

The New Trencherman

Volume I Issue III
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Richard III Society
Lincolnshire Branch

Hello again – doesn't the time fly by. Seems like yesterday when I was putting together the last issue. Soon be Christmas!!

This issue has another informative article by Alan Pizzey and a fantastic short story by Steph Bowes – just to get you in the mood for Halloween. Thanks to you both for contributing.

At the time of writing there is great excitement over the possible discovery of Richard III's body in Leicester. The released details all do seem to indicate that the remains could be those of Richard III – found in the right place according to the chroniclers, there is an arrow in the back and damage to the skull and spinal curvature. If it does turn out to be the King, no doubt arguments will now begin about a suitable resting place.

Whilst King Richard was hitting the headlines, travellers with Boar's Tours were sunning ourselves in northern France on the Branch weekend. After a short stop at Wissant we made our way to Boulogne. Our trip included a guided tour of old Boulogne, a boat trip over the St Omer marshlands, and visits to Montreuil-Sur-Mer, the Chateau de Rambures (where I spotted my first ever red squirrel) and St Valery Sur Somme, from which William of Normandy set sail in 1066. Our visit ended with a call at the hypermarket at Calais, to enable folk to stock up on comestibles and souvenirs. Unfortunately, my souvenir escaped at Cambridge Services, but that's another story!

Here's looking forward to another action-packed year, when Jean reveals next year's programme at the A.G.M.

Tracy

THE BATTLE OF TOWTON ~ exemplifying “ The tragic misfortunes which could befall a poorly governed kingdom - a last appalling commentary on the misrule of Henry VI”

John Gillingham – Emeritus Professor of History at the London School of Economics.

The battle of Towton fought on Palm Sunday 29 March 1461 was the largest set piece battle of the Wars of the Roses. The number of combatants is subject to doubtful estimate but perhaps 40,000 Yorkists and 45,000 Lancastrians approaches a realistic figure. This conflict was pivotal to the establishment of the House of York as the dominant party in the 1460's. It marked the emergence of the young king Edward IV from the shadow of his cousin Warwick, and a reduction in the influence of the powerful northern families which had hitherto supported the Lancastrian cause. This Yorkist victory persuaded many uncommitted nobles to accept Edward as king and gave an impetus to many ordinary people to support the Yorkist party. These folk were concerned at the barbarous behaviour of Lancastrian soldiery in the army of Queen Margaret.

The campaign of 1460 /61 leading eventually to Towton

There were mistakes and victories on both sides.

In June 1460, the cousins Edward Earl of March and Richard Earl of Warwick, landed at Sandwich from exile in Calais. Their experienced uncle Lord Fauconberg was with them. They marched upon London, gathering supporters from Kent and Sussex on the way. The City Fathers opened the gates to them and the Lancastrian garrison under Lord Scales retreated to the Tower from which they foolishly bombarded the city. Very soon the Yorkists set off towards the Midlands to mediate with King Henry VI but met a sizeable Lancastrian army at Northampton on 10 July. However Lord Grey of Ruthyn commanding the Lancastrian left wing, turned his coat, and his troops according to John Whethamstede of St Albans even helped Edward's men across the fortified ditch and mound. These soldiers were then able to roll up the Lancastrian line and the fight was over in thirty minutes with Henry VI captured and Buckingham, Shrewsbury, Egremont and Beaumont killed.

In the absence of the Duke of York in Ireland, the Earls of March and Warwick returned to London and ruled in Henry's name. The garrison at the Tower capitulated but Lord Scales was allowed to go free. The London watermen mindful of his bombardment of their homes caught and murdered him as he went up river.

