

Whether my hero was or was not an impostor, he was believed to be the true man by his contemporaries¹.

Perkin Warbeck

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The young man, called by Henry VII's spin doctors, "Perkin Warbeck", has been surrounded by controversy ever since he first appeared on the world stage. He claimed to be Richard, Duke of York, the younger son of Edward IV, and thus would have been the brother of Henry's Queen Elizabeth. As Perkin Warbeck he is often regarded by historians as a footnote of little consequence to the glorious Tudor reign, and this is certainly the image that the Tudors liked to create. As we shall see, whatever Henry's efforts at portraying the affair, this young man had him seriously worried and was widely accepted as Richard of York.

As we know according to Tudor history Richard III was that evil monster who killed his poor innocent nephews. Therefore anyone claiming to be one of these nephews had to be an impostor, and a rather stupid one at that. However, there is no proof that they were indeed murdered by their uncle, or anyone else for that matter, and once we acknowledge this, we can have a more unbiased look at this young man's identity.

When Henry came to the throne he had the Titulus Regius, stating that Edward IV's children were illegitimate, revoked, in order to have an added claim to the throne through his wife. This would have left her two brothers, if they were alive, with a better claim than Henry². So when first a young man appeared saying he was Edward IV's elder son Edward and later another young man claimed to be Richard, they were seen as the great hope of the Yorkist cause.

I think that there is a very good chance that this young man was indeed who he claimed to be: Richard of York.

We can only speculate on what happened to the boys, when they were no longer

¹ Mary Shelley, *The Fortunes of Perkin Warbeck*, quoted in Garbin, Lidia, "The Fortunes of Perkin Warbeck: Walter Scott in the Writings of Mary Shelley".
<http://www.erudir.org/revue/ron/1997/v/n6/005752ar.html>

² Arthurson, Ian, *The Perkin Warbeck Conspiracy 1491-1499*. Alan Sutton Publishing, Stroud, 1994, p.190

seen at the Tower. There is the possibility that they were smuggled to their aunt Margaret of Burgundy (Edward IV and Richard III's sister), possibly with the help of Sir James Tyrell and/or Sir Edward Brampton³.

1. Short Summary of Perkin/Richard's life

Following is a short summary of the life of the young man that came to be known as Perkin Warbeck.

1.1 Some time after Easter 1487 (i.e. before the Battle of Stoke on 16 June 1487, where an earlier pretender, who by the Tudors would be referred to as Lambert Simnel, was defeated⁴) a young man arrived in Portugal in the company of Sir Edward Brampton and his wife on a ship sent by the Portuguese King. He stayed until 1491. Even during this time there were said to be many who regarded him as Richard of York⁵.

1.2 In the autumn of 1491 this young man appeared in Cork in Ireland claiming to be Richard, Duke of York. He arrived on a ship owned by Pregent Meno and was wearing fine silk clothes⁶. He found some support in Ireland, but not enough⁷.

1.3 In June 1492 the French King, Charles VIII, invited him to France, and he went there. His presence helped Charles to get Henry to the negotiating table. So when the treaty was signed in December 1492, he had no more use for him⁸, and the young man had to look for new backers.

1.4 From France he went to Margaret in Burgundy, Richard's aunt. Through Margaret he got into contact with Maximilian I, Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation⁹. Maximilian proved to be one of his most steadfast supporters. His big problem was that he was always strapped for cash, due to the reluctance of his subjects to allow him funds¹⁰. He did finance an invasion force for the pretender.

1.5 Unfortunately Henry had found out about the plans and had got rid of

³ Williamson, Audrey, *The Mystery of the Princes*. Alan Sutton, 1981 pp.114-130

⁴ Smith, Gordon, "Lambert Simnel and the King from Dublin", *The Ricardian*, Vol.10, No. 135, December 1996 (also published on web page of The Richard III Society)

⁵ Wroe, Ann, *The Perfect Prince*. Random House, New York, 2003, p. 19 & p. 41

⁶ Wroe, *Perfect Prince*, pp. 48 - 49

⁷ Kleyn, Diana, *Richard of England*. Jacobyte Books, Australia, 2001, pp. 87 - 89

⁸ Wroe, *Perfect Prince*, pp. 114 - 120, Kleyn, p. 91

⁹ Wroe, *Perfect Prince*, pp. 148 ff

¹⁰ Kleyn, p. 111 Later on in his reign he actually mortgaged the mines in Tyrol in order to borrow money of the Fugger banking family. (Gisela Sachse' "Kaiser Maximilian I - Bewahrer und Reformier.
http://www.aski.ork/kb_202/kb202maximilian.htm)

Richard's support base in England before his arrival¹¹. On 3 July 1495, Richard arrived off Deal in Kent. Some of his men went on land, where they were greeted by the men of Kent, who invited the Pretender ashore. He seems to have suspected a trap, which indeed it was, and stayed on board, as Henry had done in a similar situation. Most of those, who had landed, were executed, a few made it back to the ships¹².

