

Book Reviews

THE TOWNSHENDS AND THEIR WORLD: Gentry, Law, and Land in Norfolk c. 1450-1551. C. E. Moreton. 1992. Clarendon Press, Oxford, £35. ISBN 0-19-820299-7.

This book is a valuable addition to our knowledge of the English gentry. Two Sir Roger Townshends, father and son, are thoroughly examined; indeed, they are interrogated and duly incriminate themselves as the nuisances only English gentlemen can be. Sir Roger I was the son of a well-off Norfolk yeoman, John Townshend, who died in 1466 owning two manors in Raynham. Roger was a successful lawyer: he went to Lincoln's Inn in 1454, began to practise in 1463, became a sergeant at law in 1477 and a judge of the Common Pleas in September 1485, and died in 1493. If it was a successful career – who has ever heard of a fifteenth-century lawyer who was not successful? – it was not a distinguished one. Distinction, however, was not necessary. Sir Roger was a steady, sharp, clever, perhaps even a cultured man, who made his money, took advantage of the misfortunes of others to invest in land in his own *pays*, married well (but not an heiress) and wisely (his widow ran the estate after his death), and, despite having numerous noble patrons, sitting twice in the Commons, and being an active magistrate for more than twenty-five years, kept out of politics. Roger II was also at Lincoln's Inn, but his career was principally as a government agent in his home county: he kept the country quiet and saw the Reformation implemented. Roger II was knight of the shire in the Reformation and other parliaments and as assiduous a justice of the peace as his father had been. He died in 1551. Both men had narrow horizons; north Norfolk was their world: they 'knew the outside world', says Dr Moreton, 'but their kin and friendship networks show that they limited their contact with it'. This is, perhaps, surprising; it seems to mark them out as more early-modern than late-medieval landed gentry; they were the shape of things to come, or, of things coming into being: their society was already the smaller-minded and unc cosmopolitan one familiar to us from studies of the late-Tudor and Stuart, not to mention Georgian, England.

The Townshend archive at East Raynham has made this study possible. The author allows the documents to do the talking; as a young scholar should, he keeps himself in the background. The documents are revealing enough; they reveal what ruthlessly self-interested gentlemen father and son were. These are Dr Moreton's words. Cynicism is another word of his: to describe Roger II's involvement in the destruction of his lord, the Earl of Surrey in 1546. Roger I appears to have been equally cynical in his attitude towards his patrons, ditching them (if not dishing them) when they became of no further

use: the Woodvilles in 1483, Richard III in 1485. Dr Moreton stops short of calling the Townshends nasty; he does not have to: the documents say it for him. They were engrossing landlords of the worst sort; sheep were big business for them: they duly behaved like big businessmen. The explicitly anti-gentlemen statements of the yeomen and husbandmen of East Anglia in the 1530s and 1540s were fully justified. The Townshends used the law they knew so well and administered so efficiently to their own advantage; they never prosecuted anyone except their social inferiors, and no one, naturally prosecuted them. What the author calls their 'predatory instinct' never seems to have let them down. Even their bailiff at East Raynham, Thomas Austyn, did not escape; in 1518 Thomas wrote on the back of a bill of acknowledgement, 'I wyll that ye [Roger II] shalle nott have my landys inne Bermere [Barmer] nore xiiij acres in Estrudham feld'; two years later he sold to Roger. With this and another case in mind, the reticent Dr Moreton feels drawn to comment that 'what might not be achieved by fair means might be achieved by foul'. Yet, gentlemen like the Townshends seldom needed to use foul means; as they determined what was fair, fair means were sufficient to achieve their foul ends. It is typical that in the 'particularly interesting' notes on husbandry, which on 13 August 1486 he jotted down (in his excruciating hand) at the end of some sheep accounts (and which I wish Dr Moreton had published here and hope he might publish elsewhere), Roger I complained about his ploughmen: they came to work late and they did bad work. Typical, because Roger's voice has the authentically shrill tone of a capitalist employer. Capitalists the two Rogers undoubtedly were; moreover, they are examples of capitalism at its most ugly.

It is impossible to feel a flicker of warmth for the Townshends. It is to the author's credit that he does not seek to soften them. Of course the documents, good as they are, abundant as they are, cannot fully lay bare Rogers I and II. Roger I was in charge of the library when he was senior fellow at Lincoln's Inn; Roger II always went drinking on Fridays when he was a student there. Beyond such *minutiae*, which, nonetheless, may tell us something (but what?), we are unable to penetrate. Given the sort of men the two Rogers were, we ought not to want to: we know enough, and that enough is more than enough. Woe to England when the government of the kingdom was in their hands – and it was, it was: in the 1520s their landed wealth was consistently under-estimated for taxation, in the 1530s they plundered the Church to consolidate and extend that wealth (and called it Reform).

Readers of *The Ricardian* will recall Dr Moreton's important paper, 'A Local Dispute and the Politics of 1483: Roger Townshend, Earl Rivers and the Duke of Gloucester', *ante*, 8 (1989), 305-7. He does not relent in the book: 'I stand by my central point that there is no contemporary evidence of hostility between the Woodvilles and Gloucester before 1483'. Dr Moreton goes further: he suggests that in the Helhoughton Affair Anthony Woodville behaved with a restraint uncharacteristic for one in so elevated a position. But then, I would suggest, Anthony Woodville in his fashion was as uncharacteristic a king's brother as Richard of Gloucester was in his.

