

Book Reviews

PROFESSION, VOCATION AND CULTURE IN LATER MEDIEVAL ENGLAND. Essays dedicated to the memory of A. R. Myers. Edited Cecil H. Clough. Liverpool University Press 1982. £18.50.

This book was designed as a tribute to A. R. Myers on his retirement in 1980 and became, sadly, a collection *in memoriam*. For the Richard III Society Professor Myers was a courteous and friendly correspondent in the matter of the publication of BL. Harleian Ms. 433. The theme is the culture of English society in the later middle ages studied in terms of several professional and vocational groups.

Jennifer Kermode defines the small and much intermarried merchant class of York, Beverley and Hull. These were men who accepted public office and responsibility and struggled to maintain 'good government', as they saw it, and improve their environment. They spent their money on beautifying their towns with churches or guildhalls and they provided for their souls by giving to the poor, the sick and the imprisoned. They led comfortable, reasonably literate lives, patronizing such cultural events as the play cycles of York and Beverley. Inevitably there is an overlap between this study and that of Helen Jewell on the lay official families of the North, especially Yorkshire. Both make extensive use of the same source material, notably wills. Like their merchant brothers the officials were literate and expected to be so by the crown before they received such offices as controller of the customs and coroner. They also owned books and patronized education and artists, on a modest scale and usually for predominantly practical reasons.

Professor Storey traces the growth of that class which was called 'gentlemen' and which emerged after the Statute of Additions of 1413 which laid down that all defendants' names in indictments and original writs must be followed by their 'estate or degree' or trade as well as their towns and counties. It was not a new class but it was a new 'name of worship', fitting in between the esquire (and sometimes the same as esquire) and the yeoman. Professor Storey's is a useful and illuminating description of how to define the fifteenth century 'gentleman'. At the centre of his study is the rise of the lay civil servant who took over from the cleric in this century and who was invariably defined as a 'gentleman'. There are appendices of office holders in the Household and Exchequer before 1461.

The Church is represented by Richard Davies' study of the episcopate and C. T. Allmand's of the civil lawyers. The much maligned bishops of this period are defended as a diverse, well educated group, mostly from 'county' families and usually concerned to do their best for their flocks. The late middle ages saw a tendency to appoint graduates, a preponderance studying either civil law or canon and civil law, and a smaller number studying theology, a subject less immediately useful for an administrative career (the latter included George Neville and Thomas Bourchier neither of whom had to consider how to make

their way in the world). Davies' article is an important one in combating the frequently repeated misconceptions about the pre-Reformation episcopacy. The civil lawyers who did not acquire bishoprics might practise in the courts of Chivalry, Admiralty, of the church and of Chancery. They and their law exercised a valuable and underestimated influence, considers Dr. Allmand. The civil courts were used increasingly under the Yorkist kings and civilians were conspicuous among the men used in diplomacy, both on embassies and drawing up the relevant treaties; they were the international lawyers of their day. They came from prosperous families, often studied in Italy and were open to humanist influences.

Arguably the most innovative group, both culturally and intellectually, was that of the common lawyers. E. W. Ives breaks new ground in dealing extensively with the emergence of England's 'third university' at the Inns of Court, a new system of education that exercised tremendous influence throughout English society. It was a common lawyer too who produced a major contribution to political analysis (Fortescue) and another who wrote one of the greatest practical books of English law (Littleton's *Tenures*). Others were compiling the *Year Books*.

The least regarded group, in their own day, comes last. They were also the smallest (300-600 at any time) and the poorest, earning perhaps £10 a year. Nicholas Orme argues persuasively however, that the schoolmasters had among the most far reaching influences of all these groups. It was they who taught all the literate their letters, from the average apprentice to Geoffrey Chaucer and the kings of England. They made a considerable impression on the development of the English language particularly while teaching grammar (Latin) for they wrote text books of English passages for translation into Latin and while pointing out the rules of Latin also classified the parts of English.

This collection of essays reveals how wide and various were the communities of late medieval England yet how closely united by the pervasive culture and teaching of the church. Its subject commands attention and should encourage further work in this neglected field.

