

Ricart's Kalendar and National and Local Events in Bristol's Late 15th-Century

Local Historiography

Abstract:

Robert Ricart's Kalendar incorporates an important early English civic chronicle. This includes annalistic entries for the period leading to its initial creation in 1478/79, with an increasing number of entries specifically relevant to Bristol in the forty years to that date. Significantly, these chronicle entries were then continued through to the turn of the century. This paper considers these additions to the civic chronicle and argues that they represent a continued effort to create a history in which Bristol's loyalty and service to the crown is emphasised and discord is de-emphasised. In particular, the marginal reference to the deaths of the 'princes in the Tower' (Edward V and his brother, Richard duke of York), is identified as a later addition to a sequence of annals which originally entirely omitted the disruptions consequent on Richard III's coup of May/June 1483, including the reign of Edward V and the rebellion of Henry, duke of Buckingham later that year. (156 words)

Robert Ricart's Kalendar has often been referred to as incorporating an important early example of an English civic chronicle, and it has also loomed large in discussions of the reign of Richard III and specifically of the fate of Edward V and his brother Richard, duke of York. This is because the Kalendar's chronicle has appeared to offer a near-contemporaneous reference to the deaths of the 'princes in the Tower' in the context of a pattern of local historical writing and compilation which is unusually highly structured and sophisticated.

This article considers the way in which the politics of the period is represented in the Kalendar's chronicle and argues that the reference to the princes' deaths needs to be addressed as part of a process of layering and addition to the chronicle over the last decades of the 15th century. The Kalendar's reference to the princes is unlikely to be closely contemporaneous, and this adds to the evidence that specific reports that they were dead were not recorded during Richard's reign. Instead, the addition is almost certainly one associated with the ongoing compilation and editing of the city of Bristol's history during the reign of Henry VII. When Lucy Toulmin Smith edited the Kalendar for the Camden Society in 1872,¹ the choices she made were to have an important role in shaping our understanding of the document. Smith opted to omit the non-Bristol-related chronicle material, and gave little indication of the way in which the layers of development of the material could be read in the manuscript. A study of the later stages of the chronicle underlines the way in which the volume was being developed to address local impacts of wider conflict.

Peter Fleming has shown that Ricart was appointed Bristol's town clerk in Michaelmas 1478 and filled the role until October 1489. Ricart may have died soon afterwards. Fleming has argued that Ricart did not himself compose and write the text of the Kalendar but was most likely responsible for devising the structure, sourcing the documents and translating them where necessary. Ricart was a Bristol merchant active from the 1450s and associated with prominent Bristolians including mayors Philip Mede and William Spencer, the latter of whom sponsored the creation of the volume. Fleming has suggested that the compilation and especially the writing of the original chronicle element

¹ Robert Ricart, *The Maire of Bristowe is Kalendar*, ed. Lucy Toulmin Smith, Camden Soc., new ser., 5 (1872); *The Maire of Bristowe is Kalendar*, ed. Peter Fleming, Bristol Record Soc., 67 (2015), p. 2.

were the legacy of leading citizens' alignment with Richard Neville, earl of Warwick ('the Kingmaker'), and hence with the losing party during the Lancastrian readeption of 1470-1: Spencer himself had paid to make amends for his role in the events of 1470-1, and in March 1479 he had been accused of treason in what Fleming believes was an attempt to revive memories of his actions during that time. Fleming associates the deadpan coverage of Warwick and the Lancastrians' activities in the South West in the Kalendar with a deliberate effort by Spencer and his associates to write embarrassing events out of their collective history.²

The broader context of the manuscript's creation was undoubtedly also a desire to secure the textual basis for the city's privileges and liberties against a background of increasingly complex archival accumulation, and as cultures locally and nationally became more bureaucratic.³ Christian Liddy has emphasised the role of the texts compiled in Ricart's Kalendar in reinforcing the urban hierarchy, urging caution against reading them as simple representations of uncontested relationships and power around the mayor in particular.

² *Maire of Bristowe is Kalendar*, ed. Fleming, pp. 1–4; Peter Fleming, 'Making History: Culture, Politics and The Maire of Bristowe is Kalendar', in Douglas Biggs, Sharon D. Michalove, and Compton Reeves (eds.), *Reputation and Representation in Fifteenth-century Europe* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), pp. 289–316, at pp. 307–8, 312–16; idem, *Late Medieval Bristol: Time, Space and Power* (Donington: Yorkist History Trust in association with Shaun Tyas, 2024), pp. 15–16, 262–7. A possible later reference to Ricart in *The Great White Book of Bristol*, ed. E. Ralph, Bristol Record Soc., 32 (1979), p. 45 (11 June 1496) is to a 'Roberti Ricardis' and may not be the Ricart who is the subject here.

³ *Maire of Bristowe is Kalendar*, ed. Fleming, pp. 5–7; Fleming, 'Making History', pp. 310–12; Fleming, *Late Medieval Bristol*, pp. 45–9.

