

Book Reviews

POLITICS AND CRISIS IN FOURTEENTH CENTURY ENGLAND. Edited by John Taylor and Wendy Childs. 1990. Alan Sutton, Stroud, £18.00.

Collections of essays which were originally delivered at conferences are usually highly selective and specific in their content. This collection, of papers originally delivered at Leeds in 1986, is no exception. The contributors concentrate on particular events or precise issues of current historiographical concern. As a result the volume presents a miscellany of specialist essays which require a working knowledge of fourteenth-century English history. A degree of unity is created, however, by the shared interest of the authors in the years of crisis during the early and later decades. As a result this is a book for those for whom the unsuccessful kings, Edward II and Richard II, hold a greater appeal than Edward III in his successful prime.

Two essays concentrate on the reign of Edward II. Michael Prestwich reconsiders the Ordinances of 1311 and concludes that they largely harked back to the issues which were dominant in the last years of Edward I, and Wendy Childs argues that Edward II's greed in the exploitation of customs charged on England's strong overseas trade was yet another aspect of his political ineptitude. The remaining contributions concentrate on the years of crisis after the renewal of the Hundred Years' War in 1369. Helen Jewell draws attention to reflections of contemporary crises in the successive versions of *Piers Plowman*. John Taylor offers a characteristically incisive analysis of the sources for the Good Parliament which demonstrates that in the eyes of contemporaries it was the drama of political crisis not the setting of constitutional precedent which caught the eye. The late James Sherborne, in what was sadly his last published work, deployed his unrivalled knowledge of later fourteenth-century military history to reveal the extent to which ten years later the parliament of 1386 which impeached Michael de la Pole met in a climate of heightened and well-founded fear of imminent French invasion. On the same theme of the Hundred Years' War, Anthony Tuck examines the failure of the peace negotiations of 1393 and suggests that they foundered on the refusal of the English political nation to accept the concession of liege homage for Aquitaine, not the Gascons to accept John of Gaunt.

Two essays in particular are likely to have a more immediate interest to Ricardians. Nigel Saul tackles a subject which is of equal relevance to the later-fifteenth century as the fourteenth: the apparent contradiction between the evidence from the record of legal proceedings of local societies in constant turmoil and conflict and the evidence from family papers of the same societies enjoying harmonious communal relationships. The dilemma is resolved, he argues, if one appreciates that legal proceedings were often used as levers in disputes over property and that the resort to violence in these often triggered the process of reconciliation through local mediation. Local gentry societies had a

strong desire to settle their own differences. Indeed he suggests further that during the later middle ages local communities were endeavouring to claw back a degree of autonomy that had been lost to the direct assault of royal justice in the preceding centuries.

Finally Caroline Barron offers an apology for Richard II which should stir the hearts of all true Ricardians. The second Richard, she argues, as well as the third, was the victim of the black propaganda of his successor and deposer, equally eager to persuade the realm that he had been both tyrannical and unpopular. But, Dr. Barron points out, Richard II had arguably been no more arbitrary than other kings before and after who have not been condemned as tyrants. Moreover the events of July and August 1399 suggest that Richard fell not because he was especially unpopular but because he was unfortunately not at hand to rally his retinue and lead it against his challenger. The interpretation is plausible: it is a line that ought to be taken up and propagated by the newly established Society of the White Hart.

A. J. POLLARD

HISTORY/WRITING. Albert Cook. 1989. Cambridge University Press, £25.

The key to this book is provided by a subtitle appearing on the dust-jacket but nowhere else: *The Theory and Practice of History in Antiquity and in Modern Times*. Written by an American professor of Comparative Literature, English and Classics, it applies analytical techniques now widely used among literary scholars to the work of some major historians. Beginning with Herodotus and Thucydides, it continues in part one with Tacitus, Machiavelli, Guicciardini and Gibbon, to finish with Burckhardt and Michelet, whilst part two discusses the Old and New Testaments as 'historiography', 'Totalizing Explanations of History' (Spengler, Toynbee *et al.*) and 'The Strength of Partial Purchases: Kinds of Synecdoche in Modern History Writing' (Namier, Syme, A. J. P. Taylor, Le Roy Ladurie . . .):

My books of the past few years could be grouped as studies of the referent under deep domination by foregone matrices . . . or in the "silent" communications of art . . . or under conditions of revelatory indeterminacy . . . — or here, under conditions where the referent is both subverted and foregrounded by the very mode of expression, historiography, that the writer has chosen (Preface, p. ix).