1.6 Richard then went back to Ireland, but here Henry had got rid of Richard's support base as well¹³.

1.7 So Richard accepted an invitation from James IV of Scotland, where he arrived on 20 November 1495. James proved to be his other faithful supporter. He financed him and his court during his stay in Scotland. Richard married James's relative Catherine Gordon in January 1496¹⁴, and it seems likely that they had a son in September (though the sources differ about this)¹⁵.

1.8 In September James organized an invasion of England on his behalf. On the eve of the invasion Richard issued a proclamation. However, the expected support for Richard did not materialize and the whole exercise ended in being just another border raid. Richard was so disgusted by the mayhem that he returned to Scotland, which left James with no option but to follow¹⁶.

1.9 In June 1497 there was a revolt by Cornishman and others against Henry's taxation. They marched to London, but were defeated and punished¹⁷.

1.10 Henry began peace negotiations with James, which made it impossible for Richard to stay. He, his family and followers left in July 1497 on a merchant ship with no weapons or soldiers¹⁸, leaving behind a fair amount of debt. After being chased from Ireland they landed on 7 September 1497 in Cornwall, too late for the above-mentioned uprising¹⁹. He found a fair amount of support among the common people, while the nobility adopted a wait-and-see attitude.

1.11 Richard first tried his luck in Exeter. However, the citizens closed their gates to him. As he had neither military expertise nor equipment, they were forced to withdraw.

¹¹ Kleyn, pp.114 - 118

¹² Kleyn, pp. 126-127

¹³ Kleyn, pp. 128-129

¹⁴ Kleyn, pp 137-141

¹⁵ Wroe, *Perfect Prince*, p. 269 and pp. 298-299. However, Kleyn states that they did not have any children, or if they had, it must have died during the journey (Kleyn, p. 172).

¹⁶ Kleyn, pp. 151-156. Full Text of the proclamation is included as Appendix V, pp. 258-262

¹⁷ Kleyn, pp. 167-170

¹⁸ Wroe, *Perfect Prince*, p. 314

¹⁹ Kleyn, pp. 170-175

1.12 He then moved to Taunton. He and his close supporters vanished during the night before the battle, leaving his host without leaders. He tried to get to Southampton, but did not find any ships there and then asked at Beaulieu Abbey for sanctuary. The abbot apparently tipped Henry off and Richard was arrested. He was said to have made a full confession²⁰. On his arrest Richard was made to believe that Henry would pardon him, however, such a pardon was never given²¹.

1.13 At first Richard lived in Henry's retinue at court under light house arrest. He was given servants, a horse and a tailor²². He was allowed to see his wife, though not sleep with her²³. His wife had been sent to Queen Elizabeth²⁴. We do not know what happened to their child, if indeed there was one, after Catherine's arrival in London. There are clues that it was sent to Wales²⁵.

1.14 In June 1498 Richard tried to escape. It seems likely that Henry arranged for his guards to turn a blind eye. Richard asked for sanctuary at Shene Abbey, but the prior informed Henry. Richard was arrested and brought to the Tower, where Edward of Clarence had been imprisoned since 1485²⁶.

1.15 Probably again with Henry connivance, Richard and Edward tried to escape in 1499, but were quickly caught. This gave Henry the argument to have them tried for high treason and in November 1499 executed²⁷.

2. Confession and Letter to Mother

So what about the famous confession? By historians in the Tudor tradition this is usually seen as absolute proof that he was an impostor, arguing that "there is nothing in [his] confession which should make us doubt his truthfulness"²⁸. Somehow they cannot have looked at it too closely.

