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## The Death and Burial of Bridget, Daughter of Edward IV: A Revised Chronology

MARGARET M. CONDON

There are two starting points<sup>1</sup> for any study of Bridget, youngest daughter of Edward IV. These are a 'life' by Mary Everett Green, published in 1857, and a short piece published by Pauline Routh in 1975 in the very early days of *The Ricardian*. There is little else.<sup>2</sup> The two pieces give variant dates of death. Routh's article republished, with minimal comment, several antiquarian texts pertaining to the Lady Bridget. The most substantial of these described the elaborate ceremony of Bridget's christening. Routh followed this with several short extracts that chronicled Richard III's circumscribed acknowledgement of the young child as his kinswoman, and Bridget's subsequent life and death as a nun in the Dominican priory of Dartford, which, according to the antiquary John Weever (d. 1632), occurred about 1517. This date, implicitly accepted by Routh, has long been the year most commonly recited for Bridget's death. Green, however, proposed an earlier date. Basing her argument on a close reading of Thomas More's *History of King Richard III*, she suggested that Bridget was dead by 1513, but that her actual date of death was unknown.<sup>3</sup> Much scholarly literature has picked up on Green's mention of 1513 rather than 1517, although the older orthodoxy has not been entirely displaced. Green's thoughtful caveat, reserving judgement on both the year and date, has, however, largely been ignored.<sup>4</sup> In popular writing, John Weever's suggestion of 1517 remains current thinking. However, there is a third way that draws on directly

<sup>1</sup> I thank Dr R.E. Archer and Dr Evan T. Jones for their comments on an earlier draft of this paper. Any remaining errors are my own. This paper is an output of the Tudor Court and Kingship Project directed by Dr. James Ross under the aegis of the University of Winchester. A longer essay on Bridget's life is in course of preparation.

<sup>2</sup> Mary Anne Everitt Green, *Lives of the Princesses of England from the Norman Conquest*, 6 vols, London 1857, vol. 4, pp. 44-48. Green made what she could of the few facts that she could glean from both manuscript and published sources in order to construct a coherent biography. Her narrative amounts to just four full pages of print. Pauline E. Routh, 'Princess Bridget', *The Ricardian*, vol. 3, no. 49 (1975), pp. 13-14. Apart from the account of Bridget's baptism, several of Routh's extracts are truncated. Writing in the days before the internet democratised bibliographic research, Routh missed an article by a Dominican friar, Charles Ferrers Raymond Palmer, which included two more contemporary references to Bridget, C.F.R. Palmer, 'History of the Priory of Dartford, in Kent', *Archaeological Journal*, vol. 36 (1879), pp. 261-62. Since 1975 some of the core texts reproduced by Routh have been published in modern scholarly editions.

<sup>3</sup> Green, *Lives of the Princesses*, vol. 4, pp. 47-48.

<sup>4</sup> Cora Scofield, with her usual care, is one of the few to record 'before 1513': C.L. Scofield, *The Life and Reign of Edward IV*, 2 vols, London 1923, vol. 2, p. 300.

contemporary evidence. This indicates an altogether different year for Bridget's death and burial. The arguments underpinning the two traditional dates are further discussed below, followed by the case for their revision.<sup>5</sup>

Name, and dates of birth and death, are the basic building blocks of biography. In Bridget's case, the first two elements are known and well evidenced by a herald's account of her baptism. She was born at Eltham on 10 November 1480, and baptised the following day.<sup>6</sup> Her name, which had no precedent within the Plantagenet royal line, is confirmed by a small number of contemporary records. These include the publicly attested oath sworn by Richard III in March 1484.<sup>7</sup> By this, the king promised his protection to Edward IV's widow, styled as 'dam Elizabeth Gray late calling her self Quene of England', and to her children, and to provide financial support, if they emerged from sanctuary and agreed to be 'guyded, Ruled & demeaned after me'.<sup>8</sup> Richard listed Edward's five still living daughters in the order of their birth: the last named was 'Briggite'.<sup>9</sup> However, Bridget went largely unnoticed by the chroniclers. Even the generally well-informed Croyland continuator, who does mention her, mistakenly called her Dorothy.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>5</sup> At a late stage in writing this article, the author discovered that the evidence for revision is not entirely 'new'. It is buried in a footnote in H.M. Colvin *et al.*, *The History of the King's Works 1485-1660*, vol. IV pt. 2, London 1982, p. 70. Howard Colvin and John Summerson did not, however, draw out the implications of their reference, and it seems not to have been picked up by any writer since.

