

To Bury a King: Richard III's Re-interment – a re-enactor's perspective

An article written by various people, and brought together by Frances Perry

To Bury a King: Richard III's Re-interment – A Re-enactor's Perspective

In a carpark in September 2012, a team of archaeologists from Leicester University uncovered a body believed by some to be the remains of Richard III. The skeleton was uncovered at the former site of the Grey Friars church in Leicester (destroyed in the 1530s) where Richard III, who reigned over England for just over 2 years, was reportedly buried. In February 2013 the DNA results confirmed that the remains were, indeed, that of the king slain at the Battle of Bosworth in Leicestershire over 500 years ago. An individual who has been in equal measures venerated and despised through history, and who remains an enigmatic figure even now having more biographies written about him than any other pre-Tudor monarch.

In a culmination of months of planning, on Sunday 22 March in the year 2015, the bones of an anointed King of England began their 7 day journey of re-interment to a tomb in Leicester Cathedral. It was as if all the eyes of the world were focused on the unusual and unique event, with thousands of spectators arriving in Leicestershire from all over the world, and press coverage by many newspapers and media companies. On this Sunday, the day had been prepared into a set of timed events which would reflect both the modern practices of both the Church of England and Royal funeral rites, but also to pay homage to the rites of the 15th century. I have written this article to bring together the perspectives of several different re-enactors who were lucky enough to be asked to participate in this set of events, in order to document their perspective on the re-burial of a King of England – lost and found so dramatically. This is also an article to denounce those who felt the medieval element to the day was a mere “pantomime”, and provides an insight into why we were there.

Frances Perry

*Sir John Savile's Household
Market Bosworth – Market Square*

He has almost a mythical quality. Richard III. A name that, at least in the circles I travel in, can cause a passionate reaction in many people I talk to. I am not a staunch 'supporter' or 'opponent' of Richard, but rather I was intrigued that such a figure could reign for just over 2 years and still become such a figure of intrigue throughout English history. I also respected him for being the last King to lead a cavalry charge in battle. To say that archaeologists found his bones. That they held them and popped them into a box for

DNA analysis is very strange indeed - like it didn't really happened. But it did indeed happen, and Leicestershire prepared to inter his bones into its Cathedral. I didn't really know what to expect – would there be people weeping? Would there be foreign dignitaries? Would the general public notice that it was happening at all? How do you bury a 500 year old King, anyway? Hell, how do you go about bury a *King*?

So when our Petty Captain, Tim Kearney, said that our re-enactment group had been selected to attend the re-interment events going on at Market Bosworth on that Sunday I was heartened. Not only was I proud that our group had been selected, but keenly aware that we were representing the period of history that Richard would have recognised in the midst of all this modern ceremony, and which the general public would also see. Our duty was to provide 'living history' to the public during the Sunday – in the form of military and clothing talks and displays of crafts and information – and then to form a marching column of soldiers into the market square to line the route prior to the funeral cortege travelling through Market Bosworth on its way through the villages. How do you prepare for something like that? I made sure my kit was up to scratch and had no tears, polished my armour and weaponry until it shone, and did careful research on the biography of Richard III to prepare for questions by members of the public.



Photo by Leicestershire Evening Post

It wasn't until the day of the event, when we were all set up and waiting for the first people to arrive, that it hit me that this text-based historical 'figure' had actually stepped out of the pages and into a real person. A King who ruled England and actually wore the armour, and the clothing and used the weaponry I was

talking about. That no-one alive in 2015 knew him, or saw him, or (let's face it) really knew what it was truly like to 'live' in the 15th century.

The march out into the square was other-worldly for me. *So. Many. People.* Kids up lamp-posts; the mayor and other important local persons sat with a choir; church representatives; shop-fronts kitted out with pseudo-medieval displays and bunting; hand-made banners and hats and outfits; cameras and media crew running this way and that; people holding white roses and flags. A very, very strange experience indeed, and I was so nervous I was sweating under my jack and felt like I was staggering rather than marching! We stopped and lined the route and waited for what seemed like an age, and then there was a ripple from the crowd and the Police bikes cruised past. People threw white roses and we knelt while it drove past us on its journey.