Liddy further argues that reference to the past was a consolation to an elite which felt acutely the decline of Bristol consequent on the end of the Hundred Years War and other factors.⁴

For the period after 1216, the chronicle follows the London practice of organisation of annals under mayoral years, rather than as previously year of grace.⁵ But it is only from c. 1440 that the annalist's approach starts to record local events alongside national ones with any frequency, ranging from weather events and their impacts on agriculture and maritime trade, through improvements to the civic environment, and on to visits from royalty. Fleming has commented on the failure of Ricart to capitalise on his access to the civic archive, seen for example in the absence even of mention of the grant of Bristol's charters of 1373, which gave the city county-borough status. Verbatim extracts from substantial portions of original documents feature prominently elsewhere in the volume, so it appears Ricart chose not to draw on them for the chronicle element. Fleming's conclusion is therefore that Ricart's approach was based on recollection and almost certainly another Bristol chronicle which has not survived. The combined effects of this approach were to impose a forty-year horizon on local events in his chronicle.

Fleming has described the initial composition of the chronicle element of the Kalendar as the 'product both of a particular provincial culture and of Bristol's political

⁴ Christian D. Liddy, *Contesting the City: The Politics of Citizenship in English Towns, 1250–1530* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 120–4, 168, 212–13.

⁵ Discussed in Fleming, 'Making History', pp. 301–3; idem, *Late Medieval Bristol*, pp. 49–56.

situation in the late 1470s'.⁶ There has not yet been an attempt to analyse the further additions to the chronicle in subsequent years through the 1480s and 1490s and into the early 16th century. By the early 1480s the indications are that the chronicle initially compiled and edited by Ricart was being added to on an annual basis. Each annual entry providing details of mayor, sheriff and bailiffs, against a year of grace and regnal year, appears, if not in an entirely different hand, to be sufficiently distinct to rule out composition in one campaign of writing. The first expansive entry after 1478/9 is that for '1483' (the mayoral year Michaelmas 1482 – Michaelmas 1483, when Robert Strange was mayor), and in which the chronicler recorded the death of Edward IV on 8 April [*recte* 9 April] at Westminster, his burial at Windsor on 19 April [*recte* 18 April], and then on 7 July [*recte* 6 July] Richard duke of Gloucester, his brother, being 'made king & crowned at Westm[inster]'.⁷ Then in '1484' (when Henry Vaghan was mayor – the mayoral year Michaelmas 1483 – Michaelmas 1484), the chronicler gives an account of a great storm on 15 October [1483], in which a flood and wind at Bristol and in its environs damaged wood and ships, wrecked the *Antony* of Bristol and a ship of Bilbao ['Bilbowe'], and drowned areas of saltmarsh. Corn, cattle and houses were swept away by the sea, and more than 200 people drowned. The chronicler also

⁶ Fleming, 'Making History', p. 291; idem, *Late Medieval Bristol*, pp. 56–64.

⁷ Bristol Archives, MS CC-2-7, f. 129r; Ricart, *Maire of Bristowe is Kalendar*, ed. Toulmin Smith, p. 46; Charles Ross, *Edward IV* (new edn, New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1997), pp. 414–16; Charles Ross, *Richard III* (new edn, New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1999), pp. 63–95; Michael Hicks, *Richard III: The Self-Made King* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 2019), pp. 234–60.

reports that soon after in this year Henry, duke of Buckingham was beheaded at Salisbury, which we know took place on 2 November 1483.⁸

The events of the year '1485' are then given as the landing of Henry earl of Richmond at Milford Haven in Wales, his encounter with Richard at Bosworth Field, and his victory there, on 22 August, Richard being slain, and soon after a sudden epidemic, the sweating sickness, spreading across England, from which many people died.⁹

⁸ Bristol Archives, MS CC-2-7, f. 129v; Ricart, *Maire of Bristowe is Kalendar*, ed. Toulmin Smith, p. 46; Ross, *Richard III*, pp. 105–17; Hicks, *Richard III: Self-Made King*, pp. 293–305; Rosemary Horrox, *Richard III: A Study in Service* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 150–77. These events, and their coincidence with both a full moon and total eclipse of the moon (which would have intensified the effect of the tide), on the night of 15 Oct. 1483, are expanded up on in Chris Skidmore, *Richard III: Brother, Protector, King* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2019), pp. 249, 405 n.65. The locations identified are discussed by Richard Coates, with Jennifer Scherr, 'Some Local Place-Names in Medieval and Early-Modern Bristol', *Transactions of the Bristol & Gloucestershire Archaeol. Soc.*, 129 (2011), 155–196, at p. 159.

⁹ Bristol Archives, MS CC-2-7, f. 129v; Ricart, *Maire of Bristowe is Kalendar*, ed. Toulmin Smith, pp. 46–7; John L. Flood, "'Safer on the Battlefield than in the City": England, the "Sweating Sickness", and the Continent', *Renaissance Studies*, 17 (2003), 147–76, esp. 148–50; Lorraine Attreed, 'Beggarly Bretons and Faynte-hearted Frenchmen: Age- and Class-specific Mortality During London's Sweating Sickness of 1485', *The Ricardian*, 4, no. 59 (1978), 2–16; Ross, *Richard III*, pp. 210–26; Hicks, *Richard III: Self-Made King*, pp. 380–90; S. B. Chrimes, *Henry VII* (new edn, New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1999), pp. 40–52; Ralph A. Griffiths and Roger S. Thomas, *The Making of the Tudor Dynasty* (corrected paperback edn, Stroud: Alan Sutton, 1933), pp. 131–65; David Rees, *The Son of Prophecy: Henry Tudor's Road to Bosworth* (2nd edn, Ruthin: John Jones, 1997), pp. 117–34.

