Dr. Bertram Wolfe has recently written a short article "When and Why did Hastings Lose his Head." It is much sounder on the subject of the when than the why. He has effectively demolished Mrs. Alison Hanham's contention that Hastings was executed on Friday June 20th 1483 instead of the hitherto accepted date of Friday June 13th. He has shown the 'new evidence,' a minute in the Acts of Court of the Mercers' Company, believed by Mrs. Hanham to be dated 15th June 1483, to be out of context and to refer to an earlier year, and he has clinched the matter by a quotation from the accounts of the Controller of Calais (of which Hastings was King's Lieutenant and Captain) firmly giving June 13th as the date of death, this being so far the earliest record evidence. The controversial Stallworth letter with its reference to the beheading of Hastings on 'Friday last' is also shown to refer to events in correct chronological order.

However, I find Dr. Wolfe's explanation of why Richard executed Hastings no more convincing than Mrs. Hanham's suggestion that all the inquisitions post mortem held for Hastings's lands, and which gave June 13th as the date of death, were an attempt at deliberate falsification on the part of Richard to present his usurpation in a better light. He appears to think that Hastings, Rotherham and Morton were only concerned to prevent the continuation of Richard's powers as Protector beyond the date of Edward V's coronation. There is no mention of Stillington's revelation of Edward IV's pre-contract of marriage with Lady Eleanor Butler and the consequent illegitimacy of Edward V, whether or not Dr. Wolfe might choose to regard this revelation as a fabrication or a quibble. No doubt it is true that until Stillington revealed the pre-contract, the Woodville faction were only concerned to prevent Richard continuing as Protector, but once Elizabeth Woodville's children were likely to be bastardised and Richard was seen as the next heir (Clarence's children being barred by attainder), it is not difficult to believe that there would be an attempt to remove him altogether. Dr. Wolfe does indeed mention Richard's allegation, in his letter to the city of York, that the Queen and her family and associates were continuing to plot against his life, though Dr. Wolfe adds that evidence for a conspiracy between Hastings and the Queen is unlikely to be discovered.

This omission of any mention of the pre-contract also raises difficulties for Dr. Wolfe in his explanation of why Mancini and the subsequent Tudor chroniclers stated that the Queen released her youngest son from sanctuary before, instead of after, the death of Hastings, and he has to fall back on Professor Myers's reference to the 'retrospective revulsion' of these writers from a man whom they regarded as a usurper and murderer. This really will not do. Mancini was there at the time and wrote his account only a few months later—may even have drafted it immediately after Richard's accession. It is far more likely that Mancini (who produced his own, quite erroneous, version of the story of the pre-contract) and the Tudor chroniclers were guilty of deliberate falsification of the conspiracy, in which the Queen was involved. Morton was also more deeply implicated than he cared to have known, and all accounts of the fatal council meeting at the Tower on Friday 13th June, except that of
Mancini, and the Croyland Chronicle, stem ultimately from Morton. Hence the fabrication of Richard's withered arm and the story of the strawberries to add a convincing detail. Richard accused Elizabeth Woodville and Jane Shore (by that time under Hastings's protection) of plotting against him. Dr. Wolfe points out that the feud between Hastings and the Woodville-Grey faction was continued into the next generation, but necessity, as is well known, makes strange bedfellows. Hastings's association with Jane Shore was public knowledge, for even Shakespeare makes the Lord Mayor say of Hastings:

'I never looked for better at his hands
After he once fell in with Mistress Shore.'

If Hastings felt increasingly deprived of power and influence through the ascendancy of Buckingham with Richard, it may have needed little persuasion from Jane, herself perhaps moved by love for the late King and loyalty to his son, to induce him to go over, at least temporarily, to the Woodville camp where he might consider his influence would be greater. Hastings's betrayal of his friend is surely most convincingly explained if he believed Richard to be aiming for the crown, while Richard's action in handing Jane over to the Church for punishment was an acknowledgement of the part he knew her to have played in this betrayal. The very fact that Morton, through More, finds it necessary to point out how unlikely it was that Elizabeth Woodville would conspire with her hated rival should make one suspicious. To conceal the truth of the plot against Richard, Morton turned the tables and alleged that Richard, determined to rid himself of the opposition of Hastings, fabricated a charge against him. In this context Richard must be seen to have both Edward's sons in his power before he proceeded against Hastings. We can only guess at the probably mixed motives of Elizabeth Woodville when she handed over the Duke of York to the Cardinal Archbishop to join his brother. She was losing a bargaining counter, but in view of the failure of the Woodville conspiracy, she may well have felt her cause would be better served by limited co-operation with Richard's wishes. At any rate she put a good face on it for Stallworth describes the delivery in Westminster Hall as a happy scene. If she had really known Hastings to have been guiltless, would she have been persuaded even by the Archbishop?

So we come back to the alleged 'retrospective revulsion' which caused Mancini and the Tudor writers to transpose these events and to telescope the period between the Council meeting and Richard's accession. If this were true, why was the continuator of the Croyland Chronicle immune from the revulsion against Richard, to whom he was certainly no friend? Yet he alone gets the facts of the pre-contract correct, and the sequence of events. Could it be that the Croyland account was not intended for publication or to be read by powerful patrons? How far was Mancini influenced by Morton? There is certainly no proof that he met him, but the fact remains that Mancini had a powerful patron at the French court, whither Morton escaped at about the time that Mancini's 'Usurpation of Richard III' appeared; that although Commines knew the true facts about the pre-contract, Mancini produced a version liable to revive old scores against Richard among his French readers; and that he also reversed the order of events concerning Hastings's death and
the Duke of York leaving sanctuary. Not quite such an unbiased reporter, perhaps, as historians have assumed him to be. However, if one starts with the assumption that what Richard said was the truth, everything falls into place.

NOTES AND REFERENCES


Richard III and Lord Hastings—again

An article has recently appeared in the Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research entitled Richard III and Lord Hastings—a problematical case reviewed by J. A. F. Thomson (B.I.H.R. No. 117, Vol. 48, 1975, pp. 22-30). It is a cogent and well argued review of the evidence for the two possible dates of Hastings' execution. While it accepts that the revised date of 20th June has an inherent logic since it makes more sense to suppose that Richard would make no move towards asserting his claim (however one views it) until he had both Princes in his custody, the article concludes that the traditional view despite its difficulties seems to have more to commend it.

RESEARCH NOTES AND QUERIES

P. W. HAMMOND

The following two notes are contributed by Rhoda Edwards:

Dr. Lewis of Caerleon

The various physicians connected with the Yorkist court are fairly well documented, e.g. Dr. Argentine (see The Usurpation of Richard III, ed. C. A. J. Armstrong, 1969, p. 127). One who may not have been identified was Dr. Lewis, the Welsh physician who acted as go-between from Margaret Beaufort to Elizabeth Woodville at the time of Buckingham's rebellion. An article on Lewis of Caerleon (in Monmouthshire), physician, astronomer and mathematician, by Pearl Kibre appeared in Isis 43 (1952) pp. 100-108. This notes that he was caught and imprisoned in the Tower for his part in the plot of Autumn 1483.