

# ARTICLES

## THE ACCESSION OF RICHARD III: two sources supporting the *Titulus Regius* and pre-contract crisis of June 1483.

### Part One: the English source

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While research into The Missing Princes Project continues apace, I have been revisiting the sources, particularly those concerning the project's key period of investigation 1483–6. This has identified two important contemporary sources supporting the validity of *Titulus Regius* and the pre-contract crisis of June 1483. Both are significant, as they pre-date Richard's parliament of 23 January 1484 and the ratification of his accession in the *Titulus Regius*. These important sources help to reveal the events of 1483 as they occurred, and provide a clearer picture about what people knew about them, both at home and abroad. As a result, we are further able to support the legitimacy of Richard's accession, and the efforts made for transparency.<sup>1</sup> The first source is English, dated 1483, which we discuss here. The second, somewhat surprisingly, is French, dated early January 1484, which we will consider in Part Two (in the next *Bulletin*).

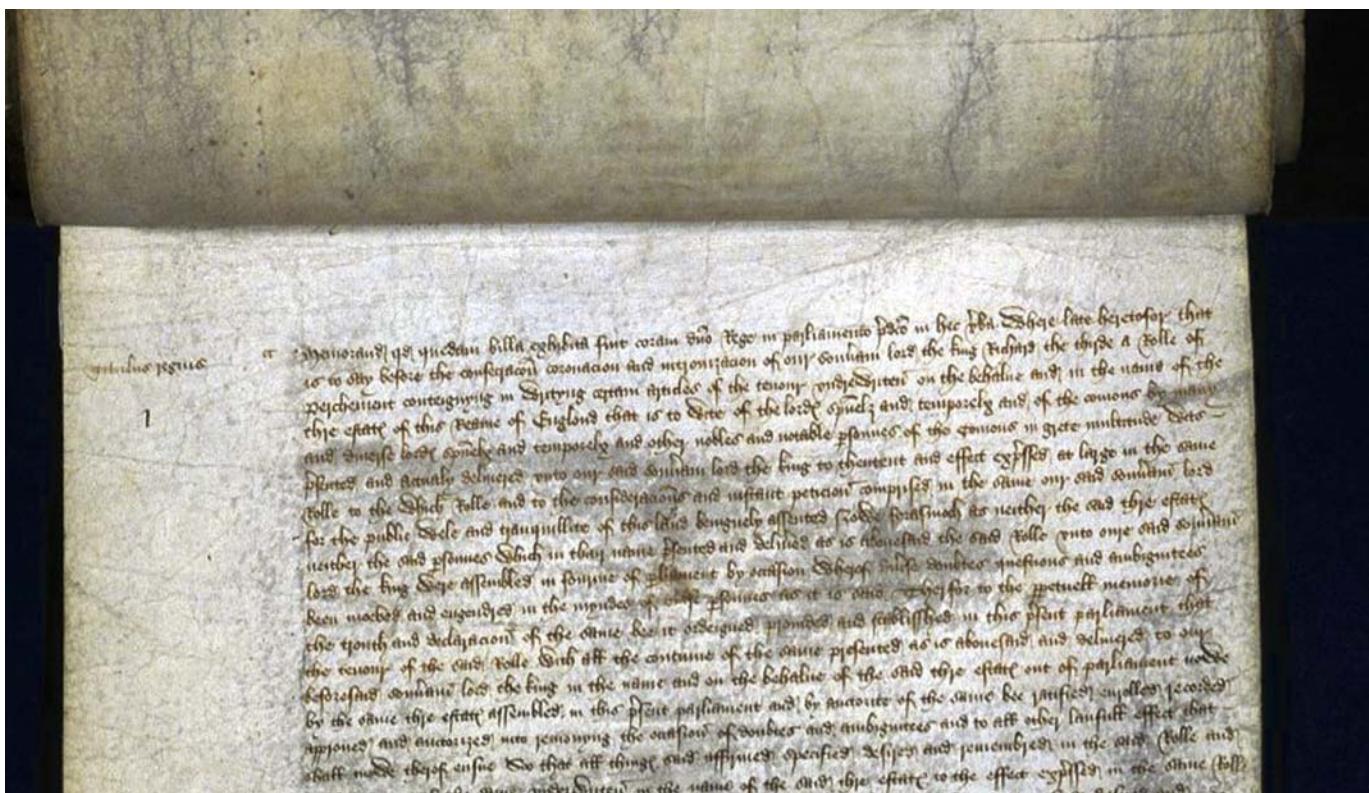
The English source, the Recognition, describes part of King Richard's coronation ceremony. The Recognition is the enquiry made by the archbishop of Canterbury, requesting the consent of the people for the king's coronation before he can vest himself for the Mass and begin the service.<sup>2</sup> The text of the Recognition, found in a contemporary manuscript drawn up in 1483<sup>3</sup> for Richard's coronation, includes the date of 6 July and the name 'Richard' in the acclamation.<sup>4</sup> It also includes marginal notes that may have been written by Richard, his Earl Marshal and/or his Chamberlain.<sup>5</sup> It survives in a collection of documents relating to the coronation of Richard III, in particular a manuscript known as the Little Device.<sup>6</sup> The Little Device was the plan or order of service for Richard's coronation,<sup>7</sup> later used by Henry VII at his own coronation on 30 October 1485.<sup>8</sup> It is therefore quite remarkable that this source has survived. Later printed versions were, as Sutton and Hammond note, not 'wholly accurate, omitting some lines, and some of the marginal notes'.<sup>9</sup> This later editing process seems to have gone further, with printed versions removing King Richard's Recognition (and acclamation), and in one instance only mentioning it in passing whilst placing it in the account of the coronation of his successor, Henry VII.<sup>10</sup> It is also important to note that Henry VII copied Richard's Recognition for his own coronation, and this was delivered by Peter Courtenay, bishop of Exeter.<sup>11</sup> Another intriguing element is the publication of a further manuscript relating to King Richard's coronation that was published by the Tudor chronicler (and publisher) Richard Grafton, in his *John Harding's Chronicle* of 1543.<sup>12</sup> It is not clear if this manuscript (now lost) contained Richard's Recognition or if Grafton decided not to

