

THE MYSTERIOUS AFFAIR AT STONY STRATFORD

An Opinion Piece by Annette Carson

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With an interest in Richard III since the 1950s, I was a regular reader of non-fiction books about him for half a century before it occurred to me to write my own. The serious biographical surveys (leaving aside the shoals of ‘Princes in the Tower whodunnits’, which I avoided) cast him almost without exception as a villain. Of 20th-century authors I could count on the fingers of one hand the number of dissenters: Kendall, Lamb, Williamson, Potter – among whom Paul Murray Kendall was the only substantial biographer. After enduring an onslaught of Hicks at the end of the century (“FROM MODEL OF NOBILITY TO MURDERER AND MONSTER”), I thought as we entered the noughties it was time to present a thoroughgoing case for the other side of the story.

Though not actually a biography, at 130,000 words my book *Richard III: The Maligned King* (The History Press, 2008) was the first substantial revisionist appraisal of Richard III’s reign for a generation, and Ricardians have embraced it. With 12,000 sold to date, and countless borrowings from libraries, I now see many of its contents repeated by people who haven’t even read it.



In *The Maligned King*, as in all my books, I guided readers to consult the original sources from which historians draw their information ... and which they like to keep close to their chests as if ordinary mortals can’t be trusted to digest them. I set out the most important ones in an appendix to that book, complete with my personal appraisals so that no reader could be in doubt as to the degree of confidence I placed in each one, and why. Most importantly, I made it crystal clear that the only sources I felt carried any credibility to be relied on were those written relatively contemporaneously. By which I mean, broadly, written before Henry VII came to the throne and ushered in his Tudor outlook on history. In this way I differed radically from most writers about Richard III, even the magisterial Kendall whose work, regrettably, embraced Thomas More and various of his contemporaries and imitators.

Even so, the key narrative sources that have made it into my category here – principally Domenico Mancini and the Crowland Chronicle – are both written with their thumb heavily on the scales. Obviously if we discard *all* such sources we’ll be throwing out the baby with the bathwater; but if we do our research carefully we can often distinguish between items that can be corroborated or others that must be rejected. It is my constant endeavour to let readers know how I arrive at my conclusions (as witness this preamble) and I hope my assertions can usually be seen as deduced from recorded facts. This is why I am making it clear that this is an opinion piece: the facts I present are taken from accounts that I believe to be more credible than not, even though those accounts may be embedded within written sources that are in other ways questionable. Having extracted what I judge to be *generally believable descriptions* of events – descriptions that differ only in matters of detail – I have drawn conclusions from them that are purely my own. N.B. I have departed from the practice of providing footnotes because I am here working with written sources that are well known and easily identifiable.

Out of all the surviving narrative sources about Richard III, the most important coverage of the events following Edward IV’s death up to Richard III’s coronation is provided in a manuscript written by Domenico Mancini, a Franco-Italian cleric who was visiting London at the time, April–July 1483. France had broken a long-standing treaty with England at the end of 1482 and Mancini was evidently gathering information for the French court. Then King Edward IV suddenly died and he stayed on to note the extraordinary aftermath. With the typical attitudes of a century ago, the original editor of this document in the 1930s, C.A.J. Armstrong, bestowed on it a title misrendered from the Latin: *The Usurpation of Richard III*. I vowed to drag our understanding of this vital document into the 21st century and have now published my own new translation, together with appraisal and historical analysis: *Domenico Mancini, de occupatione regni Anglie* (Imprimis, 2021). Not only is the translation less biased towards the Victorian school of thought, but it also reflects more accurately where and how Mancini labours under misapprehensions about England. Until you know clearly from the new translation what Mancini’s thought-processes were, you can’t really understand how he evaluated Richard’s actions.

Although there are swathes in Mancini that are sheer gossip, especially in his historical scene-setting, often there are useful facts to be found once you strip away the moralizing and editorializing. There are also nuggets of reporting that point to a well-informed source, and this applies particularly to the revelations he includes about Edward V. This source is generally acknowledged to have been Dr John Argentine from Edward V’s household, the only informant Mancini actually names. On the basis that Mancini’s account of the events at Northampton and Stony Stratford owes its origins to Argentine who was, apparently, with the king at the time, it is one of those sections of his document that I think we can really believe ... making allowances for a few errors that are fairly easy to spot.

Throughout my researches and my five Ricardian books, my spotlight has been trained on Richard the man, whether as Duke of Gloucester or as Richard III. This has led me to try to analyse his authority, offices and powers through his own eyes and from the point of view of his own epoch, rather than through the rear-view mirror of later centuries and commentators. His era was a time when swingeing powers could be concentrated in a single person, and during the course of Richard’s lifetime his brother, Edward IV, appointed him Warden of the West Marches, Lord High Constable of England, Lord Great Chamberlain of England, Lord High Admiral of England, and since 1480 had relied on him as Lieutenant-General of England’s land forces in his Scottish wars. Had it come to new hostilities against France (as he threatened), Edward would have had wars on two fronts which he could never have managed alone. Richard was his seasoned general and the one man Edward entrusted with overall military command. My work has convinced me that Richard dealt with developing situations as a military strategist. He was an active soldier, and when a soldier perceives danger or the threat of danger, his first thoughts are *to act* to secure his position. I believe the incident we’re examining exemplifies this.

It is not my goal to judge how well Richard discharged his many responsibilities. Nor is it to twitch aside a curtain to reveal a ‘verray parfit gentil knight’ whose decisions and actions were impeccable. Richard made mistakes politically, and no doubt militarily too. What we can record of him as a military leader is that the final tribute of his brother King Edward, in his Parliament of 1483, was to reward him publicly and express in him his utmost confidence. This is on record in the Rolls of Parliament.

Domenico Mancini was well aware of Richard’s exemplary reputation, and put into words Edward’s implicit trust in him: ‘Such was his renown in warfare that whenever anything difficult and

dangerous had to be done on behalf of the realm it would be entrusted to his judgement and his leadership.’ However, Mancini was writing a report aimed not just at recounting current events, but recounting them while appealing to French ears and eyes. And since Louis XI had decided to breach the treaty by which he had been expensively buying-off the threat of invasion by his old adversary Edward IV, it was necessary for Mancini to reflect the revived anti-English mood in France. A modern appreciation of Mancini’s writing must therefore recognize the evident bias that pervades his report. Not to mention his poor geography and inadequate grasp of how England was governed. But let’s not go there.

In the Introduction to my new edition I have drawn attention to all this and a range of other factors, important to me, on which historians in general have not felt it necessary to comment. In particular, whether through laziness or complacency, it has been an article of faith to accept C.A.J. Armstrong’s observations when comparing Mancini with later writers (e.g. Thomas More and the Tudor chroniclers), citing the occurrence of certain commonalities *as evidence* that what More and his followers wrote must have been accurate. This is to place the 16th-century cart outrageously before the 15th-century horse, a myth which I hope my new edition now resoundingly explodes. There seems to me no doubt whatsoever that Mancini’s partisan observations rippled through the busy literary circles of the era and were *echoed* by later writers who assiduously mined all such sources for information.

One of the few aspects of Mancini on which some historians felt it worth expending effort was the attempt to trace his sources. Dr John Argentine was early identified by Armstrong and has a useful entry in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (ODNB). However, the temptation to delve more deeply into the text was usually stymied by fear of emerging tainted with pro-Ricardian conclusions, thus inviting the dreaded ‘academic ridicule’. It was, for example, deemed entirely sensible to identify Richard and his circle as the source of evil propaganda against his own family, the house of York (expatiated on at length by A.J. Pollard). But to identify anyone else, even this hostile French correspondent, as propagandizing against the English ruling house had to be discounted. Mancini was, according to Armstrong, a ‘detached observer’. Hence many of Armstrong’s historical notes go into contortions about matters which ought to be perfectly straightforward. And this is why we must set aside most of Armstrong’s comments about the events we are about to explore, which occurred on Tuesday and Wednesday, 29–30 April 1483, at Northampton and Stony Stratford.



The aftermath of Edward IV's death

This is a tale of rapidly-moving developments in the aftermath of 9 April 1483, the generally accepted date of Edward IV's unexpected death at the early age of 40, when his son and heir, Edward V, was summoned to London to begin his reign. These events were, I believe, mainly told to Mancini by Dr John Argentine, Edward V's physician. Not only is he the sole informant that Mancini names in his text as a source, but he proves to be convincingly well informed. We may certainly deduce that the new young king was accompanied by his physician on his week-long journey relocating himself and his household from his previous residence in Ludlow, along with a large number of attendants to care for his physical and spiritual well-being. With healthcare being an obvious precaution, especially at a time of high child mortality, I do not see that the presence of Argentine provides any hint as to Edward V's having a poor state of health. This is a subject I have covered exhaustively in *The Maligned King*, and I will linger here only to say that Mancini would have been an extremely remiss provider of information to the circles around the French court if he had failed to discover from Argentine that the new King of England was, as has been suggested in the past, a sick little boy.

Mancini's descriptions of what transpired on their journey sound very much as if derived from a first-hand observer, right down to actual conversations, and since Mancini was clearly not an eyewitness himself, it seems to me apparent that Argentine provided them – although in hindsight, after the elapse of some weeks. It is known that the doctor had spent time in Italy, and their common language must have made for fluency of communication. Further, given due allowance for Argentine's understandable bias in favour of the regime that employed him, he seems to provide an entirely coherent narrative. In offering the following analysis, therefore, I am working on the assumption that he was not only Mancini's source, but a credible one.

In terms of Edward V's transfer to London, we learn that Richard Duke of Gloucester and Harry Duke of Buckingham made advance arrangements to meet the king's party as they, too, made their way from their respective estates to the capital. Buckingham had played very little part in Edward IV's government, apparently due to his poor relationship with the late king. Mancini explains this by saying he had been forced at a young age, against his desires and best interests, to marry one of the queen's sisters: there was a yawning disparity between the rank of the royal duke and that of his commoner wife, and of course she brought with her no rich estates or inheritance. This is not the place to delve into the historical stories reported by Mancini to set the scene in his early chapters, but when we come to Argentine's report of Buckingham's encounter with Edward V, it is noticeable that the duke displays a heated reaction at the mention of the queen's name.

Richard of Gloucester was Edward IV's last surviving brother, uncle to Edward V; he was the senior royal duke of the realm and adult heir to the crown. Given that Buckingham had much to gain by associating himself with Richard, and would have known how to reach him right away by messenger, it seems evident that it was Buckingham who invited himself into the picture. This would be after Richard had already written to Ludlow generously suggesting a meeting *en route* so that the new king's party and his ducal party could enter London together in a much-needed display of unity. I am confident that Richard would have made this suggestion to Earl Rivers, not the other way around, as will become clear later when we consider that Rivers's relatives in London were at the time busy demoting Richard in his absence.

I speak advisedly of a generous offer of much-needed unity. I have for a long time assumed that students of the late 15th century must be aware that the interregnum between the death of Edward IV and the formal accession of his child-heir was in itself an equivocal and potentially hazardous situation. Curiously, I see little of this reflected in books on the period, which tend to be rather misty-eyed about how the government and nobility clasped this 12-year-old son of York to their collective bosom. Perhaps we should spend a moment considering England's position in the world.

A key aspect of this situation too often overlooked is that by the time Edward IV died he had managed to place England at odds with most of the countries that surrounded her: the French, the Scots, his difficult neighbours in Brittany, and even his erstwhile friends in the Low Countries. It was a bad time for an inexperienced child to succeed to the throne.