As apparently originally written, these annual entries are notable for omitting entirely the accession, reign and deposition of Edward V, and the context for the demise of Henry, duke of Buckingham. The spring and summer of 1483 are presented as a sequence of death, burial and making of kings, with only an unspoken awkwardness in the hiatus between 19 April and 7 July to raise a question in the mind of the reader. The rebellion of Buckingham is also absent in all details other than his execution at Salisbury, in spite of the fact that his movements in the late summer and autumn of 1483 took him across the head of the Severn Estuary, from Gloucester (with King Richard) on 2 August, to Brecon where on 18 October he set up his standard, and on to Weobley.¹⁰

This approach to the recording of events continues into the reign of Henry VII, picking out certain notable national developments alongside a small number of Bristol events. The evidence again suggests that these annals were added separately, probably soon after the year in question. What is given as the first year of Henry VII, and as '1486',

¹⁰ But as his supporters deserted him, he moved north seeking refuge and finally came to Wem. Horrox, *Richard III: Study in Service*, p. 163 prefers the account in *The Croyland Chronicle Continuations, 1459–1486*, ed. Nicholas Pronay and John Cox (London: Richard III and Yorkist History Trust, 1986), pp. 162–5, over that of Edward Hall, *The Union of the Two Noble and Illustrate Famelies of Lancastre & Yorke* (London: Richard Grafton, 1548), Richard III, fo. 15. James Gairdner, *History of the Life and Reign of Richard III* (2nd edn, London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1879), pp. 176–7, conflated the two accounts in a way that is implausible. See also [The] P[arliament] R[olls] O[f] M[edieval] E[ngland, 1275–1504], ed. Chris Given-Wilson et al. (16 vols, Woodbridge: Boydell Press, National Archives), xv. 24–5; Paul Murray Kendall, *Richard the Third* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1955), pp. 272–3; Skidmore, *Richard III*, pp. 246–9.

the mayoral year of Edmund Wescote (i.e. Michaelmas 1485 – Michaelmas 1486), has recorded against it the fact that Wescote died within fifteen days of Michaelmas, and that Henry Vaughan was made mayor in his place. This year's annal also records the marriage between Henry and Elizabeth, the eldest daughter of Edward IV (this occurring on 18 January 1486).¹¹ There is a notable omission this year of the king's visit to Bristol in May 1486, in spite of its importance in the development of the city's relationship with the crown, and in particular the urban elite's reassurance to the king of their wealth, power and degree of effective control.¹² Nonetheless, it is likely that the entry was made only a little after the

¹¹ Bristol Archives, MS CC-2-7, f. 130r; Ricart, *Maire of Bristowe is Kalendar*, ed. Toulmin Smith, p. 47; Chrimes, *Henry VII*, pp. 65–6. Westcote died between his election at Michaelmas, 29 Sept 1485, and 19 Nov 1485, when probate was granted on his will: [Kew,] T[he] N[ational] A[rchives of the United Kingdom], PROB 11/7/265.

¹² Peter Fleming, 'Processing Power: Performance, Politics, and Place in Early Tudor Bristol', in A. Compton Reeves (ed.), *Personalities and Perspectives of Fifteenth-Century England* (Tempe AZ: The Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2012), pp. 141–68; idem, *Late Medieval Bristol*, pp. 33, 271–2; James Lee, 'Urban Policy and Urban Political Culture: Henry VII and his Towns', *Historical Research*, 82 (2009), 493–510, at p. 497; James Lee, 'Political Communication in Early Tudor England: The Bristol Elite, the Urban Community and the Crown, c.1471–c.1553', unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, University of the West of England, Bristol, 2006, pp. 22–5; Lisa L. Ford, 'Conciliar Administration and Politics in the Reign of Henry VII', unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, University of St. Andrews, 2001, pp. 51–2, 211; Sydney Anglo, *Spectacle, Pageantry, and Early Tudor Policy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), pp. 32–4; British Library, Cotton MS Julian B XII, ff. 18–21 (*The Herald's Memoir 1486–1490: Court Ceremony, Royal Progress and Rebellion*, ed. Emma Cavell (Donington: Shaun Tyas for

spring of 1486, when the immediate recollection of the events surrounding the king's marriage would have been fresh.

The year '1487', which is described as the second year of the king's reign and ran from Michaelmas 1486 to Michaelmas 1487, has entries for the queen being crowned (which actually occurred on 25 November 1487 and therefore in mayor year '1488'); and a field made against the king by the earl of Lincoln, Lord Lovell and Martin Schwartz, as a result of which all were killed (Stoke Field, on 16 June 1487).¹³ '1488', called Henry's third year, sees the first reporting during Henry's reign of a local story alongside a national one, with an entry that tells of the ship *Anthony* of Bristol that was lost for default of her master, this being the very large *Anthony Margaret*, lost in February 1488,¹⁴ and Prince Arthur born at Winchester – the most distinctly misplaced of this sequence of events, given that it occurred on 20 September 1486 (i.e. late in the mayoral year '1486', not '1488').¹⁵ The latter

the Richard III and Yorkist History Trust, 2009), pp. 92–8). The visit is included in *Adams's Chronicle of Bristol*, ed. Francis F. Fox & E. Salisbury (Bristol, 1910), p. 75.

