

Book Reviews

THE PLAYFAIR HOURS: A LATE FIFTEENTH CENTURY ILLUMINATED MANUSCRIPT FROM ROUEN. Rowan Watson. Victoria and Albert Museum, London, 1984. £19.95.

The Playfair Hours is a Book of Hours of Sarum Use, produced in Rouen in the 1480s or early 1490s, with a Calendar indicating that it was intended for a Scottish owner. The manuscript seems, however, to have remained on the Continent at least until the eighteenth century, before being rebound in England or Scotland c.1820 and coming into the possession of the Playfair family apparently in the first half of the nineteenth century. It was sold by the Rev. Dr. Patrick Playfair in 1918 to benefit the Scottish Red Cross and bought by Sir Otto Beit, who gave it to the Victoria & Albert Museum.

The original ownership of the Book of Hours is unknown and this anonymity is characteristic of the manuscript as a whole: the text, apart from the Scottish saints of the Calendar, is a standard version of the Sarum Use; the scribal hand is an unexceptional example of the common '*lettre bâtarde*'; and whilst the illumination and illustration is profuse and skilful, and the iconography of the miniatures can be related to the work of 'named' masters, the artists of the manuscript are themselves unnamed. *The Playfair Hours* represents typically proficient, if unsensational work from what Rowan Watson calls 'the "middle range" of the market'.

For this reason *The Playfair Hours* presents problems (and opportunities) rather different from those of the generally exceptional manuscripts (*The Hastings Hours*, *The Rohan Hours*, etc.) that have received similar treatment in previous books. Rowan Watson's detailed discussion and description of *The Playfair Hours* (accompanied by 32 colour plates, reproducing all the manuscript's miniatures, but for seven small illustrations, and black-and-white plates from related manuscripts) concentrates upon this class of 'middle range' manuscripts, which he contrasts in his Introduction with finer and more lavishly produced books: 'Whereas manuscripts of this kind can be studied by grouping them according to the style and designs used by an outstanding master . . . this approach can lead to a rather mechanical assumption when applied to books like *The Playfair Hours* that the works of the most able artists were copied by a number of less capable imitators' (p.12). He goes on to suggest that a manuscript of the 'middle range' should be approached 'by identifying the styles and images used in the milieu or "school" from which it emerged rather than trying to explain its decoration and illustrative cycles by pointing to the direct influence of a prestigious artist'. This is a courageous line to take. In abandoning the traditional syntheses of art history ('school of'/'influenced by') Rowan Watson must seek the origin of such manuscripts in the

unindividualized collective of the medieval book trade; but it is surely right to attempt to explain 'middle range' manuscripts in terms of their ordinariness and not in terms of their possibly distant connections with a few exceptional treasures.

In sections 2-4 of his discussion of the manuscript, Rowan Watson reviews what information is available about the book trade in Rouen, particularly during the fifteenth century. There is interesting evidence of the concentration of book trade craftsmen in a single area of the city (p.21) and of bookselling at the gates to the cathedral precincts and in the square in front of the cathedral—prime positions, it appears, controlled by the cathedral authorities and defended by the booksellers themselves 'at different times in the 1480s against outsiders and traders dealing in printed books (pp.24-25, 31). A map or plan of Rouen might have been helpful in this discussion, but the evidence itself is clear enough and contrasts with what can be gathered about the organization of the trade in these localities. Typically, the commercial production of books seems to have involved no one pattern of working; those detailed records of the organization of the trade that do survive suggest a series of adventitious collaborations and relationships (pp.23-28). The complexity and variability of individual practice, here in Rouen but familiar also in the book trade in other medieval cities, accentuates the importance of geographical proximity and the emergent role of the stationer in articulating the organization of book production. It would be interesting to know more about the guilds and fraternities that catered for craftsmen in the book trade in Rouen during the fifteenth century, especially in relation to the emergence of a clearly identifiable group of middlemen, the 'libraires', whom Rowan Watson assumes to have co-ordinated the activities of craftsmen of the various book trades (p.26). Despite early references to individual crafts and use of the term 'libraire' by about the middle of the fifteenth century (pp.20, 23), there seems to have been no separate guild for any of the book trades in Rouen until the middle of the sixteenth century (pp.21, 27-28), which contrasts with the situation in Paris or London, for instance. But despite this curious silence, the evidence confirms the energetic opportunism of the 'libraires', from selling second-hand books (p.30) to investing in print as a logical extension of their involvement in the old technologies (pp.31-34).

