

Of course it was not necessary for Richard to marry Elizabeth himself in order to pre-empt Henry. The second point is that in paraphrasing St. John's Gospel, Ch.21 v.24, the Third Continuator was unaware at that date that theologians now dispute the authorship of the gospel, and that 'the disciple who bears witness to these things' was very unlikely to have been the author, but the inspiration behind it.

Turning to Dr. Wylie's ingenious argument for the death of the Princes from sweating sickness, may one enquire why, even if it was advisable to bury the bodies very deep, it should have been under a staircase? — and why there should have been no one at the Tower to inform Henry VII of what had happened. It is inconceivable that two King's sons should have died in the Tower of natural causes without any sort of official record, or requiem mass, and above all without their mother being informed in due course. The rumours of their end were many and various, but this was not one of them. However learned the analysis of the anatomical evidence, unless the *fact* of the death of both Princes in the Tower, and the identification of the skeletons found in 1674 as those of the boys, can be squared with all the other relevant evidence, the fate of Edward IV's sons must remain a mystery, at least as regards Edward V.

Book Reviews

THE SON OF PROPHECY: HENRY TUDOR'S ROAD TO BOSWORTH. David Rees, Black Rowen Press, London, 1985, £8.95 (hardback), £3.95 (paperback).

THE MAKING OF THE TUDOR DYNASTY. Ralph A. Griffiths and Roger S. Thomas. Alan Sutton Publishing Ltd., Gloucester, 1985, £12.50.

THE QUINCENTENARY OF HENRY TUDOR'S LANDING IN WALES and victory at Bosworth has led to a resurgence of interest in the King and his background. The accession of a relative stranger to English politics was in itself unusual, if not unprecedented. Such a feeling is captured in the account of the chronicler Edward Hall, where Richard III describes Henry as 'an unknown Welshman, whose father I never knew, nor him personally met'. Richard's reaction, whether actual or apocryphal, would have been echoed by many of the English aristocracy. It is significant that the powerful magnate and prominent courtier Thomas Lord Stanley (Steward of the King's household 1472-83, and again 1484-5) was to declare that he only met Henry on 24 August 1485, that is two days after the Battle of Bosworth. Save for a brief appearance at the Readeption court of Henry VI, in October 1470, the future monarch spent the early part of his career on the fringes of the political stage, firstly as a ward of the powerful Herbert family, and then in exile in Brittany and France. There is a very real sense of isolation here, brought home by Commynes's description of his

first meeting with Henry Tudor, when the prospective claimant to the English throne described his own life as spent either as a captive or a fugitive. To come to grips with Henry as a ruler one has to know more about his background. The need for such an enquiry was firmly emphasised by Henry VII's most recent biographer, Professor Stanley Chrimes, at a fifteenth century symposium at Manchester in 1970, when he commented: 'I am convinced that, in any estimate that may some day be made of Henry as man and King, fuller account needs to be taken of the very peculiar circumstances of his early life'.

Most historians would agree with such a view. The difficulty arises in attempting to evaluate the significance of Henry Tudor's Welsh ancestry, both to the King and to his subjects. Chrimes himself was sceptical, emphasising Henry's pragmatism and the caution of many of the Welsh gentry, such as Rhys ap Thomas. The context was one of political necessity: 'It was not his purpose to fulfil bardic prophecies and visions but to get the crown of England and keep it'. Others have carried the argument further, differentiating between short-term gestures and expedients and Henry VII's failure to deal with the real Welsh problems, the demands for equal political status and the removal of economic disabilities. In this light Henry's Welsh connections represent the retrospective and calculated working of political propaganda rather than any real sense of identity. Such a hard-headed approach can carry its own dangers, as Professor Glanmor Williams has shown, in underestimating the rôle of prophetic literature and poetry, and Henry's own interest in his ancestry. In such troubled waters two new works have arisen, attempting to chart a course between the extremes of political pragmatism and patriotic sentiment.

David Rees has produced an attractive and clearly written book (*The Son of Prophecy: Henry Tudor's Road to Bosworth*) describing Henry's origins and early career and placing particular emphasis on the Welsh prophetic tradition. The author has a lively interest in Welsh history, and, as the bibliography shows, has consulted a wide range of printed material. A positive feature of this work is the emphasis placed on the writings of such poets and seers as Lewis Glyn Cothi of Carmarthenshire and Dafydd Llwydd of Mathafarn. These represent an important and somewhat neglected source, spanning the period before and after Henry's accession, and it is worth emphasising a point not made by Rees, that Dafydd Llwydd provides an early and hostile portrayal of Richard's reign. In a *cywydd* (a poem in the form of a flexible alliterative couplet) written soon after Henry's accession Richard was singled out for attack because of the destruction of his two nephews. He is described as a saracen (associated in the medieval mind with the devouring of Christian children), responsible for the 'sin of Herod'. Other features of the poem strike a resonance with the Tudor portrayal, the King's worry, his stature ('a little ape') and the deliberate killing of lords of the realm.

