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Edward IV: Glorious Son of York, Jeffrey James (Stroud: Amberley Publishing, 2015).

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Edward IV: Glorious Son of York. By Jeffrey James. Amberley Publishing: Stroud, 2015. ISBN 978-1-4456-4621-3. pp. 288. £20

This book appears at first sight to be a biography of the first Yorkist king. It swiftly becomes clear that it is actually a military history of the Wars of the Roses. The book opens with a series of maps of battle sites and two simplified genealogies. It is lavishly illustrated, mostly with colour photographs of landscapes or ruins associated with fifteenth-century battles.

Academics and students will be frustrated by the random nature and scarcity of the endnotes, the failure to reference most quotations and the absence of a bibliography. It is aimed at a more casual reader who has a particular interest in warfare. The major events of Edward IV's dramatic life and the causes of conflict are presented with clarity and pace. Each armed confrontation is described in detail and the story is set within a broader context of military clashes on the Continent. Edward IV is portrayed as a brave warrior and formidable military tactician. The author rejects contemporary suggestions that the king's love of luxury was a weakness. More than once he emphasises Edward's ruthlessness and "cold-blooded manner" (178).

The prologue opens with an imaginative reconstruction of the Battle of Mortimer's Cross and its aftermath. Edward IV is then introduced as a handsome and charismatic giant with a "knack of seizing the initiative and winning battles" (17). It is suggested that we might read our kings' characters in their surviving portraits: "meanness and cunning (Henry VII) or outright villainy (Richard III)" (16). This is unfortunate since some readers will be put off at an early stage whereas the author's reasoning throughout the rest of the book is generally much more measured.

The first two chapters, about a fifth of the book, are focused on Edward IV's father, Richard duke of York. The story opens with the death of York's father in 1415 and outlines the major events of Henry VI's reign. The author's lack of interest in the networks of the fifteenth-century political community is illustrated in an extraordinarily garbled explanation of disturbances between the Nevilles and the Percies. This represents Hotspur as "the famous first earl of Northumberland" (37) (rather than his son). It then alleges that Hotspur's mother was the eldest daughter of "the same Edmund Mortimer, Earl of March, who had avoided censure during the Southampton Plot" (37) for which York's father had been executed. Hotspur was in fact a generation older than Mortimer and his wife (not his mother) was the daughter of a different Edmund Mortimer. Even if the author had not noticed the chronological impossibility, he should have realised that his description

would have made the earl of Northumberland (rather than Richard duke of York) heir to Mortimer's potential claim to the throne.

The narrative of York's career is fairly standard, although unusually his withdrawal to Ireland is envisaged as an attempt to distance himself from policies he disagreed with. The author frequently defends Margaret of Anjou. He depicts her constantly trying to keep the peace in the face of York's "baleful belligerence" (54). However, he misunderstands the Act of Accord of 1460 in which York was declared Henry VI's heir as evidence that the lords in parliament agreed that Henry VI's son was illegitimate. York's death at Wakefield is depicted as a consequence of the duke's arrogance and naïvety.

Edward IV then takes centre stage in a second, much more detailed, account of the battle of Mortimer's Cross. The next two chapters are dominated by a breathtaking and bloody series of battles by which Edward gained and defended his place on the throne of England. There follows a sudden change of mood for another highly imaginative reconstruction. This is of 1 May 1464, the traditional date for Edward IV's secret wedding to one of his own subjects, Elizabeth Woodville. The author endeavours to give a balanced portrait of the king's new Woodville relatives. He argues that Edward's decision to marry Elizabeth was a "breakaway from Warwick's shackles that would prove in time to be the true making of him", despite the civil war that it provoked (138).

Warwick takes over from Edward as the principal focus of the next chapter. This usefully explores the earl's relationship with the French king before moving into the breakdown of Warwick's relationship with Edward IV and eventual rebellion. Whereas most accounts of the battle of Edgecote focus on the lords involved, this importantly emphasises the terrible impact upon ordinary Welshmen. The author defends Edward's inaction in the face of Warwick's first invasion by explaining that the situation must have been very confusing. The king's response to his imprisonment "highlights Edward's famously imperturbable nature" (171). As is often the case, the rebellion in Lincolnshire is then dealt with rather briefly. Warwick's consequent exile is covered in more detail. A combination of circumstances explain the success of Warwick's subsequent invasion to reinstate Henry VI. These included bad weather that broke a naval blockade against him and Thomas Montagu's decision to turn his coat out of resentment at Edward IV's generosity to Henry Percy.

James is happy to accept some of his hero's limitations: he makes it clear that without Burgundian aid Edward IV would never have regained his throne and that this was only forthcoming because the duke of Burgundy feared the consequences of Warwick's determination to maintain the Lancastrian alliance with belligerent France. Similarly crucial to Edward's

success were the dissensions between Warwick and his new Lancastrian allies, not all of whom chose to support him against Edward IV at Barnet. The chapter devoted to the battles of 1471 is typically detailed and vivid.

Edward IV's second reign is largely summed up in the penultimate chapter which focuses on the king's brothers, George duke of Clarence and Richard duke of Gloucester. The chapter opens with their squabble over their wives' lands. There is then a comprehensive narrative of Edward's invasion of France in 1475 followed by discussion of George duke of Clarence's downfall. The last six years of the reign are covered in a few paragraphs of the final brief chapter which is largely devoted to Richard III's coup in 1483. The errors in this well-known story are likely to annoy many readers, in particular the confused chronology and the unqualified assertion that Richard divulged his plans to Lord Hastings who "demurred" and was consequently executed (266). There is no reference to the plot which Richard gave as his justification for this action.

It is a shame that a fifteenth-century historian was not asked to proof read this work since s/he could have cut out such mistakes as well as the various smaller but disconcerting errors (e.g. a reference to an imaginary C. S. L. Lewis instead of to C. S. L. Davies). *Edward IV, Glorious Son of York* is not a book about kingship and governance nor does it touch on the king's patronage, piety or even on chivalric culture at his court. What it does provide is a straightforward and engaging narrative of the most violent and exciting episodes in Edward IV's tumultuous life.

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