Having described and discussed the history and text of *The Playfair Hours* in sections 5-7, the remaining sections, 8-9, are devoted to the illumination of the manuscript (with a short conclusion, section 10, and a full technical description of the manuscript in section 11), following which are the colour plates, descriptions of the plates and a list of black-and-white figures in the text. The plates provide complete materials (with the exception of a few, small illustrations noted above) for the study of the manuscript's illumination (though there is no obvious indication of the scale of the reproductions). The accompanying discussion relates the illustrations of the Calendar of *The Playfair Hours* to those of other Books of Hours made in Rouen in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The compositions for these Calendar illustrations seem to derive ultimately from Parisian models, which it is suggested might have been introduced from Paris by the Fastolf Master, who appears to have undertaken commissions in Rouen in the 1430s and 1440s (pp.19, 53). However the interest

of these compositions lies less in their possible origins than in their successive adaptation, whether from pattern books or from other copies, in the group of manuscripts that can be associated with *The Playfair Hours*. So, too, with the compositions for the miniatures in the text of *The Playfair Hours*, which can similarly be paralleled in other Rouen manuscripts and seem to be associated with the style of the so-called Master of the Geneva Latini. But once again, whatever the origins of these compositions or the direct stylistic influences upon the artists involved, the instructive feature of this group of associated manuscripts is their adaptation and evolution of compositions and iconographies. Rowan Watson repeats L. M. J. Delaissé's characterization of manuscripts produced in Rouen at this period as having 'a near perfect homogeneity', referring both to compositions and styles (pp.54, 75). It is again in the ordinariness of these 'middle range' manuscripts that their particular interest lies.

Rowan Watson's account of *The Playfair Hours* raises a number of important questions of the proper approach to manuscripts of this kind and to the functioning of the book trade in Rouen, but also in other centres at the end of the fifteenth century. His discussion and description of the manuscript is detailed and balanced and the book itself beautifully designed and very well produced. It's the sort of book that one would want to be given, but would probably have bought already oneself.

JEREMY GRIFFITHS

THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF MEDIEVAL ENGLAND AND WALES. John M. Steane. Croom Helm, London, 1984. £19.95.

John Steane interprets the title of his book in its widest sense. 'Medieval' covers the period from the eighth century (many examples are taken from Anglo-Scandinavian England) right up to the Tudor period, taking into account the Dissolution of the monasteries. 'Archaeology' also covers a multitude of disciplines. Mr. Steane uses documentary evidence, pictures, tombs, standing buildings and aerial surveys as well as the more usual forms of archaeology. However, professional practical archaeology is well covered and the author describes techniques and problems in archaeology today, raising wider issues.

The result is an attractive book, giving a comprehensive picture of medieval life in England and Wales. Mr. Steane uses examples from all over the two countries, particularly proving his deep knowledge of Oxfordshire and Northamptonshire. His arguments are well presented, and are not swamped by detail. It is inevitable in a book of this nature that any aspect can only be scratched on the surface, and this makes it a layman's guide, rather than a book for the serious archaeologist.

The book is carefully referenced, with the references at the end of each chapter, providing a good bibliography. Recently published archaeological reports are the most frequently cited sources; where his sources are secondary, Mr. Steane uses well-known and accepted authorities.

