

The 'Ricardian' Windows in Penrith Church

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THE PARISH church of St Andrew in Penrith was well-established by 1133. The strong tower with walls 6 feet thick was built by the Nevilles, and the Earl of Warwick's badge, the bear and ragged staff, decorates the top of the tower. By the beginning of the eighteenth century the nave had suffered so badly from the effects of fire and decay that it had to be pulled down and rebuilt, retaining the tower and incorporating some of the monuments and stained glass from the older structure.

A window in the south aisle of the church contains some fragments of this older glass depicting two heads. One, underneath which are the words 'Richard, Duke of York' is the uncovered head of a man with a forked beard and gauntleted arm and there is an inscription 'MATER DEI MISERERE MEI.' The other, underneath which are the words 'Cecily Neville,' is the coifed head of a woman; under this portrait is the Neville bear and ragged staff. These old pieces of glass are very delicately coloured, pale yellow, gold, silver and black, and are set in a framework of glass of a later period. This framework, again delicately coloured, is of white roses and crowns.

Tradition in Penrith has associated these portraits with Richard III's parents. It is interesting that Bishop Nicolson made no reference to the glass in his *Miscellany Accounts of the Diocese of Carlisle*, although he detailed many features of the church which he visited in 1704.¹ Drawings of the two heads were published by Harding, in 1792,² with the captions:

Richard Plantagenet, Duke of York,
Father of Kings Edward IV and Richard III,
Henry VI, Part III

in a South Window of Penrith Church in Cumberland.

Cecily Nevile Dutchess of York
daughter of Ralph, Earl of Westmorland. Wife of
Richard Plantagenet Duke of York and mother of Kings
Edward IV and Richard III in a Window of Penrith
Church in Cumberland.

When Jefferson described the windows in 1840,³ he wrote: 'These are supposed to be the only original portraits of these personages now extant.'

The Duke and Duchess of York, however, had only slight connections with Penrith. The Nevilles held the manor of Penrith for several centuries and the surrounding country was largely Lancastrian, although during Richard III's Wardenship of the West Marches, the town of Penrith loyally supported him. It was perhaps because the Duke and Duchess of York had no major interest in Penrith that the Rev. Edward King, a curate at Penrith, questioned whether they were the subjects of the portraits. In 1881, in a lecture to the Royal Historical Society he claimed that the two portraits represented members of a well-known local family, the Huttons.⁴

Jefferson also described the other stained glass windows in Penrith Church and gave information about a window which was in the church before the rebuilding. 'Richard St George, Norroy King of Arms, 1615, in his pedigree of the Hutton family says the tomb of Thomas de Hutton and Helen his wife, *temp.* Henry V, was under a south window in the chancel, their effigies painted in the window with this inscription: *Orate pro animabus Thomae Horton et Elenae uxoris ejus.*⁵ This seems to support King's theory.

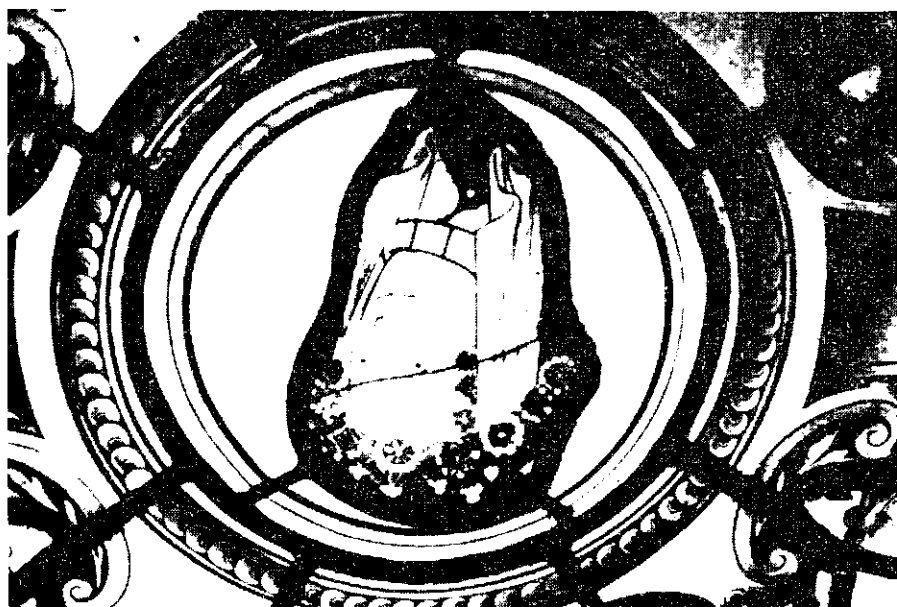
When Ferdinand and Roy Hudleston investigated the original Richard St George manuscript, they found no mention of this glass and this caused them to wonder if Jefferson had confused St George's visit to Penrith with a visit made by Dugdale in 1665.⁶ When the Hudlestons examined the Dugdale manuscript in 1948, they found a page of drawings of the glass and monuments in Penrith Church drawn by Dugdale's secretary, Gregory King. At the top of the page are drawings of four figures which were in the glass of the east window of the chancel in 1665. The two right hand pictures, of St George and of a member of the Neville family, have been lost but the Hudlestons suggested that of the other two figures only the heads, a pair of supplicating arms⁷ and the words '*Mater Dei Miserere*' had survived. These they believed were seen by Jefferson in the north window of the chancel and are now in the window of the south aisle of the nave of the church. This they demonstrated by a quotation from the Penrith Observer for 1872, as follows:

During the past week a very handsome ornamental window, purchased with the surplus arising out of the Harrison memorial fund, has been placed in the south side of Penrith Parish Church. In it are preserved two interesting medallions which for centuries found a place in the old chancel window. The portraits are those of Richard, Duke of York, and Cicily Nevill, the father and mother of Richard III, and it is supposed that they are the only portraits of those two distinguished personages extant. Below the medallions, which are placed in the centre of the window, is a coloured crest representing the Bear and the Ragged Staff. The remainder of the embellishments chiefly consist of Tudor roses, the colours being kept subordinate to the chief points of the picture and the whole forms a very interesting piece of art. A memorial window is shortly to be erected on the same side of the church immediately facing the pulpit stairs.