Whilst this approach undoubtedly has interesting, possibly important, ?things to say about how historians set about their task and the philosophical and literary problems of the discipline, this reader found them obfuscated by a mode of discourse that blurred rather than illuminated. The obvious as well as the novel is disguised in jargon of numbing opacity. A strong hold on the elements of English grammar is a prerequisite as unremitting discussion of synecdoche, prolepsis, metonymy, metatrophe, asyndeton etc. proceeds, whilst even words with apparently firm modern usages — apprehension (p. 9), recur (p. 26) — are used with a precision or licence that are only fully appreciated with an etymological dictionary close to hand.

The publisher's blurb, paraphrasing page one, sets the tone in its simplest form: '(History) lays claim, both rhetorically and actually, to a validity of

correspondence to the public processes of the real world.' The continuation in the main text reveals the difficult road ahead:

'What the commanding historians of the past, remote and recent, have written constitutes a set of texts, of multiply coded verbal constructs that seem in certain ways to exceed the just demands of the claim to validity by means initially of veracity to evidence and then to a sense behind all the evidence so concatenated. But the concatenation, if successful, turns these writings into "works"; it is their achieved discourse that manages to answer the claims of validity and veracity by concatenating them.'

If you have a head for this kind of thing you are in luck: the book is about coded messages, and is itself cryptically written for initiates.

This reviewer was duly impressed by the range of reference and allusion, for example, Einhard, Geoffrey of Monmouth, Malory, Chinese historians and (as a natural and logical progression) Ezra Pound jostle side by side in the chapter discussing Herodotus. But he was not much enlightened — a reflection probably on the mundane cast of his own mind rather than on the worth of *History/Writing*. But with a typical passage like the following as an example, others can judge for themselves the value of such intellectual pyrotechnics:

When Foucault speaks of "hospital" in a historiographic work, he is referring to a physical building in a specific location in Paris: and even his term "reason" may refer to a particular era's assumption of explanatory consistency.

[So far so good, perhaps, but hold on:]

In such cases the historian is employing the "static" mimesis of Plato. And at the same time he is also employing the "dynamic" mimesis of Aristotle by referring to the particular concretization of purposes and assumptions at a moment of time that became the hospital, to the particular posture within a social dialectic at a moment of time that was and may still metatheoretically be characterized as "reason". (p. 176)

What does this all signify? And would we be any wiser if we knew? After attempting to grapple with the issues raised by this book seriously, I for one am not; those made of sterner stuff may, however, find *History/Writing* intellectually invigorating.

MICHAEL JONES

THE PLANTAGENET ENCYCLOPEDIA. AN ALPHABETICAL GUIDE TO 400 YEARS OF ENGLISH HISTORY. General editor Elizabeth Hallam. 1990. Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, £14.95.

This is a companion volume to *The Plantagenet Chronicles*, *The Chronicles of the Age of Chivalry* (Four Gothic Kings in the US edition) and *The Wars of the Roses*, all published by the same house and edited by the same general editor. It contains alphabetically arranged information on people, places, events, institutions and concepts connected with the rule of the Plantagenet kings from c. 1100 to 1485. Relevant, very simple maps of Europe at the time of these dates are symbolically placed at the beginning and the end.

With a little *more* effort from the editor this attractive-looking and inexpensive book could have been made to stand on its own. One suspects, however, that that was not the intention, as references to the three earlier (narrative) volumes are given with each entry. On the whole the text is effective and quite cleverly brief; as a result everyone, Ricardians included, will have their own complaints and spot their own errors. The illustrations, some of which are beautiful and some rare, are all good. Their main shortcoming, and of the book as a whole as well, is a lack of cross-reference. Captions also fail to give the exact library location and the date and origin of the pictures. Library locations have to be found in a separate list (why? it would take the same quantity of ink, paper and effort to put them in their 'proper' place) and the absence of date and country of origin may lead the non-historian to believe that a picture is in some way 'realistic'. The lack of cross-reference between text and illustration and text and text makes the book the poorer. To give one example: the very attractive miniature from BN. Ms. lat. 1158 on page 207 shows Ralph Neville, Earl of Westmorland, kneeling in prayer, together with twelve of his many children. In the list of illustrations on page 219 this fact is mentioned ('... his 11 [*sic*] children'). Ralph's personal entry occurs on p. 143, but there we are not informed that he also appears in an illustration. Finally, the caption of the picture itself does not say whom it depicts (just 'The Neville family ...'). A case of missed opportunities.

