

# History Extension Major Work



**“Evaluate the changing interpretations of Richard III’s controversial character in light of recent archaeological and scientific evidence”.**

**By**

**Christopher Lo**

**Bostes Number: 27735770**

**Synopsis word count: 272**

**Assignment word count: 2750**

**Annotated Bibliography word count: 588**



# Synopsis



**“Evaluate the changing interpretations of Richard III’s controversial character in light of recent archaeological and scientific evidence”.**

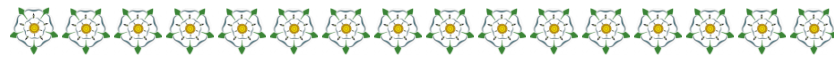
The image of Richard III has been subject to an oscillation between polarised views throughout history and has remained that way for over 500 years. However, the recent archaeological and scientific discovery of Richard III’s remains has once again rekindled the debate between traditionalists, revisionists and Ricardians<sup>1</sup>. Previous scholars have examined either this new archaeological evidence or traditional literary evidence, but the way in which the two areas are related has yet to be discussed. This paper examines the diverse interpretations of Richard’s character by his contemporaries and modern scholars in light of new evidence. The study has included the most influential sources in scholarship addressing Richard III and up to date archaeological and scientific evidence.

The paper is designed to address the focus question in two parts. Firstly, I will address Richard III’s personality. With this I will examine various contextual influence on sources depicting Richard III. My analysis shows that these depictions reflect the concerns of the era in which they were written. Secondly, I will address the controversial issues of whether Richard murdered his nephews in the Tower and the extent to which he had physical impairments. I conclude that recent archaeological evidence highlights that accusations of murdering the princes in the sources correspond to the pro or anti Richard context in which they were written. I also show that new archaeological and scientific discoveries demonstrate that even the exaggerated portrayals of Richard’s impairment by Tudor writers have a basis in

---

<sup>1</sup> Ricardian refers to both professional and amateur admirers of Richard III.

physical evidence. This essay reveals that the historiography of Richard III is subject to ongoing reinterpretation.



## “Evaluate the changing interpretations of Richard III’s controversial character in light of recent archaeological and scientific evidence”.

The discovery and exhumation of King Richard III’s body from a Leicester council car park in 2012 remains to this day one of the most exhilarating archaeological discoveries of modern times. It has re-opened many of the questions about Richard’s life and death, which have divided historians into traditionalists, Ricardians, revisionists and even intrigued popular audiences since his death in 1485. This essay will argue that recent archaeological and scientific evidence has challenged the traditionalist interpretation of Richard III’s reign. It will establish the varying interpretations of his character in the sources, then use modern archaeological evidence to re-examine the mystery of the Princes in the Tower and his physical characteristics. This essay demonstrates how contextual motivation has constructed, manipulated and challenged assessments of Richard III’s character over time.

## The personality of Richard III



The volatile context of the medieval period<sup>2</sup> has led to problematic issues of reliability and bias in the contemporary accounts of Richard III’s character. However, not even modern technological advances are able to determine the nature of Richard III’s character. Rather, it is

<sup>2</sup> Castor, Helen “*Medieval Lives: Birth, Marriage & Death*”, Matchlight/SBS Documentary 2014.

the task of this section to demonstrate how and why historical perspectives towards Richard III have changed over time. It will be shown that the earliest sources about Richard interpret his character favourably. Contextual influences on writers in England shaped the critical interpretations of the Tudor period. The impact of these portrayals will then be analysed in the early modern debate, looking at the revisionist scholarship of Sir George Buck and Sir Horace Walpole.

The favourable attitudes of early accounts of Richard's character demonstrate the influence of changes in socio-political landscape of medieval Britain. Later accounts after Richard's death at the Battle of Bosworth either contribute to or are influenced by Tudor propaganda. An example of a contemporary source not influenced by the Tudor age is a letter by Thomas Langton stating "*On my throuth I liked never the conditions of any prince so well as his...*"<sup>3</sup> Although there is possible bias in the source since Langton had just been made Bishop of St. David's and aspired to further promotion, it is however a private letter and Langton had a reputation of being intelligent and highly moral. The letter is also supported by opinions from the provinces of Canterbury and York that attested Richard was of a "*most noble and blessed disposition*"<sup>4</sup> and The University of Cambridge saw him as being "*kind and generous*"<sup>5</sup> especially after presenting significant benefactions to the University. John Rous described him as "*the good lord, punishing offenders against the laws and oppressors of his commons, gaining the love of all his people through his virtues*"<sup>6</sup> but later changed his opinion when Henry Tudor rose to power. These firsthand accounts are useful because they demonstrate the favourable attitudes towards Richard's character, which changed during the Tudor period.

---

<sup>3</sup> Hammond, P.W "The Reputation of Richard III", *Richard III: A Medieval Kingship* edited by John Gillingham, Ch. VIII p.134.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid* p.134.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid* p.134.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid* p.135.