¹³ Bristol Archives, MS CC-2-7, f. 130v; Ricart, *Maire of Bristowe is Kalendar*, ed. Toulmin Smith, p. 47; Chrimes, *Henry VII*, pp. 66–7; Michael J. Bennett, *Lambert Simnel and the Battle of Stoke* (Gloucester: Sutton, 1987).

¹⁴ Margaret M. Condon and Evan T. Jones, 'William Weston: Early Voyager to the New World', *Historical Research*, 91 (2018), 628–46, at pp. 639–44.

¹⁵ Bristol Archives, MS CC-2-7, f. 130v; Ricart, *Maire of Bristowe is Kalendar*, ed. Toulmin Smith, p. 47; Steven Gunn and Linda Monkton, 'Arthur Tudor, the Forgotten Prince', in Steven Gunn and Linda Monkton (eds), *Arthur Tudor, Prince of Wales* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2009), pp. 1–6, at p. 1; Sean Cunningham, *Prince Arthur: The Tudor King who Never was* (Stroud: Amberley, 2017), ch. 2.

error, with the misplaced reference to Elizabeth's coronation, suggests that the annals for these years '1487' to '1488' were composed later enough after the events in question for chronologies to have started to become confused.

The year '1489', described as the fourth year of the reign, once again juxtaposes local and national events: it describes how Henry VII sent an army of 7,000 men to Brittany, a reference to the force (actually closer to 6,000) sent to support the Bretons under the terms of the treaty of Redon (February 1489) in the face of imminent annexation by the French, and how the king summoned the mayor, sheriff and bailiffs of Bristol, who brought with them two men of Waterford whom they had imprisoned for bringing Irish money into the town.¹⁶ For the entry for '1490', given as Henry's fifth year, there is just a local event, with the bridge on the weir reported as having been new made.¹⁷

In '1491', the sixth year of the reign, the annalist records that various streets were new paved, and the high cross painted and gilt, which cost £20; and that the king came to Bristol where he received a benevolence of £1,800. This visit took place in September of 1491.¹⁸ Further, in an incomplete element, the annal records that Matthew Jubbes bought a

¹⁶ Bristol Archives, MS CC-2-7, f. 131r; Ricart, *Maire of Bristowe is Kalendar*, ed. Toulmin Smith, p. 47; John M. Currin, 'Henry VII and the Treaty of Redon (1489): Plantagenet Ambitions and Early Tudor Foreign Policy', *History*, 81 (1996), 343–58.

¹⁷ Bristol Archives, MS CC-2-7, f. 131r; Ricart, *Maire of Bristowe is Kalendar*, ed. Toulmin Smith, p. 47.

¹⁸ Lee, 'Political Communication in Early Tudor England', p. 22; Ford, 'Conciliar Administration and Politics', p. 224.

piece of ground of the city in St Nicholas Street, for sum of [blank].¹⁹ For '1492', the king's seventh year, the annalist records that the king went to Calais with a great army but peace (that is the peace of Étapes, of November 1492) was made without a battle.²⁰ And in '1493', given as Henry's eighth year, there is simply the routine indication that mayor Clement Wiltshire died and John Hawkes elected in his place.²¹

After a year of no entry, for '1494', and one the following year which tersely records that Sir William Stanley, the lord chamberlain, was beheaded,²² there follow two years in which Bristol's loyalty and service to the crown are particularly clearly signalled. For '1496', given as Henry's eleventh year, the annal records that the king and queen came to Bristol with diverse lords spiritual and temporal; the context for this visit in August 1496 was that the duke of Bedford, the king's uncle (Jasper Tudor) had died at Thornbury. The mayor and his brethren met with the king at Kingswood with 2,000 men on horseback all in black

¹⁹ Bristol Archives, MS CC-2-7, f. 131v; Ricart, *Maire of Bristowe is Kalendar*, ed. Toulmin Smith, pp. 47–8.

²⁰ Bristol Archives, MS CC-2-7, f. 131v; Ricart, *Maire of Bristowe is Kalendar*, ed. Toulmin Smith, p. 48; John M. Currin, "'To Traffic with War?'" Henry VII and the French Campaign of 1492', in David Grummitt (ed.), *The English Experience in France c.1450–1558: War, Diplomacy and Cultural Exchange* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 106–31.

²¹ Bristol Archives, MS CC-2-7, f. 132r; Ricart, *Maire of Bristowe is Kalendar*, ed. Toulmin Smith, p. 48. Mayor Wiltshire's death occurred some time before 7 Jan 1493, when probate was granted on his will: Bristol Archives, JOr/1/1, Great Orphan Book and Book of Wills, ff. ccxliii–ccxlv.

