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Philip J. Caudrey, *Military Society and the Court of Chivalry in the Age of the Hundred Years War*. Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2019. xii + 227 pp. ISBN 978-1-78327-377-5. £60.

Interest in the Court of Chivalry has never flagged since it was brilliantly brought back to life as an enduring part of our legal system by Sir Anthony Wagner, G.D. Squibb and others in the lawsuit, *Manchester Corporation v. Manchester Palace of Varieties Ltd.* (1954). Almost singlehandedly, the late Maurice Keen then brought the medieval Court of Chivalry – then known also as the Court of the Constable and Marshal, the office of Constable not yet having fallen into disuse and being the senior of the two dignitaries – into the consciousness of historians of the Middle Ages. In a series of articles published from the 1960s to 1980s, an edition of *Morley v. Montagu* (1997) and then his book on the *Origins of the English Gentleman* (2002), he showed how central the Court of Chivalry was to the workings of chivalric society in the second half of the fourteenth century and the first half of the fifteenth. More recently, historians of medieval soldiery have begun to explore the life-stories narrated by witnesses as part of their testimony to the court. Many of the deponents presented vivid autobiographies as they sought to show how they had gained their knowledge of who bore the coat of arms that was the subject of the dispute for which their testimony had been sought.

Military Society and the Court of Chivalry in the Age of the Hundred Years War by Philip Caudrey is the first monograph ever to be published on the Court of Chivalry in the Middle Ages. It is a valuable contribution to the subject, extensively researched in the primary sources, and is clear, compact (just under 200 pages of text) and readable. The main substance of the book is presented in just four chapters, but these are preceded by a helpful introduction which presents the history of the court from the 1340s (with some pre-history) to the early fifteenth century and summarises the three best-documented cases: *Sir Richard, Lord Scrope v. Sir Robert Grosvenor* (1385–90), *John, Lord Lovel v. Thomas, Lord Morley* (1386–7), and *Reginald, Lord Grey v. Sir Edward Hastings* (1407–16). The records of only the first of the three have been printed, and that in a now-scarce edition by Sir N.H. Nicolas in 1832. This reviewer has undertaken to produce an edition and translation of all three and can testify from his own experience that it is no easy task to read the medieval and seventeenth-century manuscripts that contain the texts of the cases. Caudrey modestly observes how Maurice Keen made perceptive use of the trio as part of his studies of chivalric culture and heraldic identity, and how subsequent scholarship, chiefly by Andrew Ayton and Adrian Bell, has highlighted the value of the cases' witness-testimony for military history – identifying participants and establishing patterns of military recruitment and service. What is novel about Caudrey's approach is his contention that 'the value of these three disputes lies in their breadth, as much as in the depth, of material': that is to say, in such questions as magnate-gentry relations, the contemporary meaning and role of lordship, and the nature of what he terms inter-gentry solidarity. He is realistic enough to state that 'a full prosopographical analysis of the witness lists is quite simply impossible, given the obscurity of a significant proportion of those who deposed' (p. 19), but he has in fact carried out a valuable amount of prosopographical research, some of the fruits being set out in Appendix 2, Lancastrian Retainers.

BOOK REVIEWS

The heart of the book is in its four main chapters. The first considers the military service of deponents in *Scrope v. Grosvenor* and *Grey v. Hastings*, and shows that these men's statements need to be tested against evidence from other military records; at the same time, a flavour is given of some soldiers' remarkably long and wide-ranging experiences. We learn fascinating details from a series of case studies of such men as the self-made Sir William Berdewell (d. 1434), whose sword was to hang on the north wall of Bardwell church for centuries after his death. The second and third chapters look at deponents more as a body, considering the social networks that they formed and the ties that bound or defined them, both vertical – that is, the role of lordship – and horizontal, to other gentry and to the counties or regions to which they belonged. In the fourth chapter a more considered and thoughtful note is struck, as Caudrey wonders how far the recollecting of chivalric deeds may have been affected by the military failures that had followed the glorious victories of the 1340s and 1350s. By 1386, when the vast majority of Scrope's and Morley's deponents were being questioned, almost all the English gains that had been crystallised in the treaty of Brétigny (1360) had been lost, and England was even faced with the threat of French invasion. Knighthood itself was now changing in its nature (and in the scale on which it was bestowed). Caudrey suggests that the deponents for Sir Edward Hastings in the years around 1410 were more inclined to favour the martial exploits of the 1370s and 1380s (unsuccessful though some of these had been) than their contemporaries who, when young men, had testified, much closer to that time, for Scrope and for Morley (p. 184).

Caudrey's briskness of treatment of the Court of Chivalry materials is generally a strength: he has covered a great deal of ground very efficiently. A few typographic slips (e.g. principle for principal, pp. 23, 115, 136; *Mariscelli* for *Marescalli*, p. 204; and Phillips for Phillipps, pp. 128, 129, 200) will be forgiven. It must, however, be a matter of real regret – especially for readers of this journal – that heraldry is not a subject that he has chosen to engage with, central though it was to the court's activities. The index entry for 'Heraldic identity' (a mere string of selected page numbers) is also quite inadequate as a guide to the book's armorial references; a fuller treatment of heraldic subjects would have led the reader to such details as the making of a roll of arms by Sir Robert Laton's father (p. 143) and the book of painted shields of arms known to the abbot of Selby (p. 161). This is a book that is aimed at the social, political and military historian.

Nigel Ramsay