

Research Notes and Queries

Richards III's Mottoes

Tant le desiere is the least well known of the two main mottoes associated with Richard III, not surprisingly as it defies neat translation into English. Professor Ross has recently (*Richard III*, London 1981, plate 18a) suggested that it was Richard's usual motto but there is little evidence to support this suggestion. It is only known from two sources. It occurs in this spelling with Richard's boar in a small collection of drawings of heraldic beasts, associated with English nobles and knights of the fifteenth century, which has been in the British Library since 1923 (BL. Additional MS. 40742). The drawings were found in a much mutilated state in 1779 by the antiquarian John Fenne who salvaged them, cut them out and pasted them on to new sheets of paper, carefully recording his actions. He dated the devices to the period 1450-1470 (ff.1b, 21b-22) and was undoubtedly correct to do so. It might be more precise to say 1460-70 before the Earl of Warwick's death. Among the devices there are two boars both with coronets round their necks, one a jolly looking beast with no note of any owner (f.13), and the other, a fierce animal with the motto referred to written beneath it (f.5). Above the same boar is written, 'my lorde of gloscester', followed by a much faded second line which has probably also been interfered with by one of the manuscript's owners. If it could be read satisfactorily it might provide a useful gloss upon the motto. It runs: *illa t desyre* or *il la t desyre*, the number of intervening letters and the language is debatable. So far it has defied deciphering even under ultra-violet light by several persons experienced in fifteenth-century handwriting. (There is a reproduction of this boar and motto in the Catalogue of the National Portrait Gallery Exhibition: *Richard III*, 1973, no. 46)

The same motto occurs in Richard's own hand with the different spelling of *tant le desieree* above his signature on a page of the prose version of *Ipomedon*, a chivalric romance of the perfect knight genre, which he owned (Longleat MS. 257, f.98b). The purpose and date of this motto is difficult to evaluate and it seems likely that it is a motto of Richard's youth, before 1470, later rejected in favour of something more recognisable. It may have been a motto adopted in tournaments

and courtly entertainments by the young Richard, such fancies being an essential part of these activities. Its appearance at the foot of a page of *Ipomedon* gives support to this. The complicated adventures of this tale of knightly endeavour, written originally in the twelfth century, were most likely to appeal to someone in their early teens rather than an adult in the late fifteenth century to whom more sophisticated romances were available. The aspirations towards knightly achievement in *Ipomedon* were also exactly suited to elicit the comment *tant le desieree*.

Loyaulte me lie or 'loyalty binds me' is much more easily understood. All its occurrences are dateable 1483-5. It first appears, bracketed together with Richard's signature, on the famous scrap of paper also bearing Edward V's signature and that of the Duke of Buckingham with his motto, certainly dateable to May or early June 1483 (BL, Cotton Vespasian MS. F xiii, f.123). A few weeks later it occurs in a letter from George Brown to John Paston, a reference apparently not generally known. Brown was hostile to Richard's assumption of the crown, took part in Buckingham's rebellion and was executed. His play on Richard's motto shows both his hostility and that this motto was well known; 'Loyalte Ayme. Hyt schal newyr cum howte for me' (N. Davis, ed., *Paston Letters*, vol. 2, Oxford 1976, p.443). The most important use of this motto is on Richard's charter of incorporation granted to the Waxchandlers' Company of London, 16 February 1484. It is written on a scroll behind the crowned arms of the King painted in the initial letter R at the beginning of the charter. This public use provides indisputable evidence that *loyaulte me lie* was generally recognised as Richard III's personal motto during his reign.