C. F. RICHMOND

On receiving this book, such was its enchanting power that I immediately felt inspired to rush off and attempt to recreate every medieval culinary delight in my Tooting kitchen. I visualised myself as on the BBC 'Masterchef' series, ('And in the medieval kitchen tonight we have . . .'), as I rummaged through my cupboards for unlikely saffron and mace, but as a non-meat-eater I was suddenly stopped in my tracks. The most exotic and lavish dishes appeared mostly to be meat orientated, whilst vegetarians seemed relegated to the gloomy sounding 'frumenty' (a bulgar wheat pottage) and downright ordinary 'girdle cakes', plain and uninspiring fare indeed, compared to the lavishly spiced meat dishes. So, instead of intrepidly turning my kitchen into a medieval banqueting hall, I decided, less ambitiously, to simply read the book instead, and leave something to the imagination.

On a closer read of the whole book, however, I discovered that there was more to this book than I had envisaged. I was happy to learn that as a vegetable and fish eater, my initial worries were unjustified, and that I could, after all, have quite happily survived in the middle ages on such delicacies as 'mushroom pasties', 'lasagne layered with cheese', 'roasted salmon with wine sauce' and 'haddock in a tasty sauce'. Aside from my obvious relief at this discovery, and more importantly, this book is not only beautifully produced and attractively presented, but also a treat to read. It contains thirty colour plates, twelve black and white photographs, and thirty five line drawings, all from original contemporary manuscripts and books. As a person largely ignorant of medieval history, I found this book both inspiring and informative. The detail in the illustrations revealed such a wonderful array of medieval characters, all tucking into their food with great relish, and the rich tapestry of contemporary life was so temptingly set before me, that I found the book totally absorbing.

I was pleased to note the careful use of original source material, researched meticulously and with obvious enthusiasm by Maggie Black, who is a food historian and a freelance consultant on historical meals. Each recipe is reproduced as an original transcript (printed in italics), with an adapted modern version set out below that, with clear helpful advice and tips from the author, who has tested all the recipes herself. This makes every recipe far less intimidating for the twentieth century reader. This approach is very successful in effectively bridging the gap between the modern and the medieval cook. Instantly the reader feels comfortable with the recipes, and hungry – an historical empathy transmitted through the common love of food! Contemporary characters take shape through the recipes they used – be they frugal or lavish, they are always revealing!

The book is written in a very readable style, assuming no particular previous knowledge of the period, yet avoiding the trap of patronising the reader. The author portrays her medieval cooks with sympathy, and a welcome sense of humour. She notes, for example, tongue-in-cheek, how, in courtly circles, women were taught the less showy culinary arts (just the essentials like the cooking and pickling), whilst the men confined themselves

to the more ostentatious fun of carving and serving 'skills'!

The selected recipes are explained in the main narrative text of the book which discusses in detail the historical context of different aspects of medieval food. Each chapter covers foods in its different settings, from Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* to the monastery life, from Christmas to the court. Contemporary attitudes to food, manners, etiquette, hospitality, ingredients and diet are all revealed and discussed.

In a very clever touch, the author rounds off her sumptuous tour of medieval gastronomic delights with a final chapter of 'Herbals and Simples', from which exhausted gourmets sought comfort, following the excesses of feasting. These quaint folk remedies for over-indulgence finish the book off in style, especially the final piece of advice, taken from 'A Leechbook', which is amusingly curt following such a vast array of treats:

Whoso will keep continual health [must] keep his stomach so that he put not too much therein when he hath appetite, nor take anything into it when he hath no need. And then continual health will ensue.

As this dictate runs so supremely counter to the spirit of exuberant excess in this superb book, I now feel ready to happily disregard it and make a start on the medieval lasagne and mushroom pasties instead. Bon appetite!

URSULA S. CARLYLE

MASONS AND SCULPTORS. Nicola Coldstream. 1991. British Museum Press, £6.95. ISBN 0-7141-2048

In my last review of a booklet in this series, Kay Staniland's *Medieval Embroiderers*, I remarked on the dearth of modern studies of this important and strangely neglected craft. This was hardly a problem facing Nicola Coldstream when she came to write her *Masons and Sculptors*. Here, a real difficulty must have been the vast size of the literature before her. Much of it is mentioned in her recommendations for further reading at the back of the book. John Harvey's magisterial *English Medieval Architects* is included but the same author's earlier, eccentric and sometimes irritating, but immensely stimulating *The Medieval Architect* (1972), is omitted. I should also have added *inter alia* Christopher Wilson's uneven but sporadically brilliant *The Gothic Cathedral* (1990), which contains much that is directly pertinent to the subject. Such inclusions, though, are mere quibbles. The essential requirements for a new general guide are, first, that it should provide a useful and reliable introduction to the subject, and secondly, that it should provide a stimulating means of organising the mass of material. Although Nicola Coldstream's book is conventional in its structure and analysis, she provides a helpful and wide ranging introduction to the subject. Specialists may occasionally jibe at some of the less carefully formulated generalisations or internal contradictions; on page 5, we are told that 'the master mason acted as contractor, engineer and designer'; this is certainly true of some master

masons, but the development of the mason-contractor is primarily late-medieval, a point which she concedes on p. 17. She claims (p. 8) that the real evidence of how masons worked lies in the buildings themselves and in building accounts, but contracts and legal cases are arguably equally helpful in clarifying the details of the building process. There are a few more irritating errors: the illustration on p. 13, claimed to show a master mason supervising stone cutting, in fact shows a king directing the design, and the caption on the same page to a faint illustration taken from Cotton Nero D i is misleading. In fact, the captions to the, usually excellent, illustrations are too often unhelpful: the diagram on page 70 identifying the various elements of a church has no less than four mistakes in it.