include it.<sup>13</sup> Grafton did, however, include Sir Robert Dymoke's challenge as the king's champion in Westminster Hall and the Heralds' *largesse*.<sup>14</sup> As a result later versions of Grafton's work and other Tudor chroniclers followed this format.<sup>15</sup>

The Little Device contains the text of the Recognition to be delivered at Richard's coronation on 6 July 1483 by England's senior, officiating cleric, Cardinal Thomas Bourchier, archbishop of Canterbury.<sup>16</sup> After outlining various specifics about the double coronation, the text of the manuscript goes on to say:

This done the Cardinall as Archbussishop of Canterbury shewinge the Kinge the people at the iiiij parties of the seide pulpitt shall say in this wise, Syrs her' (comyth Richard the third) is present Richard rightful and undoubted enheritor by the lawes of God and man to the corone and roiall dignite of Engeland with all thinges therunto annexid and apperteynyng, elected chosen and required by all the iij estatis of this same lande to take upon him the saide crowne and roiall dignyte, wher upon ye shall understand that this day is prefixed and appointyd by all the peeris of this lande for the consecracion enunccion and coronacion of the saide most excellent prince Richard. Woll ye syris at this tyme geve your willys and assentes to the same consecracion enunccion and coronacion, wherunto the people shall say with a great voise Kinge Richard, Kynge Richard, Kinge Richard ye ye ye soo be it etc., Kynge Richard Kinge Richard Kynge Richard.<sup>17</sup>

There are here a number of significant phrases. The first confirms that Richard is present and is the: 'rightful and undoubted enheritor by the lawes of God and man to the corone and roiall dignite'. This clearly expresses