Our day was not finished there. We talked to more public about our displays and 15th century life. Children knew who we were talking about and had obviously been taught

about Richard III in school that week. We learnt later that the crowds of people had been waiting up to 4 hours prior to the cortege drive-past in order to get a good view-point. We were inundated with public all day, and had a fantastic if tiring day talking to people that were very interested in everything we had to say. Feels stupid to write it but I felt we were helping people to make that connection to this person from 500 years ago – bridging the gap in time, so to speak.

Peter Griffiths

21 Gun Salute Gun Crew

Sir John Savile's Household

Bosworth Visitors Centre

Sunday the 22nd March marked the culmination of a remarkable week for some friends and I when our cannon fired for the very first time as King Richard's coffin came up Ambion Hill towards the sundial at its apex. Robin Edge, a friend of mine and fellow member of Sir John Savile's Household, had worked every night of the two weeks prior - from morning until late evening - building and assembling a replica 15th century cannon and making a purpose-built trailer in time to be ready for the great day. Robin and I must at this point personally thank Dr. Philip Stone who contacted the Birmingham Proofing House in order to speed up the proofing of the cannon barrel to be in time for the day.

And what a day it was!!

We arrived at the battlefield centre at Ambion Hill and took the cannon in its trailer up to the top of Ambion Hill to be chained together with the rest of the cannons ready to be fired on the Sunday. On Saturday morning all the cannons and gun crews assembled and had a talk through of the order of service followed by a practice firing session including the procedure in the unfortunate event of a misfire (which is a gun crews worst nightmare!). At the conclusion of the practice session we were issued with a pewter badge that had been commissioned especially for the gun crews who were to take part in the gun salute. The pewter badge was a boar standing on a cannon barrel.

I awoke on the Sunday morning with a feeling of excitement, apprehension and nervousness about the historic and unique event that we

had been chosen to take part in. It began to dawn on us all just the significance of the day which was to be a once in a lifetime experience and never be repeated in our lives. We got into position by 11am ready to move the guns forward to the firing line by 1pm. In the meantime we talked about the cannon, our re-enactment experiences and about our part in the funeral events to the many members of the public as the afternoon progressed. Our wives and Robin's daughter had placed two white roses on our cannon during the morning so I think nobody had any doubt whatsoever during the day where our allegiance lay! Visitors from all over the world came to speak to us but the one that stood out to me was a lady from Northern Ireland who was partially sighted and in a wheelchair pushed by her daughter. She was dressed in a beautiful murrey and blue dress with a white rose and the words '*Loyalty Me Lie*' embroidered on her sash. When I told her I was from Yorkshire and the story of our cannon she insisted on having a photo taken with "*King Richard's cannon*"! Gosh! I felt humbled, but proud!

Eventually, the call came to move the guns up to the firing line, so we moved our cannon - who we had named *Esther* after the wife of its builder and an ancient queen of Egypt known for having a fiery temperament (it is the owner of the gun tradition to give it a name) - into the firing position. By now all of our gun crew were getting excited and I am sure hoping that all would run smoothly and that our cannon would not misfire, even though we have been though the firing procedure hundreds of times on previous guns. We had heard King Richard III was on his way and like all the people present that day, we strained to see the cortege come into view.

We were told by the Master Gunner what the procedure would be - after the minute's silence that would be the time to start the 21 gun salute. But as the coffin carrying King Richard's remains came into view on the gun carriage drawn by the army cadets I felt choked with emotion. I had to hold back the tears as I listened to Dr Stone talk about the life of the King and the various clerical figures as they said prayers for both the King and all who fell at the Battle of Bosworth. As a re-enactor I have taken part in encampments and the battle re-enactment at Ambion Hill for

20 years as a Yorkist supporter but nothing has come close to being in the presence of our King who took part in and died in the actual battle.

