

Book Reviews

THE REIGN OF HENRY VI, by Ralph A. Griffiths. Ernest Benn 1981. £25.

In a year that has already produced a commendable and much needed biography of Henry VI, Dr. Griffiths' blockbuster dealing with that monarch in the wider context of a political history of his reign, has more than adequately filled a necessarily large gap in the narrative literature of the period and set Henry VI fairly and squarely on the map of our Lancastrian kings.

This latest contribution to historiography is indeed a daunting proposition to even the most enthusiastic readers of fifteenth century English history. It is a monumental addition to the catalogue of books, papers and articles which have already singled Dr. Griffiths out as one of the most prolific historians of today.

In an age that has veered towards the production of specialized monographs and biographies, this volume is more reminiscent—even allowing for the fact of the longevity of the reign—of the approach of J. H. Wylie or C. L. Scofield. It is an exhaustive and inexorable examination of every facet of the period. Few books in recent years have been presented in such a ready sorted and carefully divided fashion—the whole into three parts; each part into chapters; and each chapter into a series of sub-sections. Regular reminders of significant facts and ample cross referencing makes each section an entity in itself without impairing the sense of unity and the general flow of the work as a whole. All of these, and the inclusion of an excellent bibliography will undoubtedly render it pre-eminent as a work of reference.

The first section of the work follows in minute detail the working of the council in the minority, though a tendency to concentrate on the Beaufort-Gloucester quarrel detracts somewhat from the overall success of the council. The attendance of the lords has been monitored largely by the records of council and privy seal warrants (PRO E28) but these are fragmentary and not entirely reliable. John Mowbray, for instance—who incidentally never was Earl of Norfolk, but rather Earl of Nottingham—was certainly paid as a regular councillor to Henry VI, wages being deducted for the period of his war service in 1423 and 1430, but the evidence of E28 suggests he was an infrequent attender. He deserves more credit as a 'dependable' adviser of Henry VI (p.38). His Beaufort connections through his marriage to one of the daughters of Ralph Neville and Joan Beaufort is certainly not sufficient grounds for classing him as a member of the Beaufort circle (p.21) and his assistance to Gloucester in Hainault in 1424–5 did not stop him joining the plea made to the Protector in 1427 to keep within his prescribed powers. Aside from discussion of the Beaufort-Gloucester quarrel two themes are of special note in this section: firstly Dr. Griffiths' work on the shrievalties—which he pursues throughout—and their contribution to continuity in the years 1422–36; and secondly the early discussion of patronage *vis à vis* finance and faction, which was proving a considerable stumbling block before Henry VI intervened to make matters worse. The section also considers the 'Celtic Fringe' and the position of aliens, examining conciliar approaches to these issues. The escalation of violence in the mid fifteenth century has been the subject of much interest, and deservedly so in

view of its significance for the final outbreak of civil war. Dr. Griffiths presents a bleak picture of the levels of violence which existed at the end of the protectorate. The intimation that the nobility as a whole was given to outbreaks of violence is perhaps overstating the matter. Evidence of the quarrel between Huntingdon and Norfolk, for example (p.135) is derived from one source, and there is every reason to suppose that relations between the two were generally good.

The second part of the book, covering the years 1436-53, forms the greater part of the work. Dr. Griffiths has given due attention to the ending of the hundred years' war, the problems of finance and the growth of faction. It is perhaps a trifle unfair to contemplate Dr. Griffiths' work as a biography, but some deference to Henry as a person is inevitable. Dr. Wolfe's biography, it may be said, complements and supplements Dr. Griffiths in this respect. Between them the two works present differing views of the King. For Dr. Griffiths Henry VI was unwise, easily led and inexperienced. He is presented to the reader in kinder terms and with a denial of Henry's wilful involvement in affairs of state up to 1453. In many cases it is not possible to be certain of Henry's personal intervention, rather than his passive assenting to policies formulated by the council. Dr. Griffiths makes greater allowance for this element of doubt than does Dr. Wolfe, though perhaps in some cases goes too far in exonerating the King. It is questionable whether Henry's increase of his household was unplanned, and whether its curiously well arranged geographical distribution was in fact accidental. There is some leeway for ideas that Henry was more organised and clear headed than Dr. Griffiths suggests. The survival of the household up to Henry's collapse, and in spite of Suffolk's demise is a powerful indication of the true source of leadership. Certainly before 1453 there are signs that Henry's tenacity to his own misguided policies lay behind some of the disasters of those years. The lengthy study of Cade's Rebellion adds substantially to present knowledge and understanding of that event and draws attention to the many other revolts which occurred as an offshoot of the main movement. This together with an examination of the career of Richard, Duke of York, gives a very full picture of the political situation on the eve of Henry's collapse.

