

# Alice Martyn, Widow of London: An Episode from Richard's Youth

HANNES KLEINEKE

The eighteen months immediately preceding When Edward IV's accession to the throne of England in March 1461 were dramatic ones for the future Richard III. During this time he lost his father and an elder brother, and was not only frequently moved from one residence to another, but ultimately even sent across the Channel to Flanders. In the autumn of 1459, aged seven, Richard was probably too young to appreciate fully the political upheavals that led to the confrontation of the armed retinues of his father, Richard, Duke of York, and his supporters, the Neville earls of Salisbury and Warwick, with a royal army headed (if not led) by King Henry VI himself at Ludford bridge, outside Ludlow. On the night of 12 October York's forces disintegrated in the face of the superior Lancastrian numbers, and the duke of York, his two eldest sons and the peers who supported his cause fled the realm. York and his second son, Edmund, Earl of Rutland, made for Ireland, while the duke's heir, Edward, Earl of March, accompanied by the earls of Warwick and Salisbury sought refuge in Calais.<sup>1</sup> Cecily, Duchess of York, and her two youngest sons, George and Richard, whose whereabouts at the time are uncertain, were left behind, and their immediate fate is unclear: one contemporary chronicler asserted that Cecily remained at Ludlow and was treated badly by the victorious Lancastrians,<sup>2</sup> but more recently it has been suggested that the duchess and her younger sons were in fact at the family home of Fotheringhay when the duke had to flee from Ludlow.<sup>3</sup> In early December Cecily appeared at the Coventry Parliament and was granted annual revenues of 1,000 marks for her support, but was placed in the protective custody of her brother-in-law, Humphrey Stafford, Duke of Buckingham, and his wife, Duchess Anne Neville.<sup>4</sup> The duchess of York's younger children probably remained with her at this time, but it is not known where the family spent the months until York's supporters regained the political initiative the following summer. It is possible that Cecily and her children were staying at the Stafford manor of Writtle, not far from London, when the earls of Salisbury, Warwick and March defeated a Lancastrian force and captured King Henry VI at Northampton on 10 July 1460. Certainly, in mid September the duchess, her sons George and Richard and her daughter Margaret took up residence in the Southwark house formerly owned by Sir John Fastolf and then in the care of the Pastons, and it was here that they received the news of the duke of York's landing at Chester. The duchess went to join her husband at Hereford, leaving the children behind in Southwark, where they were regularly visited by their eldest brother, Edward.<sup>5</sup>

York arrived at Westminster on 10 October, and it seems likely that his duchess returned with him and was reunited with her children. In December, the family was once more split up. On 9 December the duke of York, accompanied by the young earl of Rutland and the elderly earl of Salisbury, rode north to challenge the forces raised by Queen Margaret, Thomas Courtenay, Earl of Devon, and Henry Beaufort, Duke of Somerset. Edward of March was sent to the Welsh marches to raise forces in the areas where his family commanded influence, and to meet the threat posed by Jasper Tudor, earl of Pembroke. Duchess Cecily and her younger children probably remained in the south-east, but disappeared from the records, until the reappearance of Richard and George in the spring of 1461 in the Low Countries, where their mother had sent them for safety.<sup>6</sup> A document at the Public Record Office sheds some light on the fate

---

<sup>1</sup> For Edward's flight to Calais via Devon see P.A. Johnson, *Duke Richard of York 1411-1460*, 2nd edn., Oxford 1991, p. 195; Hannes Kleineke, 'Lady Joan Dinham: A Fifteenth-Century West-Country Matriarch', in Tim Thornton, ed., *Social Attitudes and Political Structures in the Fifteenth Century*, Stroud 2000, pp. 75-77.

<sup>2</sup> J.S. Davies, ed., *An English Chronicle of the Reigns of Richard II, Henry IV, Henry V, and Henry VI*, London 1856, p. 83.

<sup>3</sup> Ross, *Richard III*, p. 4.

<sup>4</sup> James Gairdner, ed., *The Paston Letters*, 3 vols., London 1872-75, vol. 1, p. 499; Ross, *Richard III*, p. 4; Johnson, *Duke Richard*, p. 192.

