

RESEARCH NOTES AND QUERIES

P. W. HAMMOND

HASTINGS REDIVIVUS

AN ARTICLE with this title has just been published by Dr Alison Hanham (*English Historical Review*, Vol. 90 (1975), pp. 821-7). In it she argues in support of her new date for the execution of Lord Hastings (June 20th) and against the views of Dr Wolffe, discussed in the September, 1975, *Ricardian* (pp. 27-9). Dr Hanham's arguments are, as always, persuasive, but she admits (p. 826) that the major stumbling block to accepting her new date is the need to accept with it a wholesale falsification of official records, something which seems very unlikely. In addition a series of facts supporting the old date of 13th June has been pointed out to me by Rhoda Edwards. The Privy Seal writs of Edward V signed by Oliver King (Secretary to Edward IV and Edward V), cease on 9th June, the entries in Harleian MS 433 emanating from Edward V cease on 8th June. King is mentioned by Stallworth as being in the Tower with Morton and Rotherham. Although it is not stated, the inference is that he was arrested at the same time as the others, on the day Hastings was executed. If this was on 13th June, and the conspiracy was discovered a little earlier (and with it a reason for Richard to cease issuing writs in the name of his nephew), such an early date for this cessation could be expected, but not if the execution was on 20th June. It is true that there is an entry on the Patent Roll of Edward V dated 17th June, but these documents, sealed by the Chancellor, probably began their journey through the Chancery a few days before they were sealed.

JOHN NESFIELD

The following note is contributed by Mr W. E. Hampton.

Of the Yorkshire squire John Nesfield, little is recorded before 1483, apart from one brief, but significant, entry in the Patent Rolls, which records that he was granted a general pardon on 20th June, 1478 (*Calendar Patent Rolls, 1476-85*, p. 102). The preceding entry records a general pardon granted that day to another Yorkshireman, Robert Stillington, Bishop of Bath and Wells, lately a prisoner in the Tower. As later events will show, the two pardons may well have been linked.

Despite this obscurity, in the late summer of 1483, following rumours of plans to smuggle Edward IV's daughters abroad during Richard's absence from London, John Nesfield was chosen to watch over the Westminster sanctuary (*Croyland Chronicle*, p. 491), and in March, 1484, the King promised to pay John Nesfield, one of the esquires of his body, for the support of Elizabeth Gray, and for his attendance upon her, 700 marks yearly during her life (*Harl. MS. 433*, f. 308b). Nesfield received a number of subsequent grants, one for service against the rebels in 1483 (*Cal. Pat. Rolls 1476-85*, p. 448). During the summer of 1484 Nesfield and Sir Thomas Everingham were captured at sea by Franco-Scottish forces, after a fight off Scarborough (*Croyland Chronicle*, p. 497). It is possible that Nesfield at least was soon ransomed since there is a grant to him on the Patent Roll for 5th September, 1484 (*Cal. Pat. Rolls*

1476-85, p. 485). It seems probable that he fought at Bosworth with Richard. Attempts were made by Henry VII immediately after the battle to have his goods confiscated, attempts which were frustrated by his attorney and his wife Agnes (A. Raine, *York Civic Records*, pp. 160-2).

This persecution of his attorney proves that Nesfield was either slain at Bosworth, or had escaped abroad. Commynes, writing of Stillington, recounts that the bishop had a bastard son whom Richard intended to marry to the Princess Elizabeth in order to degrade her. The young man was, however, captured at sea and cast into the Petit Chatelet (an old fort on the left bank of the Seine, used as a prison, and situated near the Hotel Dieu) where he died of poverty and hunger (*Philip de Commynes' Memoirs*, Bk. 6, Chap. 8). This story, wild as it may appear, does resemble in many ways that of Nesfield. It is remarkable that Nesfield's name alone remains of those who had access to the princess. Nesfield's marriage to the princess would be compatible with Richard's promise to marry Edward's daughters to gentlemen, Nesfield was captured at sea, and was almost certainly a protege, at least, of the Bishop of Bath and Wells. The manner of his death—if he survived Bosworth—is unknown. Among probable bastards of Bishop Stillington are Robert and John Stillington, collated to canonries by the bishop in 1473 and 1477 respectively, and not to be found in pedigrees of the family, and perhaps George Stillington, buried in the bishop's new Lady Chapel at Wells in 1492 or 1493 (*Stillingtons Register*, Somerset Record Society, 1937, p. 15).

BOOK REVIEWS

THE BATTLE OF BOSWORTH, by James Gairdner. Published, with a new introduction by P. W. Hammond, by the Richard III Society, 1975. Card covers, 27 pages plus 4 pages of monochrome illustrations. Price £1.00.

Even when emotions, pro- or anti-Richard, are excluded and the literary tinsel is stripped away, the Battle of Bosworth Field still emerges as one of the most remarkable, important and puzzling battles ever fought on English soil. Remarkable because it brought about the destruction of the only King of England to die in plain battle since the Norman Conquest; important because although it was not the final battle of the Wars of York and Lancaster, the verdict of this trial by combat was never reversed and the rule of the Plantagenets was ended for ever; puzzling because the few contemporary accounts to have come down to us are vague, often contradictory and if accepted verbatim, often incomprehensible, leaving even the most basic points to be established beyond reasonable doubt.

James Gairdner's article on Bosworth first appeared eighty years ago in *Archaeologia* and although by no means the longest account of the battle to have been published it was, and still is, regarded as one of the best. Subsequent research has failed to necessitate anything other than minor corrections