ANNE F. SUTTON

THE CASTLE STORY by Sheila Sancha. 1981. Penguin, Harmondsworth, £3.95.

Aimed principally at younger readers, Mrs. Sancha's book, which first appeared in 1979, is chiefly characterised by its diagrams, drawings, and photographs on which she generally sketches missing battlements, knights in armour and the like. A good many of these diagrams have appeared elsewhere, in D.O.E. Guidebooks for instance, but some are new, and certainly her cartoons are good, harmless fun, especially that of 'Hugh Bigod drawn from imagination' on page 86.

In essence, the book attempts to trace the architectural history of the British castle from start to finish while simultaneously giving some account of what life was like within it. In a small book this is quite a difficult task, and unfortunately Mrs. Sancha makes her problems of compression more acute by relatively lengthy excursions into political history, which may perhaps explain why, at the end of the book, she can only allocate four pages to works of the fifteenth

century. What concerns me most however, is that *The Castle Story* may be responsible for the perpetuation of certain, rather old fashioned ideas. One constantly recurring feature of the work is that of identifying particular buildings as garrison quarters when it is far from always clear that such was what they were. Again, as with most writers on the subject, Mrs. Sancha is anxious to underline the redundancy of rectangular keeps from the reign of Henry II. On page 83 she claims that Henry built Orford because of dissatisfaction with the older keeps, though this hardly explains why King Henry continued building in rectangular form. On the same subject she claims on page 92 that in Henry's reign, only barons were so old fashioned as to build square keeps and she then apparently cites Kenilworth, Dover and Scarborough as examples of this, though the last two were most certainly built by King Henry.

It would perhaps be tiresome to itemise all the points on which I feel the author should revise her views, but I consider that some cannot go without comment. Thus it should be added that it is quite wrong to see the first half of the thirteenth century as an uninspiring hiatus between the splendours of Dover and Château Gaillard with those of Caerphilly and Caernarvon. Indeed it can be asserted that some castles built c. 1200-1250, particularly Beeston, Bolingbroke and the earlier Tattershall were among the most formidable, from a purely military point of view, of all time. On page 133 (and she is not alone in this error) she declares Caerphilly was the first concentric castle when she has already noted this feature at Dover and Kenilworth. One page 172, she writes off Edward II as never having built a castle in his life when, of all English kings, Edward probably showed the keenest interest in the actual details of castle design in England, as witness Knarborough. On page 178 she reveals she has no real knowledge of the contingents that made up the feudal armies of the early middle ages, and most grievously, on page 210 she alleges that the nobility of the Wars of the Roses were too busy fighting each other to build castles.

Having said all this, I must weigh the scales a little and indicate that the book is nonetheless an adequate introduction to the English castle. Its line drawings and other illustrations will no doubt stimulate the interest of the uninitiated, young or old, and it can in fact even be illuminating to those with some prior knowledge. I especially enjoyed chapter 3 on domestic life in the hall and was fascinated to learn that stale roundels of bread were used as plates (?). Her attempt at a reconstruction of Kenilworth at the time of the siege of 1266 (page 125) though rather unpolished by her own standards, is especially well thought out, and finally her short extract from *Piers Plowman* (page 169) is really quite exciting. Its relevance to late medieval 'castellologie' does not seem to have been recognised as yet, and I for one am grateful to Mrs. Sancha for pointing it out.

J. PETRE

KNIGHTHOOD IN MEDIEVAL LITERATURE. Edited by W. H. Jackson. 1981. D. S. Brewer, Woodbridge, £9.50.