There is another consideration which traditional historians often discount, and that is the unpopularity in certain quarters of queen Elizabeth Woodville's family. Some recent writers have been at pains to claim that the recorded dismay at the time of Edward's unsuitable marriage soon evaporated once the queen showed herself worthy of her new rank and her numerous relatives became entrenched. It is true that the negative narrative about the Woodville clan that pervades Mancini's early chapters, overblown though it is, finds the historical *mésalliance* with Elizabeth little more than

a rich vein of gossip, typical of an age that disesteemed women. His actual censure concentrates more on the odium that he claims surrounded her Woodville relatives at court: their scheming, their grasping venality, their moral laxity, and their increasing hold over the king. This thread reciting the common discredit in which they were held persists throughout Mancini's reporting, past and present. It may indeed stem from a heavily prejudiced source, but it cannot be dismissed when we find that the *Crowland Chronicle* (I cite the Pronay and Cox edition in this article) includes a report identical to Mancini's to the effect that it was openly said by some that the uncles and brothers on the mother's side ought not to dominate the young king in his minority. Though this view may principally reflect 'the Westminster village', nevertheless opinions of people at Westminster shaped the loyalties of their wider dependants. There is enough concordance between the writers on this point for it to be taken seriously, especially when they are not throwaway remarks: in both cases there is a considerable amount of context for them.

At this time the influence of the Woodvilles on the heir to the throne was impregnable: it had been encouraged by Edward IV throughout his son's upbringing thanks to their ten-year control of the Prince of Wales at his establishment at Ludlow. Presumably the king saw himself as invincible, imagining a time in the future tutoring his son in the ways of government when he ceased being a child at the prescribed age of 14. Unfortunately Edward IV departed this life too early, leaving the 12-year-old child well-educated but without experience in the ways of ruling the realm. This problem was compounded because the Woodvilles had been generally passed over by Edward IV for national office. How much could the young Edward V learn from them of government, military command, state finances, international relations and diplomacy? Some historians point to previous child-kings (e.g. Richard II, Henry VI) assuming personal rule at a tender age; but it should be remembered that those boys, young though they were, had by then spent some years on the throne of England while learning royal statesmanship whether by means of guidance, observation or sheer osmosis. Edward V enjoyed no such prior apprenticeship. So it was vital for the good of the realm that the right adults be appointed who had sufficient knowledge to introduce him to the responsibilities of governance ... whilst effecting a transition smooth enough not to expose England to internal unrest or external peril.

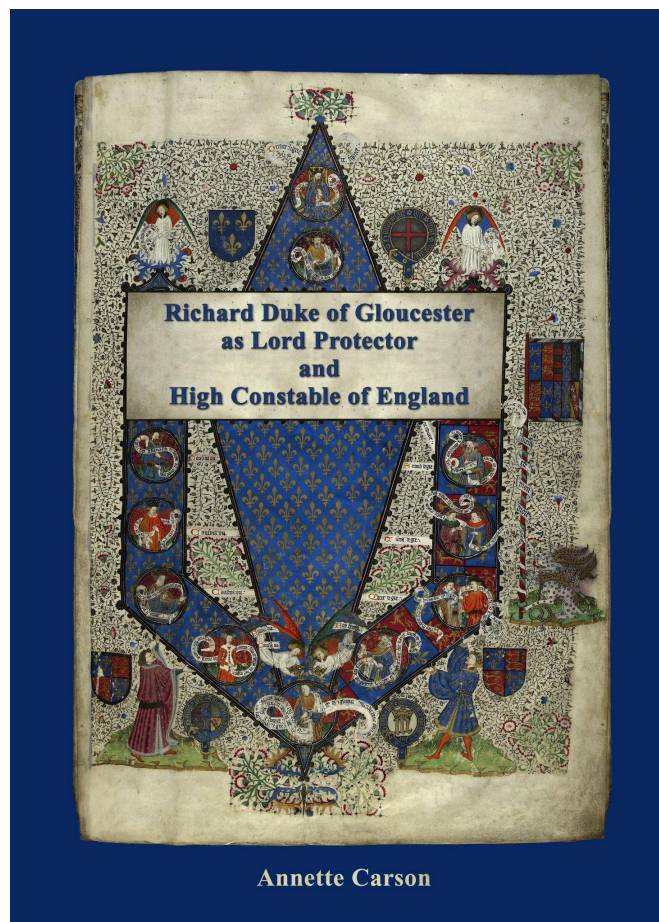
Given his own preferences, any new king would surely choose to be surrounded by familiar faces. And why should Edward, cocooned with his own council and household at Ludlow, be aware that his mother's family had any negative reputation? The boy's decided opinion of their worth is quoted by Mancini via Argentine, possibly close to verbatim, in his riposte when urged that they must be replaced by new advisers now that he was king: 'He had those courtiers that his father had furnished for him,' he said, 'and respecting his father's foresight he believed those assigned to him were good and faithful: for himself, he had seen nothing of evil in them, and wished to have them unless they should be proven evil. As for the governance of the realm, such care little concerned his former courtiers as he had great confidence in the nobles and the queen.'

This was hardly reassuring. Involving his mother in the governance of the realm revealed a concept of the future which was alarmingly alien to England (an attempt on the part of Henry VI's queen Margaret of Anjou had been rebuffed in favour of a protectorate in 1454). The boy may not have spoken those exact words, but clearly he mentioned the queen in this context because Argentine remembered the Duke of Buckingham's intemperate reaction to his argument, as mentioned above, which set the duke off into a rant about governance not being women's business.

The death of Edward IV had therefore left the realm exposed internationally, and consigned to the hands of an inexperienced lad who was by no means everyone's ideal successor. Being unexpected, the king's demise was also unprepared-for. All he apparently managed was to add some codicils to a will so out-of-date that it left his finances in a highly questionable state, to the extent that his new executors, which did not include the queen, had to take special measures including sale of assets. To this must be added the exiguous circumstances in which he left the state treasury, as demonstrated by surviving Financial Memoranda of the Reign of Edward V [ed. Rosemary Horrox]. And whatever Edward IV's codicils provided, which Mancini says was a protectorate, the King's Council readily took it upon themselves to debate and reject those provisions.

Perhaps it needs to be noted that by convention it was on the shoulders of the existing King's Council, men who had been appointed by the king and had sworn the councillors' oath, that such matters of interim governance fell in a situation like this. In 1483 there were some 50 of Edward IV's councillors, but only a select few seem to have been taking decisions at Westminster in April. By precedent established in 1422 and twice in the 1450s, when the king was a minor, or otherwise incapable of ruling personally, the King's Council had put to Parliament, and Parliament had approved, their advice for a protectorate to be established. A protectorate was a uniquely English

power-sharing measure which had worked very efficiently three times in living memory. Briefly summarized, the Lord Protector's role was the defence of the realm; the Council's role was to administer the government; and the personal care of the king (and, if a minor, his education) was assigned to a separately appointed group. Only by official appointment could any person(s) legitimately control or supersede the powers of a king; which is why such cases had been expeditiously put to Parliament, debated, and the terms agreed and ratified. Had a protectorate been agreed in April 1483 with the king's uncle as Protector, in accordance with the precedents of 1422, 1454 and 1455, the roles involved were already well established and could have smoothly taken effect pending Parliament's ratification. That Parliament would have favoured a protectorate is indicated in that, a few weeks later (probably by early June) the Council commissioned the Chancellor to prepare a policy statement for Edward V's first Parliament which still survives in draft: it provided for a protectorate that would continue after his coronation. The entire statement is reproduced as an Appendix in my book *Richard Duke of Gloucester as Lord Protector and High Constable of England* (Imprimis, 2015).



The Woodville-dominated Council in April demonstrated significantly poor judgement by rejecting such a universally recognized arrangement, and specifically denying Richard the office of Lord Protector. Indeed, they not only denied him that office, which automatically chimed with his existing national military offices, but they deliberately usurped his powers of national military oversight by arranging for the queen's brother, Edward Woodville and her son, Thomas Grey to clear out the state treasury, raise a fleet of 20 vessels, and provision it with 3,000 men plus equipment, ostensibly to counter-attack French piracy in the English Channel. (Richard was actually the only figure of national standing who knew, from his part in continued international negotiations, that the Woodville fleet was the worst and most profligate means of dealing with endemic piracy in the Channel, at a time when even the Calais garrison was woefully undermanned.)

In terms of governance the group of councillors then present at Westminster opted for an immediate coronation accompanied by some kind of arrangement in which they clearly saw themselves playing the major parts – described by Mancini as ‘government by many persons’ (*administratio per plures*) – for which there was no workable precedent. By conjuring up this vague phrase they resisted the official delegation of any part of the king's responsibility for ruling the realm

to any named, qualified and appointed personnel. This meant that the 12-year-old king was free to rule in his own right.

To ratify such an unprecedented situation, with personal rule by this minor king, Parliament needed to assemble and give its imprimatur, in which arena the Woodville faction would probably have been outnumbered. Whatever regime Parliament might have approved, there was scant likelihood that any individuals it appointed to counsel and work with the king would have been those who were presently making such ill-judged decisions. This is evidently why these decision-makers set a date for the coronation but *set no date for any Parliament*. They were gambling on bringing about a *fait accompli* in the immediate future: relying on a combination of past support for the prevailing regime, together with Edward V's concurrence in their plans to entrench themselves as the king's preferred circle.

Looking at the timetable of Council meetings in April, in which Crowland accords with Mancini, we are informed that their meetings to discuss Edward V's minority reign took place subsequent to Edward IV's funeral (which ended at Windsor on 18 April). There is no hint that the Council met earlier. But indications show that from the moment the late king died the queen's family made it their business to arrange the immediate coronation of his son while the boy was still reliant on the network they had surrounded him with in Ludlow as Prince of Wales, and which they were getting ready to replicate in London. This is clear from a letter written by Edward V from Ludlow on 16 April, to which we shall return later, in which Edward announced that he was proceeding in haste to London to be crowned. Edward IV is taken to have died on 9 April, and the messenger bringing the news had arrived on 14 April after four or five days on the road. This news, and these instructions, were probably penned right after the king's death.

Mancini and Crowland recount the proceedings that took place in council following Edward IV's funeral, when the Woodvilles' actions met with some considerable dissent. If Mancini reported accurately (which is, admittedly, open to question), those who argued against a protectorate lied about dangers experienced in the past when protectors were appointed who allegedly refused to relinquish their office (never happened!). The Crowland author, whose sympathies were wont to rest with the widowed queen, wrote that the Council 'keenly desired that this prince should succeed his father in all his glory'. Yet elsewhere in his account (as quoted above, and echoed by Mancini) he reports opposition in council to allowing the queen's relatives to continue exerting control over him. As for Richard, we learn from Mancini/Argentine, quoting the gist of his spoken words, that he shared the same view that young Edward's maternal relatives must be separated from him: they had been a corrupting influence on Edward IV and should be prevented from playing the same game with the son.

The Crowland Chronicle reports that Edward IV's confidant, chamberlain and councillor William, Baron Hastings, who was vigorously pursuing a feud with the Woodvilles, was so resistant to their encroachment that he threatened fellow councillors that he would resort to his captaincy of England's sole standing army, that of the Calais pale, if a limit were not placed on the armed force which they were raising to escort the new king from Ludlow. *A limit on the King of England's escort!* A cap of maximum 2,000 men was duly agreed, in order to extinguish 'every spark of murmuring and unrest' (*murmuris et turbationis scintillam*, in Latin, which could equally well be translated as 'protest and disorder'). So already this was by no means a smooth transition, even with a Council packed with supporters of the regime that had governed for most of Edward IV's reign.

It is also worth considering the exhortation that was sent out by the Council to the Mercers' Company and other civic dignitaries and livery companies of the capital, advising them that the Mayor of London had been charged to command the companies and constables 'to see the peace be kept every to their power, and not to provoke, do or cause any debate or strife' and to assist the authorities 'against all and every such person intending or breaking the King's peace', for which purpose everyone was 'to be ready in harness if need should so require'. And Edward V's letter of 16 April from Ludlow, mentioned above, addressed to the Mayor of Bishop's Lynn (modern King's Lynn), similarly desired the Mayor to keep the peace: 'to see that our peace be surely kept and good governance had within the town of Lynn', and for the civic authority to be exercised notwithstanding any person of any degree whatsoever.