*Titulus Regius (Royal Title); a statute of the 1484 Parliament which granted the title of king of England to Richard III.*  
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Richard's rightful claim to the throne (as heir of Richard, duke of York), and as the 'undoubted successor' he is awarded his position by the two powers in the land – Church and State. A further explanation of the king's accession is then offered in similarly unambiguous language: 'elected chosen and required by all the iij estatis of this same lande to take upon him the saide crowne and royall dignyte.' This not only verifies Richard's election as king (chosen by and required by), but also by *all* Three Estates of the Realm (my emphasis). It also publicly proclaims the sequence of events in Richard's election as king, enacted by right of the nobility, church and commons (the legal body known as the Three Estates, periodically assembled as a parliament at the command of the king). Moreover, in declaring: 'this day is prefixed and appointyd by all the peeris of this lande ...' it is made clear to all present that the peers have not only instigated this reign but have chosen and actively engaged it (see below). Finally, those present are asked to give their 'willys and assenttes' in 'great voise' in acclamation of the aforesaid statements.

It is important to note those present at the Recognition and acclamation. We know from surviving documents that Richard's coronation was well attended and included prominent representatives of the noble families and clergy<sup>18</sup> as well as key members of the commons.<sup>19</sup> We also know that the coronation banquet was for 3,000 guests.<sup>20</sup> Clearly not everyone could be named.<sup>21</sup> Today Westminster Abbey seats 2,000 but I've been unable to ascertain if all those who attended the banquet may have also attended the coronation ceremony.<sup>22</sup>

The presence of foreign ambassadors for the planned coronation of Edward V, and therefore that of Richard III, seems unlikely, and thus it seems that official foreign dignitaries did not witness the king's Recognition (see below). Taking a place of honour in the coronation procession had been the king's 'squires for his body', with two described by Sutton and Hammond as representing 'the Duchies of Normandy and Guienne', adding that 'Such representatives appeared in most of the subsequent coronations up to that of George III in 1760, but seem to have first appeared in that of Richard III.'<sup>23</sup> It is unclear whether they represented the French government in an official capacity.

It also seems that Richard followed royal protocol and wrote to England's neighbours informing them of his accession,<sup>24</sup> with English merchants in Bruges providing 'lavish entertainment in honour of the coronation' on 7 July.<sup>25</sup> By 21 July, Louis XI of France had responded, noting that he had seen Richard's letters, thanking him for his news and confirming his desire for friendship.<sup>26</sup> This initial communication with Louis seems sadly to be no longer extant, but Richard's communication of 20 August – 'my servant Blanc Sanglier, who is presently over with you'<sup>27</sup> – reveals that the king's herald had stayed a month or more at Louis's court. Richard's earlier letter of 18 August also reveals that Buckingham Herald had also been at Louis's court. Communications between Richard and Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain were lengthy and warm, with the Spanish queen quickly expressing her desire for a new and meaningful friendship.<sup>28</sup> This is significant. A monarch's reputation was not to be risked on the

international stage.<sup>29</sup> With Galfridus (Geoffrey) de Sasiola, the Spanish ambassador, accompanying Richard on his Royal Progress,<sup>30</sup> the Spanish monarchs would have been well versed in what their emissary knew.

Such positivity is further supported by the account of Domenico Mancini, who was in London during the pre-contract crisis and coronation. Although relatively hostile to Richard, Mancini confirms:<sup>31</sup>

The only survivor of the royal stock was Richard, Duke of Gloucester who was legally entitled to the crown, and could bear his responsibilities thanks to his proficiency. His previous career and blameless morals would be a sure guarantee of his good government. Although he would refuse such a burden, he might yet change his mind if he were asked by the peers.

He adds:

All important matters are deliberated, and decrees made law by these three orders, whom they call the three estates. This being accomplished a date was fixed for the coronation:

Mancini's account follows the Recognition. He makes it clear that Richard was 'legally entitled to the crown' but would refuse the 'burden' unless 'asked by *the* peers' (my emphasis). Moreover, he confirms the legality of Richard's accession by 'deliberation' of the Three Estates and their 'decrees made law'.

