The spring and summer of 1483 were times of high drama in the political life of England. King Edward IV died at Westminster Palace on 9 April seemingly of natural (but difficult to identify) causes following an illness of less than a fortnight. He was a few days short of his forty-first birthday. It was presumed that Edward, the older of his two sons, would become the next king as Edward V, and that there would be a minority government for the immediate future. That was not to be the case. The young Edward, Prince of Wales, aged twelve, was at Ludlow, the administrative centre of the principality of Wales, when his father died. There was insufficient time for Edward to be notified of his father's death and to make a speedy journey east for the elaborate funeral rites and the final interment on 20 April of the remains of his father in the fine chapel of St George that Edward IV had caused to be constructed at Windsor. Prince Edward heard of his father's death on or about 14 April, and he set off for London some ten days later. King Edward's sole living brother, Richard, Duke of Gloucester, was at Middleham Castle in Yorkshire when Edward died, and he began travelling towards London at about the same time as his nephew. Richard, it is appropriate to believe, anticipated that he would be taking on the duties of protector of England until his nephew should come of age and take up the full responsibilities of kingship, as Edward IV is reported to have directed, although no documentary proof of Edward's wishes survives.

It is not necessary to engage here in careful analytical efforts to illuminate the intense political manoeuvering that occupied assorted people as they struggled for power in the weeks immediately following the death of Edward IV, but certain facts need to be called to mind. One group anticipating continuing political influence centred upon Elizabeth Woodville, the widowed queen. Thomas Grey, Marquess of Dorset and the queen's first son by her first marriage, was constable of the Tower of London and in control of the modest royal treasure left by Edward IV. The queen's brother, Sir Edward Woodville, went to sea in command of a fleet. Anthony Woodville, Earl Rivers and the queen's brother, was with Prince Edward at Ludlow as the boy's governor,
together with Sir Richard Grey, the queen’s son. The group also included the late king’s chancellor, Archbishop Thomas Rotherham of York. It is generally believed that it was the goal of this group to avoid a protectorate of the kingdom by Gloucester, but rather to establish a regency council for a crowned king in his minority, such as had ruled England during the minority of Richard II, of which Richard of Gloucester would be the presiding member. The course of events was to unfold in an altogether different fashion, and a major player would be the hitherto politically uninvolved Henry Stafford, Duke of Buckingham.

The entourage escorting the young Edward to London for his coronation (already set by the Woodville-dominated council for 4 May) reached Stony Stratford in Northamptonshire on 29 April, and Richard of Gloucester, who had been joined by Buckingham, was near by at Northampton with a more substantial following than that of Edward. The following morning at Stony Stratford, Gloucester and Buckingham took charge of young Edward, placed Rivers in custody, and disbanded the royal escort. When word of the events at Stony Stratford reached Elizabeth Woodville in London, she took her younger son Richard of York and her daughters into sanctuary at Westminster Abbey, joined also by her son Dorset and her brother Bishop Lionel Woodville of Salisbury. Earl Rivers and Sir Richard Grey would later (on 25 June) suffer beheading, but meanwhile on Sunday, 4 May, Richard of Gloucester, the young king, and Buckingham were formally greeted by the murrey-clad mayor and other dignitaries and guildsmen as they entered London, where Edward was lodged in the palace of the bishop of London close to St Paul’s Cathedral. Over the next few days council meetings were held during which Richard of Gloucester was confirmed as protector for the minority of Edward V, Buckingham was made chief justice of north and south Wales and was shown other marks of favour, Bishop John Russell of Lincoln was put in the place of Archbishop Rotherham as chancellor, men were appointed to attempt the arrest at sea of Sir Edward Woodville, and the date of the coronation was moved ahead to 22 June, with a parliament being called for 25 June. Neither the coronation nor the parliament would take place as scheduled. It would resolve many long-standing and heated debates about Richard of Gloucester if it were known whether at this time he was determined to avoid the coronation of Edward V and thus preserve his place as protector, or was plotting that the next coronation should be his own.