The Queen, Margaret of Anjou, and her party, including the Duke of Somerset and the Earls of Devon and Wiltshire began to assemble a fresh Lancastrian army at Hull where they were joined by the Earl of Northumberland and others. Meanwhile the Duke of York returned from Ireland in September and on arrival in London took steps to claim the crown, as a descendant of Lionel of Clarence as well as Edmund of Langley. His high handed attitude did not endear him to some of the Lords who might otherwise have supported him. In December the Duke marched northward with the Earl of Salisbury and 6,000 men to counter the new Lancastrian army. His first born son, Edward of March was despatched to Ludlow to oppose Jasper Tudor, the Earl of Pembroke, and other Lancastrians. Warwick and the Duke of Norfolk remained in London with Henry VI. York had foolishly divided his forces, and his depleted army was heavily defeated at Wakefield in the last days of 1460. York and Salisbury were killed, as was the young Earl of Rutland, the second son of the Duke. This was a battle which York should have avoided. The victorious Queen Margaret now marched south, but foolishly allowed her troops to rape and pillage the countryside on the way. Grantham and Stamford both suffered from this unruly army. The unbridled behaviour of these soldiers sent fear and apprehension amongst the people further south, which stiffened resistance to the Lancastrian cause. On 17 February 1461 this Lancastrian army defeated Warwick at St Albans and re-captured King Henry VI. Despite this victory the city fathers in London refused to open the gates to the Lancastrian army, whose licentious reputation had preceded it. Margaret withdrew northwards, and her unruly soldiers, cheated of the spoils of London, once again laid waste to the towns and villages on their route. Meanwhile the 18 year old Edward of March, fresh from his victory over Jasper Tudor at Mortimers Cross on 3 February, returned to London. The Parhelion observed over this battlefield inspired Edward to take as his emblem “the Sunne in Splendour”. He was installed as King on 4 March and by 28 March he and his friends had raised a sizeable army, which marched north to Pontefract. The stage was set for the battle of Towton.

Lord Fauconberg

“Little Fauconberg, a knight of great reverence” – a popular ballad
As a widower Ralph Neville, first Earl of Westmoreland married Joan Beaufort, a daughter of John of Gaunt and Katherine Swynford. Their second son, William Neville, married an appropriate heiress and became Lord Fauconberg. This doughty fighter was therefore uncle to Richard Neville, Earl of Salisbury and Warwick – “the Kingmaker” – and to the children of Richard

Duke of York, who had married his sister Cecily. These included Edward Earl of March and Edmund Earl of Rutland.

Fauconberg supported March and Warwick during their exile in Calais in 1459, and by his raid on Sandwich in 1460 he paved the way for their return to England. Edward of March gave Fauconberg command of a division of his army at the battle of Northampton. Later it was Fauconberg, who was trusted by Edward to march his army northwards to Pontefract, rather than Warwick whose defeat at St Albans had tarnished his reputation. Fauconberg was therefore right at the heart of the Yorkist party in terms of family connection and military skills.

Dintingdale Valley

Two days before the battle of Towton a Yorkist detachment was sent to seize and hold the crossing of the River Aire at Ferrybridge. They were surprised by a Lancastrian force under Lord Clifford. The Yorkist commander, Lord Fitzwalter, awakened by the noise, left his lodgings to investigate and was promptly killed, as was Warwick's half-brother Sir Richard Jenney. Some authorities say Warwick himself was present at this skirmish, that he was slightly wounded, and hastened back to Edward with tidings of defeat. Edward sent Fauconberg to cross the river at Castleford and cut off the Lancastrian's escape. Clifford beat a hasty retreat but was caught by Fauconberg in Dintingdale Valley only two miles from the safety of the main Lancastrian army which did nothing to rescue him. Clifford was foolish enough to remove his gorget and was killed by an arrow in the throat. John Neville, a brother of Ralph, 2nd Earl of Westmoreland, a prominent Lancastrian [and also a nephew of Fauconberg] was another killed in this fight. This illustrates how families were split into factions fighting each other in the Wars of the Roses.

It also demonstrates the influence of the desire for revenge as a motivator in such troubled times. Clifford's father had been killed by Yorkists at first St Albans in 1455. In 1460 Clifford in turn had pursued the young Earl of Rutland [a nephew of Fauconberg] from the battle of Wakefield, where his father had just been killed. Catching up with this young man on the bridge at Wakefield, Clifford had needlessly stabbed him to death. In February 1461 at the 2nd battle of St Albans it was in Clifford's tent that King Henry VI was re-united with his queen and his eight year old son, Prince Edward. The king's four Yorkist guardians were summarily executed soon after. At Dintingdale Fauconberg was revenged on Clifford for the death of his young nephew

Edmund, and his Yorkist friends. He also prevented Clifford, a battle hardened tactician, from helping the Lancastrians at Towton.

Fauconberg's victorious troops rejoined the advancing Yorkist host and he assumed command of the vanguard.

