

Tumbledown Dick - or Richard IV?: The Story Behind the Coin

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Between 1649 and 1660, coins were struck in the name of the Commonwealth of England. During this period until his death in 1658, the Head of State was Oliver Cromwell. However, on his death his son, Richard, as-



A shilling struck under Richard Cromwell

sumed the role of Lord Protector and this was marked by a new impress mark on the coinage, in the form of an anchor, which replaced the sun symbol used by Oliver. Anyone seeking to form a complete set of coins of English rulers should perhaps consider including a Commonwealth coin with each

mintmark; History has had much to say of Oliver Cromwell, but what of his son Richard?

Early Life: Richard Cromwell, third son of Oliver Cromwell was born at Huntingdon on 4 October 1626 and together with his three brothers was educated at Felsted Public School in Essex. Of his sisters (Mary) later became Lady Fauconberg.; another sister (Frances) also became a member of the aristocracy by marrying Lord Robert Richard whose grandfather was a dear and close friend of the Protector's. In 1649, Richard married Dorothy Major and had nine children during the next decade but sadly only five survived to adulthood. One of his daughters (Anne) was buried at St George the Martyr Church near Russell Square in London and whose grave I discovered by accident when working at a nearby location.

Another daughter was Elizabeth who was eventually involved in a dispute with her father about the ownership of the family home at Hursley House in Hampshire along with her sister Anne and Anne's husband, Dr. Gibson. Little is known about his other children except Oliver who is mentioned in the dispute. It is recorded that Richard lived in harmony with his neighbours and tenants; unlike the previous owner of Hursley (his father-in-law - Richard Major), he appears to have been fair-minded and considerate.

Known Accomplishments: He received legal education at Lincoln's Inn which led to his appointment as Justice of the Peace in Hampshire. As a Member of Parliament and Justice of the Peace from 1655, he was charged

with the organisation of relief for residents of Worthing after a serious fire. As an MP, Richard had to deal with scores of petitions; no doubt some of these were merely opportunists; but there were many genuine cases and Richard is recorded as helpful and sympathetic. He is also recorded as Chancellor of the University of Oxford from 1657 until 1660 and was also a member of the Earl of Essex Lifeguards. Randall Bingley (late curator of Thurrock Museum) mentioned that one of his ancestors was a Cornet in Richard Cromwell's army. A Cornet was the lowest rank of commissioned cavalry officers



Richard Cromwell

Richard as Lord Protector: After the death of Oliver, on 3 September 1658, Richard (his oldest surviving son) was the second ruling Lord Protector of England, Scotland and Ireland, serving for just under nine months, from 3 September until 25 May 1659. At Oliver's funeral, it was arranged that his soldiers were dressed in new red uniforms trimmed in black with black buttons and the ensigns wrapped in the design of cypress leaves showing respect for their leader. At that time Richard was at the centre of a storm between Parliament and the Army, and there were problems with the financial deficit of the regime; a debt of £2 million, no doubt not helped by Oliver's earlier confrontation with the Dutch. It seems that his position became untenable and he eventually resigned on 25 May 1659 and in July, Parliament was obliged to officially grant Richard 6 months' immunity from arrest. On 29 May 1660, (his 30th birthday) King Charles II returned to England at the invitation of General Monke, a top ranking officer in Oliver's New Model Army. The ship bringing him to England was actually the famous "Naseby", but it was swiftly re-christened "Royal Charles". Winston Churchill, in his book, *The Island Race*, says "Leading figures of the Parliamentary party, peers and commoners, high officers under the republic or Cromwell, made ready shift to sit upon the tribunals which slaughtered the regicides; and it is upon these that history may justly cast whatever odium belongs to these melancholy but limited reprisals."

In Exile: After his fall from power, Richard was given the unflattering nicknames of Tumbledown Dick and Queen Dick by Royalists. However, the Council of Officers (part of the Long Parliament) proposed that £10,000 per annum should be settled on the retired Protector for life in addition to the

