

Holy Cross church – notes on Richard III and Lady Anne Neville

A Glimpse into the Long History of Cowbridge Church – in the parish magazine, 1970s

The Glamorgan County Record Office possesses, amongst many other documents of great age, one relating to Cowbridge church. Its date is February 27th 1484; it is, as you may expect, in Latin and written on parchment 16 inches long and 8 inches wide. It is on exhibition in the National Portrait Gallery. The letter came to Cowbridge through the Bishop of Llandaff at that time, Bishop John Marshall, and appears to have come in response to a petition from the Chief Citizens of Cowbridge of that time. It bears the King's signature and seal – Richard III 1484.

To most of us, Richard III is known only for what is believed to have been his villainy. He was brother to King Edward IV, and bore first the title Duke of Gloucester. As such, on the death of Edward, he became Regent to Edward VI's two young sons, Edward V and the even younger Duke of York. These two stood between him and the throne, and what we remember most about Richard is that, whether it was true or false, he is generally believed to have been responsible for the murder in the Tower of the young King and his brother, and thus made the throne his own.

What then you may wonder had Richard III to do with Cowbridge church? Richard, while Duke of Gloucester, married Anne, 1472, one of the daughters of the all powerful Earl of Warwick, and Anne, on the death of her father, inherited all his estates and properties in Glamorgan. Thus Richard succeeded to the Lordship of Glamorgan, and his interest in Cowbridge church. Anne herself in 1473 had been responsible for the building of the south aisle in Cowbridge church – the one that cost us £2000 to repair a few years ago! – the tower of Llanblethian church and the tower of St John the Baptist church in Cardiff.

Richard's letter in 1484 began with a description of himself in the opening paragraph as King of England, France etc. and the Lord of Glamorgan, and in it he gives Royal Assent to the appointment of a perpetual Chaplain for the Chapel of the Holy Cross for the purpose of celebrating Divine Worship and the Holy Sacraments, an arrangement to be worked out between Cowbridge and Llanblethian, and the support for the Chaplaincy to come from the proceeds and product of the tithes and from dues levied on all the inhabitants of the village, and he urged Bishop Marshall to make such an appointment as speedily as lay in his power and pastoral office.

Of course, there were ministers in charge of Cowbridge church long before 1484, and these would have come from monasteries, from chaplains to noble families, from those serving Llanblethian church in fact, granted by the King and regular and systemic support be found for the stipend. This letter 1484 shows clearly the close connection between

Richard and Cowbridge, and another side to his nature. Even murderers it seems can show glimpses of piety.

S.H.M (Revd. Stanley Mogford) – Revd. Mogford died September 2013 in Cardiff, just before his 100th birthday.

Lady Anne Neville's connection with Cowbridge

by Deborah Fisher

Some of you may be wondering what connection there could be between a medieval queen of England and a town in south Wales. Others of you will be aware of the links between Anne Neville and the churches of Cowbridge. Because this talk was given to a meeting of the Cowbridge *Record* Society, it tries to focus on illustrating how *records* contribute to our understanding of her life and her connection with us. It aims to show that, not only can records tell us a lot about the past, but the *absence* of records can affect our view of past events.

Anne Neville died at the age of 28. In her time, she held the titles of Princess of Wales, Duchess of Gloucester, and Queen of England, in that order. She had an eventful life by most people's standards, yet we know very little about her, as is the case with many of the medieval queens of England. Some would say this is only to be expected, as the queen consorts had no share in governing the kingdom. But we know that some of them had a very strong influence, and this was also the case with Anne.

The only picture of Anne that is anywhere near contemporary is from the Rous Roll, which is a genealogical record of her family. One of the most useful sources of historical knowledge for the past 150 years has been the photograph, but in mid-15th century England, not only did they not have photography, they didn't even have proper portraiture. If you go to the National Portrait Gallery, you'll find that their portraits of monarchs only begin with Edward IV. The painting of him is one of the first that bears any suggestion of being true to life. Women would have to wait a few years longer to be considered important enough for their appearance to be recorded with any care.