Contemporary descriptions of the Battle of Towton

There is a marked shortage of reliable source material to ascertain what actually happened during this battle, which is said to have lasted all day from 8am until dusk. Some accounts were written many years after the battle and tactical details are uncertain being passed on by word of mouth, with consequent adjustment and embellishment. For example, did the Lancastrian cavalry charge and defeat their Yorkist counterparts, and was there a Lancastrian ambush prepared in Castle Hill wood, which could have attacked the Yorkist left flank. Neither of these tactics, if they actually happened, was sufficient to affect the final result which was a complete rout and slaughter of the Lancastrian army.

Warwick's brother, George Neville Bishop of Exeter, wrote a letter on 7 April 1461 based on news reaching London from messengers and letters. He was however more concerned with the important casualties than with the action itself. Edmund Hall wrote a detailed description of the battle, but this was eighty years after the event. In 1465 Jean de Warin wrote a general history of the campaigns of 1461, including Towton, which is said to be based on the memories of men who took part in the battle, but those fighting at one place may not have had time to appreciate what was happening elsewhere.

Gregory's Chronicle and the Croyland Chronicle provide further short insights which may indeed be hearsay. Gregory suggests that Edward had 200,000 troops including the Duke of Norfolk's detachment and some Burgundian mercenaries when his army concentrated at Pontefract on 22 March 1461 but this seems unreal.

The Battle

King Henry, Queen Margaret, and Edward Prince of Wales, remained in York, but two Dukes, four Earls, one Viscount, and eight Barons fought on their side. The 24 year old Duke of Somerset commanded this large Lancastrian army although other more experienced commanders were present. He chose an advantageous position on the top of a low ridge and arranged his troops facing south in divisions, or "battles", stretching from the Earl of Northumberland's men on the right by the Cock Beck eastwards across the road from Castleford until they reached the road from Sherburn [see map]. Established in this position on Saturday 28 March the Lancastrians awaited

the arrival of the Yorkist army, but took no steps to rescue Lord Clifford at Dintingdale on that day. The weather on this ridge was appalling with snow and strong winds, but the Cock Beck in spate which was about 5 feet deep and fast flowing protected their right flank. However the marshes and the small bridge over the Cock Beck in their rear were to prove a disastrous hazard in retreat.

The Yorkists crossed the River Aire at Castleford and reached Saxton before dark on 28 March. They advanced to within 800 yards of their enemy and deployed in line of divisions on a low ridge above Towton Vale, with Fauconberg on their right. Both armies passed the night in the open with snow showers brought by the cold north wind. The dawn was cold and cloudy on Palm Sunday, and Edward advanced his troops to the crest of the ridge. He could not attack then as a complete division of his army, under the ailing Duke of Norfolk, had not yet arrived.

The experienced Fauconberg gave his side an early advantage, when the wind, now coming from the south, blew a heavy snow shower into the faces of the Lancastrians on their ridge. He pushed his archers forward and ordered them to fire a volley into the Lancastrian line and then to withdraw into the cover of the snow storm. The unsighted Lancastrians became confused, believing a full attack was imminent, and shot back into the snowstorm until their quivers were empty. The arrows fell short of the Yorkist archers and were thus ineffective. Fauconberg then advanced his archers again to gather the Lancastrian's arrows and maintain a harmful barrage into their ranks. The Lancastrians began to take casualties, and had no alternative but to forsake their carefully prepared position and advance into Towton Vale and up the opposite slope to meet their enemy. By this time they were at a considerable disadvantage and on the west of their line the steeper ascent from Bloody Meadow into the archers' volleys was particularly costly.

The Lancastrian cavalry may have charged at this time to defeat the Yorkist horsemen, but there is no certain evidence of this. What we do know is that a melee of savage hand to hand fighting developed on foot between knights and men at arms using swords, axes and maces. The Lancastrians gradually forced the Yorkists to give ground by sheer weight of numbers. The archers on the edge of this conflict picked their targets – Lord Dacre was killed by an arrow fired from behind a “burtree” or elder. After three hours of this combat in mud and slush the reserves were being used up to fill gaps in the line and the Lancastrians seemed to be gaining the upper hand. An ambush sprung from Castle Hill wood would have disadvantaged the Yorkist left flank. At this