<sup>5</sup> Gairdner, ed., *Paston Letters*, vol. 1, p. 525; Norman Davies, ed., *Paston Letters and Papers of the Fifteenth Century*, 2 pts., Oxford 1976, pt. 2, pp. 216-17. J.L. Chamberlayne, 'A Paper Crown: The Titles and Seals of Cecily Duchess of York', *The Ricardian*, vol. 10 (1996), p. 430. Fastolf Place has been discussed by Martha Carlin, 'Fastolf Place, Southwark: The Home of the Duke of York's Family, 1460', *The Ricardian*, vol. 5 (1981), pp. 311-14, repr. in James Petre, ed., *Richard III: Crown and People*, Gloucester 1985, pp. 44-47.

<sup>6</sup> Davies, ed., *English Chronicle*, p. 109; A.D. Thomas and I.D. Thornley, eds., *The Great Chronicle of London*, London 1938, p.

of two princes in the intervening months.

On 28 March 1463 Edward IV sent a letter under his signet to the keeper of the privy seal to set in motion the administrative process of granting an annuity of 100*s.* to the London widow Alice Martyn. She was to have this reward, so the king's letter continued, for 'receiuyng and keping ... oure right entierli biloued Brethren The Dukes of Clarence and Gloucestre from daungier and perill in thair troubles vnto the tyme of thair departing out of this oure Reame into the parties of fflaundes'.<sup>7</sup> No further details of these 'troubles' are given, but the document clearly relates to the period between the duke of York's death at Wakefield on 30 December 1460 and the princes' departure, probably in early to mid February 1461, perhaps even before Edward of March's victory at Mortimer's Cross, but possibly as late as the aftermath of the battle of St Albans, when word of the approach of Queen Margaret's army reached the city.<sup>8</sup> News of the defeat at Wakefield, where a London contingent had fought, and the deaths of York and his second son, Edmund of Rutland, reached the city by 5 January, and it is likely that Cecily began to make plans for her surviving sons' safety almost immediately.<sup>9</sup> After Ludford Bridge, Cecily might have been humiliated, but her and her younger children's lives had been spared. Rutland's death at Wakefield probably suggested to the duchess that Queen Margaret would not be as sentimental this time and would seek to solve the threat to her son's succession presented by York's male line once and for all. London's ruling elite continued to be supportive of the Yorkist cause, and the house of a London widow may thus have seemed a safer refuge for the two boys than either their mother's home at Baynard's castle or Fastolf's place in Southwark, should Lancastrian forces reach the city.

Unfortunately, Alice herself is an elusive figure. No further details of her career have been discovered, and the identity of the husband who had predeceased her is equally obscure. There were a number of prominent Martyns in London and the south-east in the mid-fifteenth century, but none of those who died in the years before 1463 are known to have left a widow called Alice. The only Alice Martyn definitely known to have lived in London in the reign of Henry VI was the wife of one Robert Martyn, and a niece of Alice Galyot, wife of the London waxchandler Thomas Galyot. She was coheiress to her aunt's property in the Old Exchange in the London parish of St Augustine by St Paul's, which the coheirs granted away in May 1436.<sup>10</sup> An alternative candidate could be an Alice Martyn from Chalk on the Thames estuary in Kent (and thus on the route to Low Countries), but this lady, who made her will in September 1470, is not known to have had any connexions with the city.<sup>11</sup>

Whoever Alice was, she did not enjoy the king's largesse for long. By 1465 Edward's generosity had seriously depleted his resources of patronage and he took recourse to the by now traditional remedy of English kings finding themselves in this position. That same spring, Parliament passed an act of Resumption, and among the royal grants that fell victim to it was Alice's annuity which was cancelled in the account of the Duchy of Cornwall's receiver general the following year.<sup>12</sup>

Two copies of Alice's grant survive among the public records. The original signet letter may be found among the records of the Privy Seal office, while a copy in Latin was enrolled by the King's Remembrancer of the Exchequer on his memoranda roll.<sup>13</sup>

---

195. For the princes' Burgundian exile see A.F. Sutton, 'The return of Richard of Gloucester after his first exile', *The Ricardian*, vol. 3 (1975), pp. 21-22; L. Visser-Fuchs, 'Richard in Holland 1461', *The Ricardian*, vol. 6 (1983) esp. pp. 184-88.

