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## VI Seventeenth Century

### (i) British and Irish History

*Martyn Bennett*

**General** Only just sneaking into this year's review is a biography of the 17<sup>th</sup> earl of Oxford, *Edward de Vere (1550–1604): the crisis and consequences of wardship* (Ashgate, £45) by Daphne Pearson. A bug bear of the mid seventeenth century until opposition politicians got control of the Court of Wards, wardship was seen as a means of extracting money from the estates of minors by the crown. Pearson argues, through the case of de Vere, that there is indeed some justification in the later calls for its abolition. Wardship was the root of lifelong financial decline for the earl and his tiny income at his death is firmly blamed on his succeeding to his title whilst a minor. The biography does deal with more than just the wardship years, exploring for the first time the full length Edward de Vere's life, which is well-worth reading.

Amy Louise Erickson poses a very interesting question at the opening of 'Coverture and capitalism' (*Hist. Workshop J.*, 59): what is the contribution of women's economic role to the economy in pre-industrial England? She argues persuasively that it is important and moreover is crucial to the early development of capitalism. Indeed coverture, the principle that married women's property and income is under male control after marriage resulted in the development of sophisticated means of protecting women's personal inheritance and thus had a knock on effect in the development of financial institutions. Moreover, the freedom accorded to unmarried women to use their income at will had the potential contribution of 50% to overall levels of investment. This is an excellent essay which will excite debate and discussion. Two reissues deserve to be mentioned here, both from Routledge: John Wroughton's second edition of *The Routledge Companion to the Stuart Age* (hbk £55, pbk £16.99) and David Cressy and Ann Ferrell's *Religion and society in early modern England* (hbk £60, pbk £19.99) and also as an e-book at £19.99, which is also in its second edition. Both have both proved useful to a wide range of readers in the past, and their thorough revisions and additions enable them to keep pace with this most vibrant area of work.

A very different general piece should act as an introduction to a large number of research projects in part or as a whole. Elaine MacKay's 'English diarists: gender, geography and occupation, 1500–1700' (*Hist.*, 90) looks at the nature of diaries and diarists. As with so many studies involving diaries at some point this makes a useful background article. To date 372 diaries in England have been tracked in national and local record offices. Using this as a base figure the diaries are analysed in terms of gender, occupation and location: questions of motive and content are discussed. Thus providing gems of information for anyone working on a diary, McKay is fully aware that this is an ongoing project: even so its value is unquestioned.

Before moving on Martyn Bennett has published *Society, religion and culture in seventeenth century Nottinghamshire* (Edwin Mellen £69.99), a collection of essays by scholars originally based at Nottingham Trent University, but now distributed across the northern hemisphere. Their combined talents add depth and breadth not only to our understanding of Nottinghamshire, but of the century as a whole in Britain. The essays cover gender and crime, witchcraft, religion literary culture, community economics and politics.

1 **Political, Cultural and Religious History 1600–1640** An early contender for this  
2 section of the review is Brenda Buchanan, Justin Champion, David Canadine and  
3 David Cressey's *Gunpowder plots: a celebration of 400 yYears of Bonfire Night* (Allen  
4 Lane, £14.99). This collection of essays examines the way that the 5 November has  
5 been celebrated in various places over time and the resonance that the night still bears.  
6 As well as examining the national panic that followed the attempt on the lives of the  
7 king and MPs, there is also a history of fireworks – the essential part of bonfire night.  
8 Of course the anniversary of the plot spawned several works on television, including  
9 the memorable reconstruction of the explosion carried in one documentary, as well as  
10 in print. Jim Sharpe's *Remember, remember the fifth of November* (Profile Books  
11 £15.99) is another example of the broad brush approach. Like the authors of *Gunpowder  
12 plots*, Sharpe not only explores the nature of the plot and its dramatic discovery but  
13 also the way that the events are commemorated and remembered over the intervening  
14 four hundred years. James Travers of the National Archives produced *Gunpowder: the  
15 players behind the plot* (National Archives, £19.99), perhaps the most interesting of  
16 the studies, focussing on the key figures in the documents that revealed their roles in  
17 the plot, which Travers explores from the last weeks before the discovery of the plan  
18 through the court cases in the succeeding months.

