

**Dr David Baldwin on "What happened to the Princes in the Tower?"**  
**Richard III Yorkshire Branch Spring Lecture**

**Report by Jan Scott**

We all know that Richard III has had a bad press from historians and the public alike over the centuries, but I think his successor, Hank 7, gets a bit of a bum rap as well. Okay, so you'd not like to go down the pub with him – you know he'd try and get out of buying his round, but was he such a failure? Wasn't he just a bit loveable? He produced an heir and a spare, he stabilised the country after the upheavals of the Wars of the Roses, he put the financial footing of the nation on a very solid base and it is just possible he left an alternate king in peace and quiet throughout the whole of his reign even though he knew all about him. And it's the last bit that is pivotal to David Baldwin's theory.

But Dr Baldwin started with a look at other theories of what happened to those doe eyed little angels, Edward V and baby bro Richard of York.

The accusation that Uncle Richard III had them killed only started well after his death. The first reports are in the Chronicles of London, but as three possible methods were suggested (presumably not at the same time) of drowning in a butt of Malmsey, poison and suffocating in bed, it was hardly definitive. Which reminds me – note to time travellers: never drink Malmsey in 15<sup>th</sup> century England – you never know who has died in it.

The last of the three suggestions, the killing in bed scenario, was repeated by the sainted Thomas More and picked up by Hollinshead and Shakespeare. This became the accepted version with Tyrell doing Richard III's bidding. The source for this version is the confession of Sir James himself, just before he was executed for other crimes, but it was never made a big thing of at the time and smacks of official tidying (a sort of "taking into account another 28 offences"). Certainly contemporaries didn't tell this tale at all including Vergil writing in 1517-18.

Then in 1674 bones were found under some stairs and these were declared to be the boy's bones. Leaving aside the small matter that if you follow More's account the bodies were actually dug up from beneath the stairs and buried elsewhere (he must have forgotten to mention it was another stairwell then!), the bones were examined in 1933 and the ages were estimated as 12-13 and 10. How convenient. Of course bones are actually very hard to age accurately. In 1965 Anne Mowbray's bones were found and looked like the bones of a 6 year old, though we know Anne was 9 when she died. And as the authorities have refused any further investigation the matter lies there. (You can see their point – with so many sets of bones in situ they'd be an exhumation every five minutes to prove or disprove someone's pet theory).

Some apologists for Richard seeking evidence of the boys surviving 1483 look to Harlean 433, which refers to high born children in July 1484 and "the Lord Bastard" in March 1485 all in Sheriff Hutton. But in truth this is really as likely to be references to other royal kids around at the time – Edward IV's other children

and Clarence's kids are possibilities with the Lord Bastard possibly being John of Gloucester, Richard's own bastard son.

Could Perkin Warbeck have been the youngest boy as he claimed? Well he looked like his supposed dad, but all those tales of not being able to explain fully how he'd escaped the tower and where he was from 1483-91 to protect others do seem a bit thin. He certainly didn't get much support, aside from those outside England who were happy to use him to stir up trouble.

Henry VII never did confront Perkin with his "sisters" or others who could have identified Warbeck. Was this because Henry feared it might legitimise him or was it instead because he knew where the real Richard was so this was clearly a fake?

So what other theories do we have? Jack Leslau had both boys surviving and living as Edward Guildford and Dr John Clement (Edward and Richard respectively). There was a whole tale of a painting of the More's family being a coded set of clues that showed Dr Clement was Richard, but this really doesn't make sense. If you are living incognito best not to put clues somewhere where others could see them, and anyhow this man was far too young to be Richard. Unless you think he was the ultimate late developer, not qualifying as a doctor until he was 52 and dying at 98. Ingenious idea, but Doctor Baldwin is not convinced.

So turning from other's ideas, David had some of his own. He can not accept that no one ever knew what happened. Someone must have known, if only those directly involved. Why did the boy's mother and sisters never ask what had happened? They didn't seem to make a song and dance about it even after Henry took power. He also believes that not only Richard but his successor, Henry also would have known the boys' fate, as would Margaret Beaufort and Cardinal Morton, but all remained surprisingly silent. Even the chroniclers kept quiet.

There was a supposition that the boys were no more, but no specifics; no proof.

We do know that Edward V regularly saw a doctor, so presumably was ill, but there has never been any suggestion that his younger brother was unwell. So did big brother die in late 1483, or even early 1484? Doctoring was not an exact science at that time and he wouldn't have been the first patient not to survive his medical attention. And what of the fact that no pretender ever claimed to be the lost king? Warwick and York, yes, but never Edward. This suggests that it was generally accepted that Edward was dead, but there was more doubt as to the fate of the young Duke of York. It would have been acceptable, after a period of time, to announce two unfortunate deaths, but not if one lad had survived.

So if the younger boy had survived, who could he have been? Well David has an idea.