There are not many errors, printing or otherwise, and few inconsistencies and I will refrain from the usual listing of these, except for one that is unlikely to be the typesetter's. In the Editor's Note, which says 'we have looked at the period through the eyes of the ... Plantagenets'(!), the book is portentously compared to the great thirteenth-century encyclopedia of Bartholomew the Englishman — unfortunately the title of Bartholomew's successful work is given as *De proprietatis rerum* instead of *De proprietatibus rerum*.

LIVIA VISSER-FÜCHS

THE PLUMPTON CORRESPONDENCE. Edited Thomas Stapleton. New introduction by Keith Dockray. 1989. Alan Sutton Publishing Ltd., Gloucester, £24.

The Plumptons were an old Yorkshire family who, during the fifteenth century, as retainers of the Earls of Northumberland, were often at the centre of English history. One member of the family was executed after the Northumberland rebellion of 1405-1408, another was probably killed at Towton and it is likely there were members of the family present at the first battle of St. Albans, Ludford Bridge and Wakefield. The most remarkable fact about the family, however, is the survival of a considerable correspondence. The preservation of these letters is remarkable in itself in that a seventeenth century member of the family chose to have the letters copied up in book form which eventually came into the possession of Christopher Townley, the noted antiquarian. The original letters have now disappeared and the whereabouts of the seventeenth century copies

was a mystery until 1972 when they were deposited at the Leeds Archive — within ten miles of their original home. Since then they have again been available to scholars and there have been two important articles about them; by John Taylor in 1975 (The Plumpton Letters 1416-1552, *Northern History*, vol. 10) and by Keith Dockray in 1977 (The Troubles of the Yorkshire Plumptons, *History Today*, vol. 27).

The present volume is a microprint of Thomas Stapleton's 1839 edition of the letters with a new introduction by Keith Dockray which gives a lucid account of the family and the present state of the letters. It also benefits from much recent research into northern families. Mr. Dockray whets our appetite with his account of the twice married Sir William (1404-80) who created problems with his second, secret marriage involving his family in expensive litigation. The resulting court cases between the heirs general and the heirs male so beggared his successors that they had a particular interest in preserving their letters for several generations.

The Richard III Society owes a great deal to Alan Sutton who has made so much fifteenth century material available at reasonable prices. Once again he has brought a basic text into the bookshops. The microprint form with four original pages to a page may not be the easiest form in which to read the letters but at least we shall be able to read them in the comfort of our homes.

ARTHUR COCKERILL

THE BATTLES OF BARNET AND TEWKESBURY. P. W. Hammond. 1990. Alan Sutton, Stroud; St. Martin's Press, New York, £14.95. (£13.50 to Members, from the Sales Officer.)

The historian is confronted by two fundamental problems when contemplating a book on medieval battles. First, he must decide how extensive a treatment he will give to causes and effects, in other words the politics that give rise to the conflicts, and their results. Unless he is intent on a purely military history, *some* reference to this wider canvas will be necessary. Second, he must decide how far he will theorise where satisfactory evidence is lacking on such subjects as routes taken to the battlefield, the disposition of armies, and patterns of attack. As a rule, the sources are rarely precise on these matters, either because they were not based on eye-witness accounts, or because such details were not deemed important. In this situation, the historian then either recounts his narrative *only* with what he has, or alternatively he adds his own conclusions based on what Col. A. H. Burne called I.M.P. (Inherent Military Probability).

