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# The return of Richard the Lionheart

On Sunday 3rd August, Richard the Lionheart will once again be at the head of a procession into the Limousin town of Châlus as part of the biennial *Rando Festival Richard Coeur de Lion*. This year, the town where one of England's most memorable kings met his end is celebrating the 815th anniversary of his death. For more details on the life and death of Richard I, see our interview right with historian - and Richard I expert - Professor John Gillingham.

The 2014 event will focus on a 20-kilometre walk through the beautiful Limousin countryside, culminating in the King's arrival in Châlus, where the festivities will really begin. The walk consists of two 10-kilometre hikes, either side of a break for lunch and will combine subjects on foot, knights on horseback... and even a few modern day citizens on mountain bikes! The walk is free, period costumes are encouraged and lunch can be brought along as a picnic, or bought from one of the food and drink stands that will be waiting for the *randonneurs* half way round their hike.

Once the procession reaches Châlus at 4pm, there will be medieval jousting, falconry, archery, singing and dancing to entertain the crowds. The evening will also feature a medieval banquet: a pork spit-roast will be on offer, with accompanying vegetables, for just €10. Other food and drink choices will also be available from a number of stalls around the town centre, which will be closed to traffic for the duration of the festival.

You can simply turn up on the day for the walk or

*In advance of the Rando Festival Richard Coeur de Lion, The Bugle interviewed Richard I expert Professor John Gillingham about the life of one of England's most celebrated kings.*

*The Limousin town of Châlus claims to be the location where Richard I died, after being mortally wounded at the Château de Châlus. Other rumours and legends dispute this claim, however, so what does the historical and scientific evidence currently suggest on Richard's last days, the location of his death and his final resting place?*

There is no doubt that he was fatally wounded on 26 March 1199 while besieging the castle of Châlus-Chabrol. That name is recorded by some contemporary English chroniclers with good contacts at the royal court, as well as by a local observer named Bernard Itier, monk and later librarian of St Martial's, the great abbey of Limoges. He died at Châlus on 6 April. His mother Eleanor of Aquitaine took his body to the abbey of Fontevraud, which had been her base in her old age, and he was buried there, close to his father Henry II. His entrails had already been buried separately, probably in the abbey of Charroux (which claimed to have been founded by Charlemagne). His heart was taken on to Rouen Cathedral where it was buried close to the body of his older brother, also a Henry. Recent scientific analysis of the powdery remains of what has long been identified as his heart, preserved in a lead casket, has shown that it had been embalmed.



taine, Anjou, Touraine, Maine and Normandy) and spent the bulk of his reign in France, especially Normandy, the part most under threat from the king of France. By contrast his good relations with the Scottish king and Welsh princes meant that England was not threatened, and his presence there not needed.

*Professor Gillingham, as a renowned specialist on the life of Richard the Lionheart, why do you think that he remains such a "popular" figure, 815 years after his death?*

As a king who went on crusade and who shared front-line risks with his soldiers, he became a legend in his own lifetime. This status was enhanced by the extraordinary fact that he had the misfortune to be captured, not by Muslim enemies, but by fellow Christians and held in prison in Germany before being freed in return for the proverbial king's ransom - to which, incidentally, the people of the Limousin as well as all the rest of his subjects contributed. The crusade came to be seen as a

You can simply turn up on the day for the walk or the meal, but reserving is highly recommended and can be done via the organisers' website: <http://www.rando-festival-richard.fr/>

By signing up for the walk in advance, you will automatically be covered by the event's liability insurance. For details of where to meet and departure times, please also see the above website. ■

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*While Richard the Lionheart ruled England, is it true that he actually spent very little time in the country and may not even have spoken the language?*

It is true that he spent little time in England. Although he was born in England, in Oxford, he became duke of Aquitaine when he was 14 years old, and there's no evidence he spent much time in England before then, so he may well never have learned English. Like all the English ruling class since 1066 he spoke French, and in his case probably both *langue d'oïl* and *langue d'oc*.

As king he, like his father, ruled over much of France (Aqui-

taigne) and his subjects contributed. The crusade came to be seen as a duel between him and the great Muslim leader Saladin. All this made him a legend in the Islamic world as well as in Christian Europe, a heroic figure about whom all sorts of new stories were invented in a process which has gone on ever since his death. (The story of treasure trove at Châlus may well be one such tale). And indeed, no other king of England has ever played such an active leading role in world history, in this case the struggle for control of the Middle East between two world religions, Islam and Christianity. ■

*John Gillingham studied history at Oxford and Munich Universities, then taught for thirty years at the LSE where he is now an Emeritus Professor. He was elected to the British Academy in 2007. His books include The Wars of the Roses, Richard I, The English in the Twelfth Century, The Angevin Empire, and Conquests, Catastrophe and Recovery. Britain and Ireland c. 1066-c.1485 (due out in October). He is currently working on a biography of William Rufus - another king of England who met a sudden and sticky end.*



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