After Richard's death at the Battle of Bosworth in 1485, sources recorded his deeds and character in a profoundly negative way. John Rous and many others who previously served Richard at court changed their minds about Richard's qualities in order to please the new King Henry VII, his historians and supporters, which formed early Tudor propaganda. *The Croyland Chronicler*<sup>7</sup> wrote an account of events covering the life of King Richard after his death. The Chronicler regarded Richard as "*a spendthrift, as deceitful and moreover as unjust*"<sup>8</sup> but that at Bosworth he was "*a brave man, dying like a "spirited and courageous Prince*".<sup>9</sup> His bravery was also highlighted by John Rous<sup>10</sup> who is normally hostile in tone towards Richard and by the humanist Polydore Vergil<sup>11</sup>, who had been commissioned by Henry VII to write a "History of England" favourable to the rise of the House of Tudor, and who accepted that "*Richard died fighting bravely in the thickest press of his enemies*".<sup>12</sup> Vergil still managed to note that "*it is divine justice that the wicked provoke the punishment they deserve*".<sup>13</sup> Both the change in the views of people like John Rous and the proliferation of more professional but still critical records of Richard's character, such as the Chronicler and Vergil, demonstrate the way in which Tudor narrative emerged as the orthodoxy on the history of the Plantagenets.

This atmosphere of denigration permeates the works of Sir Thomas More and William Shakespeare, who became the most influential commentators on Richard's character over the

---

<sup>7</sup> *The Croyland Chronicle* written by anonymous writer Pseudo-Ingulf was presumably a secular cleric and a member of the royal council. His written account on Richard III's rule was written after the downfall of the Plantagenet dynasty. His account was therefore designed to be appealing towards a Tudor audience was written in Northern England with an anti-northern attitude. His motivation for writing this source appears to be out of a desire to write history for a new ruling class and also out of a dislike for Richard III.

<sup>8</sup> Hammond, P.W "The Reputation of Richard III", *Richard III: A Medieval Kingship* edited by John Gillingham, Ch. VIII p.138.

<sup>9</sup> *ibid* p.138.

<sup>10</sup> Rous, John, "*The Rous Roll*" 1483 cit. in Ross, C. "*Richard III*" (1981) p.xxii.

<sup>11</sup> Vergil, Polydore "*Anglica Historia*" 1534 Book 25.24.

<sup>12</sup> Hammond, P.W "The Reputation of Richard III", *Richard III: A Medieval Kingship* edited by John Gillingham, Ch. VIII p.138.

<sup>13</sup> Potter, Jeremy "*Richard III's Historians: Adverse and Favourable Views*", in the *Richard III Society American Branch website*, viewed on December 9<sup>th</sup> 2015, <<http://www.r3.org/on-line-library-text-essays/jeremy-potter-richard-iiis-historians-adverse-and-favourable-views/p.5>.

next five hundred years. Sir Thomas More's *History of King Richard III*, depicts him as a man, "*malicious, wrathful, envious, and from before his birth, ever perverse*"<sup>14</sup>. More's account is less concerned with history than moral lessons against tyranny and it simultaneously displays his fine literary skills. Horace Walpole called More: "*an author capable of employing truth as cement in a fabric of fiction*"<sup>15</sup>. Additionally, according to Hammond<sup>16</sup>, More admits that rumour was the only evidence for Richard's involvement in some crimes such as the death of his brother, the Duke of Clarence. Ricardian Jeremy Potter<sup>17</sup> goes as far as suggesting that More never intended to publish his works and that they were incomplete and written as a parody of history.<sup>18</sup> More's sources were Richard's victorious enemies, who needed to justify their mandate to rule after thirty years of civil war. Whatever More's reasons for writing this account, it formed the customary view of Richard for the following two centuries, partly due to his reputation as a scholar, saint and martyr, and partly because it exploited the view of Richard III which had been developing and suited the political needs of the Tudor dynasty.

First performed in 1597, William Shakespeare's *Richard III*, with its dramatic caricature has become the best known cultural construction of the king. In gathering material for his dramas, Shakespeare used ideas borrowed from others, which ultimately relied on More.<sup>19</sup> Using these Tudor accounts and historical perspectives, Shakespeare was able to develop a compelling and convincing anti-hero. The real character of Richard III was not his concern, and a negative portrayal of the last Plantagenet would have appealed to his audience. Although

---

<sup>14</sup> Moore, Sir Thomas "*Complete Works of Sir Thomas More*" c.1515 p. 319.

<sup>15</sup> Hammond, P.W "The Reputation of Richard III", *Richard III: A Medieval Kingship* edited by John Gillingham, Ch. VIII p.139.

<sup>16</sup> *ibid* p.140.

<sup>17</sup> Potter, Jeremy "*Richard III's Historians: Adverse and Favourable Views*", in the *Richard III Society American Branch website*, viewed on December 9<sup>th</sup> 2015, <<http://www.r3.org/on-line-library-text-essays/jeremy-potter-richard-iiis-historians-adverse-and-favourable-views/p.6>.

<sup>18</sup> Potter explains that this text was "*as jest at the expense of historians like Polydore Vergil and the implausible tales which they retailed as historical facts*".

<sup>19</sup> Shakespeare used Raphael Holinshed whose Chronicles were based on Edward Hall (both of whom wrote for the Tudor chronicle) who had published a translation of Polydore Vergil and relied on More.