Anne was born at Warwick Castle on June 11th, 1456. She was the second child of Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick, whom we know as "the Kingmaker". Richard came by the title of Earl of Warwick through his wife, Anne Beauchamp, who was the daughter of the previous earl, Richard Beauchamp. That might be regarded as good luck, but it was Richard Neville's *bad* luck that, like his father-in-law, he had no sons to succeed him. He had only two daughters, Isabel and Anne.

Neville was a very wealthy, powerful man. In his own right, he was Earl of Salisbury, and his two earldoms brought him vast estates (including the lordship of Glamorgan). He owned several castles; one of his favourites was Middleham in the north of England, and this was where his children spent a lot of their time. When the two girls were born, King Henry VI was on the throne. Henry was considered a weak king. Although he was king from the age of nine months,

the country was run by regents until he came of age. He then married Margaret of Anjou, who would gain the nickname, "The Tigress of France", for her role in the Wars of the Roses. They had only one child - Edward, Prince of Wales, usually known as Edward of Westminster, to differentiate him from all the other Edwards that were around at the time.

One of those other Edwards was Edward, Earl of March, the eldest son of the Duke of York. The Duke of York, who happened to be an uncle of Richard Neville's wife, had a strong claim to the throne, and until the birth of the Prince of Wales, he had hoped to be next in line after Henry VI. By the time Edward of Westminster was born, King Henry was already in the grip of mental illness, and there were rumours flying around that the child wasn't really his. The Yorkists took up arms against the king, and this was the beginning of the Wars of the Roses. At the Battle of Northampton in 1460, the Yorkists were victorious and they took the king prisoner and forced him to agree to disinherit his own son and make the Duke of York his heir.

Margaret of Anjou, the queen, wasn't having any of this. She raised an army of her own, and defeated York later in the same year. The Duke of York was killed, which made his son, Edward, Earl of March, the Yorkist claimant to the throne. This is really where the kingmaking abilities of the Earl of Warwick (Richard Neville) came into play. He was 32 years old at the time, and he went into exile along with the young Earl of March, who was only 18. The Duke of York had had several sons. One of them was killed along with his father at the Battle of Wakefield, but there were two younger sons, George and Richard. They came under the protection of the Earl of Warwick and went into his household. In the meantime, their elder brother, despite his youth, showed himself to be a military genius, and with Warwick's help he became King Edward IV of England. Henry VI was finally deposed and put into confinement, and Queen Margaret and her son escaped to France.

So at Middleham Castle we have four children growing up: George, Duke of Clarence, aged eleven, his brother Richard, aged eight, and Warwick's two daughters, Isabel Neville, aged nine, and Anne, aged four. What do *you* think happened?

The point about this is that we have no idea what happened during those years. Children's activities were not carefully recorded. there were no school photographs, no concerts to be video-recorded, and most of the time we can't even be sure who was where. We can only surmise that the four children became close friends.

So far, so good for the Earl of Warwick. He was well in with the new young king. It was a few years before King Edward started to want to be free of the Earl's influence. One of the first signs of this was when Edward, knowing that Warwick was negotiating for him to marry a foreign princess, got secretly married to an English widow, Elizabeth Woodville, whose family had been *Lancastrian* supporters in the recent war! Things got worse, as the Woodville family took over prominent positions at court and Warwick was sidelined.

In 1469, the king's brother, George, Duke of Clarence, married Isabel Neville, his childhood companion. Like Warwick, he was growing a little tired of the king and his new in-laws. So he agreed when Warwick suggested that they should all go to France and find Margaret of Anjou. This was the one and only time that Warwick turned coat. He went to Margaret and offered to help her get her husband's throne back. Henry VI was in Yorkist hands, but this didn't really

matter, as Margaret's main concern was to get her son's inheritance back. She didn't trust Warwick, and as proof of good faith she insisted that he go back to England and get the throne back *before* she and her son followed. In return, she agreed to his proposal that her son, Edward of Westminster, aged seventeen, should marry Warwick's daughter, Anne, who was now about fourteen.

