William, Lord Hastings and the Crisis of 1483: an Assessment. Part 2 (conclusion)

WENDY E. A. MOORHEN

April – May 1483

ON 17 APRIL HASTINGS took part in the funeral obsequies in Westminster Abbey and, on the 20th was present when Edward's body was committed to the tomb in the magnificent Chapel of St. George that he had built at Windsor. Hastings must have experienced great sorrow at the loss of his beloved master and friend, all the more poignant as Edward was the younger man.

The business of government, however, had to continue and the pragmatic Hastings wasted no time in alerting Richard of Gloucester as to the events in London, urging him to join with King Edward V and to proceed south to take control.[1] In the meantime Hastings was active in the council chamber. The council sent 300 men to Calais to reinforce the garrison and presumably to discourage the French from taking advantage of any possible political turmoil in England following the accession of a minor to the throne.[2] Hastings effectively prevented the Woodvilles from providing the young king with an over-large escort on his journey from Ludlow. The Crowland chronicler records that the 'forsighted members of the Council' did not wish the King's maternal relatives 'to have control of the person of the young man until he came of age'.[3] Such was the influence of Hastings, that his threat to retire to Calais caused the Queen to capitulate and agree that the escort would be no more than 2,000 men. The chronicler goes on to make it quite clear that Hastings' motive for his objection was self-preservation as he was concerned that the Woodvilles would 'sharply avenge the alleged injuries done to them by that lord'.[4]

Hastings' correspondence with Richard is described by Mancini who writes that it was on Hastings' advice that Richard secured the King and restrained Rivers. In similar vein to the Crowland chronicler, Mancini had Hastings say he was in great danger 'for he could scarecely escape the snares of his enemies' but added that this danger was also due to his friendship with Richard. According to Mancini it was common knowledge that Hastings had been in contact with Richard.[5]

Richard, in the decisive fashion that was to be the hallmark of his future actions, left Yorkshire and met with the King's maternal uncle at Northampton. The arrest of Rivers and his immediate supporters led to the collapse of the Woodville machinations to rule England through the young King. When news of the day's happenings reached London, Queen Elizabeth took refuge in sanctuary at Westminster. Supporters of the Queen hovered around Westminster while those favouring Richard of Gloucester gravitated to the 'protection of Lord Hastings',[6] The Queen's son, Dorset, who was deputy constable of the Tower, joined his mother in sanctuary.[7]

On 4 May, the date originally set for the coronation, Richard and his nephew arrived in London accompanied by the new major player in the drama that was about to unfold, the hitherto political lightweight: Henry Stafford, Duke of Buckingham.

Buckingham was born in 1455 and was descended from the youngest son of Edward III, Thomas of Woodstock. Despite his rank the Duke had played no part in government although the same rank enabled him to be involved in the ceremonial aspect of court life.[8] He contributed soldiers to King Edward's French campaign but returned home before the army's embarkation.[9] Obviously not trusted, and probably not liked by King Edward, Buckingham saw an opportunity for a political career and increased wealth with Richard of Gloucester as Protector and he wasted no time in giving his support. Whatever reasons King Edward had for his exclusion of Buckingham from public office they would have been known to, and possibly endorsed by, Hastings.

At the time of Richard's arrival in London, Hastings was described by the Crowland chronicler as 'bursting with joy over this new world'.[10] His relationship with the two dukes was good and he declared that the transfer of government had been effected with no more blood shed than 'from a cut finger'.[11] Polydore Vergil, on the other hand, later painted a very different picture. He wrote that Hastings was shocked by Richard's high handed actions at Northampton and repented his earlier support. According to Vergil, Hastings held a meeting at St. Paul's with trusted friends to discuss the situation. Although they agreed that the young King was 'utterly oppressyd and wrongyd' by Richard, their policy would be to wait and see.[12] It has been suggested that if Vergil was correct in his gauging of Hastings' attitude, then a 'tentative meeting of the minds' between Hastings and Dorset could have taken place shortly after the news of Richard's coup reached London on the evening of 30 April, possibly before Dorset went into hiding the next day. If, however, such an allegiance was formed after Dorset disappeared, the initiative must have been taken by Hastings, as Dorset would not have risked capture by approaching, by whatever means, his enemy.[13]

During the weeks that followed Richard took control of the government and plans moved forward for the coronation, now to take place on 22 June. A government re-shuffle had John Russell succeed Rotherham as chancellor and John Gunthorpe succeed Russell as keeper of the privy seal.

On 7 May a meeting of the late King's executors, including Richard, Buckingham, Hastings, Stanley and leading prelates, took place at the home of Duchess Cecily of York at Baynards Castle when Cardinal Bourgchier, the Archbishop of Canterbury, placed Edward IV's jewels under ecclesiastical sequestration.[14] The Archbishop performed this action as the executors of the late

King had been hesitant to do so themselves. Following the sequestration, the Archbishop wrote to the executors, empowering them to sell goods of the late King to pay for his funeral expenses that had amounted to £1,496. 17s 2d.

On 20 May Hastings was re-appointed to the office of master of the mint, the only grant he was to receive from Richard and one that paled into insignificance against the grants that were bestowed on the Duke of Buckingham. A few days earlier the Duke was made chief justice and chamberlain of North and South Wales, constable and steward of Welsh crown lands – 'virtually the viceroy in Wales'.[15] The historian, Paul Murray Kendall commented: 'seldom has a man so little known become so important so quickly'.[16] Richard had acknowledged and rewarded the Duke for his support with these spectacular grants. Hastings may have been apprehensive as to the ability and motives of the inexperienced Buckingham. He may also have been disappointed at Richard's qualified recognition of his own support. If Vergil was accurate in his reporting of Hastings' concern over the Northampton affair perhaps Richard was aware of this change in attitude, and this is reflected in his treatment of Hastings.