Undoubtedly the least satisfactory aspect of this wide-ranging and entertaining booklet, though, is the fact that Coldstream also attempts, in about three pages of text, to include medieval sculptors. She argues that specialist figure-sculptors only really emerged by the late thirteenth century. The documentary evidence certainly shows that this had happened in England already: the sculptor Alexander of Abingdon, who worked on the memorials for Eleanor of Castile (see D. Parsons, ed, *Eleanor of Castile*, Stamford 1991) is always termed an imager in the royal accounts and she is quite wrong in believing that he is indiscriminately referred to as *imaginator* or *caementarius*. The fact that other contemporary sculptors are referred to in this way (e.g. William of Ireland in the same accounts, may perhaps indicate that the separation between masons and sculptors was not always complete. However, there is good evidence for the emergence of specialists long before this date in much of Western Europe. In fact, it seems obvious that they would tend to develop wherever there was a long-term demand for sculpture, and it is clear that the twelfth century already saw specialist sculptors at work.

Booklets of this type tend, naturally enough, to obscure the very great differences in practice between different regions and different periods. My 1985 study of the Ely Lady Chapel reliefs showed that the sculptural methods employed (the same as the ones recently identified by Nicholas Dawton in the Percy Tomb at Beverley) were dramatically different from those adopted by the contemporary Maitani workshop at Orvieto. Here the differences are so palpable as to cast doubts on the wisdom of attempting to circumscribe medieval European practices within a few hundred words. It is indeed the divergent practices which are so fascinating, and which reveal so much about these large sculptural workshops.

In a booklet largely devoted to masons and building, the sculpture section should instead perhaps have been devoted to the interaction between craftsmen and patrons, about which Coldstream has much of interest to say. These matters could have been dealt with in a succinct and systematic way. The matter is important because well into the nineteenth century, there was a tendency to attribute the design of Gothic architecture to ecclesiastics such as William of Wykeham, Bishop of Winchester, to whom was attributed, the design of the two colleges he founded at Winchester and Oxford. Today these works are ascribed instead to the master mason William Wynford and his colleague the master carpenter Hugh Herland. In fact a careful reading of the Bishop's will would have revealed that Wykeham was no

architect: the will orders the Bishop's executors to continue the rebuilding of Winchester Cathedral nave which he had taken up in 1394, leaving 'the disposal and direction of the new works in the hands of Master William Wynford and other sufficient and discreet craftsmen'. Clearly Wynford was the architect.

The confusion between ecclesiastical patrons and their medieval architects was comprehensively dispelled by Harvey's *English Medieval Architects* which showed that only a handful of clerics can be numbered amongst the 1,700 or so English architects known or surmised from the period between the Norman Conquest and the reformation. The more recent tendency to underplay the role of the patron in medieval architecture can be seen as a reaction to the mistakes of earlier scholarship, but the significance of the symbiotic relationship between medieval patrons and their architects should not be underestimated. Although the part played by patrons varied almost as much as did their motives for building in the first place, we can highlight five key ways in which the patron could affect building besides, of course the initial choice of the master mason. First, there is an obvious sense in which the patron, as paymaster, necessarily determined such features of the building programme as the work's general scale and the pace of construction. This is graphically demonstrated by the history of St Stephen's chapel in the royal palace at Westminster. Although construction started in 1292 and was well advanced by 1297, the chapel was not structurally complete until 1348. It took three kings and three master masons to complete it partly because there were long pauses in construction when finances were diverted to the more pressing political needs of military preparations. It is one of the building's paradoxes that it was so influential precisely because its workforce took its stylistic innovations back to the provinces in the long interruptions between periods of construction.

An individual patron's desire to adhere to, or to surpass, specific stylistic or iconographic models could determine, to some considerable extent, the features of the ground plan and elevation as well as the general dimensions of a building. The decision to embark on a large-scale rebuilding of Westminster Abbey in 1245, for example, seems to have been directly due to King Henry III, who himself funded its construction. Henry's motives are mixed. A pious attachment to his sainted predecessor, Edward the Confessor, was undoubtedly important: he was building a splendid new shrine for the saint's remains, whose cult buttressed his own sacerdotal view of kingship. Equally important was Henry's sense of rivalry with Louis IX of France, whose power and prestige now outstripped his own. Henry must have been aware that the rebuilding of the French royal necropolis, St. Denis, was well underway and that the new choir of Reims cathedral, the coronation church of the French kings, was now complete: Louis IX himself had funded the erection of the Cistercian Abbey of Royaumont (c. 1228 on) and the palatine chapel of the Saint Chapelle (begun c. 1241-3) to house the relic of the Crown of Thorns. Henry's Westminster Abbey was specifically intended to rival these buildings and such features as its ground plan with radiating chapels, its use of bar tracery derived from Reims, its tall elevation and flying buttresses, rose windows and sculptured spandrels are incomprehensible unless we suppose