This is where the lack of records, combined with our lack of understanding of the period, again makes it difficult for us to know what was going on. We are not sure when the marriage took place, but after December 1470 Anne was married to the Prince of Wales, making her Princess of Wales. Or was she? It's not clear whether the ceremony that took place was a wedding or just a betrothal. Even if the records were more complete, we could not necessarily be sure of the answer, because a promise to marry someone was regarded as legally binding. We don't know whether it was a marriage, or just an arrangement that Margaret of Anjou could get out of later if Warwick didn't come up with the goods. We don't know whether the marriage, if it was one, was ever consummated. And there is no record of Anne being called Princess of Wales, so we don't know whether she used the title. And if she didn't, it wouldn't be so surprising, because the title of Prince of Wales had only been held by four princes before Edward of Westminster - it was still not automatic - and the title of Princess of Wales had only been held by one woman before Anne.

Let's assume Anne *was* Princess of Wales when the news reached France that her father, the Earl of Warwick, had defeated King Edward IV in battle and had restored King Henry VI to the throne. Edward IV had been forced to flee the country, and it was safe for Margaret of Anjou, together with her son and daughter-in-law, to return.

Not everything was going according to plan. Warwick's other son-in-law, George, Duke of Clarence, had deserted him. It had suddenly dawned on Clarence that, if the Lancastrians got back on the throne, he was never actually going to be king himself, whereas if he went back over to his brother's side, he would at least have some standing. Furthermore, Warwick, despite his experience, wasn't a great diplomat. By accepting French help, he had turned the Burgundians against him, and it was to Burgundy, where his sister was duchess, that Edward IV went. Edward IV got back to England before Margaret of Anjou, and when the Lancastrian royal party arrived, they were greeted with the news that the Earl of Warwick, whom they'd been relying on, was dead, and Henry VI was back in prison - where he didn't last long.

Imagine what this must have been like for Anne. But we don't know how she reacted. In fact, we don't know exactly where she was in the period after she returned to England. At the Battle of Tewkesbury, on the 4th of May 1471, Edward of Westminster was killed - the only Prince of Wales ever to be killed in battle. Or was he? Actually, some say that he was killed *after* the battle, when many of his army took refuge inside Tewkesbury Abbey and were slaughtered by the Yorkists. It's said that Anne and her mother-in-law took refuge in a religious house, possibly Malvern Priory, which has a window given by Anne and her second husband, but there is no proof of her having been there, only oral tradition and some generally unreliable written sources. If it's true, it goes some way to explaining her later interest in religious foundations.

And then she disappears altogether. The next time Anne surfaces in the records is in 1472, and by then she has re-married, and her new husband is none other than her childhood companion, Richard, Duke of Gloucester. We know they were married in 1472, but we don't know exactly when their son, Edward - another Edward - was born, although we do know that he was born at

Middleham Castle, hence he is referred to as Edward of Middleham.

What was Anne doing in the fourteen months between the end of her first marriage and the beginning of her second one? The story that has grown up may have a grain of truth in it, but is not supported by any official records. Anne was brought to London in the train of her victorious brother-in-law, Edward IV. There's no reason to think she was ill-treated or even treated as a prisoner. Although she was Warwick's daughter-in-law and the widow of Henry VI's son and heir, she was also a long-standing friend of the family, and her sister was married to the king's brother. It's possible that Anne had never been happy as the wife of the Prince of Wales. Imagine having Margaret of Anjou as a mother-in-law! Even if she had loved her first husband, she was probably relieved at seeing those familiar faces, the family of the Duke of York.

