9. Sir Richard – onwards and upwards or shaken and angry? 1399-1405

The past is real. We owe it to the people who had to live through it to try to see it as they saw it.

Professor Helen Parr*, History Today, August 2019*

For someone who'd been a prisoner at Chester in the summer of 1399, Richard Redmayn had an astonishingly successful career under the man who'd imprisoned him, Henry IV. By 1405 Richard had become a major figure in the north. His biography in *The House of Commons 1386-1421* volumes sets out the known details of his CV very effectively – he was appointed Sheriff of Cumberland and of Yorkshire, was a member of numerous commissions, was summoned by the king to attend Great Councils and received a variety of grants and other rewards. It's a very impressive record but, left at the level of a CV as it is in that biography, it implies that these were years of smooth and unworried progress for Richard, of rising ever 'onwards and upwards'. What I want to explore in this chapter is whether these years were really so straightforward and unproblematic for Richard. As Helen Parr says in my opening quotation, we owe it to Richard to try to see these events as he saw them and so understand his life a little more deeply.

The alternative interpretation I want to consider is that these were years of uncertainty and sometimes fear for Richard because King Henry faced continual, multiple threats that by implication also threatened his supporters, men such as Richard Redmayn. Some threats were predictable, involving supporters of Richard II or attacks from France or Scotland, but others involved men who'd been Henry's supporters in 1399 but now conspired to overthrow him. Some of these rebels were men who Sir Richard knew well and therefore their actions may well have left him shaken, angry and fearful about how events would turn out, especially when, in 1403, King Henry had to lead his army on the battlefield to defend his crown. Would it be surprising if Sir Richard's feelings about these events were conditioned by his experiences in 1399, those days in prison in Chester when his fortunes had plummeted with dramatic speed. Could he have been afraid that this could happen to him again?

To explore this alternative interpretation, I'm going to set out the broad picture of Richard's career up to 1405 but focus on Richard's possible reactions at two pivotal moments – Hotspur's rebellion which led to the battle of Shrewsbury in 1403 and, secondly, the rebellion and execution of Archbishop Scrope of York in 1405. During these years the geographical balance of Richard's service to the crown changed as he took on greater responsibilities in Yorkshire, including the office of Sheriff in 1403, rather than being based predominantly in the north-west.

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Between 1399 and 1402, the first years of Henry's reign, Sir Richard may, however, have enjoyed the familiarity of work in the north-west and on Scottish border, a return to his patterns of service in the 1380s and 1390s. This may have been all the more re-assuring after the fears of 1399 and the alarm of the Epiphany Rising against Henry in January 1400.

Richard's first major opportunity to show his loyalty to King Henry came with Henry's invasion of Scotland in June 1400. All knights receiving annuities from the crown (of whom Richard was one) were summoned to join the royal army at York '*with all the speed they could, furnished and arrayed for war*'. No documents survive to prove Richard took part but there's a host of reasons why we can be certain he did:

- joining the king's army demonstrated that he was now loyal to Henry.
- he continued to receive appointments and rewards over the next few years which would not have happened had he refused the king's summons to join his army.
- his whole career had involved defence of the border and border warfare – taking part in an invasion of Scotland was in his DNA.
- this was one of the largest English armies of the period (13,000 men, chiefly from the north and the Duchy of Lancaster) so it's hard to see Richard refusing the chance to fight alongside so many fellow-northerners, including his friend Henry Vavasour, whose involvement is recorded. Another companion was Janico Dartas, his fellow prisoner at Chester, who showed off his jousting skills as the army assembled at York. If Richard and Janico had the chance to talk, I do wonder if their conversation turned to those days in Wales and Chester.