<sup>6</sup> The account survives only in mid-sixteenth century and later copies. Routh republished the most authoritative of these, British Library [BL], Additional MS 6113, ff. 74r, v, from the text of Frederic Madden, 'The children of Edward IV', *Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. 101 pt. 1 (1831), pp. 24-25.

<sup>7</sup> Quoted in extract by Routh, 'Princess Bridget', p. 14, and transcribed in full *British Library Harleian Manuscript 433*, ed. Rosemary Horrox and P.W. Hammond, 4 vols, Richard III Society, Gloucester 1979-83, vol. 3, p. 190.

<sup>8</sup> The former queen and her children had been in sanctuary at Westminster since the beginning of May 1483. Richard's first (and only) parliament had confirmed the alleged pre-contract of marriage made by Edward IV, and thus the invalidity of his marriage to Elizabeth Gray (née Woodville) and the bastardy of Edward's children by his queen.

<sup>9</sup> Two other daughters, Margaret (1472-1472) and Mary (1467-82) had died in their father's lifetime: Anne F. Sutton and Livia Visser-Fuchs, with R.A. Griffiths, *The Royal Funerals of the House of York at Windsor*, Richard III Society 2005, pp. 4, 58-65.

<sup>10</sup> *The Crowland Chronicle Continuations 1459-1486*, ed. Nicholas Pronay and John Cox, Richard III and Yorkist History Trust 1986, p. 149. It is possible that, as in the Great Chronicle, the name is a later interpolation. Much of the original manuscript was destroyed in the Cotton Library fire of 1731, and the passage cannot be checked. Most of the Crowland text has been preserved only through a seventeenth century transcript. However, as the modern editors show, based on the very limited cross-checking now possible, William Fulman was an extraordinarily scrupulous editor: *Crowland Chronicle*, pp. 43-44, 51-54. The *Great Chronicle* named only three girls, with a later annotator, possibly John Stow, adding Katherine and (again) Dorothy: *The Great Chronicle of London*, ed. A.H. Thomas and I.D. Thornley, London 1938, p. 230.

The last of the three major elements of biography is the date of death. Bridget did not die, as has been claimed, in, or even around, either 1517 or 1513. She did not long outlive her eldest sister, Elizabeth, the wife of Henry VII, who died aged just thirty-seven, on her birthday, 10 February 1503, in the aftermath of childbirth. Bridget was dead by, at the very latest, mid-December 1507, in a year that also claimed another of Bridget's older sisters, Cecily.<sup>11</sup>

John Weever's authority has had a long reach, not just in print.<sup>12</sup> Poet, pamphleteer, and antiquary, his *Ancient Funerall Monuments* was published in 1631, the year before his death.<sup>13</sup> It was republished in 1737, and is still accepted as a useful surrogate for primary sources since lost. Weever did not, however, confine himself to the description of surviving monuments and the transcription of tomb epitaphs, for which his work remains valuable.<sup>14</sup> His transcriptions were 'intermixed and illustrated' by notes 'extracted out of approved Authors, infallible Records, Lieger Bookes, Charters, Rolls, old Manuscripts, and the Collections of iudicious Antiquaries'.<sup>15</sup> This confident declaration is relevant to his brief notice of Bridget. It sounds a note of caution.

That Weever presented evidence relating to Bridget is fortuitous. He organized his gazetteer by diocese. Canterbury, Rochester, London, and Norwich, were all that was published. Dartford Priory, which had housed an enclosed order of Dominican nuns, was in the diocese of Rochester, and therefore came within the book's remit. The priory was where Bridget had spent her entire adult life. By the early seventeenth century the remains of Dartford priory, and the royal manor house that had replaced it on the same site, still survived in part, but was 'somewhat ruinous'.<sup>16</sup> (Fig. 1) Tomb monuments and tombstones had been destroyed in 1541 in the course of Henry VIII's building works.<sup>17</sup> By default therefore, Weever turned to written sources. His friendship networks assisted his access to manuscripts, particularly to those of the heralds' office, on which he drew frequently.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Cecily died on 24 August 1507. For Cecily, Rosemary Horrox, 'Cecily Viscountess Welles (1469-1507)', *ODNB* (2004), vol. 10, pp. 799-800.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. James Northcote's 1822 history painting, 'Princess Bridget dedicated to the Nunnery at Dartford', now at Petworth House: National Trust Collections, Object 486142. It includes a fictitious *trompe-l'oeil* book declaring Bridget's lineage, with a date of death of 1517.