19 The structures of the Jacobean church are explored in an interesting book by Charles  
20 Prior. In *Defining the Jacobean church: the politics of controversy, 1603–1625* (CUP,  
21 £50) Prior argues that the divisions within the church were actually multifarious. Most  
22 arguments lie within the nexus of predestination versus free will and thus concentrate  
23 upon salvation. In Prior's view that whole nature of the church was being debated and  
24 discussed and moreover that this was seen in a civil and historical context. The very  
25 role of church in society too was under discussion and the relationship with civil governors  
26 and governance was and would remain contentious. The seeds of later debate were  
27 there, even if in the end the solutions were not going to be found. One feature of the  
28 Laudian church was the lack of clarity regarding the position of confirmation. James  
29 F. Turrell suggests that here as in other areas Laud was not as 'Laudian' as some of his  
30 juniors, in "‘Until such time as he be confirmed’": the Laudians and confirmation in the  
31 seventeenth century church' (*Seventeenth Century*, XX). Confirmation was largely  
32 downgraded during the Reformation; baptism and catechising were seen as the most  
33 important element of acceptance into the church, and despite reference to confirmation  
34 in the 1604 canons, there was little concerted attempt to restore its importance as a  
35 precursor to receipt of communion. Laud was apparently lukewarm on the issue and  
36 there was no sustained redevelopment of confirmation's status in the 1630s. The civil  
37 wars naturally had a further negative impact and nothing further was done to rehabilitate  
38 confirmation in the 1660s. This essay therefore casts useful light on the limitations of  
39 'Laudian' reform and on Laud's own attitudes to church practice.

40 In *The blessed revolution: English politics and the coming of war, 1621–1624* by  
41 Thomas Cogswell (CUP, £31.99) the naissance of the civil wars and revolution are  
42 embedded in the 1620s, by looking at the conflict between court and crown over  
43 James's pacific stance regarding Spain. Parliament succeeded in changing the direction  
44 of foreign policy, an obvious starting point for the influence it felt it should have a  
45 decade and a half later when James's successor was powerless to deflect the attempt to  
46 enshrine executive powers in Parliament. This is a contentious argument in many ways  
47 but can be seen to bridge gaps between the revisionist approach to the run-up to war  
48 and those who claim to detect longer term of deeper rooted crises.

49 In a similar vein, Richard Cust has returned to the fertile ground upon which he  
50 worked in the 80s and 90s with 'Was there an alternative to the personal rule? Charles  
51 I, the Privy Council and the Parliament of 1629' *Hist.*, 90. The answer is, of course, I  
52 suppose, yes. Cust argues that the king could still have changed tack as late as the  
53 early thirties, he was still taking advice, no one necessarily saw him as confirmed in  
54 one or another means of government: only with the growing confidence as a adult

1 father did he more clearly harden his attitude. Even so Cust argues forcibly that the  
2 period 1628–29 was crucial in the development of the king's attitude towards parliament  
3 and government. Like Cogswell, Cust maintains that the 1620s remain crucial to  
4 understanding the coming catastrophe.

5 **Political, Cultural and Religious History 1640–1660** Without a doubt the most  
6 exciting book in this section is Mark Stoyles *Soldiers and strangers: an ethnic history*  
7 *of the English Civil War*, Yale U.P., £25. This book presents the war as a modern conflict  
8 of religions and ethnicities, in which borders play a small role. Stoyle has always  
9 regarded the ethnic aspects of the conflicts as crucial to our understanding and has  
10 broadened our perspectives on these currents and undercurrents within England and  
11 Wales to a greater extent than perhaps anyone else. The book looks at the war in two  
12 main stages, the first at the influx of outsiders usually appended to the royalist cause.  
13 The second looks very much at England being reborn and pushing the surge of invaders  
14 from its borders. The book advances Stoyles's belief in the centrality of ethnicity and  
15 carries some weight in so doing.

16 Jason Peacey looks at the development of propaganda in the revolution. Instead of  
17 looking at the text in 'The hunting of the Leveller: the sophistication of Parliamentary  
18 Propaganda 1647–53' (*Hist. Research*, 78) Peacey looks at the frequency and timing  
19 of publications in relation to attempts to silence and imprison John Lilburne. In the  
20 early stages of the Leveller campaigns there was nothing in the way of a concerted  
21 parliamentary response to them or to Lilburne. However, from the second edition of  
22 *England's New Chains Discovered* onwards things changed. As Lilburne was arrested  
23 copies of Parliament's reasons in the form of a declaration were published and circulated.  
24 Beyond this a more sophisticated approach failed when John Milton failed to  
25 produce a rebuttal of Lilburne's politics and as a result Lilburne escaped a charge of  
26 treason. By May–June 1649 however, attempts to counter Lilburne's publications were  
27 meeting with more success, Milton was taken off the case and his job given to John  
28 Canne. Even so, as with the king's trial earlier that year, Lilburne's appearance in court  
29 counteracted all parliament's propaganda and engendered sympathy for the defendant.  
30 Greater success had to wait until the tightening of restrictions on the press. Peacey  
31 makes no sustained comment on the quality of the pamphlets aimed at undermining  
32 one of the revolution's most prolific writers, but the inference is plain. It was to be  
33 mechanics of the publication effort and control of publishing that shut Lilburne down,  
34 and the increased sophistication of those mechanics reveals the development of  
35 conservative political system in parallel with the radical machine.