These concerns, conventional though they may be thought, were not necessarily merely formulaic. There were times in the affairs of state when unrest could be predictable, and this was one such. It leads us back to the same question: to what extent the accession of this underage child – and a Woodville-dominated child at that – was welcomed. We may wonder what exactly his minders were thinking when they envisioned surrounding him with an immoderate number of horse for his traverse

through a succession of English counties. Hence my observation that Richard's gesture of public harmony, uniting their retinues as they entered London, was a generous one. As the realm's foremost military commander there was no better man to have at one's side in case of trouble.

Before proceeding to recount Edward V's onward journey, I should like to refer again to his letter to Lynn (doubtless composed for him), which stated his intention to be crowned but mentioned nothing of any Parliament. The letter announced that God had ordained him to 'succeed and inherit my said lord and father in the pre-eminence and dignity royal of the crowns of England and France' ... and 'so to govern rule and protect this our realm of England as shall be to His pleasure and our honour' ... and 'to be at our city of London in all convenient haste by God's grace to be crowned at Westminster'.

Marie Barnfield has recently been re-examining this text and her reading of its language invites the conclusion that even at this early date, two days after learning that his father had died, his letter set out precisely that policy which was to be promulgated by the Woodville-dominated King's Council when it later met in London, i.e. for him to be crowned in haste and to rule immediately in avoidance of any protectorate. Moreover, by writing in his own name, using his own signet, she sees Edward V taking personal ownership of the Woodville aims expressed as what was divinely wanted of him, i.e. to take up the reins of government himself. The intended effect of this letter, she suggests, was to give the appearance of legitimacy to their position, characterizing their intended control of the government as the king's personal rule.

The reporting of events in Mancini's Chapter Four

In the process of retelling the events of late April 1483 we must first address a few editorial errors that are easy to dismiss as pure Mancini. They start with the opening sentences of Chapter Four, the chapter within which the events of our story are neatly encapsulated. Here Mancini attempts to set the scene by imagining how the two royal dukes – Richard of Gloucester and Harry of Buckingham – cooked up a conspiracy after getting together on the road and comparing grudges as they made their way to the prearranged rendezvous. Owing to Mancini's erroneous idea that the Duke of Gloucester came from Gloucester, he offers this conspiracy scenario based on his assumption that the two dukes met because they were both travelling from the West. Actually Richard's itinerary from York joined the Great North Road, so any such meeting was impossible. This did not prevent later chroniclers of the Tudor era adopting Mancini's conspiracy theory.

This is of a piece with another of Mancini's conspiracy theories, also adopted by chroniclers, in which Baron Hastings sent secret letters and messengers to Duke Richard giving him potentially treasonous instructions to waylay and snatch the new king before he reached London ... which (lo and behold) turns out to presage exactly the actions that Mancini's narrative then describes. How our author supposedly came by the content of those secret, potentially treasonous letters he does not vouchsafe to his readers. It seems that he (or his informant) constructed this story on the basis that Hastings communicated with Richard soon after the late king's death, which he probably did, alerting Richard to his personal alarm at the actions of the Woodvilles and the size of their army destined to come from Wales. There is a hint of confirmation in the Crowland Chronicle that Hastings sent such a communication, in that it says he was content with an escort of maximum 2,000 men prescribed by the Council 'for he was confident enough, so it seemed, that the dukes of Gloucester and Buckingham ... would bring with them no less a number'. But it's a tenuous clue, without corroboration, and rather than any conspiracy on Richard's part it says much more about how Hastings was squaring up to his adversaries in London in the aftermath of Edward IV's death. Having lost his former patron, it would certainly suit him to invoke Richard's name as if they had reached some kind of personal accord.

Regrettably, taken with the story of the imagined contents of Hastings's supposed letter, the idea of a preplanned revenge conspiracy, *rendering Richard's actions towards Edward V malevolent and unworthy*, has been baked into the views of traditional historians ... on the sole basis of Mancini's allegation and Crowland's tenuous hint. That it has been disseminated so widely is principally thanks to Thomas More's genius in sniffing out Mancini's story of the 'conspirator Hastings' as a promising plot device, and making it a key feature of his idiosyncratic satirical drama about Richard III. Let us set aside such fictions and proceed with our narrative.

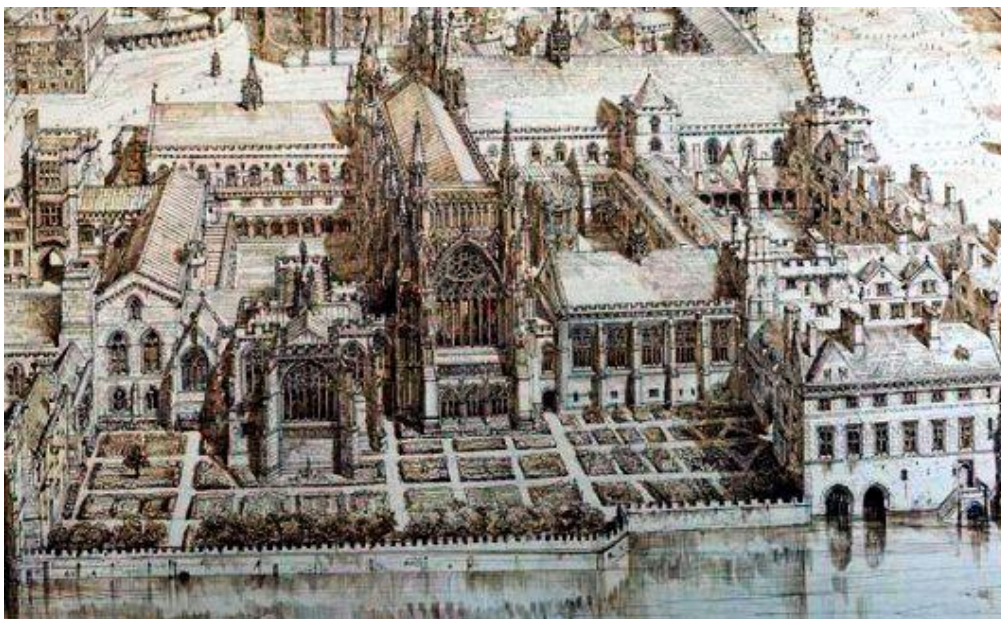
Mancini says the rendezvous for the three retinues to meet was at a location 'near the twelfth milestone from the city [of London]'. This is another of his geographical aberrations. He is assuming the location was St Alban's, one of two great historic junctions of Watling Street, the Roman road that ran roughly north-south to London. He has confused this with the other great junction at Weedon Bec

near their actual rendezvous of Northampton, some 50 miles farther north than St Alban's but still within easy reach of the capital. Fortunately we have the English writer of the Crowland Chronicle to thank for knowing the correct place-names. Nevertheless, we have no reason to suppose the Crowland author had *better intelligence* on the episode than Argentine, since (a) he was not present, and (b) some considerable time had passed before the late autumn of 1485 when he wrote it down. The great advantage of supplementing our knowledge by reference to the Crowland Chronicle is that it supplies some important material, especially geographical material, which Mancini overlooks. But it is Argentine's overall account that rings true when the two are occasionally in (minor) conflict.

In the absence of contrary information historians assume that Edward V's uncle, Anthony Woodville, Earl Rivers, was at Ludlow with his nephew when news arrived on 14 April that Edward IV had died on 9 April. For ten years under Edward IV's ordinances he had held the personal appointment of governor of the Prince of Wales, surrounding the child with favoured appointees. Scarcely eight weeks previously the late king had revised and updated these ordinances which can be seen transcribed in full in another of the appendices to my book *Richard Duke of Gloucester as Lord Protector and High Constable of England*. Familiarity with this book will aid understanding and supply sources for several of the points raised here. In the aforementioned ordinances the Prince of Wales was to remain under the control of Rivers's governance for a further year and a half until he reached his age of majority at 14. At the same time – very conveniently as it turned out – these revised ordinances gave Rivers new personal authority to *move the prince from place to place*; and (according to Rivers) letters patent also authorized him to *raise troops* in the March of Wales. Since both these actions were immediately called for in response to the late king's death, it was Rivers's responsibility to take charge of arrangements. Had he not been present, there would have been consternation and delay caused by establishing the necessary official authorities to take such actions.

Within the ensuing ten days they were able to raise and equip the king's escort of 2,000 men, while completing all the arrangements to pack up and make roadworthy the entire Ludlow contingent: a royal relocation which doubtless involved several hundred men and women of the household including clergy, servants, cooks, attendants and artisans, numerous animals and their grooms, farriers and keepers, and untold amounts of furniture, clothing and other personal baggage. There was a small delay when it became apparent they could not reach their destination by St George's Day, 23 April, when it was necessary for the new sovereign to observe the saint's day and the ceremonies of the Order of the Garter that accompanied it. Apparently they left on the 24th, the same date that Richard of Gloucester, accompanied by a suitable retinue of gentlemen in mourning, probably left York.

Meanwhile at Westminster . . .



Questions of who knew what and when are germane to this narrative, so we must pause a moment to review the parallel activities at Westminster. If we look at the dates of Edward IV's funeral observances, which began on 16 April and ended at Windsor on the 18th, and compare the five days it took for the news of his death to reach Ludlow on 14 April, it may be seen how little opportunity had been allowed for magnates from more distant parts of the realm to be present (the same lack of

opportunity would be applied when announcing the coronation date). Edward's obsequies were attended by leading citizens of London, by members of the king's household, and by magnates 'from neighbouring estates' as Mancini describes those who attended the ensuing Council meetings. There were significant absences of senior nobility who resided at a distance, including Earl Rivers and Richard, Duke of Gloucester, not to mention the new king himself who was not present in council. We know nothing of how Richard came to be notified personally of his brother's death.

There was no shortage of clergy at the funeral, since they had been preparing to attend a convocation on the 18th. In the process of confirming its postponement due to the king's death, a bidding prayer was composed in which the only royal persons mentioned by name were Edward V and the queen, Elizabeth Woodville. Richard's name was already erased from the picture.

According to Mancini, when the late king's will was read it envisaged a protectorate during his son's minority, naming Richard as Lord Protector of the Realm. Mancini's account is fraught with difficulty in this connection because our Italian visitor failed to understand what a Protector was, and assumed that he was some kind of head of government. C.A.J. Armstrong had an equally vague concept of the Protector's role; he not only failed to notice Mancini's error but compounded it. But although we have to be careful of Mancini's terminology because of his ignorance, there is no doubting the title of Protector (*protectorem*) that he uses when citing Edward's will. The reason I believe Mancini reported Edward's wish for a protectorate correctly is very simple: he refers to it in relation to Richard several times in his text, and never once denies its veracity or validity. Anyone familiar with his style of narration will know he is always quick to repudiate any statement that he decides to view as false.

Too many commentators have wrongly asserted, following Mancini, that a Protector had responsibility for the person of the king himself. And too many have assumed, thanks to the allegations of Richard's detractors, that Edward should not have trusted him 'to protect his son'. The truth of the matter needs to be fully understood, and is explained in my book on the subject and in the Introduction to my new edition of Mancini. In summary a protectorate was a collaborative administration invoked when the king was unable to undertake personal rule, e.g. during a child's minority. In a protectorate the king's person was placed in the care of a group of guardians and educators during his minority, while the governance of the realm lay in the hands of the King's Council under Parliament. The role of the Protector was spelt out explicitly by Parliament as primarily concerned with the security of the kingdom; his full title was Protector and Defender of the Church and Realm in England and Principal Councillor of the King. As the nation's foremost military commander Richard was the obvious person to fulfil the security responsibilities; and with his mastery of administration, justice and international affairs he was well qualified to be a senior adviser during the inexperienced young king's minority.