The chapters are divided into different aspects of medieval life: government; fortifications; religion; communications, towns, ports and trade; the medieval countryside; housing; industries and crafts and the necessities of life. They are not on the whole taken chronologically. The first chapter, on Government, immediately demonstrates the task of the book, with a concise introduction to its aims, and with its use of buildings, heraldry, seals and other forms of 'indirect' archaeology as examples. It contains an interesting discussion on medieval trials, from an unusual angle. The second chapter on Fortifications contains a strong element of documentary evidence, for example the Pipe Rolls, which Mr. Steane uses to illustrate the building of medieval castles.

Chapters 3, 4 and 5 on Religion, Communications, etc., and the Countryside emphasize the importance of topographical archaeology. Thus the second section of the chapter on Religion starts with an interesting discussion on the siting of ecclesiastical buildings. Chapter 5 on the lay-out of the medieval countryside gives a good description of the landscape of England and Wales; and because it has to be so brief, the overall picture is conveyed vividly to the reader.

In places, Mr. Steane leans towards the romantic, which contrasts with an otherwise factual and accurate book. He refers to the 'weary traveller at the end of a hard day's journey' when discussing inns, and whilst suggesting the effect of the Black Death on the economy may have been exaggerated, he needs more evidence to back up rather dramatic statements (influenced by Huizinga) about its effects on morale. This tendency also shows in some of his own photographs, obviously taken specially for the book. Generally, the book is well illustrated (although there is no key to Figure 7.8 on the reconstruction of a late Saxon pole lathe, p.239).

One serious omission is the absence of any discussion on Guilds or Mysterics, which must have affected most craftsmen and traders in one form or another. The chapter on Industries and Crafts mentions them only in passing. Buildings such as the Merchant Adventurers' Hall in York are proof of the power of these institutions.

This book is thoroughly enjoyable, making the reader much more aware of the evidence of medieval life that still surrounds us.

CAROLINE MARTIN

THE CHURCH IN LATE MEDIEVAL NORWICH 1370-1532. Norman P. Tanner. Studies and Texts, volume 66, 1984. Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 59 Queen's Park Crescent East, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5S 2C4. \$25.

At first glance, it might be supposed from the title that this was a book about the Church hierarchy and administration in Norwich. However, although bishops and their officials, and other leading churchmen, are mentioned from time to time, the book is, in fact, 'not principally concerned with the Church as an institution but rather with what Christianity meant to, and how it was

practised by, the mass of Christians' (p.xv). Norwich, one of the largest English cities of the period, the site of a cathedral and several religious houses, with links with the Low Countries and the Rhineland (fertile areas for new religious movements), and the home of the celebrated mystic Julian of Norwich, is a city that amply rewards such study. That the religious life of its citizens can be studied in any depth at all is largely thanks to the magnificent series of wills surviving from the 1370s onwards. Wills are the primary source for this book, as they were for Dr. Tanner's D.Phil thesis on which it is based. However, the author is aware of the dangers of relying solely on will evidence and has used a myriad of other sources to supplement his findings. These include records of city government and the guilds and pious confraternities, bishops' registers and visitation records, and the records of the Norwich Prior and Chapter.

The book produced by this detailed study of relevant records falls into three sections. In the first two chapters Dr. Tanner examines the religious institutions and practices that existed in the city in the period. These he splits into the 'Old Order' and 'New Movements'. The old order consisted of the parishes, the secular clergy, and religious orders. These were all still flourishing, and the evidence for the rebuilding and equipping of the parish churches, together with the increase in higher education of the clergy, seems to point to progress rather than to decline during the period. The 'new movements' include the increase in devotion to the saints and the proliferation of masses and prayers for the dead which were to be so virulently attacked by reformers. The discussion of craft guilds and pious confraternities reveals the somewhat surprising position of there being more clerical than lay involvement in the confraternities. However, the most fascinating 'new movement' in Norwich in the later middle ages was, undoubtedly, the proliferation of hermits, anchorites and, to a lesser extent, communities of lay women resembling continental beguinages. It seems clear that Julian of Norwich was only the most important contributor to a flourishing eremitical tradition in the city. The 'beguinages' do not seem to have lasted long, but the very fact that this continental tradition, not known elsewhere in England, existed in Norwich is of interest.

