

## REVIEWS

**Ismini Pells, (Ed.). *New Approaches to the Military History of the English Civil War*, Helion: Solihull, 2017. Notes, Index, Bibliography. pp. 212. ISBN: 978-1-911096-44-3. Hardback. Price £20.29.**

This varied collection of essays represents the proceedings of the 'First Helion and company' 'century of the soldier' conference in 2015 which was held at Rowley House in Shrewsbury.

The eight essays are grouped into three sections: New Perspectives; Theory and Practice and Medicine and Welfare – Human and Equine. Whilst in separate sections and at opposite ends of the book there are two essays which focus on battles in 1643: Middlewich and Roundway Down and they could not be more different. Peter Gaunt presents a thorough reconstruction of the battle at Middlewich, it is almost an old-fashionedly thorough exploration of the stages of an early modern battle, owing a great deal to the master of battle narrative, Peter Young and yet it shows a more modern approach to exploration of topography, in maps and exploration on foot combined with a thorough exploration of the textual accounts. Where the essay forms a neat circumlocution with Chris Scott's examination of Roundway Down is in the forensic way in which Gaunt analyses the royalist defeat. Scott is concerned with the way that operational issues and battlefield tactics accounted for Waller's humiliation. Waller had been hitherto successful and had apparently bottled Hopton up in Devizes: however, the fact that his soldiers had been fighting and marching constantly for days on end had exhausted them and their horses; whereas the royalists who swept them from the field were relatively fresh. Moreover, their charge at speed broke their stationary parliamentarian foe during the attack.

Gaunt's fine study precedes an exploration of Cromwell's Worcester campaign in 1651 by the master of forensic studies of generals and their campaigns, Malcolm Wanklyn. This essay focusses interestingly on the use of the pontoons during the battle. Useful in itself, this is only part of the story and Wanklyn draws this into an assessment of Cromwell's abilities as a general in a measure of 'his greatness'. The other essays cover a variety of war related issues. The editor, Dr Pells opens the second section with an important look at the networks of experience and service that centred on the 'fighting Veres'. This is an important study of one of the human elements of the way in which experience was communicated during the 'military revolution'.

We are reminded of the puritan element of the civil wars by Tim Jenkins's enlightening exploration of William Rowley and Richard Baxter in Shrewsbury. Rowley was a brewer and cloth merchant as well as being a stalwart of the puritan community and a friend of the more famous Baxter. The nonconformist community of Shrewsbury

provided the background to the latter's rejection of the Church of England within half a decade of his ordination. Warwick Louth's essay looks at the literary output of the military revolution and seeks to place the military manuals alongside battlefield archaeology as a means of developing our understanding of the conflict. This is a useful corrective to attempts to understand battles through text alone and incorporates psychology, practicability and detailed knowledge to explain how concentrations of recovered objects, i.e. detritus left behind by musketeers in action, can inform the observer of the type of action undertaken at a given site. This essay serves almost as a *vade mecum* for battlefield exploration.

Essays by Stephen M Rutherford and Eric Gruber von Arni cover the medical aspects of the civil war from the perspective of surgical knowledge and hospital organisation. Rutherford looks at battlefield surgery via the lens of manuals and recorded experience and compares the practice with both contemporary and later practices. He concludes this fascinating essay by suggesting that whilst all surgeons of the civil wars would be equally skilful, some were pioneers of war-related and emergency surgery. Von Arni paints a different picture for his essay examines the 'horrendous' royalist medical organisation. There was no planned response, very little of the expertise Rutherford discusses available because the College of Physicians favoured parliament.

Beyond the content of the essays themselves there is an introduction to vibrant collections of fields of study, for each essay hints at greater works in progress. The book is encouraging for both those who seek to enter the world of the Civil War and related military research and for those long immersed in it. The structure is well-considered, the content more than sufficiently diverse in both form and content to show that there is lots to be done in assessing generals, battlefields, military operations, medical experience and practice, the involvement of religion and networks of soldiers to excite yet further study.

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**Troy Bickham. *The Weight of Vengeance: The United States, the British Empire, and the War of 1812*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012. Notes, Index, Bibliography, Photographs, pp. 325. ISBN: 978-0-19-021781-5. Hardback. Price £21.99.**

Historians at the University of Edinburgh tell a story, probably apocryphal, of a visit many years ago by an eminent Canadian historian. The visitor was asked to deliver a public lecture during his visit. He asked his hosts what they wanted him to speak about

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