As the days passed, the military strength in London of Buckingham and Gloucester increased, and Anne Neville, Gloucester’s wife, arrived in London on 5 June. At some point in these days Gloucester heard the story of his dead brother and the late Eleanor Talbot, Lady Boteler (d. 1468). The story was that
Edward IV had contracted a marriage valid in canon law with Lady Eleanor before his marriage to Elizabeth Woodville, and that his marriage to Elizabeth Woodville was therefore invalid and their children illegitimate and ineligible to inherit the throne. The cautiously plausible but unprovable story added to the tension and rumour present at the seat of power. At a council meeting in the Tower of London on Friday, 13 June, Gloucester charged William, Lord Hastings, the late king’s chamberlain, with treason, and Hastings was immediately beheaded. Archbishop Rotherham of York was arrested, as were Bishop John Morton of Ely and Edward V’s secretary, Oliver King. Hastings had been a moderate, and the accepted leader among the surviving core of Edward IV’s household. It is a much debated subject as to what actions and assumptions led to Hastings’ hurried execution, but the event made it utterly clear that Gloucester was bent upon wearing the royal crown. On 16 June a group of Gloucester’s retainers went to Westminster Abbey where they persuaded Queen Elizabeth to hand over her son, Richard, Duke of York, who was taken to be with his brother, Edward V, whose residence had become the Tower of London. Edward, Earl of Warwick, the son of Gloucester’s attainted and dead brother, George, Duke of Clarence, was in Gloucester’s household where he could be monitored should he become the focus of opposition to Gloucester’s plan of action. Various Sunday sermons in London on 22 June informed the public of the bastardy of the sons of Edward IV, the exclusion of Edward of Warwick from the succession by virtue of his father’s treason, and the worthiness of the duke of Gloucester to become king. A group of notables and men who had arrived to sit in the parliament which had been called (but then cancelled on 17 June), acting under the chairmanship of Buckingham, petitioned Richard of Gloucester on 25 June to assume the crown. The following day at Baynard’s Castle, his mother’s London residence where Richard was staying, an assembly of notables formally presented Richard with a bill of petition asking that Richard assume the throne. Richard accepted, and was ritually conducted to Westminster Hall where he put on royal robes and, with a sceptre in his hand, sat in the marble chair of the court of King's Bench. Richard proclaimed the date of 26 June as the beginning of his reign, and announced his coronation as King Richard III for 6 July. He was then taken in procession to Westminster Abbey for further ceremonial events, and then to St Paul’s Cathedral before retiring to Baynard’s Castle.

The magnificent coronation of Richard III took place in Westminster Abbey on Sunday, 6 July, with various celebratory events continuing through to the following Sunday. In less than three months English folk had been faced with digesting the news that King Edward IV had died, that Edward his son would not be nominally presiding over a minority government, but that the
late king's brother Richard, initially protector, was in fact to be their king. Questions about the legitimacy of Richard's accession, the fate and well-being of the late king's sons, widow, and daughters, and of his nephew Edward of Warwick had to be faced or glossed over and given time to abate. A glorious coronation accompanied by feasting and pageantry might have helped those present in and around London to reconcile themselves to the new political reality, but it was important for the new king, who necessarily desired the loyalty of his subjects, to be seen in other parts of the kingdom. Richard took the obvious decision to make a journey, an imposing progress, around his kingdom. On Sunday, 13 July, King Richard made his way to Greenwich, where he stayed until the following Saturday before moving on to Windsor, where the exequies of his royal brother had recently been carried to completion, and he remained until Monday, 21 July, when he moved on to Reading. The next stop was Oxford, where the founder of Magdalen College, Bishop William Waynflete of Winchester, was joined by scholars of the college and officials of the University in offering a formal greeting to the king. For two days he was entertained with academic disputations and visits to Oxford colleges, and then, perhaps weary with intellectual fatigue, he went to the royal hunting-lodge at Woodstock. His progress carried Richard westward through Minster Lovell to Gloucester, which he reached by 2 August, and on 4 August was at Tewkesbury where his brother Clarence was buried and where he himself had been a commander in the battle of 1471 which helped regain Edward IV his throne. By 5 August the progress had reached Worcester, and was directed toward Warwick Castle, where Queen Anne arrived to join her husband, and there was a pause of several days. Then it was on to Coventry, then Leicester, and then Nottingham, where Edward IV had begun a programme of remodelling the castle. Richard in time had the work on Nottingham Castle carried to completion, and it became one of his preferred places of residence. While at Nottingham, on 24 August, Richard issued a charter creating his only legitimate son, Edward, who had been born at Middleham Castle in 1475 or 1476, prince of Wales and earl of Chester. Curiously, Edward of Middleham was never formally granted the third title normally given to the heir to the throne, that of duke of Cornwall, although he was named as such in assorted official documents. Previously, while at Leicester on 19 August, Richard had named his son to be lord lieutenant of Ireland, with the powerful earl of Kildare swiftly being appointed as acting deputy.

