

Two 15th Century Chester Herald's

BY J. R. S. WHITING

(Part III)

Numbers in brackets refer to references listed at the end of the article

Thomas Whiting's account of the reburial of Richard, Duke of York, in 1476 (he had been killed at the battle of Wakefield, 1460), is to be found in French in Harleian MS 48, f78-81 of which this is a translation:—

"Here follows the form and manner of the burial of the most high and mighty and most excellent prince Richard Duke of York, the father of the king our sovereign lord Edward IV, who was brought down from the said town of Pontefract from the house of the Friars Minors on the 24th day of July in the year of grace MCCCCCL (he is wrong; it was 1476 in fact) and in the sixteenth year of the reign of King Edward IV.

Firstly he was brought up and put in the choir of the church within a richly furnished hearse. He was on top of the bier clothed as Lord Protector with his face uncovered and his hands joined, wearing a mantle of cloth lined with ermine fur. On his head was a cap of maintenance of purple ermine. Behind him a white angel held a crown of gold behind his head. Above and below him there was a rich cover of gold and below that a white cross on satin. The said hearse was enriched with large and small candles, with banners and flags, standards and pennants and escutcheons. When

it was brought up there were there the bishop of Durham, the bishop of Hereford, the bishop of Chester, the bishop of Bangor, and then other men of religion; that is to say, abbots, priors, choirs and many others. The chapel of the King our sovereign lord was there. They remained there until the time that the said body was placed in the earth, and the temporal lords kept guard over the said body until they reached that place, clad in the clothes of legates: firstly my lord of Gloucester, my lord of Northumberland, Lord Stanley, Lord Greystock, my Lord of Wells, Lord Mountjoy, and they stayed by the hearse at the Dirige, (27) and at the requiem mass, and it was the said duke (of Gloucester) who offered the alms of the mass. The names of the King-at-arms, heralds, and pursuivants were there; March King-at-arms, Norroy King-at-arms, Ireland King-at-arms, Windsor herald, Falcon herald, Chester herald, Segundon (?) herald, Hereford herald, Guines pursuivant, Comfort pursuivant, . . . (?) pursuivant, Wales pursuivant, and the said officers of arms stood at each corner of the hearse, clad in their coats of arms and each one clothed in mourning. And there were 23(?) poor men each of whom carried a burning torch in

his hand up to the aforementioned place where the body lay. Each poor man had twelve pence for himself and twenty shillings at his departure.

Item on the 25th day of the month the body was moved as far as the town of Doncaster and all the possessions of the countryside round about were used. Each priest who sang mass had twelve pence and each clerk fourpence, and to every man of those who came, both poor and rich a penny, with twopence for every pregnant woman. Each parish was given two torches and sufficient hand labour according to the needs of the church there, and to those who rang the bells, fourpence without mentioning the greater alms which were given to the said churches where the body rested: that is to say, from five to six marks as well as the trappings from the hearse.

Item when the body left Pontefract it was placed on a richly covered funeral cart with the face exposed and the hands joined exactly as before within the hearse. The aforesaid lords continued to keep guard over the body and officers of arms were at each corner of the carriage having six fine horses with trappings all in black and charged with escutcheons of the arms of England and France. There was also a knight mounted on a charger holding a banner of the complete arms and dressed in mourning. There the body received its Dirige and requiem mass.

Item on the 26th day of the month the body was removed to Blyth and the procession was

received by all the people of the countryside as before. Alms continued to be given to all those who came and again there was a new hearse which remained at the place, with all its furnishings. There the body received its Dirige and mass.

Here follow the names of the banners and standards: the banner of the Trinity, the banner of Our Lady, the banner of St. George, the banner of St. Edmund, the banner of St. Edward, the banner of the whole arms. The first standard had a chief argent, the second a white lion, the third was of a falcon within a . . . seiné of the same, the fourth was of a white rose seiné with small roses, and each one had its appropriate legend. In addition there were five great chandeliers on the hearse with a great number of candles to each chandelier. These chandeliers were on the four corners of the hearse and there was one in the middle. Six banners and flags and small pennants with four standards were arranged similarly. These decorations were used with each hearse in the places where the body rested.

Item on the 26th day of the month the body was removed from Blyth to Tuxford Aclay and it was received there as before. There the body had its Dirige and requiem mass.

Item on the 27th day of the month the body was moved from Tuxford to Grantham and there the town received it all dressed in black. All the substantial men of the neighbourhood came to meet it as before and again there were alms for all those who came.