

Live Chat with Dr Sean Cunningham on Richard III and Henry VII – February 2020

Claire Ridgway23:54

Hello everyone! I'm sure we'll get others joining as we go! Welcome to this month's expert live chat with Sean Cunningham. A big thank you to Sean for his excellent talk on Richard III and Henry VII, and for joining us today to answer our questions. I'll be here moderating and copying and pasting for those who can't be here. So fire away, questions on these two kings! By the way, if the chat freezes at all for you, just refresh your browser.

Lorna Wanstall23:55

Aside from his mother's ambition, what made Henry think he had a right to the throne.

Claire Ridgway23:55

Sean, I thought your point about the two men's different experience as interesting. Richard being at Edward IV's right hand, while Henry was in a much more domestic set-up in exile. Very different experiences.

Claire Ridgway23:56

Hi RTL and Roland!

Sean Cunningham23:56

I doubt that Henry had any thoughts on taking the throne until 1483 when the opportunity for him to be pushed forward arose

Bill Wolff23:56

“ambition?” How about blood!

Roland Hui23:56

Hello

Lorna Wanstall23:57

Bill there is that, but it was very watered down, and there were others with a stronger claim

RealTudorLady23:57

Hello, Dr Cunningham, do you believe that had Henry been raised his whole life with a York supporter rather than Herbert being killed that he may have become a useful York Tudor noble?

Sean Cunningham23:58

His link to Henry VI and the Lancastrians was weak. I think he wanted to come back to England as an earl but circumstances meant he became the centre of the conspiracy

Bill Wolff23:58

Hi Real!!

Claire Ridgway23:59

Do you think others would have risen against Richard if Henry Tudor hadn't planned his invasion and then defeated Richard?

Claire Ridgway23:59

Hi Ceri!

Ceri Creffield23:59

Hi everyone

Roland Hui00:00

Hello Sean, I enjoyed your book 'R III: A Royal Enigma'. You implied that Richard's mother Cecily Neville wanted him on the throne rather than her grandson Edward V. Can you elaborate? Didn't 'Team Richard' spread nasty rumours about her saying that Edward IV was conceived in adultery (thus making Richard's own mother look bad)?

Sean Cunningham00:00

Richard knew he had to defeat Henry Tudor to rule without threat. Once the 1483 uprising was defeated Henry's defeat or capture was the last step for Richard in securing his rule

Sean Cunningham00:02

Like many things, we rely on reported info on Cecily's views of the events of 1483. She was a very clever politician as Jo Laynesmith has shown, so Cecily's perspective is important

RealTudorLady00:02

I am signed out and back in. I have a connection problems.

Lorna Wanstall00:03

I have always believed that Richard did what he thought was right for the country after the death of E4. Child rulers could be trouble and Richard felt that what the country needed at this point was a strong adult ruler, not a child king.

Sean Cunningham00:03

The story of the archer in Rouen and Edward IV's birth is one allegation. So is Richard's strong resemblance to his father the 3rd duke of York

Sean Cunningham00:05

Its difficult to understand what political figures were prepared to do after 30 years of civil war. Stable rule was in everyone's interests and the reigns of underage kings had been troubled.

Lorna Wanstall00:05

The archer was called Claybourne if I have remembered it rightly

Claire Ridgway00:05

Hi Doc!

RealTudorLady00:05

With his blue eyes as a child and fair hair Richard must have looked much more like his older brother than we previously knew.

Doc Clark00:05

Hi Claire

Lorna Wanstall00:06

I understand R3 reasons for taking the throne, but not how he did it.

Lorna Wanstall00:06

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Sean Cunningham00:06

When these stories were unveiled is as interesting as what they alleged. It was what people were prepared to believe that mattered. That's why Henry VII had such trouble with Perkin Warbeck

Claire Ridgway00:07

It wouldn't have been long until Edward V reached his majority though, although perhaps civil war and unrest was too much of a risk.

Bill Wolff00:07

Sean, your thoughts on R3 & The Princes.

Lorna Wanstall00:08

Claire I think a lot of the trouble with having E5 to succeed was because the rest of the royal family didn't want the Woodvilles involved in the regency

Sean Cunningham00:08

The effects of civil war, recrimination and forfeiture had made many people willing to back a king who would end it. Richard was given that chance in 1483 but his reign had its own problems and he didn't keep all his support intact.

