

Book Reviews

WILLIAM WAYNFLETE, BISHOP AND EDUCATIONALIST. Virginia Davis. 1993. *Studies in the History of Medieval Religion* 6, The Boydell Press, Woodbridge, £35.

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Patten, educational reform, emphasis on grammar, a full teaching day and problems maintaining school buildings ..., are not, as many Ricardians will knowingly recognize, allusions to recent contemporary concerns, but to the life and career of one of the longest serving Lancastrian prelates, William Patten, better known by his adopted Lincolnshire birthplace name of Wainfleet. Probably born shortly after 1400 (his mother's parents were married in 1386), little is known of Waynflete's youth and background except that he was from respectable county gentry stock. Davis soundly disentangles previous too eager identifications of the future bishop from among several homonyms active in the early fifteenth century. He is stripped thereby of any Wykehamist connections before appearing as *magister informator* of William of Wykeham's great school in June 1430. This account of his early life thus necessitates serious revision of standard works like A.B. Emden's *Biographical Register of . . . Oxford* that have unwittingly conflated several separate lives. But from that point Waynflete's official career may be easily followed: eleven years as headmaster of Winchester, six as Provost of Eton (1441-7) and nearly forty as the holder of England's richest see, Winchester (1447-86), while for a brief but testing period he also held the Chancellorship of England (1456-60), resigning on the eve of the battle of Northampton.

In retrospect, Waynflete appears as one of the few successful senior clerics who owed their fortunes exclusively to Henry VI, whom Davis sees as his main benefactor, notably by calling him from Winchester to Eton at a critical moment in that favoured royal foundation's history. Efficient, competent, businesslike, conscientious, thorough, these are the qualities that characterise Waynflete, first as a schoolmaster then as a diocesan or secular administrator, promoter of educational reform and early patron of humanist learning in England. Unlike his immediate predecessor at Winchester, Cardinal Beaufort, he had little real interest in politics. Naturally, his high position ensured that he took some part in national affairs, in the royal council and parliament, though he escaped the nemesis that fell on other eminent churchmen associated with Suffolk's regime. A true politique, he negotiated the turmoil of the next thirty years with few real alarms, despite his Lancastrian colours, only briefly finding himself in difficulties in 1471 when, according to the Arrivall, he was briefly put in the Tower and required a pardon in an episode not elucidated here.

Relations with Edward IV for the rest of his second reign and with Richard III were, however, good: both visited Magdalen, his new Oxford college, Edward in 1481 when the reception remained largely ceremonial, and Richard in 1483 when a more specifically academic content was introduced into proceedings by holding formal philosophical and theological disputations in the king's presence. By this time Waynflete himself was an old man, receiving news of his college largely at second hand from its president on regular visits, but to the end of his life his enduring concern, as well as his lasting historical significance, as Davis admirably demonstrates in her clear and well-structured account, lies in his important contribution to education, chiefly as a 'facilitator' (to use jargon that his modern namesake has encouraged).

Thanks to experience at Winchester, Waynflete was well-qualified to help Henry VI establish Eton (and to revive its languishing fortunes in Edward IV's reign, after a cautious interlude following 1461, by bringing its building programme to a successful conclusion by dipping into his own pocket), and to promote learning by the foundation of his own schools at Wainfleet and Oxford. These were eventually linked, following Wykeham's model, to Waynflete's most important foundation, Magdalen Hall (1448), transformed into Magdalen College in 1458. This latter was particularly richly endowed with lands and properties that Waynflete systematically acquired over many decades, in a process well-traced here. A lesser collegiate foundation which also enjoyed his close attention as executor of its nominal founder, Ralph, Lord Cromwell, was Tattershall in his native county. Evidence from all these institutions shows Waynflete's close personal and detailed attention (to their statutes, which Davis carefully surveys, buildings and endowments etc.) over many decades.