Moreover, the office of Protector during a minority had by precedent (and in living memory) been held by the minor king's royal uncles: John, Duke of Bedford and Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester. The continuing King's Council, who were presently at Westminster taking these decisions, knew this perfectly well; and knew that Richard, Duke of York, the father of Richard and Edward IV, had twice been appointed Protector when Henry VI was deemed incapable to rule as an adult. That Edward should choose to bequeath this office to Richard was entirely in accordance with precedent and with his bestowal on him of that portfolio of national offices already mentioned.

It is a matter of some significance that Edward IV's provisions for a protectorate were designed to ensure a reasonable distribution of powers between Richard in the Lord Protector's role, which would keep him occupied with defence of the realm internally and internationally, and the queen's Woodville family whom Edward would have envisaged Parliament appointing to the continued guardianship of the boy-king's person, thus fulfilling their desire for ongoing influence over him. The late king would have realized that the ambitions of his wife's family needed satisfying, and to deny them a slice of power would only store up trouble. In any case the boy would qualify to assume personal rule in a year and a half, when he turned 14. It was a tried and tested power-sharing system that had worked well in the past, under provisions stipulated by Parliament; and in the real world of 1483 it was one the late king could scarcely have bettered for his son in the circumstances.

The controversy at Westminster obviously began immediately after Edward's funeral (if not before) when the Crowland Chronicle tells us that the widowed queen Elizabeth Woodville presided over a meeting of the King's Council. Let's imagine it took place on Saturday 19 April. As we have observed, in addition to clergy there were on hand and available to meet in council a number of Londoners, members of the late king's household, and magnates 'from neighbouring estates': by no means representative of the Great Council which the situation surely called for, or even a Privy

Council formed of senior councillors. This meeting's members are not recorded, but from Mancini we learn that Edward IV's closest courtiers had been those who shared his debauched lifestyle: Elizabeth's two sons by her first marriage (Thomas and Richard Grey) and one of her brothers (Edward Woodville), plus the chamberlain of his household, William Hastings. His last known activity was recreational: he went fishing with friends, quite likely including the aforementioned characters. They all play a leading part in Mancini's report of what follows, and their influence on outcomes must be taken into account.

Mancini states that the decision which won the day was that 'government should be exercised by many persons, among whom the duke would not be excluded but ... would be numbered the foremost'. This simply meant that Richard would receive lip-service within the group that was already conducting this exercise – 'would be given honour' in Mancini's words – while the 'kingly authority' would be 'safeguarded' ('kept in safety' – *in tuto locaretur*). Since there was no suggestion of anyone being appointed with interim powers to deputize for any element of that 'kingly authority', the obvious conclusion is that this authority would be vested wholly in the person of the 12-year-old Edward V as soon as he was crowned.

The words quoted above are Mancini's summation, but he leaves much detail missing. Unfortunately I cannot go into an analysis of Mancini here, and anyway you will find it dealt with in detail in my new edition. Suffice it to say that Mancini was familiar with the regency system that was the norm for a minority in every European government; indeed, just such a regency had been instituted in France after Louis XI's death by the time Mancini returned there and wrote his retrospective report in December 1483. He had no idea what a protectorate was, and clearly thought that a Protector would have been head of the English government. His remarks should also be viewed in the context of the subsequent months during which he saw Richard accede to the crown without (by his lights) legal justification.

Moreover, the Woodvilles' actions described by Mancini, which *appear* to be born of *apprehension*, should be seen in another context ... the context of a story Mancini has built up beforehand, telling us that (1) through their jealousy they had connived at Edward IV's execution of his brother George (Duke of Clarence); that (2) they had incurred Richard's hatred for this; and (3) they were consequently frightened of reprisals if he gained too much power. The careful reader will wish to examine Mancini's entire analysis of this political situation and consider what truths can be unravelled from it.

So far as we are able to ascertain from historical records, and despite Mancini's back-story, everything indicates that relations between Richard and the Woodvilles until now had been entirely amicable. I will not digress so far as to pursue this question here, as it is already covered in my new edition of Mancini, plus I'm planning to explore the issue in a separate article. I will say there is a reek of hindsight-driven antipathy to Richard in the details supplied to Mancini by whichever informant(s) claimed he harboured hostility to his in-laws for decades before they acted against him in April 1483. For his part, with his home life and energies concentrated in the North, it is hard to imagine what the duke might have done to cause such a rupture in relations. Yet Mancini conveys negative attitudes to Richard from the Woodville-dominated Council well before his arrival in London. With the ring of authenticity, he gives what seems to be a verbatim quotation of the words he attributes to the queen's eldest son, Thomas Grey: 'We are so important that even without the king's uncle we can make and enforce these decisions.'

We do not know when or if the Council contacted Richard with news of their deliberations. Indeed, why would they? Apparently by some means he did hear of Edward IV's wish for a protectorate, and learnt there was opposition to it: for he wrote to the Council, as reported by Mancini, expressing his loyalty unto death towards the late king's heirs and requesting that, 'when they made arrangements for governing the country they should take due account of that dignity to which he was entitled by law and by his brother's decrees.' This letter had a great effect on hearers who, 'having previously favoured the duke in their hearts from their belief in his integrity,' now openly supported his right to be Protector. But it was of course far too late. Despite protests of several members that the Council should not take such radical steps before Richard arrived, the majority had already decided against a protectorate. Having fixed a date for the coronation on 4 May, they sent a message to Ludlow advising the young king that he should arrive in London three days beforehand.

By any calculations, if Mancini is correct, the Council had made their decision within a couple of post-funeral meetings. That message must have been penned by about 20 April if it was to reach Ludlow in time to be effective, although in fact all parties would have been aware by now that Edward V had been notified of his father's death and would already be making preparations to leave.

The only trace of correspondence that has survived is the record of that much earlier letter (16 April) from Edward V to Lynn saying that he'd received the news of his father's death on 14 April. It does not say who he received it from. The only clue we have is the report in Crowland that it was 'the benevolent queen' who corresponded with her son at Ludlow.

If we go by Marie Barnfield's reading of the wording of Edward V's letter – in which his stated intention is to repair to 'our city of London in all convenient haste ... to be crowned at Westminster' – the policy decision for him to be crowned and to exercise personal rule must actually have been taken by the Woodvilles in London right after Edward IV died.

Again one is led to reflect whether this haste derived from doubts as to his universal acceptance, given these precipitate moves to consolidate power, perhaps even before meetings of the Council took place. It was not only decisions that were rushed through in April by these self-appointed 'many people' without waiting for the arrival of the king in person, but also a string of executive actions were taken too, despite their determination that he should rule in his own right. In *The Coronation of Richard III*, the authors conclude that Council meetings must have taken place even before Edward IV's funeral, although Mancini specifies that they met afterwards. Just to remind ourselves, in addition to levying taxes (not all of them legal), they cleaned out the small amount of funds that remained in the state treasury at the Tower, and usurped Richard's military authority by appointing the queen's brother, Edward Woodville, to assemble and command a fleet of vessels and her son, Thomas Grey, to provide soldiers and equipment to man them. The fleet had already set to sea by the time King Edward V was even due in London on 1 May.

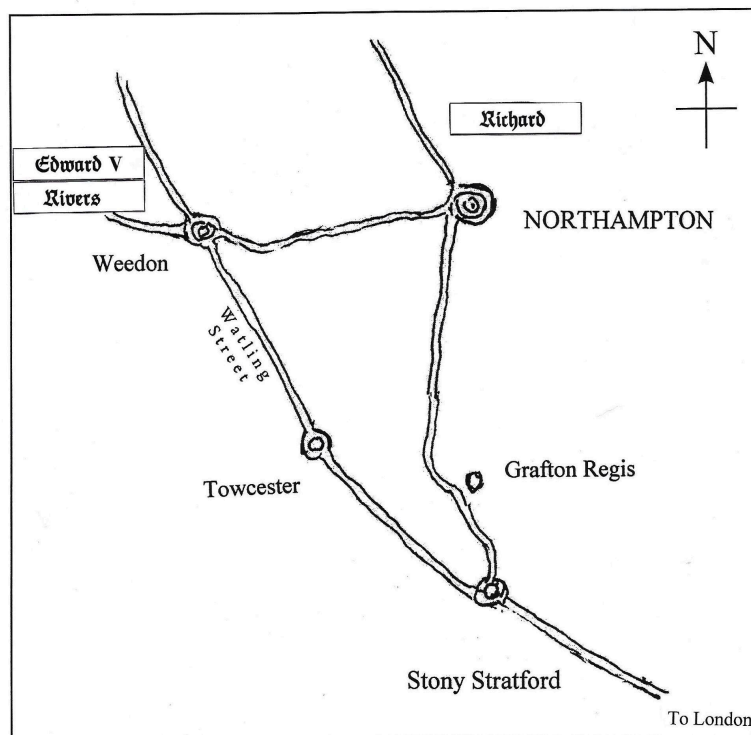
The boy-king's crowning was similarly scheduled to be enacted at the shortest possible notice and almost immediately he arrived, which entailed another snub for Gloucester who, as Great Chamberlain, should have been a key figure in arranging the coronation. It is worth noting that the Woodville party's haste would require Edward to be conducted upon arrival straight to the Tower of London, from where the king must by tradition make his procession through the streets to Westminster Abbey for the crowning and anointing. Being installed at the Tower, with Thomas Grey in control as Deputy Constable, would mean that he would easily be kept within Woodville influence. Then, without specified adults appointed to guide or deputize for him, his coronation would give him *carte blanche* to rule as a child while consulting with whichever councillors and ministers appealed to him. The calling of Parliament could probably be put off for a few months, even though it meant living on credit and accumulating ever-mounting debts. [When Richard arrived he was forced to subsidize Edward V out of his own pocket.] Meanwhile the intervening period would have been sufficient for the boy's family to consolidate their positions and establish themselves as a virtually impermeable circle around him. In the past, arrangements such as this had created resentment on the part of those who saw themselves excluded, creating dissension as factions vied forcefully to influence a malleable king. A parallel situation, within living memory, had led to the deposition of Henry VI.

On the road with Edward V, Richard of Gloucester and Harry of Buckingham

From Mancini's report, presumably supplied by Dr John Argentine, we learn that as the king approached the way to Northampton ('when he had drawn near') he and his party 'forgathered at a certain location, there to await his uncle'. They stayed there until they knew Richard had almost reached their Northampton rendezvous. As may be seen from the sketch-plan below, the obvious place for Rivers to halt and muster the king's escort while checking to see if Richard had arrived was at Weedon (officially 'Weedon Bec'), about 6–7 miles west of Northampton. This historic junction with Watling Street was for a long time known as 'Weedon on the Street'.

But in fact, says Argentine (who was presumably with them): 'as his uncle neared that place the young king gave orders for just about all his company, which consisted of a large number of companions brought from Wales, to move onward to other places closer to London.' The reason given for this was 'so that the appointed location [Northampton] might be better suited to receiving his uncle'. 'Better suited' [*commodior*] sounds as if it might mean 'had more accommodation', although that isn't what is actually said by Argentine/Mancini. Nor is this explanation likely to be the result of Argentine's first-hand knowledge: it's doubtful that he recce'd Northampton personally. So although this is the official story, it is not something that our informant knew to be the case.

The reason this story is doubtful is that Northampton was not a small town (although the 1936 translation of Mancini described it as a 'village'). It was in fact an important urban centre, the next key staging post after London and St Alban's on the Great North Road, with its own castle, abbey, and town walls.



Mancini describes it as ‘a particularly well fortified town’, and John Speed’s map of 1610 (below) shows its town walls still standing 125 years later. In former years Northampton had hosted Parliaments. I have been unable to ascertain where Richard might have lodged, or appointed as lodgings for the king, but it might have been at The Tower, a major residence that originally formed part of the defensive walls, and which was now in the possession of the Chauncy family. It is seen marked ‘T’ on Speed’s map, lying within the south-east quadrant of the town walls adjacent to Derngate.