At Nottingham, Richard and his entourage were poised to enter Yorkshire. Richard's secretary, John Kendall, wrote on 23 August to the mayor, recorder, aldermen, and sheriffs of the city of York complimenting the city of York, saying how fond Richard was of the city, and hinting broadly that a splendid
reception for the king and queen would be in order upon their arrival in York. The civic leadership in York was ahead of Kendall, and was discussing an expected visit by King Richard as early as the end of July. Richard himself had already, on 18 August, summoned no fewer than seventy-one northern knights and gentry to meet him on 27 August at Pontefract Castle, some twenty miles from York. These men and their attendants would add to the impressiveness of the royal entourage, and Richard appears to have been planning to dazzle, and hoping to be dazzled by, his subjects when he reached York. Edward of Middleham also joined his parents at Pontefract. The leading citizens of York had already been ingratiating themselves with the new king, having decided on 12 July to send a delegation led by the mayor, John Newton, to Middleham Castle with a present for Edward of Middleham of bread, a barrel each of red and white wine, six cygnets, six herons, and two dozen rabbits.

It was an impressive royal retinue that left Pontefract for York. Along with the king, queen, and their son were the two bishops of the northern province: Durham and Carlisle, and also the bishops of Worcester, St Asaph, and St David's. Archbishop Rotherham of York, it will be remembered, was persona non grata because of his association with the Woodville power block after the death of Edward IV, although he had by this time been released from confinement in the Tower of London. Prominent secular lords in Richard's train were the earls of Northumberland, Lincoln, and Surrey, together with lords Stanley, Strange (the eldest son of Lord Stanley), FitzHugh, Lisle, Lovell, and Graystoke (a cousin of Richard). These prominent figures and many others, all accompanied by their attendants, would have made 29 August a day to remember. One sheriff of the city of York, Miles Greynbank, and William White, a deputy for the unwell second sheriff, Thomas Pierson, carrying their rods of office, met the royal party at Tadcaster and led it towards the city. At Breckles Mills, outside the city, the procession was met by the mayor and aldermen, dressed in scarlet and, in red gowns, by other civic officers and leading citizens. The citizenry of York were on hand to greet the procession as it passed by St James' Chapel and into the city through Micklegate Bar, the gateway into the city upon which the head of Richard's father, Duke Richard of York, had been spiked following his defeat at Wakefield in 1460. Just within the walls was staged the first of three pageants for the entertainment of the royal party, with the next being staged at the bridge crossing of the Ouse, and the third in Stayngate. We may suppose the streets were hung with tapestries and arras as Kendall had suggested they be. The entry on 29 August was almost certainly carefully timed. It was the feast of the Decollation of St John the Baptist. The staging of the mystery plays on the springtime feast of Corpus Christi was a major event in York, and the responsibility of the Corpus Christi Guild, of
which Richard III and Anne had been members since 1477. Religious images of
the decapitated head of the Baptist on a charger were very popular in northern
England in the fifteenth century, where devotion to John the Baptist was
strong, and the Head of the Baptist was taken as a representation of the Body
of Christ, the Corpus Christi, and thus many layers of symbolism would have
been appreciated with King Richard’s entry into the city and his journey on the
route of the mystery plays to the cathedral church on the feast of the
Decollation of the Baptist.