Then it came our turn to fire and our thoughts were refocused to the task in hand and the gun salute commenced. Working as calmly as our excitement would allow, we loaded the gun and then when the signal was given we fired *Esther*. She fired beautifully and now we, the gun crew, leapt into action to prepare her to fire again. We fired a second time and that was it - all too soon our part in the 21 gun salute was over. Now I was able to be a spectator as the coffin of the King left as we could hear the King's flag fluttered in the breeze. Leaving the gun line we walked the short distance to the sundial and placed our white roses on the grass followed by other members of the public present that glorious day. We were relieved and pleased that all had gone to plan in the gun salute in honour of King Richard. Soon after the crowds started to disperse and we started to pack the gun and camp away feeling happy and privileged to have taken part in such an historic, once in a lifetime occasion and one I shall never forget.



It was the best day I have ever experienced in many years as a re-enactor and Ricardian, and I was so glad to see how proud Robin was of his cannon and the way it performed on the day after all the hard work he put into building it especially for King Richard's re-interment. Even though I knew his answer, I asked Robin whether all the effort he had put into building his cannon was worth it, and he answered with a resounding "Definitely!"

Alex Kay

King's Champion of the Funeral Procession
Sir John Paston's Household
Bosworth Visitors Centre

Late last year, I was approached regarding an ambitious project that was, frankly, mind blowing... It all started with a message asking for my background, and what motivates me in the world of re-enactment, coupled with asking if I was interested in doing some historical interpretation. I responded with a little curiosity and caution, outlining my interpretation CV but mostly talking about what grabs my interest in regards to pushing my boundaries on trying to achieve something truly medieval. About 2 to 3 weeks later I then had a phone call, and the true significance of the project was revealed... to escort Richard III's remains to the Memorial Service held at the Bosworth Battlefield Centre.

Now this obviously initiated a mix of feelings, ranging from pride and honour to be asked to be involved in such an undertaking, to humble disbelief that a 'joe public' like myself could take part in something that could only be described as a royal funeral. Mixed with this, I was extremely conscious that this was the funeral of a human, who should be treated with great respect. Now, normally with funerals you are celebrating the living memory of the individual, but in Richard's case, our 'living memory' is somewhat remote and skewed by history and rumour that followed his death. To make it more complex, there was the whole Catholic v Church of England, debate that was beginning to rise up in strength in the public forums. This was possibly one of the most complex and controversial undertakings I have ever been part of. However, I had been approached to undertake the role of '*King's Champion*' - for a man who defended his beliefs in battle and showed great bravery in his final moments, a life with an end that I cannot relate to - but one that I respect greatly. I was going to make sure that I did everything I possibly could do to make sure that this role was carried out to the very best of my ability.

The role of *King's Champion*

My colleague, Tim, had outlined some of the research they had done up to that point, and I started looking into what I could find on the subject. The role of *King's Champion* was

held by the Dymoke [Dymmok] family. From what little research could be done it appears the Dymoke family have been champion of the royal family for generations - in fact, it is a hereditary title. Logical expectation would be that you earn the right to a title like this through skills and attributes and that a new *King's Champion* could be created during a reign of each new King. But this was not the case. It appears the King has no say in who is the Champion, nor is there any test of skills or stamina. It is purely handed down from father to son. So Robert Dymoke - who was the *King's Champion* from 1470 onwards in fact championed 3 kings: Richard III, Henry VII, and Henry VIII. He must have made an extremely senior Champion by the end of his life! The other interesting point around the hereditary title of *King's Champion* is associated with Robert's father, Thomas who was executed in 1470 following his involvement in a Lancastrian uprising in 1469. Thomas, among others, had taken Sanctuary at Westminster Abbey but was enticed to leave Sanctuary and was swiftly beheaded by the order of Edward IV. However, this did not prevent the next in line becoming the *King's Champion* for Richard, 13 years later.

The Sword

Research pointed to the role involving the *King's Champion* walking in front of the procession wearing full plate harness and carrying the State Sword. A high quality harness was needed, with a sword and scabbard of significance. It turned out that in the previous year, I had worked with Matt Bayley of Heritage Castings to recreate a sword harness and scabbard suitable for a high status individual. The belt pattern, copied from that seen on the effigy of Ralph Fitzherbert, was fitted with 18 large bronze cast mounts together with 2 lockets (rather than the single one on the effigy), with enamels mounted into the centre of each (a slight deviation from the original), and a finely cast chape in keeping with the scale of the rest of the scabbard. This would fit the role nicely.