the Henry III had expressly intended to rival the prestigious French churches. In 1245 the King had not yet himself seen any of these buildings and so his knowledge of them must have either been based on drawings or on his architect's acquaintance with them. It is even conceivable that Henry sent his designer to look at the very buildings which he intended to surpass. Such a procedure was not uncommon in the middle ages. In 1369, for instance, William Humberville was sent by the Fellows of Merton College Oxford to Sherborne, Salisbury, Winchester and London to look at libraries before he constructed one for Merton, whilst in 1456 two of the canons of Troyes Cathedral visited Reims, Amiens and Notre-Dame of Paris in the company of the architect Master Bleuet to incorporate ideas derived from these thirteenth century buildings in the design for the new west front of Troyes Cathedral.

Thirdly, the patron might even interfere with the design of architectural mouldings, add ideas which were not foreseen at the design stage, or even defer decision on major features until construction was well advanced. At Eton, Henry VI specified that the masons working on the new chapel must avoid complex mouldings and complicated sculptural detail and at Oxford the master mason Thomas Elkin was similarly instructed to avoid excessive detailing in the Divinity School which was then under construction. In the latter example, we might be dealing with a cost-cutting measure but this can hardly be the case at Eton. What we seem to be witnessing is a deliberate reaction by patrons to what they saw as the overfussy detailing preferred by their architects. Patrons might also add features which were not anticipated at the design stage. A legal case reveals that a timber-framed house built by two early sixteenth century carpenters cost some twenty per cent more than its initial estimate because the alderman for whom it was built made additions to the agreed design while work was actually in progress. A few years earlier another carpenter had complained to Henry VII that the plans for the roof of Woodstock Hall had been altered after the design had been agreed, with the result that some of the shaped timbers were now useless.

But a patron's role could be much more positive than this. In a 1398 contract for the monks' dormitory at Durham, the Prior stipulated that the windows of the first floor were to be based on specified examples of adjacent buildings, all except for the great south window, which was to be of such design as the prior decided (*una magna fenestra ad voluntatem et arbitrium dicti Prioris facienda*). What this shows is both that so important an element as the design of the south window could be deferred until construction was actually underway and also that it was the prior who was to choose what the window should look like. He probably will have indicated some preferred models and may have made a selection from a variety of designs supplied by the master-mason.

Contacts between patrons were of vital importance for the movements of artists. Master James of St George, the great military designer responsible for so many of Edward I's great Welsh castles, was very probably recruited directly by the King when Edward received homage from Count Philip of Savoy in June 1273, on his way back to England from the Holy Land. Perhaps Philip recommended Master James to the King just as Bishop Fox of Durham commended the carpenter Humphrey Coke to Lord Darcy in 1500. Such

contacts must also underlie the monks of Canterbury's consultation of French and English architects when they were faced with the task of rebuilding the choir after the catastrophic fire of 1174.

Another important way in which patrons could affect detailed architectural design is by ensuring continuity with work already constructed. When the first architect of the Durham dormitory failed to complete the work, the Prior imposed upon his successor the obligation to adhere to his predecessor's window design. On a rather grander scale, this requirement to homogenise his style to that of his predecessors must also have been imposed on the architects of Westminster Abbey after the resumption of work in 1376 on the Abbey nave. Almost certainly, it is not the fourteenth century masons but their patrons who should take the credit for the stylistic homogeneity of the later work on the nave with the five bays completed under Henry III.

PHILLIP LINDLEY

THE PRINCES IN THE TOWER. Alison Weir. 1992. The Bodley Head, London, £17.99.
ISBN 0 370 317920 0.

The only reason for writing and publishing yet another book on the 'Princes' would be to say something really new. Unfortunately this book does not. This is despite the author implying that no one before her had solved the mystery of their deaths and stating more than once that solving it had caused her no problems. Judging by the bibliography Ms Weir certainly did considerable reading, some of it very ill digested as will be seen, but the lack of problems in solving the mystery was caused by the fact that she accepted the word of Sir Thomas More for the sequence of events, a delightfully simple procedure for a writer on this subject.

The major sources used, for example Mancini, Buck, Vergil, and Crowland, but above all More, are discussed in the first chapter. More's *History* is discussed at greatest length, the conclusion being that 'there is little reason to doubt its overall authenticity' and that it is credible and consistent (pp.9,11). In this conclusion Ms Weir is following Richard Marius in his biography of More and indeed Desmond Seward, whose work was a 'constant inspiration', (p. xv). Following these authors she stresses their case that More was a man of unimpeachable integrity and reputation for honesty: 'with More, the truth came first' (p.9). This is nowadays merely irritating, and indeed inconsistent with the facts revealed by Marius, as Jeremy Potter pointed out in his review in the *Ricardian*.¹ More was a lawyer and was fully capable of arguing a case irrespective of its truth or otherwise. That More's work is useful is undeniable, but to judge that something is likely because More says so is very tiresome and quite unhistorical.

