

WORKSHOP REPORT

May Workshop – Richard III Walk and Talk

Report by Hilary Dunnighan

In glorious weather we met our guide - Kim Harding, Chair of the Northern Dales Richard III Society - on Scar Top. We learnt that the Castle had been inherited by Richard of Gloucester following his marriage to the daughter of Warwick the Kingmaker. In the 1470s and 80s, Richard spent a lot of time in the town – visiting for the last time in 1484, one year after becoming King.

Richard made considerable improvements to the living quarters in the Brackenbury Tower of the Castle and adorned the oriel window with his white boar motif. The original medieval main door to the Castle would have been where the Kings Court Care Home now stands leading to a farm and small chapel within the walls. The present entrance to the Castle was the North door which opened on to a flat area used for military training.

We then walked to the County Bridge, built in 1569, where Kim informed us that it used to have 3 arches and a small chapel in the centre. This was used for marriages, where the bride and groom jumped over the broom. The bridge was damaged during the great flood of 1771.



Walking along Bridgegate - one of the 4 gates into town along with Galgate, Thorngate and Broadgate - we reached The Bank where there used to be a monks' priory at the bottom and a steward's house for replenishing victuals at the castle about halfway up. Many of the houses on the Bank had (and still have) tunnels under the road going to the castle! Blagraves, the oldest house in town, was given by Richard III to the widow of Miles Forrest, Keeper of the Kings Wardrobe, as thanks for his services. The building has the white boar motif on one of its back windows and one tunnel in the cellar that goes 50m under the Demesnes and another that goes to the Castle.

At the Market place, we were told there would have been a Shambles area, a toll booth and a gallows. The toll booth bell would ring to notify stallholders they could start selling and inside the booth were kept

standard weights and measures to ensure all the sellers complied with the rules. Constables were in town to keep the peace. Richard III instituted the town's Wednesday market.



Outside St Mary's Church, Kim told us there had been a Guild Hall where the Black Horse pub now stands, and, where the Capri restaurant is now, was St John's Hospital which had a chapel and rooms for 13 patients. Richard III was going to build a Collegiate Church at Amen Corner and the original buildings in front of the church may have been houses for priests as the foundations were medieval with wattle and daub walls. The only way up to the church was the little cobbled lane from the Bank and the alleyway leading to the vestry. Richard's boar motif was found on a building at the end of this alley and is now in the Bowes Museum.



On entering the church, Kim told us about the improvements instigated by Richard III. Inside, he widened the aisle, built a two-storey vestry, opened up the North door, raised the nave and put windows at the top. On the outside of the window above the maze there can be seen his white boar motif and on the chancel arch there are two faces – his brother on the left and Richard on the right.

We had refreshments in the church and Kim happily answered the many questions from our group. We all agreed that she had given us a fascinating insight into the connection between Richard III and the town of Barnard Castle.