At some point as the royal cavalcade moved through the city the mayor,
John Newton, delivered a speech of welcome and offered a gift to the king of
one hundred marks contained in a gold cup and to the queen £100 in gold in
a precious piece of plate. Newton himself had contributed £20 to the royal
presents, and spent additional sums on entertainment during the royal visit. There is no record of it, but we must suppose that a gift for Prince Edward was
not neglected. The royal procession carried on through the city to the
precincts of the cathedral church for an ecclesiastical reception. The cathedral
church of St Peter of York, as the largest single architectural structure of
English Gothic, made an impressive backdrop for the royal reception. The
great tower had been rebuilt early in the century, and the south-western tower
was almost new. It was at the west door of York Minster that the king was
formally received by a delegation of ecclesiastics headed by the dean. The dean
was Dr Robert Booth, a Cambridge-educated legist and a member of a highly
accomplished Lancashire family. Dean Booth’s father, Sir William Booth,
had been sheriff of Cheshire, and an uncle, John, had been bishop of Exeter
when he died in 1478. Two great uncles of Dean Booth had died as arch-
bishops of York: William in 1464, and Lawrence in 1480. Robert had become
dean in 1477 through the patronage of Archbishop Lawrence, who had been
keeper of the privy seal and chancellor of England in the reign of Edward IV.

Robert Booth was the only dean of a metropolitan church in England, for
the other metropolitan church, Canterbury, was served by a community of
Benedictine monks headed by a prior. Booth was a distinguished man, and
hardly lost in a crowd of canons on 29 August. Although a full complement of
secular clergy called canons, who formed the most exalted circle of ecclesiastics
in the service of York Minster, was thirty-six, very few were residentiary
canons, only thirty-four in fact for the entire fifteenth century. Most of the
canons were occupied elsewhere, like the soon-to-be canon William Beverley
(died 1494), who served Richard of Gloucester as a councillor, was rector of
Middleham while Richard was often resident at Middleham Castle, became
dean of St George’s, Windsor, in 1483, and was named to be the first dean of
the collegiate church Richard founded at Middleham. Over decades there had
been a gradual concentration of administrative authority and responsibility at York Minster in the hands of a few residentiary canons, primarily because the financial structure of the institution, dividing certain revenues amongst all residentiaries, encouraged a few canons to carry the burden so that their incomes would remain attractive. At the time of King Richard's visit there were, in addition to Robert Booth, but two residentiary canons: the Yorkshire-men William Poteman and Thomas Portyngton. William Poteman (died 1493) held an Oxford doctorate in civil law and had become a residentiary canon in 1468, while the Cambridge-educated Thomas Portyngton (died 1485), who as apparently the last male of his family was secular lord of Portington in the East Riding of Yorkshire, became a residentiary in 1481.

An apparent eye witness recorded the events as the royal procession reached the west door of York Minster where the dean and his two fellow residentiaries, supported by other of the cathedral clergy, including some canons who were not residentiaries, all strikingly vested in copes of violet silk, received the visitors. The king was sprinkled with holy water and censed as he made his way into the cathedral church. Richard was not a passive actor in the ceremonies taking place. He made his way to a prie-dieu beside the baptismal font, and there he said a Paternoster. The succentor of the vicars choral (that is, the vicar representing the absent canon who was precentor of the cathedral and who was nominally responsible for the music in the cathedral, but who was represented by his succentor, just as the vicars choral as a group represented the absent cathedral canons in choir) began the liturgical response De Trinitate with the words Honor, virtus, and it was finished by the choir standing before the steps of the high altar. Then there was a pause long enough for a Paternoster and an Ave Maria. Then Dean Booth began the prayer Et ne nos inducas for the benefit of the king. Following the prayer, the dean and canons processed to their stalls in the cathedral choir, together with the other clergy, as the organ intoned the Amen. We are told that the officiating prelate (prelato executore officii), most likely Dean Booth, began the psalm Te, Deum, laudamus, which was concluded by the choir and organ. Immediately thereafter the succentor chanted the antiphon of the Trinity beginning with the words Gracias tibi, Deus, with a versicle and prayer to the Trinity. The service now being concluded, the royal party left York Minster for the short walk northwest to the palace of the archbishop of York where Richard stayed during his visit.