<sup>13</sup> For Weever, David Kathman, 'Weever, John (1575/6-1632)', *ODNB* (2004), vol. 57, pp. 941-43.

<sup>14</sup> Some epitaphs Weever had clearly observed for himself; others were taken from 'approved authors', including John Stow, and from medieval chroniclers.

<sup>15</sup> John Weever, *Ancient Funerall Monuments of Great Britain*, London 1631, title page.

<sup>16</sup> Weever, *Funerall Monuments*, p. 335; Colvin, *King's Works*, pp. 68-74.

<sup>17</sup> Colvin, *King's Works*, p. 70.

<sup>18</sup> Augustine Vincent (d. 1626), a pursuivant from 1616 and Windsor Herald in 1624, as well as antiquaries such as Sir Roger Cotton, facilitated his use of records of the heralds' office and other manuscript sources: Kathman, 'Weever, John'.

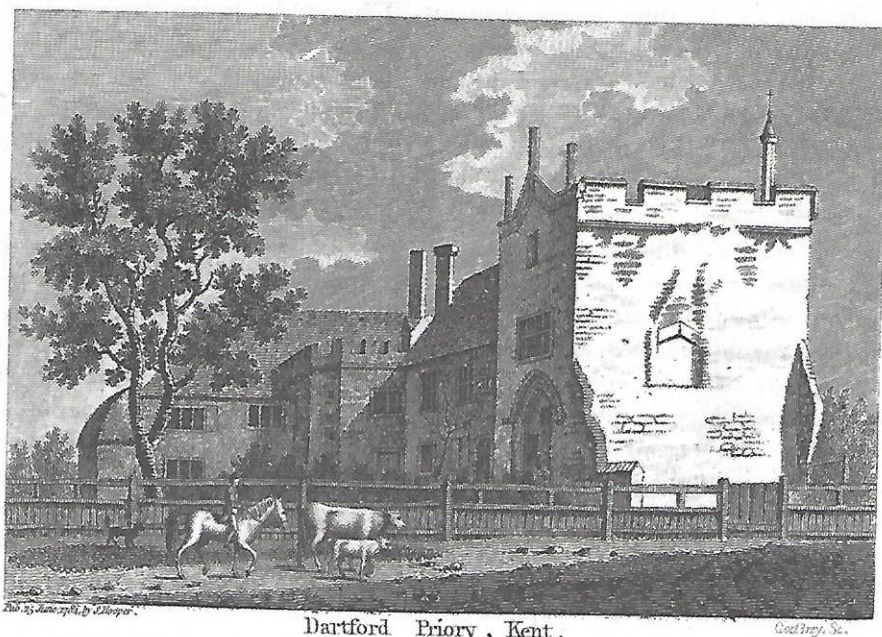


Fig. 1 Remains of Dartford manor and Priory, 1784, copy of engraving of 1773 in F. Grose, *Antiquities of England and Wales*, London 1785-1787. Engraving in possession of author.

For his Dartford entry, Weever quoted from a visitation of Kent made by Thomas Benolt, Clarenceux king-at-arms, c. 1530-31.<sup>19</sup> At the priory, Benolt had interviewed the long-serving Elizabeth Cressener, prioress since 1489. Other records show that Cressener retained full acuity into extreme old age.<sup>20</sup> She is likely to have been a trustworthy witness. The herald, as would be the pattern of later visitations, seems not to have examined the physical evidence of tomb inscriptions or memorials, but relied on oral testimony.<sup>21</sup> Weever's transcript and commentary are as follows:

<sup>19</sup> In 1530 Benolt commenced a series of visitations of all the counties of the southern province, having first obtained a commission and letters of aid from Henry VIII, *Letters and Papers Foreign and Domestic* (hereafter *L & P*), vol. 4, nos. 6314, 6317; *L & P*, vol. 5, Appendix, no. 38. Weever gives the date of 21 Henry VIII for the visitations of Kent and Sussex, and his text indicates it as his source, Weever, *Funerall Monuments*, p. 335.