The bulk of the book is taken up by a competent but slightly old fashioned account of events from roughly the beginning of the reign of Edward IV. It is old fashioned because it is very reminiscent of the older histories of, say, the eighteenth century, with the course of events described more or less from the one source with additions from chronicles and other narrative sources. Unlike most of these older writers the author does not give any references. Ms Weir's basic unfamiliarity with the period and the sources

she uses leads her into some unusual and some very familiar errors. Some of the mistakes are due to merely not reading her sources, thus Richard and Anne are once again described as being naked from the waist up when anointed at their coronation, despite the recent refutation of this error.² Richard's prayer is again described as being dedicated to St Julian, who killed his own parents. In this Weir follows Seward. This error too has been refuted, but in the *Ricardian*,³ a journal of which this author did not apparently make full use. Some errors are due to misunderstanding the sources, for example describing one manuscript of Buck as Cotton Tiberius E x f. 238 (apparently not understanding a reference to folio 238 of Tiberius E x) and another as Egerton Ms 2216-2220 (which is in fact five manuscripts, of which only the first contains Buck). One rather odd mistake from the author of *Britain's Royal Families: The Complete Genealogy* is that Richard's father and mother are omitted from the genealogical table.

Richard's 'crimes' are (mostly) once again attributed to him, even the responsibility for the death of Edward of Lancaster. This latter is achieved by giving greater weight to Vergil than to the contemporary sources. Ms Weir makes the most of Richard of Gloucester probably being in the Tower when Henry VI was killed and also says, in the face of the evidence, that the Lancastrians taken after the battle of Tewkesbury were executed on Richard's orders without trial. A book such as this is not complete without a new 'crime' and this one is no exception. In this book Richard is accused of committing adultery with Elizabeth of York and most of the chapter 'An Incestuous Passion' is devoted to discussing this. It is difficult and probably not necessary to combat the flimsy arguments used which are based on the familiar sources of Crowland's account of events at court at Christmas 1484 and the letter from Elizabeth to the Duke of Norfolk described by Buck. The arguments used perhaps owe their persuasiveness for the author to her unfamiliarity with fifteenth century sources. In the pursuit of this 'affair' the author also considers it quite possible that Richard may have murdered Queen Anne.

The book concludes with a discussion of the various bones found in the Tower of London. This discussion further illustrates the lack of attention to what the sources actually say which distinguish this book. Following an account of the two sets of bones found before 1674, (one of which the author says was found in a tunnel instead of found in a tower, perhaps she could not read her notes) Ms Weir turns her attention to those found in 1674 and now in Westminster Abbey. She accepts the Tanner and Wright conclusion⁴ that these bones must be those of the Princes and goes on to discuss more recent work, attempting to reinforce this discussion by a thoroughly confused account of correspondence in the *Times* which followed an account of Theya Molleson's article on the bones in *The London Archaeologist*. Ms Weir manages to confuse William White, one correspondent, with William Wright, co-author of the 1934 *Archaeologia* article and to misrepresent (and consequently dismiss easily) White's argument, which was about bones in the skull and not congenitally missing teeth as this author says. She also confuses me with the *Times*' Archaeological correspondent Norman Hammond (no relation) and mistakes my arguments. Ms Weir does make one new point in her discussion of the bones and this concerns the velvet scraps said to have

been found with them. As she says velvet was not a fabric known before the middle ages so that if it was indeed buried with the bodies these could not date from Roman times. Velvet was certainly known before the 1400s (the date she suggests) though, it is known in England from 1278 at least⁵ so that the possible span of burial dates for the bodies is rather longer than she suggests.

To summarise, this book says little that has not been said before many times. It is written by someone who is not familiar with the period and its sources and who consequently makes avoidable mistakes. It is not a book to be recommended.

1. Jeremy Potter, Richard Marius, *Thomas More, The Ricardian*, vol. 7, part 89, (June 1985), pp. 71-72.
2. *The Coronation of Richard III*, Anne F. Sutton and P. W. Hammond. Gloucester. 1983, p. 40.
3. Anne Sutton and Livia Visser-Fuchs, Richard III and St. Julian: a new myth, *The Ricardian*, vol. 8, part 106, (September 1989), pp. 265-270.
4. L. E. Tanner and W. Wright, Recent Investigations Regarding the Fate of the Princes in the Tower, *Archaeologia*, vol. 84, (1934), pp. 1-26.
5. Elisabeth Crowfoot *et al.*, *Textiles and Clothing, 1150-1450*, HMSO 1992, p. 127.

P. W. HAMMOND

THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE COUNTY PALATINE OF CHESTER. 1442-85. Dorothy J. Clayton. Chetham Society, third series 35 (1990), £35.
ISBN 0-7190-1343-7

This book is exactly what its title claims: an exhaustive study of administrative procedures based on an analysis of the surviving records of the county palatine in the middle years of the fifteenth century. It derives from Dr Clayton's Liverpool PhD thesis on 'The involvement of the gentry in the political, administrative and judicial affairs of the county palatine of Chester, 1442-85', but several of the wider issues raised there have been hived off into articles, including the question of crime in the county; leaving a study in which the gentry are little more than names in judicial records.

