

Book Reviews

RULERS AND RULED IN LATE MEDIEVAL ENGLAND. ESSAYS PRESENTED TO GERALD HARRISS. Edited by Rowena E. Archer and Simon Walker. 1995. Hambledon Press, 102 Gloucester Ave., London NW1 8HX, £35. Special price of £20 plus £1.50 postage to members ordering direct from publisher. ISBN 1-85285-133-3

During a career which has spanned more than forty years, and which is far from over yet, Gerald Harriss has exerted a major influence over later medieval English history. His work on parliament and public finance forms the basis for today's understanding of the later medieval state and its relationship with contemporary society; his treatments of politics — his study of Cardinal Beaufort, his collection of essays on Henry V, his articles on fiscal policy in the 1440s and the struggle for Calais in the 1450s — are among the most important; his labours as a teacher and supervisor of postgraduate research are borne out in the vast array of distinguished work produced by his pupils. In this book, many of them have joined together with a number of Dr. Harriss's Oxford colleagues to present a tribute to him on his seventieth birthday. It is a tribute on which the master, whose familiar beady eye — part startled, part scrutinising — perfectly captured in the photograph on page viii, is likely to look with pleasure.

As Angus Macintyre's introduction points out, the hallmarks of the Harriss method are precision and roundedness: attention to the detail of what happened; a sure grasp of what the evidence will and will not warrant; skilful and imaginative exploration of the variety of contexts which surround each individual act or event or person. These fourteen essays are written very much in that tradition. A large number of them present a specific episode, typically reconstructing it from a variety of (often intractable) sources before moving on to explore its wider implications for our understanding of political, constitutional, legal or social norms. The result is an extremely satisfying and suggestive collection of well-crafted studies: object lessons on how to handle evidence (a concern which is explicitly discussed in many of the pieces — Philippa Maddern on using wills, for example, Edmund Wright on how to discern the activities of councils, or Christine Carpenter on the possibilities of gentry correspondences); and, taken together, an eloquent demonstration of what is perhaps the most valuable lesson in the works of

McFarlane and Harriss himself — that interests, institutions and ideas *all* need to be considered by political historians, and considered together. Not one of the essays quite matches Harriss in attempting this kind of study at the level of the realm (though Rosemary Horrox comes close with some provocative and thoughtful suggestions about the comparatively un-Harrissian world of the royal court, and Simon Walker's well-founded treatment of Richard II's views on kingship involves some discussion of the established norms of royal power). However, most of the other themes explored in Harriss' work receive attention in this volume, and it may be helpful to describe the rest of the contributions briefly.

The interplay of politics and finance is well-expressed in Edmund Wright's useful piece on the work of the council of 1406-7, which began the business of restoring Henry IV's financial and political credit. The essay is incidentally a reminder of how much valuable information on Henry's reign is salted away in largely unpublished theses: Wright's own, as well as those of A. Rogers and A. L. Brown. Important insights on Lancastrian policy emerge from the essays of Ted Powell and Jeremy Catto. Powell's treatment of the hounding of Sir John Mortimer in the late 1410s and early 1420s is an interesting reminder of the dynastic paranoia of the new dynasty even at the height of its power. Meanwhile Catto's investigation of the part played by Henry VI's government in the downfall of Bishop Pecock extends his important thesis about the confidence with which Henry V intervened in the religious life of his realm: it emerges that, in this sphere as in others, the dead king's approach to rule shaped the assumptions of his son's advisers and ministers. In both essays, there is something of the new image of the Lancastrians which is gaining ground in other writing: a regime which showed surprising continuity over three reigns, and which was in certain respects as authoritarian, manipulative and obsessed with conformity as the so-called 'new monarchies' which followed it.

The concerns, values and activities of fifteenth-century landowners form the subject of the largest group of essays. Christopher Woolgar provides some interesting information on the diets of noble and gentry households in Eastern England. Christine Carpenter offers a preliminary exploration of the networks of power in Stonor country, a part of the world with rather a different social framework from that of her 'native' Warwickshire: here, the power of magnates is never so great, the king is more directly involved and a well-established and extensive gentry network dominates affairs. Gratifyingly for its author, in the light of her other writings, this network extends across county boundaries and its members possess a strong sense of the social hierarchy, instead of laying claim to the 'independence' which their combined resources may seem to permit. Philippa Maddern raises interesting and fundamental questions about the business of making a will, and argues convincingly for a shift of historical attention from the legatees to the executors. Like Carpenter, she points to a world in which family

connections and friendship circles overlap and inter-relate, a theme which also surfaces in Anthony Smith's article, where Sir John Fastolf's land-purchases are analysed and it emerges that he typically bought up properties from men with whom he was already connected. A striking feature of these three articles is their emphasis on the effort expended on protecting and securing land. This, rather than crude power-play, aggressiveness and competition — themes sometimes unduly emphasised in studies of local politics — emerges as the basic activity of gentry society. Not surprisingly, it is an activity conducted as much as possible through peaceful negotiation, in which social life, civility and the building of trust are important features. This is not to say that there were no sharks, however, and Simon Payling demonstrates how Ralph Lord Cromwell was able to exploit the weakness of Henry VI's authority and the opportunities presented by the common law of mortgage to deprive one hapless Lincolnshire gentleman of a large part of his property. Meanwhile, Rowena Archer places John Mowbray's success in regaining his family's lost dukedom of Norfolk (in 1425) in the context of his own political struggles with the earl of Warwick and of a heightening interest in the details of precedence among the nobility as a whole. Clearly, some men were prepared to be unscrupulous or to act in ways which threatened equilibrium, either locally or nationally. Historians, including the pupils of Gerald Harriss, are divided as to whether it is the works of co-operation or those of division which deserve most emphasis.