Loyaulte me lie may have developed from earlier efforts. It has verbal associations with two other mottoes. *A vo' me ly* occurs with Richard's signature on a page of his English Bible (New York Public Library MS. De Ricci 67, f.1). Again, this must surely date from Richard's youth. The other is *a vos plaisir* engraved round a metal plaque with a central motif of a linked R A, found at Middleham Castle (illustrated, NPG Catalogue, *Richard III* Exhibition 1973, no. 47). The R A could stand for Richard and his wife Anne Neville but it cannot be identified with certainty because their predecessors as owners of Middleham Castle had the same initials: Richard Neville and Anne Beauchamp, Richard Neville and Alice Montague. The similarity between *à vous plaisir* and *à vous me lie* is, however, a persuasive argument in favour of bestowing it on Richard Plantagenet and Anne Neville.

As a footnote it can also be said that two Northern families close to Richard had the word 'loyalty' in their mottoes. The Parrs of Kendal used *amour avec loyauté*, and Lord Dacre (d.1525), who was one of Richard III's henchmen as a boy and who was the son of a Parr, used *forte en loiauté* (S. E. James, *The Parrs of Kendal 1360-1571*, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Cambridge 1977, R. S. Ferguson, *The Heraldry of Naworth, Trans. of the Cumberland and Westmorland Archaeological and Antiquarian Society*, vol. 4, 1878-9, p.496).

The common aspect of all these mottoes is that there is always an object of the emotion (loyalty or desire) expressed by the speaker or owner, the object usually to be understood as a person or persons.

The Editor.

The Site of the Burial of Richard III in the Grey Friars' Church, Leicester

A note by Mr. T. Y. Cocks, Honorary Archivist of Leicester Cathedral, concerning the pillar said to have been put up early in the seventeenth century to mark the grave of Richard III after the dissolution of the Grey Friars, Leicester:

I carried out some research about the Grey Friars site some years ago, when writing an article on the old Georgian house at 17 Friar Lane (then the County Health Department and now belonging to the City Council). The pillar erected to the memory of Richard III by Robert Herrick had disappeared by 1795, when John Nichols published the first volume of his *History and Antiquities of the County of Leicester*; probably many years previously, as Nichols would have mentioned if it had been there in living memory. He quotes Christopher Wren's account of the pillar.

The land attached to the Herrick mansion on the site of the Grey Friars covered a large area. Robert Herrick died in 1618; his descendants sold the property in 1711 and a later owner, Roger Ruding, sold part of it in 1743, at which time New Street was laid out. Ruding retained the Eastern portion of the site, with the mansion, until 1752, when it was purchased by Richard Garle, a wealthy hosier, and much of it was subsequently sold in separate portions for building plots (of which 17 Friar Lane was one). There has therefore been much subdivision and building on the Grey Friars site, which is now occupied by offices and car parks. A small fragment of brick wall in the car park on the West side of New Street is thought to be of Tudor date and to have been part of a boundary wall belonging to the Friary; in the opposite corner of the car park there used to be the remains of a stone 'Gothick folly' type summer-house, demolished some years ago, but it was probably erected much later than 1612 and contained no sort of memorial or inscription.

The tradition that the bones of Richard III were flung into the river Soar is very strong and cannot be easily discounted, despite the inscription of 1612, which might possibly have marked the *site* of his vanished tomb. Royal remains were treated with scant courtesy at the dissolution of the religious houses. The writer of an article in *The Ricardian* (vol. 3, no. 50, 1975, pp.3-7) referred to the disinterment of the bones of John Wycliffe at Lutterworth in 1425, but that was an *official* action; a far closer parallel to the treatment of Richard's remains occurred at the dissolution of Faversham Abbey, Kent, where the bones of King Stephen and Queen Matilda, the abbey's founders, were paraded through the streets by a mob and then flung into the town ditch. Many other royal remains similarly vanished; even at the Grey Friars Church in London, which ranked second only to Westminster Abbey as a royal burial place (as mentioned in the article) the tombs were sold and the bones of queens and other royalties were lost. Richard's 'stone coffin', perhaps the actual tomb erected by Henry VII, was used for many years as a horse-trough at a now-vanished inn in Leicester and was eventually broken up early in the eighteenth century to use for repairing its cellar steps — another well-established tradition.