

Pretenders and Rebellions

November's meeting of the Woodhouse and Woodhouse Eaves local history group was a presentation by Darren Harris entitled 'Pretenders and Rebellions.' Darren set the scene by explaining how the War of the Roses, lasting over 32 years, involved sixteen battles between feuding sides. Starting from the familiar local standpoint of the Battle of Bosworth Darren reminded us that many of Richard III's followers, having escaped the battlefield with their lives, continued to support campaigns aimed at removing Henry VII from the throne. Among the rebellions Darren considered were the Stafford-Lovell Rebellion in 1486, and the revolt led by a mythical figure called Robin of Redesdale near Ripon. He also revealed the part played by John de la Pole, Earl of Lincoln, (Richard III's heir after death of his son in 1484) in various plots including an assassination attempt in York in 1486.



The Battle of Bosworth

Darren explored the attempts by Richard Symonds to train the young Lambert Simnel, in courtly ways by impersonating the Earl of Warwick (rumoured to have died in the Tower of London) in the hope he could seize the throne.

As the Earl of Warwick, Simnel was taken to Ireland and crowned King Edward VI in Dublin. He was even paraded around the streets of Dublin on the shoulders of D'Arcy of Platten (Ireland's tallest man). However, their jubilation was short lived when news spread that Henry VII had paraded the real Warwick around the streets of London.

After a series of bloody battles in the North and Midlands this rebellion was finally put down, two years after Bosworth, at Stoke Field, near Newark. Richard Symonds was imprisoned for life whilst Lambert Simnel was lucky to survive and was even put to work as a spit-turner in the royal kitchens – later became a royal falconer.

Following a series of disastrous harvests and the crippling costs of defending Brittany (England's ally fighting the French) Henry imposed higher taxes on many parts of his kingdom. The north was especially hit and it's probably not a surprise to learn that in 1488 rebellion broke out in April in Yorkshire and Durham. On April 28th the Earl of Northumberland, commissioned by the king to collect taxes, was dragged from his horse near York and killed by rebels. Legend has it that a note was attached to the body blaming him for death of Richard III. Henry VII immediately sent an army of 8,000 north to squash this rebellion, led by the Earl of Surrey.

Darren talked about Perkin Warbeck who also lay claim the English throne claiming to be one of the Princes in the tower. As Edward Vs younger brother his supporters claimed he'd been spared by his brother's (unidentified) murderers because of his age and innocence. In 1491, Warbeck landed in Ireland in the vain hope of gaining support for an active rebellion and Warbeck was forced to flea to mainland Europe. In January 1495 all the conspirators were arrested and although six were later pardoned, Sir William Stanley was convicted of treason and executed in 1495 for supporting Warbeck. Warbeck escaped to Scotland where he was well-received by James IV of Scotland. Although James attempted to raise supporting forces to invade England in 1496 no English support for Warbeck materialised at this time.

Darren interrupted his discussion on Warbeck with an examination of the Cornish Rebellion prompted by Henry's decision to levy higher taxes to pay for the war against the Scots. Although this rebellion drew in support from the southern coastal counties it eventually collapsed at the Battle of Deptford Bridge on 17 June 1497 when the Cornish army (led by Michael An Gof and Thomas Flamank) was defeated by Henry's army of 25,000. Darren's talk concluded with the 2nd invasion instigated in Cornwall once more by the supporters of Perkin Warbeck in Sept. 1497, hoping to capitalise on Cornish resentment in the aftermath of their uprising only three months earlier.. However this rebellion like all the others failed and Warbeck paid for his treachery with his life being hung at Tyburn on 23 November 1499. Yorkist plots continued to fester for many more years prompting in the execution in 1513 of Edmund de la Pole (descended from Richard III's heir) so he couldn't be proclaimed king in Henry's absence fighting in France. For the same reason Edmund's successor Richard de la Pole (the White Rose) was also killed in 1525 by Tudor assassins whilst fighting for the French against an Imperial-Spanish army. By the 1530's Yorkist hopes still centred on the Courtenay and Pole families but their plots to overthrow Henry VII and later his son Henry VIII came to nothing and his decision to execute the elderly (67) Margaret Pole, Countess of Shrewsbury in 1571 put a stop to any serious plotting to restore the Yorkist line to the monarchy.

A tremendous amount of research had clearly gone into the evening's presentation which was warmly received by the group. At our next meeting on December 9th we have a talk on the Martin family of the Brand given by Robert Martin. Visitors welcome.

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