This tension between common and individual interests, as Maurice Keen points out, was the kind of problem confronting military planners in the age of contract armies. When so much of the public appeal of this method of troop-raising lay in the possibilities for individual initiative and reward, and when so much of the glue that held the army together was private and informal (the often personal and neighbourly links between captains and their men), the creation of effective military ordinances involved striking workable compromises between public and private interests. Keen's analysis suggests that Richard II's ordinances of 1385 fit a pattern which is immediately familiar to all students of the later middle ages, as Harriss and others have presented the period — a pattern of delicate balances between the informal and the formal, between the public and the private, between authority and the interests of subjects.

These balances were to be upset later in the century, as the last two essays in the collection demonstrate. Dominic Luckett discusses the attempts of Henry VII to concentrate military power in the hands of royal office-holders via a system of licensed retaining and an insistence that the king's men were to be the king's alone. Both he and, more fully, Richard Hoyle show what happened to such men if they used the resources thus placed at their disposal in a disorderly fashion. The protest of the Earl of Northumberland in 1504, that Archbishop Savage, though a power in

the county, was not a gentleman, and the latter's wheedling reminder to King Henry that 'he was of litil substaunce ... and had no thing to take to but of the kinges grace, as thawe his highnes and made hym out of claye', demonstrate that we have entered a different world, in which the natural hierarchy of Stonor country in the 1460s, and the compromises between law, order and lordship so apparent in Simon Payling's Lincolnshire and Maurice Keen's royal army are fading fast. It may be partly, as Luckett tends to suggest, that Henry VII's power was simply unanswerable, but there is also a sense that a new political world, with a new distribution of power and new notions of legitimacy was developing. It is a world rather different from the one which Gerald Harriss has done so much to illuminate, and which this volume captures so successfully.

JOHN WATTS

THE PASTON FAMILY IN THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY: Volume 2. FASTOLF'S WILL. Colin Richmond. 1996. Cambridge University Press, £40.

ISBN 0-521-56238-4

This is the second volume of Professor Richmond's exploration of the Pastons, and it brings the story onto more familiar territory with the dispute over Fastolf's will and its consequences. 'More familiar' in outline, at least, for here, as in the previous book, Richmond offers a far greater depth of analysis than any previous account. Before embarking on the will, however, he gives us an introductory chapter — 'The characters re-invented' — in which he reconsiders some of the figures first met in the previous book. Part of its purpose is presumably to introduce the characters to new readers; but, more to the point, it allows the author second thoughts. The past is the creation of the historian, and medievalists in particular can never be other than sharply aware of how small a piece of additional evidence may prompt a reassessment. For John I it was a list of expenses which has led to a rather warmer verdict on him than emerged from the first book.

Then it is on to the will. In his introduction Richmond eschews digressions and promises a 'dogged' treatment of the subject. Obstinate tenacious (in the Collins' definition) perhaps it is, but there is nothing remotely plodding about it — the author evokes the characters and their dilemmas too vividly for that. The central figures this time are the two brothers, John II and John III. They are often seen as chalk and cheese, so that the familiar games of character-analysis 'Do you like cats or dogs?', 'Do you admire Plato or Aristotle?' could equally be played with these two. Unlike most previous writers on the family, Richmond is not convinced.

His John II has a darker side (perhaps a colder side, too); is sometimes in need of cheering up. John III emerges as more cheerful, more chivalrous, much funnier than usually thought, albeit still the provincial. Neither of them can be neatly compartmentalized, and that is the great strength of these books: that the reader is never presented with a pre-digested version of events.

If the Pastons inevitably occupy centre stage, their drama also has a subtext. For Richmond, the Pastons' woes (however much they may have been of their own making) are an indictment of the contemporary political world. Edward IV emerges badly from all of this. When he is glimpsed (and it is no more than that — he doesn't even make it into the index) it is as a lazy man who wants a quiet life, and is prepared to ignore his subjects' problems in pursuit of it. As with the duke of Suffolk in the previous volume, one longs for the king to step out of the wings and be realised in as much depth as the Pastons themselves. It doesn't happen: Professor Richmond's sympathies are with the little men. But perhaps writers on 'high' politics will be encouraged to adopt his approach. Historians are often wary of speculating about the character of their subjects; indeed some medievalists argue that because we can never be sure of character we cannot use it as an historical explanation — which often means not talking about it at all. Richmond has no time for this. We cannot be sure, but we must speculate, because in the end people are what make things happen.

