

over £554. Cecily may very well have loved fine clothes, but this did not make her an irresponsible 'big spender'. What we know of her administration in later life indicates that she was all too aware of the importance of careful financial management.

### 'Proud Cis'

Finally, a sin that is commonly linked with Cecily's love of fine things is that of pride. Many accounts explain that she acquired the epithet 'Proud Cis' from those who lived near her at Fotheringhay during her widowhood. Actually there is no evidence that she ever set foot in Fotheringhay Castle after Richard, duke of York's, death, so this is unlikely to have been its origin. Indeed, I have not been able to find any mention of the epithet before 1713. In that year a Fleet Street bookseller called Alexander Bosvile wrote a letter to the vicar of Fotheringhay about Cecily. Bosvile's letter was published in 1787. He believed that Cecily had married Richard, duke of York, 'in hopes of being queen' and his account of her life is shaped as a moral warning of 'the mutability

of human affairs' which implies the folly of pride. So far I have not been able to track down any earlier reference to what he calls 'proverb' she is a proud Cis, but would be very grateful for information if any readers of the *Bulletin* have come across it.

In conclusion, Cecily may well have been a proud and beautiful woman who loved expensive clothes, but we need to reconsider the notion that either her pride or beauty were famous among contemporaries and should not imagine that her husband found her tastes a drain on his resources. These misrepresentations of Cecily may not be in the same league as those attached to her son Richard (or certain stories about Cecily's later life), but it is important to strip away the accretion of legend if we are to get any sense of the real woman who bore the Yorkist kings.

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## Tom Denny's RICHARD III WINDOW

ANN WROE

**When Tom Denny went to Leicester in 2013 to present his ideas for the Cathedral's new Richard III windows, he left his most intriguing argument until last. He was himself a distant relative of the king. One line ran through his great-grandmother, a Lyster, from Richard's maternal uncle Richard Neville; another came down, also via Mr Denny's great-grandmother, from Richard's paternal aunt, Isabel Plantagenet. Moreover, in the eighteenth century the Bromes had married into the Denny family, descendants of the John Brome who, in the first year of Richard's reign, was appointed 'Master, Guider and Ruler of all our Bears and Apes . . . for our pleasure'.**

Nor was this all. In the sixteenth century the Dennys took over the castle of Tralee, near Cork, once the main seat of the earls of Desmond. There later members of the family found an early sixteenth-century tile (pictured below), of a wild boar devouring an acorn. The tile had plausibly been inspired by a gift presented to the earl of Desmond by Richard in 1484 as a gesture of reconciliation: a white boar pendant from a fine gold collar, set with Yorkist white roses and Yorkist suns. As Mr Denny ruefully remarked to the Dean, 'The Dennys still have the tile, though not the castle.'

But these clinching arguments, as Mr Denny mischievously thought of them, were in the end not needed. He and the Cathedral clergy were in broad agreement from the start. The guiding Biblical quotations he and they had thought of (usually the way his commissions begin) were already interlinking and complementary. The Dean and Chapter wanted windows that were not merely figurative or armorial, or restricted to the history of just one man. They had in mind universal themes of struggle, humiliation, losing and finding, redemption and salvation.

They had come to the right man. Mr Denny's glass –

also to be seen at Malvern Priory, Tewkesbury Abbey, in Gloucester, Hereford and Durham cathedrals and in

The early sixteenth-century tile of a wild boar devouring an acorn.  
Photo courtesy of Ann Wroe.





Left: Tom Denny selecting glass from the sample racks at Lamberts glassworks, Waldsassen, Bavaria. Right: Tom Denny and Patrick Costeloe cutting glass in his studio at Belchalwell; the cutline drawings are visible behind Patrick. Photos courtesy of Tom Denny

smaller churches up and down the land – has been concerned with those themes since he began. His windows are glorious floods of light and colour in which the lead-lines, rather than forming a rigid grid, snake and dance with the flow. He believes that stained glass should be ‘experienced initially as something operating purely in terms of colour and light, an abstract or musical medium’. Then, as the viewer draws closer, the narrative of the windows opens up. Within his colours, typically, small delicately painted figures negotiate a landscape in which local trees, hills, flowers and birds are recorded with exquisite care. The landscape may be rocky, difficult, beset by thorns or even monsters; or it may be soft and pastoral. The figures may be beset, questioning, tortured; or they may be confident and chosen, walking joyfully in God’s creation. Both journeys will resolve at last into resurrection, reconciliation and heavenly light. The Leicester glass will portray Richard’s journey, but in images that are ‘generic rather than historic, place and time not pinned down’. The king’s life stories, says Mr Denny, ‘could well encapsulate those of any of us – loss, anguish, division, love, being reviled, being acclaimed.’