The chroniclers devoted few words to the last days of May and early June. Simon Stallworthe, in his letter of 9 June to Sir William Stonor, confirmed there was nothing new to report.[17] The process of government had become somewhat fragmented with committees of councillors meeting in various locations within the capital: Westminster, the Tower, Baynards Castle and their own residences. In Richard's case this was Crosby Hall and it was here that he gathered his inner circle of supporters, Buckingham, Francis Lovel, Lord John Howard and William Catesby. The last two had strong connections with Hastings: Howard as his deputy in Calais and Catesby as a lawyer.[18] The continued presence of these men about the Protector may well have affected Hastings' equilibrium.

Hastings re-appointment to the mint had been tardy. Despite his duties and attendance at council meetings he could now begin to feel isolated from the real power base. Although he was far from being politically impotent, Hasting's rancour could have been shared by other officials of the late King's government, Rotherham, Morton and Stanley, the 'quadrumvirate of the dispossessed'.[19] They had taken to meeting in each other's houses and perhaps at such a meeting discontent turned to sedition.

Hastings was well placed if he wished to regain his position at the centre of political affairs. He represented continuity from the old regime. He had retained, if not increased, his offices and could presumably have looked for support from the moderate element of the council. Inevitably, the Queen would need to be aware of any plans. If Hastings succeeded in curtailing the power of Richard and Buckingham, the re-emergence of the Woodvilles as a political faction would, at some stage, follow. Hastings needed to ally himself with his enstranged colleagues and with the Queen. The go-between may have been Mistress Shore.

Elizabeth Shore had been the mistress of Edward IV and was the divorced wife of the mercer William Shore.[20] In October 1483 a proclamation in the patent rolls described her as 'the unshameful and mischievous woman called Shore's wife' and as being held in adultery by Dorset.[21] This liaison, presumably, did not start before King Edward's death in April and within three weeks Dorset was in sanctuary. Elizabeth herself was arrested in June and was probably not released until sometime after the October rebellion when she married Richard's solicitor-general

Thomas Lynom.[23] There is no contemporary evidence that she was sexually involved with Hastings although she would have undoubtedly been well known to him.[24]

It should also be remembered that there was another obvious connection between Dorset and Hastings in the person of the Marchioness Cecily, who may well have visited her husband in sanctuary and could have acted as mediator with her stepfather.[24]

Seal of William, Lord Hastings from an indenture dated 26 February 1477.
BL. Add.Charter 19808, seal 10,527.
Reproduced by kind permission of the British Library.

June 1483

On Thursday 5 June the Duchess of Gloucester arrived in London from the North and the same day Duke Richard wrote to the citizens of York a friendly letter advising them he did not have 'convenient leyser to accomplysh this your besnes', referring to their request for his support in alleviating a local tax.[25] On Monday 9 June a full council meeting was held at Westminster lasting some four hours to discuss the coronation and Stallworthe reported that 'None spoke with the Queen'.[26]

The following day Richard wrote again to York but this time the tenor of his letter was very different as he was appealing for urgent help against 'the Queen, her blood adherents, and affinity'.[27] He does not enlarge on her 'affinity' in the letter, leaving the messenger, Richard Ratcliffe, to provide the details of the plot. Further developments may have delayed Ratcliffe's departure, possibly intelligence that Hastings was implicated in the conspiracy. Richard's appeal for help is repeated in a letter to Lord Neville dated 13 June, the day Ratcliffe left London.'[28] Additional correspondence may have been entrusted to Ratcliffe eliciting support from Richard's northern friends. The troops were duly mustered but did not arrive in London until 3 July. They may have discounted the urgency of Richard's written appeal due to a verbal update by Ratcliffe that the situation had changed and the main danger in London would have been dealt with by the time the letters were received. Although a military force was still required it would be as a demonstration of strength rather than any direct action.

According to Thomas More the person who betrayed Hastings was the lawyer William Catesby, who had for many years served not only Hastings but also the Duke of Buckingham. No mention of Catesby, however, was made by Crowland, Mancini or the London chroniclers. Perhaps More's vanity was such that he wished to assign a major role to a wily member of his own profession, who, like so many in this story, was long dead. More wrote that Hastings considered Catesby to be his ears amongst the Gloucester set and because of the trust he placed in him Hastings was indiscreet in his presence. The Protector, on the other hand, wanted Catesby to sound out Hastings to join his cause, in other words to take part in a usurpation, but Hastings views were so strongly against such a cause that Catesby didn't even have to test Hastings' loyalty:

> But . . whether he assayed him or assaied him not, reported unto them, that he founde him so fast, and hard him speke so terrible woordes, that he durst no further breke.[29]

Hastings may have displayed great naivety in still trusting Catesby, if More was correct, in view of the appointment Catesby had received from Richard in May, the chancellorship of the earldom of March, an office which reported directly to Buckingham.'[30] This appointment has been interpreted as eliciting Hastings' support to agree to the extension of the protectorate by the promotion of one of his affinity.[31]

Two interesting points emerge from More's story of Catesby's tendentious enquiries. The first is that Catesby confirmed Hastings was not content and was suspicious of the Protector, though this contradicts the Crowland chronicler. Secondly, it appears that Catesby was not wholly impartial where Hastings was concerned. More admitted that Catesby urged the Protector to take action against Hastings 'and much the rather, for he trusted by his deth to obtaine much of the

rule that the lorde Hastings bare his countrey'.[32] It is feasible that Catesby could have deliberately mislead Richard as to Hastings' attitude to the possibility of Richard assuming the throne. Catesby benefited directly from Hastings' demise with grants for the contableship of Rockingham Castle (with Francis Lovel), the stewardship of St. Albans Abbey and Hastings' Exchequer offices. He indirectly benefited by removing a potential opponent to Richard's claim to the throne and the ultimate advancement of his new master.[33]