Mancini also confirms the basis of Richard's royal title, stating that Edward V was 'illegitimate, because his father King Edward [IV] on marrying Elizabeth was legally contracted to another wife'.

In coronation documents from the time of Richard II, the Recognition is outlined in general terms only.<sup>32</sup> Whether this is suggestive of either a recognised or open format I've been unable to discover, with no earlier Recognition texts to analyse as a comparator. As we stand, it would seem that Richard's Recognition was not only allowed to survive but was subsequently used by Henry VII – not, ostensibly, the act of someone who believed his predecessor had obtained the throne through illegal or fraudulent means. Moreover, and significantly, the accession bill presented by Henry VII to his Parliament of November 1485, unlike that of Richard III, bears no resemblance to the Recognition.<sup>33</sup> In it, Henry simply tells Parliament he is king, because he is king.<sup>34</sup>

It must be noted that the Recognition element of a coronation was (and still is) considered a formality. In earlier records this is made clear in its perfunctory description.<sup>35</sup> However, it is in King Richard's detailed Recognition that its importance is gleaned.

It is therefore the present writer's conclusion that King Richard's Recognition was of great personal importance to him and to the realm. In it the process that led to his acceptance of the throne is clearly



The Coronation Chair, also known as St Edward's Chair or King Edward's Chair, is an ancient wooden chair on which King Richard III would have sat when he was crowned on 6 July 1483. It was commissioned in 1296 by King Edward I to contain the coronation stone of Scotland – known as the Stone of Destiny – which had been captured from the Scots who kept it at Scone Abbey. The stone was returned to Scotland on St Andrew's Day in 1996 and is now kept at Edinburgh Castle.

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expressed. It is significant that no contemporary English source appears outraged by what they had heard or witnessed,<sup>36</sup> and that transparency seems to have been a key objective. This is further supported by the French source we will discuss in Part Two.

## Notes and references

1. Sutton, Anne F., 'Richard III's "tytelle and right": a new discovery', *Richard III: crown and people* (1983), pp 57–63, and 'Richard III's "tytelle and right": correspondence', pp 64–5. First published in *The Ricardian*, vol. 4, no. 57 (June 1977) and subsequent note, no. 59 (Dec. 1977), p. 28.
2. Ullmann, Walter (ed.), *Liber Regie Capelle* (London, 1961),

