

# Research Notes and Queries

P. W. HAMMOND

## THE BONES OF THE PRINCES

As a postscript to my article in the last *Ricardian* (pp. 22-25) Dr Marjorie Weeks has reminded me of the paper by Professor M. A. Rushton on the teeth of Anne Mowbray (*British Dental Journal*, Vol. 119, 1965, pp. 355-359). Prof Rushton compares the jaw of Anne with those of the "Princes." He discovered a congenital absence of certain teeth in Anne Mowbray's jaw, an absence paralleled by the absence of (different) teeth in the jaw of at least the elder of the two bodies in the Abbey. This congenital absence is very rare in the general population but tends to be more common amongst relations, especially where inbreeding has occurred. Anne Mowbray and the two sons of Edward IV shared a common ancestry (they were all descended from Edward III by several different routes, and from Ralph Neville Earl of Westmorland), and could certainly be described as the products of inbreeding. The evidence of the teeth could thus be used to reinforce a belief that the bones in the Abbey are those of the "princes." However the defect in their teeth need not be derived from a common source, nor is its incidence in the fifteenth century known.

Dr Weeks has also pointed out that the elder "Prince" need not have been suffering from osteomyelitis. Prof. Rushton believed that long neglected abscesses could have been the cause of his diseased jaw. A long standing infection of this sort would probably have the same effect on growth as osteomyelitis. On the other hand of course the bone damage could have been the result of a more serious disease.

I would like to thank Dr Weeks for reminding me of Prof. Rushton's paper, explaining the terms used, and for helpful comment.

## THE COUNTESS OF DESMOND

In his *Historic Doubts* Horace Walpole cites the Old Countess of Desmond (said to have been aged 140 when she died in 1604) as saying that she danced with Richard of Gloucester, and that "he was the handsomest man in the room, except his brother" (*Historic Doubts*, 1768, p. 102). This statement, sometimes quoted to prove that Richard was not deformed at all, appears unlikely to be based on fact. The Old Countess herself certainly existed. She was Katherine, daughter of Sir John FitzGerald, Lord of the Decies, who died in 1533. She was the second wife of Thomas FitzGerald, 13th Earl of Desmond (*Complete Peerage*, Vol. 4, 1916, p. 250). When she married is unknown, but it seems probable that it was after 1505, when Thomas' first wife was still alive. Sir Walter Raleigh (who knew her), and Fynes Moryson, writing a few years after her death, both believed her to be of great age, and to have been born in the reign of Edward IV (*ibid.*, p. 250). This is perhaps just possible, although in view of the other known facts not likely.

Neither of the above authorities make any mention of the Countess dancing with Richard of Gloucester, and Walpole in *Historic Doubts* gives no source. It appears to have been a family tradition handed down in the St John family, or possibly from an unidentified Lady Dacre (*Dublin Review*,

Vol. 51, 1862, p. 56). Similar traditions existed with other families, e.g. one cited by Sharon Turner in his poem on Richard III (*ibid.*, pp. 57-8). On investigation all of these traditions appear shaky: the first link in the chain, the one said to have been told by the Countess, being born after her death. It appears that she must therefore be abandoned as a source of information on the appearance of Richard III.

## Book Reviews

**EXTRACTS FROM THE MUNICIPAL RECORDS OF THE CITY OF YORK DURING THE REIGNS OF EDWARD IV, EDWARD V AND RICHARD III**, edited by Robert Davies (1843). Gloucester Reprints 1976, vii+304pp. £6.

Gloucester Reprints have just made available, at a competitive price, a book first published in 1843 and for long difficult to obtain. During the 1830s Robert Davies, Town Clerk of the City of York, made selections from the manuscripts in his care that related to the Yorkist period. This pioneer work has never been superseded entirely, even by the larger selection from the Council Minutes edited by Angelo Raine in 1938.

Davies made his selection in section one from the then existing account rolls of the Chamberlains' expenses of 1462-3, 1475-6 and 1478-9, of which each year runs from February to February. The portions are set out in a Latin transcript with an English translation on the opposite page. Davies provides commentaries on each roll, which are illustrated by extracts from the Council Minutes.

Section two consists of extracts from the Council Minutes 1480-86, many of which are familiar to us. The whole presents a picture of the remarkably close relationship of the City with Richard.

The book has useful footnotes, and two fairly detailed appendices, one on the York Corpus Christi plays, and of special interest to members, one on the investiture of Richard III's son Edward as Prince of Wales in 1483.

It should be borne in mind that the book does consist of extracts only from an unwieldy body of records. Since these were made other account rolls have been located and remain unquoted today. The City records are worth a re-examination. Also, they are worth quoting accurately. I have seen at least three versions of the famous lament on the result of the Battle of Bosworth, probably partly because Davies made a small slip in transcription; he gives "King Richard late mercifully reigning," whereas the original is "King Richard lawfully reigning," perhaps of equal satisfaction to members.

Those members of the Society engaged in historical research need to buy this book; those not so scholarly will find it interesting and rewarding reading throughout.

RHODA EDWARDS

**RICHARD THE THIRD UP TO SHAKESPEARE**, by George Bosworth Churchill. Berlin, 1900. Reprinted by Alan Sutton (Dursley), 1976. 548 pages. £8.

... 'That the Richard whose character and career were the subject of Shakespeare's work was not the Richard of history has long been well known.'