Once upon a time, in the burgeoning lands of France and Germany, knights held a low position in society. The violence of their trade and their lack of

distinguished ancestors separated them from the nobility who idealized different virtues. By the twelfth century, however, knightly prestige grew as the Church began to value and use military skills, and as the traditional nobles lost power. Literature slowly took notice of the trend and began to equate knighthood with new moral, spiritual and social values, in memorable and enduring chivalric romance. The six essays in this book trace the birth and long life of the genre, which continued even after the military usefulness of knights was lessened by mercenaries, footsoldiers, a moneyed economy, and the rise of territorial states. Tony Hunt's introductory essay on the rise of the knight from the eleventh century has a sound historical basis in the work of Georges Duby, although Hunt ranges farther to study the German and Anglo-Norman warrior class. Linda Paterson's study of the Occitan epic reveals the gradual development of chivalric and courtly love themes, as they grew from a more mundane emphasis on friendship, service, and knighthood as a profession. A similar serious and practical note is found in Ann McKim's essay on the prudent hero James Douglas in the fourteenth-century Scottish tale *Bruce*. Two essays, including one by editor Jackson, on twelfth-century German literature return to the theme of the slow growth of respect for the knightly class, and the assistance rendered by the Church. In *Rolandstied*, the warrior's profession not only does not conflict with Christian values, but becomes the means of knightly salvation, making swords like Roland's cherished Durendal instruments of divine purpose. The final essay by W. R. J. Barron shows that the genre grew more complex by the fifteenth century. England's civil wars and knightly criminals may have encouraged the nobility increasingly to idealize chivalric values preserved almost solely in literature, but Barron shows that even romances were not immune to social realities. Irony in *Sir Gawain* and *Le Mortè Darthur* 'can leave the ideal untouched while sharpening the reader's awareness of the demands which devotion to chivalry makes upon human nature'. This book as a whole is a study of irony, as it shows how the cavalryman was able to live happily ever after in the aristocratic literature which was so reluctant to accept and value him in the first place.

LORRAINE C. ATTREED

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.

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BOOKS

Patricia Basing (editor), *Parish Fraternity Register. Fraternity of the Holy Trinity and SS. Fabian and Sebastian in the Parish of St. Botolph without Aldersgate*. London Record Society 1982. £10 to non-members; apply the Hon. Secretary, c/o Institute of Historical Research, Senate House, London WC1E 7HU.

An edition with introduction of the rules, lists of members, accounts, cartulary of deeds and memoranda from the thirteenth to sixteenth centuries. Fraternities were a common feature of medieval life, existing for charitable and pious purposes, but their records rarely survive. The first publication of the records of a London example.

J. A. Burrow, *Medieval Writers and their Work: Middle English Literature and its Background, 1100-1500*. 208 pages. 1982. Oxford University Press. £9.95 (hardback), £3.95 (paperback).

Useful introduction to the subject. Covers cultural and historical background as well as the development of the language.

Roger Custance (editor), *Winchester College: Sixth-Centenary Essays*. 544 pages, illustrated. 1982. Oxford University Press. £20.

Includes essays on William of Wykeham and the Historians, the site of the College and its lands, its buildings and 'Wykehamist culture' before the Reformation.

David Fallows, *Dufay*. Illustrated. 1982. Dent. £9.95.

Covers both the life of this important fifteenth century composer and the music of the period as a whole.

S. S. Frere, Sally Stow and Paul Bennett, *The Archaeology of Canterbury Volume II: Excavations on the Roman and Medieval Defences of Canterbury*. 181 pages, illustrated. 1982. Kent Archaeological Society for the Canterbury Archaeological Trust, £9.50 (plus £1.60 p.&p.) to non-members from Canterbury Archaeological Trust, 92a Broad Street, Canterbury, Kent CT1 2LU.

Includes excavations of city wall and studies of the West Gate and St. Mary Northgate Church.

J. C. Holt, *Robin Hood*. 208 pages. Illustrated. 1982. Thames and Hudson. £8.95.

New theories about the legendary Robin Hood by an historian of the aristocracy. A chapter discusses the composition of the audience of the Tales.

Norman Macdougall, *James III. A Political Study*. 338 pages. 1982. James Donald, Edinburgh, £18.

Important new study of the King of Scotland with whom Richard III had diplomatic relations.

Maureen Fennell Mazzaoui, *The Italian Cotton Industry in the later Middle Ages 1100-1600*. 250 pages. 1981. Cambridge University Press. £24.

Contains some discussion of the cotton industry and the use of cotton north of the Alps including England in the fifteenth century.

K. B. McFarlane, *England in the Fifteenth Century. Collected Essays*. Edited by G. L. Harriss. 1981. Hambleton Press, London. £15.

