

identify and rescue the burials of her York ancestors at Fotheringhay in the latter part of the sixteenth century.

Although the pillar and the garden have vanished, the site would now probably lie beneath the private car park of the Department of Social Services. The Richard III Society erected a plaque nearby recording Richard's burial.

As for the tale of the grave desecration, and of his body being thrown into the river, there is absolutely no contemporaneous source to back this up. Indeed, the story is not encountered before the late seventeenth century. There is no reason to suppose that Richard III was the target of popular hatred in Leicester or anywhere else in the 1530s. The Tudor propaganda machine had succeeded in establishing his reputation as a multiple murderer; but the fact that during his reign he had 'made good laws' was still widely remembered.

The seventeenth-century legend, however, was supported by a popular relic: a stone horse-trough which was displayed to tourists visiting Leicester as 'Richard III's coffin'. This is not heard of after the mid-1740s. From the surviving descriptions, this coffin dated from many centuries earlier than Richard's time and although one cannot rule out the possibility that he might have been buried in a re-used coffin, in the absence of further evidence the horse-trough story is unlikely to be true.

In the mid-nineteenth century Mr Benjamin Broadbent came upon the scene. The founder of a firm of builders, he was proud of his town's association with King Richard, and regretted the lack of any tangible memorial in Leicester to commemorate him. Accordingly, in 1856 he erected a large stone plaque close to Bow Bridge, which reads, 'Near this spot lie the remains of Richard III, the last of the Plantagenets, 1485.' Mr Broadbent admitted that it was based solely upon local tradition; nevertheless, as John Ashdown-Hill observes, it is by no means uncommon to find historians, who ought to have checked their facts, relying on the plaque's statement and retailing the dubious story of Richard's body being thrown into the river as though this were an established truth.

To set the record straight, a new Richard III Society plaque was unveiled by Mr Broadbent's descendant Christopher in August 2005, stating the modern belief that Richard's remains probably still lie at the Greyfriars.

Still in Social Services Car Park.

Grey Friars (street)