

An aerial photograph of a river valley. A stone bridge with multiple arches spans the river. To the left of the bridge, a small village with several houses and a church is visible. The surrounding landscape is covered in dense trees, some with autumn foliage. The sky is filled with large, grey clouds.

On 21 September 1496,
a man described as Richard of
England – known to posterity
as Perkin Warbeck – and
James IV of Scotland and his
army crossed into England
at Coldstream...

RICHARD OF ENGLAND'S SCOTTISH PROCLAMATION

by Judith Ford, member of The Missing Princes Project

Their declared intention was to raise popular support for the former's claim to the English throne as Richard, younger son of Edward IV¹. Close to the time of the invasion a proclamation was issued, setting out the pretender's 'right wise quarrel' with Henry VII, and listing the dangers and disadvantages of Henry's rule. Richard quickly withdrew from England, appalled, it is said, by the reality of warfare, and discouraged by 'the failure of his manifesto denouncing Henry's misgovernment to elicit any visible support for his cause'².

The statesman and philosopher Sir Francis Bacon (1561–1626) included a transcription of the proclamation in his history of the reign of Henry VII, first published in 1622. Bacon noted that 'the original of this proclamation remaineth with Sir Robert Cotton... from whose manuscripts I have had much light for the servicing of this work'.³ This provenance has led the historian David Dunlop to assert that, 'for once Bacon is a very valuable source, since he appears to have consulted the Cotton MSS for Warbeck's [Richard's] proclamation'.⁴ However, manuscript copies of the proclamation, including copies of the same source used by Bacon, indicate that he made significant alterations to the text. It is not known how many copies of the proclamation were made by Richard's camp for distribution. Of four extant manuscript copies of the document, three are in the British Library. Two of these date from the early seventeenth century and are transcriptions of the document in the Cotton collection.⁵ Apart from variations in spelling, these copies are almost identical, but differ in significant respects from Bacon's published version. A third copy in the British Library dates from the nineteenth century, having apparently been made for a new edition of Sir George Buck's *History of Richard III* by Charles Yarnold (which was not completed).⁶ The 'original' document in the Cotton collection is believed to have been destroyed in a fire in 1731, and the Yarnold transcription was probably made from one of the seventeenth century copies. A fourth copy of the proclamation is in the Carreglwyd estate archive held by the National Library of Wales. Part of this archive is formed by a collection of papers 'accumulated by John Griffith, secretary to Henry Howard (1540–1614), 1st Earl of Northampton'. The earl was the great-great-grandson of John, Duke of Norfolk (c. 1425–85) who was killed at Bosworth fighting for Richard III. Many of the papers in John Griffith's collection came 'into his hands during his residence in the Earl of Northampton's household [and] remained in [his hands] after [the earl's] death'.⁷ Griffith's papers are contained in Series 1 of the Carreglwyd archive, which includes the proclamation.⁸ The date of the National Library of

Wales manuscript is unclear. It is catalogued as a copy, with a creation date of '1479' (the '7' and the '9' have apparently been transposed in error). The text is almost identical to that of the 1616 copies, but the document may be earlier in date.^{9,10}

Given Griffith's connections, it would appear unlikely that the Carreglwyd archive would include a copy of the proclamation unless it was thought to be authentic, and at the very least, an accurate copy of the original. The activities of Henry Howard's great-grandfather, Thomas, Earl of Surrey (1443–1524), on Henry VII's behalf during 1496 and 1497 would have provided ample opportunities to seize copies of the proclamation, which may have been passed down to his great-grandson.¹¹ Northampton was 'the intimate and patron' of Sir Robert Cotton¹² and it is possible either that the earl was the source of the proclamation in the Cotton collection, or that a copy was made for Howard from the original in the Cotton library. The antiquarian network of the early seventeenth century included Sir George Buck (1560–1622), who consulted Sir Robert Cotton, and members of the Howard family for his history (and defence) of Richard III.¹³

'Richard by grace of gode...'