In his reaction to these choices, Peter Hammond has taken the path exemplified in other books centring on battles in this illustrated history series from Alan Sutton. Thus the first four of the nine chapters recount concisely the lead-up to the 1471 battles, commencing with the series of northern risings in April and May 1469 and the battle of Edgecot in July. This whole period from April 1469 to May 1471 when Edward IV re-entered London and Henry VI expired is surely among the most complicated periods of English history. Fortunately, as Peter points out, our sources for some of this period are unusually good, but this still leaves the historian the challenge of a lucid

explanation of these years of vicissitude and turmoil. This Peter does most capably, setting the scene for the campaigns and battles of Barnet, Tewkesbury and the Bastard's attack on London. Coming to the campaigns and battles themselves, Peter does complement his source material with his own presumptions. This he is unusually qualified to do, for as the Society's long-standing Research Officer, he has many years study of the period behind him. More to the point, Peter has harboured a particular interest in the subject of this book since 1971 when, as he explains in the preface, he took part in the celebrations of the anniversary of the battle of Tewkesbury. Indeed, it was largely he who wrote the booklet published by the Tewkesbury Festival 1971 Committee in 1971 to commemorate the battle. His present work is, partly of course an enlargement of that publication, and it is noteworthy that the accounts given of Tewkesbury are substantially similar. It was then self-effacing of the author to refrain from reference to his earlier work in his endnotes and bibliography. Similarly, Peter has not acknowledged every other latter day account of the battles, and to be fair, many do not warrant acknowledgement. This is because, unlike Peter's account, some of these modern works — for example a number of books on various battles with a short chapter on each — are not based on a close study of all the primary sources available. It is Peter's concern to do just this that marks out his book as a work of serious scholarship on this exciting period in Yorkist history.

Finally, a word about the lay-out and production of the book itself. As with the other volumes in this series, it is profusely illustrated, with fifty-four black and white photographs and five maps. In addition to the nine chapters constituting the narrative of events, Peter includes three appendices dealing with sources, the death of Edward of Lancaster, and the date of Henry VI's death. The endnotes are comprehensive without being tedious and the whole work put together by the publishers on glossy paper that enhances the illustrations and the print.

JAMES O. PETRE

THE HOURS OF RICHARD III. Anne F. Sutton and Livia Visser-Fuchs. 1990. Alan Sutton Publishing Ltd., Stroud, for the Richard III and Yorkist History Trust, £25. £14 to members of the Society from the Sales Officer.

Edward IV, Richard III's brother, was a notable collector of books. Although no inventory of an English monarch's books is known before 1535, he is today regarded as the founder of the Royal Library of the kings of England. Quite apart from ancient manuscripts in his collection, he commissioned (from 1470-1, it is said) as many as seventeen works from Netherlandish bookmakers, suppliers to the Burgundian court and on the whole capable of excelling English production. Richard's sister, Margaret of York, joined a dynasty of bibliophiles when she married Charles, Duke of Burgundy from 1467. As Duchess, she commissioned sumptuously illuminated works on her own account. Richard's interest in *de luxe* illustrated books was not of the same order. The books that he owned as Duke of

Gloucester and as King have been discussed in the pages of this journal by Anne Sutton and Livia Visser-Fuchs, and it is them we must thank for full description of two books that Richard inscribed as King, Leningrad, State Public Library Mss Lat. IV. 74 and 76. (Other manuscripts owned by Richard and thus far described by the authors are BL. Egerton 2006 and Longleat 257; also BL. Royal 18 A xii, which was actually made for him). The approach in these articles was to give an account of the history of the texts in question and to establish the intellectual, religious and literary pre-occupations signified by ownership of them. For the Hours owned by Richard III, now Ms 474 in Lambeth Palace Library, Sutton and Visser-Fuchs have described the prayers and their history, sought to unveil the nature of Richard III's piety, and related the book, produced in London in c.1420, to contemporary production of illuminated manuscripts.