The Scottish expedition achieved little for the king but, assuming he did take part, Sir Richard had demonstrated his loyalty to King Henry. Over the next three years his royal service continued to be primarily in the north-west rather than in Yorkshire, despite his marriage to Elizabeth. Richard was appointed Sheriff of Cumberland (for the fifth time) in 1401 and was soon in action defending the border around Carlisle against Scottish raids. In Westmorland he was appointed to the Commission of the Peace and to a commission to deal with malcontents 'spreading lies' about Henry IV's government. Richard was also one of 300 knights summoned to a Great Council to discuss policies towards France and Scotland.

In return, the crown renewed Richard's annuity of £20 from the Duchy of Lancaster, gave him gifts of game and timber and two properties in Liverpool, confiscated from one of the leaders of the Epiphany Rising. The king also extended Richard's right to hold crown estates at Blencogo in Cumberland from Richard's lifetime to in perpetuity so he could pass them on to his heir.

All this suggests that these early years were, for Richard, a successful transition to life under Henry IV, laying the ghost of his support for Richard II. In that sense they support the 'onwards and upwards' interpretation of how Richard saw these years – but, at the same time, he would have been very aware of the multiple threats facing King Henry. French ships attacked English merchant shipping and French troops attacked the English lands in Gascony. Scottish raids across the border continued. Rumours of Richard II's survival and of plots to restore him to the throne never went away. In Wales a rising led by Owain Glyndwr developed into a nationalist challenge to English control. Henry spent vast sums sending English armies into Wales but none was able to force the Welsh to battle and defeat them. None of these threats were likely to have led Sir Richard to question his support for Henry but their cumulative impact may have made him, and many more of Henry's supporters, anxious for the future. After three years as king, Henry was no nearer putting an end to the threats to his crown.

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Now for the first of those two pivotal events, Hotspur's rebellion in 1403 (Hotspur, if you're tuning in again after a break, was more formally known as Henry Percy, eldest son of the earl of Northumberland). Richard Redmayn's possible responses to this rebellion feel particularly interesting because, not only did it come very close to deposing Henry, but because Richard had known Hotspur for 15 years or more. They'd worked together and Richard may well have admired Hotspur's military qualities. It's hard to believe that Richard responded to Hotspur's rebellion with distant objectivity.

What's astonishing, given how close this rebellion came to ending Henry's reign, is its brevity –just twelve days from beginning to end. On 9th July, Hotspur proclaimed that Richard II was alive and would soon appear in Chester to reclaim his crown. Hotspur then appealed for support to depose Henry and headed south, planning to destroy the Prince of Wales's army in the Welsh borders before the king and prince could combine their armies. It was three days later that King Henry heard the news of Hotspur's actions. Henry was in Nottingham, on his way north to lead another invasion of Scotland, but turned west immediately to intercept Hotspur while rattling out a raft of orders and commissions, one ordering Richard Redmayn and others to arrest rebels in Yorkshire.

Why did Hotspur and the Percy family rebel when they were the most powerful family in the kingdom and the best-rewarded of Henry's supporters? Unhelpfully for anyone who prefers simple explanation, their motives appear to be a complex tangle of resentments. The Percies disagreed with the king's policy towards Wales where they favoured a more conciliatory solution. They also pointed to the king's failure to pay their fees as wardens of the Scottish Marches, to refund military expenses in Wales and to ransom Edmund Mortimer, Hotspur's brother-in-law, who was a prisoner of Owain Glyndwr in Wales. Hotspur particularly resented the king's order to hand over Scottish prisoners taken at the Battle of Homildon Hill in 1402 rather than letting Hotspur ransom them.

However, behind all these issues may lie simple ambition. The Percies may have believed their position as the most powerful family in England was under threat as King Henry was giving more influence to the Percies' regional rival, Ralph Neville, earl of Westmoreland and to his own half-brothers, the Beauforts. The Percies' solution was to replace Henry with a new king they could control, 11-year-old Edmund Mortimer, earl of March – the nephew of the Edmund Mortimer mentioned in the paragraph above. In theory, March had a stronger blood claim to the crown than Henry IV, but that had been glossed over in 1399 when replacing Richard II with a child was not a practical option.