36 Of different political mettle is Thomas Lord Fairfax. Luke Dixon in 'The politics of  
37 Sir Thomas Fairfax reassessed' (*History*., 90) suggests convincingly that Fairfax was  
38 not politically neutral or powerless in the revolutionary months of 1648–9, nor was he  
39 a conservative block to revolutionary progress. Rather he argues Fairfax's sympathy  
40 with the politics and more so the plight of his soldiers helped keep the army together,  
41 thus enabling its political success in the revolution. Blame, should there be such a  
42 thing, for Fairfax's position in 1648 should lie with the king's intransigence that had,  
43 as it had with Cromwell, finally turned Fairfax from the belief in a negotiated settlement  
44 with Charles to accepting that more radical steps needed to be taken. An interesting  
45 argument and insight into Fairfax's role in the revolution.

'Was Marvell a Republican?' asks Warren Chernaik in *Seventeenth Century*, XX.  
Chernaik investigates the political messages in a series of Marvell's works for the  
1650s. He finds mixed messages in the texts which suggest either confusion in  
Marvell's mind or perhaps portray the development of ideas as time passes. There is  
clearly an internal debate going on in Marvell's mind. Two poems written closely  
together, *An Horation Ode . . .* and *Tom May's death* are good examples of this and the  
eulogy for the young Lord Hastings is clearly royalist in intent: although Lord Hastings  
is not an easy figure to pin down: he was too young to have participated in the wars,

1 his father the Earl of Huntingdon was a parliamentarian turned lukewarm royalist and  
 2 his mother was a hard-line parliamentarian and so a confused picture in the poem  
 3 could be result of a fight over the soul of the dead much hoped-for heir as much as  
 4 uncertainty in the Marvell's mind. Chernaik answers his question with a firm no – not yet.

5 Marvell features in another article, this time on the distinctly un-puritan celebrations  
 6 of the marriage of Lord Protector Oliver's daughters, Frances and Mary. Both made  
 7 strong political alliances in 1657 which, had time permitted, firmly bound the new  
 8 regime into the families and structures lingering from the old. In ‘“Soe Honny from  
 9 the Lyon came”’: the wedding masques for the Protector's daughters’ (*Seventeenth Century*,  
 10 XX), Edward Holberton looks at the work of Edmund Waller and Marvell. In ‘On the  
 11 Marriage of Mrs Frances Cromwell with Mr Rich Grandchild to the Earl of Warwick’,  
 12 Waller celebrates, he concludes, the rise of the new moderate aristocrats, who will  
 13 ensure the survival of the new regime, whilst to Marvell, perhaps still Chernaik's  
 14 unconvinced republican, in ‘Two Songs at the marriage of the Lord Fauconberg and  
 15 the Lady Mary Cromwell’ the newness of the regime is still a contentious issue to be  
 16 resolved. Useful commentaries on both masques provide a light on the way the regime  
 17 was (still) settling in within the heart of the nation and its political classes.

16 **Political Cultural and Religious History 1660–1715** William Gibson and Robert  
 17 Ingram's *Religious identities in Britain, 1660–1831* (Ashgate, £45) is a collection of  
 18 essays aiming to cover the post revolutionary period in British religious development.  
 19 It therefore takes as its themes, the conflict between high and low Anglicanism, the  
 20 Jacobites. It is an important collection of studies and deserves a wide readership.  
 21 Naturally, according to William E. Burns, astrology and Roman Catholicism appeared  
 22 hand in hand in the late seventeenth century. The popular astrologists and compilers of  
 23 almanacs fought a religious war over James II. In ‘Astrology and Politics in seven-  
 24 teenth century England: King James II and the Almanac Men’ (*Seventeenth Century*,  
 25 XX), Burns examines the way James II was presented in almanacs as God's chosen  
 26 instrument and thus the reinstatement of the Roman Catholic faith was demonstrated  
 27 to have God's approval. Monarchist astrologer John Gadbury, and others demonstrated  
 28 that the king's escape from myriad dangers during the civil wars and republic could  
 29 only have been salvation by providential fortune. Just as his grandfather's salvation  
 30 from diabolic plots could be seen as proving that his Protestant credentials had  
 31 approval by God, so James II was shown to have providentialist blessing, justifying his  
 32 religious bent. Naturally there was an opposite viewpoint with authors such as the  
 33 exiled John Partridge offering a contrary perspective. This is a fascinating insight into  
 34 the popular press and its political position during the late century.

