

Not so fast, Leicester Cathedral - Richard III was a Catholic



If it is established that the remains recently disinterred from a Leicester car park are indeed those of the last Plantagenet king, then a final resting-place should be in a Catholic church.

Given that Richard was first buried at the church of the Greyfriars in Leicester it would make perfect sense to place his tomb in the nearest Franciscan friary. This turns out to be the Franciscan parish of Our Lady and St Edward in Nottingham, a small modern friary with a brick church built in the 1950s. It's the last place one might expect to find a royal tomb but then, maybe that's a good reason for Richard to be there.

Another thought is Westminster Cathedral, which has plenty of cardinals' tombs, but no monarchs. Richard's tomb would be a great tourist attraction and it would be conveniently close to Westminster Abbey - and the final resting-place of the man who deposed him, Henry Tudor, who became Henry VII.

History has been far kinder to Henry than Richard, proving the maxim that it is indeed the victors who determine the record. Henry's claim to the throne was much weaker, something he shrewdly addressed by marrying Elizabeth of York.

Had Richard prevailed at the Battle of Bosworth Field, there would have been no Henry VII, therefore no Henry VIII and no Reformation. England today might still be a Catholic country.

There is some evidence of Richard's piety. It is said that he endowed a college for 100 priests in York, though he did not live to complete the project. He was also a generous benefactor of York Minster.

Leicester Cathedral is laying claim to be the site for Richard's tomb since the Greyfriars' church falls within its parish. Leicester's Dean, the Very Revd Vivienne Faull, also points out that it has the only cathedral memorial to King Richard.

On the cathedral website, she states that if the identity of the remains is confirmed 'Leicester Cathedral will continue to work with the Royal Household, and with the Richard III Society, to ensure that his remains are treated with dignity and respect and are reburied with the appropriate rites and ceremonies of the Church.'

The 'appropriate' rites would surely be a Catholic funeral with a full Requiem Mass, and only a Catholic church will do for Richard's tomb.

Elena Curti is the deputy editor of The Tablet.

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