ROSEMARY HORROX

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOHN TREVISA: MEDIEVAL SCHOLAR.

David C. Fowler. 1995. Seattle and London, University of Washington Press, \$40.

ISBN 0-295-97427-3

Three decades ago, every undergraduate reading English knew of John Trevisa (1342-1402) through an extract in Sisam's *Fourteenth-Century Verse and Prose* from his translation of Higden's *Polychronicon* (1352). There Trevisa notes that when he was writing in 1385, educational reforms by two innovatory Cornish schoolmasters had left grammar-school children knowing 'no more Frensch than can here lift (left) heele', with consequent disadvantages for foreign travel which are still with us. This can hardly have been true of Trevisa himself, who tells us he travelled, discussing exchange rates as he went, in Germany and the Savoy and he probably went to France and Italy as well. His first language must have been Cornish, learned in his home, identified by Fowler as Trevis(s)a in St Enoder, in Tygembreth manor, owned by the Berkeley family, whose chaplain John Trevisa

was to become. Fowler examined records at Berkeley Castle leading him to link John with two other Trevisas, a Cornish MP from 1351 to 1371, and an older namesake. John Trevisa's benefactor was probably Thomas III, lord of Berkeley until 1361, who perhaps noticed him at school at Penryn and financed his education at Oxford, where Trevisa was fellow of Exeter College and then resident at Queen's College from 1369 to 77, and probably 1383-87 (p. 85, but cf. p. 24) and 1394-96 while also chaplain to Thomas's grandson Thomas IV, dedicatee of *Polychronicon*.

But much of this is conjecture: the documentary evidence of Trevisa's life is largely confined to incomplete records at Exeter and Queen's, some confused evidence from Berkeley, and Trevisa's signed annotations in his translation of *Polychronicon*, which he prefaced with an autobiographical 'Dialogue Between a Lord and a Clerk upon Translation', and 'Epistle'. He translated extensively and well, and his canon also includes the *Gospel of Nicodemus*, *Dialogus inter Militem et Clericum*, FitzRalph's *Defensio Curatorum*, all perhaps from the 1370s, *De Regimine Principum* which Fowler dates to the late 1380s, and Bartholomeus Anglicus's *De Proprietatibus Rerum*, finished at Berkeley in 1399. Trevisa's *Polychronicon* translation was finished in 1387 and printed in 1482 by Caxton and 1495 by de Worde, who also printed his *De Proprietatibus Rerum*, as did Bertelette. Attribution to Trevisa of some hand in the first (Hereford) Wycliffite Bible is more controversial: Fowler weighs the scant historical evidence and inclines to think Trevisa did collaborate in the translation with Hereford, who came to Queen's with Trevisa in 1369, and Wyclif, who was at Queen's from 1374 to 1381, though Anne Hudson's dating of the whole translation process to the last two decades of the fourteenth century (*The Premature Reformation*, p. 247) would rule this out.

More controversial still is Fowler's long-standing claim that Trevisa wrote the B and C Texts of *Piers Plowman*. Appendix II provides a list of references in *Piers B* and *C* which correspond to events in Trevisa's life or topics in his translations. Fowler cites his published work on many of these but without discussion. Here, though, Fowler's analysis of fourteenth-century academic and clerical conflicts shows that similarities between Trevisa's translation of FitzRalph's 1357 attack on the friars in the sermon *Defensio Curatorum* and the B and C Texts of *Piers* (which Fowler dates to the 1380s) most likely reflect either shared experience or a shared source. The striking observation in *Piers B*, XIII, 439ff, that at feasts the needy and disabled rather than minstrel entertainment should 'solace the soul' derives from FitzRalph's distinction between true beggars and begging friars, and if Fowler's evidence is read against the grain, what emerges is that both Trevisa and 'Langland' (whoever he was) were similarly aware of the buzz words of the time (like 'common profit') and of the texts which had special currency in mid-

fourteenth-century Oxford.

Trevisa was not an ideal priest. He was contentious, protective of his prebend as canon of Westbury (pp. 109, 113) and perhaps cavalier about paying university hall dues (p. 30). His appointment at Berkeley (1374?) seems to have been irregular (p. 104), and he engaged in some kind of armed raid on his dean's household, for which records are contradictory as to date and provocation (pp. 109-12). Even so, Trevisa barely emerges as a personality from this biography. Several medieval writers' 'lives and times' have appeared in the last decade (Chaucer's and Malory's, for instance), in part as a way of accounting for certain black marks (rape, theft and rapine) in the records. Trevisa is not free of such blots, but the 'times' also fill out the meagre evidence for his activities. Fowler provides a better analysis of fourteenth-century Oxford than Bennett's *Chaucer at Oxford and Cambridge*, with a useful map of Oxford — not as clear as Bennett's — in the endpapers (a map of south-western England, including Cornwall and Gloucestershire, would have been even more useful). He is very informative on Trevisa's Latin source texts, but for *De Proprietatibus* he tells us more about the source than Trevisa's work, probably because the edition and analysis by M.C. Seymour and his team was still proceeding (1975-1992).