Shakespeare is not considered a defender of Richard III, Dr. Lesley Boatwright<sup>20</sup> posits that the playwright does include a very interesting passage about hearsay evidence.<sup>21</sup> Here Boatwright speculates that Shakespeare himself was perfectly aware that at least some reports about Richard circulating in his own day were fabrications.<sup>22</sup> In spite of recent archaeological and scientific evidence questioning Shakespeare's characterisation, new stage and screen adaptations, such as the most recent *Hollow Crown*<sup>23</sup> still perpetuates the myth of Richard's evil caricature. The success of Shakespeare's *Richard III* shows how the king's reputation has become a combination of myth and history.

Although the accounts by More and Shakespeare appear to be products of Tudor Propaganda, the early revisionist reinterpretation of Richard III demonstrates both the mutability of his character and the complex contextual variables at this point of English history. Sir George Buck<sup>24</sup> was among the first to challenge the validity of the Tudor traditionalist interpretation of Richard's character writing less than thirty years later. Buck proposed that Richard possessed all the virtues that a king should have. Buck wrote to "*redeem him from those improbable imputations and strange and spiteful scandals*"<sup>25</sup>. As part of this process of reassessment, he was the first to use the *Croyland Chronicle* and the *Titulus Regius*<sup>26</sup> suppressed by Henry VII as source material, which stated and legitimised Richard's claim to the throne. His motivation is difficult to determine but Ricardian Phillipa Langley posits that

---

<sup>20</sup> Boatwright, Lesley Dr, MBE, Former Researcher Richard the Third Society, UK, died 2012.

<sup>21</sup> Shakespeare, William *Richard III*: Act 2 Scene 4

Duchess: *His nurse!* [told you this story] *Why, she was dead ere thou wert born.*

York: *If 'twere not she, I cannot tell who told me.*

Duchess: *A parlous boy: go to, you are too shrewd.*

<sup>22</sup> Boatwright, Lesley Dr. "*Richard's earlier defenders: Their motives and methods*", *The Controversies*, [http://www.richardiii.net/2\\_5\\_0\\_riii\\_controversy.php#play](http://www.richardiii.net/2_5_0_riii_controversy.php#play).

<sup>23</sup> *The Hollow Crown: Richard III*, 2015 BBC Worldwide tele-movie starring Benedict Cumberbatch.

<sup>24</sup> Buck, Sir George, "*History of King Richard III*", 1619 Book VI. 240

<sup>25</sup> Boatwright, Lesley Dr. "*Richard's earlier defenders: Their motives and methods*", *The Controversies*, [http://www.richardiii.net/2\\_5\\_0\\_riii\\_controversy.php#play](http://www.richardiii.net/2_5_0_riii_controversy.php#play).

<sup>26</sup> *Titulus regius* official document formally set out in Parliament in 1484 outlining Richard's right to the throne.

*“Buck believed that one of his ancestors had fought and died by Richard III’s side”.*<sup>27</sup>

Therefore, Buck’s revisionist work re-established an interpretation of Richard that not only offered an alternative to a pro-Tudor view, but was also based on historical evidence and inquiry.

The impact of Buck’s revisionism on changing interpretations of Richard’s character is clear in the work of Sir Horace Walpole. He used some new and pre-Tudor documentary material and demonstrated the powerful influence that More especially had on *“All later historians...Grafton has copied him verbatim, so does Hollingshed...[his History] is in truth a composition”*.<sup>28</sup> Walpole’s polemic essay highlights both the ongoing prevalence of More’s critical assessment of Richard and the continuous reinterpretation in what became called the *“Great Debate”*. Interpretations of the King therefore became not only matters of pro or anti-Plantagenet sources but also ways of exploring the developing genre of historical inquiry.

Walpole’s famous defence of Richard’s reputation has framed modern inquiry and debate about Richard’s character, largely dividing scholars into the pro-Richard *“Ricardian”* stance and the *“traditionalists”* who espouse Tudor source material.<sup>29</sup> Paul Murray Kendall<sup>30</sup> wrote a more sympathetic biography of Richard III in 1955 drawing on overlooked testimonies such as the city fathers of York who noted he was *“the most famous Prince of blessed memory”*.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, Kendall’s interpretation probably sparked the twelve year search for Richard III’s physical remains. Charles Ross, conversely, was one of the revisionists who became critical of Richard III. Ross saw Richard in many ways as a conventional medieval prince and a product of a brutal and ruthless era. However, his acquisition of the throne, and the violence

<sup>27</sup> Langley, Philippa and Jones, Michael *“The Search for Richard III The King’s Grave”*, Richard as King, p.47.

<sup>28</sup> Walpole, Horace, *“Historic Doubts on the Life and Reign of King Richard the Third”*, 1768, p.17.

<sup>29</sup> This division in scholarship has perpetuated changing interpretations of Richard’s character by solidifying the Great Debate in both academia and the public imagination.

<sup>30</sup> Kendall, Paul Murray, *“Richard the Third”*, London 1955.