<sup>7</sup> [The National Archives:] P[ublic] R[ecord] O[ffice], PSO1/23, no. 1247B.

<sup>8</sup> For the dating of Richard and George's departure for Flanders see Visser Fuchs, 'Richard in Holland', pp. 184, 187, 189.

<sup>9</sup> C. M. Barron, 'London and the Crown, 1451-61' in J.R.L. Highfield and Robin Jeffs, eds., *The Crown and Local Communities in England and France in the Fifteenth Century*, Gloucester 1981, pp. 98, 108.

<sup>10</sup> C[orporation of] L[ondon] R[ecord] O[ffice], HR 164 (39).

<sup>11</sup> This Alice's will mentioned another Alice Martyn, probably her niece, who on chronological grounds seems an unlikely candidate for identification with the princes' protectress: Centre for Kentish Studies, Maidstone, Rochester consistory court wills, DRb/PWr/1.100, DRb/PWr/3.76; PRO, C1/113/44, C1/114/1. I am grateful to Dr David Grummitt for providing me with copies of the Rochester wills.

<sup>12</sup> PRO, SC6/816/8, m. 6. Alice's annuity was payable from the revenues of the manor of Kennington which was parcel of the duchy. The duchy's possessions were among those covered by the 1465 Act of Resumption: M. A. Hicks, 'Attainder, Resumption and Coercion 1461-1529', *Parliamentary History*, vol. 3 (1984), pp. 24-25.

<sup>13</sup> In this transcription, common abbreviations have been expanded, and a degree of punctuation introduced. The capitalization of the original has been retained.

**Public Record Office, PSO 1/23/1247B**

By the King

Right trusti and Welbeloved We grete you wele, Lating you wite þat in consideracion of the true hert and feithfull service that oure welbeloved Alice Martyn of oure Citee of London, Widowe, hath borne ad doon vnto vs heretofore, and namely in receiuyng and keping of oure right entierli biloued Brethren The Dukes of Clarence and Gloucestre from daungier and perill in thair troubles vnto the tyme of thair departing out of this oure Reame into the parties of fflaundes. We of oure grace especial have graunted vnto the same Alice an Annuitee of C s. yerely to bee payed during her lyff of thissues, proffittes ffermes and revenues of oure lordship of Kenyngton commyng by the handes of the ffermours or occupiours of the same for the tyme beeing. Therefore we Wol and charge you þat under oure priue seal, beeing in youre keping, ye doo make oure lettres directed vnto oure chaunceller of England, charging him by the same þat under oure great seal, beeing in his warde, herupon he doo make oure lettres patentes in due fourme according vnto theeffect of thees oure lettres Which shalbee youre suffisant warant. Yeuen under oure signet at our Palois of Westminster the xxvij day of March the thrid [sic] yere of oure reigne.

**Public Record Office, E 159/241, *recorda* Easter rot. 21**

Anglia: Edwardus, dei gracia Rex Anglie et Francie et Dominus Hibernie, Omnibus ad quos presentes littere peruenerint, salutem. Sciatís quod nos consideracione veri cordis et fidelis servicij quod dilecta nobis Alicia Martyn de civitate nostra London', vidua, nobis perante gessit et impendit et precipue in recipiendo et custodiendo precarissimos fratres nostros, duces Clarencie et Gloucestre, a periculo in tribulacionibus suis vsque ad tempus recessuum suorum ab hoc regno nostro in partes Flandree, de gracia nostra speciali concessimus eidem Alicie quendam annuitatem centum solidorum, percipiendam annuatim durante vita sua de exitibus, proficuis, firmis et reuencionibus dominij nostri de Kenyngton prouenientibus per manus firmariorum sive Occupatorum eiusdem pro tempore existencium. In cuius rei testimonium has litteras nostras fieri fecimus patentes. Teste me ipso apud Westmonasterium tricesimo die Marcij, anno regni nostri tercio.

Pekham

Per breve de privato sigillo et de data predicta auctoritate parlamenti.

First published in The Ricardian Vol. 14 2004.

© Richard III Society

This document is not to be reproduced without the permission of the Society