Whatever Hotspur's motives, there's no doubt that Henry's response was speedy and decisive, amply fulfilling his outstanding military reputation. Moving faster than Hotspur anticipated, Henry succeeded in joining forces with the Prince of Wales, his 16-year-old son, the future Henry V. Then, on 21st July, just nine days after hearing of the rebellion, the king and prince fought on foot together at the battle of Shrewsbury. This was the first battle in which English and Welsh archers fought on both sides, subjecting their countrymen to the arrowstorms whose previous targets had been French and Scottish armies. Over 2000 men were killed and both king and prince came close to death. The king's standard bearer, one of two knights wearing the royal arms as decoys, was killed. The prince suffered an arrow wound to the face but fought on, leading the decisive counter-attack in an

incredible act of courage. The decisive moment came when Hotspur was killed. What in hindsight was the greatest threat to Henry was over.

Richard Redmayn was unlikely to have been at Shrewsbury, given that he'd been ordered to deal with rebels in the north, but he was extremely busy in the aftermath of the rebellion. Membership of the commission to arrest rebels in Yorkshire was followed by another commission in Yorkshire to try cases against rebels, working alongside his neighbour William Gascoigne, who was now Lord Chief Justice. Richard was also with the king at York in August when the earl of Northumberland submitted to the king.

Most significantly, in November 1403 Richard was appointed Sheriff of Yorkshire. The king needed a capable, trusted individual as Sheriff to counter the extensive Percy influence in Yorkshire and his choice of Richard shows how much confidence he had in Richard. This appointment was a major turning point in Richard's career. From now on, his major roles would be in Yorkshire, not the north-west.

While these appointments again appear to support the idea of Richard moving smoothly upwards, it seems likely that there was far more to Richard's feelings in 1403 than any list of appointments suggests. It's probable that a cacophony of contrasting thoughts and emotions careered through his mind. If we put ourselves in Richard's boots and think from the inside of his situation here are some possibilities:

- **alarm** for the safety of the king and prince.
- **anger and wonder** at the Percy family's ambition.
- **anxiety** that this could be the beginning of a long-running civil war
- **frustration** because Hotspur was making King Henry's multi-faceted task so much harder and his rebellion might encourage the king's enemies to increase their attacks
- **fear** for his own future and for his family should Henry be killed or deposed
- **relief** at the royal victory at Shrewsbury and renewed respect for Henry's military leadership.
- **pride and pleasure** in being appointed Sheriff of Yorkshire.

And then, most complex of all, there's Richard's reaction to Hotspur's actions and death. Richard had known Hotspur (who was ten years younger than Richard) since the 1380s. They'd campaigned together on the Scottish border and shared their enthusiasm for jousting at Carlisle and maybe elsewhere. Richard may well have admired Hotspur as a soldier and crusader and as a man of chivalric ideals – and yet, when Richard next rode through Micklegate Bar into York, Hotspur's head was staring sightlessly down from a traitor's spike. What thoughts passed through Richard's mind then? Shock? Anger? Regret? Sadness? Pity? Perhaps all of these and more.

These are only some of the possible ways that Richard may have reacted to the events of 1403 – and they may not be how Richard thought – but setting out these possibilities is the only way of attempting to see events as Sir Richard may have seen them. It had been only four years since he'd found himself imprisoned as one king was toppled by a rival – can that memory really have faded from his mind or did the events of 1403 prompt memories and thoughts he'd rather have not experienced, even flashbacks to moments of deepest anxiety and real fear?

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Now for the second of those pivotal moments. On 8th June 1405 the Archbishop of York, Richard Scrope, was executed in York and in public on King Henry's orders. Never before had a king ordered the execution of a bishop, let alone an archbishop. Henry's decision shocked many people – was Richard Redmayn one of those who was shocked, even angered, his faith in King Henry's judgement shaken or should we assume that, as someone in the king's service, he simply accepted Henry's decision as justified? The answers are, of course, unknowable but what's particularly intriguing is that this took place in Richard's 'backyard', just twenty miles from Harewood, and involving people he knew and worked with. He would have met Archbishop Scrope too, both at Richard II's court and in York.