All the manuscript copies begin with a formal declaration of the identity claimed by the author of the proclamation: 'Richard by the grace of gode kinge of England and of France lorde of Ireland Prince of Wales to all those that these our present [l]ettres shalbe seen or rede and to every of them gretinge'. Bacon's published text includes the information that the author of the proclamation is the son of Edward IV, but this is absent from the manuscript copies. That absence might seem odd, given that the proclamation was intended to appeal not only to those who had reason to keep themselves informed of such issues, but to the wider population. Some background information is provided in the manuscript copies. Richard asserts that:

wee in oure tender age escaped by godes might out of the tower of London and were secretlie conveyed over the sea into other divers countries there remayninge certaine years as unknowne in w[hi]ch season that happened one Henry sonne to Edmond Tiddre Earle of Richmond created sonne to Owen Tiddre of lowe birth in the Countrie of Wales to come from franncce and enter into thys our Realme and by subtile and false meanes to obteyne the crowne of the same unto us as of right appertaininge

The wording of this section of the document is of considerable interest, as it indicates Richard's and his advisers' perceptions of ➤



Who was Perkin Warbeck?

In 1491 a handsome young man, splendidly dressed, arrived in Cork. Acclaimed to be of royal descent, he called himself Richard of England, asserting he was the younger son of Edward IV. History, however, calls him Perkin Warbeck. His claim was supported by King Charles VIII of France, Maximilian the King of the Romans, Margaret the Dowager Duchess of Burgundy and King James IV of Scotland. He attempted an invasion of England in July 1495 but his troops were routed and he sailed to Ireland before making his way to Scotland. Then with James IV he invaded England in September 1496 but the venture met with no success and he sailed from Ayr with his Scottish wife. He landed in Cornwall in September 1497 to join West Country rebels protesting about taxes: Henry VII moved quickly against this threat and Richard/Perkin surrendered at Beaulieu Abbey. At Taunton he confessed his imposture to Henry. Initially under house arrest he tried to escape in 1498 and when captured was sent to the Tower. Then with fellow prisoner Edward, Earl of Warwick, they conspired or were the victims of an *agent provocateur* and were convicted of treason and executed in 1499. Wendy Moorhen

PHOTOGRAPH: ALAMY

the information that would be both understood and accepted by the general population in the mid-1490s. Richard's reference to his escape from the Tower of London implies that the public at large were expected to accept that he had been in some respect confined there. Yet no mention is made of Edward, the elder of the 'princes in the Tower'. Henry Tudor is accused of using 'false means' to obtain the crown. This is almost certainly a reference to Henry's claim to the throne based on 'right of conquest' and his 'lineal descent' from Henry VI, but no reference is made to the fact that he had 'obtained' the throne from Richard III.

There is no specific mention of Richard III in the manuscript copies. The central theme of the proclamation is that of a general, non-factional statement of the virtues and competence of the old (Yorkist) order, and a denunciation of the corruption, ineptitude and brutality of Henry Tudor's rule. The focus is firmly on the 'quarrel' between Richard, as the representative of the old order, and Henry VII. In this carefully constructed document no previous monarchs are named, and Richard refers instead to his 'noble progenitors kings of England'. Bacon, however, includes in his published transcription the following reference to Richard III:

For King Richard our unnatural uncle although desire of rule did blind him, yet in his other actions, like a true Plantagenet, was noble and loved the honour of the realm and the contentment and comfort of his nobles and people.¹⁴

Since these words do not appear in the manuscript copies, they have apparently been added by Bacon, who prefaced his published transcription of the proclamation with the words that the original was 'of this tenor following'.¹⁵ The theme of a 'bad man' being a 'good prince' and making good laws, was central to some early seventeenth-century appraisals of Richard III.¹⁶

Proclamations were used as powerful instruments of communication and propaganda, and the accusations against Tudor, as recorded in Richard's proclamation, are wide-ranging and damning. Henry is described as 'our extreme and mortal enemy', who had 'imagined compassed and wrought all the subtle ways and means he could devise to our final destruction', and of having 'falsely surmised us to be a feyned p[er]son gevinge us yknames [sic] soe abusing your minds'. Henry is also accused of importuning Richard's supporters to 'forsake and leave our right wise quarrell and so dep[ar]t from our service'. Indeed, Sir Robert Clifford, one of the 'senior figures at the English court [who had been] drawn into plotting on Warbeck's [Richard's] behalf'¹⁷, is singled out as an example of those who

had been persuaded to return to Henry VII's side.¹⁸

Henry, the proclamation alleges, had 'subtily by craftie meanes levied outrageous and inportable summes of money upon the hole bodie of our realme to the great hurt and impoverishinge of the same', and it is observed that he 'needed not to have made the foresaid costages and importune labour if [Richard] had bene such a feyned p[er]son as he untruly surmiseth...'