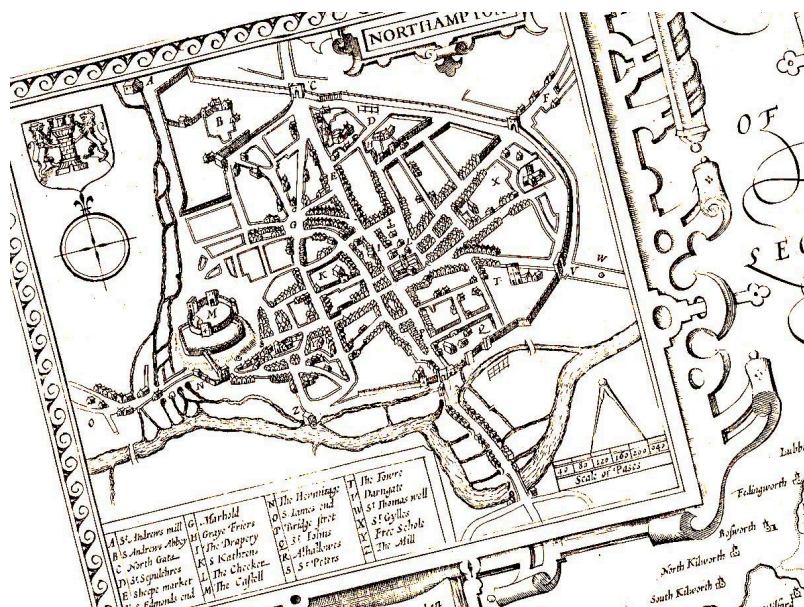
In terms of accommodation for the king his visit would not, of course, have entailed finding space at Northampton for the whole of his army – the main body of foot-soldiers would have gone nowhere near the town, they would have made shift for themselves, as armies always did, camping in outlying areas. Only the king and his immediate company would have required quarters within the town walls of Northampton. It had been Richard’s invitation to meet with his new sovereign and to pay homage in person, so it was his duty as a subject to make everything in order. Doubtless he would have prepared himself suitably for the occasion, bearing costly gifts personally chosen to please the boy and to console him when they exchanged commiserations on the death of his father, Richard’s brother.

As for accommodations, Richard would certainly have arranged the best available, having sent his harbingers ahead to ensure all was ready for the king’s household as well as for his own party and Buckingham’s. An equal consideration would have been to send word as early as possible to Northampton’s mayor and civic leaders, alerting them to make ready for the royal visit and arrange a suitable reception and evening meal. In mediaeval times it was traditional for a king – especially a new king – to make a Royal Entry (or Joyous Entry) into a particular town or city, which entailed a formal entry procession with ceremonies of homage by the civic authorities followed by festivities and feasting. In the case of Northampton probably the haste of the king’s party ruled out such grand celebrations; but on the other hand any such royal visit would be doubly significant because the family seat of the Woodvilles was a mere ten miles away, so Northampton was the household’s local town. This, I believe, is why Argentine, not a local man himself, nevertheless noted the fact that the king moved on and failed to stop: bypassing the town would have been the talk of the neighbourhood.

A suggestion has been made (by whom I don’t know) that a problem of some sort arose because the king’s arrival at Northampton might have clashed with market day. The Northamptonshire Archives and Heritage Service has confirmed to me that the earliest record of markets held in Northampton is in a 16th-century charter indicating that the town’s market days were Wednesday, Friday and Saturday. Whether this reflected the existing position or an altered arrangement is not entirely clear, but these were very much the traditional days for English markets. Since the king was

due to arrive on Tuesday 29 April and leave early (probably at dawn) on Wednesday the 30th, there would have been little disruption even with Wednesday as a market day.

I'm sure I don't have to remind readers to abandon our 21st-century viewpoint when contemplating a 15th-century king. The king's grace was ultimately the source of favour and patronage to you, your family, your community. If your local representatives were presented with a perhaps once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to be favoured with the king's presence, they did not cavil over days of the week. They would be expected to mount a full-scale civic welcome, at the same time using the opportunity to advantage, perhaps handing in petitions or seeking permission to press their case personally. This was especially pertinent when there was a new regime which might well be unaware or unheeding of promises made to you by the old regime. The good burghers of Northampton would have been well gratified by the substantial advantages of welcoming the King of England to their town, and appropriate rearrangements were part of the expected procedure.



Returning to Richard's progress from York to Northampton, by 26 April he had arrived at Nottingham. Possibly new messages reached him there, although we cannot know how much information on matters at Westminster they contained.

Did he know by then that his brother's wish to observe England's precedents for governance by protectorate had been overturned? That despite his father's ordinances and will, the boy Edward V was, in essence, to cease being a minor at the age of 12, taking on his shoulders the full weight of government and defence of the realm?

Did Richard also know that his own military authority as commander of England's forces by land and sea had been usurped by the upstarts Edward Woodville and Thomas Grey?

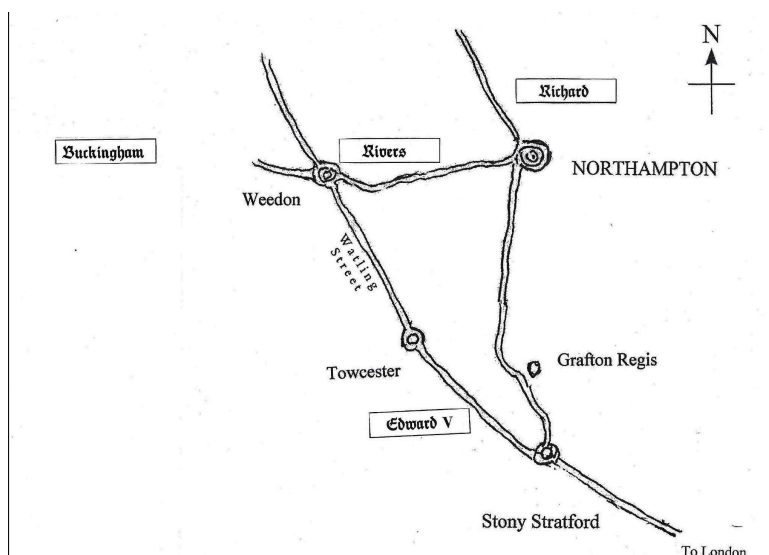
At some point on his journey south Richard would have started to hear of these developments, even if only cursorily and intermittently. He had written letters urging the rightness of his brother's plans for the realm. Had they really been overturned so peremptorily? Or had wiser heads prevailed? Imagine him reaching Northampton in this dubious frame of mind, while preparing to salute his nephew as kinsman and loyal subject.

Now imagine Anthony Woodville, Earl Rivers, arriving with the astonishing news that the king's party had suddenly decided to move on 17 miles farther down Watling Street to Stony Stratford, alleging that the king had bypassed the town to suit his uncle. Ostensibly it was for Richard's greater convenience, but in reality it was an obvious affront to his dignity. Why should Edward V (or rather Rivers, who was responsible for moving him) deem it fitting to make this last-minute cancellation? Why turn his back on the major, well-fortified town of Northampton, while relocating the king to some oddly outlying village to the south? With Richard being a military man, I cannot help thinking such questions would have been running through his mind. And all this on top of the supreme discourtesy of ignoring their agreed plans which he (and in due course Buckingham, who arrived some hours later) had faithfully adhered to.

Obviously it was Rivers's task to explain this decision to Richard as diplomatically as possible. His best course was simply to ride across from Weedon while the king's party headed south

without him. At this point we must leave Rivers on his way to meet Richard in Northampton, while we follow Mancini's narrative of the king's southward progress.

Here are two observations from Argentine about the king and his escort's movements. First, as we've heard, 'the young king gave orders for just about all his company ... to move onward to other places closer to London.' Evidently they passed Towcester and made for Stony Stratford. All I have discovered about Towcester is that very little is known of it in the Middle Ages. Anyway, Stony Stratford was their destination because it was on Richard's direct route to the capital from Northampton. A route, as can be seen from my sketch-plan, that went right past the Woodville village and manor of Grafton. This meant that when he departed from Northampton to catch up with the king, he would be passing through Woodville territory.



Next, Argentine says the king himself waited together with a few men from his household. So his Welsh escort were sent onward while Edward with some of his household waited ... somewhere, but evidently not with them. Mancini's Latin is not very specific, although it doesn't describe either place as a town. We can rest assured that the army made camp at the Watling Street junction of Stony Stratford, because by the time the Crowland author recounted the story it was Stony Stratford that was remembered as the centre of these activities. However, the tradition fostered there today that the king and his household-men stayed at a Stony Stratford inn is clearly a cock and bull story, ironically worthy of the town that claims to have originated the genre.

Maybe some of his middle-ranking attendants made shift for themselves crammed into an inn in a small village, and maybe this was retained as a folk memory because they were part of a royal train. But when it came to the king and his courtiers, there was a much more suitable place, the seat of the Woodville family itself, just five miles up the road. I contend that they stayed at the Woodville manor at Grafton (later called Grafton Regis) or, as it was called at the time, Grafton Woodville. All of the party were mounted, of course, so it was a diversion of only an hour or so. Meanwhile the slow-moving main army and entourage, encamped at Stony Stratford, would enjoy a head start getting to the capital (and the coronation) when they set off next morning at first light.

As we know, for the king to rendezvous at Northampton as planned would have entailed going through the formalities of exchanging courtesies – not only with Gloucester and Buckingham, but also other local notables and dignitaries. Since a meal and overnight stay were necessary anyway, it is hard to imagine what circumstance could have been so disruptive as to force such a visit to be cancelled, frustrating the expectations of all who planned to receive their king, and wasting their carefully planned accommodations. So the question is why did the town not suit the king and his advisers, when a small village did? I believe the answer is that the king's destination was never Northampton or Stony Stratford: they had always intended for Edward V to spend the night at Grafton. Accommodations for a king and his retinue in the 15th century could scarcely be cobbled together at a day's notice or less, a fact that would not be lost on Richard of Gloucester. I am sure their arrangements were in place well ahead, because they had another rendezvous in mind, as will become apparent.

Meetings at Northampton

It is time now to return to where we left Earl Rivers, riding from Weedon to Northampton to meet Richard with explanations after sending the king's contingent southward. Both Mancini and Crowland describe how Rivers and Richard took their evening meal together in the town. Argentine specifies that Richard received Rivers benignly: 'And having spent most of the night feasting, they both retired to sleep'. By 'both' (*ambo*) he means that at supper the only persons of note were Richard and Rivers. No Buckingham, and no Richard Grey. Buckingham appears in his account only the next day ... and Grey much later.

Once more I am inclined to believe Argentine's words are more accurate than those of the Crowland author, whose report of the incident is laced with hand-wringing in hindsight at its lamentable outcome: 'morning came, and a particularly wretched one as it afterwards appeared'. His account insists (which Argentine's does not) that Richard greeted Rivers's party 'with a **particularly** cheerful and merry face' (*jocundo nimis atque hilari vultu*) and 'they passed the whole time in **very** pleasant conversation' (*gratiosis valde colloquiis*) [my emphasis]; note the intensifiers *nimis* and *valde*, which mean 'excessively' or 'exceedingly': laying it on with a trowel, as we might say. But of course the Crowland author's account has had 400 years to embed itself in the minds of historians. Since he was not present, and since he was wrong about who actually was, I am inclined to treat these assertions as a rhetorical device to emphasize the contrast with Richard's subsequent actions, of which he was keen to condemn the consequences. Argentine contents himself with the factual remark 'spent the night feasting' – I'm sure he is right, and undoubtedly the town had prepared a special banquet for Edward V's visit. Whether the conversation was 'exceedingly pleasant', as Crowland says, I leave it to others to conclude.