Some essential context to begin – despite Hotspur's death at Shrewsbury, the threats to King Henry actually increased after 1403. French ships raided English towns, Welsh forces captured major castles in Wales and Glyndwr agreed a tripartite alliance with the earl of Northumberland and Edmund Mortimer to overthrow Henry and divide England and Wales between the three of them. Northumberland himself had been pardoned by the king after Shrewsbury but was humiliated and marginalised in the north, losing his chief responsibilities to his Neville rival, the earl of Westmoreland. Evidence of his continuing threat can be seen in a commission issued in April 1405 which ordered the earl of Westmorland, William Gascoigne (the Lord Chief Justice) and four other leading northern supporters of the king, including Richard Redmayn, 'to treat in the king's name with certain of the king's lieges lately in insurrection in the company of Henry, earl of Northumberland'.

Early in May 1405, Northumberland resurrected his campaign to depose Henry with an attack on Henry's ally, the earl of Westmoreland. The attack failed and Northumberland retreated north but that didn't end the disorder. Firstly, 7000 to 8000 gentry and their retainers (many but not all followers of Northumberland) gathered in northern Yorkshire. The reasons behind this protest were complex and they were speedily dispersed by a royal force led by Westmorland and the king's second son, John of Lancaster, but this kept the sense of danger to the king boiling – and then came news from York of another rising headed by Archbishop Scrope, and the young duke of Norfolk. Norfolk's reasons for rebellion were very personal (his father had quarrelled with King Henry and Norfolk himself had lost the prestigious role of Earl Marshal to Westmoreland) but why the Archbishop was involved is far less clear.

What exactly was happening in York has been much debated by historians. Around 8000 people, including many clergy, are said to have gathered on moorland outside the city by 27th May and to Henry this must have appeared part of the wider Percy threat, that Scrope in league with Northumberland. Historians, however, now suggest that Archbishop Scrope wasn't attempting to overthrow Henry but saw his protest as a 'loyal rebellion' drawing the king's attention to a series of grievances – excessive taxation, taxation of the church and the inability of crown and parliament to put an end to disorder. Scrope's actions must however have appeared decidedly dangerous to the king as he raced north, having been forced to abandon his campaign in Wales because of these events in the north.

Scrope and his followers spent three days camped on the moor outside York before they too were confronted by the royal army led by Westmoreland and John of Lancaster. Scrope was persuaded to disband his followers, expecting that Henry would listen to their grievances. Instead he was arrested and early on 8th June, on the king's orders, the archbishop and the duke of Norfolk were tried for treason, found guilty and executed outside the city walls. Scrope's death was witnessed by hundreds, maybe thousands, of people because York was teeming with people celebrating the feast day of St William of York by making a pilgrimage to the saint's tomb in the Minster. Many of those witnesses would have shared the view of one of the leading modern authorities on Richard Scrope, Dr Jeremy Goldberg, that the Archbishop's execution was 'judicial murder'.

We don't know if Richard Redmayn witnessed the execution but it wouldn't be surprising if he did. His term as Sheriff of Yorkshire had only ended six months earlier in December 1404 and he was now filling another senior role, that of the king's escheator in Yorkshire. As escheator, Richard was responsible for administering the lands of royal tenants who had died or taken part in rebellions. Richard was therefore very clearly one of the king's leading supporters in Yorkshire and may well have joined the King when he reached Pontefract on 3rd June or York on 6th, just before Scrope's rebellion.