Having made an initial denunciation of Tudor, the proclamation takes care to emphasise the honourable intentions of James IV of Scotland, 'by whose ayde and supportac[i]on wee in p[ro]per p[er]son bee nowe by godes grace entered into thys our realme of England where wee shall shew our self openly unto you all'.

This wording indicates that the proclamation was intended to be distributed once the invasion had begun. It is firmly stated in the proclamation that as soon as:

[King James] may finde or see our subiects and natural liege people according to right and the duties of their allegiances resort lovinglie unto us w[i]th such power as by their puissance¹⁹ shall now bee able of likelihood to distresse and suborne our enemies he is fully sett and determined to returne home againe quietlie w[i]th his people into his owne lande without doeinge or suffer to be done any hurt or p[re]judice unto our Realme or the inhabitants of the same.

Although Richard III is not mentioned in the manuscript transcriptions, the tenets of his own proclamation against Henry Tudor (23 June 1485) are in evidence, and Richard of England's proclamation may be seen as confirming those earlier predictions.²⁰ The 1485 document had asserted that if Henry should achieve his 'false intent and purpose' of taking the throne of England, then 'every man his life, livelihood, and goods would be taken into [Henry's] hands, and there would ensue disinheriting and destruction of all the noble and worshipful blood of this Realm for ever.'²¹ Richard of England's proclamation



Royal endorsements: Perkin Warbeck's claim was supported by the future Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I (right) and King James IV of Scotland (left), who gave his cousin, Lady Katherine Gordon, in marriage

accuses Henry VII of having caused the murder of 'diverse nobles of this our realm'.

In the British Library manuscript copies, the first in a list of these nobles is 'Lord Fitzwalter', who was beheaded at Calais, on or about 18 November 1496, after the proclamation was (apparently) first issued.²² The manuscript copy in the National Library of Wales does not include Fitzwalter, and the list of 'murdered' nobles begins with the words, 'our cozen the lord ... Sir William Stanley Sir Robert Chamberlayne ...' Nor does Bacon include Fitzwalter's name, instead starting with the words 'our cousin Sir William Stanley ...' As Fitzwalter is unlikely to have been described by Richard of England as his cousin, Bacon may have adjusted the text of the original to 'correct' what he saw as a mistake. Bacon's list also differs from the manuscript copies of the proclamation in that, following the name of Stanley, he uses the words 'lord chamberlain'²³ instead of the name 'Sir Robert Chamberlayne'. A possible explanation for some of these discrepancies is that Fitzwalter's name was added during or after November 1496, to existing copies of the proclamation, and in some instances was inserted incorrectly, possibly superscript, after the words 'our cozen'. If original copies of the proclamation were amended, this may suggest that Richard and his supporters anticipated a further foray into England from Scotland.²⁴ ➡



Royal fastness: Prior to his invasion of England, Perkin Warbeck spent time at Falkland Palace in Fife. It may be where the proclamation was written

The proclamation then accuses Henry VII of continuing to imprison Edward, Earl of Warwick ‘and other [individuals]’, and asserts (again echoing Richard III’s proclamation) that he is ‘withholdinge from them theire rightfull Inheritance to the intent they no [sic] should be of might & power to ayd & assist us at our need after the dewtie of their ligances’.

Henry’s ‘lowly’ lineage

Henry VII’s ‘lowly’ lineage and connections are emphasised once more by the accusation that Richard of England’s sisters, his cousin Warwick’s sister, and ‘divers other ladies of the blood Royall’ had been compelled to marry ‘kinsmen & frendes [of Henry Tudor] of simple and lowe degree’. At the close of this section of the document, a list of the men who then surrounded Henry at court is provided to contrast with the earlier list of executed nobles and gentlemen. The named men and ‘such other Catiffes²⁵ and villaynes of simple birth w[hi]ch by subtile inventions and pillinge of the people’ had, according to the proclamation, ‘bene the p[r]incipall finders occasioners and Counsellors of the misrule and mischeife now reyninge in England’.