<sup>31</sup> *“The most famous prince of blessed memory”*. - Angelo Raine, ed. *York Civic Records*, volume 1 (Leeds Yorkshire Archaeological Society, 1939), 126.



that accompanied it, was still depicted as “*an unashamed bid for personal power*”.<sup>32</sup> The discovery of Richard’s remains even instigated psychologists to re-analyse Richard’s character. After examining biographies and other secondary literature, they concluded that the king likely suffered from anxiety—a condition called *an intolerance of uncertainty*.<sup>33</sup> These modern approaches demonstrate the ongoing progress and development of historical debate in reassessments of Richard’s character.

Richard III’s true personality is lost to modern commentators, but this survey of early, Tudor, revisionist and modern arguments has shown that interpretations of Richard change not only according to contextual variables, but also according to the changing nature of historical inquiry itself.

## The Princes in the Tower and the Physical Characteristics of Richard III



Although the issue has dominated the historiography of Richard III, there is no conclusive evidence that Richard did or did not murder his nephews, the princes Edward V and Richard, Duke of York.<sup>34</sup> Similarly, analyses of Richard III have also been associated with judgements on his physical characteristics.<sup>35</sup> This section argues that regardless of whether Richard was guilty of murdering the princes or whether he had significant physical impairments, the

---

<sup>32</sup> Ross, Charles “*Richard III*”, *The Search for Support, The People*, Chapter 8, p.1, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, USA, 1981.

<sup>33</sup> Landsdale, Mark and Boon, Julian *Richard III: A Psychological Portrait*, *Ricardian Bulletin*, March 2013 p.5.

<sup>34</sup> Carson, Annette “*Great Lives on Richard III*” BBC Radio 4 Podcast, 6<sup>th</sup> January, 2015.

<sup>35</sup> Earlier sources such as the Tudor Chroniclers, Rous and Vergil, were hostile towards Richard but did not feature More and Shakespeare’s representation of a limping hunchback with a withered arm to emphasise the medieval notion that *an evil mind must dwell within a twisted body*. [http://www.richardiii.net/2\\_4\\_0\\_riii\\_appearance.php](http://www.richardiii.net/2_4_0_riii_appearance.php) Hammond, Caroline, “*His Appearance*”

judgements of the sources demonstrate that interpretations of Richard's character have changed according to the context in which they were written.

The way in which the murders became part of the increasingly negative portrayal of Richard in the Tudor period can be seen in the absence of accusations in earlier sources, even though they are critical of the king overall. The *Croyland Chronicle* does not report that Richard was responsible for killing his nephews, nor that they were even known to be dead. Dominic Mancini wrote of Edward V "*he had such dignity in his whole person...and already there was a suspicion that he had been done away with*".<sup>36</sup> However, Mancini had a strict regard for the truth and added a disclaimer: "*Whether however, he has been done away with, and by what manner of death, so far I have not at all discovered*".<sup>37</sup> Polydore Vergil supported the general belief that the princes were still alive during Henry VII's reign, secretly conveyed out of the Tower and "*obscurely concealed in some distant region*".<sup>38</sup> Therefore it seems plausible that the contemporary sources did not mention the deaths of the Princes due to a lack of certainty.

Similarly, early sources that do not implicate Richard in the murder of his nephews make no mention of his physical irregularities. The Crowland Chronicler<sup>39</sup>, Dominic Mancini<sup>40</sup> and Nicholas Von Poppelau all met or spoke with those who had met Richard, suggesting that their neutral descriptions are plausible.<sup>41</sup> Accordingly, portraits of Richard III from the Society of Antiquaries painted after his death and based on originals show no signs of deformity.

---

<sup>36</sup> Mancini, Dominic, *De Occupatione Regni Anglie Per Riccardum Tercium* (trans. Armstrong) p.93.

<sup>37</sup> *ibid* pp. 92-93

<sup>38</sup> Walpole, Horace, *Historic Doubts on the Life and Reign of King Richard III* 1768, p 69ff.

<sup>39</sup> Pseudo-Ingulf, *The Crowland Chronicle* 1486

<sup>40</sup> Mancini, Dominic *De Occupatione Regni Anglie Per Riccardum Tercium*, (Latin) December 1483.

<sup>41</sup> "*King Richard is...a high born prince, three fingers taller than I, but a bit slimmer and not as thickset as I am, and much more lightly built; he has quite slender arms and thighs, and also a great heart*". Travel diary translated by Dr. Livia Visser-Fuchs from "*Reisebeschreibung Niclas von Popplau, Ritter, Burtig von Breslau*", edited by Piotr Radzikowski, 1998, printed in *The Ricardian* June, 1999, p.529.



Source 1: The Society of Antiquaries Portrait

It was after Richard's death in 1485 that More and Shakespeare's depictions of Richard III as a deformed murderer became the predominant narrative. More produced what became the authoritative version on the fate of the Princes in the Tower. It is conceivable that More invented details such as the burial of the bodies to improve the drama of his version of events<sup>42</sup> which he had received from John Morton.<sup>43</sup> Shakespeare was even less focused on the historical truth. He took More's version of events and wrote the play, partly as a morality story showing the abuse of power and the eventual rewards of tyranny, but mainly as an entertaining drama. Although they had different motivations, More and Shakespeare together fashioned a powerful and coherent image of Richard as a murderer that reflected common and official views towards the ruler of Tudor England.