Fowler's analyses of *Nicodemus*, *Defensio*, *Dialogus* and *De Regimine* are detailed, illustrating Trevisa's facility for finding the right word (or doublet) to match the tone of the original, and demonstrating that where Trevisa seems confused, either his source was corrupt or scribes have corrupted his translation by dislocating or omitting copy; Fowler's convincing and intricate textual restorations make one wonder how medieval prose survived at all, without rhyme or metre to provide some anchor. He emends adroitly, but for the most part these emendations are demonstrated on a text in modern spelling. Who is this book for? Literary scholars or historians? Historians do not need the close textual analysis, and might query some of Fowler's historical interpretation, as does John Kaye, Keeper of the Queen's College Archives, whose letter Fowler conscientiously quotes (pp. 232-34) as corrective to his own account of expulsion from Queen's of Trevisa and the 'southern faction' in 1377. Those with Middle English would prefer Trevisa's lambent prose in the original spelling rather than this 'half-chongyd' Middle English:

I would a wise man had yseie his water (=tested his urine) and yheeled (poured) it
in his throat though it were a gallon!

This dilutes some of Trevisa's vigour, as in:

Among cates in tyme of loue is hard fightynge for wyues, and oon craccheth and
rendeth the other greuousliche with bytyng and with clawes ...

Nor is this exactly a new book: it has grown over thirty years out of Fowler's interest in the medieval Bible, and expecially its treatment by Middle English

writers. Many sections have been published previously, including the Trevisa biography itself which appeared in 1993 in volume 1 of the Variorum Series 'Authors of the Middle Ages', and several further growth nodes are indicated in references to current work by palaeographers, which Fowler would doubtless wish to interrogate further. Trevisa's jaunty style presents the friendly face of medieval scholarship and Fowler's easy prose belies his wide learning, for which many kinds of reader will be grateful.

ROSAMUND ALLEN

AUTHORS OF THE MIDDLE AGES. English Writers of the Late Middle Ages. General Editor M.C. Seymour. Volume III: 7. William Caxton, by N.F. Blake; 8. Reginald Pecock, by Wendy Scase; 9. Robert Henryson, by Douglas Gray; 10. William Dunbar, by Douglas Gray; 11. John Capgrave, by M.C. Seymour. 1996. Variorum, Ashgate Publishing Ltd, Aldershot, £45.

ISBN 0-86078-556-4

The short biographies in this series are excellent introductions to the literary figures of medieval England; most important they have appendices of documents and bibliographies. Seek them out, they are worth collecting, and reading! Many of the earlier ones have come out as separate booklets, but so far the five in this set have not. Their subjects, authors whose words we can still read, are among the few men of the middle ages — there are only men in this collection — whom we can hope to hear speak to us in our mind's ear, and about whose lives we need to know as many facts as we can.

Reginald Pecock is not the best known of this group of fifteenth-century writers, but he may rank as the most curious: a bishop who was condemned as a heretic. Wendy Scase's study makes use of much newly discovered material and, in short compass, gives an excellent insight into this extraordinary man. Pecock was probably born in Wales in the early 1390s; he studied at Oxford during the period of Archbishop Arundel's efforts to extirpate the Wycliffite heresy from the university, and he left there in 1424, apparently maintaining links there through the rest of his life. His first benefice was St Michael's, Gloucester, in 1424, but he resigned it in 1431 for the attractive promotion to the joint post of master of Whittington College and rector of St Michael Paternoster Royal, then in the patronage of John Carpenter, common clerk of London and executor of Richard Whittington, the founder of the College; Pecock was involved in some of the processes which completed the College's foundation. Not only did he become

acquainted with leading citizens actively concerned with their own pious education, such as Carpenter, and with the provision of religious books for lay readers, he was also closely associated with many wealthy and important citizens such as the Mercers. The Mercers' Company took over the administration of the College when Carpenter died, and Pecock was one of two clerics designated by Carpenter to choose books for Guildhall library from his own collection. By 1443 Pecock was one of a group of London citizens, officers of the royal household and courtiers, lead by John Somerset, Henry VI's physician and chancellor of the exchequer, who founded a fraternity of All Angels at Brentford.

London citizens expected a great deal from their clergy, including inspiring sermons, and people were used to taking an active role in running their parishes. Pecock's own writings, begun while at Whittington College, were part of his conviction that the laity needed reasoned, orthodox texts, to assist them in their understanding of religion — and they were circulated in draft among his associates. In 1444 Pecock was made bishop of St Asaph, moving to Chichester in 1450, possibly with the patronage of William de la Pole, Duke of Suffolk; little is known of either episcopate because of the lack of registers, but he maintained his London connections. On 15 May 1447 he preached a sermon at St Paul's Cross which provoked a bitter controversy on the subject of absentee bishops and the proper duties of bishops, especially preaching; he may have instigated a preaching campaign in his own diocese, and was certainly involved in disputes with his fellow clergy. He continued to make enemies until the crisis of 1457 when, at a time of considerable fears of public disorder, Lord Beaumont wrote to Henry VI recommending an investigation of Pecock and his ideas, citing the king's father's prosecution of heretics. Thomas Bourchier, Archbishop of Canterbury, was not anxious to proceed against Pecock, but many other clerics were.