²² Bristol Archives, MS CC-2-7, f. 132v; Ricart, *Maire of Bristowe is Kalendar*, ed. Toulmin Smith, p. 48; Ian Arthurson, *The Perkin Warbeck Conspiracy, 1491–1499* (1997 edn., Thrupp: Sutton), pp. 83–97.

gowns and brought his body to Keynsham Abbey, for which they had great thanks of the king.²³ Then for the following year, '1497', the king's twelfth year, there is an even fuller account of how the Cornish rebelled, with Lord Audley; and that the king was victorious at Blackheath, and Audley was taken and beheaded at a place the name of which is left blank. The annal describes how Audley, when he was at Wells with the blacksmith [called Michael Joseph] captain of the Cornishmen, having with them 40,000 men, sent to the mayor of Bristol for victual and lodging for 20,000 men. But the mayor warned them off, mustered men on the walls with guns, and brought ships and boats around the 'marsh' (where Queen Square, Mud Dock and their district now lie) supplied with men, artillery and guns, and hearing this the rebels took another way.²⁴

There then follows a gap in the regular reporting of national and local events which spans more than twenty years. There is nothing recorded until '1506', Henry's 21st year, and this is only the death of a sheriff and his replacement, and then in '1518', the ninth year of Henry VIII's reign, the death of a mayor.²⁵ The period sees important events in the city's history overlooked, perhaps most notably (given the structure of the annals around a list of mayors and other office-holders) a lack of mention of the 1499 charter, which strengthened

²³ Bristol Archives, MS CC-2-7, f. 132v; Ricart, *Maire of Bristowe is Kalendar*, ed. Toulmin Smith, p. 48; Lee, 'Political Communication in Early Tudor England', p. 25; Ford, 'Conciliar Administration and Politics', p. 240; Sara Elin Roberts, *Jasper: The Tudor Kingmaker* ([Stroud]: Fonthill Media, 2015), pp. 113–15.

²⁴ Bristol Archives, MS CC-2-7, f. 133r; Ricart, *Maire of Bristowe is Kalendar*, ed. Toulmin Smith, pp. 48–9; Arthurson, *Perkin Warbeck Conspiracy*, pp. 163–7; Fleming, *Late Medieval Bristol*, pp. 273–5.

²⁵ Bristol Archives, MS CC-2-7, ff. 135r, 138r.

the grip of governing elite and, amongst other things, replaced the two bailiffs with a second sheriff.²⁶

When fuller annals resume, in the mayoral year '1522', the thirteenth year of Henry VIII's reign, it is to record a rise in the price of corn and grains, and the mayor's action in responding to this.²⁷ In '1523', the fourteenth year of Henry VIII, an annal records payments in relation to the expenses of burgesses in parliament.²⁸ And in '1524', Henry VIII's fifteenth, it was the sitting of justice Sir Lewis Pollard JCP with the mayor to determine a point about action of debt by one of the sheriffs against Anthony Budgegood: this was a payment of scavage, the dues taken from merchant strangers for goods showed or offered for sale within their liberties.²⁹

²⁶ *Bristol Charters*, ed. H. A. Cronne, Bristol Record Soc., 1, 11, 12 (1930–47), ii. 163–88; Lee, 'Political Communication in Early Tudor England', pp. 33–6; Lee, 'Urban Policy and Urban Political Culture', pp. 501–6.

²⁷ Bristol Archives, MS CC-2-7, f. 139r; Ricart, *Maire of Bristowe is Kalendar*, ed. Toulmin Smith, p. 49.

²⁸ Bristol Archives, MS CC-2-7, f. 139v; Ricart, *Maire of Bristowe is Kalendar*, ed. Toulmin Smith, pp. 49–50.

²⁹ Bristol Archives, MS CC-2-7, f. 139v; Ricart, *Maire of Bristowe is Kalendar*, ed. Toulmin Smith, pp. 50–1. Sir Lewis Pollard: Josiah C. Wedgwood and Anne D. Holt, *History of Parliament: Biographies of Members of the Commons House, 1439–1509* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1936), p. 689. Budgegood was a servant of the Marquess of Dorset: Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Thomas Cromwell: A Life* (London: Allen Lane, 2018), p. 48.

There were almost certainly other annals being compiled in this period, and Fleming has reviewed the evidence for them which survives in later copies.³⁰ Adams' early seventeenth-century work is the most important of these.³¹ This and other sets of annals provide additional information on some events which come from Bristol sources, for example in describing the imprisonment of the earl of Oxford in Bristol's Newgate, given against the year 1473, but most likely associated with the earl's seizure of St Michael's Mount in Cornwall in 1473 and subsequent surrender in February 1474.³² That said, there is relatively little specific to Bristol which is added in these other chronicles independently of their access to other English historical sources. The visit of the king in 1486 is one, and the presence of the royal chancellor (Archbishop John Morton) with the king on the visit of September 1491 is another.³³ For 1498 there is added detail that there was no court in

³⁰ Fleming, *Late Medieval Bristol*, pp. 51–7; see also Rosemary Sweet, *The Writing of Urban Histories in Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), pp. 76–8; Alfred E. Hudd, 'Two Bristol Calendars', *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society*, 19 (1894–5), 105–41; Jonathan Barry, 'Provincial Town Culture, 1640–1780: Urbane or Civic?', in Joan H. Pittock and Andrew Wear (eds), *Interpretation and Cultural History* (London: Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1991), pp. 198–234.

