

Research Notes and Queries

A Chantry Chapel at Sheriff Hutton

Peter Hammond has sent the following note:—

In the *BL Harleian Ms.433* (ed. Rosemary Horrox and P. W. Hammond, Vol. 2, 1980, p.189) there occurs a warrant to Geoffrey Franke, Receiver of the lordship of Sheriff Hutton, to pay 'Sir' William Symson, 'chantry priest of our Lady Chapel beside the Church of Sheriff Hutton' his salary at Michaelmas 'last past' for the half year. This warrant is dated 15 January 1485, and the period in question is thus the six months from 29 March 1484 until Michaelmas, 29 September. Appointment of chantry priests is rare in *BL Harleian Ms.433*, and indeed in other records, and one wonders why this particular appointment was made, at this particular time, at Sheriff Hutton. The possibility immediately occurs that this was a priest appointed to a chantry set up for Edward of Middleham, who died about the end of March 1484 (P. W. Hammond, *Edward of Middleham*, 1973, p.21). It is known that there were a number of chantry chapels in the parish of Sheriff Hutton, including one in the castle. The latter cannot possibly be meant because of the description 'beside the church', but which of the three or four within the church it was we cannot tell. There does appear to have been one dedicated to St. Mary. It is possible that there was a separate chapel in the churchyard as one Robert Jeffraison asked in 1525 in his will to be buried in the churchyard of the parish church of Sheriff Hutton 'on the north side, between the chapel and the church' (Borthwick Institute, Probate Register 9, f.339). This wording is reminiscent of that in the warrant to Geoffrey Franke.

Who William Symson was is also something of a mystery. He was possibly the W. S. of the York Diocese who was ordained priest on 12 June 1484 at Oxford (A. B. Emden, *Biographical Register Oxford*, vol. 3, 1959, p.1843), about whom nothing further appears to be known. He could just possibly be the W. S. who was Sacrist at the Premonstratensian Abbey of Topholme (Lincs.) described as priest in 1488 (F. A. Gasquet, *Collectanea Anglia-Premonstratensia*, vol. 3, Camden Society, 1906, p.160).

Thanks are due to Rosemary Horrox for first drawing my attention to the entry in *BL Harleian Ms.433*, and to Mr. Tony Wright for confirming the existence of a chapel of St. Mary in Sheriff Hutton church.

Book Reviews

THE YEAR OF THE THREE KINGS. Giles St. Aubyn. 1983. Collins, £11.95.

1483 shares with only two other years (1066 and 1936) the distinction of having had three different kings reigning in London in the same twelve months. This book tells the story of 1483, of the accession to the throne of

Richard III, and of the events surrounding that accession. This is the central portion of the book, introduced by a survey of English history from 1422 until the death of Edward IV and a survey of the sources used, and the book finishes with a chapter on the rest of Richard's reign and two chapters which analyse the 'purpose and nature' of his assumption of the throne and a description of later historians' handling of his reputation. There are also brief biographies of the chief protagonists.

The book is very carefully written, with a calm measured approach, and the evidence is discussed and conclusions clearly stated. Unfortunately it is hostile in tone to Richard throughout, with the worst motives usually being attributed to his actions. It would perhaps make a useful book for sixth forms, if it is borne in mind that the book is far from neutral. Unusually for historians, it is also written with a sense of humour. It is unfortunate that in the central chapters dealing with the events of May to June 1483 there is an over-reliance on More's *History*, even to including More's knowledge of Richard's motives, despite a warning against such reliance in the chapter on sources. This is in rather startling contrast to the discussion of the death of Edward V and his brother where More's account is dismissed out of hand, with judicious doubt being cast on the status of the bones in Westminster Abbey. While the conclusion is reached that the Princes were probably murdered on the orders of Richard III all other possibilities are carefully discussed.