Of course, with a disposable annual income usually in excess of £3000 from his bishopric, he was well-positioned to act in a generous fashion or to indulge other aesthetic and intellectual interests – among them music and fine book-bindings – though as Davis shows, he was careful to get good value for his money, avoiding for the most part the damaging consequences that holding properties with dubious titles could cost in litigation. There were other demands on his resources too: Waynflete had a position to keep up and non-academic buildings like his episcopal palaces, castles and manors at Esher, Farnham, Wolvesey and Bishop's Waltham, at which the employment of the relatively novel medium of brick helped to set fashions taken up more generally in the early Tudor period, was another major item of expenditure. He also had to maintain a large household (at least 125 names are provided by one list), though details on this aspect of his lifestyle are rather sparsely offered. In all likelihood into his eighties when he died, William Waynflete thus enjoyed a long and, on the evidence nicely presented here, remarkably uneventful existence. But it was one which considerably and positively enriched the lives of many contemporaries and, of course, as the choristers who still celebrate May Day atop the tower of Magdalen College completed shortly after his death can testify, much of his legacy for the promotion of 'godly learning' with a new humanist tinge still endures: Dr Davis admirably describes its well-laid foundations in a welcome addition to modern fifteenth-century lives.

MICHAEL JONES

MEDIEVAL QUEENSHIP. Edited John Carmi Parsons. 1994 Alan Sutton Publishing, Stroud, £35.00 (hardback). ISBN 0-7509-0583-2

LETTERS OF THE QUEENS OF ENGLAND 1100-1547. Edited Anne Crawford. 1994. Alan Sutton Publishing, Stroud, £18.99 (hardback). ISBN 0-86299-726-7

Until recently, as both these books point out, medieval queens have on the whole been neglected by historians. However, the wide range of essays provided in *Medieval Queenship*, and the publication in translation of a considerable number of the *Letters of the Queens of England* will go a long way towards remedying the situation. Both books cover at any rate part of the sixteenth century, and it is useful to see the extent of continuity with the earlier period. Both take a broad view of medieval queenship, and discussion includes the queen's relations with her family (notably husband and children), her household and estates, and the extent of her political, religious and cultural influence. The overlap between the public and private spheres, between family and politics, is frequently emphasised.

The essays in *Medieval Queenship* are concerned with topics ranging from the ninth to the sixteenth centuries and emanating from all parts of Europe. Some chapters open up areas where knowledge up to now has been scant, although a scarcity of evidence often means that we cannot learn as much as we would like. This is apparent in Janos Bak's examination of the queens of Arpadian and Angevin Hungary between 1000 and 1386, and Inge Skovgaard-Petersen's chapter on queenship in medieval Denmark. Yet in both cases it is clear that queens could on occasion wield considerable power, as did Margaret I of Denmark in the late fourteenth century.

Investigation, and more particularly interpretation of the evidence are crucial in elucidating the role of the queen, and historians have to be aware of the problems inherent in much of the material they use. This is a point considered in many of the chapters, but it comes out especially strongly in the work of Janet Nelson and Pauline Stafford. Janet Nelson takes as her subject 'Women at the court of Charlemagne', and uses a number of visual images (Roman, Byzantine and Carolingian) which would have been known at Charlemagne's court in order to show the variety of possible interpretations of women's roles. Pauline Stafford examines the portrayal of royal women in England between the mid-tenth and mid-twelfth century, and again stresses the contradictory and ambiguous elements in the sources. Moreover, changing ideas and conventions by the twelfth century meant that different facets would inevitably be described.

Not only does change over time have to be considered, but also the impact of local custom. Roger Collins shows how tenth-century queenship in León and Navarre differed from that in other western societies; there were also differences between the two kingdoms. In León the queen-mother's role was non-existent, but it was possible for another female member of the ruling family to act as regent, as the royal nun, Elvira Ramirez, did for her nephew. On the other hand, in Navarre, the regent queen-mother is certainly found.

The common theme running through the essays concerns the ways in which queens pursued and made use of the means to power. Power has to be seen primarily in the context of family as well as of local custom. The queen might act on behalf of her husband, or, more usually, her children, since there is no doubt

that the birth of an heir gave the queen an added importance; hereditary succession undoubtedly became regarded as increasingly important in Western Europe. Queens are certainly found reigning in medieval Europe, as the examples considered by Armin Wolf show. The family role could however limit as well as empower the queen, and therefore time and again it was as a result of special circumstances that the queen was able to exercise power. John Carmi Parsons argues, using the evidence of the Plantagenet rulers, that parents were concerned for their children's welfare as they went off on their arranged dynastic marriages, and mothers in particular trained their daughters for their future role. However, circumstances and customs had to be propitious for a woman to exercise power; not all women were as able to take advantage of their situations as Charlemagne's daughters who were acting as informal advisers at the end of his reign.