The Harness

My older harness - that had been put together at the end of the previous year - was missing a back-plate (due to being used with an 'arming jack' - an experiment based around the surviving 'lubeck jack' from Germany).

However, I felt that I should be in full harness, and not partial plate for such an occasion. It just so happened I had started to integrate components of a harness based around a cuirass I had commissioned from Mark Vickers of St George Armouries. I already had a leg harness, with sabatons to match, and was only missing the tassets, cutlet, and the arms. So this was the focus for the next 2 or 3 months. Slowly with a couple of purchases and also a lot of hard work constructing the pauldrons, tassets and demi-tassets, the harness was complete!



The Day Dawns

On the big day it was found there had been some changes. This was a result of the Planning Committee who were coordinating the entire event, rather than the local team based at Bosworth. This meant that certain aspects of the procession would be compromised resulting in a slightly diluted representation. However, following 4 or 5 rehearsals early in the morning, everyone was ready to do their best. When the procession time came there was no room left for nerves, and I remember taking every step - remembering to be sure footed, and also maintaining a respectful pace, something that had been drilled into me during my time in the Army. We finally made it around the memorial and then stood in front of Richard's throne at Bosworth. Then came 30 - 45 minutes of motionless standing whilst the service took place. When Richard's body was wheeled around the memorial, a realisation of what was happening finally hit home. I had been working to the deadline so hard, that I had not really had a chance to take stock of what was happening up to that point. A feeling of pride, and honour, heavily mixed with thoughts of Richard, and some of the situations he must

have faced with his journey to the ultimate end. Then thinking about his final decisive decision to launch the charge that would decide his fate. This was quite a location to reflect upon what I know of his reign, and thoughts of the events of that day were at the forefront of my mind.

Following the memorial and once the blood had recirculated in my feet the rest of the day was taken up with talking to members of the public and VIPs about the day, and how special it was. For me it was a glorious day celebrating our heritage, and it is my opinion it is only fitting that we, along with many others - those who feel passion for the period, not just lords, or ladies, barons, or dukes - who dedicate their time to developing our understanding of the period, had the opportunity to respectfully be involved in the day. Paying respects for a brave King of England who died fighting on the battlefield defending his family's right to lead the nation, and writing the final chapter in the history of his story.



James Green

*Master Gunner of the 21 Gun Salute
Buckingham's Retinue and Wars of the Roses
Federation Master Gunner
Bosworth Visitors Centre*

As Sunday dawned I awoke to the morning I had been planning for since late October 2014. I personally was a tad nervous. I had overseen the practice 21 gun salute the day before trying to anticipate problems, including working out the misfire routine we were going to use, delegating posts to various people,

To Bury a King: Richard III's Re-interment – a re-enactor's perspective

arranging spare match holders and having a safety look-out, etc. but still wondering if I had covered all the bases.

As I gave the final briefing I knew I could trust the gunners I had chosen to perform safely. I knew they all felt very honoured and the take up of the special badge we had commissioned was 100% - everyone was wearing it with pride. I ran through the plan for the day: what time powder would be issued, where we would store it, when and how we would move the guns. Everyone was attentive but with a happy, jocular banter happening. Everyone was ready for the show.



Photo copyright Pat Patrick

My greatest moment of pride was when we lined the guns up in the morning, and we had the public and reporters coming along asking questions. I stood there looking along the line thinking, what a great display we as Wars of the Roses Federation gunners were putting on!

We lined our guns up ready for the display, ensuring safe and clear lines for the shooting of the cannons, the crews getting ready for Richard's carriage. Once the cadets drawing the coffin came abreast I gave the command for gunners to take a knee to honour him. As he passed it left a lump in my throat as we all knelt as one.