Useful collection of the work of the historian who revived research into fifteenth century England. Essential reading.

J. R. Roskell, *Parliament and Politics in late Medieval England*. Two volumes. 1981. Hambleton Press, London. £18 each.

Collected essays of an historian of the fifteenth century parliament: volume 1 includes his discussion of the office and dignity of the Protector; volume 2 contains all his biographical essays on the speakers of parliament including William Catesby, Speaker in 1484.

Nicholas Orme, *The Minor Clergy of Exeter Cathedral 1300-1548. A List of the Minor Officers, Vicars Choral, Annuellars, Secondaries and Choristers*. xxviii and 164 pages. 1980. University of Exeter. £4.50.

A list of about 1,000 of the frequently forgotten but ubiquitous minor clergy of the later middle ages. The introduction covers their local background, education and finances. Plan of the cathedral close.

Colin Platt, *The Castle in Medieval England and Wales*. 224 pages. Illustrated. 1982. Secker and Warburg. £12.50.

The castle and its uses explained against the background of medieval politics, society and economics. A companion volume to Dr. Platt's *The Parish Churches of Medieval England*.

Susan Rose, *The Navy of the Lancastrian Kings. The Accounts and Inventories of William Soper, Keeper of the King's Ships 1422-27*. 288 pages. 1982. Allen and Unwin in conjunction with the Navy Record Society, £17.50.

A study of the medieval navy based on an account book in the Library of the National Maritime Museum at Greenwich. Important for an understanding of the Yorkist navy.

Beryl Rowland (editor), *Medieval Woman's Guide to Health*. 193 pages. Illustrated. 1981. Kent State University, Ohio, and Croom Helm Ltd., London. £10.95.

An edition with introduction of the first gynaecological handbook written in English.

Sheila Sancha, *The Castle Story*. 224 pages. Illustrated. 1982. Penguin Books. £3.95.

Mainly designed for children but the delightful illustrations, a mixture of photographs and drawings, recommend it to adults too.

ARTICLES

Edith G. Henderson, Legal Rights to Land in Early Chancery Cases, *American Journal of Legal History*, volume 26, number 2, April 1982, pages 97-117.

Mostly on the post 1485 period but deals briefly with the earlier years. Use of the Chancellor's Court for disputes over land especially in cases concerning unlawful retention of deeds or where the defendant was a person of greater power than the plaintiff.

Mark R. Horowitz, Richard Empson, minister of Henry VII, *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, vol. 55, no. 131, May 1982, pages 35-49.

A useful biography of a man whose career started under Edward IV, and who has not been studied in detail before. Unfortunately his dismissal from office under Richard III remains to be satisfactorily explained.*

Margaret Kekewich, The Attainder of the Yorkists in 1459: Two Contemporary Accounts, *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, vol. 55, no. 131, May 1982, pages 25-34.

Discussion and comparison of the *Somnium Vigilantis*, a violently anti-Yorkist tract, and the measured, moderate account of the events of 1459 in the Register of Abbot Whethamstede of St. Albans, written consciously as a history for future generations to read.*

J. R. Kenyon, Early Artillery Fortifications in England and Wales: a preliminary survey and reappraisal, *The Archaeological Journal*, volume 138, 1981, pp. 205-240.

Greatly needed survey of the architectural and documentary evidence for this subject up to 1539. Concentrates on castles, towns and blockhouses but adds details about fortified manor houses.*

Notes on Contributors

Lorraine C. Atreed. Research Officer of the Society's American Branch, a Ph.D. candidate at Harvard University, writing a thesis on English Crown-urban relations in the fifteenth century.

Rosemary E. Horrox. Co-editor of the Society's edition of *BL. Harleian MS. 433*.

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).

W. J. White. A member for ten years, he is the author of the forthcoming report on the human remains from the cemetery of St. Nicholas-in-the-Shambles, City of London.

Barrie Williams. Chaplain of St. Edward's Church, Cambridge, and Assistant Chaplain of Trinity Hall. Author of *The Subscription Book of Bishops Tounson and Davenant*.