This seems a pity – partly because the result, although undeniably useful, is inevitably rather dry; but also because recent years have brought a whole flurry of county-based studies of the gentry which (with very few exceptions) have discussed their power and involvement in county affairs in entirely non-administrative terms. Dr. Clayton's exploration of the Cheshire records restores that missing dimension, but then offers only tantalising hints of how she sees this relating to less formal power structures; as in her speculations on what the gentry got out of acting as mainpernors (p. 257).

There is, for instance, no discussion here of the role of aristocratic retainers. Dr. Clayton argues that Cheshire had no major aristocratic presence, with the Stanleys (the obvious candidates) primarily interested in Lancashire. This seems to play down the consequences of their acknowledged importance in royal government in Cheshire – how far were they, in effect, heading a royal retinue in the county? But even if one accepts Cheshire as a

genuinely nobility-free zone, it leaves open the question of the impact this had on the gentry's own role: something central to current debates about the late-medieval balance of power at a local level. Dr Clayton's view of noble power seems essentially negative. The Stanleys are presented in classic terms as 'over-mighty' subjects, too powerful to be crossed by the king (pp. 154-5) and she later suggests that 'the lack of a noble presence in Cheshire saved the county from the worst consequences of bastard feudalism' (p. 215). Although she immediately adds that 'an oligarchy of prominent gentry families was at least potentially troublesome' she seems to feel that in practice self-policing by the gentry was a success. This, however, is not explored here in detail, and it is left unclear whether she is suggesting that an elite of gentry families were taking on a quasi-aristocratic role (as Dr. Payling has suggested in Nottinghamshire).¹

But it is unfair to castigate a book for not being what it probably never intended to be. Dr. Clayton's work sheds valuable light on an aspect of county affairs which historians have tended to shirk. It has useful things to say about the administrative realities hidden behind the common form of the records. Because of her line of approach, Dr Clayton is able to demonstrate the sheer numbers involved in local government. Most recent county studies have approached the gentry through a self-selecting elite which can be tiny – a mere nine families in one case. The present book reminds us in no uncertain terms of the myriad of lesser figures who underpinned the elite: the gentlemen who turned up at sessions of the county court and acted as jurors or mainpernors. Dr Clayton suggests that at any one time there were around 500 men capable of performing such a role, of whom eighty carried most of the work, with as many again acting occasionally. Inevitably many of these men can never be more than names to us, but it is salutary to be reminded of their existence – and it is a reminder, too, of the awesome amount of work which lies behind this book.

1. S. J. Payling, *Political Society in Lancastrian England: the greater gentry of Nottinghamshire*, Oxford 1991.

ROSEMARY HORROX

THE ALLEGORY OF FEMALE AUTHORITY. Christine de Pizan's *Cité des Dames*. Maureen Quilligan. 1991. Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, £32.95 (cloth) ISBN 0 8014 2552 2; £14.95 (paper) ISBN 0 8014 9788 4.

The Book of the City of Ladies will never be completely understood however much is written about it, but Professor Quilligan is a guide who gives the reader a new view of the city's beauty, as well as leading one into many secret alleys.

Christine de Pizan's refuge against misogyny for all women of good repute, past and present, pagan and christian, was not built in a day. Slowly the ground was cleared of slanderous dirt; the foundation was laid by shedding new light on the reputation of some women of political and military prowess, and the walls were constructed of tales of feminine learning and skill. Its many houses were varied, consisting of examples of women who were visionaries, or strong in love, chaste or faithful, or famous for other reasons

such as their beauty or generosity. The roofs were raised and the city finished by the arrival of numberless saints and martyrs led by the Virgin Mary herself.

The present study is almost apologetic about being 'essentially a page-by-page commentary', but this seems the only approach to this complicated text that will help the reader. The author is, in her own words, 'a feminist theorist and a scholar of allegories' and she sets out to analyse Christine de Pizans' 'authorities': Christine's own as a female and author, and the authority of the women and their stories that make the book. For example, Christine's emphasis on her own name and gender in her work is compared with the way contemporary chroniclers name themselves and claim uniqueness and truthfulness; in a similar way, it is said, Christine took up a position from which to open the attack on misogyny and prejudice, and she proceeded to reverse the written tradition about such maligned women – and city founders – as Semiramis and Dido, excusing them and explaining their achievements and predicaments in a manner very acceptable to modern ears. According to Quilligan there is a general focus in the *City of Ladies* – especially in the second part – on reconsidering by means of the conventional stories, the value of the unwritten, intellectual authority of women unsupported by the scriptural and lettered tradition made by men. This focus is made clear, for instance, by Christine's handling and altering of her sources, mainly Boccaccio. The sibyls and the immense influence of their secret and female knowledge are introduced, followed by a consideration of the power of mother/daughter relationships and of the position and role of daughters in family and society: Christine's own mother is brought in again and again.