2.1 Officially the confession was made in October 1497 after Richard's capture. However, large parts of it had been published by Henry as early as

²⁰ Kleyn, pp. 179-185

²¹ Wroe, *Perfect Prince*, p. 372

²² Wroe, Ann, "The Debate: Who Was Perkin Warbeck?" *Ricardian Bulletin*, Summer 2005 (pp. 24-27), p. 26

²³ Wroe, *Perfect Prince*, pp. 433-434

²⁴ Wroe, *Perfect Prince*, p.186

²⁵ Wroe cites two families in Wales, who trace their origin to a Richard Perkins, the son of "Peter Osbeck of Tournai". It has to be remembered that Richard of York had never been to Wales, so it would make a good hiding place for his son. Catherine also lived later on for a while near one of the families (*Perfect Prince*, p. 506).

²⁶ Kleyn, pp. 203-205

²⁷ Kleyn, pp. 216-223

²⁸ Arthurson, p. 2

1493²⁹. It seems more likely that Richard was just asked to sign on the dotted line and repeat what he was told. As Henry was holding on to his wife and possible child, this would have been quite a strong inducement to go along with it³⁰. We only have copies of the confession, no original³¹ - rather negligent of Henry and his administration! Nor has Polydore Vergil, Henry's official historian, heard of it³². In addition there are marked differences in the contents of copies in French and copies in English³³.

2.2 Earlier Henry had always claimed that this was Perkin Warbeck, the son of Jehan Werbecque from Tournai. However, in the confession the father is suddenly John Osbeck. It has been said that the secretary who wrote down the confession misheard or mis-spelt the surname, but Osbeck is quite different from Warbeck or the French Werbecque³⁴. And would they not have made sure to get the names right in an important document like this?

2.3 At about the same time Perkin was supposed to have written a letter to his mother, again we only have copies. Here we have the same confusion with names. The surname now is Warbecque, but he refers to his supposed mother as Kateryn or Catherine, while according to the Tournai archives she was Nicaise or Caisine, which does not seem to be the same³⁵.

2.4 According to the confession the father was a boatsman and customs collector in Tournai. This means that the family would have been part of a class which was "well-educated, highly mobile [and] associating with the princely court"³⁶. Would such a family not have been the perfect hiding place for a little prince? Their comparative obscurity would have provided a certain safety³⁷. And after all the young Richard III also spent time with the Paston family³⁸.

2.5 The English version then continues to tell us about some moving around in Burgundy in order to learn Flemish. We know that the family actually was of Flemish origin, as also their surname suggests, so the boy could have learnt the language at home³⁹. Later on it was found that he spoke much better English than either French, as spoken in Tournai, or Flemish. If these travels ever took

²⁹ Wroe, "The Debate", p. 25

³⁰ Wroe, "The Debate", p. 25.

³¹ Kleyn, p. 190 + p. 197

³² Fields, Bertram, *Royal Blood. Richard III and the Mystery of the Princes*. Regan Books, New York, 1998, p. 234: see also Wroe, "The Debate", p. 26

³³ Wroe, *Perfect Prince*, pp. 381-384

³⁴ Kleyn, pp. 190-193

³⁵ Kleyn, pp. 193-197, see also Fields, p. 216

³⁶ Arthurson, p. 28

³⁷ It is also worth noting that Tournai was a "free city that anyone could enter without safe-conducts", cf. Kleyn, p. 4.

³⁸ Helen Castor, *Blood & Roses*, Faber and Faber Ltd, London, 2004, p. 138

³⁹ Wroe, *Perfect Prince*, p. 393

place, they might just have been to shake off Henry's spies.

2.6 In the French version on the other hand the boy stays in Tournai, where "no expense was spared to educate him" and "tutors and guardians" were employed⁴⁰. Surely Aunt Margaret would have seen to it that Richard received a proper education.

2.7 According to the confession he arrived in Cork in the service of Pregent Meno, modelling silks for him in the town. Some Yorkists just happen to be around and immediately decide that he would make the perfect front man for their cause⁴¹. It just does not make sense that they would use someone, who does not even speak English, to play an English prince when plenty of legitimate claimants were around.⁴²

In any case Meno was not a silk merchant either, but traded in raw wool. The French version also says that the silk clothes were Richard's own⁴³. And Henry stated in a letter that Meno was basically the ferryman who brought Richard to Ireland⁴⁴. We know the meeting with the Yorkists was not just a coincidence, but had been carefully arranged. Richard had announced his impending arrival to the Earls of Desmond and Kildare by letter⁴⁵.