In linking the Welsh background with the broader sweep of events the author's touch is less sure. There are occasional but rather alarming slips and misunderstandings: Richard Duke of Gloucester marrying Isabel Neville (p.83), and as King declaring Lady Margaret Beaufort illegitimate

(p.93), a course of action hardly likely to endear him to Lord Stanley! Nor is it particularly helpful to be referred to Trevelyan's long-outdated view that the Wars of the Roses were 'to a large extent a quarrel among Marcher Lords' (p.51). To his credit Rees makes the distinction between bardic aspirations and the political goals of many of the Welsh gentry, but his account lacks critical bite, over-evaluating the influence of the Welsh poets at the time of Henry's landing and underestimating the caution of leaders like Rhys ap Thomas before they finally committed their forces.

The dangers inherent in failing to disentangle retrospective tradition from political reality are revealed in comparing sections of Rees's book with the more thoughtful and critical work of Professor Ralph Griffiths and Dr. Roger Thomas, *The Making of the Tudor Dynasty*. In his discussion of the poet Dafydd Llwydd, David Rees states that by the reign of Richard III Llwydd was a staunch supporter of the Lancastrian cause and saw Henry Tudor as his hero. Henry's consultations with the seer soon after his landing are described as the 'convergence of politics and prophecy' (p.107). The details of the meeting, given in *Griffiths and Thomas*, pp.142-3, tell a somewhat different story:

When Henry asked Dafydd whether or not he would be successful at the end of his march, Dafydd hesitated and asked for time to think before answering. During the night, he consulted his wife who advised him to answer in the affirmative. She pointed out that if Henry were victorious against Richard III there was a good chance that he would reward a true prophet; if he were unsuccessful, he would be unlikely to pass their way again!

The informative and beautifully illustrated book by Griffiths and Thomas combines a fluent and balanced narrative with substantial new material on Henry's life: it is indispensable reading for anyone interested in the period. French archives are exploited to add to our knowledge of Henry's period of exile, particularly in Brittany, and some excellent photographs are used to give substance to the descriptions. A wide range of sources are drawn on for Henry's march through Wales, including the important sixteenth century chronicle of Elis Gruffydd, and the result is a far more accurate chronology, showing that Tudor and his forces only reached Shrewsbury on 17 August, two days later than the date normally recognized. Throughout their work the authors are careful in their evaluation of sixteenth century tradition: the result is both critical and refreshing. In their discussion of Buckingham's rebellion (p.96) they point out: '... it would be rash to assume that Buckingham endorsed Henry's claim to the throne or the marriage with Elizabeth of York ... Knowledge of the eventual outcome ... may have warped the perceptions of later writers and created an irresistible Tudor chronology'. Similar scepticism is shown over Henry VI's supposed prophetic remarks to the young Earl of Richmond, but it is noted that some form of acknowledgement at the time of the Readeption was quite likely: this could have been recalled after Bosworth and invested with greater significance. The result of all this is that a clearer picture of the King really does emerge, politically astute and realistic and yet with a strong personal interest in his Welsh background, whether investigating his own pedigree, celebrating St. David's Day at court or in his patronage of rhymesters and harpists.

MICHAEL K. JONES

RICHARD III: THE ROAD TO BOSWORTH FIELD. P. W. Hammond and Anne F. Sutton, 1985. Constable, £12.95. Special price, £10 to Members, from Miss A. Smith, 14 Lincoln Rd., Guildford, Surrey GU2 6TJ.

This book was published to commemorate the 500th anniversary of Richard III's death and its authors need no introduction to readers of *The Ricardian*. Its format is perhaps a little less familiar. The production of books consisting largely of examples of contemporary documents are not uncommon in the academic field — J. R. Lander's *Wars of the Roses* (1965) is but one example* in the area of fifteenth century studies — but they are much rarer in the general market. Here the authors, perhaps one should say editors, have provided a brief narrative of the main events in Richard's life which they illustrate with passages of contemporary evidence. These consist chiefly of chronicles, but also include letters, the register of the Signet Office known as British Library Harleian Manuscript 433, other records of government such as Rolls of Parliament, Patent and Close Rolls and local records from cities such as London, York and Canterbury. Many of the excerpts will be well-known to Ricardians, for they form the basis of most modern writing on Richard, others have only been available previously in specialist works, while some, particularly those from local rather than national sources, are printed for the first time. The authors have not modernised the spelling or grammar, though they have aided the reader by modernising the punctuation and use of capital letters. Some of the passages are very much easier to read than others. The *Croyland Chronicle* appears particularly straightforward, but that is because it has been translated from the Latin. In general government records are easier than private letters, especially when written by the King of Scots, but there are few, if any, extracts which the determined modern reader will fail to master.