Two days later, on the last day of August, Richard, having taken the decision to have his son formally invested as Prince of Wales in York, sent an urgent message to Peter Courteys, keeper of the king's Great Wardrobe in London, outlining goods he wished transported to York. The items demanded
included such costly clothing as two short gowns of crimson cloth of gold, a cloak with a cape of violet lined in black velvet, a stomacher of purple satin and another of tawny satin, enough white cloth of gold for the trappings of a horse, other gowns, spurs, and five coats of arms for heralds, together with forty trumpet banners and 13,000 badges of Richard's white boar emblem. Processional banners were requested of the Virgin Mary, the Trinity, St George, St Edward, St Cuthbert, and one of Richard's arms, as well as three coats of arms beaten with fine gold for Richard himself. The investiture of Prince Edward was set for Monday, 8 September, and the week leading up to it was occupied with banquets and hospitality. Bishop Thomas Langton of St David's wrote to the prior of Christ Church, Canterbury, expressing great enthusiasm over the popularity King Richard was engendering, noting the money he had been offered by cities and towns for his good will on his progress but had diplomatically refused to take, and offering his opinion that God had been gracious to send such a prince to govern England.44

On 2 September John Newton, the mayor, Miles Metcalfe, the city recorder who was a loyal supporter of King Richard, and ten other councillors met in the Common Hall where it was decided to stage a special performance of the Creed Play on Sunday, 7 September, for the pleasure of the king.45 The Creed Play text does not survive, but it has been conjectured that it was an abbreviated version of the cycle of mystery plays performed annually in York.46 Nearly forty years earlier, a chaplain named William Revetour had given the St Christopher's Guild in York a play about the Creed with a book for each of the parts in the play.47 The day before the play was performed, the city leaders decided that the mayor, the twelve aldermen, and the Council of Twenty Four, who were junior councillors to the mayor and aldermen, would all attend upon the king at the performance and share the cost thereof.48

The day after the performance of the Creed Play was the festival of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, the day appointed for the investiture of Edward of Middleham as the eighth prince of Wales to be recognized by an English king, the first having been Llywelyn ap Gruffudd in 1267, and the most recent Edward V in 1471.49 The same eye witness account that records the king's arrival in York on 29 August provides the account of events on 8 September.50 A procession led by the king and queen, both wearing crowns, entered York Minster for mass. The procession included Prince Edward, temporal and spiritual lords, and other dignitaries. The officiating prelate was Bishop William Dudley of Durham, and the focal point of the high altar of the cathedral was enhanced by silver figures of the twelve apostles, as well as other ornaments of gilt and numerous relics, all provided by the king. The assemblage remained at mass until the sixth hour of evening. Then, following mass, all returned to the
archbishop's palace, and there in the hall before dinner the king invested his son as prince of Wales by arming or girding Edward with a sword, presenting him with a gold rod and ring, and placing a coronet on his head. A four-hour dinner, during which the royal family sat crowned, continued into the evening. Dean Robert Booth was present, as were the residentiaries William Poteman and Thomas Portyngton. We are informed by the anonymous clerical reporter that the sub-dean was present as well as four other canons (none of whom are named), together with ten chantry priests (personae) from the Minster, twelve vicars choral, and other cathedral clergy.