stage leadership proves its value, and Edward, although only just 19 years old, encouraged his men by fighting alongside them. A tall strong figure in armour [6 ft 3ins tall] moving amongst them stiffened their resolve to fight on. Help was at hand as, well after midday, the advance guard of Norfolk's division appeared along the Sherburn road. An hour later and these troops had swung round to attack the Lancastrian left wing and rear. The battle now turned in the Yorkist's favour, but the Lancastrians stubbornly fought on. Eventually they began to give ground, with a few men trickling away to the rear, which turned into a retreat and then by late afternoon into flight. Soldiers in heavy armour found it difficult to escape pursuit by their foes. Those retreating along the course of the Cock Beck were trapped between the beck in spate and the steep slope. Bloody Meadow became a death trap for these men. Others retreated towards Towton and the bridge over the Cock Beck. It was difficult to make a stand whilst backing down the slope to the old London Road. The small wooden bridge and the marsh, swollen by the flood, now became a real obstacle as panic set in and many were drowned. Yorkist cavalry pursued the fleeing Lancastrians almost as far as York, inflicting heavy casualties on those they caught.

Casualty figures vary according to their source. The Croyland Chronicle says 38,000 on both sides, and Edward Hall a somewhat exact figure of 36,776, perhaps taken from records compiled by the Heralds. The Paston letters show 28,000 with 20,000 of these Lancastrians. Abbot Whethampstede is close to this figure. Polydor Virgil writing 50 years later says 20,000 of which 10,000 were wounded and taken prisoner, but this is probably quite wrong. Certainly five Lancastrian peers were killed in the action and the Earls of Northumberland and Wiltshire were both captured and executed soon after. The Dukes of Somerset and Exeter managed to escape. Gregory's Chronicle says that 42 Lancastrian knights were taken or killed by the end of the battle. King Edward however knighted on the field Walter Devereux, John Howard, Humphrey Stafford and William Hastings, who all became trusted servants of the crown.

The Aftermath

King Edward IV triumphantly entered York. The Lancastrian royal family fled to Scotland and were joined by Somerset, Exeter, Lord Roos and others. The remnants of the Lancastrian army took refuge in Northumberland where there were still strong castles in Lancastrian hands. Fauconberg was put in command of the garrison at Newcastle to check any counter attack by these forces allied to Scottish military units.

Edward returned to London for his coronation, and to arrange an Act of Attainder against his defeated foes. In Scotland King James II was killed on 3 August 1461 when a bombard, fired to salute his wife, exploded. The new king James III was only 8 years old and the divided regency council was too preoccupied to assist Margaret of Anjou. She and Prince Edward continued on to France in March 1462.

King Edward in turn was establishing his own authority in the south, and watching in case of an invasion from France. A newly raised Yorkist army under Lord Herbert defeated the Earl of Pembroke and the Duke of Exeter at Caernarvon on 16 October 1461. Intermittent fighting continued in the north until 1464. Somerset was executed after capture in a minor battle at Hexham in May 1464. Henry VI was captured in July 1465 and taken to the Tower of London.

As to Lord Fauconberg, his royal nephew recognised his contribution to the Towton campaign by promoting him to the Earldom of Kent, and as Steward of the Royal Household on 30 June 1461. This earldom brought him 56 manors in the West Country, which had been forfeited from the estates of the earls of Wiltshire and Devon. He became naval commander in the English Channel and frustrated the efforts of Queen Margaret to transfer troops from France to Scotland to assist an invasion of Northumberland. The Earl died in 1463, but the title could not pass to his illegitimate son. This well-endowed earldom was next conferred on Lord Grey of Ruthyn, the turncoat from the battle of Northampton in 1460, whose son had by now married a sister of Elizabeth Woodville. This marks another pivotal moment in the Wars of the Roses as the influence of the Woodvilles and their adherents began to increase at the expense of the Nevilles.