The idea of Hastings being scrutinised as to his loyalties rather than betrayed in his conspiratorial activities is borne out by Mancini who wrote that this task was undertaken by Buckingham and included Rotherham and Morton as well as Hastings in his enquiries. Like Catesby, Buckingham was to benefit from Hastings death. He succeeded Hastings to the stewardship of the honour of Tutbury, an appointment he may have coveted for sometime due to the standing of the Stafford family in that area.[34]

Regardless of how Richard learnt of the disaffection of Hastings he had chosen his course of action by Thursday 12 June when he arranged for two council meetings to take place the next day, one at Westminster with the Chancellor, John Russell, and the other at the Tower.[35] The handling of the dénouement was also well planned and careful consideration given to the wording of the subsequent proclamation, as suggested by More.[36] Such preparation, however, need not be interpreted as contrived but merely essential to an important operation. Richard was determined to act swiftly and decisively to this latest crisis and although the hostile chroniclers and historians have implied he acted with feigned spontaneity, hindsight has perhaps affected their judgement of the situation.

13 June 1483

During the night of 12/13 June Lord Stanley had a nightmare in which he and Hastings were both attacked by a boar which 'with his tuskes soraced them both bi the heddes, that the blood ranne aboute both their shoulders'. So disturbed was Stanley when he awoke during the night that he immediately despatched a messenger to Hastings suggesting they flee the city immediately. Hastings dismissed Stanley's fears with 'we might be as likely to make them true by our going' and sent the messenger home, saying, he was sure of Richard.

In the morning Hastings rode to the Tower but on two or three occasions his horse stumbled, in 'olde rite & custome' a portentous occurrence. While he was steadying his horse in Tower Street Hastings spoke with a priest. A knight, sent by Richard to ensure Hastings attended the council meeting, merrily asked why he was spending so much time talking to a priest when he had no need; he laughed in the knowledge that soon Hastings would require the services of a priest. When Hastings reached Tower Wharf a double coincidence occurred as he met another man called Hastings whom he had last seen at the same place during the period when he had been accused by Lord Rivers and fallen from King Edward's favour. While reminiscing Hastings told how well things were with him at the present as he knew that his enemy and author of his former trouble (Rivers) would that day die at Pontefract. That is how Sir Thomas More, vividly but speculatively, recounts Hastings eventful last hours before entering the Tower for the council meeting.[37]

The accounts of 13 June, some more brief than others, basically agree, More of course providing the most colourful and detailed version.[38] Crowland merely

reported: 'On 13 June, the sixth day of the week, when he came to the Council in the Tower, on the authority of the Protector, Lord Hastings was beheaded'.[39] If Chancellor John Russell was the anonymous continuator of the Crowland Chronicle, he was probably involved in the other council meeting taking place at Westminster and, therefore, not an eye witness. This may account for his brevity or possibly reflect a disapproval or dislike of Hastings which resulted in his failure to provide a fuller commentary of what was a significant event. The London Chronicle, known as Vitellius A XVI, is also brief:

> And the xiij day of Jun the Duke of Glowcetir, sodeynly w' oute Judgement, cawsid the lord Hastynges, Chamberlayne of England, to be beheded w'in the Tower. And forthwith sent the Bisshoppis of Ely and York in to Walys, there to haue been prysoned.[40]

The 'historical notes of a London citizen' also gives the date as 13 June and confirms the arrests of Rotherham, Morton and Oliver King ' with other moo [men]' the same day.[41] The Great Chronicle of London states that, apart from Hastings and the 'Earl of Derby', most of the councillors attending the Tower were supporters of the Protector and continues

> 'Upon the same [day] dyned the said lord hastynges with him [Richard] and afftyr dyner Rode behynd hym or behynd the duke of Bukkyngham unto the Towyr'.

When all were assembled a cry of treason was uttered and the usher burst upon 'such as beffore were appoyntid' and arrested Stanley and Hastings, the latter being executed without 'processe of any lawe or lawfully examynacion'.[42]

Mancini portrays the events as beginning with Hastings, Rotherham and Ely making a customary call upon Richard in the Tower at ten o'clock. The Protector at once accused them of arranging an ambush upon him 'as they had come with hidden arms' and again, by pre-arrangement, soldiers entered the room, this time accompanied by Buckingham and despatched Hastings forthwith. 'Thus fell Hastings, killed not by those enemies he had always feared, but by a friend whom he had never doubted.'[43]

Vergil's version refers to the two council meetings: one at Westminster given the task to proclaim the date of King Edward's coronation and the other within the Tower to debate the whole matter of the coronation. The date of the coronation had, of course, been set for 22 June and was well publicised, which rather makes a nonsense of Vergil's agenda. The Tower meeting was convened early, but Gloucester launched into a tirade against the Queen whose witchcraft was wasting his body and he showed the assembly his arm as proof.[44] More's version starts the meeting at nine o'clock with Richard's small talk of strawberries. He withdraws for an hour or so and when he returns his mood is completely changed, exhibiting 'angrye countenaunce, knitting of brows, frowning and froting and knawing on hys lippes.'[45] At this stage More's story resembles Vergil's, similarly recounting Richard's accusations against the Queen and his conversation with Hastings, who agreed the lady should be punished for her actions. In More's account we also find Richard's rejoinder '. . . and I will make good on thy body tratour' and 'What then, William, yf by thine owne practises I be brought to destruction' immediately before guards entered the chamber to make their arrests. During the scuffle Stanley received a blow that knocked him under a table, with blood about his ears, then with Rotherham and Morton, he was arrested and they were taken to separate

rooms while Hastings briefly made his confession, the Protector having declared he would not eat 'til I se thy hed of'.

