

Research Notes and Queries

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Anne and Peter Idley

Interest has been expressed in Peter and Anne Idley. Peter was the author of a treatise of moral instruction for Thomas, his eldest son, and Anne, his second wife and widow, became Mistress of the Nursery of Richard, Duke of Gloucester, and was thus the supervisor of the early years of Edward of Middleham. *Peter Idley's Instructions to his Son* were edited nearly forty years ago by Charlotte D'Evelyn (Modern Language Association of America, Boston and Oxford University Press 1935) and her introduction gives all the known information about the Idleys.

Peter was of Drayton St Leonards, near Dorchester, Oxfordshire (though he may have been born in Kent), and by 1439 was bailiff of the Honour of Wallingford and St Valery and the four and a half hundreds of Chiltern, part of the Duchy of Cornwall, being replaced in 1447. From 1456 to 1461 he was Comptroller of the King's Works but the real work was carried out by the Clerk of this Office. He held no office under the Yorkists and may have been quite old by this date. He died in 1473, his first wife, Elizabeth Drayton, and his eldest son, Thomas, having died before him.

After his death his family was rent by conflicts over his estates, his second son, William, disputing the inheritance with Alice, the widow of Thomas, and Thomas's son and heir, Richard, who was a minor. Peter's widow, Anne, was also caught up in this fight for she had been left by her husband the right to occupy the chapel, parlour, chambers and garden of Drayton Manor for her life. As the second wife she seems to have decided to remove herself from the scene for at some date before Michaelmas 1475 she came to an agreement with William that she would leave the premises in return for an annuity of five marks.

Approximately three years later Richard, Duke of Gloucester, wrote to Sir William Stonor and Humphrey Forster, justices of the peace for Oxfordshire and neighbours and associates of the Idleys, asking them to find out why William Idley and his sister, Elizabeth, had not paid this annuity to the Mistress of his Nursery. Anne had clearly found this post at some date between her husband's death at the end of 1473 and Michaelmas 1475, just about the time when Edward of Middleham was demanding a nursery.

Was Anne Idley's background as the widow of a man who had devoted time to compiling a book of moral instruction in English verse influential in securing her this post? Her maiden name is not known (possibly Creting) and there may be several connections between her, the Idleys and the Gloucesters still undiscovered, that would give a much more prosaic explanation. Peter's book was extensively based on the works of others, in particular those of Albertanus of Brescia (a copy of his works was owned by Edmund Rede of Boarstall, a friend of Peter), Robert Mannyng and Lydgate, but his own individuality flickers through occasionally. Most important for the Edward of Middleham connection is the fact that the master of the Idley Household had such an activity and interest. The second mistress may have also been interested in instructing the young and imparting wordly wisdom in an easily remembered manner, certainly

she must have heard it discussed. Is it too much to suggest that the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester deliberately chose a widow with an interest in education to supervise the nursery of their infant son?

Points on the 'Princes' and Clarence

The following note has been received from Miss Audrey Williamson: As Doreen Court, in her review of a most valuable discovery, J. M. Rey's *Essais Historiques et Critiques sur Richard III*, published in Paris in 1818 (*Ricardian*, Volume V, No. 72, March 1981, pp.323-5), does not appear to be aware of my own book, *The Mystery of the Princes: An Investigation Into a Supposed Murder* (1978), I think it should be pointed out that from other sources my more accessible book refers at length to du Maurier's translation of the Delaval papers and the account by Maurice de Nassau (1567/1625) of the 'skeletons of King Edward V and the Duke of York, his brother' discovered 'in Queen Elizabeth's time' (p.191). In fact, there is an apparent repetition of this story on the flyleaf of an edition of More marked 1647, dating the discovery as during the time of the imprisonment of Sir Walter Raleigh and Lord Grey of Wilton. As I point out, these men were first imprisoned for conspiracy in 1603, in the reign of James I, not Elizabeth who died in March that year. My book publishes among its illustrations (opp. p.174) the plan of this 'Little roome' which was appended to the account, and in which the skeletons were supposed to have been found.

I also, from the Great Chronicle of London reference to 'much whyspering' that the princes had been put to death 'aftyр Estyrn', as well as from a tradition in the Tyrell family that the princes lived at Gipping Hall with their mother, deduce that 1484 was the only possible year if these things are true: as Elizabeth Woodville did not leave sanctuary until March, 1484, and at Easter, 1483, Edward IV was still alive (he died on April 9: after Easter Day which occurred that year on March 30. Easter Day, 1484 was on April 18).