³¹ 1623: *Adams's Chronicle of Bristol*; 1625: Bristol Archives, 13748/4.

³² *Adams's Chronicle of Bristol*, p. 72; Fleming, *Late Medieval Bristol*, p. 56. James Ross, *John de Vere, Thirteenth Earl of Oxford (1442–1513): 'The Foremost Man of the Kingdom'* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2011), pp. 72–4, tells of the siege of St Michael's Mount, and imprisonment at Hammes, but does not mention Bristol.

³³ *Adams's Chronicle of Bristol*, pp. 75–82, for these and the following instances.

Temple fee, or bailiff or constable, for 14 weeks; and that many heretics were taken in Bristol, of whom some were burned and some abjured; and 1499 that this was the last year of bailiffs in Bristol (as a result of the new charter of that year, although it specifically is not mentioned). Two cases of the death of sheriffs in office are noted, in 1503 and 1505. But then until 1514, and commentary on the generosity of Robert Thorne, mayor that year, there is nothing additional in Adams' chronicle with a specific Bristol flavour. As in the Ricart MS, therefore, it seems there was a pause in more detailed annal-creation in Bristol between the 1490s and at least the mid-1510s.

As well as being isolated from later phases of annal-writing, this period of chronicling from 1478/79 until 1497 demonstrates a distinctive interest in national events. The people involved in these additions were perhaps understandably keen to locate their city's life against a set of national political events which were more than usually disturbed and which on several occasions impinged on the local experience. Across this period of fifteen years, in nine individual years local events were recorded, and in eleven years national ones. As Daniel Woolf and others have argued, this was a period in which the chronicle tradition was starting to build towards its apogee across England.³⁴ Personal and highly local factors seem to have played a role in Bristol's case, however. It is almost certainly significant that although he had ceased to be town clerk in October 1489, Ricart may have survived until at least 1495-6. Bristol's efforts to reinforce its rights and the position of its elite reached a new high-point with the grant of the charter of 1499, marking a clear recovery from the

³⁴ Daniel R. Woolf, 'Genre into Artifact: The Decline of the English Chronicle in the Sixteenth Century', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 19 (1988), 321-54.

troubles arising from misplaced allegiances in 1470-1, which Ricart's original project had sought to address.

A more specific significance of all this is that Ricart's Kalendar for 1484 includes a marginal addition which indicates 'And this yere the two sonnes of King E[dward] were put to scylence in the Towre of London' (see figure 1). As we have seen, the annals for years in the 1480s and 1490s appear to have been written near-contemporaneously, with one or two likely exceptions, but the exact dating of this addition to the text is unclear.³⁵ The challenge of dating is made more acute by the fact that this is a marginal note, a fact which has not always been highlighted in discussion.³⁶ Even its basic intention, in allocating the death of the princes to a specific year, has resulted in differences of opinion. A. J. Pollard has argued it is for 1483, which may be correct, but the mayoral year only really locates the event to September 1483 to September 1484.³⁷ If the entry regarding the princes were to be contemporaneous or near contemporaneous, then it would be one of very few English sources for the death of the princes to date from around the time of their disappearance.

³⁵ Ricart, *Maire of Bristowe is Kalendar*, ed. Toulmin Smith, p. 46; *Maire of Bristowe is Kalendar*, ed. Fleming, pp. 2–3; Fleming, 'Making History', pp. 306–10.

³⁶ Fleming, 'Making History', p. 311, n. 80, suggests entries for years after 1478/9 were probably made in or soon after the year in question, but he acknowledges that the original text for 1483/4 makes no mention of the Princes in the Tower and that it is a 'marginal note, in a fifteenth-century hand but doubtless added after 22 August 1485' which records the death of the princes.

³⁷ A. J. Pollard, *Richard III and the Princes in the Tower* (Stroud: Alan Sutton, 1991), p. 122.

The distinctiveness of this text, if it is near-contemporaneous with the events described, would be enhanced by the scarcity of comments on the fate of the princes in England during Richard's reign. The main examples of such evidence are well known and initially reflect not a certainty of their death but rather a lack of knowledge of their fate around the time of their disappearance. Not long after the execution of Lord Hastings on 13 June 1483 and before Richard III claimed the throne George Cely reported a rumour that Edward V might be dead ('Yff the Kyng... wher dessett').³⁸ Dominic Mancini, who left London in mid-July 1483, soon after wrote that the princes had been withdrawn into the inner apartments of the Tower 'usque adeo ut penitus desierint apparere' - 'till at length they ceased to appear altogether'.³⁹ One early record, which may represent rumours circulating at the time of the Buckingham rebellion late in 1483, suggests a date of death for the princes in June 1483 and that Edward had been drowned: 'interfectus fuit et corpus eius submersum fuit'.⁴⁰ Less certain in date, but probably contemporary or near-contemporary, the historical notes of a London citizen written during the years 1483-8 indicated that the princes had been murdered by the 'vise' (advise/design) of the duke of Buckingham.⁴¹

³⁸ *The Cely Letters, 1472-1488*, ed. Alison Hanham, Early English Text Soc., original ser., cclxxiii (1975), pp. 184-5.

