

THE BATTLE OF WAKEFIELD 1460.

Philip A. Haigh. 1996. Sutton Publishing Ltd., Stroud, £18.99. ISBN 0-7509-1342-8

It appeared to be a good idea when Sutton Publishing embarked on a series of books devoted to the battles of the Wars of the Roses: such a series could have provided very useful monographs had they had careful editing.

Unfortunately, the present volume, *The Battle of Wakefield, 1460*, is not totally successful. In their articles in *The Ricardian* (volume IX, number 117, 1992) Keith Dockray and Richard Knowles pointed out the difficulties involved in trying to find out what really happened at Wakefield. Contemporary references are extremely brief and it is not until the Tudor period that detailed accounts occur. In all cases these seem to be a mixture of fact and fantasy. One reason for the shortage of accounts from contemporary writers is that Wakefield was a Yorkist failure and so Yorkist sympathisers were unlikely to give it much attention. The most reliable summary of the battle remains the one in *The Ricardian* that I have referred to.

Like Richard Knowles, Philip A. Haigh has a great fund of local knowledge but despite his enthusiasm for his subject he has not really made the picture any clearer. Chapter Five is confusing with its separation of 'Accepted Account' and 'Suggested Account'. In any case, much of the information freely discussed is that which was given by Leland, Hall and Stow, and sixteen full-page maps devoted to the battle seems to be excessive.

Another aspect of the need for more careful editing is in the style of writing and the occasional detail. There is frequent use of the expression 'a modern-day' instead of the straightforward 'modern', 'earl's' for 'earls" (p15) and there is a reference to Richard Plantagenet, Duke of York, as the son of the *fifth* earl of Cambridge. Finally, when the author refers to Leeds Library, which is a private library, he really intends The City of Leeds Public Library.

The Appendices do bring together some useful information on chroniclers, commanders and casualties as well as a resume of the Act of Attainder. For some readers the book will be a handy reference.

However, I think I must conclude with Mr Haigh's own remark about the work of Keith Dockray and Richard Knowles: 'This recent account of the battle is derived directly from the chroniclers, and other than the fact that the authors do not go beyond what can be proved conclusively, their work is quite informative'!

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