Waiting for the moment starting the minute of silence with a single hand gun shot. Waiting as my timer counted down. As I raised my hand for the first shot of the 21 gun salute the Gun Captain - Kaylea Farquhar (whom I had

placed in charge of my cannon) - turned towards me waiting for the signal to shoot. The tension rose. Then I gave the command and the first shot went off. My focus went down to giving commands to fire every 10 seconds. Even dealing with a misfire and redirecting other guns to cover just happened on automatic. Suddenly the 21 gun salute was over, and all that was left was ensuring the guns were cleared ready for the public to pass between them and place their white roses at the sundial.

To stand there and realise that we had given Richard the Royal Salute to send him on his way to his final resting place! What an honour to have commanded such fine gunners at such a time! I will hold that day in my memory for the rest of my life.



Photo copyright Pat Patrick

Tim Lambon

*The Kynges Guard – how it came about
The Beaufort Company
Bosworth Visitors Centre*

Dignity & Honour

I never knew that my motivation to be part of the *Kynges Guard* could be summed up so beautifully. As I watched the big screen that rainy Thursday morning in Jubilee Square, Leicester, and Richard's remains were placed in his new grave, the words of the Poet Laureate's poem for the King brought me to tears...

*"Or I once dreamed of this, your future breath
In prayer for me, lost long, forever found;
Or sensed you from the backstage of my
death,*

As kings glimpse shadows on a battleground."

It's why three of us, Fiona Boyle, Ian Flint and I worked so hard to see that our King got the pageantry he deserved. There were not many things I agreed with in how the whole discovery, exploitation and burial of Richard III took place, but I did agree with the overarching aims of reburying this anointed King of England with "Dignity and Honour".

In the closing months of 2014 we approached Richard Mackinder of the Bosworth Battlefield Heritage Centre and asked if he knew how we might become involved in Richard's re-interment. We were amazed when he said they were looking for something special and suggested we put together a proposal of what we might do at the site on the day the King's remains would leave Bosworth for the last time. Knowing how important care of the souls, as well as the remains of the dead were to the people of his time, I set to work immediately researching what a funeral for a medieval king would have looked like. Without knowing the declared aims of the project had already been adopted, I sought to devise a spectacle that our King would himself have recognised and appreciated.

Dragged as a bloody naked corpse from the field of battle, Richard was slung across a mule and taken in humiliation back to Leicester. There his body was displayed for three days before being hurriedly bundled into the grave so lately excavated in the Grey Friar's church.

His father, Richard Duke of York and his elder brother, Edmund Earl of Rutland had suffered a similar fate at the hands of Somerset and Clifford. After they'd been slaughtered at Wakefield in 1460, their heads were displayed along with that of Warwick's father, Salisbury, on spikes above Micklegate Bar in York. Their bodies did not remain as long in their temporary graves as Richard's later did, for in 1476, with Richard as the Chief Mourner, York and Rutland were taken from Pontefract to the family mausoleum at Fotheringhay.

It was a time of great record keeping and of course many original sources exist, describing the procession, procedures, provisions and procurements. Luckily I did not have to go all the way back to these fragile documents as they have been very ably described by Anne

Sutton, Livia Visser-Fuchs, Peter Hammond and Ralph Griffiths in various Richardian journals. I very quickly became familiar with what Richard, as Duke of Gloucester, would have taken for granted and put together a proposal for the Battlefield Heritage Centre.

It was already mid-February when the three of us drove up to Bosworth and presented the project to Richard Mackinder and Richard Knox, the Centre's re-interment project director. It was a great meeting as they absorbed just what we were proposing. They immediately saw the potential and loved the ideas. And that we had designed it all to work within their budget made it even more attractive. Fiona, Ian and I drove away elated that we would be able to participate in some small part in making the King's departure from the battlefield for the final time an event to remember.

A few days later a phone call said the signs were encouraging. All it needed was sign off by the Dean of the Cathedral who was running the whole project. We set to work fashioning funerary escutcons, pennons, and badges. I sourced the materials and began constructing the canopy of state to be carried over the coffin, and to make the torches to be carried alongside. We commissioned the banners of Richard's favoured saints and a "majesty cloth" to line the underside of the funeral canopy. A roll of deep blue velvet was purchased to make a silver crossed pall and to dress the funerary cart. It was all happening.