- Henry Bradshaw Society Vol. XCII, pp 40–1. Also pp 24–38 for the history of the Recognition in coronation ceremonies in England and France. French kings removed the Recognition element from their coronation ceremonies altogether and ‘certainly from the ordo of Rheims (c.1270) onwards’, see p. 34.
3. Sutton, A. F. and Hammond, P. W. (eds.), *The Coronation of Richard III: the extant documents* (1983), p. 204, fn.19. BL: Add. Ms.18669. For dating see pp 204, 212, etc.
  4. Sutton and Hammond, *Coronation*, p. 204. The acclamation comes at the end of the Recognition, when the people (congregation) signify their loud and enthusiastic approval for the coronation.
  5. Sutton and Hammond, *Coronation*, pp 212, 224 fn.120.
  6. Sutton and Hammond, *Coronation*, pp 204 fn. 19, 212. BL: Add. Ms.18669. ‘The manuscript was bought by the British Museum in 1851, from the Earl of Denbigh.’
  7. Sutton and Hammond, *Coronation*, pp 4, 204, 207.
  8. Sutton and Hammond, *Coronation*. This is evidenced by surviving deletions and marginal notes for adjustments to key roles for Henry’s supporters. For example, the key coronation role of the bishops of Bath and Wells and Durham as the two supporters of the king was amended to the bishops of Exeter and Ely for the coronation of Henry VII, see p. 219, fn. 72.
  9. Sutton and Hammond, *Coronation*, p. 204.
  10. Sutton and Hammond, *Coronation*, p. 204, fn.23. See Legg, L. G. Wickham, *English Coronation Records* (Westminster, 1901), ‘Coronation of Richard III’, Chapter XVIII, p. 196, for removal from publication of the king’s recognition speech. Also ‘Little Device for the Coronation of Henry VII’, Chapter XX, see p. 219, for mention of King Richard’s recognition speech in the section describing the coronation of Henry VII. Legg refers only to its opening and closing lines: ‘Sirs, here present is Richard, rightful and undoubted inheritor to the crown.’ And ‘Yea, yea, yea, so be it; King Richard, King Richard, King Richard.’ Also pp 228–9 for Bourchier’s entire recognition speech (for King Richard) but published in full by Legg in the section for the coronation of Henry VII.
  11. Sutton and Hammond, *Coronation*, p. 218, fn. 67. In a margin note is also written ‘Assop’ in another hand for the bishop of St Asaph (Richard Redman). It is not clear which coronation this referred to, although a later insertion for Henry VII’s coronation suggests Asaph may have been considered to carry the patten (as he had done for Richard) but his name was deleted, see p. 219, fn. 74, also p. 217, fn. 45. A key supporter of Richard III, it is unlikely that the bishop took part in the coronation of Henry VII. Redman was not summoned to Henry’s first parliament in the November but received a pardon from him on 22 February 1486. See *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Richard K. Rose, accessed 3 January 2019.
  12. Sutton and Hammond, *Coronation*, pp 257, fn. 24, and 266–7. See also Grafton, Richard, *Harding’s Chronicle*, 1543.
  13. Grafton referred to Richard’s accession as a ‘mockish election’ so it is possible that he decided not to publish the Recognition. See *Grafton’s Chronicle* (London, 1809), Second Volume, p. 113.