RealTudorLady00:09

I find some of the stuff around 1483 quite mad. It depends on who and what you read as to what was happening, motivation, etc and the Cely letters for me as in your talk show just how confusing it was. In there everyone is dead, everything is mad, nobody knows what's going on and all hell has broken loose. A big exaggeration but systematic of the rumours aka social media of the day.

Claire Ridgway00:10

I liked your point about how rumours were rife and even those in London didn't seem to know what was going on in 1483 so how can we today? Great point!

Ceri Creffield00:10

Do you think, Sean, that there were too many people pursuing their own interests for Richard to unite them?

Sean Cunningham00:10

There's a big difference between the old landed power and court-based families who had to play politics to get on. The 1470s were more like the 1530s than we might think (without the religious angle and such good records)

Lorna Wanstall00:10

Did H7 overturn R3 law concerning the legitimacy of E4 and EW children, before his marriage to Elizabeth of York?

Sean Cunningham00:11

Good point about rumours. Those letters show how hard it was to find out what was happening. Richard's accession, presented as a petition from London's citizens, suggests that experts in PR could control the popular message

Claire Ridgway00:11

Hi Laurie!

Lorna Wanstall00:11

Hi Laurie

Laurie Duerr00:12

Hi Claire and all! Sorry to be late!

Claire Ridgway00:12

Don't worry!

Bill Wolff00:12

Hi Laurie!

RealTudorLady00:12

Do you think, Sean, that Richard trod on too many toes with his idea of fair justices, taking the side of right over his own retainers even in cases and upsetting a noble or two because their old power was being threatened?

Sean Cunningham00:12

Richard was seen as a strong northern lord and when Edward IV's men from the south and Marches fled in 1483 Richard had trouble running the entire country on the basis of his personal northern following

Lorna Wanstall00:12

If Richard had killed Henry at Bosworth would he have been safe? and would he have to contend with people like Perkin Warbeck

Shelley Varran00:13

Hello Everyone...hope all are well.

Claire Ridgway00:13

Hi Ellen!

Ellen Ross00:13

Hello, sorry to be late

Sean Cunningham00:14

That stretched his resources. Some new research I've been doing shows how Tudor's followers disrupted his money trail and tried to break up how sheriffs got the money from the counties to the centre to pay for wages. That helped Tudor persuade some to change sides

Claire Ridgway00:14

Hi Shelley!

Shelley Varran00:14

What would have come about if R3 HAD won?

Shelley Varran00:14

Hi Claire!

Claire Ridgway00:15

Interesting about the money trail interception! Thank you!

Ceri Creffield00:15

What do you think was Richard's biggest mistake after assuming the throne?

Sean Cunningham00:16

Thanks Lorna. Once a king came to power any new statue could overturn those of a previous king. Before 1399, Richard II tried to bind his successor to some laws and it didn't go down well with the Lords. Henry knew what he was doing, since people like John Morton had been at the heart of Edward IV's govt

Lorna Wanstall00:16

Thank you Sean.

Lorna Wanstall00:17

Richard 2nd was a very naughty boy lol

RealTudorLady00:17

Lorna, yes, he had to during his first Parliament. However, the first 14 lines only were read out, and Henry ordered every copy of the Titular Regis destroyed. One turned up later.

Claire Ridgway00:18

Do you think that Elizabeth Woodville believed that her boys were dead when she made her alliance with Margaret Beaufort?

Lorna Wanstall00:18

Thank you RTL.. I knew about a copy of it turning up otherwise we wouldn't have ever known a law like that had been passed.

Sean Cunningham00:19

Richard should have been able to keep his nobles on side. He was one of them and Henry only had the exiles earl of Oxford with him. The size of Richard's army in Aug 1483 suggests that many were prepared to back him up to the last minute. It was the inactivity of his northerners under Northumberland that cost him the battle and not the Stanley decision to intervene. Had Pervy joined in earlier then I'm sure Stanley troops would have backed Richard

RealTudorLady00:20

Sorry, do you believe Sean that Henry's 14_years in exile taught him to be shrewd and patient and how to avoid making rash errors and did this help him rule?

Claire Ridgway00:20

Interesting! The Stanleys get too much credit then!

Bill Wolff00:20

Agreed on Stanley, Sean. He was with the winner!!