Some interesting points are raised in the course of the book, for example in the account of Bosworth the interesting theory is put forward that Sir William Stanley may have intended to attack Henry Tudor and not Richard, but mistook his King for his enemy in the confusion of battle. Both men would of course have borne the royal arms. Several unusual references to Eton also occur, possibly due to the author being a senior history master at the College. There are a number of mistakes in the course of the book, possibly due to an over-reliance at times on secondary sources. The discussion of Buckingham's character for example seems to owe more to later interpretations than to contemporary sources. The writs of *supersedeas* sent out in June to cancel the parliament called for that month did not at the same time cancel the forthcoming coronation of Edward V, this was only postponed until November, and this point is crucial to a correct understanding of the situation at this time. Sir James Tyrell, a Suffolk man married to an Arundel of Lanherne, Cornwall, is once again credited with being a northerner. Despite these criticisms, and the bias with which the book is written, it is a clear and readable account of a very confused period, and of Richard's possible motives. A useful book.

P. W. HAMMOND

THE STATESMAN AND THE FANATIC — THOMAS WOLSEY AND THOMAS MORE by Jasper Ridley, Constable, London 1982, £12.50.

For well over a century, historians and biographers have found it commercially expedient to be revolutionaries. There is no more seductive

recommendation for any book than the assertion that it overturns cherished dogma or discredits the conventional wisdom. Nevertheless, in attempting the rehabilitation of Thomas Wolsey and in revealing the dark side of Thomas More, Jasper Ridley appears to present sincere views and, subject to the selectivity of a partisan approach, they are well-justified by the evidence he presents.

The unusual concept of a twin biography is also a good sales platform but as the unifying theme of this book it does not work very well. Whereas the closing chapter on 'The Verdict of History' reads well as a comparative essay on the two characters and their historiography, the preceding alternating chapters of biography are uneasy companions. Despite their roles as successive Chancellors under Henry VIII, the author finds surprisingly few points of contact between Wolsey and More. Mr. Ridley clearly had more than sufficient material and interest to do justice to either subject at full length and it is to be hoped that one day he will do so.

Readers of this Journal will be particularly interested in the chapters on Thomas More. His popular sanctity has for so long secured his unfinished biography of Richard III as a major stumbling block to the acceptance of any reassessment of the King. A person's image or reputation depends so much on the emphasis given to the different aspects of character, the interpretation of actions and motives and the inclusion or omission of selected evidence. So it is that playwright Robert Bolt's sympathetically framed *Man for All Seasons* may be viewed through Jasper Ridley's glass as a tormented, multi-schizophrenic persecuting bigot. The ironic parallel with the wildly diverse images of Richard III needs no elaboration. To decide how much of the 'sainted More' and how much of 'Ridley's More' to accept, the critical reader will need to go beyond the present conflicting biographers and engage in personal research. At least Thomas More has left a literary output on which one can base an assessment.

Whatever may be the final verdict, the view of Thomas More can never be quite the same now that Mr. Ridley has exposed to popular scrutiny More's treatment of heretics, his tyrannical rule over family and servants and the unbelievably venomous, foul-mouthed tirades of his *Answer to Luther*. It is therefore surprising that although Mr. Ridley demonstrates More's hypocritical willingness to debase his literary talent for political or intellectual expediency, he complacently accepts his account of Richard III at face value. Referring to the council meeting at which Hastings was denounced, Ridley states unequivocally that 'Shakespeare's version of the incident . . . (based on More) is historically accurate.' In fact, Ridley's uncritical approach to *Richard III* is disappointingly quite out of line with his treatment of the rest of More's literary output. However, if Mr. Ridley does not seem very interested in More the historian, others will doubtless find his re-appraisal and illumination of other aspects of More's complex life and character to be extremely relevant to just that subject.

ROBERT C HAIRSINE

ENGLISH COURT CULTURE IN THE LATER MIDDLE AGES, edited by V. J. Scattergood and J. W. Sherborne. Duckworth 1983. £18.