What is said to have happened is that she ran away from her brother-in-law, George, Duke of Clarence. It's known for certain that Clarence and his youngest brother, Richard, Duke of Gloucester, were not on good terms. They were jockeying for position. Clarence had been disloyal to his brother, but, like the Prodigal Son, he had returned to the fold. It must have seemed hard to Richard, who had stood by Edward through thick and thin, that Clarence should receive a share of the rewards. But there was more to it than that. Because Warwick was dead, his inheritance, and the estates of his wife Anne Beauchamp (who was still alive at this time), passed jointly to his daughters and their husbands. Isabel Neville was married to Clarence and they had children, therefore Clarence stood to gain if anything happened to Isabel's sister, Anne. However, he had everything to lose if Anne decided to marry his brother, Richard, who was already his greatest rival. We don't know whether Richard and Anne had been close when they were younger, but it would seem a reasonable idea for them to marry, and we can understand why Clarence might have kidnapped her, which is another version of the story. Whether he did this or whether she was in hiding from him, she is said to have been discovered working as a kitchen-maid in London, and rescued - by Richard, Duke of Gloucester.

This supposed act of heroism has become part of the great myth surrounding Richard III, about which I would like to say something, but not too much. Richard III was a victim of Tudor propaganda. After Henry VII took the throne, he did his best to make Richard out to be an utter villain. He didn't need to do his own dirty work, because there were many Tudor supporters who were prepared to invent stories about Richard in order to win Henry's favour. Later, they went even further, and altered his portraits to make him look deformed, which in those days would have been considered evidence of an evil character. The one thing Henry did do, which would backfire on the Tudors a long time afterwards, was to destroy a lot of the records relating to Richard's reign.

Because those records no longer exist, there are many things we can't be sure about. We don't really know, for example, if it is true that Richard executed Lord Hastings without trial, as was claimed during the Tudor period. If there had been records of a trial, it might have shown either of two things: (1) that the evidence of treason against Hastings was considerable, or (2) that the evidence against him was non-existent. However, the absence of records does not prove that there was no trial.

Now, in the last fifty years or so, it has become fashionable to take the view that, because the Tudors made up stories about Richard III, he must therefore have been innocent of all the crimes of which he was accused. This is nonsense. One of the things people fail to understand is that the concept of

recording history accurately is a relatively modern one. Medieval historians were not concerned with the truth; they just wanted an exciting story. The word "historia", in Latin, means "a story". From the few facts that are available, we know that Richard III had by far the best motive and opportunity for murdering his two nephews, the Princes in the Tower. It's a matter of historical record that the rumours of his having killed them were circulating as early as January 1484. To me, the most damning evidence against Richard is that, despite knowing about these rumours and publicly denying them, he made no attempt to disprove them by allowing the boys to be seen in public. They were never seen alive after the autumn of 1483.

Another thing that many people don't understand is how a king who is recorded as having been very popular in parts of the country, particularly the north, a man who endowed places of worship and educational establishments, could have done something as repellent as to kill two children who were related to him ~ the sons of a brother to whom he was very close. The people known as Ricardians believe that Richard was a good man, and therefore he could never have done anything bad. But if we look at the evidence for a moment, we see - and again this is a matter of record - that Richard had already had the two princes, his brother's children, declared illegitimate, in order to take the throne from them. Richard foresaw that his nephew, Edward V, would be easily influenced by the Woodville family, and that the Woodvilles would probably resent Richard and try to get rid of him. So he stepped in and made sure of his own safety and that of his family. Reasonable motives. Once the boys were in captivity, he had a problem, because his enemies might have got hold of them and made them into figureheads and started another civil war. So they had to be removed. Of course Richard didn't go into the Tower of London and strangle them with his own hands. But there was no shortage of people who would have been prepared to do it for him, and he probably didn't even need to ask.

We can't say what happened. We assume that Richard's wife, Anne, didn't know much about it. For more than ten years, from the time of their marriage up to the sudden death of King Edward IV in 1483, they had lived quietly, as Duke and Duchess of Gloucester, in the north of England, mainly at Middleham Castle, the very place where they spent their childhood together. They had a son of their own, who had been born there. If Edward IV had lived a little longer, they might well have stayed there.