It is noticeable that after reviewing these different accounts, Thomas Stanley only appears in the Tudor versions. Perhaps his fame was not so great in 1483 when Hastings, Morton and Rotherham took centre stage, but it is worth noting that although he is included with the plotters restrospectively, yet less than three weeks later he carried the constable's mace at Richard's coronation.[46] Did Stanley, as the step-father of King Henry VII, need to be seen acting against Richard?

Whichever version the reader wishes to accept as the 'true' account, the outcome was the same: the respected and popular Lord Hastings 'who chiefly amongst all the nobylytie was, for his bountifulness and lyberalytie, much beloved of the common people' was dead.[47]

Events moved quickly with further arrests, including Mistress Shore, the King's secretary Oliver King and John Forster, the co-steward (with Hastings) of the Abbey of St. Albans and son-in-law of Sir Thomas Cook. Forster was taken to the Tower from his home in Hertfordshire on 14 June and others may also have been arrested.[48] Dorset escaped from sanctuary and

> supposing that he was hiding in the adjacent neighbourhood, he [Richard] surrounded with troops and dogs the already grown crops and the cultivated and woody places, and sought for him, after the manner of huntsmen, by a very close encirclement: but he was never found.[49]

The question remains unanswered as to whether there was a genuine plot against Richard and, if this was the case, whether Hastings was personally involved. Before considering this dichotomy it is relevant to review the situation from Richard's perspective and to follow subsequent events.

The decision to become King

It has been argued that Richard kept his options open, and that his actions, generally, can be interpreted as not following a premeditated and determined path to usurpation. His policy was forever under review and changing to meet the needs of the current situation. In other words Richard was merely reacting to new situations.[50]

It should be remembered that Richard's situation was not particularly secure at the beginning of June. His role of Protector may be regarded to some extent as nominal: he had failed to obtain the Council's agreement to the executions of Rivers and Grey; the Queen remained in sanctuary with her youngest son and daughters, to Richard's embarrassment; and there was an independent party of magnates and prelates led by Hastings who could wield considerable influence and power. Richard badly needed to extend his protectorship and he would certainly have been aware of the fate of two earlier dukes of Gloucester who had both held high office and died under suspicious circumstances.[51] To this end he had gained the Council's approval to an extension of his powers after the coronation as is evidenced in the draft address to parliament prepared by Russell.[52] How long Richard could have held the office was and is open to speculation and no-one was more acutely aware of this than Richard himself.

As the date of the coronation drew near, events gathered momentum and the first indication of the ensuing turmoil was the virtual suspension of normal government: grants ceased to be recorded by 11 June.[53] Richard probably learnt of

the conspiracy on the 9th or 10th, applied for military aid within forty-eight hours but proceeded to take corrective action on the 13th and 14th. Richard was no longer prepared to brook any obstinacy from the Queen and on Monday the 16th she relinquished Richard, Duke of York. At what stage Stillington told his story to Richard about King Edward's pre-contract with Eleanor Butler is unknown but undoubtedly Richard was in possession of the revelation by this time and now had three options open to him: ignore the pre-contract and continue with the coronation on the 22nd; postpone the coronation; assume the throne on the grounds of the illegitimacy of his nephews.

On 16 June Richard took the second option, he issued the writs of *supersedeas* cancelling both the coronation on the 22nd and parliament on 25 June and he named a new coronation date of 9 November.[54] The deliberations by which Richard came to his decision to become King had now begun in earnest and the decision was made by the Saturday.[55] On Sunday 22 June the issue of the pre-contract was made public and within four days he was acclaimed King Richard III. The postponement of Edward V's coronation was, in part, an expedient act designed to give Richard time to think and decide where his duty lay, following several days of intense activity culminating in the exposure of the conspiracy, the existence of which, had demonstrated Richard's vulnerability. The revised date for the coronation, however, was common knowledge in official circles and beyond. Many Londoners were involved in the preparations for the coronation and the new date was recorded in the College of Arms chronicle.[56] None of Richard's actions in June (the plea for aid, arrest of the conspirators, transfer of Richard of York and the postponement of the coronation) need be regarded as sinister or pre-emptive if reviewed in chronological order and without hindsight. In the words of Isolde Wigram who wrote about the dating of Hastings' death: 'If one starts with the assumption that what Richard said was the truth, everything falls into place'.[57]

Conspiracy or Canard

The only documentary evidence that the plot existed are the two letters, written by Richard to the city of York and Lord Neville, together with the report of the proclamation issued within a few hours of the execution declaring Hastings a traitor.[58] The opinion has been expressed that if there was no conspiracy, Richard would have waited to take action against Hastings and his friends until after the arrival of the troops, but in the event, the situation was sufficiently threatening to Richard to preclude delay.[59]

Circumstantial evidence exists in the form of the arrests, not only of the high ranking prelates, Rotherham and Morton, but of Mistress Shore, Oliver King and John Forster.[60] What was the purpose of their arrests unless they were part of a genuine conspiracy? Elizabeth Shore's introduction to her future husband, Thomas Lynom, was probably made while he interrogated her in his capacity as Richard's solicitor-general.[61] Forster, Queen Elizabeth's treasurer and receiver-general, was held in prison for almost nine months and he was sufficiently frightened to surrender his stewardship of the liberty of St. Albans within forty-eight hours of his arrest 'in the hope of obtaining remission of his punishment'.[62] Further testimony to the seriousness of the charges against him was supplied by Stallworthe in his 21 June letter to Sir William Stonor when he reported that men feared for Forster's life.[63] Stallworthe also reported that the London residences of Rotherham and Ely

were occupied, and possibly their country homes as well, by Richard's men. Richard was obviously taking no chances and was extremely thorough in the mop up operation, presumably searching the prelates' homes and interviewing staff, servants and visitors.