This is a well produced and illustrated collection of ten papers presented at a seminar at Bristol University in 1981, promoted by the Colston Research Society and introduced by J. A. Burrow. It covers the reigns of Edward III to Henry VII but concentrates on the first half of this period. The general consensus of opinion expressed is that the court of England, however it be defined, was not the central and crucial artistic influence the court could be in other European countries at this time. Individual kings are also demoted from past eminence as leaders of culture. J. W. Sherborne does not see either Edward III or Richard II as genuinely fulfilling this role. Edward III's main cultural achievement was in building and the frequent claims by art historians that Richard II's reign saw a pinnacle of artistic achievement is firmly corrected. V. J. Scattergood, dealing with the literature of this reign, similarly criticises the accepted view of Richard as the centre of a highly literate court, and prefers to emphasise the other, often closely linked, circles of the aristocracy, with its romances and a predominantly Latin and French culture, and the neighbourly London group of civil servants (such as Chaucer), lawyers and intellectuals. This postulates a more complex view of literary society than has been common among historians up to now.

An illuminating article from Maurice Kee concerns that late medieval knight. He argues persuasively that the crusade against the heathen was not an outmoded or impractical ideal, as so often stated, and points to the examples of families like the Lovells, Scropes and Morleys who supplied a succession of such crusaders to Prussia, the Eastern Mediterranean and Spain in the late fourteenth century. Chaucer's knight who loved chivalry and went on these same crusades was as much an accepted and recognisable ideal of society as his parson or ploughman.

Nicholas Orme covers the education of the potential courtier, male and female, aristocracy and gentry. The system of the later middle ages was more flexible and genial to the child than that of earlier generations and had not yet become the speciality of experts. Those who taught usually still did so as part of wider duties, and education was still part of daily life and not a consciously separate area of experience. This essay provides a remarkably detailed picture of a well born child's curriculum.

Richard Firth Green discusses the existence of 'courts of love' in the later middle ages and how those that may have existed (such as that of Charles VI of France) differed from those of the twelfth century. From 'courts of love' presided over by women they became male dominated circles for literary discussion and competition of *pays d'amours* very like the minstrel *pays*. The author admits there is no firm evidence for English 'courts of love' existing in any formal sense although poems continued to be written in the convention of debates on set themes and lip service was paid to female sovereignty.

Denton Fox surveys middle Scots poets and patrons and postulates that fifteenth century Scots (and Northern English) had the advantage of being able to draw on an active tradition of both alliterative and syllabic poetry,

unlike their Southern counterparts who only had the latter. This enabled the Scots to produce work of greater variety and skill in the 1400s.

H. M. Colvin re-defines more carefully and acceptably than previous writers the notion of a court style in architecture, limiting it to periods when the king can be seen to be personally involved. This chapter is made rewarding by the author's considerable knowledge of the King's Works.

A. I. Doyle tentatively dismisses the notion of a pervasive court influence on the production of books in English. He does not see the court as a self-sufficient group but one closely inter-related with the City of London and the provinces. He finds also that books in English were usually working-day productions, unless presentation copies, even when owned by earls. This dovetails with the researches of J. J. G. Alexander among illuminated manuscripts. The latter gives a detailed survey of all such works owned and commissioned by kings, queens and princes of Wales, using both the books that have survived and documentary evidence. He stresses the sparse survival of both these sources but is forced to conclude that English monarchs had little interest or discrimination and had little native talent to employ in this period. Even when a king like Edward IV spent large sums on books in Flanders, he failed to commission the best craftsmen, unlike his sister, Margaret of York, or his chamberlain, William Hastings. Alexander does put the *Beauchamp Pageant* among the best productions of native talent, but fails to mention that it was almost undoubtedly commissioned for Richard III's Prince of Wales by his mother, Queen Anne Neville, or his grandmother Anne Beauchamp.

The essays conclude with one by Nigel Wilkins on the considerable exchange of musical and poetic (song writing) skills across the Channel, in both directions. Music was an important part of a courtier's education and music was always present in ceremonial, secular and religious. Like the chapters by J. J. G. Alexander and A. I. Doyle, Wilkins supplies a useful bibliography of his subject in his footnotes.