Dr Scase provides an admirable analysis of the documents and unreliable narratives that survive of the trial and condemnation. Pecock had to submit to the examination of his books and see them burnt; he was expelled from the council and he recanted his heresies at St Paul's Cross — he confessed that for twenty years he had taught and written about the sacraments and articles of faith otherwise than was taught by the church. One wonders what the London citizens thought when this man, whom they had known so well for many years, a man of such a bright intelligence and with so much enthusiasm for communication, was compelled to admit that he had preferred his own reason to the authority of scripture and the church (his main offence).

Bourchier and his associates, and Pecock himself, may have expected that he would return to his see; others, however, decided to make an example of him, seeing it as an opportunity to renew the authority of the monarchy. The advice of many doctors of canon law and theology was sought — among them Robert

Stillington — and the pope was persuaded that he could not in any way support Pecock's return to his duties. Deprived of writing materials and visitors, Pecock died shortly afterwards at Thorney Abbey. Copies of some of his books, however, escaped destruction.

Another man passionate about communication was William Caxton, who introduced the printing press to England and printed the first book in English. Norman Blake has long been an authority on Caxton and encouraged an accurate appraisal of his career. He issues the very necessary warning about the paucity of sources on Caxton's personal life — his precise place of birth, the precise order of printing of his books, a complete list of his publications, and the details of his will and family are not known — because there have been too many fantasies built around him. Blake rightly dismisses the notions that this canny, successful merchant adventurer and diplomatist was heavily involved in political factionalism, and that he was ever in the employ of Margaret of York; and he rightly recognises what he calls Caxton's 'financial muscle', mercantile expertise and essential independence of patrons. This essay concentrates on the facts and the documents which support them and gives the most important documents in an appendix for the reader to judge; the list is already out-of-date as new snippets have been and are being published. There is also a list of Caxton's books in alphabetical order, with only their year dates (even when a more precise date is known) and an assessment of the year dates of the others based on current research — inevitably, there will be disagreements. It may, perhaps, be useful to point out that Hugh Brice was not a mercer but a goldsmith, and that Elizabeth Woodville was married only two times (a type-setter's error?). The St Katherine whose *Life* was received by St Margaret's Westminster from Caxton's executors, may well have been the saint of Alexandria — whose *vita* Caxton knew very well, having included an extended version in his edition of the *Golden Legend* — and not St Katherine of Siena, whose *Life* Wynkyn de Worde published in 1493. The lost book could even have been a copy of Pietro Carmeliano's Latin life of the saint which had originally been dedicated to Richard III!

Overall Professor Blake shows what a remarkable man William Caxton was: a man who changed careers in his fifties, an entrepreneur, a translator with a voluminous output, and that rare phenomenon, an early printer who survived in the business.

The other three men of this collection, in contrast, had more circumscribed careers: they were predominantly authors and of two of them very little is known except their work. Of Robert Henryson, whose life bridged the year 1500, we only know that he had a connection with Dunfermline and was a well-read and well-educated 'medieval humanist', not the humble, rustic poet he has sometimes been taken for. In five pages Gray is able to list the facts and fictions about Henryson's

life, the extent of his learning and briefly analyse and praise the originality and individuality of his work. The overview of extant texts, both printed and manuscript, and modern editions and studies fills no less than twelve pages; it also includes reference to fuller bibliographies.

A little more is known about Henryson's contemporary, William Dunbar. The 'first great Edinburgh poet' may have been born c. 1460 and perhaps graduated at St Andrews in 1479. Accounts show that he served James IV, receiving a regular salary as member of the royal household, but his way of life there must be deduced from his poems. His work is extremely versatile, including alliterative poetry, popular tales, fabliaux, dream visions, drinking songs and devotional lyrics. Again a list of sources and main studies completes the biography, but references to more complete bibliographies are also given.

The certain and possible facts of John Capgrave's life (1393-1464) are given by Seymour in great detail, starting with a description of the settlement of the Austin Friars in England — including the common mistake of putting their Clare house at *Stoke Clare* — leading on through the academic career of the gifted friar, listing Capgrave's presentations to Humphrey of Gloucester, the first patron he sought for his house and his order; and his various saints' lives and their dedicatees. Among all these facts there is a curious outburst of the author, who claims that 'like all the friars, the Hermits were staunchly Lancastrian' — though Osborn Bokenham and probably other inmates of the house at Clare manifestly were not — and proceeds (from his modern armchair) to blame Capgrave for actively seeking Edward IV's patronage, accusing the aged friar of 'cowardice, vanity, and self-interest' in the 'nauseating performance' of rededicating a work to the new king. The additional texts to this biography consist of a table of dates, five Latin prefaces, a list of lost works, Capgrave's patrons, his language, and a short bibliography.