Central to the final part of the *City* is the martyrdom of Christine de Pizan's own saint, St. Christine, describing the gruesome details of her torture, the effect of her strength on the spectators and her 'refusal' to stop praising God even though her tongue has been cut out. To give a sample of Quilligan's interpretation, that also seeks to explain Christine's need to include these very physical and distasteful stories:

An apt image of the voice that refuses to be silenced, and therefore a wonderful image of the power of female authority, the narrative fact of the severed tongue continues to enact the painful price paid for that authority. St. Christine's cut-off tongue represents both the power and the precariousness of female speech, especially speech not shored up by the authority of a (masculine) church that can turn narrative facts into sacred text

This is not an easy book, but it becomes easier as one reads on. It is advisable to return to the introduction after a while, as it will seem much clearer to the better 'informed' reader. Some of the psychological, narrative and structural links that Quilligan supposes Christine to have made will not find immediate credence, but this is a failure inherent in all theories of literary critics and art historians; one need not agree with the commentator to have one's eyes opened. My only personal objection is to an over-indulgent use of fashionable words such as 'paradigm' and 'paradigmatic' – let alone 'parameter' and 'to author' – which *seem* very often to have the same meaning as 'model' or 'proverbial', etc.... Unfortunately the book has no bibliography; to most 'mere' medievalists such a bibliography of the many modern, critical and feminist authorities Quilligan refers to would be as amazing as it would be revelatory.

LIVIA VISSER-FUCHS

WAR AND BORDER SOCIETIES IN THE MIDDLE AGES. Ed. Anthony Tuck and Anthony Goodman. 1992. Routledge, London, £35.

ISBN 0-415-18021-5.

NORTH-EAST ENGLAND IN THE MIDDLE AGES. Richard Lomas. 1992. John Donald, Edinburgh, £22.

ISBN 0-85976-361-7.

In September 1988 a group of hardy medievalists met in the decaying splendour of Otterburn Hall (reminiscent of the Hotel Majestic in J. G. Farrell's novel, *Troubles*) to consider the significance and implications of the battle which took place somewhere, but no-one knows precisely, in the neighbourhood 600 years earlier. The volume edited by Tuck and Goodman is the splendid outcome. It provides a fine example of how concentration on one central event can provide the focal point for an illuminating collection of related essays. The difficulty of identifying the site of the battle is examined in depth by Colin Tyson and the mid-sixteenth century version of the eponymous ballad in its celebration is discussed by James Reed. Based on a much earlier oral tradition (dating from as soon as the early fifteenth century, suggests Alexander Grant) the ballad, composed from an English point of view, turns the harsh reality of border violence into an heroic tale in praise of Hotspur. That border violence is explored in its local, national and international dimensions. In his introduction, Anthony Goodman establishes the particular nature of the Anglo-Scottish borders as a type of kindred society in which feud was part of a way of life. Henry Summerson demonstrates how after 1378 Cumberland was ravaged by a series of raids yet how nevertheless, at the same time, men and goods could continue to cross the border peacefully in commerce, thus revealing not only the resilience of the Cumbrians, but also the manner in which border society was accustomed to war. Barrie Dobson similarly shows how both North Durham and Islandshire, parts of the estates of Durham adjacent to the border were similarly ravaged, though in the case of Inner Farne, where the monks retained a cell, with more lasting effect. But Dobson is also interested in the politics behind the battle and shows how the failure of Bishop Fordham to reinforce Sir Henry Percy, perhaps a critical reason for the English defeat, arose from a conflict of interests between the Bishop and the Percies. Anthony Tuck in his essay reveals, contrary to the generally held wisdom, that the Percies in the reign of Richard II could at no time feel confident of their ascendancy over Northumbrian society because of the rival attractions of the Duke of Lancaster, the Nevilles and the crown. However, the battle of Otterburn is best known as being the most dramatic moment in the long-standing cross-border feud between Percy and Douglas. Alexander Grant points out that, literary embellishment notwithstanding, the real issue at stake was Percy's ambition to carve out an estate based on Jedburgh and other lands in southern Scotland belonging to the Douglasses. Moreover, the Otterburn War was, he argues, the culmination of the recovery by the Scots of the zone of territory in the south of their country that had been occupied by the English since 1356. The battle brought the wars of Scottish Independence to an end and was one of a series of events that moved the kingdoms of northern

Europe to attempt a more lasting peace settlement in the 1390s. Although there is no direct bearing on the career of Richard III in this volume, it nevertheless provides one of the best introductions to the essentially unchanged world of the borders and far north which he entered when he became warden of the west march in 1470.

This is more, regrettably, than can be said of Richard Lomas' disappointing history of north-east England in the middle ages. Lomas offers a highly descriptive, conventional, even old-fashioned account of institutions, administration and constitution heavily weighted towards the early middle ages. His work, as one would expect given his own research, is strongest on the development of the rural economy especially in Durham. But the whole is strangely imbalanced. There is very little, for instance, on the nature of lay piety, very little on the nature of border society as explored recently by Anthony Goodman, and indeed very little on political society in general and thus no attempt to provide a political history of the region. And it is very weak on the second half of the fifteenth century. Unfortunately, therefore, Lomas offers nothing of value to Ricardians. Indeed he seems to be unaware of most of the work published in the last two decades on the county of Durham in the later fifteenth century, including the articles by Mary O'Regan and James Petre in the pages of *The Ricardian*. His index entry does not even recognize Richard III as king. The number of typographical errors does not help: one hopes therefore that the lapse in the index is no more ominous than another proof-reading oversight.

