Richard III of England

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The King
The Duke of Gloucester
*Lord* Richard Plantagenet

**Royal house** House of York

**Father** Richard, 3rd Duke of York

**Mother** Cecily Neville

**Born** 2 October 1452

Fotheringhay Castle, Northamptonshire

**Died** 22 August 1485 (aged 32)

Bosworth Field, Leicestershire

Richard III (2 October 1452 – 22 August 1485) was King of England from 1483

**Burial** Greyfriars Abbey, Leicestershire[^11]

until his death. He was the last king from the House of York, and his defeat at the Battle of Bosworth marked the culmination of the Wars of the Roses and the end of the Plantagenet dynasty. After the death of his brother King Edward IV, Richard briefly governed as regent for Edward's son King Edward V with the title of Lord Protector, but he placed Edward and his brother Richard in the Tower (see Princes in the Tower) and seized the throne for himself, being crowned on 6 July 1483.

Two large-scale rebellions rose against Richard. The first, in 1483, was led by staunch opponents of Edward IV and, most notably, Richard's own 'kingmaker', Henry Stafford, 2nd Duke of Buckingham. The revolt collapsed and Buckingham was executed at Salisbury, near the Bull's Head Inn. However, in 1485, another rebellion arose against Richard, headed by Henry Tudor, 2nd Earl of Richmond (later King Henry VII) and his uncle Jasper. The rebels landed troops and Richard fell in the Battle of Bosworth Field, then known as Redemore or Dadlington Field, as the last Plantagenet king and the last English king to die in battle.
Childhood

Richard was born at Fotheringhay Castle, the eighth and youngest, and fourth surviving, son of Richard Plantagenet, 3rd Duke of York (who had been a strong claimant to the throne of King Henry VI) and Cecily Neville. Richard spent much of his childhood at Middleham Castle in Wensleydale, under the tutelage of his cousin Richard Neville, 16th Earl of Warwick (known to history as "The Kingmaker" because of his strong influence on the course of the Wars of the Roses).

At the time of the death of his father and older brother Edmund at the Battle of Wakefield, Richard, who was still a boy, was taken into the care of Warwick. While Richard was at Warwick's estate, he developed a close friendship with Francis Lovell, a friendship that would remain strong for the rest of his life. Another child in the household was Warwick's daughter Anne Neville, whom Richard would later marry.

Reign of Edward IV

During the reign of his brother, King Edward IV, Richard demonstrated his loyalty and skill as a military commander. He was rewarded with large estates in northern England, awarded the title Duke of Gloucester and appointed as Governor of the North, becoming the richest and most powerful noble in England and a loyal aide to Edward IV. In contrast, the other surviving brother, George Plantagenet, 1st Duke of Clarence, was executed by Edward for treason.

Richard controlled the north of England until Edward IV's death. There and especially in the city of York, he was regarded with much love and affection. In 1482 Richard
recaptured Berwick-upon-Tweed from the Scots, and his administration was regarded as fair and just, endowing universities and making grants to the church.

**Accession to the Throne**

On the death of Edward IV, on 9 April 1483, the late King's sons (Richard's young nephews), King Edward V, aged 12, and Richard of Shrewsbury, 1st Duke of York, aged 9, were next in the order of succession. Richard, however, had the king's guardian, Anthony Woodville, 2nd Earl Rivers (brother of Elizabeth Woodville, Edward IV's Queen Consort) and other advisors arrested and taken to Pontefract Castle, where they were later executed, allegedly for planning to assassinate Edward V. He then took Edward and his younger brother to the Tower of London.

On 22 June 1483, outside St Paul's Cathedral, a statement was read out on behalf of Richard declaring for the first time that he was taking the throne for himself on the grounds that Edward IV's marriage had been illegitimate and that, in consequence, the true heir to the throne was Richard and not Edward V. This proclamation was then supported by a bill passed by Parliament on the evidence of a bishop who testified to having married Edward to Lady Eleanor Butler, who was still living when Edward married Elizabeth Woodville.