³⁹ *The Usurpation of Richard the Third: Dominicus Mancinus ad Angelum Catonem de occupatione Regni Anglie per Riccardum Tercium libellus*, ed. C.A.J. Armstrong (2nd edn, Oxford, 1969), pp. 92-3.

⁴⁰ Philip Morgan, 'The Death of Edward V and the Rebellion of 1483', *Historical Research*, 68 (1995), 229-32.

⁴¹ R. F. Green, 'Historical Notes of a London Citizen, 1483-1488', *English Historical Review*, xcvi (1981), 585-90, at p. 588.

Sources written immediately after Richard's defeat became a little more direct in their explanation of the princes' fate: the Crowland Chronicler, writing in autumn 1485, affirmed that Edward and Richard 'by some unknown manner of violent destruction, had met their fate'. Although in this he avoided specific allegations of responsibility, he also quoted a poem (not necessarily his own) that indicated Richard 'fratris opprimeret proles', which does not categorically say the king had killed them.⁴² Some time very early in Henry VII's reign the Welsh bard Dafydd Llwyd directly accused Richard, saying the murders were like 'killing angels, Christ's own. An atrocity'.⁴³ Given that scarcity, the record in the Kalendar might be important additional evidence alongside that cited by Philip Morgan for the extent to which stories of the princes' deaths were circulating amongst an urban elite even early in Richard's reign.

Bristol's early adoption of local chronicling has long been known to be distinctive for cities and towns outside London. Ralph Flenley's very pessimistic comments on beginnings of chronicles in most urban centres have been qualified by the work of Alan Dyer, Robert

⁴² *The Crowland Chronicle Continuations: 1459–86*, ed. Nicholas. Pronay and John Cox (London, 1986), pp. 162–3; Michael Hicks, 'The Second Anonymous Continuation of the Crowland Abbey Chronicle 1459–1486 Revisited', *English Historical Review*, cxvii (2007), 349–70, at p. 354. Crowland associated general awareness of the princes' fate with the choice of many people to rebel in Oct 1483.

⁴³ *Gwaith Dafydd Llwyd o Fathafarn*, ed. W. Leslie Richards (Cardiff: Gwasg Prifysgol Cymru, 1964), p. 69; Pamela Tudor-Craig, *Richard III* (2nd edn, London: National Portrait Gallery, 1977), p. 95; Andrew Breeze, 'A Welsh Poem of 1485 on Richard III', *The Ricardian*, xviii (2008), 46–53 (p. 47 for translation).

Tittler, Richard Britnell and others.⁴⁴ Still, in Ricart's Kalendar, Bristol offers a very unusual opportunity to gauge the ways the recent past was being constructed, and within that the understanding of provincial England as to the fate of the princes. Bristol was the second city of the realm outside London in 1377 and continued to hold this rank in 1523-7.⁴⁵ Its mercantile wealth and connections through the Severn toward Ireland and elsewhere in Europe (albeit with some changes when the English hold on Gascony was lost), and very

⁴⁴ Ralph Flenley, *Six Town Chronicles of England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1911), pp. 27–38; Alan Dyer, 'English Town Chronicles', *Local Historian*, 12 (1976–7), 285–92; Denis Hay, 'History and Historians in England and France during the Fifteenth Century', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 35 (1962), 111–27, at p. 123; R. H. Britnell, *Growth and Decline in Colchester, 1300–1525* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 123–5 (chronicle of 1372–8 in the town's Red Paper Book; Britnell recognises this is unusual for towns at that time); Peter Fleming, *Coventry and the Wars of the Roses*, Dugdale Soc., occasional papers, 50 (Stratford-upon-Avon: Dugdale Soc. with the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, 2011), pp. 24–35 (c. 1462); Robert Tittler, 'Reformation, Civic Culture and Collective Memory in English Provincial Towns', *Urban History*, 24 (1997), 281–302, esp. pp. 292–4; Daniel Woolf, *The Social Circulation of the Past: English Historical Culture 1500–1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 280–5, 295–7; idem, *Reading History in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 65–74.

⁴⁵ W. G. Hoskins, *Local History in England* (3rd edn, London: Longman, 1984), pp. 277–8; Alan Dyer, *Decline and Growth in English Towns, 1400–1640* (new edn, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

tentatively in the early 16th century towards the Americas, gave it the confidence to develop a historical culture ahead of its lesser peers.⁴⁶

This prominence was reflected in the stature of the men who served as recorder of the city and often also as one of its MPs. That stature, and their connections, meant Bristol's was unlikely ever to be a purely parochial take on the past. John Twynho was recorder from at least 1472 and served as MP for Bristol in 1472-5 and in 1484. Twynho's brother William (d 1472) and his wife Ankaret were in the household of George, duke of Clarence, and it was Ankaret's judicial murder in 1477 which precipitated the fall of the duke. John moved with his relatives into the service of the Woodvilles, particularly the marquess of Dorset, and he was attorney general for Prince Edward by 1479 and sworn as a councillor of the Duchy of