Finally, there is one further indication that the conspiracy was real. The register of Abbot Wallingford of St. Albans, which recorded Forster's arrest and imprisonment, also records 'that it was said Hastings deserved his fate'.[64] Perhaps the phrase 'it was said' indicates a certain sceptisim on the part of the chronicler but unless it was generally accepted that Hastings was involved in a plot against the Protector, why bother to make the statement at all?

Historians who adopt the traditional anti-Richard stance have drawn their own conclusions about the events of 13 June: primarily that the execution of Hastings was a second pre-emptive act by Richard and one that removed the most powerful magnate who would remain loyal to the son of his former master. Due to the paucity of the evidence they argue no conspiracy existed except in the minds of Richard and Buckingham and rely on Mancini's gossip 'that the plot had been feigned by the duke so as to escape the odium of such a crime'.[65] It was true, of course, that the existence of a conspiracy did provide Richard with an excuse to rid himself permanently of the Woodville prisoners. On 25 June Richard took the initiative: Rivers and Grey were executed at Pontefract.

The two major arguments against Hastings' involvement in a plot are his relationship with Richard and the unliklihood of his rapprochement with the Queen. Both Crowland and Mancini referred to the good will Hastings bore Richard and More wrote: 'undoubtedly the protector loued him wel, & loth was to haue loste him'.[66] Presumably Hastings was aware of the content of Russell's parliamentary address confirming Richard's continuance as Protector after the coronation and thus he endorsed this extension to the protectorship. Further, Hastings' retained his offices and 'his interests were respected' so, it has been argued, why should Hastings conspire against the Protector?[67] To what could he possibly have objected?

It could also be argued, however, that this scenario is confirmed by Richard himself: his complete astonishment at Hastings' betrayal that was manifested by his violent and swift response. Richard acted while his anger was still hot. If he had hesitated and waited to consider what he was about to do to an old friend and comrade he would probably have been unable to order the execution. Further confirmation is provided in the form of Richard's treatment of Hastings' family. In the normal course of events, Hastings' death would have been followed by his attainder, and the subsequent confiscation of his lands would have placed a considerable amount of patronage at Richard's disposal. Richard chose not to follow this course of action but to honour Hastings' wishes in being buried near King Edward at Windsor, and on 23 July while at Reading on his royal progress, he officially assured Lady Katherine Hastings that she would in no way suffer from her late husband's conduct.[68] Are these the actions of the wicked, power-crazed monster of Tudor legend or the calculating land-hungry Duke, as he is currently represented by modern historians?

Hastings relations with the Woodvilles spanned many years. Although there were undoubtedly causes for dissension, and these have already been discussed, this did not preclude them from working together during King Edward's reign.

Dorset was Hastings' deputy at the battle of Tewkesbury. They served together on commissions of oyer and terminer, were part of a group of feoffees for the Mowbray estate and certainly worked together on other occasions at the behest of their master King Edward.[69] Rivers and Hastings seem to have shared a common interest in the collection of books.[70] Hastings and the Queen's kin may well have jostled for King Edward's favour but compromise was essential between those who so prominently served their king. In June 1483, however, Rivers was under arrest and Dorset was in no position to become actively involved in a conspiracy.

Hastings' 'animosity' with Queen Elizabeth is not as well documented as that between Hastings and the Queen's immediate relations. The view has been expressed that 'there were less well-advertised examples of cooperation, or at least of agreeable co-existence'.[71] Only More and Mancini record the hostility that stemmed from the Queen's resentment of Hastings being 'secretelye familyer with the kynge in wanton coumpanye' and 'the accomplice and partner of the sovereign's privy pleasures'.[72] If More and Mancini are to be believed it seems strange that Queen Elizabeth should single out Hastings as the sole object of her wrath without apportioning some blame to her own son and brothers for encouraging her husband in his infidelities. The possibility of some degree of discord within the Woodville family, despite their unity, should not be overlooked.

The view has been expressed that Elizabeth and Hastings each bore the other a grudge dating back to the 1464 marriage agreement that was signed just seventeen days before she married King Edward. Elizabeth, on her part, because of Hastings tough negotiations and Hastings because the agreement lapsed after her royal marriage.[73] In the event Elizabeth did agree to the contract, her common sense probably telling her that one hundred per cent of nothing is nothing and that at least with Hastings' backing she stood a chance of achieving a settlement from her in-laws. What is tantalising, however, is the hypothesis that Hastings, in attempting to obtain a favourable solution for Elizabeth from the King brought her to Edward's attention. In such circumstances Elizabeth may well have retained a certain regard for her husband's closest friend.

Apart from a possible spell in the Tower, Hastings did not seem to lose too many points to the Woodvilles. Few ladies were more pragmatic than the Queen and her later association with King Richard bears testimony to her ambivalence. Richard was responsible for the death of one of her sons, Richard Grey. The argument that Hastings and the Queen could not have formed an alliance because of their much vaunted hostility, however, is obviated by the precedent set by the Earl of Warwick and Queen Margaret. The forceful personalities of the latter pair are well known and if they could come to an alliance in 1470 so could Hastings and Queen Elizabeth a few years later.

The ultimate question is why William Hastings would want to become involved in a conspiracy to overthrow Richard of Gloucester?

Conclusion

The present author believes that the answer to that question is to be found in two aspects of Hastings' character: his loyalty and his ambition. Taking his status from his father, Hastings combined his background of landed gentry with the pride of his maternal ancestry. Although lacking the vast acres and wealth, in his early years, of a 'great magnate' he possessed the intelligence, developed the skills and, from his

cousin King Edward, acquired the land to become one of the most important men in England for over two decades. Edward's trust in 'Hastings was repaid by a lifetime of personal devotion' and Mancini describes him as the 'author of the sovereign's public policy'.[74] Confident in his own wealth, position and abilities, Hastings was perhaps unconcerned at his lack of higher rank.