A. J. POLLARD

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.

BOOKS

Christa Grössinger, *North-European Panel Paintings. A Catalogue of Netherlandish and German Paintings before 1600 in English Churches and Colleges*. 1992, 328 pages. 295 illustrations (24 in colour). Harvey Miller Publications, London, £48.

Introduction covers: 'Collecting "Early Primitives" in England'; 'Antwerp at the beginning of the Sixteenth Century'; 'Germany at the end of the Fifteenth Century and in the early Sixteenth Century'; 'Netherlandish Masters of large Workshops'; 'Brussels Workshops and Colyn de Coter'. Detailed catalogue of each of the 76 paintings. Biographies of the artists. Hand-lists of such paintings in English public collections and of 'Comparative Works of Art'.

ARTICLES

John Goodall, A Fifteenth-Century Anglo-French-Burgundian Heraldic Collection, *The Antiquaries Journal*, volume 70, part 2, 1990, pages 424-38.

Description of BL Ms. Egerton 3030, a collection of painted rolls, produced partly in France and England, partly in the Low Countries. The contents of the sections relevant to England are given in detail and include the arms of Edward IV and the Dukes of Clarence and Gloucester.

S. J. Gunn, Early Tudor dates for the death of Edward V. *Northern History*, volume 28, 1992, pages 213-216.

Argues that the manuscript note in the Anlaby Cartulary giving 22 June as the date of Edward V's death, to which Colin Richmond drew attention in 1989, derives from a verse chronicle printed in 1530 or before, and points out that many collections of statutes printed between 1508 and 1539 contained the same date, since each plagiarised its predecessors. The only sign that any contemporary noticed any difficulty with this date is a manuscript alteration of apparently later Henrician (1530s-40s) date in a volume of statutes in the Bodleian, suggesting that the early Tudor public either did not know or did not care exactly when Edward V met his end.

Ben R. McRee, Religious guilds and civic order: the case of Norwich in the late middle ages, *Speculum*, volume 67, number 1, January 1992, pages 69-97.

The Gild of St. George dominated fifteenth-century Norwich civic and political life. Founded 1385, it had acquired considerable prestige by 1417 with its annual procession featuring St. George and the dragon; it played an important but limited role in the urban riots of the 1430s and 1440s; an attempt in 1448-9 to make it an elite club for the city's ruling citizens failed, but a mediation by Justice Yelverton in 1452 achieved a slightly less exclusive system linked firmly to the governing body. The author contends that in this new form the gild was responsible for the social harmony of the city in the years that followed, but the evidence is indirect. The gild survived as the fraternity for the ruling class of Norwich till the eighteenth century.

Simon Payling, Social mobility, demographic change, and landed society in late medieval England, *Economic History Review*, volume 45, 1992, pages 51-73.

Examines the impact of the plague-induced demographic crisis of the late fourteenth century on the succession patterns and settlement practices of English landed society. It argues that the late medieval period was the last great age of the heiress, partly because of landed society's general reluctance to disinherit daughters and partly because of the length and depth of a demographic crisis that deprived families of male heirs.

Carole Rawcliffe, The Politics of Marriage in Later Medieval England: William, Lord Botreaux, and the Hungerfords, *The Huntington Library Quarterly*, volume 51, 1988, pages 161-75.

Lists the failures and particularly the successes of a number of families' marriage policy from 1396 to 1474, focussing on a contract of 1421 (given in full) and

confirming the impression that only too often children were 'pawns in the . . . game of dynastic advancement'.

Livia Visser-Fuchs, Edward IV's 'memoir on paper' to Charles, Duke of Burgundy: the so-called 'Short Version of the Arrival', *Nottingham Medieval Studies*, volume 37, 1992, pages 1-53.

The career of a signet letter: discussess who wrote the text and why, and how it was used, copied, translated, expanded, illuminated and maligned. Illustrated with black and white photographs of contemporary miniatures of the battles of Barnet and Tewkesbury and the killing of Edward of Lancaster that have not been published before.

Off-prints available at £2.50 incl. p.&p. from the Sales Officer, Miss Anne Smith, 14, Lincoln Road, Guildford, Surrey GU2 6TJ.

Notes on Contributors

Ursula Carlyle is Assistant Archivist of the Mercers' Company.

Peter Hammond, Co-editor of *British Library Harleian Ms. 433, Coronation of Richard III, Road to Bosworth Field*. Editor of *Walpole, Historic Doubts*, and author of *The Battles of Barnet and Tewkesbury*.

Rosemary Horrox. Author of *Richard III: a study of service*, Cambridge 1989.

Phillip Lindley, lecturer in the History of Art at Leicester University; editor, with S. J. Gunn of *Cardinal Wolsey: Church, State and Art*, published in 1991.

A. J. Pollard. Professor of History, Teesside University. Author of *North-Eastern England during the Wars of the Roses: Lay Society, War and Politics 1450-1500*, Oxford 1990 and *Richard III and the Princes in the Tower* Alan Sutton 1991.

Natalie Jane Prior is a children's writer. She is currently engaged in post-graduate research on Mary Shelley's professional career.

Colin Richmond. Professor of Medieval History at Keele University.

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

Instructions to Contributors to the Ricardian

Contributions 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).

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