In its present shape this collection of biographies is probably a library cataloguer's nightmare and relatively expensive, but together, or — in the future — separately, these texts are very useful and welcome.

ANNE F. SUTTON and LIVIA VISSER-FUCHS

AN ILLUSTRATED HISTORY OF LATE MEDIEVAL ENGLAND. Edited by Chris Given-Wilson. 1996. Manchester University Press, £25.00.

ISBN 0-7190-4152-X

This is an authoritative study of English society in transition. It broadly covers the

period 1200-1500, whose significant features include the decline of papal authority and the development of a religious expression that was both more personal and national, the decline of feudal monarchy and the rise of a nation state where administrative transformation allowed kings to become guardians of the national destiny, levy national taxation and accept a partnership, albeit an unequal one, with representatives of their subjects in parliament. In many ways the period was dominated by the Black Death; before it a rising population led to shortage of land, rising prices and unemployment, while afterwards the position was reversed and the English people enjoyed a rising standard of living, with the distribution of wealth shifting south from the midlands. The significance of the rise of the English language and the parallel decline in French, and in Latin everywhere except in the law, was one result of the fall of the Angevin empire and, despite the peaks of success in France achieved by Edward III and Henry V, the loss of all England's continental possessions. If military prowess was one measure of royal success, other elements included the provision of fair justice, even-handed patronage, the maintenance of the Church, the protection of the weak and needy and the ability to run an efficient but not oppressive administration while keeping a firm control over local officials.

The eleven chapters are written by ten experts in their chosen field, which makes it particularly difficult to review, since there is insufficient space to deal with each chapter separately, yet each deserves it. The aim was to reflect and synthesise the best of modern scholarship in each area and the result is an overview of uniformly high quality which is nonetheless accessible to the general reader. Chris Given-Wilson, the editor, contributes the Introduction and the final chapter on England's relations with its neighbours in the British Isles and across the Channel. Other familiar names include Ralph Griffiths on the political institutions of the realm, Michael Hicks on lawmakers and lawbreakers, Simon Walker on civil war and rebellion, Paul Brand on the family and inheritance and Richard Davies on religious sensibility. All cover ground with which Ricardians will be familiar, but do so in masterly and pithy form. Less well-known territory is covered by chapters from Ian Johnson on language and literary expression, Nigel Ramsay on forms of artistic expression and Simone Macdougall on health, diet and medicine. Least-known of all, at least to this reviewer, and therefore among the most stimulating, are the two chapters by Mark Bailey on the landscape and on population and economic resources. These are accompanied by a number of stunning aerial photographs.

The book is one of a series of illustrated histories produced by Manchester University Press and must in part be judged by the quality of its illustrations. It starts in magnificent style with its cover a reproduction of the Wilton Dyptych, perhaps the supreme surviving exemplar of artistic expression in England in the

late Middle Ages, and continues with sixteen colour plates and more than a hundred black and white illustrations. The colour ones include the expected manuscript illuminations and modern photographs of castles or the goldsmith's art, but range farther afield to take in a graphic depiction of the tooth-puller on the job and a diagram of the veins and points on the human body at which blood was to be let and two magnificent illustrations of the courts of Chancery and King's Bench at work. The black and white pictures range from the familiar portraits of the leading players to photographs of aerial evidence of mediaeval coal mining and the carved neck of a gittern (a guitar-like instrument). The clarity of the black and white photography is perhaps not all that it might be, and there are one or two infelicities in the arrangements of the illustrations, for instance, where two coloured medical plates appear in the text on religious sensibility, but this is compensated for by the remarkably low price for a volume of this type and the wide ranging picture research, for which Manchester University Press are to be congratulated.

ANNE CRAWFORD

THE REGISTER OF THETFORD PRIORY. PART 1. 1482 - 1517 Edited by David Dymond. 1995. Oxford University Press for The British Academy, £40. Also published by The Norfolk Record Society, Volume 59 for 1994.

ISBN 0-19-726160-4

Unlike the normal monastic register or cartulary this is an account book, and unlike the familiar *compoti* or account rolls of monastic officials it records *total* household and estate expenditure including outlying manors. The period covered by the whole register is 1482-1540. It seems to embody a reasonably successful attempt by the last three priors to monitor and control expenditure and consumption in a time of static income and high taxation. Its direct bearing on Richard III's reign is limited since of the years before 1497 only 1482/3 and 1483/4 are recorded, and these rather summarily. Its value lies in the picture it gives, amplified in the thoroughly-researched introduction, of a medium-sized religious house in the decades before the Dissolution; in the words of the editor, 'detail ranging from royal visits and the payment of taxes to the hunting of foxes and cleaning of latrines'. The priory comprised a household of fourteen monks with a staff of perhaps six times as many, lying on the main road between London and Norwich and on a principal pilgrimage route to Walsingham and Bromholme. That it was no backwater is illustrated oddly by the eighty lawsuits paid for between 1498 and 1540. Eight of its twenty manors were in hand so, unusually at this time, the expenses of demesne farming are recorded. There were foldcourses

