

Max Keen - King Richard III.

92 members of the History group enjoyed a detailed, and sometimes very graphic account, of the life of King Richard III as presented by local Historian Max Keen. His PowerPoint presentation was given under the title of: **King Richard III: Hero? Murderer? Loyal Brother? England's Greatest King (that never was?).**



Wearing full armour, including a helmet and breastplate, and carrying authentic contemporary weapons, such as the war hammer and sword, Max explained in his introduction the weaknesses and strengths of his protective covering and arms.

This was followed by a detailed and complicated family tree and a full background to King Richard III's claim to the throne, which included the complex setting and meticulous explanation of the Wars of the Roses. This was in essence a mighty family feud which had extensive repercussions.



Max incorporated into his talk some local history, which had national and political significance, such as the 200 spearmen from Bewdley who saved King Edward IV at the Battle of Tewkesbury and routed the Lancastrians. As a result of their brave contribution, the King granted the town of Bewdley a coat-of-arms containing the white rose of York and a sword.

Another local connection was the nearby town of Ludlow - the 'Princes in the Tower', King Edward V and his younger brother, Richard, Duke of York (aged 12 and 10) were taken from Ludlow Castle to the Tower of London and were soon after to disappear from public view. History (and Shakespeare) has unkindly pointed the finger of suspicion towards King Richard III as the source of their murder, but Max was very keen to counter this accusation.



To help the group gain an understanding of the significant battles in which King Richard III was involved, charts and battle plans of the Battles of Tewkesbury and Bosworth were displayed. This helped the audience to appreciate the movements of troops on both sides of the battle.

The gory details of the death of King Richard III were backed up by photos of his skeleton as found in Leicestershire recently. Max explained the cause of death and demonstrated with his armour how this could have been possible.

Max gave convincing arguments for Richard III not being as evil as made out in Shakespeare, and in fact being a wise and compassionate ruler who encouraged the arts and printing.

The presentation was delivered with wry humour, a good deal of laughter and some audience participation. It was evident that there had been a huge amount of research into the subject but it was delivered simply and clearly, which the audience plainly appreciated.

Heidy Hague.