

Teesdale u3a

Kim Harding of the Northern Dales Richard III Group was the speaker at the June meeting of Teesdale u3a. The first part of Kim's presentation described some of Richard III's life particularly in the north of the country. He was born in Fotheringhay Castle in 1452 and was only in his early 30s when he died at the Battle of Bosworth in 1485. He was the last Plantagenet King. Richard was created Duke of Gloucester after the accession of his brother, Edward IV to the throne in 1461. Although he was the youngest brother, King Edward gave him considerable responsibilities in the north. He led an invasion of Scotland during which he carried the banner of St Cuthbert. Although he was based in York, he also had major authority over ecclesiastical appointments at Durham Cathedral. He was extremely well read and made church appointments available to educated people who often went on to establish Grammar Schools. Throughout his life he made strong friendships and alliances with northern leaders.

Part 2 of Kim's talk summarised the evidence and importance of Richard's links to Barnard Castle. Richard's emblem is the boar's head and several of these have been found in the town. There is one in Blagraves and another in St Mary's CE Church. Blagraves had been given by Richard to the widow of Miles Forest, who was the Keeper of the King's Wardrobe. Kim had done considerable research into the ownership of Amen Corner, which is on the corner of Newgate and The Bank, adjacent to St Mary's Church. It was known that Richard had given directions for the establishment of a College of Priests and a chantry building near the Church but there had previously been some doubt whether these were ever acted upon. Chantry buildings would often be funded by donors and priests would pray on their behalf. Kim's work strongly suggests that a college was built at Amen Corner. However, the funding for the 30 clerical staff to work in the college including 12 priests ceased upon Richard's death at the Battle of Bosworth. This college would have been twice the size of that at Middleham Castle with only 6 priests. Kim's research indicates the importance that Richard attached to Barnard Castle and she believes that had Richard survived his last battle, the college would have taken its place in history alongside those at Middleham and York.

The vote of thanks was given by Keith Miles. The next meeting will be held on Thursday 28th July when Peter Norton will be speaking on Charles Willis, Royal Portrait Painter.

Ian Reid