2.8 The confession says that he was forced against his will to play the prince. In order to play Richard, he had to learn English and courtly manners and details about Edward IV's court⁴⁶. Anyone who ever learnt a foreign language knows that it is impossible to speak it fluently and without any accent within 5 months. And this was a student who did not even want to learn! Quite apart from the fact that none of his teachers was of a social standing to have spoken the court English. There are enough regional differences in the English of today, how much more would there have been in the 15th century! Nor would they have had the necessary knowledge in courtly manners or about goings on at Edward IV's court. To send him to France after only a short crash course in how to be a prince, would surely have been rather risky, as his lack of elegance and refinement would have been noticed easily, but this was not the case⁴⁷.

2.9 As already mentioned we have not only copies of his confession, but also the copy of a letter to his mother, in which he gets basically everything wrong, nor does it show any emotion of a son to his mother⁴⁸. He mentions certain

⁴⁰ Wroe, *Perfect Prince*, p. 393; Kleyn, p. 79

⁴¹ Wroe, *Perfect Prince*, p. 94

⁴² Wroe, "The Debate", p.25

⁴³ Wroe, *Perfect Prince*, pp. 49-50

⁴⁴ Wroe, *Perfect Prince*, p. 100

⁴⁵ Wroe, *Perfect Prince*, P.49

⁴⁶ Wroe, *Perfect Prince*, pp. 95-98

⁴⁷ Kleyn, p. 89

⁴⁸ Wroe, "The Debate", p. 25

events in their lives allegedly to prove that he really is her son. However, all this shows is that he seems to know about them, as a foster child would as well. And the events do not add up either. He refers to the death of his sister Jehanne from the plague in 1487, while according to the archives she was still alive and married in 1517. Nor was there any plague in Tournai in 1487 or about that time. The letter also mentions the death of the father in 1497, when the archives indicate that he only died in 1498⁴⁹.

All this shows that some serious doubts regarding the truthfulness of the confession are justified.

3. Behaviour of European Rulers

Another reason for his being an impostor is often seen in the support he received from other European rulers. The theory goes that they needed someone for their own ends to play the prince and that they dropped him as soon as he had reached his use-by-date⁵⁰. This logic seems somewhat flawed: a real prince would have served the same purpose as an impostor. Nor can it be maintained that they all got something out of it, nor did all drop him. Lets look at the actions of these rulers more closely:

3.1 Charles VIII of France: He certainly used him for his own ends. However, while Richard was at his court, Charles wrote to James IV of Scotland that this was indeed Richard of York. In the treaty Henry had demanded that he should hand Richard over to Henry, but Charles facilitated his escape instead⁵¹. Nothing there to show that he thought him an impostor!

3.2 Margaret of Burgundy: If we accept that the two boys were smuggled out of England and she was responsible for hiding them, she would have known who this young man was. Since 1488 she was in regular contact with James IV of Scotland about her nephew. From 1490 onwards, when he was still in Portugal, she actively spread rumours that Richard was alive⁵². She tirelessly worked towards the restoration of the House of York, which brought her a bad press from Tudor historians. They say that she taught the young man all the details he knew about the court of Edward IV. However, she had left England before Richard was born and only returned for a short visit in 1480 and would not have known much herself⁵³.

I doubt, whether someone with such a strong sense of family, as she by all

⁴⁹ Kleyn, pp. 197-198

⁵⁰ An example is Macdougall, p. 23. Macdougall, Norman, "The Debate: Who was Perkin Warbeck?" *Ricardian Bulletin*, Summer 2005, pp. 22 - 24

⁵¹ Wroe, *Perfect Prince*, pp. 115-120

⁵² Wroe, *Perfect Prince*, p. 91

⁵³ Kleyn, pp. 96-97

accounts had, would have supported an impostor, while plenty of real Yorkists with a possible claim were still around. When she died in 1503, while not mentioning her nephews directly, her will included money for Masses for "those souls to whom we feel bound"⁵⁴.

3.3 Maximilian I of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation: Maximilian was a highly intelligent man and was known to be a very good judge of character⁵⁵. He had a natural sympathy for Yorkist causes, stemming from affection for Margaret and his gratitude for friendship shown to him by both Edward IV and Richard III⁵⁶. He had been married to Marie, Margaret's step-daughter, and this seems to have been true love match⁵⁷. Yet this cannot explain his continuing support for the young man, he always referred to as Richard, Edward IV's son or the Duke of York.

His main drawback was that he was always short of money and had great problems to get his subjects to allow him funds for any enterprise⁵⁸. He is often referred to as "The Last Knight" and is famous for saying that "other countries may go to war, but you, happy Austria, marry"⁵⁹. This does not sound like a man who chooses to go to war just for the fun of it, but needs a very good reason to do so.