As the authors recognise, it is very difficult to make deductions about an individual's religious proclivities on the basis of ownership of so conventional a text as a Book of Hours. And of course there are only inscriptions and two prayers in Lambeth 474 added some sixty years after it was made that reflect Richard's ownership. The prayers in Lambeth 474 added in 1483-5 include reference to Richard as king (the name was excised but read by M. R. James for his 1932 catalogue of Lambeth manuscripts). The pedigree of what is called 'Richard III's prayer', from a possible Italian and Franciscan origin to generalised use in devotional books for northern European aristocrats in the late fourteenth century, notably those of Jean de Berry and Philip the Bold, is thoroughly traced, as is its occurrence in manuscripts after this date. A fragment of a litany added at the same time contains the versicle *Domine salvum fac regem*. More personal aspects of Richard III's piety are evidenced with the addition at the beginning of the manuscript of a collect for St. Ninian: as the authors comment, Richard promoted the cult of this Scottish saint in his religious foundations at York, Middleham and Barnard Castle, and it also figured in his endowment of Queen's College, Cambridge. One wonders what the specific attributes were of this saint who was venerated in Scotland and northern England. The final indication that Richard had a personal rather than a conventional interest in the manuscript — the prayers and collect mentioned above might after all reflect the intervention of a zealous chaplain — comes with an inscription in the calendar noting Richard's birth in a hand which the authors feel is that of Richard himself. There is ample evidence that Books of Hours were passed down from generation to generation within families or between friends and dependents, so we have to allow that for any owner a book might signify a friendship remembered as much as a vehicle for personal devotions. In a chapter on 'Richard III's piety', the authors lucidly bring together all evidence from a variety of sources for the nature of the King's devotion. If they conclude that 'Richard III still eludes us', the reader can be sure that only an autobiographical text, an objective contemporary account, or a document such as the household ordinance used so effectively by C. A. J. Armstrong to describe the devotional habits of Cicely, Duchess of York, could have taken us further where Richard III was concerned, and such materials are evidently lacking.

The text of Lambeth 474 is described in some detail, and the discussion has much to say about the nature of fifteenth century piety. Texts and calendars in fifteenth century Books of Hours are liable to be inaccurate. If illumination was

done to order and its quality governed by what the patron was prepared to pay, the text was liable to receive less critical scrutiny. Basic texts may indeed have been prepared as quite a separate operation from the decoration. The remark in a footnote (n.208) that the words *Dominus vobiscum* and *Et cum spiritu tuo*, omitted in Richard III's prayer, are said only by a priest, implying that the intended user was a layman or woman, or the reference to *famulum tuum* in prayers in Lambeth 474, implying that the intended user was a man, show how very careful the authors have been in culling the text for clues about original ownership, though they are well aware of the drawbacks of this kind of evidence. Information about the codicological structure of the book is given where relevant in the course of the exposition; it might have been useful to describe it fully at some point in a tabular form to allow the reader to relate text and decoration to the structure of the quires, especially in view of the summary nature of M. R. James' 1932 catalogue entry.

Among the most satisfying parts of this book is the discussion of the 'style, workmanship and date' of the illumination of Lambeth 474 and a number of related manuscripts. Major pages are reproduced in four very good colour plates. There are a number of stylistic tendencies that can be discerned in manuscripts with a London origin in and after 1400, and these are conveniently grouped under the names of the few illuminators whose names are known (Hermann Scheere, John Siferwas, *Johannes*). Perhaps post-medieval notions about 'Art' have led scholars in the past to explain stylistic fashions in terms of the influence of an individual talented artist. Such an approach will not always be fruitful with work that is not of the quality of, say, the Limburg brothers. The notion that London had a community of individualistic artists whose ideas 'interacted' and 'influenced' each other may not be the most rewarding way of looking at their products. Sutton and Visser-Fuchs describe the collaboration between illuminators from different stylistic tendencies in particular manuscripts, and reveal how they drew on a common stock of iconographic compositions. How far one can use the notion of 'influence' to explain use of similar iconographic compositions by different hands at different dates is questionable, since illuminators borrowed compositions from a wide range of artistic production in different media. The conclusion that the immediate origin of the Annunciation found in Lambeth 474, where the Virgin is shown with crossed arms, is 'English, and from Westminster in particular' is supported by solid comparative material, though use by Continental artists of the same theme, pointed out by the authors, make one feel that it may have been part of the debt English production generally owed to Flanders at this period. The authors give the name of 'Master of the Hours of Richard III' to the illuminator who belonged to the stylistic tendency characterised by Hermann Scheere, who collaborated with him on the Bedford Hours and Psalter, and who worked with hands of the *Johannes* group on the Sarum Hours now in the Bodleian (Rawlinson liturg.d.1). Whether such a name with its implication of activity in 1483-5 will find acceptance for a person active in c. 1420, the date of Lambeth 474, remains to be seen — but this admirably written book makes one feel that it will.

ROWAN WATSON

Notes on Contributors

Arthur Cockerill. A member for over twenty years, is a retired Schoolmaster who specialised in English and Drama.