On 6 July 1483, Richard was crowned at Westminster Abbey.

Although Richard III is popularly supposed to have killed Edward V and his brother, there is some controversy among historians about the actual circumstances of the boys' deaths: see Princes in the Tower for full coverage, and possible reasons for the support for Richard's accession.

**Death at the Battle of Bosworth**

On 22 August 1485, Richard met the Lancastrian forces of Henry Tudor at the Battle of Bosworth Field. He was astride his white courser. Richard's host outnumbered Henry's almost two to one. During the battle Richard was abandoned by Lord Thomas Stanley, 1st Earl of Derby, Sir William Stanley, and Henry Percy, 4th Earl of Northumberland. The switching of sides by the Stanleys severely depleted the strength of Richard's army and had a material effect on the outcome of the battle. Also the death of John Howard, Duke of Norfolk, his close companion, appeared to have had a demoralising effect on Richard and his men. Accounts note that Richard fought bravely and ably during the battle, unhorsing Sir John Cheney, a well-known champion, killing Henry's standard bearer William Brandon and nearly reaching Henry himself before being finally surrounded and killed. Tradition holds that his final words were "treason, treason, treason, treason, treason".

Richard's naked body was then paraded through the streets before being buried at Greyfriars Church, Leicester. According to one tradition, during the Dissolution of the
Monasteries his body was thrown into the nearby River Soar, although other evidence suggests that this may not be the case and that his burial site may currently be under a car park in Leicester. There is currently a memorial plaque on the site of the Cathedral where he may have once been buried.

According to another tradition, Richard consulted a see in the town of Leicester before the battle and the see foretold that "where your spur should strike on the ride into battle, your head shall be broken on the return." On the ride into battle his spur struck the bridge stone of the Bow Bridge; legend has it that, as his corpse was being carried from the battle over the back of a horse, his head struck the same stone and was broken open [1].

Henry Tudor succeeded Richard to become Henry VII, and cemented the succession by marrying the Yorkist heiress, Elizabeth of York, daughter of Edward IV.

Succession

Following the decisive Yorkist victory over the Lancastrians at the Battle of Tewkesbury, Richard had married the younger daughter of the Earl of Warwick, Anne Neville on 12 July 1472. Anne's first husband had been Edward of Westminster (d 1471), son of Henry VI.

Richard and Anne had one son, Edward Plantagenet (also known as Edward of Middleham, 1473 – 9 April 1484), who died not long after being created Prince of Wales. Richard also had a number of illegitimate children, including John of Gloucester and a daughter named Katharine who married William Herbert, 2nd Earl of Pembroke. It has been thought that their mother may have been one Katherine Haute, who is mentioned in household records. Both of these children survived Richard. Neither apparently left any descendants. The mysterious Richard Plantagenet (Richard of Eastwell) is also a possible offspring of Richard III as is Richard the Master-Builder [2,5, citation needed].

At the time of his last stand against the Lancastrians, Richard was a widower without a legitimate son. After his son's death, he had initially named his nephew, Edward, Earl of Warwick, Clarence's young son and the nephew of Queen Anne Neville, as his heir. After Anne's death, however, Richard named as his heir another nephew, John de la Pole, Earl of Lincoln, the son of his older sister Elizabeth.

Legacy

Richard's death at Bosworth resulted in the end of the Plantagenet dynasty, which had ruled England since the succession of Henry II in 1154. The last male Plantagenet, Edward, Earl of Warwick (son of Richard III's brother Clarence) was executed by Henry VII in 1499.

Richard's Council of the North greatly improved conditions for northern England, as commoners of that region were formerly without any substantial economic activity
independent of London. Its descendant position was Secretary of State for the Northern Department.

### Controversy and reputation

Much that was previously considered 'fact' about Richard III has been rejected by modern historians. For example, Richard was represented by Tudor writers as being physically deformed, which was regarded as evidence of an evil character. However, the withered arm, limp and crooked back of legend are nowadays believed to be fabrications, possibly originating from the questionable history attributed to Thomas More, which made a deep impression upon William Shakespeare, and was long taken as the authoritative history of events. The accusations against his moral character have proven more resistant to refutation than the slanders against his physical looks.