⁴⁶ Christian Liddy, *War, Politics and Finance in Late Medieval English Towns: Bristol, York and the Crown, 1350–1400* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2005); Peter Fleming, 'Bristol and the End of Empire: The Consequences of the Fall of Gascony', in Peter Crooks, David Green and W. Mark Ormrod (eds), *The Plantagenet Empire, 1259–1453: Proceedings of the 2014 Harlaxton Symposium*, Harlaxton Medieval Studies, 26 (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2016), pp. 371–83; Brendan Smith, 'Late Medieval Ireland and the English Connection: Waterford and Bristol, ca. 1360–1460', *Journal of British Studies*, 50 (2011) 546–65; Peter Fleming, 'Crown and Town in Later Medieval England: Bristol and National Politics, 1399 to 1486', in Sheila Sweetinburgh (ed.), *Negotiating the Political in Northern European Urban Society, c.1400–c.1600*, Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 434 - Arizona studies in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, 38 (Tempe AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2013), pp. 141–62; Wendy R. Childs, 'Ireland's Trade with England in the Later Middle Ages', *Irish Economic and Social History*, 9 (1982) 5–33; Tim Bowly, "'Herring of Sligo and Salmon of Bann": Bristol's Maritime Trade with Ireland in the Fifteenth Century', in Richard Gorski (ed.), *Roles of the Sea in Medieval England* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2012), pp. 147–66

Lancaster early in 1483.⁴⁷ Leading merchants were also men of substance and good connections: John Esterfield, who represented Bristol in the parliaments of 1485 and 1487, sent oranges and 'sukcades' (sweetmeats: vegetable or fruit pieces candied in a syrup) to Queen Elizabeth when she was staying at Berkeley Castle on 29 August 1502.⁴⁸ When Esterfield made his will in 1505, one of those involved with the administration of his estate was William Grevell, another recorder of Bristol and serjeant at law from 1503.⁴⁹ Grevell became a Justice of the Common Pleas soon after Henry VIII's accession, and then resigned the Bristol post; he was succeeded by John Fitzjames, who became Henry VIII's attorney

⁴⁷ Wedgwood, *House of Commons*, pp. 886–7; M. A. Hicks, *False, Fleeting, Purjur'd Clarence: George, Duke of Clarence, 1449–78* (Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1980), pp. 138–40, 166–8; *The Great Red Book of Bristol*, ed. E. W. W. Veale, Bristol Record Soc., 4, 8, 16, 18 (1931–53), Part 4, p. 92 (king to William Spencer mayor of Bristol, Windsor, 1 May; part of proceedings begun Michaelmas 18 Edward IV, i.e. 1478, therefore this letter, which refers to Twynyho as attorney general to Prince Edward, dates from 1479); *Calendar of Close Rolls, 1468–1476*, no. 963 (Twynyho as recorder, Nov. 1472); Ralph A. Griffiths, *The Principality of Wales in the Later Middle Ages: The Structure and Personnel of Government*, i: *South Wales 1277–1536* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1972), p. 161 (he was active as a justice in lordships in S. Wales, 1476–81). John made his will on 29 Sept 1485, and it was proved on 16 Feb 1486: TNA, PROB 11/7/295.

⁴⁸ Wedgwood, *House of Commons*, p. 303; TNA, E 36/210, f. 52; *Privy Purse Expenses of Elizabeth of York: Wardrobe Accounts of Edward the Fourth*, ed. Nicholas Harris Nicolas (London: W. Pickering, 1830), p. 43. Esterfield died in 1504.

⁴⁹ TNA, PROB 11/14/440; John Baker, *The Men of Court 1440 to 1550: A Prosopography of the Inns of Court and Chancery and the Courts of Law*, Selden Soc., supplementary ser., 18 (London, 2012), p. 783.

general from 1519. After Fitzjames resigned the Bristol position in 1521 when about to become Chief Baron of the Exchequer, he was followed by Thomas Jubbes, a trusted advisor of the duke of Buckingham, and then in 1533 by no less a figure than the king's chief minister Thomas Cromwell.⁵⁰ So not only was Bristol wealthy, it was very well connected through men who would have had access to information about national politics and for whom national politics would have made a difference.

It is therefore significant that the chronicle record of Bristol's history from 1478 to the end of the century continued to emphasise the city's loyalty and to deemphasise periods of controversy and conflict. It is further significant that the record being made between 1483 and 1497 did not in its main text even mention Edward V or his brother. When it did state that the princes had been murdered, this was in a marginal note which was most likely added after Richard's defeat at Bosworth. What seems to have mattered to the elite of Bristol in 1483-5 was the death of Edward IV and the succession of Richard – not rumour, however well founded, of the princes' deaths.

⁵⁰ The careers and Bristol connection of these men are traced in James Lee, 'Urban Recorders and the Crown in Late Medieval England', in Linda Clark (ed.), *The Fifteenth Century III: Authority and Subversion* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2003), pp. 163–77.

Figure 1: Chronicle entries for '1484' and '1485', including reference to Edward V and Richard, duke of York, 'put to scylence in the towre of london': Bristol Archives, CC/2/7 f. 129v. Reproduced by kind permission of Bristol Archives.