

RICHARD III TOUR

Introduction at St Michael's Tower

Richard III was one of our most controversial monarchs
At the mention of his name most people have an opinion of him and no doubt you have your own thoughts

Was he the arch villain as depicted by later historians?
Was he the evil monster of Shakespeare's play?

In the film made in 1955, Lawrence Olivier hobbled about in black, hump on shoulder and with a withered arm. In the famous soliloquy "now is the winter of our discontent made glorious summer by this sun of York" he slyly confides in a close up to camera how wicked he is, mentions his deformities and tells how he will gain the throne.

NOTES to Guide

If you include this you may want to show a picture of Olivier in the role
You can see the clip from the film on YouTube

Was he the wicked uncle responsible for the disappearance, possibly the murder, of his nephews, the princes in the Tower?
This is the central mystery of his reign!

Richard III's reign has been the subject of intense scrutiny and many books have been written
The discovery of his remains in Leicester in 2015 dispels some of the ideas about him i.e crouch/ crook back, withered arm
He suffered from scoliosis, curvature of the spine, not an uncommon condition even today- Usain Bolt has it!
A trivial but true fact is that analysis of the soil on which his body lay revealed Richard was infected with round worm at the time of his death

The portrait by an unknown artist in the National Portrait Gallery has been analysed by experts and X-rayed and shown to have been overpainted. The one shoulder has been raised, the lips narrowed and the eyes too, making him look more sinister.

On this tour we will be concentrating on Richard's visit to Gloucester in 1483 during his Royal Progress and the background to it, the granting of an important Charter in the history of the city and looking at some of the places which were in existence at the time.

Richard III

A few facts about Richard's life
Born at Fotheringhay Castle in Northamptonshire on 2 October 1452, the eleventh child of Richard , Duke of York and his wife Cecily Neville.

In 1461, at merely nine years old, he was created Duke of Gloucester by his brother the newly crowned king Edward IV

He entered the household of his cousin Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick aka the Kingmaker, to begin his education as a nobleman and to be trained in the martial arts of the time.

He married Warwick's daughter Anne in 1472.

Richard became king in 1483 a few months after the sudden and unexpected death aged 40 of his brother Edward IV.

His reign was one of the shortest in English history- 26 months (2 years one month and 28 days).

Now move on to a point near what was the South Gate of the town to talk about the events involving the town prior to the Battle of Tewkesbury.

Stop 2 opposite St Mary de Crypt Church.

St Mary de Crypt church, one of the many churches in existence in the town in 15th century

Brief details about the church.

Gloucester was a walled town with 4 Gates,

We are standing near the site of the South Gate where a significant event in the town's history occurred.

Richard III was born into the House of York. His father's conflict with the Lancastrian king Henry VI was a major cause of the Wars of the Roses, which dominated Richard's early life. These civil wars were fought between the Houses of York and Lancaster for the right to the throne. A rose- white for York, red for Lancaster - was the emblem/ badge.

One of the decisive battles was fought at Tewkesbury in 1471.

Margaret of Anjou, wife of the deposed king Henry VI, the Lancastrian king, brought her army over from France in an attempt to win back the throne.

She landed in Weymouth and started to make her way across the country to meet up with her Lancastrian supporters.

She was accompanied by her son Edward and his wife, Anne, daughter of Warwick who later became the wife of Richard III

Edward IV was in London when she reached Exeter and it was uncertain whether she was bound for Wales or planned to turn towards London

She tried to deceive Edward but he outmanoeuvred her by planting spies to watch her movements

When it became obvious what she was up to Edward sent a messenger, posthaste, to Gloucester with orders to the Governor, Sir Richard Beauchamp, to defend the town until he arrived with assistance. He must at all costs hold out against the rebels and prevent them from crossing over the Severn to link up with the Lancastrian supporters in Wales.

The Queen's army raced through the night and arrived at Gloucester at 10 o'clock on the morning of Friday 3 May to find the gates barred and soldiers manning the walls

This was totally unexpected and a great shock to her as she knew that many of the citizens of Gloucester favoured her cause

She had no time for an assault on the town as she knew Edward was hot on her trail so she drove on towards the next possible crossing of the river
It was a hot day, her troops were exhausted and were defeated in battle at Tewkesbury on the next day. Her son was slain in the fighting.
Easy way to remember the date-1471=the number to dial to find out the last received phone call

Stop 3 the Plaque on the side of St Michael's Tower

The 15th century tower is all that remains of the church which once stood on this site.

NOTE to guide- you should include some brief information about the history of the Tower

1483 Charter

The plaque commemorates the Charter, properly known as Royal Letters Patent, which was granted by Richard III on 2 September 1483 as he had promised during his visit to the town in August of that year.