Let us visualize Richard having established himself in Northampton in maybe late afternoon on 29 April, his mind in some turmoil. We may suppose that he had been receiving news at irregular intervals while he travelled, some of it perhaps contradictory. Much of it was certainly disquieting. Probably he had found fresh messages awaiting his arrival at Northampton. After all the formal greetings and courtesies, he was expecting some polite but tricky exchanges with men of the king's Ludlow Council who, annoyingly, knew much more than he did right now about decisions being made at Westminster – decisions that would determine his future role in the realm and his very relationship with the king. How would they handle themselves, he would be wondering, and how honest would they be?

Then instead of the royal retinue making a regal entry into the town amid crowds and rejoicing, it is Anthony, Earl Rivers who is ushered into Richard's presence. He bears the news that the king has cancelled the rendezvous in Northampton and is overnighing elsewhere ... for no very convincing reason. Let there be no doubt that this constitutes a major snub, on dubious grounds, which Rivers has to explain away. He also needs to inform Richard that the royal party has arranged to depart for London first thing in the morning. So if Duke Richard wants to pay his respects to the king and combine their retinues as intended, he has to rise before dawn and make a 15-mile ride.

Did Rivers explain the haste for the coronation five days from now? Did he mention that there was not to be a protectorate during the boy-king's minority? Until Edward IV's death, as Michael Hicks tells us (*Edward V*), he had portentously styled himself 'Anthony Wydeville, Earl Rivers, Protector and Defender of the rights of the Papacy in England, Governor of the Lord Edward Prince of England, first-born of the most illustrious Prince Edward IV King of England, Lord of Scales, Nuelles and the Isle of Wight'. He was now at the helm of the entire Woodville clan, but Anthony was not a man who had previously had to shoulder stern responsibilities. There had always been a superior commander, a man whose orders he followed. In terms of national office he had lost the captaincy of Calais under Edward IV, and been passed over in favour of a 17-year-old Richard when the office of High Constable of England should have devolved on Rivers at his father's death. Of late he had held titular positions, e.g. Deputy Constable of the Tower of London, scarcely a source of power when his main responsibilities lay with the Prince of Wales in Ludlow. Perhaps it is because he was usually behind the scenes that Rivers is often assumed not to have been so enterprising as other members of his family. However, he was the only Woodville member of the King's Council, a position which in addition to his influence over the prince gave him every opportunity to participate in decision-making at the centre. He had also shown remarkable perspicacity the previous month in handing over his office at the Tower to his nephew, Thomas Grey, who since Edward IV's death had taken conspicuous advantage of its access to the state treasure and other useful amenities.

I see Rivers as a planner rather than a man of action; and it is not hard for me to imagine that, confronted with the penetrating gaze of Duke Richard, Rivers might not have found it easy to deliver unpleasant truths. He must have rehearsed what he wanted to say, but did he try to manipulate the story, dissemble or distance himself from having up-to-date knowledge? Did he try to offer a sanitized version, putting off the evil moment, perhaps hoping that Bishop Alcock (president of the Ludlow Council) would find ways to soften the message when Richard had caught up with the king? If so, it was a serious mistake.

A key factor, as I see it, is what else Richard learnt and from whom. Even if I have not correctly imagined Rivers's method of approaching matters, there can be little doubt that Richard would have viewed what he told him with displeasure coupled with rising suspicion. He evidently mastered himself well, as befitted a royal duke even in the face of discourtesy, and conducted himself with magnanimity as they took their meal. Right up to when he and Rivers 'retired to sleep' we are given no suggestion of ill-feeling between them. It was only next morning that a change occurred in Richard's attitude, reported by both Mancini and Crowland – and I would argue that the missing ingredient is Buckingham. In the words of the Crowland Chronicle, 'eventually Buckingham arrived and it was late, so they went off to their various lodgings'. Richard had been expecting him all day; so, even if Buckingham's arrival was well after others had retired, and despite the lateness of the hour, Richard would have waited up until he came. They had much to discuss, including the king's sudden change of itinerary, but most important of all were the arrangements being decided at Westminster for the governance of the realm.

As we know, news must have been arriving piecemeal and intermittently, so Richard could not be certain he had the latest information on events in the capital. Earl Rivers would have given him whatever version of the facts suited his purposes. So Richard would have reined in his reactions in anticipation of hearing what his royal cousin had to say, and it may be assumed that he thoroughly probed the extent of Buckingham's knowledge.

As a reminder of how news was conveyed in 1483, in normal circumstances everything travelled at the maximum speed of a horse. It took Edward V's retinue a week to move from Ludlow to London, while moving in haste. Accommodations *en route* had to be painstakingly arranged in advance: you couldn't leave to chance anything relating to the king and his security. Normal communications via messenger, equally, travelled at the speed of a horse. We know it took four or five days before the Prince of Wales in Ludlow heard of his father's death at Westminster. And information received in the morning might well be overtaken by different information received in the evening. Persons of consequence knew this and factored it into their communication networks.

There being few other means of advising themselves what went on in the distant world behind the general run of routine announcements, persons of consequence employed agents and informants. People always needed money and were cheap to hire. However, just as today's tabloids claim to print what their readers clamour for, so it was with agents and informants: in many cases Richard would need to distil the objective truth from within an amount of assumption and partisan opinion. Those commonly presumed messages from Hastings (whether or not they ever existed) would have been an example of communications viewed with scepticism: a self-serving version of the facts from someone whose history was well known to him, rather than news from a trusted or respected source. As an experienced army commander, Richard of Gloucester had antennae in respect of communications that were probably much keener than those of the average man. In war he relied on trained men to deliver despatches speedily and accurately. In peace-time his close links with the king meant he was constantly updated with news from government circles. But on his journey from York to Northampton he would know that (a) he was a moving target, and (b) any message that had just reached him via X could easily be superseded by another from Y in a few hours' time. In either case, war or peace, a leader of men would not leap to judgements and decisions until he was in full possession of all available facts. This is the basis for my deduction that on his arrival in Northampton, despite a series of barely tolerable affronts, he held himself in check until his sum total of information could be confirmed (or otherwise) by his fellow royal duke, Harry of Buckingham.

Buckingham's news came with considerable advantages. He had been on bad terms with Edward IV and was not a member of his Council. Owing to that exclusion, and having his principal estates in the West, he was seldom at the heart of government in person. If we take Mancini at his word, Buckingham's disdain for his wife's family would also have kept him distanced from their counsels, and all the more needful of intelligence. Thus he had particular reason to maintain a constant army of agents around Westminster, otherwise he could never have kept abreast of what was happening. As soon as Edward IV died he would have been sending messengers feverishly back and

forth; for now was his chance to find out how he could gain advantage from developments that could present new opportunities. Richard did not need telling why Buckingham was so keen to make contact, but perhaps he was refreshingly open about his ambitions. At any rate, from their ensuing close collaboration it seems Richard felt some immediate trust and kinship with him. In summary, Richard's maxim would have been that whatever he knew from his own informants, a wise man compares information with others who have different allegiances. Having talked with Buckingham, he could no longer have any doubts of the full extent of what the Woodville-dominated King's Council had been hastening to do in his absence.

In this article I have had space only to summarize their decisions and actions in brief. Learned papers have been written about the international situation in the last year or so of Edward IV's life, when the king's military ambitions far outstripped his resources, and when the Woodvilles must have known (had they bothered to check) how ill-provided England was to embark on an adventure such as their 20-vessel fleet against Louis XI's foremost military commander. And this at a time when the late king had been reduced to taking out loans against those very crown jewels with which his son was about to be invested.

By my assessment, Richard was a man who had become confident in his primacy in offices of state, in peace and in war, throughout his adult life to this moment. For the same period he had also administered and dispensed the crown's justice, and laid his life on the line to partner his brother against threats to the security of the realm. I believe Richard was affronted by the bold assumption of power by the queen's family, and more than this, he was incensed at what it augured for the future governance of England. We have the Crowland Chronicle to thank for a much-quoted comment that his legal acuity was so great that it caused even persons of great learning in the law to marvel. It was now time for Richard to set his legal brain to work. By the morning of 30 April the entire complexion of things had changed.

Lord High Constable of England

There was a particular office to which Richard had been appointed for life and which he had held for over 13 years; and moreover it was an appointment that only the king could reverse. He was Lord High Constable of England, one of the Great Officers of State, and the ultimate fountainhead of martial law. At this moment in time there was an interregnum: a 12-year-old minor king, journeying on public roads, uncrowned, and with no parliamentary oversight to determine the proper governance of England under his minority reign (nor sign of any Parliament in sight). The one thing known for sure, according to Mancini, was that the interim Council at Westminster had rejected a protectorate in line with their stated intention to preserve the king's autonomy. Hence they had ensured a situation of personal rule by a child who was still 50 miles distant. Their idea of 'government by many persons' had yet to be ratified; leaving them with no powers of enacting any decrees or appointments during the days of his absence that could take permanent effect without his personal assent. Richard realized that they had fallen victim to the law of unintended consequences.

Under England's unwritten constitution the king was paramount and above the control of any individual. In the past, as we know, it had sometimes been necessary to institute arrangements for when he was unequipped to rule in his own right; but such arrangements for governance could not be made off the cuff. With a child as young as 12, a smooth and amicable transition to a protectorate would have been normal and everyone would have understood its framework. The Council's rejection of this well established system, combined with its failure to convene an imminent Parliament to authorize a replacement, meant that not only was Richard deprived of any official role but so, too, was everyone else. The ordinances that covered the Prince of Wales's establishment had conferred powers on Anthony Woodville and Richard Grey, but these had fallen away when Edward V became king in his own right; so the queen's family no longer enjoyed the control they had exerted over him at Ludlow. He would need to appoint and swear in his new King's Council when he embarked upon his personal rule, but meanwhile ... the kingly prerogative of Edward V lay slumbering on the road somewhere near Northampton.

To show just how tenuous was his family's hold on power in these crucial days, I need only refer to the opening words of Mancini's next chapter: the queen and Thomas Grey tried to raise an army to regain hold of Edward V, but 'all men's hearts were not only irresolute but deeply inimical to themselves'. Indeed, some of those they approached said openly that they preferred to see the king with his uncle Gloucester. For this reason, says Mancini, the queen and her family fled into sanctuary. I would also refer back to the instructions given by the Mayor of London, mentioned earlier in this

article, commanding the livery companies and constables to keep the peace and to don harness 'if need should so require'. The need was not so theoretical as at first it might appear.

Though the Council at Westminster could hold their discussions and make their interim policy decisions, nevertheless authority on the ground that morning to control any incipient danger, unrest or military disarray during the king's progress lay with the man on the spot, England's High Constable. His office gave him sweeping oversight in the context of the behaviour of armed arrays, including the right to control, discipline and maintain order. His powers also included the right to try cases and decide their outcome in his own court, the Court of Chivalry. And his authority was well known to all who bore arms.

Without adequate knowledge it is impossible to be certain how Richard framed his actions over the course of a developing situation. In the absence of considered analysis it has been usual to look back at a single tableau representing the outcome of known events: "On 30 April Richard took Rivers, Grey and Vaughan into custody and assumed charge of the king's onward journey to London". But in what prevailing circumstances did each of these developments take place?

Mancini tells us that in the morning, in Northampton, Richard gave orders to take hold of Rivers and his companions 'and placed them in keeping in that town', where they were held under guard. Then, 'accompanied by the Duke of Buckingham, he spurred onward to reach the young monarch, while at the same time his men set watch on the roads'.