Bibliography

“Battles in Britain” by William Seymour

“The Wars of the Roses” by John Gillingham

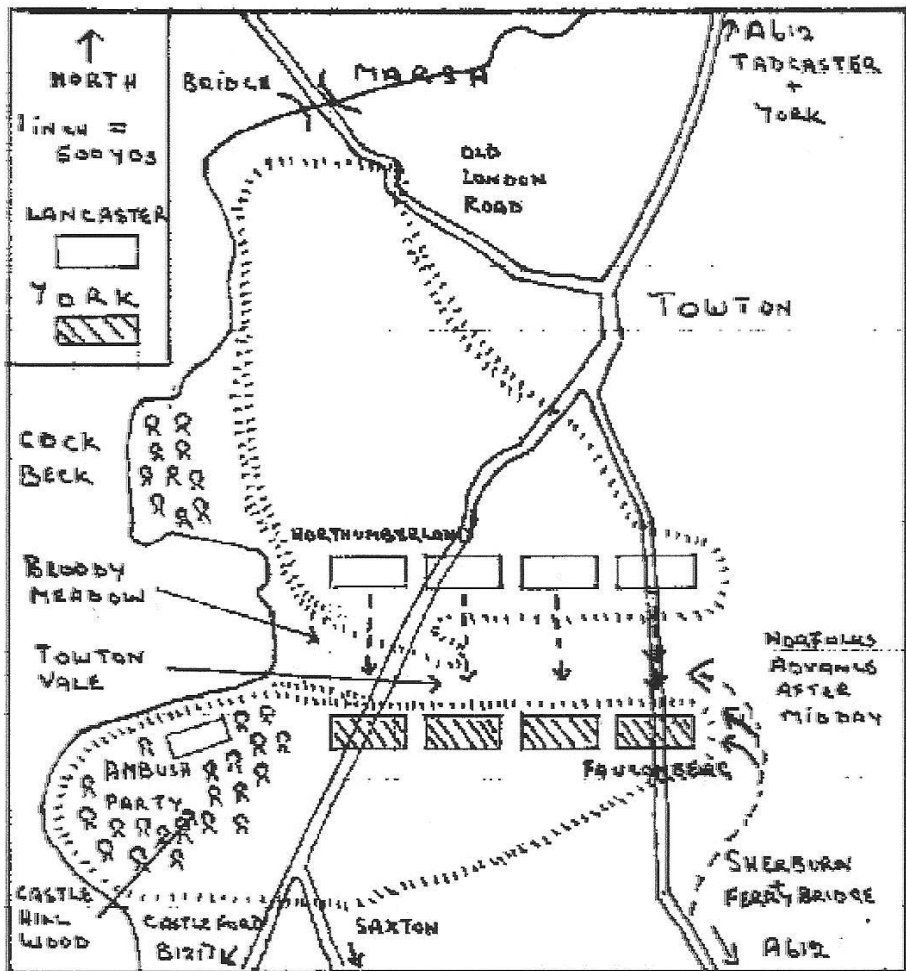
“The Wars of the Roses” by Charles Ross

“Edward IV” by Charles Ross

Alan Pizzey ~ 18 July 2012

See overleaf for Alan’s diagram of the battlefield.

THE BATTLEFIELD OF TOWTON



Lincolnshire Place Name Quiz – Part 2. [Answers.](#)

1. Armada. [Fleet.](#)
2. Attains town. [Gainsborough.](#)
3. Bestow porcine slice. [Grantham.](#)
4. Bird of prey. [Eagle.](#)
5. Bird's river crossing. [Cuckoo Bridge.](#)
6. Brag about country. [Crowland.](#)
7. Chuck stream. [Binbrook.](#)
8. Radio 4 Comedian. [Boothby Graffoe.](#)
9. Fat buzzer? [Bigby.](#)
10. Four-sided circle. [Quadrang.](#)
11. Fruit close at hand. [Appleby.](#)
12. Fruit for obliging porker. [Cherry Willingham.](#)
13. Henry VIII's Suffolk? [Brandon.](#)
14. Home of Royal Champions. [Scrivelsby.](#)
15. Home of Wesley Brothers. [Epworth.](#)
16. Jetty for spirits. [Brandy Wharf.](#)
17. Jug for insect. [Ewerby.](#)
18. Keep showing the way. [Pointon.](#)
19. Largest dog in the world. [Digby.](#)
20. Loose insect. [Aslackby.](#)
21. Nothing taken from hawker. [Barrowby.](#)
22. Pasture for canine. [Bitchfield.](#)
23. Pig from the Magi? [Threekingham.](#)
24. Piggy garden? [Edenham.](#)
25. Shakespeare's joint. [Bardney.](#)
26. Warm outerwear. [Coates.](#)
27. Water crossing for the bilious. [Belchford.](#)
28. White Christmas crooner. [Crosby.](#)
29. Who's singer? [Frampton.](#)
30. Young lady's water supply? [Maidenwell.](#)

Luckily I kept a note of the answers when I devised this for the last issue – I only got 20 right this time!!