The final section of the work adds considerably to the period 1453-61, going, inevitably, well beyond the work of Dr. Wolfe. Henry VI had become a virtual cabbage. In terms of biography there is little that can be added to a study of his character after 1453. He became increasingly remote from his kingdom which was plunged ever more deeply into serious difficulty. Dr. Griffiths' reconstruction of the events of 1455-61 is a lucid rendering of a highly complicated web of political intrigue. He works steadily towards the development of a dynastic issue bringing out the clash between the general loyalty to Henry and the increasingly widespread loathing of his French Queen. The compromise of the Westminster Accord, was an 'inspired solution', but in ignoring the residual problem of Margaret of Anjou and her son, contained a fundamental weakness that was only resolved by a fight to the death.

Overall Dr. Griffiths' book is a bold and valiant examination of a long period of English History which is essential to a full understanding of both the Houses of Lancaster and of York. The wealth of accessible material contained therein is well worth tackling by anyone with an interest in the period.

ROWENA E. ARCHER

THE CROWN AND THE TOWER: THE LEGEND OF RICHARD III, researched and edited by William H. Snyder. Richard III Society Inc. 1981. £9.50.

This compendium by the Chairman of the American branch of the Society is a condensation of Caroline Halsted's biography of Richard III (published in 1844), to which is added, chapter by chapter, a commentary by the editor and relevant quotations from other historians and commentators. It contains much information of interest to Ricardians, including the full text of the *Titulus Regius*, and will serve as a valuable work of reference on major topics and issues in the controversy over Richard's character, kingship and career.

It may serve, too, to arouse renewed interest in Caroline Halsted, whose jewelled prose remains a delight to read. As she writes of herself in her Preface: 'When brought together, and placed in opposition to the statements which have so long and so lamentably passed for history, the results [of her research] were so convincing that the author felt encouraged to submit them to the public. She was well aware that in so doing she should oppose herself to opinions long and deeply rooted—to a part of our national historical belief, which it is something like heresy to dispute. But, strong in the power of the evidences she had analysed, and in the belief that no prejudice can withstand the truth when fairly and simply displayed, she indulges the hope that, her unwearied research having fortified her with facts, and her own views being supported by those who rank high in literary fame, she may be shielded from the charge either of defective judgment or of presumption in her bold undertaking.'

To supplement the admirable Miss Halsted, the admirable Mr. Snyder has excavated nuggets all the way from Harleian ms. 433 and the Paston letters to Professor H. G. Hanbury on Richard III as a legislator and Dr. R. H. G. Lyne-Pirk on Those Bones. A grand gallimaufry!

JEREMY POTTER

A RYTHYR LEGACY: THE MONUMENTS ASSESSED. Pauline Routh and Richard Knowles. Bedesman Books, 1981. £1.80.

Following closely upon the authors' Sheriff Hutton monograph (still available), comes this, the second rewarding work of collaboration by these Yorkshire members. Pleasingly, it complements also Pauline Routh's inaugural volume, *The Harewood Alabasters* (1973), in that there were Ryther connections with both castle and church at Harewood, the latter including among its fine monuments some commemorating the family itself and others with whom they intermarried.

The present work opens with a detailed survey of the extant series of tombs in the church of All Saints, Ryther, with photographs by both authors and Geoffrey Wheeler. Of particular interest to members will be the tombs of Sir William Ryther (d.1475), and his son, Sir Robert (d.1491), the carvings of the effigy and tomb chest of the former ranking with the finest work of the period. The wills of father and son are reproduced as an appendix.

In the second half of this thirty-four page booklet the changes in disposition and state of preservation of the monuments are plotted by drawing upon the records of antiquaries who visited the church in subsequent centuries, some printed here for the first time. So far as Sir William's tomb is concerned the history is as complete as it is likely ever to be: from the specification, in his will,

that he be buried in his own parish church to the conservation treatment more than five hundred years later.

The final section describes the work of restoration of the Ryther monument, acknowledging the contributions made to the successful outcome by concerned bodies and experts. Here, as at Harewood, the story has a happy ending; yet disturbing numbers of our monuments remain at risk through the ravages of time, neglect and damp. These include not only the especially vulnerable alabaster tombs of the period but also, as the authors remind us, the beautiful limestone effigies of Sir William's fourteenth century antecedents at Ryther itself.