Edward's death threw the country into turmoil, and it pushed Anne Neville into the limelight. We don't know what kind of person she was, but she didn't leave the stamp of her personality on things, so we make the assumption, perhaps wrongly, that she was quiet, self-effacing, perhaps shy, easily pushed around and taken advantage of. We can assume that she was happy with her husband and that she loved her family. Her sister, Isabel, had died and Isabel's husband, the Duke of Clarence, had been executed for treason. So Anne was responsible for the welfare of her sister's children as well as her own.

Founding churches and colleges was all part of the business of being wealthy and powerful. Anne Neville is supposed to have had the tower of Llanblethian Church built. She is also supposed to have paid for the building of the Llanquian aisle in Holy Cross Church in Cowbridge, and we know that Richard signed a charter relating to the appointment of a chaplain for Holy Cross. Does this mean that they ever came here? I don't think so. I have not come across any evidence that Anne Neville, either as Princess of Wales or as Queen of England, ever set foot in Wales. If anyone knows of any such evidence, please let me hear about it!

Amongst other things, Anne had inherited from her father the lordship of Glamorgan, but it was Richard who took the title. Perhaps that's enough to explain why they took an interest in the churches of Glamorgan. They took an interest in many other places. They founded or restored churches at Barnard Castle and Sheriff Hutton in the north of England, and they were generous benefactors of York Minster. They went to Cambridge, where Queens' College, originally founded by Margaret of Anjou, was re-endowed in Anne's name. In return, they could be assured of having prayers said for them in these places. But why did they need prayers? Was Richard a devout man who really cared about the church? Or was he appeasing his conscience? Pardons could be bought and sold in the Middle Ages, and endowing a church would be enough to save your soul even if you *had* murdered your nephews.

However they came by their position as king and queen, they didn't have long to enjoy it. Anne Neville was probably already dying. She is thought to have had tuberculosis. She had only one child, her son Edward, who was invested as Prince of Wales in September 1483. He died only a few months later. The Croyland chronicler says that "you might have seen his father and mother in a state almost bordering on madness by reason of their sudden grief. Reading that is the only time I've ever felt sorry for Richard III.

Edward of Middleham had been the heir to the throne, and he was replaced in that role by another Edward, his first cousin. This boy, Edward, Earl of Warwick, was the son of George of Clarence and Isabel Neville, so he was Anne's nephew as well as Richard's. It's interesting to note that, almost as soon as Anne died, Richard named a new heir, an adult relation, John de la Pole, Earl of Lincoln. He had presumably named Edward in order to please Anne, or maybe she had talked him into it; but once the threat of a Tudor invasion became real, he didn't think it would be wise to have a child as his heir.

Anne only survived her son by 11 months, and no doubt his death contributed to her illness. She was young enough to have another child, but the fact that she only had the one suggests that there was some basic weakness in her constitution. It began to be said, quite openly, that Richard was planning to bump her off and was intending to marry his niece, Elizabeth of York, in her place. Here's another example of how records can mislead the modern mind if we don't read them in context. Although the idea of marrying one's niece gives us a feeling of revulsion, it would have been considered fine as long as the Pope was prepared to give a dispensation. We don't know whether he would have, but we know that Richard didn't make a move to marry Elizabeth of York after Anne's death.

Anne's death was expected, but did she die of natural causes, or had Richard been poisoning her over a long period, as the Tudors later claimed? Unlikely, I think. If we compare her with her sister, who was dead at 25, we see that the family constitution wasn't exactly strong. Ill-health was probably the reason she didn't conceive again. For Richard to have murdered her, he would have needed a motive, and there is no obvious one apart from the desire to marry again, which he made no serious attempt to do. He died not long after his wife, at the Battle of Bosworth Field, and a Welshman, Henry Tudor, became King of England. For many years, there was not even a memorial to Anne Neville in Westminster Abbey, but eventually one was erected by the efforts of the Richard III Society. So they have done some good after all.



Unknown author -

There are very few churches in south Wales which can claim that a Princess of Wales was responsible for the building of a major part of the church; there are few Welsh churches which have had a king of England to pay for its chaplain. There are few churches which have a wall memorial to a judge who was sentenced to death in the Tower of London, and there are few which have had someone who would become a major Hollywood star worshipping in its pews. For all these claims, however, Cowbridge fits the bill: and this in a church which only became a parish church in 1994!