<sup>20</sup> Paul Lee, *Nunneries, Learning, and Spirituality in Late Medieval English Society: the Dominican Priory of Dartford*, York 2001, pp. 39-40, 42-44, 78-79, 104-105, 114-116.

<sup>21</sup> The writ of aid Benolt acquired from Henry VIII envisaged examination of monuments and glass (with powers to destroy displays of unlicensed arms): The National Archives (TNA), C82/636, 6 April 1530. The Kent section of a contemporary copy of Benolt's visitations of 1530-1 is now missing from the manuscript: BL, Add. MS 12479. Personal circumstances have meant that the author has been unable to check the holdings of the College of Arms.

Memorandum, that the said Lady [Elizabeth Cressener] doth witnesse, that king Edward the third was first Founder of the said place: and the second Founder was king Richard the second.<sup>22</sup> And in the said place lieth buried the Lady Bridget, daughter to king Edward the fourth, a religious woman in the same place. Also dame Joane, daughter to the lord Scrope of Bolton, and Prioress of the same place: and Dame Margaret daughter of the Lord Beaumont, also sometime Prioress of the same place.<sup>23</sup> And also there lyeth ... daughter ... and wife to Sir Maurice Berkeley.<sup>24</sup>

Thus far, Weever is helpful and his source is clearly stated. But he then continued

This Lady Bridget here interred, was the fourth daughter of Edward the fourth, by his wife Queene Elizabeth, she was borne at Eltham, here by, the tenth of November, 1480. She tooke the habite of Religion when she was young, and so spent her life in contemplation vnto the day of her death: which happened about the year 1517. the eight of King Henry the eight.<sup>25</sup>

In sum, the first part of Weever's entry reports an oral interrogation officially conducted and recorded by a senior herald. It contains information that is verifiable from other sources.<sup>26</sup> Weever's gloss on 'Lady Bridget' was less happy. He commenced with an egregious error by making Bridget Edward IV's fourth daughter.<sup>27</sup> He followed with a (correct) date of birth almost certainly derived from heralds' records, and a comment on Bridget's life that is possibly an elaboration of the description given by Thomas More in his *History of King*

<sup>22</sup> For Edward III and Richard II, and for the foundation charters, Lee, *Nunneries, Learning, and Spirituality*, pp. 15-25 and associated footnotes.

<sup>23</sup> Margaret Beaumont, prioress 1446-60; Joan Scrope, prioress c. 1470-72: Lee, *Nunneries, Learning, and Spirituality*, p. 223.

<sup>24</sup> Katherine, widow of Maurice, Lord Berkeley: TNA, PROB 11/22, ff. 77v-78; will made 6 September, proved 25 September 1526. Said by John Smyth to be the daughter of Sir William Berkeley of Stoke Gifford and buried at Yate, Som.: but given the short interval between the will and its probate, it is likely that she was actually in the priory when she made her will, and was buried there: cf. John Smyth, *The Berkeley Manuscripts: the lives of the Berkeleys ... 1066-1618*, ed. Sir John Maclean, 3 vols, Gloucester 1883-86, vol. 2, pp. 211-12.

<sup>25</sup> Weever, *Funerall Monuments*, p. 335. The 1737 edn., p. 128, substitutes numbers for dates and regnal years, but gives the same information. The combination of *anno domini* and regnal year in the original edition means that the date is not a printer's error.

<sup>26</sup> Above, nn. 5, 22-24; Lee, *Nunneries, Learning, and Spirituality*, pp. 59-62.

<sup>27</sup> However counted, Bridget was Edward's seventh daughter, tenth child, and, even after the death of Mary in 1482, the king's fifth surviving daughter.