  14. This also included the Herald’s *largesse*. See *Harding’s Chronicle*, full text as follows: ‘... sir Robert Democke the kynges champion, making a proclamacion, that whosoeuer woulde saye that kyng Richarde was not lawfullye kyng, he woulde fighte with hym at the vteraunce, and threwe downe his gauntlet, & all the hall cried Kyng Richard. And so he did in thre partes of the halle ...’ (he departed) ‘... After that the heraldes cryed a largesse thryse in the halle, & so went vp to their staige.’
  15. Grafton, *Harding’s Chronicle*, 1543, Henry Ellis (ed.) 1812 edn, pp 517–518; 1809 edn (1189–1558 inclusive), Second Volume, pp 115–16; *Hall’s Chronicle*, 1548, Ellis 1809, pp 375–6; Holinshed’s *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland*, 1577 augmented to 1586, 1808 edn, Vol. III, pp 399–400. Robert Fabyan in *The Great Chronicle of London*, Thomas, A. H. and Thornley, I. D. (eds) (1938), p. 233, and *The Chronicles of England and France In Two Parts*, 1516, Ellis, H. (ed.) (1811), p. 670, does not mention the coronation or the Challenge in Westminster Hall and Herald’s *largesse* (see above). See also Sutton and Hammond, *Coronation*, pp 260, 277.
  16. Sutton and Hammond, *Coronation*, p. 218. Asaph may have been chosen for the acclamation. Also see note 11 above.
  17. Sutton and Hammond, *Coronation*, pp 218–19.
  18. Sutton and Hammond, *Coronation*, pp 20–21, fn. 68. Three bishops – Lionel Woodville, bishop of Salisbury, John Morton, bishop of Ely and Thomas Rotherham, archbishop of York, did not attend King Richard’s coronation. Salisbury was in sanctuary in Westminster following the failed Woodville coup of April–May and Ely had been arrested on 13 June for his part in the Hastings’ plot along with York. Both were subsequently sent separately as prisoners to Wales; see Pronay and Cox (eds), *The Crowland Chronicle Continuations* (1986), p. 159.
  19. Sutton and Hammond, *Coronation*, pp 214, fn. 11, for example, for the Mayor of London. This was Sir Edmund Shaa.
  20. Sutton and Hammond, *Coronation*, p. 285.
  21. Sutton and Hammond, *Coronation*, p. 280, fn. 130. Grafton’s list concludes with: ‘And at the other bords sat dyvers noble and worshipfull personages.’
  22. [www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/royal-wedding/8154425/Westminster-Abbey-a-royal-wedding-venue-steeped-in-history.html](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/royal-wedding/8154425/Westminster-Abbey-a-royal-wedding-venue-steeped-in-history.html) [accessed 3 January 2019]. In 1953, with special platforms erected, the abbey seated 8,200 for the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II.
  23. Sutton and Hammond, *Coronation*, p. 213, fn. 10. Twining, E. F., *European Regalia* (London, 1967).
  24. Horrox R. and Hammond, P. W. (eds.), *British Library Harleian Manuscript 433* (1983), Vol. 3, pp 25–8, 35–8, 47–51; for early communications in 1483: Ireland and a letter concerning Richard’s son and heir as Lieutenant of Ireland (19 July) conveyed by William Lacy, pp 36–8; Philip, duke of Burgundy (30 July) pp 26–8; a response from James III of Scotland, from Edinburgh (9 September) pp 47–8. Also pp 52–3 for safe-conducts for 11 of King James’s ambassadors with ‘sixty persons from the kingdom of Scotland’.
  25. Armstrong, C. A. J. (ed.), *De Occupatione Regni Anglie per*