The south or Llanquian aisle was built as a gift of Lady Anne Neville, the Lord of Glamorgan, in 1473, and eleven years later her second husband, Richard III, in response to a petition from the townspeople paid for a chaplain to “celebrate divine worship in the church of Holy Cross”. The wall memorial is to Judge David Jenkins, a staunch Royalist who was committed to the Tower and sentenced to death for publishing anti-Cromwellian pamphlets (and continued to do so when imprisoned) and yet was released. The Hollywood star is Sir Anthony Hopkins, who as a schoolboy in the Grammar School next-door worshipped regularly (and compulsorily) in the choir stalls.

The Church of the Holy Cross has been known as the 'Cathedral of the Vale' because of its size and imposing appearance for many hundreds of years, and has served the people of Cowbridge as the focus of Christian worship since the thirteenth century. It was however a daughter church to the parish church of Llanblethian, under the control of the rector of Llanblethian. That was why the townspeople felt the need for a 'chaplain', and those appointed as a result of the bequest of Richard III served the church and town until 1550. By 1608, Cowbridge Grammar School had been founded, and the headmasters - always ordained clergymen until 1918 - became de facto curates of Cowbridge, and took services on a regular basis. Despite a number of attempts to create a separate parish, Holy Cross remained part of the parish of Llanblethian until the re-ordering of the benefice in 1994.

An altar in the church, probably in the Llanquian aisle, was used as a place of legal agreements in the sixteenth century, mortgages having to be repaid 'on the altar of St Nicholas in the church of Cowbridge'.

The religious census of 1851 showed 200 people worshipping in both the morning and evening services, and of course the dayboys and boarders of the Grammar school worshipped here regularly. Carvings in the pews testify to their past attendance, and Cowbridge School still maintains its links with the Remembrance Day service and with Christmas carol concerts.

Hatch, match and dispatch – even for those who are not weekly attenders at services, the church is an important feature in these major events, and is regularly used for baptism, marriages and for funerals. Civic services too are always held here: Mayor's Sunday, the visit of royalty – such as the recent visit of the Prince of Wales – and services for momentous occasions see the church filled to capacity.

Concerts too bring in people who are not always regular worshippers, as this is one of the few buildings in Cowbridge with the atmosphere and the capacity to hold musical events.

A wonderful building, of great architectural merit, but of all one imbued with a sense of holiness and peace, Holy Cross Church is an integral part of Cowbridge life.

Cowbridge and Richard III

Prominent news headlines this last weekend have featured King Richard III, his life and his Leicester burial, but how many know of his Cowbridge connection?

In 1472, when Duke of Gloucester, he married Anne Neville, the daughter of the Earl of Warwick, born in Warwick Castle, and took on the title of Lord of Glamorgan from her inheritance. Both Richard and Anne were seemingly highly religious and supported the building of many religious establishments, and she was a great landowner in this area. Lady Anne Nevill is said to have gifted the building of the Llanquian or south aisle at Cowbridge Holy Cross church in 1473 (possibly named as a replacement for the former medieval chapel of St James, which is thought to have been at Llanquian on Stalling Down), and also the tower of Llanblethian church.

Richard was crowned King in 1483, but it was under the title of Lord of Glamorgan that he issued a charter in the following year for Cowbridge. It instructed the Bishop of Llandaff to ensure that a chaplain was appointed to serve Cowbridge church. Cowbridge townspeople had petitioned their King to help them in this respect.

That same year of 1484, Richard called his first and only parliament. His days as King were numbered, the threat of an invasion by Henry Tudor overshadowing his reign. His queen, Anne, died unexpectedly in March 1485 at the young age of twenty eight (they had just one son), and we now know for sure that Richard was killed at the Battle of Bosworth, Leicester that August.

B.A. (B Alden - *Gem* article 2015)