for 7,000 sheep and the intricacies of the East Anglian foldcourse system are indicated. Also on the sandy Breckland soil were at least seven rabbit warrens with their semi-fortified lodges. The priory's patrons were the Howards, dukes of Norfolk following the ennobling of John Howard by Richard in 1483. The priory church became the family's mausoleum, Howard himself being brought from Bosworth Field for burial and his successor the victor of Flodden being interred in 1524 with what has been described as the last great funeral of the Middle Ages. In 1540 the third duke made strenuous efforts to safeguard his chosen burial place by converting the foundation into a college of priests or even a cathedral, but in the event he managed only to secure its assets and to present nine of its monks to livings in his gift. The register has long been quarried by theatre historians and it does indeed refer to a range of entertainments: waits from as far away as Hull; 115 payments to minstrels and ninety to visiting actors; bearwards; 'the man with a camel'; and local guild plays including that of Croxton, well-known for its surviving 'Play of the Sacrament'.

No accounts of this date are without their limitations. Here the mix of languages and lapses in grammar are encapsulated in such phrases as 'le custodibus le howndes Domini Regis'. In the years 1499-1538 seventy-two pages are totalled correctly, eight-three not. An event as notable as the funeral of 1524 is dismissed in two lines. Obscurely-phrased accounting entries indicating that the prior received help from the monastic community in meeting costs have misled one historian to claim the presence of nuns from a nearby convent at the priory's entertainments. Nevertheless this and the concluding volume when it appears will be an invaluable source for the late medieval period in England. Purists may object to the omission of ubiquitous catchwords such as *Item sol'* but that seems to this reviewer to add to the immediacy of the text without significant loss. There is no translation or English summary of the text.

The volume includes an introduction of sixty-six pages, a glossary of English words and phrases, and the text to 1517. Biographies and an index will be included in the second part.

PAUL RUTLEDGE

THE HOSPITALS OF MEDIEVAL NORWICH. Carole Rawcliffe. 1995. Studies in East Anglian History 2. Centre of East Anglian Studies, University of East Anglia, Norwich. £11.95 (pbk). ISBN 0-906219-39-6

This is a much bigger book than the title would imply for it is far more than just an

account of the medieval hospitals and almshouses of Norwich. Drawing on Dr Rawcliffe's *Medicine and Society in Late Medieval England* published in the same year, and a range of recent writing on hospitals and the care of the poor and sick, this little book places the various hospitals of Norwich into their religious, economic and social context, in a manner which is exemplary. The reader will get a sense of the medieval history of Norwich, as well as of its hospitals.

For readers of *The Ricardian* the picture of the hospitals in the late fifteenth century is not exciting, with no new foundations and those that existed mostly in a state of decline, although Dr Rawcliffe writes sympathetically of the difficulties they faced. Rather it is the thirteenth and first decade of the fourteenth centuries which saw most activity after an initial burst of foundations in the twelfth. Indeed Norwich seems to have been somewhat unusual for a city of its size in the paucity of its post-Black Death foundations: only the brothers Walter and John Danyell appear to have established an almshouse (in 1418) and this does not seem to have survived long (or at least received no bequests after the 1420s). Norwich therefore fits very well into a widely-held thesis of an increasingly selective and particularist attitude to the poor. Dr Rawcliffe concentrates on more regional and local considerations, suggesting that the legacy of the Peasants' Revolt (unusually violent in East Anglia, both in its expression and repression), was of an elite more hostile to and distanced from the body of the poor than elsewhere, and with an interest limited to the relief of poor neighbours known to the donor, although this does not entirely explain why institutions could not have been established which were restrictive in their entry requirements. Certainly the later evidence of poor relief in Norwich indicates an interest in maintaining the sick and poor in their own homes where possible. It may indeed have been that by the sixteenth century hostility to hospitals was not confined to the elite: in 1549 Kett's rebels attacked St Giles hospital. By that date it may have seemed to them to be an example of the ecclesiastical privilege to which they objected, having become predominantly an increasingly splendid showcase for a series of masters appointed for their diocesan responsibilities, rather than interest in the poor.

Although this book does not have the scope to deal with non-institutional care in the chapter on the smaller hospitals of Norwich much attention is paid to the plethora of healing shrines in the East Anglian region, and thus to the numbers of the sick and crippled who must have dragged themselves on pilgrimage into the presence of saints and relics, and on the way needed the services of hospitals as lodgings which were also capable of coping with sick travellers. Indeed Dr Rawcliffe suggests that to some extent there was a network of hospitals and hospices, providing for such holy travellers, although it is not clear to what extent the smaller houses of Norwich did provide particularly for pilgrims.

There are a few caveats to this book: Holy Innocents hospital, Beverley (p.75)

is a mistake for Holy Innocents, Lincoln. Parallels with European practice may not always be helpful. The very late example of the Ypres poor relief scheme of 1525 may have influenced Tudor attitudes to the poor but cannot safely be used as evidence for earlier English attitudes. These are, however, relatively minor matters.