Sean Cunningham00:21

Its hard to see how Richard would have had a pretender or rival in the same way that Henry VII did. He was of the old nobility and people would have rallied around. Having already seen off the Woodvilles, people like Oxford and Jasper Tudor might have been an irritant but Richard would have used diplomacy to control their threat from France or Brittany

Lorna Wanstall00:21

When the boys disappeared did Richard or Henry make a search of the tower to try and find them dead or alive? Were brankenbury or anyone else with connection to the tower ever questioned about their disappearance?

Ceri Creffield00:21

That is a new perspective and quite ironic given R's popularity in the north.

Lorna Wanstall00:21

Sean I believe R3 called Henry a Welsh milk sop.. I love it..

Claire Ridgway00:22

Hi Michelle!

Bill Wolff00:22

And H responded later, "do I look like a sop from here?"

Michelle Nasello00:23

Hi Claire, Hi everyone

RealTudorLady00:23

That's the Stanley's MO. Fail to help at Towton and then Tewkesbury while one stays at Court, then get back in favour and side with whoever rewards you the best. Shrewd, dangerous and cowards.

Lorna Wanstall00:23

Hello Michelle, good to see you..

Sean Cunningham00:23

Interestingly, Henry VII kept Richard's title on the Crown's parliament roll. It had some very interesting things to say about Edward IV's lifestyle and the behaviour of the Woodvilles. Richard not very loyal to his brother's memory at that stage when making the case for his own strength as leader (understandably in the circumstances).

Bill Wolff00:23

Not sure coward is right, RTL.

Shelley Varran00:25

Hi Lorna...

Lorna Wanstall00:25

RTL..The stanley's motto I believe is Never Changing,, sounds a bout right for what they used to do. Never changed or charged..unless there was somethng in it for them.

Lorna Wanstall00:25

Hi Shelley

Bill Wolff00:25

Agreed Lorna

Sean Cunningham00:25

I think Eliz Woodville might have believed her boys were dead. If not that, then they were unable to have any influence on what would happen next. Maybe she thought they might be taken overseas for safety, as Richard and Clarence were in 1460, When Warbeck first claimed to be Richard of Shrewsbury her relationship with Henry VII went badly wrong quickly.

Claire Ridgway00:26

Thank you!

Sean Cunningham00:30

RTL - yes I think Henry had a lot of time in exile to work out how court politics worked and how people could be manipulated. He'd seen it in Brittany and France and brought some of those techniques to bear in England. He put himself in danger only at Bosworth - when he knew it was probably victory or death. After that he got others to lead the fight for him. You could say he learned form the errors of Edward IV in 1469 and Richard in 1483

Lorna Wanstall00:30

Was it EW decision to retire to Bermonsey or did H7 order her to push off and stop poking her nos into things

Ceri Creffield00:30

What happened to Cecily Neville after Bosworth?

RealTudorLady00:30

I actually believe William Stanley had more integrity than his brother, although to be fair as Henry's stepfather he was in a tight spot, because he appeared to make contact with Henry and was responsible for his victory, although Northumberland stood and did nothing, but then he also had his doubts about whether Henry was really the true King. His alleged statement that he couldn't go against Warbeck if he really was the York Prince, Richard, shows the fear and doubt and threat Warbeck was.

Michelle Nasello00:31

Did Elizabeth Woodville and Margaret Beaufort join forces to put HVII on the throne? If so did they do it to get revenge on RIII for killing the princes ?

RealTudorLady00:32

Thanks Sean.

Doc Clark00:32

Cecily retired to one of the castles in the Midlands - I can't rememeber which one

Sean Cunningham00:32

Lorna - Richard's proclamations against Tudor make great reading and show how good he was at using public opinion against an insignificant enemy who would arrive at the head of a foreign army. That was presented as the big threat to Richard's rule in England and not Tudor's personal claim or his backers.

Lorna Wanstall00:34

Cecily Neville devoted herself to religious duties and died in 1595

Sean Cunningham00:34

Lorna - EW got a £500 pension and honourable roles at the christening of Prince Arthur and Princess Margaret. She rode out any allegations of disloyalty in the Simmel crisis of 1487, but might have been worried that Henry VII's enemies were promoting the earl of Warwick's royal claim.