It is questionable whether he had enough to gain from a change on the English throne to fund an impostor. True, the young man signed something like a Will, in which he makes over to Maximilian and his son Philip his rights to the English throne should he die without male issue⁶⁰, but as Richard was only 21 at the time this seems to be a far shot. Maximilian continued to do what he could for Richard, even after his capture and the publication of the confession. When he was negotiating a treaty with Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain in the late 1490s, after Richard's capture, by which both parties agreed not to give any support to Henry's enemies, he tried to have Richard specifically excluded⁶¹.

3.4 James IV of Scotland: James paid for all of Richard's and his entourage's expenses during his stay in Scotland. He also paid for his wedding, his wife's expenses and paid him a pension. He then funded the attempted invasion from the North. Somehow Richard seems to be a very expensive reason for a border raid - a pastime that the Scottish and English had been engaged in for centuries.

⁵⁴ Wroe, *Perfect Prince*, p. 521

⁵⁵ Kleyn, p. 111

⁵⁶ Wroe, *Perfect Prince*, p. 206

⁵⁷ Kleyn, p. 111

⁵⁸ Kleyn, p. 111 Later on in his reign he actually mortgaged the mines in Tyrol in order to borrow money of the Fugger banking family. (Gisela Sachse' "Kaiser Maximilian I - Bewahrer und Reformier.
http://www.aski.ork/kb_202/kb202maximilian.htm)

⁵⁹ [http://www.goethe.de/Maximilian_1_\(HRR\).html](http://www.goethe.de/Maximilian_1_(HRR).html)

⁶⁰ Wroe, *Perfect Prince*, pp. 122-123

⁶¹ Wroe, *Perfect Prince*, p. 245

I also doubt he would have supported the marriage of his relative to a poor adventurer. And when during the peace talks with Henry, it was demanded to hand over Perkin Warbeck, he rather sent him on his way with full honours. He managed to get later a clause inserted into the treaty, which would have allowed Richard to seek sanctuary in Scotland, had he been able to get there⁶². He married Henry and Elizabeth's daughter Margaret in 1503, but always continued to refer to Richard as the Duke of York. Legend has it that he had Richard's body brought to Scotland and buried in the vault he had prepared for himself, next to his parents⁶³.

3.5. Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain⁶⁴: As they were at the time negotiating the marriage of their daughter Catherine to Henry's son Arthur they were definitely not interested in destabilizing Henry's position. They insisted that at the time of the wedding no other claimant to the English throne should be around⁶⁵, which to a certain extent sealed the fate of Richard as well as Edward of Clarence. While publicly always proclaiming that he was an impostor, privately they actually acknowledged him. There exists the codebook for a list of ciphers, which they used for important persons in secret correspondence with their ambassadors. Here in the chapter on royal persons we find Richard, the Duke of York⁶⁶. After Richard's capture and his confession their ambassador to London still urged his sovereigns to liberate "The Duke of York ... and the Duke of Clarence who were prisoners"⁶⁷.

3.6 Margaret of Burgundy was instrumental in bringing him to the notice of all the princes of Europe, who accepted him as the rightful King of England with the possible exception of the Kings of Spain and later the King of France⁶⁸

So we see whatever they might have said publicly in general European rulers accepted him as Richard.

⁶² Kleyn, pp. 178-179

⁶³ Wroe, *Perfect Prince*, pp. 510-511

⁶⁴ Isabella, as well as the King of Portugal, actually had a better claim to the English throne than Henry, as both were descended from legitimate daughters of John of Gaunt (Fields, p.153)

⁶⁵ Kleyn, p. 212 + p. 257

⁶⁶ Kleyn, p. 210-212

⁶⁷ Kleyn, p. 189

⁶⁸ Kleyn, p. 108

4. Behaviour of Other Persons

So what about all the other people who came across him or might have had an interest in him.

4.1 Sir Robert Clifford: He had known both Edward VI and Richard III well. When he went to join the Pretender in Flanders, he wrote home that he was convinced that this really was Richard⁶⁹. He was then offered money and a pardon by Henry's spies and returned to England, where he gave the whole plot away. It is possible that he was a double agent all along⁷⁰. However, why would he claim to his family to have recognized Richard?