Providing a foretaste of Dr Rawcliffe's forthcoming study of the Great Hospital of Norwich, which is eagerly awaited, this is a useful stopgap for the expert, a valuable introduction to the general reader or student, and a must for the local historian or even ordinary citizen of Norwich.

P.H. CULLUM

Notes on Contributors

Rosamund Allen teaches medieval language and literature at Queen Mary and Westfield College, London.

Anne Crawford is an Assistant Keeper at the Public Record Office. Her most recent publication is an edition of *The Letters of the Queens of England 1100-1547*.

P.H. Cullum is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Huddersfield. She is currently a Wellcome Research Fellow working on a book on Hospitals and Charitable Provision in late Medieval England.

Rosemary Horrox. Fellow of Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge. Author of *Richard III: A Study of Service*, Cambridge 1989.

Paul Rutledge has recently retired as Senior Assistant Archivist at the Norfolk Record Office. He is one of the general editors of the Norfolk Record Society.

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

John Watts is a lecturer in History at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth. He is the author of *Henry VI and the Politics of Kingship*, published last year.

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. 45-46.

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 September 1997 Ricardian must reach Miss Anne Sutton, 44 Guildhall Street, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk IP33 1QF, by 30 June. Articles should be sent well in advance. Further advice on presentation may be obtained from the editor.

RICHARD III AND YORKIST HISTORY TRUST
**The Politics of Fifteenth-Century
England: John Vale's Book**

Margaret L. Kekewich
Colin Richmond, Anne F. Sutton, Livia Visser-Fuchs, John L. Watts

An edition/calendar of BL, Add. Ms. 48031A, a memoranda book produced in the household of Sir Thomas Cook, mayor of London 1462-63, by his man-of-affairs, John Vale. Contains copies (often unique) of broadsides, private and public letters and literary and political texts c. 1420 to 1483. Introductory essays relate the documents to their background: the evolution of Richard, Duke of York's political aims; the first reign of Edward IV; the dedication and dating of the *Governance* and the particular significance of this copy; the failure of Edward's second reign as exemplified by the collapse of the French alliance. The provenance and purpose of the book are assessed by studying the careers of the collectors of the documents: Thomas Cook (died 1478), his family, notably his son-in-law, John Forster; John Vale, his Bury St Edmunds background, his copy of Lydgate's *Serpent of Division* and his association with John Multon, stationer of London.

289 pages; illustrated.

Special price to members of the Richard III Society, £29, from PO Box 247, Haywards Heath, West Sussex, RH17 5FF. 10% to be added for overseas surface mail. Cheques to be in sterling only and payable to Richard III Society.

To non-members £40, from Alan Sutton Publishing Ltd., Phoenix Mill, Far Thrupp, Stroud, Gloucester, GL5 2BU. Cheques to be in sterling only and payable to Alan Sutton Publishing Limited.

RICHARD III AND YORKIST HISTORY TRUST
**The Crowland Chronicle
Continuations 1459-1486**

edited by Nicholas Pronay and John Cox

This book contains the two continuations of the Crowland Chronicle covering the years 1459 to 1486. These are major sources for the reigns of Edward IV and Richard III and include information found nowhere else. Most of the material was written by an intelligent and well educated man who was an eye witness of some of the events he describes.

The Latin text with an English translation. The valuable introduction discusses all aspects of the chronicle including the fascinating problem of the identity of the author.

Published 1986, 207 pages.

Special price to Members of the Richard III Society, £18.50, including p&p., from the Sales Office, PO. Box 247, Haywards Heath, W. Sussex RH17 5FF. Cheques to be made payable to Richard III Society.

Price to Non-Members, £30 including post and packing, from Alan Sutton Publishing Ltd., Phoenix Mill, Far Thrupp, Stroud, Glos. GL5 2BU. Cheques to be payable to Alan Sutton Publishing Limited.



THE REBURIAL OF RICHARD DUKE OF YORK

21-30 JULY 1476

Anne F. Sutton and Livia Visser-Fuchs
with P. W. Hammond



Richard Duke of York was disinterred from the grave given him by the victors of the battle of Wakefield and reburied at Fotheringhay with elaborate pageantry. An edition with introductions of all the texts connected with this lavish display of Yorkist piety, ceremony and dynastic propaganda. (An expanded version of the *Ricardian* article.)

56 pages; 11 illustrations (4 colour)

ISBN 0-904893-14-6

Price £5, including p&p, from the Sales Office, PO Box 247, Haywards Heath, W. Sussex RH17 5FF. Overseas members to add 10% to cover surface-mail charges. Cheques to be in sterling only and made payable to the Richard III Society.

Ricardian Index 1994-96

A comprehensive author and subject index to articles, notes and reviews in all issues of *The Ricardian*, volume X numbers 124-35, March 1994-December 1996.

£3.50 including postage and packing from:
Sales Office, P.O. Box 247, Haywards Heath,
W. Sussex RH17 5FF

Please make cheques payable to the Richard III Society.