The economic and social consequences of that ‘misrule’ are set out in detail. These include offences against the Church, murders, extortions and ‘the daily pillinge²⁶ of the people by dismes²⁷ taskes tallages benevolences and other unlawfull impositions and grievous exactions with many other heinous offences to the likely distruction and desolation of the hole realme’. The author of the proclamation uses a striking analogy to contrast the care taken of the realm by the old order, with that of Henry VII and his adherents. Richard promises to ‘put ourselves effectually in our uttermost devoyre [endeavours] not as a stepdame but as the very trew moder of the child langwishinge or standing in p[er]jill to redresse and subdew the foresaid mischeife and misrule’. The implication being that Tudor might have married into the established dynasty and

“Richard’s proclamation relied upon a powerfully-worded denunciation of Henry VII”

thereby gained some acceptance, but that his concern for his subjects and the realm could never match that of the rightful heir. This assertion of the old and true order’s maternalistic role adds to a picture that is being presented of the completeness, naturalness and benevolence of the rule that would be achieved by the restoration of the old regime. Bacon does not include this element of the proclamation in his published transcription, perhaps because his sovereign, James I, would not have appreciated allusions to a maternal aspect of kingship.

The proclamation further notes that, ‘by godes grace and the helpe and assistance of the great lords of our blode with the counsell of other sadd persones of approved pollecie & prudence & experience’ the efficient, considerate rule and proper and open administration of justice, trade and other fiscal issues would be restored. Richard of England’s assurance of his ‘tender zeale and affection to indifferent administracion of justice and the publique weale of the land’ brings to mind remarks made about Richard III by some contemporary and near-contemporary commentators.²⁸ This wording may well have been the prompt for Bacon’s comment, discussed above, regarding Richard III’s love of the contentment and comfort of his nobles and people.

The proclamation offers substantial rewards to anyone who will ‘stop and lett’ Tudor’s passage out of the realm, should he try to escape. The accusation is made that Henry had sent out of the country ‘treasure of this our realme purposing to depart after in proper person’, presumably to emphasise the king’s insecurity. The body of the proclamation concludes with the assertion that those



The Pretender’s wife: Lady Katherine Gordon became a lady in waiting to Elizabeth of York. She is buried at St Nicholas, Fyfield, Oxfordshire

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Public humiliation: Perkin Warbeck was put in the stocks prior to his execution in 1499 in London, following his second attempt on the throne

who had previously sided with Henry VII would be pardoned (a familiar clause in such proclamations), while a different fate awaits those who continued 'to take their false quarrel and stande in [Henry's] defence against us'. The proclamation adds: 'We lett you witt²⁹... wee shall come and enter upon them ... everie of them as our traitoures & rebells and sede them punished according'.

The manuscript transcriptions differ in the way they end. The copy of the proclamation in Wales concludes with 'shalbe unto us deserved'. The copy of the 'original' in the Cotton library, made on 18 August 1616, attempts to convey a monogram, or signature, at the end. This is followed by an 'R' (Rex), and the word 'FINIS' is written below and to the left of the 'signature'. This may indicate that the document in the Cotton collection was indeed original, and bore the signature of Richard of England.

The manuscript copies of Richard's proclamation reveal his manifesto to have relied upon a powerfully worded denunciation of Henry VII. The document was clearly intended to appeal to all sections of society and to unite existing factions against the Tudor king. It offered a robust (and occasionally surprising) argument for the restoration of the old Yorkist order. The provenance of the 'original' document used by the 1616 copyists and that of the copy held by the National Library of Wales have not been established with certainty, but the participation of Henry Howard in the antiquarian network of the early seventeenth century, and John Griffith's connection with Howard, are of considerable interest. ●

Dr Judith Ford is a member of the Society and The Missing Princes Project, which led her to research this topic. The author wishes to thank fellow project member Joanne Larnier for her translation of the proclamation contained in Jean-Didier Chastelain's 'L'imposture de Perkin Warbeck'

Primary source

A transcription of the proclamation at the National Library of Wales is on The Missing Princes Project website (www.revealingrichardiii.com).
Above extracts are taken from that transcription unless otherwise stated

