



All Saints' Church A Royal Story to tell....

There can be few village churches in this Nation that enjoy such proudly sustained historic royal connections as All Saints. Indeed, our own relatively humble medieval parish church was, for centuries, granted the rare privilege of being able to fly the Royal Standard from its bell tower. The principal stained glass window in its Royal Chapel was provided by Queen Victoria and our church also has the honour that Queen Elizabeth II headed its subscription list for the recasting of its eight bells in 1958.

No coincidence then that, to this day, All Saints remains home to a royal tomb! An extraordinary artifact, which we now know was initially created as a fine heraldically embellished stone casket, to contain the body of King Richard II 1367-1400. It was later decided that this tomb should instead hold the remains of the Kings' uncle, Edmund de Langley, the very first Duke of York, 1341-1402 and his beloved wife Isabel of Castile 1355-1392. Edmund himself was the fifth son of Edward III and brother to both John of Gaunt and the Black Prince.

However this tomb also contains the mysterious third body of a young woman in a separate lead encasement, long assumed by eminent historians, as most likely to be Anne de Mortimer, Countess of Cambridge 1390-1411. This puzzlingly undocumented and intriguing third interment only being discovered the last time the tomb was moved, during changes made to the interior layout of the church in Victorian times. If these are indeed the remains of Anne de Mortimer, this adds hugely to the overall significance of our royal tomb. Bearing in mind, during her tragically short twenty-year life span, this young woman managed to bring to bear her extraordinary genetic influence on the entire royal Plantagenet dynasty.

What a fitting resting place then, in the tomb of the very first Duke of York, for someone whose lineage and offspring was at the heart of the entire Plantagenet dynasty and indeed all the royal houses that followed it. Anne was the daughter of Roger Mortimer, the 4th Earl of March 1374-1398 and thereby already directly related at birth to both Edward I 1272-1307 and Edward III 1327-1377. Anne subsequently married Richard Coningsburgh, 3rd Earl of Cambridge, the son of Edmund de Langley, 1st Duke of York. Tragically Anne died in childbirth, delivering their one and only surviving son, Richard, 3rd Duke of York 1385-1415, who himself was destined to father King Edward IV 1442-1483 and King Richard III 1452-1485.

Anne de Mortimer was therefore posthumously Grandmother to these last two Plantagenet monarchs, as well as Great Grandmother to the two murdered Princes in the Tower and their sister Elizabeth of York 1466-1511. Elizabeth of York, another key player in our royal story, who was fated to marry Henry VII 1457-1509 thereby putting an end to the War of the Roses and creating the House of Tudor, the very foundation stone for the monarchy we know today.

All the more extraordinary then, that there is now a recently renewed connection to this royal line, via Carole Middleton, the mother of Catherine, the current Duchess of Cambridge, whose bloodline links directly back to Anne de Mortimer, via her great-great grandmother. All of which ensures that the fused 'Cambridge' and 'York' royal bloodline Anne first

affirmed by her issue in 1411 is now destined to flow once again in the 21st Century, via the current Duke and Duchess of Cambridge's family and the likely one day heir apparent to Prince William, his eldest son, Prince George, together with his sister Princess Charlotte and younger brother, Prince Louis.

Historically speaking, our handsomely endowed parish church and the tomb itself is a powerful reminder of the significance of the royal presence here in Kings Langley, especially during the Thirteenth and Fourteenth centuries. In 1296 the Feast of All Saints and All Souls is recorded as being celebrated by Edward I here. Later in 1324, his successor, Edward II offered seven shillings at the Adoration of the Cross on Easter Day at All Saints. However hard it is hard to imagine such a royal presence locally in our village, given what little still survives these days above ground, how extraordinary it is to think now, so many centuries later, that a splendid Royal Palace once stood on the Steiner School site at the top of Langley Hill. A palace first established in 1278 by Eleanor of Castile, the wife of Edward I, together with a Dominican Friary, which in its full pomp was the richest in all England and whose church was said, at the time, to be the equal of Westminster Abbey!

The Dominican Friary Church, of course, being the original home of our Royal Tomb, prior to its transfer to All Saints in 1574, on the orders of Elizabeth I, following the obliterating destruction of Henry VIII's Reformation. This leveled the Dominican Friary and its church here in Kings Langley, together with all its associated buildings, barring its Locutorium, which survives to the day and has since become known as the Priory. The Royal Palace itself was largely destroyed much earlier by a disastrous fire in 1431.

So, however few ruins still exist locally to remind us of these fabled days, the reality is that Kings Langley was, for a good 150 years or so, home to a prominent Royal Palace. It was, for example, much frequented by Edward I, in between his long battles much further north, with William Wallace and the fearsome Scots. The Palace also acted as the backdrop to all the murderous drama and treacherous intrigue associated with King Edward II's favourite Piers Gaveston, during his reign. It is perhaps most significant that it was being used by Edward III as his seat of national government in 1349, during the Black Death, when the King and his royal retinue fled from London, in fear of their lives. In the happier days that followed, the royal court in Kings Langley, together with its charmed local surroundings, then became something of a beloved haven for the eventually betrayed monarch, King Richard II; the palace garden featuring as it does in Shakespeare's much celebrated play Richard III.