Although women's freedom in the public sphere tended to be eroded c. 1150 by changes in the law of inheritance, the emphasis on primogeniture, and the development of bureaucracy, women could still exercise authority, preferably as regent rather than ruler, as Lois Huneycutt shows in her chapter on 'Female succession and the language of power in the writings of twelfth-century churchmen'. In fact, in France, the power of the queen-regent only emerged in the later Middle Ages. André Poulet examines 'Capetian women and the regency', and finds that it was not until 1190 and later that the queen was acceptable as regent; he argues that the early fourteenth-century exclusion of women from the succession made it the usual practice for the queen to be designated regent, although others often held office with her. This practice continued into the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as is brought out by Elizabeth McCartney in her examination of the role of Louise of Savoy, mother and regent of Francis I, and of the texts justifying her authority.

Taken altogether, *Medieval Queenship* opens up many vistas and provides plenty of food for thought. *Letters of the Queens of England* supplies a valuable collection of one of the most important sources for seeing the queen in action. Many of the letters have previously been printed, but often in nineteenth-century works which are not now readily available. Anne Crawford discusses all the queens between 1100 and 1547, together with four women closely connected to the monarchy: the Empress Matilda, mother of Henry II; Joan of Kent, wife of the Black Prince and mother of Richard II; Cecily Nevill duchess of York, mother of Edward IV and Richard III; and Margaret Beaufort, mother of Henry VII. Some of the queens are well known; others, such as Berengaria of Navarre and Margaret the second wife of Edward I, have often been little more than names. Inevitably more letters have survived for some queens than for others, and a few queens have no letters surviving at all. There are more letters for the later period, and about half the book is devoted to the fifteenth and first half of the sixteenth century. It is unfortunate that in this period there are no letters for Henry V's queen, Katherine of Valois, nor for Richard III's wife, Anne Nevill.

Anne Crawford's introductions to the queens and their letters highlight many of the themes discussed in *Medieval Queenship*, and the genealogies and marriage tables will help those unfamiliar with the period. Where the letters are abundant, they have been chosen with these aspects in mind: the dynastic and political concerns underlying marriage arrangements; the vital importance of the birth of the heir; family relationships; the queen's dower lands and income; her household and

cultural influence; and her piety and charity. Moreover the letters can reveal personal details which are found nowhere else.

Concern with family was central to the queens' lives, but, as said above, it could both limit and empower them. The degree of variation can be seen by looking at two of the thirteenth-century queens. Eleanor of Provence's own family caused unpopularity in England through their search for reward and advancement from her husband, Henry III. The circumstances of the reign brought Eleanor occasional political prominence, as when she acted as one of the regents in 1253-4, and had to report to Henry III on the difficulties of raising money for the defence of Gascony. In 1264-5, while the king was in the power of Simon de Montfort, she organised a fleet in France to come to his aid. The main impression, however, which comes over from her letters is the close-knit relationship with husband and children, and especially her affection for her son, Edward I. Comparing her with her daughter-in-law, Eleanor of Castile, it is clear that both women were intent on preserving their estates and rights, but Eleanor of Castile played a minimal role in politics. Of all the queens discussed, the two most involved in politics were Eleanor of Aquitaine and Margaret of Anjou. The collection includes two of Eleanor's letters to Pope Celestine III upbraiding him for taking no action to release Richard I from captivity. The letters were probably written by Peter of Blois, but there is no reason to assume that they do not reflect Eleanor's own fury and grief. Margaret of Anjou's influence over Henry VI is well known, as is her hostility to Richard duke of York. Anne Crawford includes her propaganda letter to the citizens of London, written in 1461, assuring them that she had no intention of plundering the city, and inveighing against the duke of York who 'upon an untrue pretence feigned a title to my lord's crown'.

The Tudor letters tend to be fuller and less formal than the earlier ones; by the sixteenth century letter-writing was both more usual and less inhibited. The letters chosen help to elucidate royal relationships; they show the close bonds between Margaret Beaufort and Henry VII, and Katherine of Aragon's deep feelings both for Henry VIII and her daughter Mary, and her strong religious faith. Some of the letters of the king's later wives throw interesting sidelights on the Reformation. The volume can be enjoyed as a good read, and it also provides welcome evidence on many of the major interests of medieval queens; it shows them as real people, not as the idealised heroines of romance, nor as faceless nonentities.

JENNIFER WARD

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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.

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