To his surprise, he has found Leicester inspiring. The city’s easy multiculturalism suggests that his windows should also reflect the need for mutual tolerance and respect, for compassion, and for understanding of the flaws of human beings (not bad precepts for historians, as well as visitors in general). ‘In many ways,’ he says, ‘as a figure from a very divided and destructive England, Richard could readily embody themes of overcoming animosity and of acceptance of one another as we are.’ He is touched, too, by the enthusiasm of Leicester’s people, by their palpable excitement about Richard, and by the idea that history could come to dignify and transfigure ‘such a bashed-up place’ as surely as it beautifies Bath, or York.

Yet his first view of the site, St Katherine’s Chapel, made his heart sink. Outside the now plain-glass windows was a run of red-brick buildings, typical of Leicester, which seemed impossible to work with. Only

after a while did he realise that the sunlight, bouncing off the buildings, gave a pinkish glow that would blend ideally with his nascent scheme of yellows, oranges, crimsons and ‘more modest’ blues.

The chapel has other bonuses for him. It is ‘quite a lovely space’, small and intimate, with a northern elevation. Inside it are the tombs of the Herrick family, who once lived in Greyfriars, including Robert, the poet. They are mostly commemorated in cool and graceful vertical tomb slabs of white Nottingham alabaster (the stone of the lost monument erected to Richard, at some expense, by Henry VII) or grey Swithland slate. Together, these make ‘a nice harmonious assemblage’. And across the chapel entrance is a neo-gothic wooden screen that will have the effect of filtering and half-obscuring the ‘sudden wall of colour’ of the glass, illuminating Richard’s tomb but not distracting, or imposing on, the pilgrim-visitor approaching it from the south door. This sort of delayed or interrupted view is dear to Mr Denny, who likes to preserve an element of discovery and surprise. It will be up to the visitor to decide whether to go through the screen and inspect his glass more closely. Meanwhile, his windows will beautify and bless the surrounding space. The words from Richard’s prayer in his Book of Hours come to mind: ‘Pour thy grace over me’.

Mr Denny first encountered that prayer in the church at Sutton Cheney (‘a lovely, proper fifteenth-century church, not messed about by the Victorians’), when he visited Bosworth and its environs after getting his commission. He scribbled it down in pencil on the backs of several church postcards. Although the theme of flawed humanity’s salvation was already in his mind, Richard’s prayer helped to convince him that he was on the right track. Here was a man who was desperate and struggling, yet trusted he would be saved. That was enough for Mr Denny, and although he has done much Ricardian reading since, he has not involved himself further in teasing out the king’s character – except to say that he ‘can’t conceive’ that such a man would murder his nephews.

The two windows, as conceived and drafted, fill six main lights arranged in threes, with tracery above. Each light, he says, is 'a little world in its own right'. The easterly window deals with Richard's struggles as king. The left-hand light shows a figure about to go into the Valley of the Shadow of Death. A thicket of thorns bars his way, so that he needs courage to pass, as expressed in the words of Psalm 27: 'Be of good courage and he shall strengthen thy heart.' (The theme recurs in Richard's prayer: 'Save me from all perils of body and soul'.)

In the right-hand light a child – Edward Prince of Wales, but also any child – has died, and his parents kneel in grief beside him. The inspiration-words here come not from the Bible, but from the First World War poet Ivor Gurney (commemorated last year in a window by Mr Denny in Gloucester cathedral): 'He's gone, and all our plans are useless indeed.' In the upper part of the window, a solitary figure walks in grief, having cast aside his kingly regalia, to his wife's burial place. The tracery of this window indicates a kingdom: a castle and oak tree, a boar and rider, and the towers of Kirby Muxloe and Tewkesbury Abbey.

In the central light, a damaged man stands in despair. Fragments of his life, including manuscripts covered with fifteenth-century writing, are scattered below him. Christ comes to him, in the words of Luke 4:18: 'He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted.' On the hill behind is an empty cross: 'But now in Christ Jesus, you who were sometimes far off, were made nigh by the blood of Christ' (Ephesians 2:13). The scattered relics, like the king's discarded regalia, follow the theme of losing, finding and bringing to the light, just as the main figures complete the theme of death and resurrection.