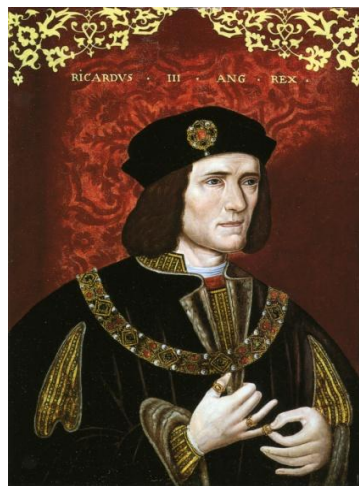
The negative views towards Richard at this time can also be seen in the portraiture which perpetuates the Tudor image of Richard III as a monstrous villain. Visual representations demonstrate the same influences as written sources contemporaneous to them. Modern re-

---

<sup>42</sup> More states that they were first buried '*at the stayre foot, metely depe in the ground under a great heape of stones*' to a '*better*' site '*because thei were a kinges sonnes*'. Thomas More, *The History of King Richard III*, ed. R.S. Sylvester (New Haven, 1963), pp.83-86.

<sup>43</sup> John Morton was the Bishop of Ely. Thomas More grew up in his household.

examination by art historian Pamela Tudor-Craig, has exposed that the Windsor portrait shows a deliberate alteration to the right shoulder, the eyes have been made more narrow and the lines on Richard's face more pronounced: *“these are clearly exaggerations, since Richard died a young man at age 32”*.<sup>44</sup> More<sup>45</sup> and Shakespeare<sup>46</sup> mention the unevenness of Richard's shoulders, but since they cannot agree on which was higher, this cannot have been very pronounced. Therefore, modern portraiture analysis has further called into question the well known literary portrayals of Richard's stature.



Source 2: The Windsor Portrait

Subsequent historical debate has largely questioned the Tudor literary portrayals of the prince's murders and Richard's physical appearance. This process is exemplified in Walpole's criticism<sup>47</sup> of More's account: *“It is difficult to crowd more improbabilities and lies together than are comprehended in this short narrative”*. Nevertheless the use of the murders as a method of developing an assessment of Richard III can be seen in the account of traditionalist

<sup>44</sup> Tudor-Craig, Pamela, testimony, *The Trial of Richard III*, (1984 DVD), London Network and Granada Ventures, 2006

<sup>45</sup> Thomas More, the well-known Tudor humanist scholar, who created the image that became a fixture in the Tudor imagination, stating that Richard was of ‘... little stature, ill featured of limbs, crook backed, his left shoulder much higher than his right, hard-favoured of visage ... malicious, wrathful, envious from before birth and ever forward’ [http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2726816/JR\\_Soc\\_Med](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2726816/JR_Soc_Med). 2009 Aug 1; 102(8): 315–323.

<sup>46</sup> Shakespeare's image of Richard III, written in 1597, is based on the reports of several Tudor historians, including More's caricature of him, none of which chose to be sympathetic towards Richard. [http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2726816/JR\\_Soc\\_Med](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2726816/JR_Soc_Med). 2009 Aug 1; 102(8): 315–323.

<sup>47</sup> Walpole, Horace *“Historic Doubts on the Life and Reign of King Richard the Third”* 1768 p.53.

James Gairdner, who found no reason to doubt that “*the dreadful deed was done*”.<sup>48</sup> Although he came to a different conclusion, revisionist Sir Clements Markham acquitted Richard of the murder of the princes and instead convicted Henry Tudor.<sup>49</sup> The influence of the exaggerated portrayals of More and Shakespeare has been significant because later writers on Richard III have all engaged in a “guilty” or “not guilty” debate.<sup>50</sup>

The increasing role of archaeology in the modern debate has allowed for analysis of the murders and the possibility of Richard’s deformities independent of the difficulties of the literary sources. In turn, this forensic approach also serves to highlight the contextual influences of traditionalists and revisionist interpretations of Richard III. Ashdown-Hill has recently demonstrated that the previously discovered bones thought to be the princes in 1674 are unlikely to have any genetic link to Richard III.<sup>51</sup> Ashdown-Hill’s innovative research has challenged the fixed notion of Richard’s involvement in murdering the two Princes in the Tower.

The discovery of Richard III’s remains, however, has challenged the negative portrayal of Richard’s physical impairments as literary constructs of More and Shakespeare. In 2012, a multidisciplinary team unearthed Richard’s remains.<sup>52</sup> The confirmation of Richard’s scoliosis reopened the question of his physical abnormality and has led to a re-evaluation of the

---

<sup>48</sup> Potter, Jeremy “*Richard III’s Historians: Adverse and Favourable Views*”, in the *Richard III Society American Branch website*, viewed on December 9<sup>th</sup> 2015, <<http://www.r3.org/on-line-library-text-essays/jeremy-potter-richard-iiis-historians-adverse-and-favourable-views/p.8>.