More's description of Hastings is of

> a good knight and a gentle ... plaine & open to his enemy, & secret to is frend: eth to begile, as he that of good hart and corage forestudied no perills, a louing man & passing wel beloued. Very faithful, & trusty ynough, trusting to much.[75]

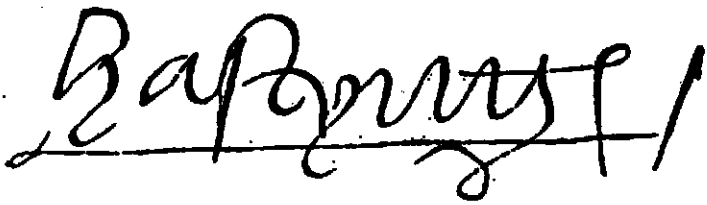
Although this accords with the loyal aspect of Hastings' character that kept faith with the Yorkist cause throughout his life, worked tirelessly on behalf of his country and inspired confidence in all levels of society, it is perhaps more a eulogy for a 'victim' of the 'ambitious' Richard of Gloucester than a complete and accurate reflection of Hastings, character. Time and again Hastings proved himself successful and to achieve success on this scale he had to be strong, competitive, astute, resourceful and acquisitive. Hastings' ability as a diplomat alone negates More's 'trusting to much'. How 'gentle' was the young Hastings in the Pierpoint affair? How 'plaine and open' to his enemies in the John Edwards incident? How easy 'to begile' when he negotiated with the widowed Elizabeth Grey. How innocent to have 'forestudied no perills' when Elizabeth speedily sought to crown her son and control the government? Perhaps the measure of William Hastings was his popularity and good reputation in spite of his success.

With King Edward's death change was inevitable and each of those closest to the late King quickly assessed their own priorities. His wife, Queen Elizabeth, wanted to attain control. His surviving brother, Richard of Gloucester, saw his role as protector of the realm until the young king could govern for himself. His greatest friend, William Hastings, wanted a smooth transition of power to a council dominated by the old nobility. Immediately Queen Elizabeth was in conflict with Richard and Hastings and within three weeks her faction was neutralised.

On the periphery there were a number of people who recognised an opportunity to promote their own interests, Margaret Beaufort, John Morton, Robert Stillington, William Catesby and Henry of Buckingham. It was perhaps the combination of their ambitions and machinations that now brought about the strife that began with Hastings' conspiracy and was to end at Bosworth over two years later.

In April, Hastings and Richard shared common goals and Hastings was content to work with Richard during the period of the protectorship. Initially Richard's friendship with Buckingham may not have concerned Hastings but by May, after Buckingham's promotion in Wales, Hastings could begin to feel uneasy as he saw Buckingham usurping a role he had dominated for over twenty years. Excluded from Richard of Gloucester's inner circle, perhaps regarded as old fashioned and belonging to another generation, it would have taken a humbler man than William Hastings not to resent this change in the *status quo*. Hastings' ambitions were not diminishing with age and he was still capable of vigorously asserting his authority as he had demonstrated in the council chamber in April.

It is very likely that Hastings was aware of the threat posed by Robert Stillington and his knowledge of the pre-contract with Eleanor Butler. It is entirely



Signature of William, Lord Hastings. Photograph by Geoffrey Wheeler.

possible that Hastings' own 'intelligence' or an interview with Catesby alerted him that Richard was already in possession of the facts. Hastings' fears would have been for the reputation of King Edward IV and the future of the boy, who for twelve years had been destined for the throne of England. Although there had been differences with the Woodvilles it was inconceivable for Hastings to stand by whilst Queen Elizabeth was exposed as Edward's paramour and their children declared illegitimate. To Hastings, such a scandal would destroy the honour of Edward IV.

In late May Hastings faced the unpleasant fact that his political influence was declining and the possibility that his beloved master's son would not be crowned. Despite his fifty-three years Hastings was not prepared to retire to his estates and abrogate his position, especially as it was being usurped by Buckingham, 'Power once obtained is very seldom voluntarily relinquished'.[76] Far from being the naive dupe presented by More, Hastings took the initiative and made peace with the Woodvilles. The conflict between Richard and Hastings was inevitable but, rather than a display of antipathy towards his former colleague, Richard, Hastings' conspiracy was simply a matter of expediency for his own political survival and that of his young master, King Edward V.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Henry Ellis, ed., *Three Books of Polydore Vergil's English History*, Camden Society 1844, p.173.
2. C.A.J.Armstrong, ed. and transl., *The Usurpation of Richard III by Dominic Mancini*, reprinted Oxford 1969 and Gloucester 1984, p.119. Armstrong suggests this action by the council was intended to obviate any move by Hastings to adopt Warwick's role a decade earlier when, as captain, he withdrew to Calais.
3. Nicholas Pronay and John Cox, eds., *The Crowland Chronicle Continuations 1459-1486*, London 1986, p.153.