Over all this book is a rewarding one for those interested in fifteenth century English culture.

ANNE F. SUTTON

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

Alistair Fox, *Thomas More. History and Providence*. 271 pages. 1982. Basil Blackwell, Oxford, £17.50.

Chapter 3 insists that the *History of Richard III* must be considered in conjunction with More's philosophy, with his *Utopia* and with his own political career. 1483 was an episode which revealed to More human nature's vulnerability to the devil who worked on men's weaknesses and irresponsibility with the resultant failure of free will and inevitable punishment. To More, Richard III was a manifestation of the devil, his outward crookedness reflecting his inner distortion, and the action of the *History* is both metaphorical and literal. In John Morton, More found a pattern for action which he was to imitate in his own career.

Glending Olson, *Literature as Recreation in the Later Middle Ages*. 245 pages. 1983. Cornell University Press, £14.75.

The author is convinced that late medieval people did regard certain literature as entertainment and valuable for that very reason, in contrast to the frequent assertion that medieval man valued literature only for its didactic and moral use.

Jeremy Potter, *Good King Richard?* 287 pages. 1983. Constable, £9.95.

A study of King Richard's reputation from his death to the present day. Examines the works of writers on Richard. 'An account of Richard III's life and times, character, appearance and reign, but above all, of the Great Debate.'

Nigel Saul, *The Batsford Companion to Medieval England*. 283 pages. Illustrated. 1983. Batsford, £14.95.

Dictionary of technical terms, themes, people, literature and institutions, with a bias towards the later middle ages. Useful reference book.

John A. F. Thomson, *The Transformation of Medieval England 1370-1529*. Series: Foundations of Modern Britain. 432 pages. 1983. Longmans, £14.95 hardback, £7.95 paperback.

Volume one of a new series covering both political and social history. The passage on Richard III is thoughtful and refreshingly unbiased.

ARTICLES

Lorraine C. Attreed, From *Pearl* Maiden to Tower Princes: towards a new history of medieval childhood, *Journal of Medieval History*, volume 9, number 1, March 1983, pages 43-58.

Contradicts Aries' thesis that medieval people neglected and ill treated their children. The author's other paper on this theme was given at the Richard III Seminar at Trinity College Oxford 1981 (see *Ricardian* no. 74, September 1981).*

Alan B. Cobban, Theology and Law in the medieval Colleges of Oxford and Cambridge, *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*, volume 65, number 1, 1982, pages 57-77.

Some evidence of a collegiate reaction against the prevalence of law.

THESES

A. P. M. Wright, The relations between the king's government and the English cities and boroughs in the fifteenth century. D.Phil. thesis, Oxford 1965.

Notes on Contributors

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

Peter W. Hammond, Research Officer of the Society and co-editor of the Society's edition of *British Library Harleian MS. 433*.

Frederick Hepburn. M. A. (Classics with Ancient History) St. Andrews, M.Litt. (History of Art) Edinburgh; teacher at Cheltenham Ladies' College.

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.

Livia Visser-Fuchs. A member since 1977. She has a B.A. in classical languages (Leyden) and history (Utrecht) and is now reading for an M.A. in history at Utrecht, whenever her family responsibilities permit.

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* and *The Franciscan Revival*.

Contributions to the Ricardian

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

B. P. Wolffe, *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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The Richard III Society: A History, by George Awdry. Its early years and achievements 1924-74. £1.50 (including p. & p. U.K. only). Available from the Sales Officer, Miss Anne Smith, 14 Lincoln Road, Guildford, Surrey GU2 6TJ.

A Beginner's Guide to Research, by the Society's Research Sub-Committee. Available from Miss Mary O'Regan, 7 St. Mary's Close, Leeds LS7 3RT. Please enclose 35 pence in stamps to cover cost and postage. Overseas members should send 4 international reply coupons for surface mail, or 6 for airmail.

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