

*The Road to Marston Moor*, David, Cooke, (Barnsley, Pen and Sword, 2007), pp228, £19.99 and Day, J., Gloucester & Newbury 1643, (Barnsley Pen and Sword, 2007)

These books to a greater and lesser degree are 'what it says on the tin' books: they are essentially a straight forward military history with little socio-economic or political input. David Cooke has the less easy job with this regard as his book has to account for the importance of a Scottish army at the heart of his study so the historical context has to be put there, clearly for readers turning to these pages for a history of a famous Yorkshire battle. Cooke's book is very reminiscent of the early works of Peter Young and its citation at length of primary sources is to great degree particularly familiar in this sort of genre. *The Road to Marston Moor* follows quite a well-trodden path and reveals little new, this is more reminiscent of works by John Barratt than something by the late Peter Newman and his co author Paul Roberts. The textual analysis is careful and useful as well as interesting, but here there is only old-fashioned field walking and photography more perhaps in the genre of Young and Gardiner than Newman and his students, and Roberts or Glenn Foard. Nevertheless, this is a fast paced and 'rattling good history' in the sense of Hardy's *Spirit Sinister*. The context is clearly the north east and the close Scottish border rather than a national book and the context in terms of the effects of the battle are rather constrained. However, there is a recognition, as Newman indicated a quarter of a century ago that the north was not necessarily lost as a result of Marston Moor and this does take us further than a straight forward local account.

The analysis of the Scottish advance on York and the failure of the royalists to hold the south of Yorkshire is covered in a strong narrative which underlines the intent

conveyed in the title. This is an exploration of how Marston Moor came to be fought, from a northern perspective. My main criticism is in the way that huge gobbets of primary source material are used in the text sometime unnecessarily, when a précis would suffice: it make a somewhat old fashioned experienced out of reading this book.

By contrast, Jon Day's book on Gloucester and the first battle of Newbury contains a far fresher addition to civil war military studies. In some ways it too looks familiar and coming from the Pen and Sword stable, it looks and feels the same, initially. However, very little has been written on this campaign recently, with the exception of Malcolm Atkin and Wayne Laughlin's interesting book on the siege of Gloucester, which is fifteen years old. Day has taken the whole campaign into consideration and has left us with a far more clear picture of the way Essex was able to resurrect his flagging military reputation. Again in the tradition of the Roundwood Press books of the 'sixties and 'seventies there is an analysis of the types of soldiers involved in the campaigns and the structures of the armies involved in the conflict, with army lists included. The nature of the siege is clearly examined and the context of Gloucester in the region as well as in parliament's imagination is well understood and developed. Day is also prescient about the individual commanders in the campaign; he looks closely at Henry Wilmot's insecurities during the campaign in a way that makes the minute dissection of the movements and actions of, in this case, the Oxford Army valuable. This translates nicely into a look at the hawks amongst the royalist campaign for whom the Gloucester campaign was a distraction. This in turn leads to a discussion of the proposed unification of the three main royalist armies, dealt with many years ago by Malcolm Wanklyn, because an attack on Gloucester would

prevent or delay such unification and allow parliament's forces near London to recover and redevelop. The discussion of the battle of Newbury is undoubtedly the most useful and original part of the book, both subtly and not so subtly in some cases redefining the disposition of the forces involved, using a very large range of sources some not put to this purpose before. This book is certainly well worth reading, for the military historian and the wider range of civil war scholars.

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