4. *Ibid.*, p.155.
5. Mancini (see n.2),pp.71-3.
6. *Crowland Chronicle* (see n.3),p.157.
7. Mancini (see n.2),p.79.
8. For life and career see Carole Rawcliffe, *The Staffords, Earls of Stafford and Dukes of Buckingham 1394-1521*, Cambridge 1978,pp.28-35.
9. F.P.Barnard, *Edward IV's French Expedition of 1475, The Leaders and their Badges being MS.2.M.16 College of Arms*, Oxford 1925 p.iv.
10. Crowland Chronicle (see n.3),p.159.
11. *Ibid.*
12. *Vergil*, (see n.1),p.175-6.
13. Charles T.Wood, Richard III, William, Lord Hastings and Friday the Thirteenth, in Ralph A. Griffiths and James Sherborne, eds., *Kings and Nobles in the Later Middle Ages*, Gloucester 1986,p.157.
14. Anne F.Sutton and Peter Hammond, eds., *The Coronation of Richard III, the Extant Documents*, Gloucester 1983,p.17.
15. *CPR 1476-85*, pp.348, 349-50. Paul Murray Kendall, *Richard the Third*, London 1955,p.192.
16. Kendall, *Richard III*, p.175.
17. C.L.Kingsford, ed., *The Stoner Letters and Papers 1290-1483*, 2 vols., Camden Society 1919,vol. 2,p.159.
18. As a Christmas gift in 1481, John Howard gave Lord Hastings a silver dish worth £22 and in the following February a pipe of wine. *The Household Books of John Howard, Duke of Norfolk, 1462-1471, 1481-1483*, Richard III and Yorkist History Trust, Gloucester 1992, vol. 2,pp.138,158.
19. Kendall, *Richard III*, p.203.
20. For biographical details of Elizabeth Shore see Nicholas Barker, The Real Jane Shore, *Etoniana*, no. 125 (1972), pp.383-91. Also Anne F.Sutton, William Shore, Merchant of London and Derby, *Derbyshire Archaeological Journal*, vol. 106 (1986), pp.129-32.
21. *CPR 1476-85*, p.371.
22. *The Stonor Letters* (see no. 17), p.161 R.Horrox and P.W.Hammond, eds., *British Library Harleian Manuscript 433*, 4 vols., Upminster and London 1979-83, vol.3, p.259. Barker, *Jane Shore*, p.389.
23. References to Mistress Shore's adulterous relationship with Hastings only occur in *The Great Chronicle*, p.233 and *More*, p.53, both written in the sixteenth century. Hastings first connection with Elizabeth may have been through her husband's brother-in-law, John Agard, who was retained by Hastings in April 1474. It has been suggested that Elizabeth was Edward's mistress by November 1474. Sutton, William Shore (see n. 20),p.131. The possibility exists that Hastings introduced Elizabeth to the King. A.H.Thomas and I.D.Thornley, eds., *The Great Chronicle of London*, London 1938. R.S.Sylvester, ed., *The Complete Works of Sir Thomas More, The History of King Richard the Third*, vol. 2, New Haven 1963.
24. Dorset was presumably in communication with his wife if Vergil, (see n. 1),p.200, was correct in reporting that Dorset escaped from England, after Buckingham's rebellion, with his son Thomas, who would have been just six years old and presumably still under the care of his mother.
25. Lorraine Attreed, ed., *York House Books*, Gloucester 1991, vol. 2,p.712.
26. *The Stonor Letters*, (see n. 17),p.159. D.A.L.Morgan has suggested that the phrase means none spoke in support of the Queen. Review of C.A.J.Armstrong's The Usurpation of Richard III by Dominic Mancini, *History*, vol. 56 (1981),p.440.
27. *York House Books*, vol. 2,pp713-4.
28. James Gairdner, ed., *The Paston Letters*, 6 vols. 1904 reprinted Gloucester 1986, vol. 6,pp.71-2.
29. *More* (see no. 23),p.46.
30. *Harleian Ms.* 433 (see n. 22),vol. 1,pp.6-7.
31. J.S.Roskell, William Catesby, Counsellor to Richard III, *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, vol. 42 (1959),p.147.
32. *More* (see n. 23),p.46.
33. *Harleian Ms. 433* (see n. 22),vol. 1,p.67. *CPR 1476-85*, pp.360-1.
34. Rosemary Horrox, *Richard III: A Study in Service*, Cambridge 1989, pp.132-3. Ian Rowney, The Hastings Affinity in Staffordshire and the Honour of Tutbury *British Institue of Historical Research*, vol. 57 (1984),p.36.

35. *Crowland Chronicle* (see n. 3),p.159.
36. *More* (see n. 23),pp.52-54.
37. *Ibid.*, pp.49-52.
38. The controversy concerning the dating of Hastings execution has recently been summarised by Peter Hammond in the *Ricardian Bulletin*, September 1992, pp.17-18. The debate was important in as much as it prompted historians to carry out further research to reinforce their arguments. The significance of the actual date revolves around the sequence of events. *Crowland* states that the execution took place on 13 June and was followed by the transfer of Richard, Duke of York from sanctuary to the Tower on the following Monday. Mancini, *Vergil, More* and two of the London chroniclers all transpose the action, placing Hastings death after York's transfer. It is argued that if Richard of Gloucester first secured the young Duke and heir, and then executed Hastings it would appear he was following a precise strategy of usurpation. With the correct chronology of events Richard's actions appear ambiguous and not so consistent with a planned usurpation. Prof. Myers attributed the chronological error to the 'retrospective revulsion' of the chroniclers to Richard's actions. In other words, they were so convinced of Richard's intention to usurp the throne that their subsequent inaccurate reporting of the chronology was understandable. Whether the reporting was sheer carelessness or 'understandable' manipulation of events is irrelevant, it simply brings into question the veracity of their accounts. A.R. Myers, The Character of Richard III, *History Today*, vol 4 (1954),pp.511-21. The series of articles on the subject of dating Hastings' execution are Alison Hanham, Richard III, Lord Hastings and the historians, *English Historical Review*, vol. 87 (1972),pp.233-48. B.P. Wolffe, When and why did Hastings lose his head? *English Historical Review*, vol. 89 (1974),pp.834-44. Alison Hanham, *Richard III and his early historians 1483-1535*, Oxford 1975, pp.24-9. Alison Hanham, Hastings Redivivus, *English Historical Review*, vol. 90 (1975),pp.821-7. J.A.F. Thomson Richard III and Lord Hastings: a problematical case reviewed, *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, vol. 48,no.117 (1975),pp22-30. Isolde Wigram, The Death of Hastings, *The Ricardian*, vol. 3 (1975),pp27-8. B.P. Wolffe, Hastings Reinterred, *English Historical Review*, vol. 91 (1976),pp.813-24. Anne F. Sutton and P.W. Hammond, The Problems of Dating and the Dangers of Redating: the Acts of Court of the Mercers' Company of London 1453-1527, *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, vol. 6,no. 2 (1978),pp.87-91. Lorraine Attreed, Hanham Redivivus – A Salvage Operation, *The Ricardian*, vol. 3,no.50 (1979),pp.41-50. C.H.D. Coleman, The Execution of Hastings: a neglected source, *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, vol. 53,no. 128 (1980),pp.244-7.
39. Crowland Chronicle (see n. 3),p.159.
40. C.L. Kingsford, ed., *Chronicles of London*, 1905 Oxford, reprinted Gloucester 1977,p.190.
41. Richard F. Green, Historical Notes of a London Citizen 1483-1488, *English Historical Review*, vol. 96 (1981),p.588.
42. *Great Chronicle of London*, (see n. 23),p.231.
43. Mancini (see. n. 2),p.91.
44. *Vergil* (see n. 1),pp.179-82.
45. *More* (see n. 23),pp.46-49.
46. *Coronation of Richard III* (see n. 14),p.399.
47. *Vergil* (see. n. 1),p.179.
48. *Stonor Letters* (see n. 17),p.161. Historical Notes of a London Citizen (see n. 41),p.588. *Coronation of Richard III* (see n. 14),pp.21-2.
49. *Mancini* (see n. 2), p.91.
50. Wood, Richard III, William Lord Hastings and Friday the Thirteenth (see n. 13) p.13.
51. Edward III's youngest son, Thomas of Woodstock, had earned the enmity of his nephew Richard II. He was principally responsible for the removal of the royal favourite, Michael de la Pole, and he died by suffocation in Calais in 1397. *Complete Peerage*, vol. 5,(vol. 2),pp.723-7. Humphrey of Gloucester, brother of Henry V, was declared protector in 1423 in the absence of his elder brother John, Duke of Bedford during the minority of Henry VI. He was arrested in 1447 and died shortly afterwards. *Complete Peerage*, vol. 5(vol. 2),pp.732-5.
52. S.B. Chrimes, *English Constitutional Ideas in the Fifteenth Century*, Cambridge 1936,p.178.
53. The signet office may have been affected by the arrest of Oliver King, one of the king's secretaries. *Harleian Ms.* (see n. 22), vol. 1,p.xxii.