The third chapter, on 'Testamentary Bequests', is in many ways the heart of the book. Here an analysis of wills examined gives an idea of the attitude of both laity and clergy to existing institutions and practices in the city. It is clear that there was a great variety on offer from the Church and, to a large extent, the testator was able to, and did, express personal preferences in making bequests. It is particularly interesting to note that there was no marked drop in the popularity of religious orders until just before the Reformation in England.

The final section, on 'Conflicts', does not quite fit into the will-based structure of the rest of the book but it is a necessary inclusion for an analysis of the Church's condition in the period. The greatest conflict, which was between the cathedral priory and the city, seems to have died down after 1450, and there is no indication that there was a great demand for the suppression of the religious orders in Norwich. There is also very little evidence of Lollard activity in the town. It is possible that the trials under Bishop Alnwick, which began with the burning of three leading Lollards in 1428, served to discourage open Lollardy in the town, but it is surely significant that only two out of the 1804 wills examined contain any hints of unorthodox tendencies.

Dr. Tanner concludes that the Church in pre-Reformation Norwich was flourishing, fairly harmonious and, to a large extent, fulfilling the needs of its members. He suggests that the Reformation was a growth from within rather than a reaction against the Church. It is a pity that Elaine M. Sheppard's 1981 article in *Norfolk Archaeology* on 'The Reformation and the Citizens of Norwich' appeared too late for consideration, but it is unlikely that Dr. Tanner would have changed his conclusions in any very substantial way.

The last third of the book is taken up by a fascinating collection of appendices giving, in tabulated form, the information about religious activities and bequests which is scattered throughout the text. The final appendix consists of transcripts of twelve wills and one inventory. John Baker's inventory, one of only two to survive, is of particular interest as is the will of Richard Caistor—the only person who seems to have inspired a cult in late medieval Norwich.

The appendices are an indication of the mass of evidence with which Dr. Tanner has had to contend, and it is to his credit that he does not hesitate to point out difficulties of interpretation to the reader. This book is to be highly recommended, not only for its excellent and very readable text, but also because of the mass of detail, so efficiently managed, that is presented in both text and appendices. This, together with the full bibliography, should be a stimulus to further research. Dr. Tanner has produced a pioneering study of the pre-Reformation Church in a provincial city. Further research of this kind is essential before the condition of the Church in late medieval England can be fully understood.

ROSEMARY C. E. HAYES

KING HENRY VI, PARTS 1, 2 AND 3: AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY.
Compiled by Judith Hinchcliffe. Garland Publishing Inc., New York, 1984.

The Garland Shakespeare bibliography series covers scholarship on the plays since 1940 and significant pieces published before then. Ricardians will find the *Henry VI* work a good companion piece to the forthcoming volume on *Richard III* as the development of Richard Duke of Gloucester emerges as one of the important aspects of the last two parts.

The book is divided in nine sections to cover all aspects of the plays, from 'Authorship' to 'Stage History'. In all, 921 pieces are annotated and indexed, with some annotations combining comments on earlier works. As the introduction points out, the plays have been performed rarely, usually in adaptations. Consequently, the 'Criticism' and 'Authorship' parts are the major sections of the bibliography.

The plays are seen from a wide number of angles: Shakespeare's use of animals and flowers; President Lincoln's reading of *Henry VI* during the American Civil War; Shakespeare's military career helping him write the battle scenes; and a psychoanalytic approach to the dramas. Some scholars see Shakespeare as the sole author, while most place him as the adapter or finisher for Marlowe, Green or others. Many see *1 Henry VI* written after 2

and 3 *Henry VI* and *Richard III* to form a tetralogy, and base it on an earlier play about Talbot. Several authors focus on the morality play theme. Henry VI is a 'superior failure' as a king. Despite his piety, he is doomed because of his grandfather's usurpation of the throne. Henry Tudor is seen as an instrument of divine vengeance in his killing of Richard at Bosworth Field. Loyal Ricardians will take pleasure in a few pieces that point out that Shakespeare was following the Tudor myth in his skilful development of Richard from a younger son to a cunning schemer worthy of his own play.