- Ricardum Tercium* (1969), p.134, fn. 112. Armstrong notes that the English merchants couldn't celebrate King Richard's coronation on 6 July as Philip the Fair was paying a state visit to Bruges that day.
26. Horrox and Hammond, *Harleian* 433, Vol. 3, p. 26. Louis says: 'Dear Cousin, I have seen the letters that your white boar messenger had for me and I thank you for the news that you gave me and if I can be of any service to you I would do it with very good heart because I very much want to have your friendship. And I commend you to God (farewell), my Cousin, written at Montilz Les Tours the 21st day of July.' My thanks to Clive Atkinson for the French translation.
27. My thanks to Marie Barnfield for her translation of both letters. 'I have written again to my servant Blanc Sanglier, who is presently over with you'. Richard's earlier reply to Louis of 18 August reveals that Louis had sent his letter to Richard via Buckingham Herald, 'My Lord Cousin, I have seen the letters that you sent me by Buckingham Herald', and that Richard's letter to Louis of 20 August shows that Blanc Sanglier was still at Louis's court. For both letters see *Harleian* 433, Vol. 3, p. 28.
28. Horrox and Hammond, *Harleian* 433, Vol. 3, pp 23–6.
29. Horrox and Hammond, *Harleian* 433, Vol. 3, p. 24. Sasiola communicated Queen Isabella's antipathy to Edward IV for 'his refusing of here (sic)' 'and taking to his wif a wedowe of England'. It seems Sasiola had no issue in speaking ill of Edward IV's marriage, even within the general dictates of diplomatic language. Elizabeth Woodville is not referred to as King Edward's queen.
30. Horrox and Hammond, *Harleian* 433, Vol. 3, p. 24. Sasiola had joined the royal party on 8 August at Warwick, and was later knighted in York by Richard on 8 September when his son was invested prince of Wales (for the knighting see Horrox and Hammond, *Harleian* 433, Vol. 1, p. 2).
31. For all the quotes here, see Armstrong, *De Occupatione*, p. 97.
32. Ullmann, Walter (ed.). *Liber Regie Capelle* (London, 1961), Henry Bradshaw Society Vol: XCII, pp 80–1. My thanks to Dr Betty Knott for her Latin translation of 06.01.19: 'When he (the king) has been led through the middle of the choir and stationed on the dais in his appointed place, either the metropolitan or the bishop who is to crown the king shall address the people from the four sides of the dais, to ascertain their will and consent concerning the consecration of the said prince, the king meantime standing in his place and turning to the four sides of the said dais while the priest addresses the people, and when they according to custom give their consent and cry out with one voice 'So be it, so be it' and 'Long live the king', gladly proclaiming the name of the said king, then the choir shall sing ... etc.'. See also: Legg, L. G. Wickham (ed.), *English Coronation Records* (1901), Chapter XIII, Liber Regalis, p. 85., and Sutton and Hammond, *Coronation*, p. 202. Also: Burrows, Daron, 'The Anglo-Norman Coronation Order of Edward II' (2016), *Medium Aevum*, Vol. LXXXV, No. 2, pp 278–313. See pp 289, 25–40. My thanks to Clive Atkinson for the translation.
33. 'Henry VII: November 1485, Part 1', in *Parliament Rolls of Medieval England*, ed. Chris Given-Wilson, Paul Brand, Seymour Phillips, Mark Ormrod, Geoffrey Martin, Anne Curry and Rosemary Horrox (Woodbridge, 2005), British History Online, www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/parliament-rolls-medieval/november-1485-pt-1 [accessed 10 January 2019]. 'For the pleasure of Almighty God, the wealth, prosperity and security of this realm of England, the particular comfort of all the king's subjects, and to avoid all ambiguities and questions, be it ordained, decreed and enacted, by authority of this present parliament, that the inheritance of the crowns of the realms of England and of France, with all the pre-eminence and royal dignity pertaining to them, and all other lordships belonging to the king overseas with the appurtenances due or pertaining to them in any way, be, rest, remain and abide in the most royal person of our present sovereign lord King Henry VII, and in the lawfully begotten heirs of his body, and in no one else, thus to endure forever by God's grace'.
34. Chrmes, S. B., *Henry VII* (London, 1972), p. 62. Henry's acclaimed biographer describes the bill of title as 'a masterpiece of terse assertion which, as a statement of the fait accompli, could scarcely have been bettered.'
35. As above, fn. 32. Also Twinning, E. F., *The English Coronation Ceremony* (London, 1937), pp 90–1. For the double coronation of George VI and Queen Consort Elizabeth: 'the king is presented to the east and is said Garter Principal King at Arms in a loud voice: 'Sirs, I here present unto you King \_\_\_\_, the undoubted King of this Realm: Wherefore all you are come to this day to do your homage and service, are you willing to do the same?' The people signify their willingness and joy by loud and repeated acclamations of 'God save King \_\_\_\_!' The Archbishop of Canterbury and Herald then proceeds to do the same on each side. Also, *The Coronation of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II* (King George's Jubilee Trust, 1953), p. 31.
36. Davis, Norman, *The Paston Letters and Papers of the Fifteenth Century*, Part II, (OUP, 2004). Carpenter, Christine, *Kingsford's Stonor Letters and Papers 1290–1483*, (CUP, 1996). Also Thomas Langton, bishop of St Davids' famous letter of September 1483 to William Selling, the prior of Christ Church in Canterbury. Sir William Stonor was present at King Richard's coronation; see Sutton and Hammond, *Coronation*, pp 272. It is probably certain that Thomas Langton (bishop-elect of St Davids, appointed 4 July 1483) was also present, see p. 46. It is also believed that Langton participated in the procession carrying the eagle ampulla on the Vigil before the coronation. If Sir George Browne's cryptic and undated letter to John Paston III was written during Richard's reign then it probably refers to Browne's (and Paston's) secret support of the October rebellion. Paston's actions tend to suggest Lancastrian/Oxford sympathies and/or attachments. For the letter, see Carpenter, p. 443. 'Loyalty Always. By your honourable G. Browne, Knight. It shall never come out for [from?] me.' My thanks to Wendy Johnson for the transcription, 06.01.19.