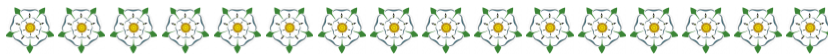
<sup>49</sup> *ibid* p.13.

<sup>50</sup> This can be seen to continue to the present day in the Ricardian movement and even the mock trial of 1984. Tudor-Craig, Pamela, testimony, *The Trial of Richard III*, (1984 DVD), London Network and Granada Ventures, 2006.

<sup>51</sup> An existing dental study of the bones shows evidence of congenitally missing teeth. An X-ray of Richard’s skull has revealed that he does not share this genetic anomaly, meaning they are unlikely to have been related. July 24, 2016 **Breaking news: Now Richard III’s skull may prove he didn’t kill princes: Mystery of the missing teeth could clear king of murder in the Tower** by Olga Craig, The Mail on Sunday, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3705167/Now-Richard-III-s-skull-prove-DIDN-T-kill-princes-Mystery-missing-teeth-clear-king-murder-Tower.html#ixzz4FJ40ZExB> accessed 24/7/16.

<sup>52</sup> His identity was proven through DNA analysis and carbon dating. Ashdown-Hill, John, *The Last Days of Richard III and the fate of his DNA*

accounts of More and Shakespeare. Therefore the visual representations from the pre-Tudor period referred to above also appear to be influenced by contextual constraints. Namely, the CT scans suggest that official portraits of Richard during his reign suppressed his physical impairment. In contrast to the analysis of Richard's spine, facial reconstruction by CT scanning suggests that Richard's appearance was similar to the one in the traditional Windsor portrait, without the tampering to look villainous.<sup>53</sup> Visual representations were therefore subject to the same contextual influences as written texts in their portrayal of Richard's character. There has also been interest in re-examining his reputation for combat, although this has been so far inconclusive.<sup>54</sup>



## Conclusion



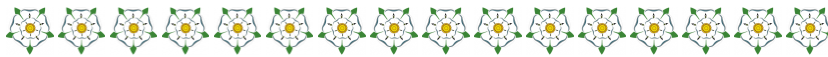
The discovery of Richard III's remains has reignited the debates concerning his personality, the princes of the Tower and his physical characteristics. This essay has shown that recent archaeological and scientific evidence has challenged the traditionalist interpretation of Richard III's character. The early sources, although critical, rarely accuse Richard of murder. The exaggerated literary accounts of the Tudor period became so influential that a question of

---

<sup>53</sup> Dr. Caroline Wilkinson is Director of the Face Lab, a LJMU research group based in Liverpool Science Park. She works with forensics and has done facial reconstructions of Richard III, Mary Queen of Scots, JS Bach and Rameses II.

<sup>54</sup> A consensus of contemporary sources, irrespective of their politics, unanimously agree that Richard's bravery and prowess in battle was superb. However, post-Tudor accounts, such as that of John Rous, indicate that Richard "*was slight in body and weak in strength (corpore parvus and viribus debilis)*". Foxhall, Lin Prof. "*Meeting Richard*" Head of the School of Archaeology and Ancient History at the University of Leicester, <http://www.le.ac.uk/richardiii/history/meetrichard.html>. A process of scientific testing has shown that the discovery of his scoliosis may not discount the validity of sources praising his military prowess. Behavioural pathology offers us insight into Richard III's portrayal as a warrior through human test subject Dominic Smee, who also has scoliosis. This discipline has made it possible for one to know whether Richard was able to move like Dominic, yet he was compromised due to the range of motion he has which for Dominic results in fatigue and for Richard could have made him vulnerable to his enemies.

guilt or innocence became a necessary issue for both revisionists and traditionalists alike. A reversal of this process can be seen in evidence of Richard's scoliosis, which offers some validity to the Tudor traditionalist interpretation regarding his deformity. While this evidence calls into question the portraiture of the pre-Tudor period, the behavioural pathology analysis suggests that the Tudor image was still exaggerated. This modern analytical approach has shed greater light on the variety of contextual influences on early sources and opened productive new avenues of research into Richard III, ensuring that this historical debate will remain exciting and intriguing for some time.



# Bibliographical Source Evaluation on Richard III



## SOURCE 1:

Jeremy Potter, '*Richard III's Historians: Adverse and Favourable Views*', in the *Richard III Society American Branch website*, viewed on December 9<sup>th</sup> 2015, <<http://www.r3.org/on-line-library-text-essays/jeremy-potter-richard-iiis-historians-adverse-and-favourable-views/>>

---

As Potter was a former chairman for the Richard III Society and known Ricardian, one would expect considerable bias in favour of Richard III from this article about his reputation throughout history. Potter does give his personal opinion about events but outlines the secondary source material in a clear and neutral way. This secondary source material is useful as he offers a user friendly overview and list of adverse and favourable views, which are balanced ranging from contemporary sources to the 20<sup>th</sup> century traditionalists and revisionists. It is done in chronological order which makes it easy to research for information. His overviews of the main Richard III debates are easy to read and comprehend. Within each historian's views, he covers Richard III's personality, physical characteristics and debate regarding his nephews, the Princes in the Tower, which makes it relevant to the focus question. Potter's article is a reliable source because he accurately cites his evidence and one can use this contextual source information to springboard into corroborating his arguments with other scholarship.