Roland Hui00:36

Sean - do you think Duchess Margaret of York really believed that Perkin Warbeck was her lost nephew? I assume that Warbeck spoke English with an accent as he was Flemish, wouldn't that been a giveaway that he was a fraud?

Sean Cunningham00:36

Ceri - Cecily basically retired from court and went to Berkhamstead. Some of her officers were caught up with Warbeck, but she was careful to avoid any personal accusations. She died in 1495. In her will she left a bed carved with the wheel of fortune to Prince Arthur and even gave Henry VII a bequest.

Ellen Ross00:38

If one of the princes had been raised abroad for a decade, an accent would be understandable

Lorna Wanstall00:39

Roland I think Margaret of York just like causing trouble for troubles sake...

Sean Cunningham00:39

RTL - William Stanley and Lord Fitzwalter reacted to the rumours of Prince Richard's return exactly as Warbeck's backers would have hoped - enough interest to show some disloyalty but not enough to flee overseas. It was Sir Robert Clifford on the inside of Warbeck's court who collected the letters and seals of Warbeck's supporters and that showed the depth of the network. Henry VII was forced to act at the end of 1494.

Michelle Nasello00:39

I agree Ellen

Ceri Creffield00:39

Wow - I used to live near Berkhamsted and had no idea of that. Thanks Sean.

Lorna Wanstall00:40

Ellen, the thing is that Margaret of York never saw the boy, she was married to Charles the Bold, and wasn't in England when the boys were born.

RealTudorLady00:40

I don't believe Richard killed King Edward V or Prince Richard, as yet he didn't need to, but that may have changed over the years. Look at Jane Grey or Mary Q of Scots or Henry Vi. Boys grow up, supporters turn up, things can change and create dangerous situations. Dr Alan Pollard once remarked he would have gotten rid of them. Had he found them, so would Henry Tudor. I don't believe they were killed, they were moved and died in one or other of the plots around them. What does fascinate me is the conspiracy between EW and Margaret B because it's like something out of the Pink Panther. ALL kinds of back and forth and sneaking about between two women, cool.

Ellen Ross00:41

One potential explanation for all the mystery around the princes could be that young Edward died of natural causes but everyone realized that nobody would believe it

Lorna Wanstall00:41

RTL I agree R3 and H7 are guiltless of the crime of murdering 2 boys.. I still feel that the Duke of Buckingham was involved.

Sean Cunningham00:41

Michelle - There seemed to be a decision to join forces against Richard after July 1483. EW and MB were key because they had the wide networks and personal resources to move information around while Lord Stanley and eventually the duke of Buckingham had to navigate being in Richard's court, household and council. It was a dangerous move but I'm always surprised that Richard did not act more directly before autumn 1483 as he had done against Lord Hastings on 13 June

RealTudorLady00:42

Thanks, Sean for your response. Do you believe there is any chance Warbeck was Richard of Shrewsbury?

Doc Clark00:43

nope - I have to disagree for the very simple but compelling reason that the only for a deposed king to go was the grave. R3 could not afford to let them live

Lorna Wanstall00:43

Ellen you could be right, it is possible that both boys died of some ailment. I believe there was a doctor called for one of the boys at some point before they disappeared. The Tower was a very healthy place to be, and any illness there was could run rampant around there

Michelle Nasello00:44

Well they were just women, what harm could they possibly do to King R3 right? LOL

Bill Wolff00:44

I think we're getting caught up in the Boy's Death minutiae. Sometimes the obvious is right.

Lorna Wanstall00:45

Michelle I think R3 underestimated both EW and MB

RealTudorLady00:45

Yes, Michelle, but women with minds and contacts, a network and the same doctor.

Michelle Nasello00:45

Oh he totally did

Sean Cunningham00:45

Richard - Margaret of York would have done anything to get Henry VII deposed. There were plenty of Yorkist male (children) around who could have taken the throne. If Warwick was the main candidate, that would have ushered in another minority regime, but that was preferable to a Tudor-Beaufort king. She confessed through her ambassador in 1497 that she knew Warbeck was not Richard, but she was under pressure from Maximilian and Philip the Fair to make an accommodation in the interests of Anglo-Burgundian relations, so we can't be sure. It is still a great story

Doc Clark00:46

The doctor who visited the princes in the Tower was Dom John Argentine. Cambridge scholar, studies medicine in Italy

Lorna Wanstall00:46

Bill you are right.. The cause of the boy's demise is forever going to be debated..

