

*The English Civil War*, Stanley D. Carpenter, ed., (Aldershot, Ashgate, 2007, pp. xxiii + 552. £130.00)

Over a century's worth of articles on the 'English Civil War' have been brought together in Stanley Carpenter's collection. Starting with an 1888 essay by W. G. Ross and ending, chronologically, with essays by Mark Stoyle and Andrew Hopper from 2000; this is an interesting selection. I think the title might be something to do with the publisher's requirements. I have spent several sessions on the 'phone with publishers who think the title 'English Civil War' is still *de rigueur*: Carpenter uses the term British civil wars almost throughout the entire text and debates the issue on naming in his introduction. 'British Civil Wars' is a more appropriate appellation as the essays do reflect the pan-national character of the fighting as there are essays on the war in Scotland and Ireland and on the holistic quality of the struggle. It is also useful to see the two formerly juxtaposed essays by John Adamson and Jane Ohlmeyer from a 1998 edition of *History Today*, which debated the relative merits of the 'Englishness', 'Britishness' and 'Irishness' of the civil wars.

Carpenter has arranged the book in three parts, dealing with the nature of the warfare and the armies; the campaigns and battles as well as a less well defined middle section on 'related aspects'. The war and army part include three essays from the 1930s and 1940 by Godfrey Davies on parliamentary armies, and an essay by Peter Newman on the Royalist officer corps from the 1980s. There are forays into army politics with material by Mark Kishlansky too, and James Scott Wheeler's work on logistics gets a look-in also.

The campaigns and battles part includes Ross's article from *The English Historical Review* in 1888 on the battle of Naseby, as well as essays by Davies, Stoyle and others written over the period of a hundred years, looking at rather eclectically,

the war on Cornwall (twice), Devon, London, a bridge of boats at Gloucester along with a reprint of Firth's edited version of Prince Rupert's journal

The middle part is, if anything more eclectic with the afore mentioned essays by Adamson and Ohlmeyer, alongside and indeed separated (why?) by essays on Clubmen, atrocities, mutiny, fire raids and so on. There are also some unanswered debates in this section. Joyce Malcolm's article on Charles I's recruitment problems was answered robustly at the time by a series of essays that explored the recruitment issues from a wider range of sources than Malcolm had used. Similarly there have been several qualifications during the past twenty years to Stephen Porter's belief that taxation was collected under threat of immolating villages.

The issues raised by part two are reflected in the other parts too. The essays are chosen according to Carpenter, to be 'vivid and broadly encompassing' (pxxvi), and he had the dilemma facing anyone 'choosing the most representative essays from the many works available' (pxiii), but it can be argued that this selection encompasses several problems: unanswered contentions, some coagulations that cause problems of balance and a rather strange structure. On the other hand the richness of the civil wars is in part reflected by essays that look at logistics and politics, locality and centrality as well as taxonomy. It is also a genuine pleasure to see some classic work reprinted. I suppose that to see this book as a cabinet of curiosities is the most sensible approach. The book lack the coherence of the essay collection put together in Peter Gaunt's, *The English Civil War*, (Blackwell, Oxford, 2000). For libraries that lack access to a collection of old journals this may be a suitable addition, but at £130.00 a copy, perhaps an internet search is a better option.

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