Happy Birthday

18 October – Barbara Pizzey.

19 November – Pat Dawson.

8 December – Sally Henshaw.

11 December – Carol Lewis.

22 December – Audrey Barclay.

23 December – Chris Light.

And the birthday of the month :

10 October – Richard Wheeldon.

This makes Richard a Dog in the Chinese horoscope. Responsible, compassionate, attentive, reliable, honest and ethically minded.

Can be pessimistic, anxious, overwhelming and nosy. The characteristics of the Dog are tempered by one of five Chinese elements. Richard is a Fire Dog – a natural leader. Fire Dogs are popular, charismatic people, always surrounded by a group of admirers. Admired for their vibrant personalities, these Dogs also possess a sexual attractiveness that makes them irresistible. They are adventurous and vivacious, yet honest and open-hearted.

The Chinese Dog is the counterpart of Libra – and Richard was also born under the sign of the Scales. Librans are the most civilised of the Zodiac characters and are often good-looking.

They have elegance, charm and good taste, are naturally kind, very gentle, and lovers of beauty and harmony.

Libra governs the lumbar region, so beware weakness in the back, and lumbago. Avoid over-indulgence in food and especially drink, for the latter can particularly harm the kidneys.

On this day:

Born – Giuseppe Verdi, William Morris, Thelonious Monk and Harold Pinter.

Died – Sir Ralph Richardson, Orson Welles and Yul Brynner.

1903 – Emmeline Pankhurst founded the Women's Social and Political Union.

1911 – the Chinese Revolution which eventually overthrew the Manchu dynasty began.

1913 – final Panama Canal breakthrough came as the Gamboa Dyke was blown up.

1928 – Tyne Bridge opened by George V.

1955 – BBC began to broadcast test transmission in colour.

1957 – serious accident at the Windscale nuclear reactor.

1961 – volcanic eruption in Tristan de Cunha.

1967 – British Road Safety Act introduces breath tests.

1969 – it is announced that the Ulster Special Constabulary was to be disbanded.

1970 – Fiji becomes an independent member of the British Commonwealth.

1971 – the dismantled London bridge is re-opened in Lake Havasu City, Arizona.

1973 – U.S. Vice President Spiro Agnew resigns after pleading guilty to tax evasion charges.

1975 – Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor marry for the second time.

1980 – Margaret Thatcher makes her 'lady's not for turning' speech.

Raven's Heart

by Stephanie Wetherill-Bowes

The sound of a cat's bell greeted me as I turned the key awkwardly in the gate, and a familiar furry shape came towards me.

"Hello Princess, you're eager for your biscuits this morning," I said.

Princess was the allotment cat, a little black and white stray and she had won my heart. I loved coming to my allotment, a patch of green heaven in a grotty industrial town. Princess ran ahead of me along the grassy path, passing other perfectly kept plots. I reached my own and followed a rather weedy trackway to the greenhouse. Princess was pleased as I shook the box of kibble, and filled her bowl. She crunched and purred noisily, as I bent down to stroke her patchy fur. I stood up; something caught my eye on my neighbour's plot; a straw witch, tied to a cane, complete with black pointy hat and broom sat in an abundant pumpkin patch. I could smile now at the Halloween toy, but a year ago it was a very different story.

You always expect witches to belong in stories along with fairies and goblins in magical worlds, but not in your own town in this day and age.

It all started last Halloween. I was picking the last of the autumn raspberries when I noticed two middle-aged women, both with long, unnaturally red hair, tidying the abandoned plot behind me. I smiled as one caught me looking.

“You’ve got your work cut out there,” I said. One of them came towards me, not smiling, pointing her long thin finger.

“You grow a lot of herbs,” she said almost accusingly.

“Yes well I do a lot of cooking.” I patted my stomach.

“Surely not with belladonna and aconite?”

“Well no, but they have their uses,” I answered, “and they’re not herbs,” I added.

She smiled coldly, and I felt quite a shiver run through me. I heard the other woman call, “Are you coming sister?” and she turned to go.

“Are you going to put a few winter veg in?” I asked, “I’ve got some spare spring cabbages if you’d like them,” but she didn’t answer, and walked away.

I finished picking my raspberries and thought no more of it.

Over the next few weeks it became evident they weren’t growing winter veg or preparing the land for next spring.