In 1542-3 Sir Thomas Moyle was looking for builders to complete his mansion at Eastwell, and one of his bricklayers was a mature man who one day, so the

family story went, was discovered reading a book; and not just a book but one in Latin. When questioned he claimed to be a bastard son of Richard III.

But does this ring true? Richard freely acknowledged his other two bastard offspring and provided for them, so why not this one? David's theory is that far from being a bastard son, he was Richard's legitimate (or not) nephew, who died at Eastwell in 1550. If this was Richard he would have been 77 at his death – a good age but far from an impossible one.

Both were called Richard Plantagenet and there are no accounts that have them both around at the same time so there just could be something in this.

There is a tradition that Richard of York was taken to Bosworth just before the battle to meet his uncle, and Dorset was there as well. After Bosworth Dorset was controlled by Henry VII but on the whole well treated. But Dorset was a political lightweight, so why pay him any attention at all – unless he knew something and yet was most likely to leak this information. And what if that information was that Richard of York lived.

After Bosworth, so the story goes, the boy was taken to Colchester, to St John's Abbey to seek sanctuary. Lovell certainly went there, for no good reason, and was allowed to stay there beyond the time limit on sanctuary by Henry VII. And Henry continued to have an interest in Colchester that has no known reason. Between 1487 and 1493 he visited several times and in 1486 secret letters from the King's Council were sent. Something was going on but what?

David's idea is that all the interest was in a really big secret – that Richard of York was alive and was going to live out in days in peace as a bricklayer. At only 12 in 1485, Richard would have been malleable but old enough to understand the need to keep quiet as to his real identity.

Anything else that suggests this could be true? Circumstantial but interesting are two items from the official records.

In Feb 1491 there is a pardon issued to a young widow, Eleanor Keychen. The pardon (crime not defined) was on the condition that Eleanor stayed in the custody of her parents, and on their death, family members until her death. This did not just preclude remarriage, but was close to house arrest. But why? What if she had some secret to impart and had to be kept out the way? In 1490 Richard would have been 17. Is it outside the bounds of possibility that a young widow would have caught his eye. What if he'd offered marriage? Clearly he could not be allowed to have children – more potential targets for rebellion. So keeping the two firmly apart would fit the bill, and ensuring the silence of the thwarted would-be wife essential.

In Henry VIII's reign (now there's a monarch who deserves any bad press going!) there is a royal pardon for Richard Grey of Colchester, alias of North Creke, Norfolk. Richard Grey certainly would have been a good neutral name for Richard of York to adopt, especially as it was his mother's family name and, if he was illegitimate, would have been his own surname.

But why, when he had been sent to Colchester, would he leave in later years? A number of reasons. One would be that the Abbot of Colchester had no work for him so he was allowed to work elsewhere. As he got older close supervision was not longer required so they could risk him working away from the Abbey. Then came the dissolution of the monasteries which resulted in the closure of St John's in 1539. Sometimes the new secular owners of former church properties had work for the lay brothers, but not in this case. So in 1542 Richard's arrival at Eastwell would seem plausible, as he was forced out of Colchester to look for work.

Once arrived there, and exposed as having far more learning than the average master bricklayer, why tell Moyle he was Richard III's bastard son? Why not tell the truth? Perhaps even this late in his life it was safer to be someone with no claim whatsoever to the throne than one with a good one. He might have that pardon, but Henry was unpredictable and had proved himself very free with the executioner's services.

Of course this is all speculation. Richard could have survived the tower and this is one explanation of how it happened. As Dr Baldwin reminded us, if we knew the answers and had clear evidence it wouldn't be a mystery. So yes all this could be a coincidence – but what if it isn't? That's what makes it interesting.

Afterwards, inevitably, there were questions. Why had Richard not been put back in the tower after Bosworth? If Henry had done that he would have provided his opponents with a very visible centre for their ambitions, whereas with the acceptance that both boys were dead not only could Richard live his life out in Colchester in peace, but it also eliminated him as a rival. Henry VII actually wasn't a great one for executions; he'd much rather come to a financial settlement in his favour. Not like his son, who was never one to spare the axe.

How could it have been kept quiet when so many at the tower must have known what had really happened to the boys? They did know, but it was in their interests to keep quiet. If both had died then the truth would have been told sometime, but with one surviving and that not being known being central to his continuing safety, no one had any tales to tell.

Anything in the Tyrell connection? There is a tradition that Elizabeth Woodville was in Nesfield and then Tyrell's care before both men were called away and unable to provide adequate supervision. But Elizabeth could well have been there with her youngest boy.

And so it was over for another year. If you want to read more; to have the full tale of Lovell and Co at Colchester; more examples of Henry VIII's murderous ways and just more detail than here, then do get Dr Baldwin's Book. It's called *The Lost Prince* – the survival of Richard of York and is published by Sutton. It's a fine read.