Under the Charter Gloucester obtained full municipal independence and became a county in its own right

Many privileges were granted including the right conferred on the Burgesses to elect a Mayor and 12 Aldermen

The Mayor to have a sword carried before him to mark the dignity of his role and a great privilege which survives to this day

Some will tell you there were Mayors before this date but this was title assumed by some on an informal basis

The king also remitted a substantial amount of the farm of £65 payable annually by the town. It was reduced to £20

The citizens were delighted by the granting of this charter of liberties. In former times when the town was not thriving it had, like many other towns, petitioned for a reduction of the farm due to hardship or abnormal expenses

Possibly it was the double connection that Richard had with Gloucester that prompted him to grant the Charter of Incorporation. Not only had his brother created him Duke of Gloucester but had granted him the farm of £65 that was payable by the city

Farm or Fee Farm is a fixed payment

For a borough it was the annual sum paid to the Exchequer in return for the king allowing it to administer the borough. Before the period of self government boroughs were farmed by local powerful men e.g county sheriffs or entrepreneurs able to make a profit from the role. This could lead to corruption and extortion

Term found in legal documents

Modern usage= farm out. Board out (children) or give work for which you are responsible to others for a fixed payment

Richard said "the good and faithful service of the bailiffs and burgesses in causes of great importance to us"

Stop 4 High Cross (if time permits)

Describe or show illustration

13 century, also functioned as a water conduit

Various statues of royal benefactors to the city

John, Henry III, Eleanor, Edward III, Richard II

Richard III statue added after his visit

Later Elizabeth I and Charles I

Statues now lost, taken away in 1751 when road widening carried out "for the greater convenience of carriages"

Stop 5 New Inn

Built between 1430 and 1450 = quite new when Richard came to Gloucester

Continue by outlining the history etc of the building

Large and lively place, the town probably would have welcomed the king with suitable festivities and perhaps some of his people would have sampled the delights of the inn!

Richard had encountered Henry Stafford, the Duke of Buckingham on the route. He was on his way home to Brecon by the main road which led through Gloucester and Hereford. This was the last time they were destined to see one another. Buckingham took leave of him at Gloucester, apparently on friendly terms, although there is little doubt that he was already plotting to overthrow Richard

NB. Buckingham didn't travel with Richard from London - a record from Magdalen College in Oxford shows he wasn't there.

Tudor Coat/ Shield

Granted to Gloucester in 1538, principally obtained by the efforts of Alderman Sir Thomas Bell, wealthy man who employed some 300 people in cap making
White rose of York, red rose of Lancaster

Henry Tudor, the victor at the Battle of Bosworth where Richard was killed, united the 2 Houses by marrying Elizabeth, the daughter of Edward IV. The two roses were combined to form the Tudor Rose (Rosa Mundi)

Point out other features, including the boar's head, the boar being Richard's emblem.
Is it significant that only the decapitated head is shown!

Older shield reverted to in 1647

Stop 6 The North Gate

We are now looking at St John's Church, near the site of the North Gate- another church which was here at the time of Richard's visit but no longer in the form he would have seen as it was rebuilt in 18th century although the 14th century tower and steeple still survive

Richard began his Royal Progress in July 1483, passing through Reading and Oxford. He stayed at Minster Lovell* before arriving at Gloucester at the beginning of August

He most likely would have arrived at the North Gate and been greeted with enthusiasm by the citizens of the town. Here was their own Duke, now the new king.
The first time a Duke of Gloucester had become king

Ordinary folk knew little of politics or the goings in London but he was known for his bravery in battle and his loyalty to his brother for many years

NB. His motto was "Loyaulte me Lie=loyalty binds me"

Civic authorities offered him a sum of money/expenses of the Progress which he graciously declined, saying he would rather have their love than their treasury. Also took no money for the grant of the Charter which was usually demanded.

*Home of his supporter Francis Lovell, other supporters were Catsby and Ratcliffe hence the rhyme "the Catte, the Ratte and Lovell our dog rulyth all Englande under an Hog"

Stop 7 The Cathedral

Short history

Tower / Abbot Seabrooke started 1450, completed 20 years before the king's visit. Magnificent sight, outstanding in a small town and a landmark for miles around.

Stop 8 Millers Green

The king was the guest of the Abbot as the Castle was not suitable. The Abbot's Lodging was on the site of the Old Kings School-Abbots lived in some comfort and style.

No contemporary local documents have been found but on 2 Aug the king sealed a document at "the monastrie at Gloucester"

Others in his party were lodged with the Prior in the Great Hall (Parliament Room). The Abbot was William Farley, the 28th Abbot (1472-1498) who presided with great credit for 16 years and had attended Richard's first parliament.

Farley finished the Lady Chapel in 1483 so would have been keen to show this "final glory of 15th century" to the king.

No records but the king would have attended Mass either privately in the Abbot's Chapel or publicly in the Abbey taking part in the procession and given the seat of honour in the west end of the Choir.

He would have seen the tomb of Edward II

During his stay he probably presided in legal matters / hearing and ruling on cases.*

His stay lasted 3 or 4 days. Left for Worcester via Tewkesbury

My own conclusions after much reading and research

Richard was intelligent, courageous, pious and loyal

*He was progressive and enlightened with major emphasis on justice for both rich and poor**

A man of the time/ king of the time which can be difficult for us to imagine

As one writer said "we don't know as much as we are led to believe we know!"