settlement of debts and an advancement of £2,000 indicating “all was forgiven”. It seems that Richard was fitted for neither government nor military command and retired to the Continent in 1660 under the pseudonym of John Clarke. In later life he used other surnames. It is known that he went to France in an attempt to escape debtors and also he believed that Charles II sought retribution, but no surviving instructions for his arrest exist. He remained there until 1668 living at the Paris house of Monsieur Etienne Margas. There is little known about this gentleman; but he may have been a prosperous merchant with some English trading contacts and possibly may have been acquainted with Richard since the latter had served on the Trade Commission during his father’s Protectorate. Until at least 1666, money to support Richard in exile was provided by his wife (Dorothy) through John Claypole, his son-in-law. The Fauconbergs (Richard’s sister and her husband) provided further financial instance to Richard. As Richard’s name appeared on a list in March 1666 of fourteen people to be returned to England, it is assumed that some official action was contemplated. In 1671, there was a false tip-off that Richard was either in London or at ‘Husley’, but all that was found was a letter addressed to Monsieur Margas requesting that funds were to be directed to Richard Cromwell via a merchant in Nicholas Lane, London. A story goes, that on the rumour of a possible war between England and France, Richard had thought it prudent to remove to some neutral country, and so fixed on Geneva. Going by way of Bordeaux and the Languedoc, he finally reached Pezanas, a town belonging to the Prince of Condi, who was Governor of Languedoc. After staying there for some time, he met an acquaintance who informed him it was the custom for all strangers, and particularly Englishmen, to pay the Prince their respects as Governor. The friend offered to introduce him to the Prince without disclosing his name for safety reasons, and was received graciously. It is said that the Prince attempted to discuss English affairs. Among other things he referred to Oliver as a “traitor and a villain, who nevertheless was a brave fellow who had great courage, great parts and was worthy to command”. But Richard, he described, as a “coxcomb, coquin, poltroon, and surely the basest fellow alive.” “What is become of that fool?” he asked. “How was it possible he could be such a sot?” Richard told him that he had been betrayed by those whom he most trusted and who had been most accepted by his father! He left the town the next morning to avoid his identity being discovered, and the Prince of Condi learned of this two days later! Before his return to England, he learned his wife had died in 1676 leaving the Hursley estate to Richard and their son Oliver. Richard returned to England in 1681, after 20 years of exile.

Return to England: In 1681, on his return, he found that the country was dissatisfied. The “Merry Monarch” (Charles II) of the 1660’s had become a cynical and skilful political manipulator. He further discovered that of his immediate family, Frances Rich and Mary Fauconberg were still living as well as Elizabeth and Anne. It is recorded that he then spent many years living with Thomas and Rachel Pengelly and remained with them for the rest of his long life. Rachel in her diary about Richard’s activities noted that he occasionally smoked a pipe, that in 1683 he began to use spectacles for reading and he enjoyed dressing well, as befitted a gentleman. Richard enjoyed sherry, brandy and all kinds of wine. He also enjoyed a cup of tea, and developed a liking for the new beverage that was sweeping England, coffee. Finally, Richard had dogs and took up hunting again, which he enjoyed well into his eighties. Richard acquired a manservant - Robert Deagle or Diggle, who remained with him to the day he died. On account of his dark complexion Deagle was nicknamed “Black Robert”. He initially worked for the Pengellys, but was then offered a place with Richard’s son Oliver. For unknown reasons, this arrangement never took place, and Richard himself employed Deagle. On a trip to Winchester, Charles II (when he learned that Richard was nearby visiting Hursley) expressed a wish to meet him. However, there is no evidence to confirm that it occurred.

Dispute: Richard’s son Oliver and his cousin Francis were known to be gamblers and heavy drinkers. It was found that Oliver had been using Hursley as security for borrowing money. When Elizabeth discovered this, she told her sister Anne and Anne’s husband, Dr Gibson. After Oliver died in 1705, there followed many years of legal wrangles and Anne and Dr Gibson tried unsuccessfully to take control of Hursley. Eventually, the magistrate, Richard Sparkes, found in Richard Cromwell’s favour and he took possession in April 1707.

Last days: Richard was not well enough to visit his sister, Lady Fauconberg, before he died in 1712 and is buried in the chancel of Hursley Parish Church along with other family members. This writer was fortunate enough to visit Hursley Church some years ago and saw the plaque, placed by the Cromwell Association saying “Richard Cromwell Lord Protector of These Islands 1658—1660”. Also, in the churchyard, was a memorial to Edward Reynell and his wife, Mary, who died 1698 and 1699 respectively, and for many years it was a belief in the village that Reynell was the executioner of Charles I, but history records the name as being Brandon.

Other Relevant Information: During his 85 years of life, he saw five different monarchs, from Charles I to Queen Anne. Richard apparently watched the coronation of Queen Anne in some old farmer-type clothes and said to a nearby gentleman “I once sat on that throne”. The man naturally must have thought that he (Richard) was not quite the ‘shilling’!

There are no portraits of Richard on coins, but the Commonwealth mintmark of an anchor is very collectable. The anchor appears on all three gold denominations and on the silver half-crown, shilling and sixpence. During the demolition of the Great Lodge of Hursley House around 1720, the die of the seal of the Commonwealth was found in a crevice in a wall. It is believed that Richard Cromwell took this die from Parliament for his own security; regrettably, the die has since been lost. Richard enjoyed bowling, and for years after his death, the locals of Hursley took out the old bowls, and played on the Village Green. Hursley House is now used as offices by the I.B.M. Corporation.

It is generally accepted that he died in the arms of his faithful manservant ‘Black Robert’, in the home of the Pengelly family in Cheshunt. His final words were reportedly “live in love,” spoken to his daughters just before he breathed his last. He was buried in Hursley Church.



The tomb of Richard Cromwell

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