W. J. WHITE

THE ARDEN SHAKESPEARE, KING RICHARD III. Edited by Antony Hammond, Methuen and Co. Ltd., 1981. £11.50 hardback, £2.95 paperback.

This edition comprises the text of the play, annotated and with notes of all major variant readings, a lengthy introduction, and appendices consisting of longer notes on variant passages and readings, and of sources, quoting passages from Hall and the *Mirror for Magistrates*.

The introduction deals at some length with the text, the date of the play, the play in performance, its sources, and finally interpretation of the play itself. The list of references provides a comprehensive bibliography.

Antony Hammond discusses in detail the various quarto texts and Folio, and concludes that Folio is generally to be preferred as the pre-performance text, predating the quartos, all derivative from quarto I, which originate as a 'memorial' copy pieced together by the entire company, possibly including Shakespeare. Quarto thus tends to preserve evidence of the way the play was adapted for performance, in terms of stage directions, cuts, and doubling of parts, including probably cuts and alterations made by Shakespeare himself. Quarto also preserves compositorial errors and the difficulty is to determine as far as is possible, into which category the variants fall: any more final solution than value judgement would require the use of a computerized investigation. Antony Hammond concludes in summary that Folio was set from quarto's 3 and 6, and a manuscript which was probably Shakespeare's final complete draft of the play. Despite his dry comment 'after this long and somewhat scholarly study of how many compositors can dance on the tail of a thin-space', this section is readable and interesting, with all the elements of a detective story.

He then goes on to endeavour to determine the date of the play, again a subject not susceptible to a final conclusion, but only to be suggested as 1591 by means of comparative evidence involving the dating of *Henry VI* and evidence that Marlowe knew *Richard III* by the time he wrote *Edward II*.

The twelve page section on the play in performance cannot of course compare with Julie Hankey's entire book on the subject (*Shakespeare: Richard*

III: *Plays in Performance*, Junction Books Ltd., 1981) but it is unfortunate that Hammond seems to have been writing too early to make any reference to her work. Hammond concentrates on the practicalities of performance—the size of cast needed and extent of doubling, the nature of the properties required and the probable cuts made. He then discusses briefly the history of the play in performance, making the point that the long continuance of the Cibber version was in part due to its relative ease of performance in eliminating the worst problems of doubling. In the nineteenth century, Kean's production took elaboration to the point of grotesqueness: a contemporary critic remarked, 'the painter, the tailor and the upholsterer are Mr. Kean's interpreters of Shakespeare'. Hammond has little good to say for Irving's restoration of Shakespeare as opposed to Cibber: Irving used the former but cut and patched ruthlessly—the work is just another arrogant actor's botch concludes Hammond. Similarly he is unhappy that Olivier's film version 'elected to perform a bastardized text' and 'the film's main effect on subsequent stage productions has been mainly a negative one.'

The following section on sources might one feels have come better before the 'play in performance'. It has less of interest to offer than the discussions on the text. From Hall Shakespeare took his facts, and, Hall being largely More's *Richard III* at this point, also his interpretation. Hammond scouts Hanham's view of More: His own is that More 'undoubtedly believed himself to be writing history' and, as far as accuracy and reliability go, both More and Shakespeare used their sources responsibly. Sources contemporary to Richard he states, regard him 'as a dangerously unscrupulous usurper, who had almost certainly had Prince Edward and his brother privily murdered' etc., etc. From Hall Shakespeare derived the moralistic pattern of the downfall of the house of York, and from the *Mirror for Magistrates* he took a good deal more, thinks Hammond, than has been recognised, often stimulated by the rhetoric if not using the actual events.

Hammond then discusses the play itself, a lengthy and interesting section on the rôle of Richard, its antecedents in morality drama and the rôle of the 'Vice', the aspect of retribution, and the varying realistic and ritual levels in the play and the characters. Thus Margaret is largely ritual, whereas Elizabeth Woodville and Ann have a greater degree of realism, and Richmond should be properly appreciated as an almost entirely ritualistic character, stepping into a prepared rôle as 'saviour'. Hammond also remarks on the importance of considering *Richard III* as the conclusion to the *Henry VI* trilogy: 'the context of *Henry VI* is essential to *Richard III* since otherwise 'the play as a whole gets reduced to a *comédie noire* or a hilarious melodrama'.

A few unfortunate errors have crept into the footnotes to the text: Elizabeth Woodville was not thirty-seven, or younger than Edward IV, at his death (page 131) nor was Rutland aged seven at his (page 161), or the Duchess of York's youngest son (page 277).