4.2 Sir William Stanley: Rather infamous from Bosworth. He was Henry's step-uncle and Lord Chamberlain. According to Clifford, Stanley had stated that, if he knew for certain that the young man was the son of King Edward, he would never wear arms against him. Stanley was also charged with offering Richard financial support and promising to rise for him⁷¹. Several of those arrested on the basis of Clifford's allegations had close links to him as well as to the queen, the court and other children of Edward IV⁷². They were executed for their support for Richard without recanting their belief that he was the real pretender⁷³.

4.3 Catherine Gordon: Richard's wife never said anything against her first husband. After his capture and confession she seems to have insisted on remaining married to him⁷⁴. Had he married her under an assumed name, however, this would have immediately dissolved the marriage under canon law⁷⁵. After his death she waited 11 years before remarrying. She had altogether three more husbands, and possibly had a daughter, who became the ancestor of the Earls of Pembroke⁷⁶. She wore black until her death⁷⁷. On her death in 1537 she left her property to Margaret, the youngest daughter of Cecily, the sister of Henry's Queen Elizabeth and Richard of York, whom she referred to as "cousin". This term would be used for a blood tie, which can only be explained through her first husband⁷⁸.

4.4 Cecily of York: The mother of Edward IV and Richard III, thus the grandmother of Richard of York. Her will of May 1495 mentions several who had

⁶⁹ Wroe, *Perfect Prince*, pp. 137-138

⁷⁰ Kleyn, pp. 114-116

⁷¹ Kleyn, pp. 116-117

⁷² Arthurson, pp. 95-96

⁷³ Anon, "The Great Debate of King Richard III", **Richard III Foundation**, <http://www.richard111.com>

⁷⁴ Wroe, *Perfect Prince*, pp. 433-435

⁷⁵ Wroe, *Perfect Prince*, p. 378

⁷⁶ Kleyn, pp. 227-228, Wroe (p. 519) contradicts that she had a daughter and states that "No children came from these marriages".

⁷⁷ Wroe, *Perfect Prince*, p. 505

⁷⁸ Wroe, *Perfect Prince*, p. 520; as well as private communication from Kevin Herbert, 7 February 2006

been involved in the plot uncovered by Clifford⁷⁹. It is unlikely that she would have got involved in the plot if it had not been in her grandson's favour.

4.5 Elizabeth of York and her sisters: Unfortunately we have no idea what Elizabeth or any of Richard's other sisters thought about the whole episode, though it must have been of the greatest importance to them. They were not allowed to meet the young man. There is a link between Richard and Elizabeth through an ex-yeoman of Elizabeth's, who had left her service to join Richard, and was duly executed⁸⁰.

4.6 Edmund de la Pole, Earl of Suffolk: the de la Poles were nephews of Edward IV and therefore legitimate claimants. While the Pretender was alive they had kept quiet, but after his death he came to the fore⁸¹. He would have seen Richard at court and there are indications from 1505 that he thought of him as Richard Duke of York⁸².

4.7 Nicaise Werbecque: The lives of the Werbecques were unperturbed by anything that happened outside Tournai and carried on as usual. After the death of her first husband in 1798, she married again. She seems to have stayed completely indifferent to the fate of the young man in England, who was said to be her son. In contrast to the relatives of Richard of York, there are no links between her and the Pretender.

5. The Behaviour of Henry VII

Some of the strongest indications that he actually was Richard, or that he at least thought so, come from Henry VII's own behaviour, especially when we compare it to that shown to the boy he called Lambert Simnel.

5.1 We know that when he came to the throne Henry had no idea what had happened to the boys. He never openly searched for them, dead or alive⁸³. Nor did he ever produce any suitable bodies, which would surely have saved him a lot of bother⁸⁴. His wife as well as his mother-in-law would certainly have been in a position to shed some more light on what happened to them after October 1483, when they were no longer seen in the Tower.

5.2 Although he married Elizabeth of York as a representative of the House of York, he was always adamant that his claim to the throne did not come through her. He had Parliament recognize his own title before it incorporated hers. She

⁷⁹ Arthurson, p. 87, see also Wroe, *Perfect Prince*, pp. 176-179

⁸⁰ Arthurson, p. 194

⁸¹ Wroe, *Perfect Prince*, pp. 503-504

⁸² Wroe, *Perfect Prince*, p. 513

⁸³ Arthurson, p. 189

⁸⁴ Wroe, *Perfect Prince*, p. 139

was crowned only two years after him. Bacon, who incidentally did not believe that Perkin was Richard, thought that the reason was that he knew that her brothers, or at least one of them, was still alive, and would have a better claim⁸⁵.