*Richard III*.<sup>28</sup> But he closed with a date of death that was not only unsourced and unsupported, but is, as we shall see, wrong.<sup>29</sup>

Unlike Weever, Thomas More's *History of King Richard III* offers no explicit date for Bridget's death. The weighting of More's *History* as a source for Bridget relies on two things: a critical interpretation of More's use of language; and the date at which More compiled or completed his *History*. These two elements are interdependent. According to More's nephew, William Rastell, More wrote the *History* 'about the yeare of our Lorde 1513'.<sup>30</sup> This statement is the source of Mary Everett Green's *terminus ad quem* for Bridget's death. The textual history of More's *History of King Richard III* is however complex. More wrote two parallel texts, in English and in Latin, and revised them over time, but did not finish them. Neither version, in the form in which they have passed down through Rastell's 1557 printing of More's lost autograph, and the Louvain edition of 1565, could have been completed before mid-1514: but this fact does not of itself preclude an earlier text. The critical passage in terms of dating lies in More's preliminary remarks.

More opened his *History* with the death of Edward IV in 1483, and followed with a list of the king's children alive at that time. If he intended to list them in order of birth, albeit gendered, then he incorrectly promoted Bridget above Anne (1475-1511) and Katherine (1479-1527). If he listed them in order of date of death, then he is probably right.<sup>31</sup> A more likely interpretation is the simplest one. More got the succession of children wrong, and the chronologically correct sequence of deaths was a happy accident.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, More's listing was almost certainly the authority that misled both Edward Hall and John Stow when they, in turn, came to write their English histories. They, too, promoted Bridget above her older siblings.<sup>33</sup> More painted a short word picture of each of Edward's children. Elizabeth (d. 1503) was 'after to be Queene'. Cecily (d. 1507) was 'not so fortunate as fayre'. Bridget 'whiche representynge the virtue of her, whose name she bare, professed and obserued a religiose lyfe in Dertforde, an house of close Nunnes'. Anne (d. 1511) was 'after honourablye

<sup>28</sup> For Bridget's date of birth, Routh, 'Princess Bridget', p. 13.

<sup>29</sup> For many entries, the margins of the published work indicate the sources used. In this instance, there are none, merely the catch phrase for the paragraph 'The birth and death of Bridget Plantaginet'.

<sup>30</sup> Prologue to 1557 edition of the *History* in *The History of King Richard III*, ed. Richard S. Sylvester, Yale 1963, p. 1.

<sup>31</sup> Cecily died on 24 August 1507. She probably, but not certainly, pre-deceased her youngest sister.

<sup>32</sup> As has often been observed, More also gave a precise but erroneous age at death for Edward IV, and in the course of his narrative at times counted four rather than five daughters surviving their father: see. e.g., *History of Richard III*, pp. lxix, 157.

<sup>33</sup> Edward Halle [Hall], *The union of the two noble and illustre famelies of Lancastre [and] Yorke*, London 1548, ff. AAiii r, v (p. 345 in the 1809 edition); John Stowe, *The Annales or General Chronicle of England*, London 1615, p. 434.

maryed vnto Thomas, than lorde Hawarde, and after earl of Surrey'.<sup>34</sup> Katherine (d. 1527), despite early misfortune, was still alive ('for yet she lyueth') 'in verye prosperous estate'. Mary Everitt Green realised that More's use of the past tense, and his switch to the present in the reference to Katherine as still living, could be interpreted as an indication that all the previously mentioned children were dead at the time of writing.<sup>35</sup> She did not, however, fully factor in the reference to Anne's husband, promoted as earl of Surrey only in February 1514.

The earliest extant Latin text of the *History* omits both Anne and Bridget, although blank lines were left in the manuscript.<sup>36</sup> While this could suggest a defective text, equally it might mean that the information that Thomas More initially had to hand c. 1513 was incomplete, and that the copyist preserved the blanks in his exemplar. Anne and Bridget are fully present in Rastell's 1557 edition of the English text, said to have been produced from More's autograph, and in the Louvain edition of the Latin work, published in 1565.<sup>37</sup> The editor of the standard modern edition of the *History*, swayed in part by Weever's date of 1517 for Bridget's death, but also by finding closely similar phraseology in other of More's dated writings, tends to push the Latin *History* nearer to 1518, but allows c. 1513 for the English text.<sup>38</sup> Inevitably doubts and questions remain.<sup>39</sup> A conservative conclusion might be, if More were the only available text, that Bridget had died, at the latest, by mid-decade, and certainly before the 1517 date suggested by Weever, but that her actual year of death remained unknown. It is perhaps more interesting that Thomas More was the only contemporary chronicler to show awareness that a daughter of Edward IV had become a nun, and that he accurately named both Bridget and the religious house in which she had taken her vows.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Anne (1475-1511) married Thomas, lord Howard, in 1495. He was promoted as earl of Surrey in 1514. The promotion was mentioned by More, but was possibly not present in the earliest version of his text: *History of Richard III*, p. lxiii.