With regard to Michael A. Hicks' speculations on the execution of Clarence (same issue, pp.302-10), again I would refer to my book (pp.59-60), which discusses one possible reason he does not mention. Stillington, Bishop of Bath and Wells, was, according to a Stonor letter, imprisoned at the same time, thus suggesting a theory that he might have told Clarence the story of Eleanor Butler's pre-contract, which if true made Edward IV's children by Elizabeth Woodville illegitimate and Clarence *the heir to the throne*. Of course we can only speculate here; but it is certainly a viable speculation and worth bearing in mind, as it would explain the recorded fact that it was the Woodvilles who urged Edward to execute Clarence, which he did after obvious hesitations.

The Hopper Ring

From Audrey Cartwright of Leek, Staffordshire.

An interesting item on display at a private museum in Eyam, Derbyshire, is a ring, which it is claimed is a relic of royalty. It is said to be medieval (confirmed tentatively from photographs by the British Museum) and is known as the Hopper ring. It has a central ornament showing vestiges of enamel which contains a small square of wood purporting to be a fragment of the True Cross, such rings were not uncommon. The ring is silver, the hoop is narrow and elaborately decorated, it is quite large in diameter, possibly a man's thumb ring. It has *MKENI* and *IESUS* inscribed on either side of the central ornament.

A document with the ring states that it was given by King Richard III to

Anne Hopper, ancestress of Thomas Hopper, a well known early-nineteenth-century architect. According to his obituary in the *Illustrated London News* (Vol. 29, 1856, p.352) it passed to Thomas Hopper's youngest daughter Jessalina, wife of Sir Benjamin Smith of the Corps of the Gentlemen at Arms to Queen Victoria, and thence to her only child Emily Euphemia, wife of Henry Osborne-White. According to Lady Smith, documents relating to Anne Hopper, including a promise of ennoblement of Anne Hopper's children by Richard III, were burned by Thomas Hopper's father 'in a fit of drunken spleen'. The tradition further says that the Hoppers are descended from a natural daughter of Richard III by a lady the King brought with him from Edinburgh to Dover; Richard was Constable of Dover Castle circa 1481 to 1483, the period of his Scottish expedition. This daughter married a wealthy yeoman possessing property near Canterbury, Kent, and there is still a farm and a field bearing the family name of Hopper in the area, but now no longer in their possession. The tradition goes on to say that Richard also had a son by the same liaison, and that this was the boy now known as Richard Plantagenet of Eastwell.

Attempts to confirm this story have met with little success, although members of the Kent Branch, particularly Mrs Legg, have been most helpful. It appears that the name Hopper does occur frequently in Canterbury Archdeaconry Court Wills from 1449 onwards, and a John Hopper operated a Hoppers Mill near Canterbury 1547-1585 (the mill was burned down in 1934), but this is all that can be discovered. It remains possible that the story is true although improbable. The connection with Richard Plantagenet is interesting too, but if he was fifteen or sixteen by 1485 as Brett states (in Francis Peck, *Desiderata Curiosa*, Vol. 2, p.250) then the age difference would obviously rule out any possibility of a Scottish mother for both him and Anne Hopper.

Members may like to know that the Museum, The Rock Private Museum, telephone 0433 31010, is open by appointment only, and not on Sundays. The Kendales of Leicestershire. This family has already been mentioned under John Kendale, citizen and pewterer of London, who came from that county. The family is briefly set out in Nicholls's *History of Leicestershire*¹ as of Twycross and Thornton, giving the descent as from John Kendale of Twycross, son of Thomas and Elizabeth his wife, the daughter and heiress of Richard Fitzherbert. This is the 'senior' John Kendale referred to in the will of the pewterer. John Kendale of Twycross had a son Bartholomew, who married Margaret, the daughter and heiress of John Shepey of Smithesby, similarly referred to by the pewterer and described as a 'gentleman'. He was an attorney of the Court of Common Pleas.² Bartholomew's son and heir is given by John Nicholls as William who died 7 June 1500. Another John Kendale of Twycross, gentleman, flourished about 1499 and may also have been a lawyer as his sobriquet of 'gentleman' could suggest.³ It seems likely he is the 'junior' implied by the pewterer's use of 'senior' to describe Bartholomew's father; he could have been either a brother or a son of Bartholomew.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Ricardian 72 (1981), p.320. John Nicholls, *History and Antiquities of Leicestershire* (London 1795-1815), Vol. 4, pt. 2, p.985.
2. I am indebted to Dr. J. H. Baker of St. Catherine's College, Cambridge, for this information.
3. PRO: CP40/149/160, again I am indebted to Dr. Baker for this reference and suggestion.