When taken altogether then, what a sensational story it is that belongs forever to the village community of Kings Langley and its spectacularly blessed parish church. It is certainly one that we are determined to take the opportunity which is provided by the current re-ordering exercise, to re-present in a way that brings it fully and gloriously back to life, both for local residents and the many visitors, already attracted here to our beautiful church from all over the world.

As you can see from the architect's drawings provided here, and as an integral part of the forthcoming re-ordering exercise we aim to achieve this by:

- Clearing the sight lines (left –down the north aisle) as you enter the church, so that the Royal Chapel and its splendid royal tomb makes an immediate visual impression upon all visitors to the church.
- We will also be looking to install inter-active audio-visual screens that will both guide and inform you of every glorious detail of our local royal story, as and when you choose to make your way down to the Royal Chapel.

- The tomb will be slightly re positioned to facilitate all round viewing and access in the Royal Chapel.
- There will be a comprehensive restoration and renovation of the tomb, to return it much closer to its previous authentic splendour. Similar careful restoration and conservation attention will also be paid to the Royal Standard, which is still currently on display in the Royal Chapel, in very poor condition.
- A mixture of new fittings, cabinets and wall mountings will also be installed to allow for the adjacent, clear and secure display of other exceptional associated historic royal artifacts. Principally, very fine and rare examples of tiled flooring, thought to be from the Dominican Friary Church, which are currently poorly displayed in an obscured location. As well as possibly the finer ledger stones and brasses, belonging to the church

This exercise is also aiming to provide a new home for the engraved stone slab, currently also hidden away and set into the floor which almost certainly formed the original top of the royal tomb. The re-presentation of this item will also allow us to acknowledge better the significance of the current top the tomb, itself a potentially highly significant devotional item, believed to be an altar stone, long ago salvaged from the Friary Church itself.

We are currently hopeful that these treasures will be accompanied by other spectacular items from the archaeological excavation on the Palace site, conducted between 1974-76. For example, beautifully evocative 14th century encaustic tiles found in the Royal Palace's wine cellar and large stones belonging to a royal fireplace, which incorporate some fascinating medieval graffiti, scratched into the stone, no doubt by monks and courtiers, some seven hundred years ago now!

So we very much hope that you will give this, our part of these proposals, your whole-hearted approval. This will enable us all to take this outstanding opportunity to celebrate our unique history, here in our wonderful parish church and the delightful community that is our very own village of Kings Langley; long, long ago named as such, for being 'Langelei' or 'long meadow' belonging to the King. This is a heritage that, with the scope of this current re-ordering exercise, we very much intend to bring vividly back to life for you all using the best of our imaginative endeavours.

Our Royal Story - Illustrations

The Royal Palace



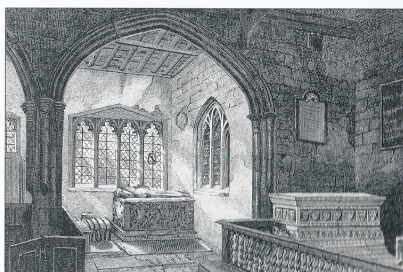
The Priory



All Saints



The Royal tomb in its original position



The Royal tomb in its current position



Artifacts:

Close up of heraldic shields in the Royal Chapel



Royal Standard and detail from Royal Window



The engraved stone slab, thought to be the original top of the Royal Tomb



Example of Tiled Flooring
thought to be from the Friary Church



Royal Wine Cellar Excavation 1970



Royal Wine Cellar Excavation detail 1970



Fireplace stone found in the Wine Cellar,
showing medieval graffiti



Example of terracotta encaustic floor tiles
found in the Wine Cellar of the Royal Palace



Gallery of royal and historic personages

Edmund de Langley



Isabel of Castile



Edward I



Edward II



Edward III



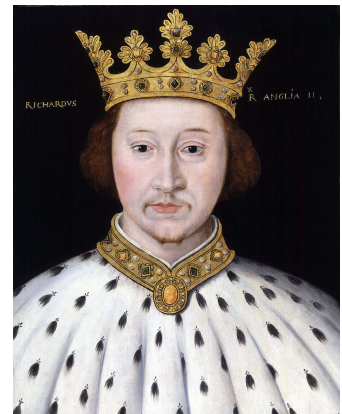
Anne de Mortimer



Richard, 3rd Duke of York



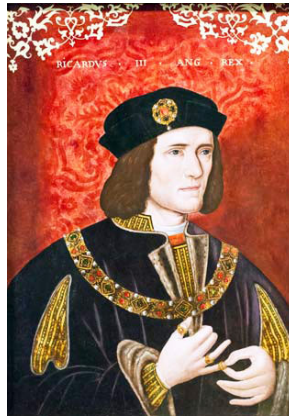
Richard II



Edward IV



Richard III



Henry VII



Elizabeth of York



Henry VIII



Elizabeth I



Queen Victoria



Elizabeth II



Prince Andrew
the current Duke of York