54. *Coronation of Richard III* (see n. 14),p.22.
55. The Chronology is discussed by Prof. Wood, Richard III, William Lord Hastings and Friday the Thirteenth, (see n. 13),p.161.
56. Historical Notes of a London Citizen, (see n. 41),p.588. *Coronation of Richard III*, (see n. 14),p.22, n.77.
57. Wigram, The Death of Hastings, (see n. 38),pp.27-8.
58. See n. 27 and n. 28 above. Mancini, (see n. 2,)p.91. There appears to be no official documentation that is extant but of course a great deal has not survived from this period..
59. Wood, Richard III, William Lord Hastings and Friday the Thirteenth, (see n. 13),p.157. Charles T. Wood, *Joan of Arc & Richard III*, Oxford 1988, pp.170-1.
60. See n. 48 above.
61. Elizabeth Shore's arrest may have been connected to Dorset's disappearance, which occurred at the same time as the discovery of the conspiracy, rather than to any direct involvement in the conspiracy.
62. *The Stonor Letters*, (see n. 17),p.161. H.T. Riley, ed., *Registrum Abbatiae Johannis Whethamstede, Registra quorundum Abbatum Monasterii S. Albani*. Rolls Series, London 1872-3, vol. 2,pp.xxx-i. Hanham (see n. 38), *Richard III and his early historians*, pp.26-27.
63. *The Stonor Letters* (see n. 17),p.161.
64. *Registrum Abbatiae Johannis Whethamstede*, vol. xx,p.265.
65. Mancini (see n. 2),p.91. Later historians follow Mancini, see *More* (see n. 23),p.53 and *Vergil* (see n. 1),p.181.
66. *More* (see n. 23),p.46. Mancini (see n. 2),p.91. Crowland Chronicle (see n. 6),p.159.
67. Horrox (see n. 34), *Richard III*, p.110.
68. Richard also confirmed the wardship of George Talbot, Earl of Shrewsbury and Edward Trussell, son of Hastings' retainer Sir William Trussell. Richard did, however, resume the manor of Loughborough describing it as 'oure derrest wif in her righte belongethe'. Public Record Office, Will of William, Lord Hastings, PCC 10 Logge, 1483, Prob. 11/7,folio 10. *Harleian Ms. 433* (see n. 22),vol. 2,pp.4-5.
69. P.W. Hammond, *The Battles of Barnet and Tewkesbury*, Gloucester 1990, p.93. *CPR 1476-85*, pp.112,145,183. Michael A. Hicks, *False, Fleeting, Perjur'd Clarence: George, Duke of Clarence 1449-78*, Gloucester 1980,pp.156-7.
70. Christine Weightman, *Margaret of York, Duchess of Burgundy 1446-1503*, Gloucester 1989, p.204 and p.209.
71. Charles Ross, *Richard III*, London 1981, p.82 and n. 59. Dr. Hicks described Hastings as enjoying 'amicable relations with the Queen' whilst acknowledging the annoyance the Woodvilles caused Hastings. *Clarence*, pp.40,149.
72. Mancini (see n. 2),p.69. *More* (see n. 23),p.11.
73. Hicks, *Clarence*, p.40. J.R. Lander, *Government and Community: England 1450-1509*, London 1980, p.237.
74. Charles Ross, *Edward IV*, London 1974,p.73. Mancini, (see n. 2),p.69.
75. *More* (see n. 23),p.52.
76. Caroline A. Halstead, *Richard III as King of England and Duke of Gloucester*, 2 vols. London 1844, reprinted Gloucester 1977,vol. 2,p.77.