We could start by looking at the seizure of Rivers. The earl had used authority under pre-existing letters patent (which have not yet been traced, but which were presumably linked to his role as governor of the Prince of Wales) to raise 2,000 men from the Welsh Marches for an escort of which he was in command. He had used his authority as governor *of the prince* to take charge of his relocation from Ludlow to London. But Rivers was not the *king's* governor, and indeed the interim Council had eliminated any right of control over the king until he formed his own government, which would not happen until he reached the capital. Moreover, Rivers had now abandoned his command of the king's escort by sending them onward while he personally spent the night some 15 miles distant in Northampton. Two thousand Welsh men-at-arms were of little use without the commander whose orders they were expected to follow, and if Richard had also discovered that the king was actually somewhere else, accompanied by only 'a few men from his household', then that Welsh escort was of no use at all. What capacity did 12-year-old Edward have to raise a successful defence if attacked? There remained plenty of Lancastrian adherents in the realm, as events would later reveal, for whom the removal of the boy would be an enormous coup. It doesn't seem very surprising that Rivers was peremptorily relieved of his military command and held pending developments.

But Richard then discovered much more. While hastening to meet up with the king he had set men to watch the roads. Knowing that he must traverse 15 miles of territory around the seat of the Woodvilles, a family whose actions had so recently taught him to be mistrustful, it was prudent to send scouts and outriders ahead. He was now leading his own retinue plus that of Buckingham, each of which would have comprised several hundred including numbers of armed retainers brought for protection on the road. They were heading to meet a 2,000-strong Welsh army, so the numbers involved were not insignificant. Fortunately these were numbers that Richard had long experience of commanding, and as Constable the task of maintaining order between arrays came naturally to him. It was a job that needed a firm hand.

Mentioning Buckingham and maintaining order leads me to add something that Mancini signals early on and confirms later in Chapter Four, with what sounds like a verbatim report by Dr Argentine – who, though not actually present, was in a good position to piece together the highlights of the exchanges that took place. I am referring to Buckingham's overtly aggressive attitude in the interview that took place between himself, Richard and Edward V upon reaching the king, when Buckingham ordered Edward to forget any ideas that his mother the queen had any part to play in ruling the country: this, he declared, was purely the business of men of noble lineage. Such insolence to the king's face suggests that Buckingham, much more than Richard himself, had come spoiling for a fight. It could have signalled Buckingham's long-term ambition to place every obstruction in the way of Edward V's accession to the throne – a situation for Richard to keep a watchful eye on. Another factor in the equation was that numbers of Buckingham's men, like the king's escort, came from parts of Wales. With men from Wales and the Marches adhering to different and competing allegiances, there were doubtless those among them who nursed old scores waiting to be settled.

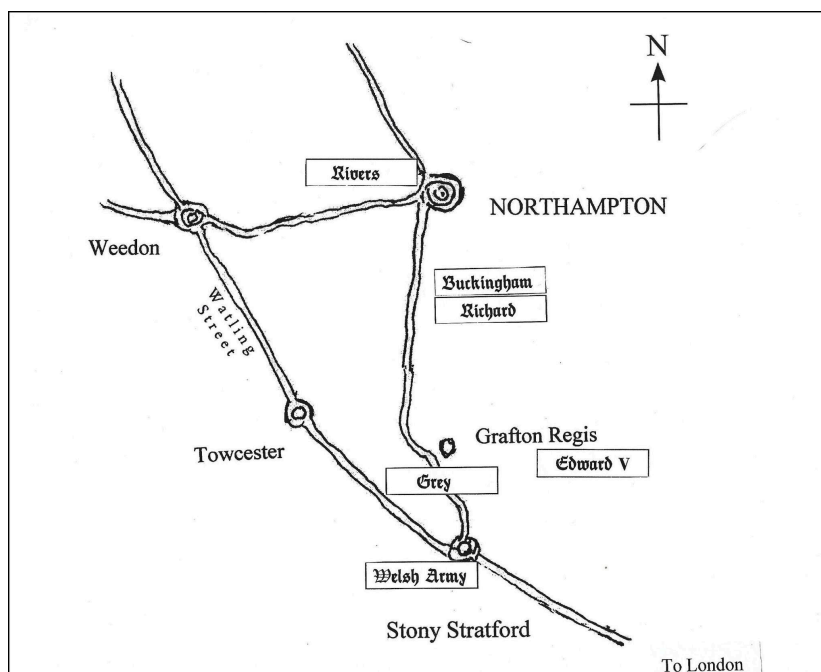
Of Richard's concerns as Constable as he set off that morning, these are just a few that spring readily to mind. But keenest of all, I believe, was something reported by his outriders who had scouted the route ahead.

Enter Sir Richard Grey

This is where Sir Richard Grey comes in, the queen's younger son by her first husband. To set the scene, I need to remind readers that I have been comparing reports in Mancini and in the Crowland Chronicle, the latter written two years after these events. I am generally much more confident of Mancini thanks to the immediacy of his source Dr Argentine, who as Edward V's physician was probably with the king's entourage during this episode. Both are sympathetic to the Woodville cause, but when they differ in detail I advise following Mancini/Argentine whose account has Richard detaining Rivers in Northampton before setting out. We can safely discount Crowland's rather odd story that Richard brought Rivers all the way down to where the king was, and then arrested him there. It seems the writer took his informant too literally when he was told 'after a plan had been made during the night *all the lords* set out together' [my emphasis]. This would have been tactically foolish. Must we suppose Richard also took with him whichever companions had accompanied Rivers to Northampton the previous day? If not, what did he do with them? It is only because the Crowland Chronicle's words held sway for centuries, and was ingrained with historians, that this version of the morning's activities became the standard account. When Mancini's version came to light in the 1930s it made much more sense.

Equally, in respect of Richard Grey's activities we have to dismiss the remarks about Grey in Crowland which are contradicted by Argentine. Mancini's informant would have known for certain that Richard Grey did not, as the Crowland author assumed, travel with the king and Rivers in the Ludlow party. Argentine, when he told Mancini that Grey 'had come out to the king from London', would not have made such an egregious error.

We do need Crowland, however, to fill in a few geographical details omitted by Argentine – or more likely omitted by Mancini who was a poor geographer whenever he had not personally observed something. There are supplementary details in Crowland that confirm Edward V was receiving hospitality somewhere other than Stony Stratford. The proceedings I am describing, which occurred on Richard's and Buckingham's route between Northampton and Stony Stratford, need to be visualized: the sketch-plan below, depicting the movements of the various participants, should be of help.



Stripped to its bare bones, the Crowland Chronicle's account tells us, first, that Richard set out from Northampton for Stony Stratford to see the king. Second, hardly had his party reached their approach to Stony Stratford when he came upon Richard Grey, whom he arrested, together with others that Grey had brought in his company. Third, he made sure this action was not known in the next village where Edward V was (I take this to be Grafton). Fourth, he forced his way into that place (*locum*) where Edward was staying, and proceeded to remove others into custody including Thomas Vaughan. But he did not omit 'to offer to his nephew the king any of the reverence required from a subject such

as bared head, bent knee or any other posture.’ We will return later to what passed between them, for Crowland again represents it differently from Mancini/Argentine. Mancini rounds off Richard’s actions by saying that the king and Grey were taken back to where Rivers was detained in Northampton and given into the care of guards. Doubtless those of Grey’s contingent who were not arrested sped their way hotfoot back to London to convey the news.

We learn from Mancini that Grey had brought his company out from London to meet Edward V ‘shortly before’, and it is this rendezvous that I contend had been set up in advance to take place at Grafton. Crowland’s description says that Richard arrested Grey and his company ‘when they [Richard’s party] had hardly reached their approach to this village [Stony Stratford]’ (*cum pene accederent ad introitum ejusdem villae*). The translation of *introitus* as ‘entrance’ is problematic here, especially in relation to approaching a village. Its literal meaning is ‘a going in’, which is why I prefer a more idiomatic way of putting it, ‘hardly had they reached their approach to this village’, indicating that they encountered Grey’s party as they made their way towards Stony Stratford but somewhat short of reaching it. This means they were in the vicinity of Grafton Woodville.

Richard’s outriders, whilst establishing the whereabouts of the king and scouting safe-passage, would have spotted Grey’s men on that part of the road; they would then have sent back to warn Richard of their unexpected presence. This, to my mind, is at the root of the later report that the Woodvilles had laid ambushes on the road. Separated as Edward V was from his escort, the arrests of Grey and his men were able to be carried out without the news reaching the king: a further argument, if one were needed, that the escort had been entirely ineffective and the boy had been left unprotected from any reasonably efficient intruder. Mancini reported how mortified the Welshmen were ‘that due to their negligence their prince had been carried off’. The true negligence, however, was on the part of Rivers, their commander.

A possibility which has lately occurred to me is that Rivers, in sending the king’s party south while he stayed to keep the rendezvous in Northampton, was carrying out a scheme he had planned beforehand: to ensure that he personally delayed Gloucester and Buckingham while Richard Grey came up from London to take his place in command of the king’s onward journey. Edward and his escorting Welsh army had enjoyed the advantage of moving south along Watling Street, a wide and well maintained artery which gave them a head start when leaving at dawn the next morning. Rivers could not accurately predict, ahead of time, whether the two royal dukes would reach the Northampton rendezvous early enough to press onward, as the king had done, on the day of their arrival. So the best way of preventing this was, first, to let everyone expect the king, right up to the last minute, so that there would be a civic welcome to detain them all. And then, after they had perforce spent the night at Northampton, there would be the prospect of having to make what speed they could down a narrower, secondary road south to Grafton at a ridiculous hour well before daybreak. Maybe Rivers hoped the dukes would see little point in rushing to catch up with the king and would follow at a distance, unaware that Grey had arrived meanwhile with a fresh company of men and horses that would make short work of the remaining leg of the journey. At least if the dukes did hasten to catch the king, Rivers could expect their party to be (usefully) reduced to a small fast-moving mounted group while the main body of their retinues followed at a slower pace. Any of these outcomes would have played out to his advantage.

However, Richard was always in favour of the pre-emptive move, which is probably why he had survived so successfully in battle. In his role as High Constable he immediately decided to immobilize everyone in the area bearing arms.

Why did he act pre-emptively and with such severity? Because we need to remember that the royal escort had been prescribed by Council as a maximum of 2,000 men from Wales. Yet here was Grey, come up from London with his own contingent. Crowland says Grey had ‘certain others’ with him – we don’t know how many – but note Mancini’s comment at the end of Chapter Four when Richard dismissed the king’s escort: ‘Of the king’s retainers, or those who had come forth to meet him [i.e. Richard Grey’s men], nearly all were ordered home.’ Grey’s contingent was not only *ultra vires* and in breach of the Council’s directive, but an unforeseen extra element in a volatile mix.

Note also that Mancini reports, when the king’s party eventually arrived in the capital, they displayed arms and equipment bearing the devices of the queen’s brothers *and sons*, i.e. not only Rivers’s equipment but also *Grey’s*. He was probably wrong to write ‘sons’ in the plural, because the elder Grey brother, Thomas, was busy on errands of his own raising troops ... unless he had augmented his younger brother’s force with some men of his own from London, perhaps from the Tower?

The presence of Grey's men on the Northampton road near Grafton and Stony Stratford meant that instead of three, there were now four companies converging on the same vicinity – perhaps approaching 4,000 in number – under four different commanders. This, I think, is the key to understanding why Richard lost no time taking charge of the situation. By his decisive actions in his office as Constable he removed all alternative commanders outside his own party, and dismissed their men. Richard was fully aware that the incursion of Grey's men was a breach of faith by those who were responsible for transferring the king to London. And such actions served only to compound their breach of faith, as he saw it, respecting the wishes expressed in Edward IV's will. They had pulled the rug from under his feet, and he no longer had reason to trust any of them. Thus he had no compunction in taking punitive action.