5.3 During Richard's stay in Portugal, Henry sent as many spies to that country as never before or after. One of them was Edward Woodville, brother of Elizabeth Woodville, the young prince's mother⁸⁶. This was at a time before the young man had openly claimed to be Richard of York, though there were rumours that he was. Would Henry really have gone to so much trouble, not to mention the expense, to check out some rumours, and continued to do so once they had turned out not to be true?

5.4 When Richard was in Burgundy, Henry sent envoys to convince Philip, Maximilian's son, who was in charge of Burgundy, not to support this impostor. They were to use 3 arguments:

* The young man could not possibly be Richard, as Richard was dead. Without body or any other proof, this seems to be a rather unconvincing argument.

* Henry had helped Maximilian against the French and it would be ungrateful of his son to help Henry's enemies⁸⁷. This would apply to a real pretender just as well as to an impostor.

* The reason for Elizabeth Woodville's attainder in 1487 "was her having rendered her daughters into Richard [III]'s custody". This is certainly an odd claim in this context, as it does nothing to show who the young man was, and Elizabeth Woodville was dead by then. It only makes sense if Maximilian and others believed that she was banished because she supported the "Lambert Simnel" rising in 1487, which only makes sense if it had been in favour of her son Edward of York. If they believed it was Edward then they would believe that it was Richard now and an alternative explanation for her attainder was needed⁸⁸.

5.5 Henry's treatment of Richard is completely different to that of Lambert Simnel. That boy had very obviously not been Edward of York, as he was too young. After his capture he was ridiculed and very quickly sent off to work in the

⁸⁵ Wroe, *Perfect Prince*, p. 160 + p. 85

⁸⁶ Wroe, *Perfect Prince*, p. 91. It is not sure whether this was to check out the young man. His official reason was that he was en route to Granada to fight the Moors; however, to do so it would not have been necessary to go through Lisbon. Henry did not trust him though and send a "Scotsman with a beard" to spy on him. It seems Edward Woodville was killed in France in 1488 and thus played no role in the later story of Perkin Warbeck ([http:// www.girders.net/WH/Woodville](http://www.girders.net/WH/Woodville)).

⁸⁷ Kleyn, pp. 101-107

⁸⁸ Fields, pp. 208-209. Another envoy, Sir Charles Somerset (a bastard son of Henry Beaufort, third Duke of Somerset), offered to show one of Margaret's men the chapel where Richard of York was buried (Wroe, *Perfect Prince*, p.153), an obvious bluff.

royal kitchen and later as falconer. He was still alive⁸⁹. Richard was at first kept in some style at Henry's court, but to have him executed Henry went to some extraordinary lengths. If this had obviously been a boatsman's son from Tournai would not ridicule also have done the trick? Why did he need such an elaborate justification to execute him?

5.6 It is certainly interesting to note that Henry's health seems to have been seriously affected by this pretender/impostor. After the young man first appeared in Ireland, Henry's "apothecary's payments that autumn were seven times higher than usual"⁹⁰. It is recorded that after the death of the pretender and the young Warwick, Henry aged 20 years in a few weeks and continued to suffer from many illnesses for the rest of his life⁹¹.

5.7 It seems that Henry referred to Richard in internal documents as "the Duke of York" right up to his surrender and even shortly afterwards⁹².

5.8 Henry challenged his rival to a formal battle for the crown. He would hardly have dealt like this with a low-born rebel. It seems more like the answer to a claim that had to be answered⁹³.

5.9 He presented his prisoner to the nobles at court to see whether he would recognize them. That he did not, is hardly surprising, would a 24-year-old be able to recognize people he had occasionally met before he was 10? And that they did not recognize him, does not come as a surprise either, as the nobles in question were carefully hand-picked for their loyalty⁹⁴. On the other hand Henry took great care that neither his wife nor any of her sisters ever met the young man⁹⁵. Their testimony would be very important, as they had spent their childhood together at court and then in the cramped conditions of sanctuary in Westminster, and thus would have known Richard very well. They probably also knew what had happened to the princes after Richard left sanctuary. It seems that Henry was afraid that they might actually recognize him.

6. The Pretender Himself

Apart from the confession there are two particular points in the Pretender's behaviour which are often quoted against him, but also several speaking for him being Richard.