**SOURCE 2:**

Hammond, P.W “The Reputation of Richard III”, *Richard III: A Medieval Kingship* edited by John Gillingham, Ch. VIII.

---

In this well written article about Richard III’s reputation, P.W Hammond demonstrates that from the early seventeenth century onwards, there have always been some historians who doubted the traditional Tudor image of the murderous tyrant. He outlines how the Tudor age had a negative influence on analyses of his character. He goes onto say that viewpoints oscillate back and forth and even conflict such as in the case of John Rous and Polydore Vergil. In his balanced view of Richard, he presents the contemporaries first so we understand fully the context of the time and so he asks the reader to think about keeping a middle view between the pro and anti Richard factions. He also asks if we should apply “medieval” or “modern” standards when assessing Richard III. This source is useful because his approach is unique and concise. Primary source material is regularly and transparently used throughout and provides access to obscure primary sources such as Langton’s letter. Again he follows the contemporaries in chronological order to present day revisionists.

### SOURCE 3:

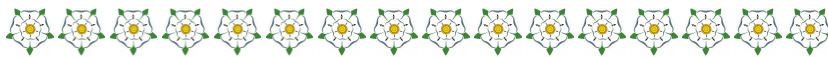
Langley, Philippa and Jones, Michael, *The Search for Richard III: The King's Grave*, John Murray Publishers, 2013.

---

The majority of this book has a pro-Ricardian bias, but was useful because it offers Langley's unique perspective of events that led to the most significant archaeological discovery in recent decades. The writing in this book is shared with Jones, who focuses on Richard's historical background. His aim is *"Not to condemn him, nor to sanitise his actions, but to place him firmly back in the context of his times"*<sup>55</sup> and he succeeded in doing so. He emphasises Richard's keen sense of justice and piety.

On alternate chapters, Langley emotionally discusses her personal experiences with the dig as she also justifies Richard III, his actions, character, and personality in an attempt to regain his lost reputation. Langley recounts the story in a personal manner, which makes it more approachable. However, it appears to be one-sided about her involvement in the story, despite acknowledging John Ashdown-Hill and Annette Carson for their contributions to the project.

The mystery of what happened to the Princes in the Tower is dealt with in an Appendix. Here the two authors agree to disagree. Langley explains convincingly why Richard should be innocent and Jones explaining equally convincingly why he probably had to do it. It is valuable to see such opposing views collaborating together so successfully. This book was useful to explain the dig, the archaeology and science behind determining Richard's identity.



---

<sup>55</sup> Langley, Philippa and Jones, Michael, *The Search for Richard III: The King's Grave*, Preface, John Murray Publishers, 2013.

---

# Major Work Bibliography on Richard III



## Books:

- Ashdown-Hill, John, *The Last Days of Richard III and the fate of his DNA* (Gloucestershire, 2013 revised)
- Ashdown-Hill, John, *The Mythology of Richard III* (Gloucestershire, 2015)
- Ashdown-Hill, John, *The Secret Queen: Eleanor Talbot-The Woman Who Put Richard III On The Throne* (The History Press, Gloucestershire, 2016 revised)
- Breverton, Terry, *Richard III The King in the Car Park* (Gloucestershire, 2015 revised)
- Fields, Bertram *Royal Blood: King Richard III and the Mystery of the Princes*, Sutton Publishing, 1998.
- Gillingham, John (edited) *Richard III: A Medieval Kingship*, Collins & Brown Ltd. 1993.
- Holinshed, Raphael *Chronicles*, The Folio Society, Forward by Michael Wood, 2012.
- Langley, Philippa and Jones, Michael, *The Search for Richard III: The King's Grave*, John Murray Publishers, 2013.
- Licence, Amy, *Richard III: The Road to Leicester* (Gloucestershire, 2014)
- Pollard, A.J *The Worlds of Richard III*, Tempus Publishing Group, 2001.
- Ross, Charles, *Richard III* (Berkeley, 1981)
- Weir, Alison *The Princes in the Tower*, Random House UK, 1992.

## Academic Journals:

- Breen, Dan, *Thomas More's "History of Richard III": Genre, Humanism, and Moral Education* in his *Studies in Philology* Vol. 107, No. 4 (Fall, 2010)
- Donno, Elizabeth Story, *"Thomas More and Richard III"* in her *Renaissance*

*Quarterly* Vol. 35, No. 3 (Autumn, 1982)

- Dunham Jr, William, *Reviewed Work: The Usurpation of Richard the Third: Dominicus Mancinus ad Angelum de Occupatione Regni Anglie per Riccardum Tercium Libellus* by C. A. J. Armstrong in *Speculum* Vol. 12, No. 1 (Jan. 1937)
- Hanham, Alison, *Richard III, Lord Hastings and the Historians* in *The English Historical Review* Vol. 87, No. 343 (Apr., 1972)
- Tulloch, Isabel, *Richard III: a study in medical misrepresentation*  
[http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2726816/JR\\_Soc\\_Med](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2726816/JR_Soc_Med). 2009 Aug 1; 102(8): 315–323. Accessed 19/7/16.