To questions as to the arrest of Sir Thomas Vaughan I have no answer. That he was loyal to Edward IV is undoubted, but according to Michael Hicks's assessment (in his biography of Edward V) Vaughan's office as chamberlain to the Prince of Wales at Ludlow grew to be his principal activity, which of course gave him significant influence alongside Rivers and Grey. Which is as much as to say that Vaughan was a major figure in the regime at Ludlow. The area under control from Ludlow was itself a key extension of Woodville power, Hicks avers, and their most important area of authority: 'indeed, the principal sphere within which Earl Rivers operated', by which they exerted a regional (and intrusive) dominance throughout Wales and the adjoining English counties. This allowed plenty of opportunity to reap personal rewards and benefit from the distribution of favours. Overall, the hegemony they collectively exerted in Wales had the effect of ousting other leading magnates of the area and, in particular, threatening the ambitions of Buckingham. Returning to his arrest on 30 April, it's likely that Vaughan had been left in charge of the king by Rivers, his immediate superior. And that when he saw Richard arrive and peremptorily take charge, he perhaps forgot himself so far as to remonstrate or even call for guards to resist Richard's assumption of command. It may well be, also, that Buckingham had the trio of Rivers, Grey and Vaughan in his sights.

Although my established habit is to eschew citing any of the Tudor chroniclers, it is perhaps worth taking a moment to address a rather persistent error derived from them, to the effect that one 'Sir' Richard Haute (or Hawte) was also arrested/executed. This assertion can even be found in the ODNB entry for Thomas Vaughan. Richard Haute (without title at this time) was a Woodville relative and member of the Ludlow household: he certainly survived this incident, subject to a bond for good behaviour, only to rebel against Richard III in October 1483. Sir Richard Haute, a loyal supporter knighted by Richard, was a different person.

Interview with the king

This paper is lengthy enough without following the events subsequent to 30 April; so I will end by reviewing reports of the interactions that took place with Edward V when they met face to face at Grafton. The Crowland Chronicle declares that Richard and Buckingham forced their way (*irruentes*) into the royal presence, of which behaviour Mancini says nothing, and indeed there would have been no need for force against the king's household personnel, who would instantly have recognized who had arrived.

Just as reported in Crowland, Mancini confirms that Richard and Buckingham began the interview with demonstrations of respect, expressing sincere grief and condolences to Edward for the loss of his father. Their next sentiments Mancini can scarcely condemn, as they exactly echo the same censure of the morals of the queen's family that Mancini himself expounds in Chapter Two. The two dukes attempted to impress on the boy that the late king's death had come about thanks to the dissolute habits encouraged by the courtiers surrounding him, who had 'scant regard for his honour' and had 'brought his health to ruination'. Because of the likelihood that these men would persist in such behaviour as soon as they had access to the young king, it was imperative that they should be 'removed from his side'.

Richard's attitudes in later contexts indicate his abhorrence of the kind of moral laxity that seems to have been associated with the influence of the (male) Woodvilles and others, such as Hastings, who joined them in their practices. The change in morality at court under Richard's aegis is reflected in the censorious words of the Act of Succession, *Titulus regius*, passed in 1484, wherein the sins of the past were enumerated: 'such as had the rule and governaunce of this Land ... lede by sensuality and concupiscence, folowed the counsaill of personnes indolent, vicious, and of inordinate avarice'.

The Crowland Chronicle also adds that Richard claimed he ‘knew for certain that there were men close to the king who had sworn to destroy his honour and his life’ – again that insistence that these unworthy men were bent on compromising the honour of his family – and he then proclaimed that ‘anyone of the king’s household should withdraw from that place at once and not approach any place the king might go, on pain of death.’ You would think this proclamation was important enough for Argentine to have reported it to Mancini, especially as it would have directly affected him as one of the household, but in fact Mancini does not mention it. It may have been added by the Crowland author’s informant for dramatic effect. Mancini says only that Richard ordered they must be ‘kept at a safe distance’.

As well as recording Richard’s complaint that those same courtiers had been behind the denial of his role as Protector, Mancini reports the same assertion as Crowland that ‘these men’ were conspiring his death. But Mancini goes further: they were ‘preparing ambushes both in the city [London] and on the road, which had been revealed to him by their accomplices’. I must admit here that although Richard may have been right in claiming that there were Woodville conspiracies against him – he was, after all, the only national figure whose stature made him capable of challenging their designs – nevertheless I find it hard to believe the notion of despatching him by ambush on the road when surrounded by hundreds of potential witnesses. By stealth and in secret, perhaps; but if we are thinking of hidden men lying in wait to pounce on him as he travelled, I cannot envision the reality of this.

The main problem I have is with the Latin word *insidiae*, which can be translated not just as ‘ambushes’ but as any kind of trap, snare, treachery or plot. I do find it believable that when Richard had taken charge of the situation at Stony Stratford, some person or persons from the former Ludlow entourage, or the Grey party, may have come to him afterwards with allegations of conspiracies. Unfortunately, Mancini’s certainty makes it hard to resist the impression that he knew everything that happened and, thanks to Argentine, reported it faithfully; but words are notoriously harder to record with accuracy than actions, and it is unlikely that Dr Argentine was in the room when these conversations took place.

Mancini in his *de occupatione* also goes on to state twice more that *insidiae* were claimed by Richard to have been laid, but is frustratingly unspecific about them. First, in public announcements upon the king’s entry into London, where a rather questionable scenario is offered. And second, when Gloucester is said to have brought charges before the King’s Council, where Mancini’s report not only stretches credulity but is equivocal about what the alleged charges really were. Neither of these reports is in Chapter Four, the ‘Argentine chapter’.

I mentioned how the Latin word *insidiae* could be variously translated, and it’s regrettable that when I made the translations in my new edition I was hampered by pre-existing prejudices. One was the overall prejudice of the original editor/translator, Armstrong, whose choice of words conformed to the accepted traditional anti-Richard view of his day: he translated these words as ‘ambushes’. The other prejudice was of long-standing luminaries of the Richard III Society who poured scorn on the prospect of translating Mancini afresh, damning the idea out of hand as a desire for ‘a counterweight translation ... to give the interpretation most favourable to Richard in every case’. To preserve objectivity I had to tread a fine line between perpetuating Armstrong’s negative assumptions and being accused of whitewashing Richard III (not an enviable task!). In the end, because these words were tied in with wider complexities of arrests that eventually led to executions, I let the word ‘ambushes’ stand in all three cases – while making a mental note that surely other readers and researchers would agree with me that the translation ‘ambush’ is likely to be a more specific accusation than Mancini probably intended. I rather think he used this portmanteau term to cover his own lack of any clear understanding of what the Woodvilles were supposed to have done.

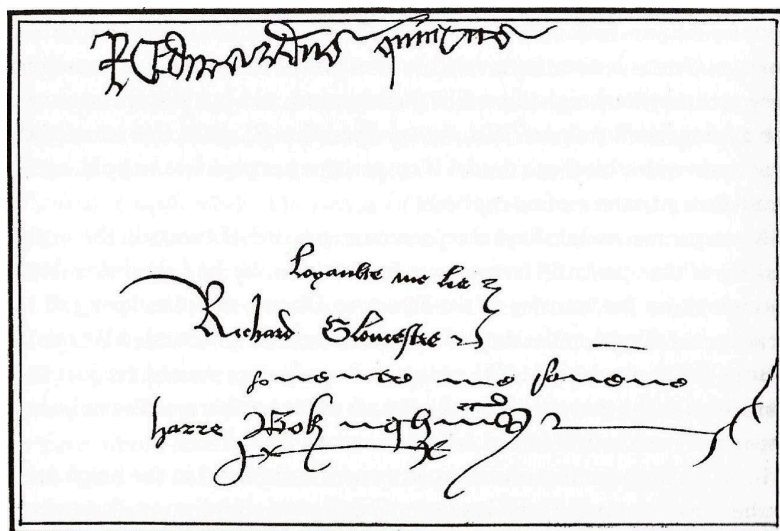
There are many ways to look at this puzzle, and one way could be for this initial ambush allegation to have been literal but transitory – an alarmed report given to Richard by his outriders after they discovered Grey’s unexpected contingent on the road – but since Richard was now alerted in advance, whatever threat they thought there was had quickly faded away. Or perhaps Grey, undistinguished and looking to make a name for himself, really was there to set some kind of trap, who knows? Alternatively, taking the trio of allegations as a whole, it might be that Buckingham, or even Hastings, was poisoning the general opinion of the Woodvilles in London which Mancini picked up in hindsight. Whatever the truth of the matter, many developments occurred in the intervening months before Rivers, Grey and Vaughan came to trial, and I am inclined to think that their indictments did not arise wholly from what happened on 30 April.

Interestingly, the conversation with Edward V seems to have been quite a lengthy one because it covered several subjects. After the offering of condolences and the assurance of fealty, with presentations of gifts and missives from diverse parties, there must have been guarded exchanges on those decisions taken earlier in London. The king's next question was probably, 'Where is my uncle Rivers?' To which Richard's reply might well have expressed his dismay at having found His Grace sitting unprotected in a country village with only a few men of his household. Rivers had been relieved of his command for dereliction of duty in abandoning his king and leaving him separated from both his escort and its commander. Protestations probably ensued from Edward that he wished to be reunited with his loyal governor. He may well have been surprised to hear in reply that Rivers no longer held any such office because a king had no governors or guardians unless they were officially appointed under the terms of a system such as a protectorate. Since he was now about to rule without a protectorate, he must set aside those who had surrounded him in his youth as Prince of Wales, and take counsel instead from those grave men experienced in matters of kingship who would attend him in London.

Mancini reports Richard's lengthy exposition about the need to root out those unworthy people at court who had encouraged the late king into a life of degeneracy. His brother's confidence had always been placed in Richard himself, he emphasized, and he had all the qualifications and experience necessary to help the new young king adopt councillors qualified to assist him. Men who had his best interests at heart, and those of the realm.

To this the young boy gave a spirited reply, says Mancini, defending those people his father had decided to surround him with, of whom Rivers, Grey and Vaughan were, of course, the leaders. And indeed, if you read the ordinances provided by Edward IV for his son's upbringing at Ludlow, you would see, ironically, how much care had been taken to shield him from precisely the kinds of behaviours in which his father publicly indulged. The great pity was that the son was too young to have knowledge of the unwholesome ways of the court he was about to enter; and he was too inexperienced to recognize that people could have different sides to their character; so that while apparently 'good and faithful' to his face, they might easily prove immoral and corrupt when opportunity presented itself. The young king also declared, to Buckingham's disgust, his great confidence in the powers of governance not only of the nobles of his realm but also his mother, the remark that evinced Buckingham's intemperate outburst about governance being no business of women. Perhaps it is not too far-fetched to wonder whether the uncle-nephew interview mightn't have benefited from Harry Stafford's absence.

At length, says Mancini, 'the young boy, aware of their reasoning, gave himself into the care of his uncle, as was inevitable; for although they were exhorting him with due propriety, nevertheless they made it clear that they were demanding rather than requesting.'



But it appears that Richard and his nephew subsequently became acquainted on better terms while spending time together as rearrangements were made for their onward journey. Edward revealed he had a favourite chaplain at Ludlow named John Geffrey, and together they found a way to reward him. A surprising survival from five centuries ago is small scrap of parchment on which the autographs of the king and the two dukes appear for no apparent reason, other than that they were perhaps comparing signatures. Maybe Gloucester and

Buckingham were inviting Edward to practise his new signature as king, and to consider what his motto would be. Richard's signature appears neatly under his best-known personal motto 'Loyaulté me lie' ('Loyalty binds me'). Buckingham's careless signature, large and full of flourishes, is surmounted by his motto 'Souvente me souvene' (usually rendered as 'Remember me often').

In conclusion, I would point out that in the course of the Stony Stratford affair Richard's awesome summary judicial powers as High Constable were not used provocatively: the three detainees were consigned to three of his northern castles pending developments, where they remained for eight weeks. He also dismissed and sent home the men brought as the king's escort, despite having reduced his own numbers by the necessary detachments of guards accompanying Rivers, Grey and Vaughan to detention in the North. Hence Mancini reported it was a company of just 500 that eventually brought the king to London. Notice also that throughout their accounts of the incident, neither Mancini nor the Crowland author makes any mention of the use of violence; or as Hastings reportedly put it, there occurred nothing more than a cut finger.