<sup>35</sup> *History of Richard III*, p. 3. The quotations are taken from the English rather than the Latin text; Green, *Lives of the Princesses*, pp. 47-48.

<sup>36</sup> College of Arms MS Arundel 43, in the edition by Richard Sylvester, *History of Richard III*, pp. xxx, xxxiv-v, xxxviii, 96.

<sup>37</sup> For the manuscripts and printed editions, *History of Richard III*, pp. xvii-liv.

<sup>38</sup> *History of Richard III*, pp. l, lxiii-lxv, xc-xci.

<sup>39</sup> See, e.g., *History of Richard III*, pp. xli-xlii, l-liv, lxiv-lxv; Elizabeth Story Dunno, 'Thomas More and Richard III', *Renaissance Quarterly*, vol. 35 (1982), pp. 401-04.

<sup>40</sup> Edward Hall places her at Syon, a Brigettine house favoured by both Edward IV and Henry VII. It is known that More used oral, as well as written, information, his sources possibly including both John Heron and John Fisher: *History of Richard III*, lxvi-viii, lxx-lxxi. After 1521 More might have acquired more direct information, since the sister-in-law of his eldest daughter became a nun at Dartford, as did the half-sister of Bishop John Fisher. Bridget, however, was at best tangential to More's *History*, and the work itself was left unfinished at More's death.

Fortunately there is a third, and unimpeachable, source for the date of Bridget's death. The evidence comes from one of the books of the Treasurer of the Chamber of Henry VII. The books of payments record, among much other matter, cash payments authorised by the king and drawn on the treasure under his immediate control. Payments made by the king's Treasurer of the Chamber included wages and rewards, loans, almsgiving, and expenditure on goods and services. They ranged from the few pence given by way of reward to women bringing the king such small gifts as apples or cakes, to massive transfers of funds for the king's building works, and as loans to foreign princes. By the latter part of the reign the books become less useful as a source for miscellaneous expenditure for a number of reasons. These include administrative change, the king's increasingly frequent and disabling illnesses, and the fact that separate books were created at times when the king was on progress. In the latter case, only totals of weekly expenditure, and not the details, were recorded in the main series of books. All these caveats apply to the accounts for 1507. In the early part of the year the king was seriously ill. For much of the summer, he was either on progress through East Anglia, the south Midlands, and the Thames Valley, or energetically engaged in one of his favourite pursuits, the hunt.<sup>41</sup> Outgoings for the latter activity, and for messengers engaged on conciliar business, dominate the incidental payments. The king returned to his palace of Richmond at the end of October. For the remainder of the year he resided at Richmond, Westminster and the Tower, all within close and easy reach along the Thames.<sup>42</sup> Despite this more settled pattern, the books, become only marginally more informative.

Amongst the repeated litany of payments for wages, building works, and messengers in this latter part of the year, one entry stands out, but is easily missed. (**Fig. 2**) Under Sunday 19 December 1507 Henry VII's Treasurer of the Chamber, John Heron – or rather, his clerk – has recorded

Item for a Marbulstone bought to ley vpon my lady Brygett  
within the quere of Dertford xlvi s viij d.<sup>43</sup>

The most important, and indeed, the only possible conclusion, is that Bridget had died by this date. The entry identifies her place of burial, and the fashion of her tombstone, as well as its cost. Bridget had been interred in the choir of the priory church. This was a place of high honour, as befitted her royal birth. The other known burials in the choir were those of the four founding nuns of the convent, two of whom had served as its first prioresses. For all four, Edward

<sup>41</sup> Summary of the king's movements in Thomas Penn, *Winter King, the Dawn of Tudor England*, London 2011, pp. 270-74, 297-300.

<sup>42</sup> TNA, E36/214, *passim*; for the king's itinerary, M.M. Condon, *The Itinerary of Henry VII* (unpublished MS).