35 What some might consider a higher art form, presented other problems for the  
 36 seventeenth-century observer. Arguably the best paintings in Europe were from the  
 37 Roman Catholic parts of the continent and the effect on the observer of gazing upon it  
 38 was problematic. How was a Protestant to view Catholic art? In her enjoyable article  
 39 ‘The culture of judgement: art and anti-Catholicism in England c. 1660–1760’, (*Hist.*  
 40 *Research*, 78) Clare Haynes suggested that the observer had to be cautious. Appreciation of  
 41 the quality of the work was one thing and the observer had carefully to avoid being  
 42 absorbed in the idolatrous nature and the religious messages within such works. As a  
 43 result descriptions of great artworks tended to be quite flat and narrative in structure,  
 44 unlike this fascinating and useful read.

45 Whilst Hobbesian scholars may have been quiet in this year, Locke's devotees  
 46 ensured that his work remained on the agenda. Hannah Dawson's very interesting  
 47 essay ‘Locke on Language in (Civil) Society’ (*History. of Political Thought*, XXVI)  
 48 argued that Locke was in serious danger of undermining his views on civil society  
 49 through his linguistic theories. His suspicion that men broke codes of language would  
 50 have an impact on the meaning of political compacts: for if people misused the  
 51 language with which they made social compacts than the compacts were undermined.

1 Jacqueline Rose, on the other hand, looked at the young Locke's argument in favour of  
2 an intolerant state church. In 'John Locke, "matters indifferent", and the restoration of  
3 the Church of England' (*Hist. J.*, 48) Rose argues that Locke saw that a restoration  
4 church should unite the political and spiritual. Far from the tolerance he later showed,  
5 Locke was a royalist Anglican in 1660: arguing the church should be defended for its  
6 political value of inculcating obedience to the state to support the restored monarchy.

7 **Economic and Social History** *Printing and parenting in early modern England*, ed.  
8 Douglas A. Brooks (Ashgate, £45) is a collection of essay which looks at the way a  
9 changing written culture had an effect on the changing nature or thereby changed  
10 nature of parenthood during the period. It is at first a strange mixture, a history of  
11 printed text and familial developments; but then the culture of writing obviously  
12 impinges on all changes in society: education, war and financial structures, so it is no  
13 surprise that family life is changed too – a worthy and interesting collection of work.  
14 Catie Gill has produced a very fine study of the literature of the Quakers. Her book,  
15 *Women in the seventeenth century Quaker community* (Ashgate, £45) is derived from  
16 her Loughborough University PhD thesis and is well worth reading. It adds greatly to  
17 our understanding of the dynamics of Quakerism and to gendered perception of this  
18 fascinating and, at the time, dangerous radical group. Obviously whilst acknowledging  
19 the quite unique circumstances of women writers in the Quaker movement, which has  
20 an impact on the availability of sources, this book contributes to the wider study of  
21 women's roles in the revolution and afterwards: long awaited and welcome. E. Wilby's  
22 *Cunning folk and familiar spirits: shamanistic visionary traditions in early modern*  
23 *British witchcraft and magic* (Sussex Academic P., £15.95) looks at the evidence for  
24 visionary ritual and belief, rather than accepting that narratives of fairy beliefs were  
25 created in the search for diabolic pacts. This is an interesting attempt to interweave  
26 shamanism and folklore into witchcraft and certainly a useful dimension to witchcraft  
27 studies. *Literature and culture in early modern London* by Lawrence Manley (CUP,  
28 £35) starts in the late fifteenth century and looks at the way London changed from a  
29 mediaeval city to a thriving cultural centre at the heart of the book trade in Britain. In  
30 so doing it argues that this was at the heart of the developing capitalist structures of  
31 the capital and nation. On the other hand, Phil Withrington's *The politics of Common-*  
32 *wealth: citizens and freemen in early modern England* (CUP, £50) looks at the rights  
33 and duties of the urban Englishman and women. Here rather than the book being at the  
34 centre of cultural change, it is the city which drives religion, economy and politics.  
35 Marrying these two books is well worth the effort.

36 Thomasin LaMay's *Musical voices of early modern women* (Ashgate, £50) is a  
37 collection of essays that adds a further dimension to our understanding of the early  
38 modern woman. It is a road far less travelled than many others that have concentrated  
39 on women's lives and all the more exciting for that – an imaginative collection: well  
40 constructed and fascinating.  
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