Lynda Dennison. After completing her doctorate in 1988 on the manuscripts produced for the Bohun family, has taught history of art at St. Mary's School, Wantage, continuing research in her spare time.

Michael Jones. Reader in French History at the University of Nottingham. His main interest is the history of medieval Brittany. He recently published a selection of his articles as *The Creation of Brittany*.

Helen Maurer is a graduate student in history at the University of California, Irvine, and is Research Librarian of the American Branch of the Richard III Society.

James Petre. A member since 1967. BA (Wales) and MA (London). He did two years' full time research into the later history of English castles. He now works for the Institute of Legal Executives.

A. J. Pollard. Reader in Local History at Teesside Polytechnic. His *North-Eastern England during the Wars of the Roses: Lay Society, War and Politics, 1450-1500* has just been published by Oxford University Press.

Livia Visser-Fuchs is working on the literary background and propaganda of Anglo-Burgundian relations of the Yorkist period.

Rowan Watson. Head of Special Collections in the library at the Victoria and Albert Museum.

Contributions to the Ricardian

These are welcomed on any subject relevant to the aims of the Society. These may be illustrated by photographs (glossy prints showing good contrast) or by line drawings. All contributions, including letters, must be typewritten, with double spacing and adequate margins, on one side of the paper only. Permission must be obtained for the use of copyright material, but this is not usually necessary for short quotes. References and footnotes must be given in one sequence at the end of the article. Details need not be given in full for second and subsequent references to the same source. They must take the form of the following examples:

R. Horrox and P. W. Hammond (eds.), *British Library Manuscript 433* (4 vols. Upminster and London 1979-83), vol. 1, pp.45-6.

Daniel Williams, The hastily drawn up will of William Catesby Esquire, 25 August 1485, *Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society Transactions*, vol. 51 (1975-6), p.48.

Anyone interested in taking display advertisement space—full, half or quarter page—or in placing an insert should contact the Editor. (Classified advertisements should be sent to the Editor of the Bulletin).

Contributions for the March 1991 *Ricardian* must reach Miss Anne Sutton, 17 Enfield Cloisters, Fanshaw Street, London N1 6LD, by January 31. Articles should be sent well in advance. Further advice on presentation may be obtained from the Editor.

RICHARD III, CROWN AND PEOPLE

Edited James Petre

A collection of the most useful and interesting articles that appeared in *The Ricardian* from 1975 to 1981. Many of them have been revised and extended in the light of recent research. Subjects include an edition of the Chancery warrants 1483-5, the administration of justice by Richard III, North, South and Richard III, the King's relations with Oxford, Gloucester and Southwark, Richard's illegitimate children, the transmission of the news of the Tudor landing in 1485, the pre-contract, John Howard as 'murderer' of the Princes, biographies of William Colyngbourne, John Harcourt, Sir Robert Percy and many other contemporaries.

Illustrated (15 plates, 2 in colour). 462 pages.

Special price to Members £14.50, including p.&p., from Miss A. Smith, 14 Lincoln Road, Guildford, Surrey GU2 6TJ. Cheques to be payable to Richard III Society.

£25, including p.&p. to **Non-Members**, from Alan Sutton Publishing Ltd., Phoenix Mill, Far Thrupp, Stroud, Glos. GL5 2BU. Cheques to be payable to Alan Sutton Publishing Limited.



RICHARD III KING OF ENGLAND 1483-1485

LIMITED EDITION OF ONLY 250 PRINTS WORLDWIDE, EACH INDIVIDUALLY NUMBERED AND SIGNED BY THE ARTIST.

Drawn by talented Leicestershire artist D. E. Bird, this fine pen and ink drawing is printed black on white quality paper and measures 25 x 18 inches (approximately).

Prints will be issued on a strictly first come, first served basis and are available from the address shown below.

Price per print is only £18.95 inclusive of postage and packing
(UK only — overseas please add £3.00 per print)

Please make cheque/POs payable to B. J. HARRIS. You may pay by VISA/MASTERCARD.

Please allow up to 28 days for delivery.

**B. J. HARRIS — FIGURINES OF QUALITY, "WILLOW COTTAGE",
165 LONDON ROAD, OADBY, LEICESTER LE2 5DQ. ENGLAND.**

