

Coronation Weekend At Middleham

Sunday July 8th was a cool, breezy and cloudy day at Middleham. It started very slowly but picked up amazingly in the afternoon [one wonders how much Henman's unsuccessful effort to get into the Wimbledon Final had to do with the earlier absences] and we had a good selection of visitors, from the UK mainly, but with a good sprinkling from the USA too.

The re-enactors were first-class again and have already been retained for next year, when they will probably appear at the end of July so that the audience will consist more of children home for the school holidays.

The switch from the Coronation weekend is not really a weakening of the one key period for Ricardians, since the Area Manager of English Heritage intends to make all of the season in 2002 a tribute, in varying ways, to the 550th anniversary of Richard's birth. She will be working with the Society and with Later Medieval Britain and similar interests to further this programme, and it would be helpful if we could have suggestions from the membership of both as to what might be included in such an ambitious schedule.

The Yorkshire Branch display drew more interest - but less gainful profit than yesterday - following adjustments to the exhibit. Our Queensland members will be delighted to know that the late addition of the boards of coloured battle-maps proved to be a key feature in this improvement and these will be in place from the start of future showings. We had an interesting idea put forward by many visitors, who asked "Have you got this in book-form?" and we may well produce such a publication, using ring-binding for simplicity and cheapness.

Overall, the festival cannot be counted an unalloyed success. The foot and mouth epidemic still extracts its toll in the form of absent visitors, particularly from overseas - I don't think I saw one

from the Southern Hemisphere - and we must hope that such a plague is never again visited on the English Tourism industry. That, of course, is in the lap of the Gods, but we poor humans can bend all our efforts to ensuring that, given the normal fair wind, the continuing Ricardian festival of 2002 is a strong healing element in the recovery of an industry which is essential to the well-being of the inhabitants of towns and villages of the countryside and thereby of the beauty of the Dales, North Yorkshire and the North East and North West. God will help those who strive hardest to help themselves.

Geoffrey Richardson