Footnotes: (1) I. Arthurson, *The Perkin Warbeck Conspiracy 1491–1499*, 1997, p. 148. (2) It has been suggested that Scotland's support for Richard undermined his cause by D. Dunlop, 'The "Masked Comedian": Perkin Warbeck's Adventures in Scotland and England from 1495–1497', *The Scottish Historical Review*, vol. 70. No. 190, Part 2 (Oct. 1991), p. 109. (3) *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2004, contribution by S. J. Gunn, 'Warbeck, Perkin [Pierrechon de Werbecque; alias Richard Plantagenet, duke of York]'. (4) F. Bacon, *The Works of Francis Bacon*, vol. 5, 1826, pp. 122–6; Sir Robert Cotton (1570–1631), 1st baronet of Connington Hall, Huntingdonshire, Member of Parliament and antiquarian, founder of the Cotton Library. (5) Dunlop, 'The "Masked Comedian"', p. 109, fn. 3. (6) British Library (BL), Harley MS 283, ff. 123v – 124v. The document is annotated 'The originall of this – old written hand is in the hands of Sir Robert Cottones the 18 of August 1616'; BL Additional Manuscript 4160 ff.4 – 7v. A. F. Pollard, *The Reign of Henry VII*, 1913, pp. 150–2, provides a transcription of this latter manuscript, and states that it also dates from 1616, and is a copy of the original in the Cotton collection. (7) BL Egerton MS 2219. See BL catalogue entry: 'Collections for a new edition of Sir George Buck's History of Richard III., by Charles Yarnold; consisting of a transcript, with collations, of Books ii.–v. from Eg. MS. 2,216, draft and printed. Egerton MS 2217–2219: 19th century.'; A. F. Pollard described this transcription as 'less accurate' than the 1616 copies. Pollard, *The Reign of Henry VII*, p. 150. (8) *Historical Manuscripts Commission, 5th Report*, 1876, p. 406 (9) National Library of Wales (hereafter NLW), Carreglwyd Estate Archive, Series 1/695. (10) Small differences include the assertion, in the 1616 copies, that Henry Tudor had importuned Richard of England's servants to 'murder our persone', leading to the conclusion that the NLW copy is a more accurate version of the proclamation. (11) It is very difficult to accurately date a manuscript from the hand in which it is written. The NLW document has some characteristics that suggest an earlier date of creation than c.1600.

and it is noteworthy that the text of the NLW copy exactly fits two sides of a single piece of parchment, which would be of advantage when distributing the document to the population. (12) Arthurson, pp. 117, 155, 174–5. (13) D. Howarth, 'Sir Robert Cotton and the Commemoration of Famous Men', *The British Library Journal*, vol. 18, No.1 (Spring 1992), p. 7. (14) For more on the interests of early seventeenth-century antiquarians, historians and politicians, see D. Weil Baker, 'Jacobean Historiography and the Election of Richard III', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, vol. 70, No.3 (September 2007), pp. 311–42; J. L. Heilbron, *The Ghost of Galileo in a Forgotten Painting from the English Civil War*, 2021, pp. 135–9. (15) Bacon, *Works*, p. 123. (16) Bacon, *Works*, p. 122. (17) Baker, 'Jacobean Historiography and the Election of Richard III', p. 315. (18) Gunn, 'Warbeck, Perkin . . .', ODNB, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/28669>. (19) Arthurson, pp. 83–5. (20) Might or force. <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/puissance>. (21) Some of the statements reflect a longer tradition. Arthurson, p. 146. (22) D. Candlin, 'A Proclamation Against Henry Tudor, 23 June 1485', *Ricardian Bulletin*, 2007, p. 23. (23) Arthurson, *The Perkin Warbeck Conspiracy*, pp. 79, 85–6, 97, 152; Pollard, *The Reign of Henry VII*, p. 144. (24) Bacon, *Works*, p. 123. Arthurson, p. 149, notes that after the unsuccessful 'raid' of September 1496, 'there is no evidence that James's financial support for Warbeck slackened'. (25) Wretches. *The Oxford English Dictionary*, vol. 2, 1978 <https://archive.org/stream/in.ernet.dli.2015.99993/2015.99993>. The-Oxford-English-Dictionary-Vol-2c_djvu.txt. (26) Robbing. <https://findwords.info/term/pilling>. (27) From Old French, 'disme', tenth. <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary/MED11672>. (28) See, for example, K. Dockray and P. Hammond, *Richard III from Contemporary Chronicles, Letters and Records*, 2018, pp. 62–4. (29) From Middle English 'witen', or 'wethe', meaning 'be assured' or 'to be certain about'. <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary/MED52987/>.