<sup>43</sup> TNA, E36/214, f. 111v [p. 222; original foliation 108v]

III, the convent's original royal founder, had paid for 'marble' tomb slabs.<sup>44</sup> In death Bridget was thus elevated from a mere 'religious'. Had it not been for her royal birth, she might have been buried in the nave, the cloister, or the churchyard.<sup>45</sup>

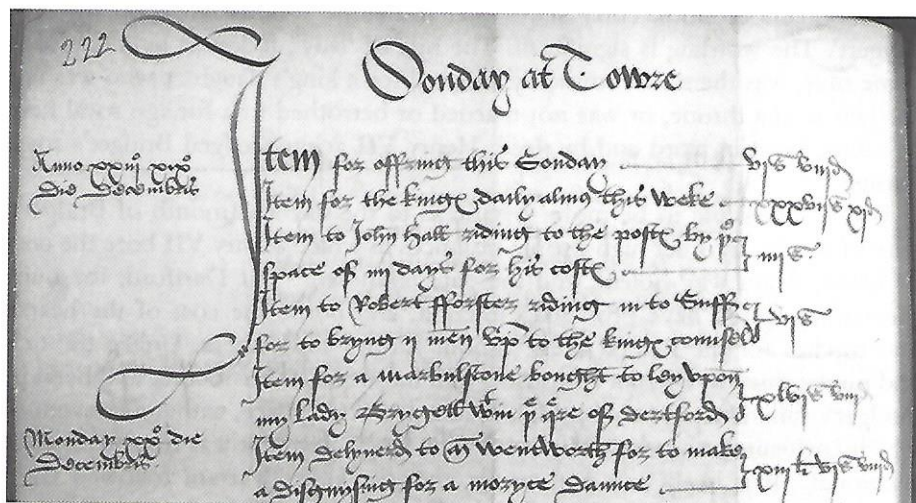


Fig. 2 Payments for week beginning 19 December 1507, Account Book of the Treasurer of the Chamber of Henry VII, TNA, E36/214, f. 111v. By permission of The National Archives.

Henry VII paid personally for the stone that would mark her grave. It can be assumed that, within the confines of the choir, stalls for the use of the nuns would have lined and occupied the walls, precluding the insertion of a larger monument.<sup>46</sup> A ledger stone, however, could be laid in the open area of the floor, effectively becoming part of the paving, and would not impede passage through the choir or obscure the view of the high altar. The choice of words used in the king's books indicates that a stone of good quality was purchased. The probability is that it was Purbeck marble, a mottled grey or grey-green fossil-rich limestone that could be highly polished, and was widely used by the slab-makers.<sup>47</sup> Nigel Saul suggests that by this period the term 'marblestone'

<sup>44</sup> Lee, *Nunneries, Learning, and Spirituality*, p. 21. The nuns had most probably come from the priory of Poissy, in France.

<sup>45</sup> She was also, of course 'founder's kin'. Both Edward IV and Henry VII confirmed the priory's privileges; and kingship, unlike the actual holder of the office, did not die.

<sup>46</sup> A freestanding chest tomb would not only have been inappropriate for a mere 'religious', but more pragmatically would have interrupted the nuns' view of the high altar, and the processional of their daily services.

<sup>47</sup> Purbeck stone is not technically a marble, although always termed as such. It was used, for example, for Edward III's tomb, although the actual effigy is bronze; Henry VII (and Henry VIII) specified a continental true marble, 'black touch' for his own tomb, again with a bronze effigy.

invariably means that the stone itself would be incised to accept a brass. The metal inlay, employing an appropriate combination of image, armorial, and lettering, identified the occupant of the grave.<sup>48</sup> While the expenditure of 46s 8d might seem slight, it was in the upper range of costs for such a slab.<sup>49</sup>

The Chamber Book entry states that the stone was to lie 'vpon my lady Brygett'. The wording is significant. The title of 'lady', followed by a Christian name only, was the style commonly adopted for a king's daughter who was not the heir to the throne, or was not married or betrothed to a foreign royal heir. In effect, both in word and by deed, Henry VII acknowledged Bridget's royal lineage.