At some time during the busy day of the investiture, the king bestowed knighthood upon his son, and did likewise with his nephew Earl Edward of Warwick, his illegitimate son John of Gloucester, and the ambassador from Queen Isabella of Castile, Gaufrid de Sasiola, who had joined the royal progress at Warwick in the company of Queen Anne and who had come to England expecting to find Edward V on the throne, but who has happy to seek friendly relations between his sovereign and Richard III, a prospect appealing as well to the English king. It is difficult to imagine that King Richard would not have been pleased with the course of events during his stay in York thus far, but for the civic authorities another great day awaited.

On Wednesday, 17 September, King Richard summoned to meet with him in the Chapter House of York Minster the mayor of the city and his fellow aldermen, and many other citizens. It soon became apparent that Richard had been dazzled by his reception in York. The king, without any petition on their part (so the record states), thanked the assembly for their good service to him before he came to the throne and at his recent coronation. Richard cited the decay and poverty of the city, which was indeed experiencing an economic slump, although it was still likely second in size only to London in the kingdom. He then went on to promise that the city would have a substantial reduction in the annual fee farm due to the crown, from a sum on the order of £160 to about £100, and Mayor Newton was appointed Richard's chief serjeant-at-arms with an annual fee of £18 5s. The financial arrangements were also meant to encourage trade in York by allowing any lawful non-resident to sell in the market of York without paying tolls. Other royal business was transacted as a matter of course while Richard was in the city, but the arrival reception, the Creed Play performance, the investiture of Prince Edward, and the mitigating of royal taxes likely mattered most to the citizenry.

The royal party did not leave York until 20 or 21 September, having stayed for more than three weeks, longer than at any other stop on Richard’s progress. The long stay, the events which took place at York during that stay, Richard’s generally happy relations with the city, and Richard’s bold but never com-
pleted plan to found a chantry in York Minster served by a college of one hundred priests, have aroused the suspicions of historians that Richard was planning to be buried in York Minster. From York the king went back to Pontefract where he remained more than a fortnight, and then he passed through Gainsborough to Lincoln. It was at Lincoln on 11 October that Richard learned of the rebellion against him led by Henry Stafford, Duke of Buckingham. The royal progress abruptly ended, and Richard turned his attention to overcoming the revolt of his erstwhile staunch supporter.

As we reflect upon the episode in his brief reign of King Richard III at York in the late summer of 1483, there are some noteworthy aspects of the event to consider. This portion of the royal progress throws into relief the king’s awareness of the importance of public display as part of the art of kingship, and Richard’s mastery of the art. Sufficient detail of Richard’s sojourn at York survives to demonstrate the techniques used by a king to cultivate the good will of his subjects: being available to his subjects, appearing regal, easing financial burdens, and the like. We also witness Richard dealing effectively with public officers in the city of York and with the ecclesiastical community of the cathedral church of York. The investiture of Edward of Middleham informs us of the keen interest Richard had in confirming his line of descent upon the English throne, and that the investiture ceremony was conducted in York speaks to the nearness to Richard’s heart of the city of York. Richard would visit York five more times during his reign, but none of these visits would be so dramatic as that of 1483 and, in spite of the high favour in which he held the city, York would not be the final resting place of King Richard III.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

30. The feast of Corpus Christi is a moveable feast. It is celebrated on the Thursday after Trinity Sunday, which is the Sunday next after Whitsunday, which falls on the seventh Sunday and thus the fiftieth day after Easter, which is a moveable feast.
39. Ibid., p. 154.
44. Quoted in Ross, Richard III, p. 151.
50. See note 42.
53. Raine, York Civic Records, vol. 1, p. 82.
58. Palliser, ‘Richard III and York’, p. 60. Palliser was remarking on ‘the very plausible suggestion’ of Professor R. B. Dobson.
60. Hammond and Sutton, Richard III: The Road to Bosworth, p. 141.
63. This essay was presented as the Keynote Address before the Annual General Meeting of the Richard III Society (American Branch) on Michaelmas Day 2001 in Fort Worth, Texas. I am indebted for the invitation to speak to Roxane Murph, known affectionately to the American Branch for her long service to the Society as ‘The Putative Dean of Middleham’.