The Richard III Society was established in the 20th century and has gathered considerable research material about his life and reign. Its aim is summed up by its Patron, the present Richard, Duke of Gloucester:

"… the purpose and indeed the strength of the Richard III Society derive from the belief that the truth is more powerful than lies - a faith that even after all these centuries the truth is important. It is proof of our sense of civilised values that something as esoteric and as fragile as reputation is worth campaigning for."

The American Branch of the Richard III Society carries out its own review of all the suspects in the case of Richard III, in the on-line library "Whodunit?".[6]

The Society of Friends of King Richard III was also set up in the 20th century in order to rehabilitate Richard and to honour his memory. The society is based in the city of York, where following his death in 1485 it was proclaimed, that "King Richard, late reigning mercifully over us, was.... piteously slain and murdered, to the great heaviness of this city".

Richard III was found not guilty in a mock trial presided over by three Justices of the United States Supreme Court in 1997. Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist and Associate Justices Ruth Bader Ginsberg and Stephen G. Breyer, in a 3-0 decision, ruled that the prosecution had not met the burden of proof that "it was more likely than not" that the Princes in the Tower had been murdered; that the bones found in 1674 in the Tower were those of the Princes; and that Richard III had ordered or was complicitous in their deaths.

Horace Walpole, Josephine Tey and Valerie Anand are among writers who have argued strongly that King Richard was innocent of the death of the Princes. Sharon Kay Penman, in her historical novel The Sunne in Splendour, also portrays Richard III as a just and honest ruler and attributes the death of the Little Princes to the Duke of Buckingham.

Richard III appears in the 2002 List of "100 Great Britons" (sponsored by the BBC and voted for by the public), alongside such others as David Beckham and Johnny Rotten.
The *BBC History Magazine* lists him under "doubtful entrants, based on special interest lobbying or 'cult' status", and comments: "On the list owing to the Ricardian lobby, but a minor monarch".

In spite of having died aged only 32, he is often depicted as being considerably older. *Basil Rathbone* and *Peter Cook* were both 46 when they played him, *Laurence Olivier* was 48, *Vincent Price* was 51, and *Ian McKellen* was 56.

**Arms**

As Duke of Gloucester, Richard had use of the coat of arms of the kingdom, differenced by a *label argent of three points ermine, on each point canton gules*.[2] As sovereign, he had use of the arms of the kingdom undifferenced. His motto was "Loyaulte me lie,"Loyalty binds me."

**Bibliography**

Source material on all aspects of Richard's reign is neatly and impartially brought together by Keith Dockray in *Richard III: A Reader in History* (Sutton, 1988).


[edit] References

1. ^ Richard was originally buried at Greyfriars Abbey, but his body was disinterred and lost during the Dissolution of the Monasteries – its current location is unknown
2. ^ Paul M.Kendall"Richard The Third" Page 133.
6. ^ Richard III Society - Maurer on Whodunit?
7. ^ Marks of Cadency in the British Royal Family

[edit] External links

- Richard III Society,England
- Richard III Society, American Branch—including links to online editions of many primary texts and secondary sources
- The Richard III Society of Canada
- Richard III Society of New South Wales
- The Richard III Foundation, Inc.
- Richard III article at dmoz.org
- The Wars of the Roses Information on Richard and Bosworth
- http://www.bbc.co.uk/legacies/myths_legends/england/leicester/article_1.shtml about his final resting place
- Richard III Chronology World History Database
- Illustrated history of King Richard III
- Portraits of Richard III, with commentary by Pamela Tudor-Craig

Richard III of England
**House of York**

Cadet branch of the House of Plantagenet

**Born:** 2 October 1452  **Died:** 22 August 1485

### Regnal titles

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### Military offices

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### Peerage of England

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