It is not possible to be more specific as to the day and month of Bridget's date of death. In other high-profile instances in which Henry VII bore the cost of burial, death was violent, and the date is known.<sup>50</sup> At Dartford, the nuns themselves would have provided the choir, and borne the cost of the hearse and torches for the funeral rites, without further supplement. Unlike the rich and public ritual of Bridget's baptism, with its attendant aristocracy and heralds, Bridget's funeral and burial took place in a protected space, within a convent in which enclosure was strictly observed. The king's payment was for the physical memorial. It is likely, but not certain, that the king's warrant followed fairly closely on the news of Bridget's death. The chamber books do not contain a reference to a messenger from the prioress.<sup>51</sup> Indeed, if death occurred in the last quarter of the year, the prioress might have entrusted a letter to one of the king's own messengers, since posts were stationed at Dartford, Sittingbourne, and Dover from late October until the end of 1507. They were not there, however, to inform the king of the illness or death of his sister-in-law, but almost certainly to keep the king and council informed of the progress of negotiations with the emperor-elect Maximilian concerning a proposed marriage between Henry VII's younger daughter Mary and Maximilian's grandson, the archduke Charles. A courier passed frequently between the court

<sup>48</sup> Nigel Saul, 'Bold as brass. Secular display in English medieval brasses', in *Heraldry, Pageantry, and Social Display in Medieval England*, ed Peter Coss and Maurice Keen, Woodbridge 2002, pp. 174, 182-183.

<sup>49</sup> Nigel Ramsay, 'The tomb of Richard III', *The Ricardian*, vol. 29 (2019), pp. 89-90.

<sup>50</sup> Sir William Stanley, d. 16 February 1495, buried before 27 February at Syon, BL, Add. MS 7099, pp. 23, 24 [£17 19s by two bills]; Edward, earl of Warwick, d. 28 November 1499, and the body taken by boat to Bisham the following day for burial [£12 18s 2½d by three bills], TNA, E101/415/3, f. 6r; *Great Chronicle of London*, pp. 291-292. Both men died by execution for alleged treason. Cf. the costs of Henry VI's first burial at Chertsey, which included linen cloth, wax and spices, rewards to soldiers for watching over the body, barge hire, and masses for the dead, to a total of £33 6s 9½d: Sutton and Visser-Fuchs, *Royal Funerals*, p. 4. For Richard III's monument, provided by Henry VII ten years after Richard's death at Bosworth, Ramsay, 'Tomb of Richard III', pp. 85-99.

<sup>51</sup> She had, however, sent the king strawberries in June 1506, TNA, E36/214, f. 34r.

and the posts.<sup>52</sup> Equally, a verbal message could have been conveyed by the bishop of Rochester, John Fisher, formerly the chaplain of the king's mother; or by the one of the friars of King's Langley, who served as chaplains to the convent.<sup>53</sup> There is so little of incidental note in the chamber books by this date that the books' silence is unsurprising. The keeper of the king's privy purse, Hugh Denys, was probably not the king's informant, but could potentially have been assigned oversight of the execution of the king's commission, since he was steward of the priory's lands.<sup>54</sup> The task would be neither long drawn out nor onerous. The chamber book entry implies that the stone had already been purchased. It might even have been laid by the time that Heron's clerk made his entry in the books.

Dartford Priory was the sole house of Dominican nuns in England, and there is no surviving obit roll to mention Bridget's death.<sup>55</sup> Bridget's tomb slab was long ago either reduced to rubble or reused as building stone. The books of the king's chamber have, however, furnished an indisputable terminus *ad quem* that is unlikely to have long postdated Bridget's death. While 'infallible records' have their limitations, two short lines in one royally connected document have made it possible to put in place that final building block of biography. Bridget died either just short of, or shortly after, her twenty-seventh birthday. She died, not in the reign of Henry VIII, but in that of Henry VII. Her year of death was 1507.

<sup>52</sup> For the couriers and posts, TNA, E36/214, ff. 102v, 105v, 106r, 107v, 108v, 109v, 111v-112v.

<sup>53</sup> While the priory was exempt from episcopal visitation, it seems possible that the prioress might have contacted Fisher as both the local ordinary and a person intimate with the king.

<sup>54</sup> For Denys as steward, Lee, *Nunneries, Learning, and Spirituality*, p. 54. Neither the Privy Purse accounts, nor the itemised bills that Denys regularly presented to John Heron for payment, survive. At Dartford, Denys was succeeded as steward by John Heron, treasurer of the Chamber of both Henry VII and Henry VIII.

<sup>55</sup> Few records created by the priory's nuns or their estate administration are extant: Lee, *Nunneries, Learning, and Spirituality*, pp. 6-7.