### Magazines/Journal Articles:

- McGuinness, Paul, “*The War of the Roses*” in his *History Revealed* magazine issue 19 (England, 2015)
- University of Leicester, *Richard III The Sources: What did we know then?* (England, 2013)
- White, Frances, “*Richard III on Trial: Murder in the Tower*”, *All About History* magazine issue 28 (England, 2015)

### Documentaries, Television & Film:

- *Bloody Tales of Europe* (2013) Documentary: *Richard III*, Produced by True North Productions Ltd for National Geographic Channels Network International, LLC.
- *Britain's Bloody Crown* (2015) Documentaries: *The Princes Must Die* and *A Mother's Love*, Prod. Sam Starbuck, Channel 5 Broadcasting Ltd.
- *David Starkey's Monarchy: The Complete Second Season* (2005) DVD, Dir. Steven Clarke, David Hutt and James Runcie. Prod. Steven Clarke, Historic Royal Palaces English Heritage, Granada Productions.
- *Looking for Richard* (1996) DVD, Dir. Al Pacino. Prod. Michael Hodge, Fox Searchlight Pictures.
- *Medieval Lives: Birth, Marriage and Death* (2014) Documentary by Helen Castor, SBS.

- **Richard III: Martyr or Monster?** (2013) DVD, Dir. Bob Carruthers. Prod. Bob Carruthers, Kultur.
- **Richard III: the New Evidence** (2014) Documentary, Dir. Gary Johnstone. Pro. Simon Young, Darlow Smithson Productions.
- **Richard III: The Unseen Story** (2013) Documentary, Dir. Louise Osmond. Prod. Simon Young and Julian Ware, Darlow Smithson Productions.
- **The Hollow Crown: Richard III** (2015) Shakespearean Play, Benedict Cumberbatch, BBC Worldwide.
- **The King In The Car Park** (2013) Documentary, Dir. Louise Osmond. Prod. Simon Young and Julian Ware, Darlow Smithson Productions.
- **The Unseen Time Team** (2011) Documentary: The Wars Of The Roses: The Battle of Bosworth, Assoc. Prod. Tony Robinson, Dir. Jeremy Cross, Videotext Communications Ltd. And The Picture house Television Co. Ltd.
- **The White Queen** (2013) Mini-series, Dir. James Kent. Prod. Gina Cronk, Anchor Bay Entertainment.
- **Who Killed the Princes in the Tower?** (2015) Documentary, Dir. Ashley Gething. Prod. Ashley Gething, Oxford Film and Television Productions.

### Websites:

- Ashdown-Hill, John website <https://johnashdownhill.squarespace.com/> Accessed 16/7/16.
- Boatwright, Lesley Dr. ***“Richard’s earlier defenders: Their motives and methods”***, ***The Controversies***, [http://www.richardiii.net/2\\_5\\_0\\_riii\\_controversy.php#play](http://www.richardiii.net/2_5_0_riii_controversy.php#play). Accessed 18/7/16.
- Craig, Olga, ***Breaking news: Now Richard III’s skull may prove he didn’t kill princes: Mystery of the missing teeth could clear king of murder in the Tower*** The Mail on Sunday: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3705167/Now-Richard-III-s-skull-prove-DIDN-T-kill-princes-Mystery-missing-teeth-clear-king-murder-Tower.html#ixzz4FJ40ZExB> accessed 24/7/16.
- Foxhall, Lin Prof. ***“Meeting Richard”*** Head of the School of Archaeology and Ancient History at the University of Leicester, <http://www.le.ac.uk/richardiii/history/meetrichard.html>

- Potter, Jeremy ‘**Richard III’s Historians: Adverse and Favourable Views**’, in the *Richard III Society American Branch website*, viewed on December 9<sup>th</sup> 2015, <<http://www.r3.org/on-line-library-text-essays/jeremy-potter-richard-iiis-historians-adverse-and-favourable-views/> Accessed 18/7/16.
- Richard III Society NSW <http://www.richardiii-nsw.org.au/> Accessed daily.
- Richard III Society UK <http://www.richardiii.net/> Accessed daily.
- University of Leicester Website <https://www.le.ac.uk/richardiii/> Accessed daily.

## The Main Primary Sources

- *Dominic Mancini’s De Occupatione Regni Anglie Per Riccardum Tercium* (trans. Armstrong) 1984
- *Hollinshed Chronicles* (Fleming, A. (ed.) 2011)
- Horace Walpole’s *Historic Doubts on the Life and Reign of King Richard the Third 1768*
- Polydore Vergil’s *Anglica Historia* (ed. and trans. Sutton, D.J, 2005)
- Sir George Buck’s *The History of Richard III* (Kincaid, A.N. (ed.) 1979)
- *The Croyland Chronicle* by Pseudo-Ingulf (trans. Riley, H.T. 1854)
- Thomas More’s *History of King Richard III* (ed. Sylvester, R.S. 1963)
- *William Shakespeare’s Richard III* (ed. Holland, P. 2000)