Michelle Nasello00:47

I think its truly interesting that after 500 years we are still debating what happened to the two prines

Michelle Nasello00:48

*princes

Doc Clark00:48

The debate will never end so long as there is no physical evidence

Ceri Creffield00:48

It's just so intriguing.

Lorna Wanstall00:48

Even if the bones in the urn are tested and turn out to be the Princes, it won't solve anything

Shelley Varran00:49

Amazing.....what they would think that people would stillbe discussing them 500 years later....

Michelle Nasello00:49

I am of the same mind Ceri

Lorna Wanstall00:49

It is a very big historic Enigma

Shelley Varran00:49

What do you think R3 and H7 would have thought of all this interest in them.....

RealTudorLady00:50

The thing with the Princes is they vanished and created a 500 yr old mystery. The only thing the bones in the Urn will solve is if they are who they are meant to be and possibly cause of death. Who is a different matter.

Sean Cunningham00:50

There are some strands still to be unravelled. Some things about Deighton and Forrest the alleged killers employed by James Tyrell have just come up. The sanctuary records of St Martin le Grand are interesting (in Westminster Abbey) and just this week came across the inventory of Tyrell's houses in Calais. It is possible that something key might jump out of the archives still.

Lorna Wanstall00:50

What did Henry feel about Richard and Vice versa.

Shelley Varran00:50

Here is a question...Bill if you could sit down with R3 or H7 in person today,,,what would you ask each King?

Claire Ridgway00:51

Oooh, a find in the archives would be wonderful!

Lorna Wanstall00:51

Shelley I know what I would do to H8 but that besides the point... lol

Michelle Nasello00:51

Oh Shelly, I will be up all night thinking of that

Bill Wolff00:52

I have, Shelley, R3, how's the back now? And H7, "I love your Mom!"

RealTudorLady00:52

The Lost Princes Project is searching archives to try and find something.

Lorna Wanstall00:52

I think I would want to know "Why they did what they did"

Michelle Nasello00:53

Oh that sounds wonderful to do RealTudorLady

Ceri Creffield00:53

It would be fantastic to find any new evidence of any sort.

Doc Clark00:53

Lost Princes Project? I've not heard about that. Where would one find info on it?

Lorna Wanstall00:53

lol Good one Bill

Sean Cunningham00:53

Lorna - we know next to nothing about what Henry thought about Richard. His letters trying to rouse support in England were fairly conventional in condemning his bad government and advisers. Richard knew he had to destroy Henry, and so welcomed the news that he could finally fight him on the battlefield (although he hoped that his troops would capture him between Pembrokeshire and the English midlands).

RealTudorLady00:54

Online there is a link on the Riii Society Website.

Claire Ridgway00:54

Thank you everyone for joining in tonight – great questions! And a big thank you to Sean for giving his time and expertise to be here, and for his talk. It's been a wonderful evening.

The winner of Sean's book on Henry VII is Lorna – congrats to you, Lorna. I'll get a book sent out to you.

Doc Clark00:54

thanks RTL

Michelle Nasello00:54

Thank you for your time Sean

Doc Clark00:54

Yes, thank you Sean

Bill Wolff00:55

Thanks All. Fun times as usual. Thx, Sean!!

Michelle Nasello00:55

Congratulations Lorna

Claire Ridgway00:55

The clock on the chatroom is rather out of synch!

Shelley Varran00:55

Thank you Sean!!

Ceri Creffield00:55

Thank you Sean and congratulations Lorna.

Michelle Nasello00:55

Night everyone

Sean Cunningham00:55

I hope I got a chance to answer most of the questions - thanks for firing them in. Obviously a great deal to talk about still!

RealTudorLady00:56

Congratulations Lorna. Thanks Sean for a wonderful chat.

Lorna Wanstall00:56

Thank you Claire and thank you Sean I am looking forward to read your wonderful book. I hope that you will return to our chatroom again soon and please feel free to drop into the forum and make a comment on any posting that tickles your fancy..

Claire Ridgway00:56

I think you did, Sean!

Ceri Creffield00:57

Goodnight all.

Ellen Ross00:57

Thank you Sean and Claire

Sean Cunningham00:57

Goodnight everyone - happy reading Lorna.

Claire Ridgway00:58

Good night!

RealTudorLady00:58

Goodnight Everyone.