In Gregory King's drawing, the lady has the Royal arms embroidered on her kirtle and the Neville arms on her mantle. It was customary for married



Ralph Neville, Earl of Westmoreland



Joan Beaufort, Countess of Westmoreland

(Photo: B. J. Gunn King)

women to be portrayed wearing their own arms on their kirtles and their husband's arms on their mantles. The lady, therefore, was a member of the Royal family married to a Neville. The arms of France occurring as a quartering in the Royal arms are *semy de lys*, proving that the glass cannot have been later than c.1410, when our kings, who continued to quarter the Royal arms of France, altered the old coat of *semy de lys* to three *fleur-de-lys* only, a change which had been made in France in 1370.

The Royal lady who married a Neville before c.1410 must be Joan Beaufort, daughter of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, who married Ralph Neville sometime between 9th June, 1396, when Ralph's first wife died, and 29th November, 1396, when Ralph and Joan were 'granted the manors and towns of Penrith and Soureby with the hamlets of Langwathby, Scouteby and Carleton.'⁸ The man kneeling next to the lady in King's drawing must be Ralph Neville. He is wearing the undifferenced arms of Neville on his jupon. All three men in the drawing wear jupons of the time of Richard II. The jupon was abandoned during Henry IV's reign.

Most of the old stained glass in Cumbria is York glass, but this Penrith window is made of glass of an 'Oxford' style. Jeremy Haselock, of York University, suggests that the glass is probably of London workmanship.⁹ Penrith was given to Ralph and Joan Neville in 1396. Some rebuilding of the church took place at this time when William Strickland, later Bishop of Carlisle, founded a chantry in the church. Perhaps Ralph and Joan Neville began alterations in the church of which they had become patrons and brought to Penrith the glass they had had commissioned in the south.

It seems, therefore, that the date of the window is about 1400 and the heads depicted are not portraits of Richard III's parents, but of his grandparents. If the portrait were of Cecily Neville, she would be wearing the Neville arms on her kirtle with the Royal arms, as used by the Duke of York, on her mantle. A suggestion that Richard III set up the window as a memorial to his parents after he was granted Penrith in 1470 must be discounted because of the heraldry, the costume detail and the early date of the glass.

In the north aisle of St Andrew's Church is a window containing the other fragments of old glass mentioned above. Among these fragments is the head of a crowned and sceptred king in yellow, silver and black. This window is mentioned in its present position by Jefferson¹⁰ but it is not known from which parts of the old church the fragments were taken. Neither Dugdale nor Bishop Nicolson record having seen such a window.

Tradition in Penrith believed the crowned head to be that of Richard III. Anthony Cheetham in his *Richard III* shows a picture of the window and captions it as the head of Richard III.¹¹ The portrait is thought, however, by many experts to be a portrait of Richard II, who granted lands in and around Penrith to Ralph and Joan Neville. If, as it is thought, they carried out extensive rebuilding of the church, it is quite probable that they would set up a portrait of Joan's cousin and patron in the church of which they were the new benefactors. The crowned head is very like the picture, in the Jerusalem Chamber of Westminster Abbey, which is called Richard II. Both faces are clean shaven, both carry a sceptre on the left shoulder, both are

crowned and both have an ermine cloak on the shoulder. The current Guide Book to Penrith Church¹² states that the portrait is believed to be that of Richard II.

The glass, however, is very different from the glass in the Neville window. Haselock states that the glass is crude, late fifteenth century work and believes that the head could represent any one of a hundred kings in the Christian iconography. He thinks the fragment might originally have been part of a scene or incident in the life of a saint. If the crown in the window actually belongs to the head, and Haselock is not sure that it does, and if the curve of the lead line represents a halo then, if the head is the head of an English king, the most likely English king is Henry VI.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. W. Nicolson, *Miscellany Accounts of the Diocese of Carlisle*, edited by R. S. Ferguson (1877).
2. Silvester and Edward Harding, *Shakespeare Illustrated, etc.*, London (1789-93). Richard, Duke of York, also appears in Parts 1 and 2 of Shakespeare's Henry VI.
3. S. Jefferson, *History of Leath Ward* (1840), p.53.
4. E. King, Notes from Parish Registers, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Vol. 10 (1882), pp.93-113.
5. Jefferson, *op. cit.*, p.43.
6. F. and R. Hudleston, *Mediaeval Glass in Penrith Church* (1951), p.97, citing College of Arms MS.C.39.
7. These are now in front of the man, but as he was in armour they cannot be his arms; they must belong to the lady.
8. *Calendar of Patent Rolls 1396-99*, H.M.S.O. (1909), p.39.
9. Private correspondence.
10. *Op. cit.*, p.53.
11. A. Cheetham, *Life and Times of Richard III*, London (1972), p.198.
12. Harold Stewart, *The Parish Church of St Andrew, Penrith: A Short History*.