It is from the Ricardian point of view perhaps to be regretted that the editor of a new edition of *Richard III* should be so firmly entrenched in the traditional view of the real Richard, but that aside, the introduction provides a stimulating discussion of the play itself and of its texts, in particular.

ELIZABETH M. NOKES

THE MEDIEVAL MONASTERIES OF YORKSHIRE. Joan and Bill Spence. Ambo Publications, Helmsley 1981. £5.00 (hardback), £2.75 (paperback).

Joan and Bill Spence's *The Medieval Monasteries of Yorkshire* is an attractive production and will probably prove an interesting and useful acquisition for the dedicated monastery-hopper. In a mere 116 pages it describes twenty of the best-known Yorkshire religious houses, those of which there are considerable remains still to be seen. It also fits in a brief history of English monasticism, and some notes on the different orders of monks, canons and friars which at various times founded houses in Yorkshire. There is a short glossary of architectural terms. A time chart at the end of the book shows that fourteen out of the twenty monasteries described were founded in the twelfth century; none survived the reign of Henry VIII. A fuller list of Yorkshire religious houses completes the book. It includes friaries and houses of canons as well as monks, giving the order concerned, the dates of foundation and closure and the present state of the remains, if any.

The guide to the monasteries forms the bulk of the book, and although not replacing those detailed D.O.E. pamphlets we all buy (and promptly lose and have to buy again on our next visit) it gives enough information on each to make a visit interesting. Indeed, a few of the monasteries described are not in the care of the D.O.E., being parish churches or in private hands. In ten cases a small plan of the monastery buildings is given, the various parts being identified by letters keyed to the glossary. Details of the buildings are brought out in sixteen beautiful drawings by Judith Gilbert. The rest of the copious illustrations come from Dugdale (1849 ed.) and Lefroy, *The Ruined Abbeys of Yorkshire* (c.1890).

The information given on each house is of a chatty nature—a brief sketch of how it was founded, some points to look for concerning the layout of the buildings, and the circumstances of its dissolution. Sidelights on the religious life of the different orders are also given—the hermit-like life of the Carthusians (Mount Grace), each monk having his own cell; and the austerity of the Cistercians (e.g. Kirkstall and Rievaulx). The Gilbertines were often in double houses of canons and nuns (Malton was for canons only); they had separate sets of buildings within the same precinct, and though they shared the church, a high partition divided them there.

MARY O'REGAN

HISTORICAL ATLAS OF BRITAIN. Edited by Malcolm Falkus and John Gillingham. Granada, 1981. £15.

At the beginning of this review I have to confess to an interest, in that historical atlases have always fascinated me. Looking at the maps seems to make a historical situation easier to understand—which is, one supposes, the reason for them. There have been many other historical atlases before this one, but not to my knowledge one devoted specifically to the British Isles, until now. It was therefore with anticipation that I opened this book, not unmixed with a certain amount of prejudice. The latter was due to the fact that in my experience large, glossy picture books such as this one are usually short on facts, whatever the quality of the illustrations. I am pleased to be able to say therefore that this book is, with certain reservations, an exception to this rule. It is divided into two parts: political history, and social and economic history, and the authors state in their

Introduction that the book is intended to be a comprehensive survey of British history from the earliest times until the present, with an emphasis on social and economic events. Most such atlases have in the past concentrated on political events. The section on political history is divided into six chapters by period, from 4,000 BC up to the present day. These chapters are then further sub-divided into double page spreads consisting of one to three maps, an illustration and a potted history of the subject, e.g. 'The Wars of the Roses'. Due to the amount of compression involved the summaries of events are sometimes somewhat misleading, or even of doubtful accuracy. For example, in the pages headed 'The Wars of the Roses', the statement that 'hardly anyone was prepared to fight for Richard III' as a consequence of his actions alienating both Yorkists and Lancastrians, is hardly supported by the evidence. One might question too the utility of many of the illustrations, which, while very well reproduced, do not really add a great deal to the usefulness of an atlas.

The social and economic history sections are refreshingly different from previous atlases, with an imaginative use of graphs in colour to illustrate such topics as population trends, food production and industrial growth. These are all more informative than the usual rather dreary maps purporting to show these things, and contribute to a fuller picture of life in these Islands. The maps and graphs showing population and wealth distribution in the Middle Ages do in particular help to an understanding of political events in the fifteenth century. In fact all of the maps seem well chosen, and do illustrate important aspects of, and events in, our history. Altogether a book well worth acquiring or consulting for the maps and diagrams, if not for the text.

