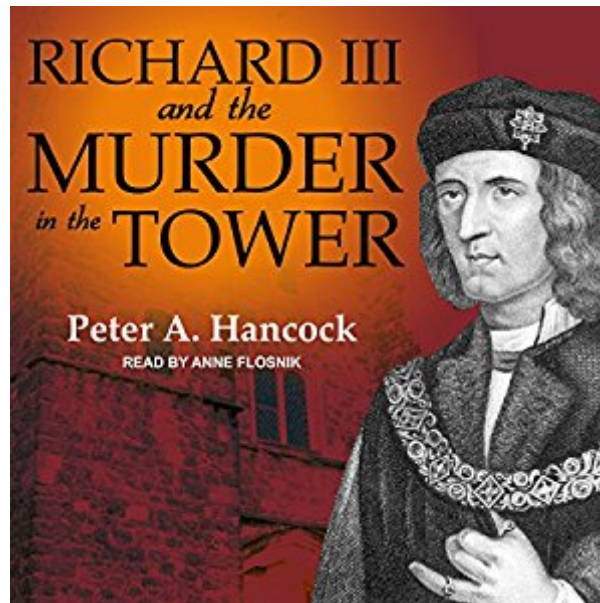




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Richard III And The Murder In The Tower



Synopsis

Since Tudor times, Richard III has been painted as the "black legend", the murderous uncle - however, the truth is much more complicated and interesting. Richard III is accused of murdering his nephews, the "Princes in the Tower", in order to usurp the throne of England, but this book tells a different story. Rather than looking at all the killings Richard III did not commit, this account focuses on the one judicial murder for which we know that he was responsible. On June 13, 1483, William, Lord Hastings, was hustled from a meeting of the Royal Council and summarily executed on Tower Green within the confines of the Tower of London. This book sheds light on the mystery of this precipitate and unadvised action by the then Duke of Gloucester and reveals the key role of William Catesby in Richard's ascent to the throne of England. It explains his curious actions during that tumultuous summer of three kings and provides an explanation for the fate of the "Princes in the Tower".

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

First of all, you MUST understand that this book is about the execution of Hastings, outside the Tower, and NOT about the 2 Princes (though we do get around to them in the very, very end). The title is a bit misleading, as Hastings was 'executed,' but there we are. As a very positive Ricardian though, it is this 'execution' of Hastings which rings as perhaps Richard's most questionable action...the book is all about just why Richard did this...And Mr. Hancock really does some research and postulations, etc. This is a long story, made even longer. Well actually, it is a very small part of a long story, but this small part is truly opened up, and examined, and put back together, and after a

long read, makes one heck of a lot of sense. I think this whole book will truly help clear up so much speculation about Richard's actions concerning his deciding he was to be king, and his reasons for executing Hastings. And one after-effect of this all is that it also makes very clear that he had no need, or intention of harming, let alone executing the two princes! Not to spoil the story, but the real focus of this whole book is William Catesby, the 'Cat' that Richard was with in his final years. We certainly get a very close look at Catesby, and from this the plot unfolds. The book IS a long, tricky read, and sadly the print is SO tiny, but well worth the adventure. The other MUST read is David Baldwin's 'The Lost Prince' which together with this book, will help steer us in a very good direction towards understanding Richard's actions after the death of his brother, the King.

One of the issues I have thought both puzzling and key to the events surrounding Richard, Duke of Gloucester's actions as Protector to Edward V on June 13, 1483 was his summary execution of William Hastings--an execution delivered without, it would seem, due process. From my point of view, this was uncharacteristic action by a man who was for most of his life, all about the rule of law. I struggled to tease apart this event in particular, and the subsequent actions taken by Richard that led him to be crowned king of England. Thus, it was with great anticipation that I opened this book that promised to offer a fresh and intriguing view of the possible motives and reasons that led to Hastings' execution and Richard's decision to go after the crown. Hancock did not disappoint. First, I want comment on the style in which the book is written. It's like Hancock is speaking with me. This book is highly readable and thoroughly engaging, and whether you agree or not with the theory, it is logically constructed. Hancock was careful to present primary and secondary sources that both substantiated and countered his theory. In the instances where the sources were contrary to his hypothesis, Hancock showed why he thought the interpretation was incorrect or didn't hold up. He didn't dismiss these arguments out-of-hand. In all but a small handful of instances, Hancock gives sources to substantiate his position. I will not quibble with a couple of un-sourced statements that were thrown in because they had no effect on the book's premise. The book set out to determine when did Richard first decide that he wanted to be King and not protector. The time span Hancock examines was from when Richard first learned his brother Edward IV had died to when Richard was made King on June 26, 1483. Although, Edward IV died April 9, 1483, Richard didn't learn of it until about a week later. From the time Richard learned of Edward's death to the council meeting on June 13th, Richard's actions were consistent with his role as protector. There was no outward indication that he was aiming for anything else. Hancock posits that something happened during that council meeting that changed everything. Per Hancock, Richard learned about the

precontracted marriage between Edward IV and Eleanor Butler from William Catesby during a break in the meeting. He also learned that Hastings knew about the precontract. Enraged by this betrayal, Richard returns to the council and accuses Hastings, among others, of treason. However, Hastings was executed that day and the only one to lose his head. Even though I don't agree with the timing of the events for reasons I won't go into here, I think the scenario Hancock painted holds together very well. What I like best about this book is that it is thoughtful and pointed out possible scenarios that I had not considered. Whether or not you will agree with the thesis Hancock lays out in his book, I think it is well worth reading.

Richard III is one of my oldest ancestors but this book is hard to stick with. I tried but gave up and moved on. I'll probably get back to it this winter. Maybe, maybe not.

Peter Hancock goes into extraordinary detail about the events prior to and following the brief reign of Richard III. Exhausting detail. This was more of a doctoral dissertation than a book.

Interesting theory on the events leading to the murder of the Princes in the Tower. Professor Hancock takes you there with almost a "Time" magazine quality and puts everything into 15th century perspective. While Hastings execution is given a compelling reason, I still believe Richard knew about Edward's pre-contract with Eleanor Butler, and he had to get rid of anyone who was sympathetic with Edward's children. Hastings was a King's man and had to have been duty bound to carry out his liege lord's wishes. The book is well written and as fast paced, with a feeling of an intense power struggle being decided as events unfolded.

The Hastings murder, not the Princes. Close reading required. Ya gotta pay attention. Not a breeze. Rewarding for Ricardians.

On Friday, June 13, 1483, William, Lord Hastings was hustled out of a Royal Council meeting and summarily put to death on Tower Green. In his book, "Richard III and the Murder in the Tower" (The History Press, 2009), Dr. Peter A. Hancock examines the events surrounding the precipitous, and ultimately ill-advised, death in the Tower of London of William Hastings. Based upon an extensive analysis of primary and secondary sources, Hancock provides an eminently readable and accessible account of the events of June 13 that proved to be the pivotal point for Richard and turned an otherwise assiduous Protector into an aspiring monarch.

Interesting and historically detailed.

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