest overseas daughter branch. We have no overseas members here to-day that I know of (not even from the enthusiastic and generous American branch) but we are pleased to welcome many from all over England and particularly, of course, from Yorkshire.

"The next member to play a vital role in the project was Mr. Geoffrey Wheeler who worked out the heraldic design. With his sketch and the aid of the architect to the fabric of Fotheringhay church, Mr. L. H. Bond, we were able to commission the distinguished stained glass artist who actually made the window—Mr. Harry Harvey, whose workshop is, most appropriately, in the city of York.

"One more public word of thanks from all of us is due. Our long-standing member, Miss J. M. Melhuish, has given us, from her great knowledge of ancient buildings and government administration, and also through her tremendous organising skill, the glue which was needed to make all the pieces of to-day's complicated jig-saw stick together. Working closely with the Lord Lieutenant, Miss Melhuish has spent an enormous amount of time, thought and energy. None of us will forget her work, nor that of the indefatigable Mr. Wheeler for creating all the visual aids and text material.

"I have great pleasure and honour in finishing where I began—with the respectful thanks of every one of us to Their Royal Highnesses for gracing the occasion and making it such a happy day for the House of York and for us who care for them."