And then came the call to say it was all off.

The Dean, apparently running the whole thing like a dictator, had very definite ideas and said something to the effect that he was having nothing to do with pantomime theatricality, and why did these people want to dress up like "dead people" anyway? As a Northern Irish protestant and evangelical to boot, he was having no vestiges of popery. Richard's time was Roman Catholic, so Richard's time was to be ignored and the re-interment of his remains was to be a thoroughly modern civic event designed to reinvigorate the flagging fortunes of a post-industrial Leicester.

We were devastated and out of pocket. We thought of quitting in disgust, of launching a Twitter and social media campaign against

the Dean, of all sorts of things. The bottom line was, as the "Looking For Richard" team, who had started and financed the whole thing in the first place had found, the University and the Cathedral had taken possession of the King's bones and the event, and there wasn't a blind thing any of us could do about it.

Of course the same theme winds its way throughout the Wars of the Roses, starting with the magnates of the time fighting for control of Henry VI, through to the death of Edward IV and the struggle over who controlled his all too young sons. It seemed to us that it was still all about "possession of the king's body" and those who had Richard's remains were calling the shots, so we shouldn't have been surprised!

At the time I wrote to Annette Carson of the "Looking For Richard" project:

"Despite having the support (we are told) of everyone including the University folk, the Sheriff, even members of the Cathedral Board, the Dean put his foot down and for unexplained reasons told them that there would be no medieval involvement in any moving part of the week's ceremony. Flat. No explanation. No argument. Just forget it. ... What can you do? The decision is extraordinary and all we can think is that this is the Reformation come back to haunt us..."

However, understanding the value of what we had proposed, the two Richards at the Bosworth Centre, like Richard the King, charged into battle and with diplomacy and tact, rather than lance and battle axe, and managed to salvage a vestige of the original plan. After a tense week, Richard Knox wrote to say that they had managed to arrive at a compromise. There was to be a separate procession by the "Kynge's Guard" which still allowed the pageantry but, whilst apparently being dissociated from the actual funerary procession, in fact led the whole thing in medieval splendour.

From then on it was all hands on deck as the time until the event was short. I had just had a total knee replacement and was somewhat incapacitated, but I was off work so I threw myself into the manufacture of the badges, torches, flag poles and the other things required to make the event as authentic as

possible. Despite holding down their day jobs, Fiona and Ian also ran themselves ragged putting together lists, arranging schedules and securing things like 25 medieval funeral cloaks and hoods!



Photo copyright Pat Patrick

It was with some trepidation that everyone watched the unfolding weather. It was the end of March in the Midlands and we were aware of just how bitterly the wind can blow over the exposed dome of Ambion Hill. I bought a tent heater and no-one for once was the slightest bit worried about wearing multiple layers of wool.

Arriving on the Friday afternoon we pitched camp and the wind howled all night. And all through the next day as the company arrived and set up. That night there was concern as everyone stoically gathered round the fire in the Boyle's canvas lean-to. The wind continued to blow a dark overcast through.

I awoke the next morning and listened. Nothing. The wind had dropped completely and a slight mistiness shrouded the early morning. As a former pilot, I knew that was a good sign.... mist means no wind, and will burn off. And so it did, bringing glorious sunshine and the best temperatures we could

To Bury a King: Richard III's Re-interment – a re-enactor's perspective

possibly have hoped for. It was the beginning of almost a full week of wonderful weather.

Some say that God shone on Richard as he was conveyed to his new resting place with Dignity and Honour.



Tim Lambon, Fiona Boyle and Ian Flint
Photo copyright Pat Patrick

My thanks go to everyone who took the time out to contributed to this article, to those that came to the event and to all those who worked behind the scenes to give Richard III a respectful funeral. My thanks also to Pat Patrick for letting me use his wonderful photos of the day.

Frances Perry

Loyaulte Me Lie



Photo copyright Pat Patrick