Princess didn't take to them, and she was a hussy round everyone, especially if they could offer a stroke round the ear or produce a bacon rind out of their pocket.

The nights were drawing in and the winter digging was done, but I went every day to feed Princess. The women, always together, and always in long, flowing skirts, not at all suitable for gardening, had erected a shed and laid a gravel space with high trellis fencing around it, as if they were hiding. I didn't care what they did, but I did object to the two black ravens that arrived at the same time as them; even the magpies didn't chase them away.

The ravens ate everything on everyone's patches, Jim's prize marrows and all the apples on Sadie's tree. Then, on a visit one afternoon, Princess didn't meet me. When I found her she was curled under my potting table in the greenhouse, her fur was pulled out and she was bleeding.

The ravens' beaks caught the light as they stared defiantly at me from the shed roof; they were covered in Princess' blood.

"Oh you bastards," I said under my breath, "it's time I sorted you out."

I returned home and collected something I hadn't used in years, something from childhood; my old catapult.

I practised a bit in the back garden, firing at tins on the back wall, and my aim was as good as it ever was.

At lunchtime I was making soup as I listened to the local news on the radio. The headlines that day were that a girl of two had gone missing in our town, and a baby from a nearby village had also been snatched. How awful, I thought. That evening I returned to the allotment to do battle with the ravens before it got too dark, but when I got there they were nowhere to be seen.

Instead I discovered my greenhouse had been broken into. There was glass everywhere. Princess was unharmed as far as I could tell, but all I could see was a pair of shining green eyes staring out from under an upturned basket. Looking round, all my terracotta pots were smashed, my herbs that had been drying upside down were pulled off their hooks and trodden into the earth floor, but nothing had been taken. The words painted on a glass pane made my stomach turn; "The ravens will eat your heart."

It was almost dark when I had finished picking up the glass and straightening the mess, when the two women arrived at their plot, one with a baby, one with a toddler.

They hadn't seen me.

"We need to hurry sister," one said.

“Are you sure we’re ready?”

“Yes, yes.”

“Well after this afternoon, she’s dealt with, I doubt her or her cat will bother us again.”

I pricked up my ears and moved quietly towards the door; my boot crunched on a bit of glass I’d missed, but luckily the toddler cried out, “I want my mummy!” They hadn’t heard me.

“Shut up you little brat, where you’re going you won’t need your mummy.” I heard a slap and the little girl wailed.

There was a gate in the trellis and I moved closer, looking through a gap, but the light was failing fast. I needed my mobile to ring the police and get help, but I’d left it in the greenhouse.

Feeling none too brave, I edged forward to get a better view. The toddler was tied to a stone bird bath. The baby lay naked on the sharp, cold gravel and the women were kneeling with their backs to me but I could hear them whispering. I took a deep breath and shouted, “Untie that child at once!”

The women turned round and got up, one of them flung open the gate and they both appeared before me before I had time to blink.

“Well sister, look who’s here, it’s the cat lady.”

“Run away cat lady or we’ll do far worse to you.”

“I don’t think so.” I took out the catapult and pointed it at them.

They laughed, high pitched, the elder one stood up and walked towards me, and I noticed she had a mole on her chin.

“You stupid woman, do you think you’d hurt me with a child’s toy?” she snarled.

“No, not really,” I said, “but this might.”

Tilting my head back, I screamed out to the night, pointing my fingers directly at them.

“Death, dumb and blind

My spell doth bind thee.

Be small, be feeble, be weak.

Be mice!”

White light shot from my finger tips and at my feet sat two ginger mice. I bent down and picked them up by their tails, and they wriggled, trying to escape me, but I held them tight.

I would call the police and peace would return to the allotments, but in the meanwhile I had a job to do.

“Princess,” I called, “I have a lovely treat for your supper.”

Help to make this YOUR New Trencherman, by contributing articles and suggestions. Newspaper cuttings, magazine articles or anything else about Richard III or Lincolnshire would be ideal. Write a ghost story, or share anything you've enjoyed with the rest of us – exhibitions, books, films, meals etc. Don't worry if you do not have a computer – I can transcribe handwritten pieces for you.

You can submit your pieces or ideas to me, Tracy Upex, in person at a meeting, by e-mail to ricardian.lincs@btinternet.com or by post to:

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Items for next issue to be received by me on or before

1 December 2012 to ensure publication.

Thank you.