

Francis Lovel

Following the flooding of our usual venue Lowdham WI Hall, our February meeting took place in the Community Space in Lambley Church. Ted White gave us a talk about Francis Lovel, a close ally of Richard III. Richard made him a Member of the Privy Council, a Knight of the Garter and appointed him head of the Royal Household so he was one of the most important people in the country.

Francis survived the Battle of Bosworth and attempted to organise a revolt against Henry VII. the victor of Bosworth the following year. This revolt was unsuccessful, so Francis went abroad to obtain funding from Richard's sister Margaret the widow of the Duke of Burgundy and one of the wealthiest women in Europe. She provided him with an army and together with Lambert Simnel, a pretender to the throne Lovel crossed to England with an army of 8000 and was defeated by Henry at the Battle of East Stoke near Newark on June 16th, 1487.

After such a prominent career and at the age of about 30, Lovel disappeared and was never heard of again. Over the years since there have been around six explanations as to what may have become of him, including from being drowned in the Trent, gone to exile in Europe, becoming a hermit in a cave, and dying of starvation in a secret room at his house; his body being discovered more than two centuries later.

Alfred Edward Lawson Lowe, a Victorian antiquarian visited Gedling church in 1866 and saw an alabaster slab with the date 1847 and suggested that it may have marked Lovel's grave. This idea was published a couple of times around 1900 and was forgotten until these publications were reproduced on the internet recently giving rise to speculation that Lovel has been found at last.

Ted offered an explanation as to how he may have travelled from the battlefield to Gedling and died there, together with new evidence showing that previous explanations of his fate are not as credible as they have been regarded.