This expensive book has several omissions and a crowded appearance which would be improved by different type for the bibliography and illustrations of the original quarto copies or recent play productions. A worthwhile purchase for university libraries, I would recommend that individuals save their money for short studies of the plays or theatre tickets for *Henry VI* or *Richard III* which they will enjoy more after reading these annotations.

LAWRENCE L. IRWIN

THE ORDNANCE SURVEY COMPLETE GUIDE TO THE BATTLEFIELDS OF BRITAIN. David Smurthwaite. 1984. Webb and Bower, Exeter. £12.95. American title: **BATTLEFIELDS OF BRITAIN.** Congdon & Weed, New York, \$24.95.

As David Smurthwaite, a librarian at the National Army Museum explains in the Introduction, the current state of battlefields in Britain ranges from excellent (Bosworth Field) to requiring a lot of imagination (Sedgemoor). In his well illustrated book Smurthwaite makes the most of all the areas, from Roman times to the Battle of Britain.

The section entitled 'The Age of the Wars of the Roses 1450-1550,' like the other sections, includes a general introduction to the period, with pictures of the armour of the period, a map of England showing the locations of the battles and contemporary illustrations. The Wars of the Roses section has a useful genealogical table and short notes on Wales, heraldry and Warwick the Kingmaker. Each of the individual battlefield chapters includes directions to the site and the background and description of the battle. Most chapters have Ordnance Survey maps and battle plans superimposed over the modern map of the site. The battlefields of Towton and Mortimer's Cross are still fairly free of interference from buildings and the maps enable one to trace the two battles of St. Albans in the modern city. Ricardians will enjoy the Bosworth Field chapter which includes colour photographs of Richard's portrait and Bosworth Field as well as a drawing showing the positions of the armies and a photograph of a cross found on the field. The account of the battle is concise and informative. Smurthwaite suggests that Richard was killed trying to take revenge on Sir William Stanley for his treachery, rather than killed trying to kill Henry Tudor.

As a whole, the book is probably the best guide to British battlefields available today. Ricardians planning a trip to Ricardian battlefields could buy the book at home as a good guide to their travels (a short bibliography

provides additional advance reading) or as a fitting souvenir of their expedition.

LAWRENCE L. IRWIN

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

J. H. Baker, *The Order of Serjeants at Law*. 610 pages. Selden Society, Supplementary Series volume 5, 1984. £35.

A chronicle of the creations of all serjeants from 1300 to the Order's extinction. A history of the Order and its customs. Brief biographies of the serjeants. Documents.

A. J. Gurevich, *Categories of Medieval Culture*. Translated from the Russian by G. L. Campbell. 347 pages. 1985. Routledge and Kegan Paul, London.

Examines the concepts of time and space, law (the principle of world order), labour, wealth and property, that made up the morally united and rationally comprehensible world of medieval thought. An attempt to understand 'the attitudes and ideas of medieval people about themselves and their world'.

Constance B. Hieatt and Sharon Butler, editors, *Curie on Inglysch*. 224 pages. Early English Text Society, Supplementary Series volume 8, 1985. £6.50.

The four earliest collections of culinary recipes in the English language, two unprinted before, and the others only available in eighteenth century editions. Glossary.

Jo Ann Hoepfner Moran, *The Growth of English Schooling, 1340-1548: Learning, Literacy and Laicization in pre-Reformation York Diocese*. 326 pages. 1985. Princeton University Press, £43.10.

A mine of information on medieval education in the north of England. Relates the establishment of local schools to the increased desire for clerical careers.