P. W. HAMMOND

Notices of Books and Articles

The following list consists of recent books and articles, mainly published in the last twelve months, although earlier publications may be included. The appearance of an item does not preclude its subsequent review. Items marked by an asterisk are in the Society's Library.

BOOKS

S. H. Cuttler, *The Law of Treason and Treason Trials in Later Medieval France*. 272 pages. 1981. Cambridge University Press, £25.

Includes comparisons with contemporary English laws and practice.

R. H. C. Davis and J. M. Wallace Hadrill (editors), *The Writing of History in the Middle Ages. Essays presented to R. W. Southern*. 517 pages. 1981. Clarendon Press, Oxford, £22.50.

Includes Maurice Keen, 'Chivalry, Heralds and History' and Roger Lovatt, 'John Blacman: biographer of Henry VI'.

Richard W. Pfaff, *Medieval Latin Liturgy: A Select Bibliography*. 128 pages. 1982. University of Toronto Press, \$20.

A select bibliography on aspects of the medieval liturgy. Sections cover the mass, occasional offices, and the liturgical year.

Pauline Routh and Richard Knowles, *A Ryther Legacy: the monuments assessed*. Illustrated. 34 pages. Bedesman Books, 30 Newland Court, Sandal, Wakefield WF1 5AG. 1982. £1.80 plus 20p postage.

History of the monuments at Ryther in the West Riding, including the tomb of Sir William Ryther (d.1475).*

M. C. Seymour (editor), *Selections from Hoccleve*. 1981. Oxford University Press, hardback £10, paperback £4.95.

Useful representative collection of the work of the poet who worked in the Chancery of Henry V and Henry VI.

ARTICLES

Pauline E. Sheppard Routh, A Fifteenth Century Alabaster Panel at Burnsall, *The Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*, Vol. 53, 1981, pages 133-136.

A 'reversed type', Adoration of the Magi, in the parish church of St. Wilfrid, Burnsall, Yorkshire, possibly made in a York alabaster workshop in the early part of the fifteenth century.*

THESES

W. R. Harwood, *The Courtenay Family in the politics of region and nation in the later fifteenth century and early sixteenth century*. Cambridge M.Litt. Thesis 1979.

L. E. James, *The career and political influence of William de la Pole, first Duke of Suffolk*. Oxford M.Litt. Thesis 1979.

P. A. Johnson, *The Political Career of Richard, Duke of York, to 1456*. Oxford D.Phil. Thesis 1981

I. Joynt, *The Blood Feud in Sir Thomas Malory's *Morte D'Arthur**. Newcastle upon Tyne University, M.Litt. Thesis 1978.

Notes on Contributors

Rowena E. Archer is currently working on late medieval English history for a D.Phil. at Oxford.

Lorraine C. Attreed was an undergraduate at the University of New Mexico, and received master's degrees from York and Harvard. She is presently working on fifteenth century cities for her doctoral dissertation.

Robert C. Hairsine. A member of the Society. Co-editor of the file of Chancery Warrants, C81/1392, in *The Ricardian*, Numbers 64, 66 (1979).

P. W. Hammond. Research Officer of the Society. Co-editor of the Society's edition of *British Library Harleian MS. 433*.

W. E. Hampton. An artist in several fields including stained glass. Author of *Memorials of the Wars of the Roses*.

Bernard Juby is a medical practitioner. Vice-President for Heraldry of the Birmingham and Midland Society for Genealogy and Heraldry, and member of the Heraldry Society. Author, collector and medievalist.

Elizabeth Nokes. Secretary of the London Branch and Correspondence Secretary for the Society.

James Petre. A member since 1967; qualified teacher; currently researching the decline of the castle in England at King's, London. Co-author of *Castles: A History and Guide* (Blandford 1980).

Muriel Smith. A member since 1970. She has worked for many years on Harrap's *New Standard French and English Dictionary* as a sub-editor, and on other Harrap dictionaries.

William White. A member since 1972. He is a chemist interested in conservation and the application of scientific techniques to archaeological problems.

Isolde Wigram. Honorary Secretary of the Richard III Society from 1956 to 1968.

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J. H. Ramsey, *Lancaster and York*, Vol. 2 (Cambridge 1892), pp.485-6.

B. P. Wolfe, When and why did Hastings lose his head? *English Historical Review*, Vol. 89 (1974), pp.835-844.

Details need not be given in full for second and subsequent references to the same source.

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