Does the formula work? As a means of introducing the general reader to fifteenth century documents, it does. However, the authors have chosen in many cases to use two or three accounts of one event or a similar number of complementary passages relating to one issue following immediately one after the other. This makes for a rather disjointed style and perhaps a line or two of linking narrative or explanation separating the extracts might have provided a smoother transition. The choice of documents is wide-ranging and no major source has been overlooked. The documents are almost all contemporary to the events they are describing, but where a later source is used, such as Richard Grafton's description of Richard III's acceptance of the crown, there is no indication that it was written long after the event by a man who did not witness it.

The book opens with a brief introduction, setting out the authors' aim, 'to depict Richard of Gloucester through the eyes of his contemporaries, and to provide the material for an informed appraisal of his acts and character.' In this they succeed, so it is perhaps carping to add that Richard's life must be seen in the whole context of the fifteenth century and not as an entity in itself. It is not good enough for the authors to dismiss, as they do in the introduction, the dismemberment of Countess of Warwick's inheritance as the kind of activity engaged in by any noble or gentleman in

a position to do so. Their victims would have had immediate recourse to that first line of protection, a 'good lord', prior to arbitration or legal proceedings. But what lord would dare oppose the wishes of the King or his brothers? Only the King had the power to deprive an innocent woman of her own lands 'as though she was legally dead'. The setting aside of the rights of heirs by both Yorkist kings for the benefit of themselves and their family shocked contemporaries because it potentially threatened every land-owner in the country.

The book is lavishly illustrated. Some of the pictures are well-known but essential, others, like the large number of manuscript illuminations, are delightfully unusual. There are many photographs of documents, places and if not people, at least their tombs, but in view of recent work published in *The Ricardian*, is it still possible to describe the tomb at Sheriff Hutton as categorically that of Edward, Prince of Wales?

At its very reasonable price, this book is worthy of a place on every Ricardian's bookshelf.

ANNE CRAWFORD

A GAZETTEER OF YORKSHIRE IN THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY.
Mary O'Regan and Arthur Cockerill, 1985. Rosalba Press, 30 Newland Court, Sandal, Wakefield WF1 5AG, £1.

To commemorate the quincentenary of the reign of Richard III the Rosalba Press, the publishing arm of the Yorkshire Branch of the Richard III Society, have produced this gazetteer of places in Yorkshire where fifteenth century buildings can still be seen.

Ninety-nine places are mentioned, arranged in one alphabetical sequence, with abbreviations to show their pre-1974 Riding and post-1974 county and a four figure Ordnance Survey map reference. Under each place is given a list of its surviving medieval and specifically fifteenth century buildings, mainly ecclesiastical, but also including some secular buildings where a castle, house, town wall, etc., still stands. Brief details are given, in a somewhat abbreviated form, together with some references to further information in journals, Pevsner's *Buildings of England* series, and publications by Pauline Routh and Richard Knowles. There is also a useful list of fifteenth century monumental brasses and baptismal fonts in Yorkshire churches.

A handy guide to where to go in Yorkshire to see fifteenth century buildings, but as addresses and precise opening hours are not given it needs to be used in conjunction with other guidebooks.

CAROLYN HAMMOND

Notes on Contributors

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These are welcomed on any subject relevant to the aims of the Society. These may be illustrated by photographs (glossy prints showing good contrast) or by line drawings. All contributions, including letters, must be typewritten, with double spacing and adequate margins, on one side of the paper only. Permission must be obtained for the use of copyright material, but this is not usually necessary for short quotes. References and footnotes must be given in one sequence at the end of the article. Details need not be given in full for second and subsequent references to the same source. They must take a form similar to the following examples:

R. Horrox and P. W. Hammond (eds.), *British Library Manuscript 433* (4 vols. Upminster and London 1979-83), vol. 1, pp.45-6.

Daniel Williams, The hastily drawn up will of William Catesby Esquire, 25 August 1485, *Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society Transactions*, vol. 51 (1975-6), p.48.

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Edited James Petre

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