The westerly window shows, in the left light, the aftermath of a battle – Bosworth, or any conflict – with women coming to minister to the dead and dying. The theme is compassion, to a text from Micah 6:8: 'What doth the Lord require of you but to do justly and to love mercy?' Above it, a man slung over a horse is paraded through city streets; here the theme is humiliation, based on Proverbs 1:22: 'The scorers delight in their

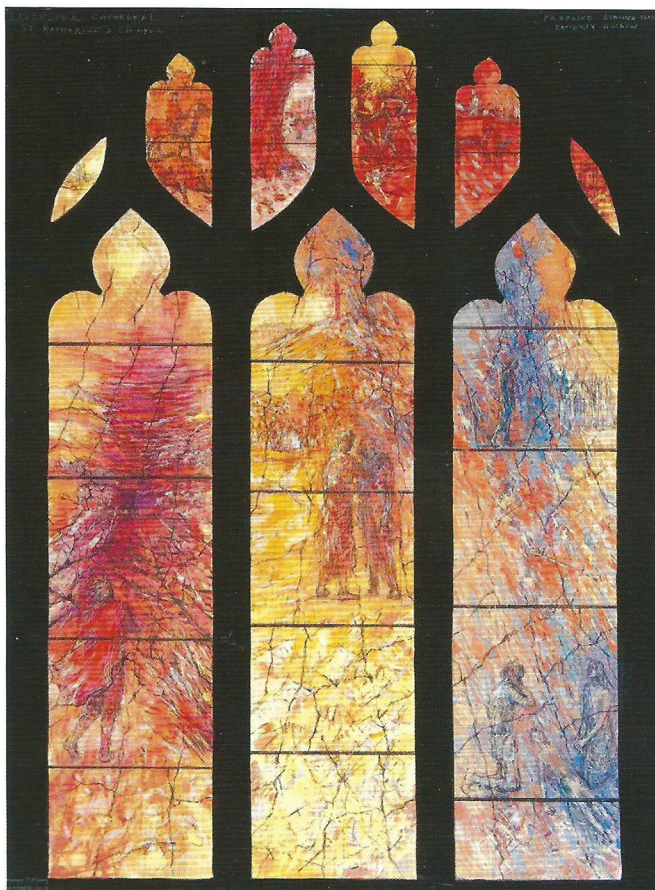
scorning.' But beyond is a suggestion of two spires, St Martin's and the old church of the Grey Friars, with the connotation (especially important to the Dean) that this would eventually be King Richard's place of safety.

The right-hand light, says Mr Denny, is about 'hiddenness and being known'. The guiding text is from Jeremiah 1:5: 'Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you.' It shows people passing to and fro with pieces of pottery, fossils and bones in the earth far beneath them, as in any long-settled place. (The fossils are a hobby of Mr Denny's, who delights in finding them on the chalk hills around his cottage in Dorset.) The figures also walk past two rose bushes, whose roots reach down 'through

layers of time and stories' to 'one long hidden'. The tracery shows scenes at Fotheringhay, with children playing, and at Middleham, with two lovers riding together.

In the central light of this window, themes of carnage and death are gathered up in an encounter with the risen, but unknown, Christ by the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. In the central tracery the Emmaus theme continues, placing resurrection at the heart of the window. Both central lights show an encounter with Christ in the luminescence of heaven, echoing again Richard's prayer from his Book of Hours: 'Extend thine arm to me'.

At present, while the fund-raising goes on, the



A preliminary sketch for Leicester's Richard III window.

Photo courtesy of Tom Denny

Leicester windows are at the stage of full-size white-paper sheets pinned to the wall of Mr Denny's workshop, a chapel-like barn in the cabbage-growing, geese-patrolled garden of his cottage. The sheets are marked with cut-lines in thick black felt pen. Sheets of uncut glass, about a metre square, are carefully stacked behind each other. Each piece of glass, in roughly hand-sized shapes, has its predetermined place among the sinuous lead-lines, indicated by serial numbers marked on the paper. It appears to be a giant jigsaw marked in code, to which only Mr Denny has the solution.