Is it possible that Richard Redmayn was shocked by the king's decision? Given his support for King Henry, Richard may never have questioned Henry's decision to execute the Archbishop. He may have agreed that Scrope was caught up in Northumberland's rebellion and that Henry needed to be ruthless in punishing even the Archbishop in order to prevent further rebellions. Given the constant pressures on Henry, Richard could also have sympathised with the king that the Archbishop's actions were the final straw amidst so many threats.

However, both immediately and over the following months, Richard would have been aware of the shock and hostility felt by many people to Scrope's execution. In particular he knew that:

- His neighbour at Harewood, Chief Justice William Gascoigne, had refused to take part in the trial of the Archbishop, saying that the commission appointed by the king did not have the authority to try an archbishop.
- The Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Arundel, had ridden through the night to argue with the king against the execution. Arundel may have thought he'd won the argument, only to discover next morning that the king had ignored his pleas.
- There had been no armed resistance to the royal army by Scrope and his followers and no-one had been killed as a result of Scrope's actions.
- Henry had often been lenient, even to the earl of Northumberland. This, together with the king's piety, made the execution of Scrope even more unexpected.
- People were soon making pilgrimages to Scrope's grave. It was said that he had asked to die by five strokes of the sword, in memory of Christ's five wounds on the cross.
- Scrope was not convicted of treason in the parliament of 1406, the lords refusing to pass judgement on Scrope. Richard attended this parliament as knight of the shire for Yorkshire.

- Families who Richard knew were among those who commemorated the Archbishop, owning books of hours which contained prayers for the Archbishop.
- When King Henry fell ill, a belief grew that God was punishing the king with leprosy for ordering the Archbishop's execution.

Given all these issues, it wouldn't be surprising if Richard felt doubts, qualms or disappointment at Henry's decision to execute the Archbishop. He certainly did not change his allegiance but may still have doubted the rightness and wisdom of the decision to execute Scrope and his confidence in Henry's decision-making may have been shaken.

Whatever his thoughts, however Richard didn't have time for lengthy reflections. King Henry left York on the day of Scope's execution, heading for the north-east to deal with Northumberland and his rebellious supporters. A later payment to cover Richard's expenses tells us that he was with the king on this expedition throughout June and early July before returning to Yorkshire where he had his hands full as escheator, dealing with the lands forfeited by rebels in the county.

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As so often, I've felt that I've been skimming the surface when writing about political events but, even if I had included more detail in this chapter, I still wouldn't know for certain how Richard felt about the events I've discussed. However, now that I've set out the possibilities for how he thought and reacted, I feel I have lived up to Helen Parr's belief that '*We owe it to the people who had to live through [the past] to try to see it as they saw it*'.

One conclusion I have reached is that thinking of Richard's career in these years solely in terms of him 'gliding onwards and upwards' does not at all do justice to the complexity of his experiences. Richard did make progress but it was hard-won, and there must have been days, weeks or even longer periods of anxiety when he wondered whether the king had really taken the wisest decisions in the circumstances and whether Henry's hold on the crown was secure – and so feared for his own and his family's security. At these times, Richard's reactions may well have been suffused by echoes of his experiences in 1399 which cannot have been at all comfortable for him or Elizabeth.

And now for a break from politics! In the next chapter I want to continue my exploration of what Richard and Elizabeth talked about and what mattered to them but this time it's their family that's the focus of conversation, not that family problems make for easier conversations than politics!

How do I know?

Notes on my sources and reading for Chapter 9

In addition to the biographies, Calendars of Patent Rolls and other sources listed for earlier chapters I found the following helpful:

Chris Given-Wilson, *Henry IV*, 2016

A J Pollard, *Late Medieval England, 1399-1509*, 2000

P J P Goldberg (ed), *Richard Scrope, Archbishop, Rebel, Martyr*, 2007

Anne Curry, 'New Regime, New Army? Henry IV's Scottish Expedition of 1400', *English Historical Review,* CXXV, 2010.

The Soldier in Later Medieval England database:

https://www.medievalsoldier.org/ provided some of the details of the families' military records.