⁸⁹ Wroe, *Perfect Prince*, p. 443, see also Kleyn, p. 217

⁹⁰ Wroe, *Perfect Prince*, p. 113

⁹¹ Kleyn, pp. 223-224. Wroe, however, puts the Henry's aging at an earlier date, March 1499 (*Perfect Prince*, p.486)

⁹² Wroe, "The Debate", p, 26

⁹³ Wroe, "The Debate", p. 26

⁹⁴ Wroe, *Perfect Prince*, p. 371

⁹⁵ "The Great Debate of King Richard III". See also: Kleyn, p. 187

6.1 On 24 January 1495 Richard signed in the presence of his aunt something like a will. In it he made over to Maximilian and his son his rights to the English throne should he die without male issue. He swore not to seek absolution for this oath under any circumstance, even that of being under age⁹⁶. As Richard would have been 21 by then, this can only mean that an impostor got his age wrong, say his critics. However, careful reading shows that he does not actually say he was under age, just that he would not use this excuse⁹⁷. Would an impostor not have made sure to know at least something as basic as the person's age he was pretending to be?

6.2 The second point is his behaviour in battle situation. He definitely does not come across as an inspiring military leader like his father. However, Richard never had any military training as he was too young when his father died. He had never experienced a battle before the Scottish invasion. Actually, this lack of martial spirit can be regarded rather as proof positive; if disgruntled Yorkist were looking for a fake claimant, would they not rather have chosen an "experienced fighter, a ruthless go-getter who would stop at nothing to get the crown?"⁹⁸ or at least have supplied him with someone with military experience to make up for his inexperience. And just to play a role for so long would have taken incredible audacity, which he never displayed⁹⁹.

6.3 On the other hand his behaviour as a prince was always convincing. As shown before none of the foreign royals were in any doubt that this was a prince.

6.4 The Yorkists who flocked to him in France and Flanders found him completely convincing. Some of them had had close connections to the court of Edward IV, but they never found any reason to doubt him¹⁰⁰.

6.5 His English was always that of a prince¹⁰¹.

6.6 He showed a distinct resemblance to Edward IV. We know what he looked like from a copy made from an original portrait painted in 1494¹⁰².

6.7 He claimed he had 3 hereditary marks on his body that would be recognized by anyone who had known Richard of York, and they were recognized¹⁰³.

⁹⁶ Kleyn, pp. 122-123

⁹⁷ Fields, pp. 220-221

⁹⁸ Lideks, Lisa, "Book Review: 'Richard of England' by Diana Kleyn", *Richard III Society, American Branch*. <http://www.archives.r3.org/rwindex/R200027/htm>

⁹⁹ Lideks

¹⁰⁰ Wroe, *Perfect Prince*, pp.133-139, see also Wroe, "The Debate", p.26

¹⁰¹ Wroe, "The Debate", p. 26

¹⁰² Wroe, "The Debate", p. 26

¹⁰³ Wroe, *Perfect Prince*, p. 133

6.8 There is no evidence that the pretender ever accepted the name “Perkin Warbeck”. There are reports of a conversation in the Tower in 1499 where he considered himself to be “Edward’s son”¹⁰⁴.

7. Conclusion

Though we will never be entirely sure, looking at all the evidence I think it is highly likely that he was indeed Richard of York. That he ultimately was not successful is due to the fact that he always was just that little bit too late, which allowed Henry to get rid of any possible support for him, before he arrived. And the lack of any military experience whether in himself or among his supporters, did not help either.

Whether, however, he would have made a good king, had he been successful, I am not so sure. His military record, which was an important part of a king's job description in those days, was rather dismal. He was never in a position to show his administrative capabilities, but there are indications that he could not work with money. For me it also speaks against him that he left his followers in the lurch at Taunton, while trying to save himself. His strong point was undoubtedly his princely manner, but this would not have been enough. And questions about his identity as well as his legitimacy would have remained.

I would also like to mention an alternative theory proposed by Jack Leslau. This theory is also the basis of the novel *Portrait of an Unknown Woman*, where Richard of York lives on as John Clement and becomes eventually Thomas More’s son-in-law. Attractive as the theory is, I think its major flaw is that according to Leslau both Tudor Henrys were into the secret¹⁰⁵. However, their track record when it comes to the well-being of any Yorkist is hardly tremendous, so it seems unlikely that they would have left the incognito princes alone.

¹⁰⁴ Wroe, “The Debate”, p. 26, see also Wroe, *Perfect Prince*, p. 484

¹⁰⁵ Bennett, Vanora, *Portrait of an Unknown Woman*, Harper Collins Publishers, London, 2006. For a detailed explanation, how Richard of York became John Clement, see pp. 193-217

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