The making of the windows will involve techniques largely unchanged since Richard's time. Mr Denny's glass comes from Lambert's factory in Bavaria, where a team of glass-blowers still blow the molten glass into

tubes that are then scored along the top, prised carefully apart, and flattened into sheets with wooden bats in a warm furnace. The glassmaker's shears, tongs, cauldrons and hammers look as they have done for 500 years.

Mr Denny's techniques, too, will hardly have changed. Though medieval windows sometimes appear to be made up of pieces of a single colour, glaziers back then knew perfectly how to get subtleties in their glass. They did just as he will do. Each piece will be etched in a bath of acid, taken out and scrubbed, then acid-etched again to reduce the colour's intensity, sometimes as far as white. Beeswax is used as a resist to the acid, to keep the original colour whenever it is needed. Each piece of 'flushed' glass (where a thin layer of coloured glass is laid on the surface of clear glass, a fourteenth-century invention) will be etched to modify the tints, and many pieces will be silver-stained, with silver nitrate, to give a yellow glow. When all this is done – when the pieces are fixed in place, overlaid with each other to blend the colours, and with their edges abraded to soften them – they are ready to be painted with all the detail that Mr

Denny has already lovingly sketched and assembled. When this, by far the longest part of the work, is done, the windows can at last be leaded up (by an expert friend) and fixed in place in the Cathedral.

The Leicester commission has thrilled Mr Denny. As in all his windows, he relishes the chance to 'grasp the ungraspable' in glass. His faint but definite kinship with King Richard gives his task an added poignancy. There is also, too, one particular irony. It was a man called Tom Denny, this time no relation, who acted as a deputy iconoclast for Oliver Cromwell in the 1640s, puncturing with iron bars and smashing up with hammers some of east Suffolk's most beautiful stained glass. Mr Denny is, in the most lively sense, repairing the outrages done by his namesake; an act of reconciliation and restoration, losing and retrieval, that makes him especially well-suited to the job he has now been given.

*Ann Wroe is the author of Perkin – A Story of Deception and is the Obituaries Editor of The Economist.*

## MATTHEW RYAN – historical artist and illustrator

**Matthew Ryan is an artist of the medieval period and a number of his works are on display in Leicester's Richard III Visitor Centre. He kindly agreed to tell us about his work and background.**

First, I would like to take the opportunity to thank the Richard III Society for including an article about me and my work in what I am sure will be an already packed edition of the *Ricardian Bulletin*.

Born in 1978, I live in Worcestershire, England, with my wife and three children and work as an historical artist and illustrator, specialising in the medieval period. Art and history, especially medieval, has always held an interest for me. Most of my earliest childhood drawings were of knights, castles and archers. After graduating with a degree in Illustration, I worked for over a decade as a traditional sign-writer and designer. Throughout this time, I carried on studying medieval history and further enjoying my passion for shooting medieval-style traditional bows and making my own arrows, before a dramatic change of circumstance led me a couple of years ago to finally combine all my interests and work freelance as an historical artist.

One of my first briefs was for Channel 4's *Walking Through History* series with Tony Robinson. Since then I have been lucky enough to have worked on some very exciting projects, such as various magazine commissions, cover and sleeve artwork for Rick Wakeman's new release of his *Softsword* album, artwork for the Battle of Northampton Society, and one that really was a busman's holiday for me, working with historian and presenter Mike Loades on his latest book for Osprey Publishing, *The Longbow*.

Although I have been pleased with how my

illustration career has taken off, I am finding that more and more my passion also lies in the fine art area, producing large-scale oil or gouache paintings. Some of these have already been popular as signed prints with collectors all around the world.

After walking the newly discovered site of the battle of Bosworth several years ago, I started to create a large oil painting of the scene showing King Richard moments after the initial cavalry clash, fighting in his saddle with battleaxe in hand. This project was self-appointed and sadly had to be sidelined due to various briefs that clients were sending me. One of the hardest things in my position with creating large-scale major pieces such as this is finding the time and funding to work on them.

It was during this time, with my unfinished Bosworth still sitting on an easel in my studio, that news broke of King Richard's remains being discovered in Leicester. I took the opportunity to contact Leicester about my work and sent them a few examples of various pieces that I had previously produced. One of the images I sent was a painting I created of the death of Simon de Montfort at the battle of Evesham, which I painted in a contemporary manuscript style based on images in the Morgan Bible. This one image caught the eye of the studio manager in charge of creating the exhibition graphics at the King Richard III Visitor Centre and so I soon found myself working on a set of eight images depicting the last few years of Richard's