

**THE ENGLISH EXPERIENCE IN FRANCE, c. 1450-1558. War, Diplomacy and Cultural Exchange.** Edited by David Grummitt. 2002. Ashgate Publishing Ltd, Aldershot. £39.99  
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The editor in his introduction gives a clear resumé of the relevant events and issues of 1450-1558 in the fields of war, diplomacy and cultural exchange, paying more attention in all three sections to the post-1500 years than to the half-century before.

In her 'The loss of Lancastrian Normandy: an administrative nightmare?' Anne Curry studies British Library MS Add. 11,509, a partial but fascinating account book of the receiver-general of France and Normandy from Michaelmas 1448 to Michaelmas 1449, the year the English lost Rouen and Normandy. The book demonstrates almost tangibly what the loss of the duchy meant to the English settlers and soldiers, but also how its administration passed seamlessly into the hands of the French. Next David Grummitt, "One of the mooste pryncipall treasours belonging to his Realme of Englande": Calais and the crown, c. 1450-1558', gives a very useful overview of the importance of the town and 'pale' of Calais to the crown and discusses in particular the Calais Act of 1536 which — he argues — was not so much an attempt to consolidate 'the Englishness' of the territory and change its constitutional position, as to make its government more efficient.

Edward Meek, in his 'The practice of English diplomacy in France 1461-71', looks at the practical details and problems of English embassies to France in the first reign of Edward IV and illustrates the 'patchy' and 'pretty constant' flow of diplomatic missions, which were often quite informal and emanating not from the crown directly, but from such as the earl of Warwick in particular, his importance partly due to his being captain of Calais and in control of the Calais based network. This paper suffers a little from being clearly taken from a larger study: a number of names are 'dropped' of men whose background and importance cannot be explained in such limited space.

In his well argued 'The myth of 1485: did France really put Henry Tudor on the throne' Michael K. Jones puts later emphasis by the French and by modern historians on the decisive importance of French help for Henry at the battle of Bosworth in perspective. This otherwise sensible study features for the first time the illusionary 'Swiss trained' pikemen that are supposed to have spelt the doom of Richard III, who had apparently never heard of such people (see also my review of Jones' *Bosworth*, above). One of Henry VII's own military expeditions and its huge preparations are described by John Currin, "'To Traffic with War"? Henry VII and the French campaign of 1492', a campaign that seems to me a repeat of Edward IV's *voyage* in 1475 — both in terms of genuine warfare and of greed. Currin concludes: '[Henry] found himself back where he started in 1485: isolated in Europe, dependent on the goodwill of France, and mistrusted by the Habsburgs'. (One quibble: the prophecy of the 'Son of Man' existed long before Henry VII; it probably goes back to Edward III's time).

The first paper concerning the sixteenth century is Charles Giry-Deloison's "'Une haquenée ... pour le porter bientost et plus doucement en enfer ou en paradis": the French and Mary Tudor's marriage to Louis XII in 1514', which lists and extensively quotes from all surviving accounts and regards the marriage as the beginning of normalisation of Anglo-French relations, 'opening up' French fashion and novelties to the English nobility. Robert Knecht's chapter on 'Sir Nicholas Carew's journey through France in 1529' provides a fascinating insight into the 'more mundane' [and timeless? LV-F] aspects of 'Renaissance' diplomacy, showing how close were the informal contacts between Englishmen and Frenchmen at certain levels of society. This picture is elaborated upon, given a more general meaning and its changing nature pointed out by Luc MacMahon in his 'Courtesy and conflict: the experience of English diplomatic personnel at the court of Frances I. For Henry VIII's embassies to France a different class of men was needed — usually gently or nobly born — to cope with Francis' very personal style, which included his 'use' of women in diplomatic communication.

Finally David Potter, 'The private face of Anglo-French relations in the sixteenth century: the Lisles and their French friends', using some less well known Lisle letters and helped by extensive footnotes, presents the attractive and intimate side of friendship between the provincial gentry of northern France and their English counterparts at Calais.

Over all this is a thorough, revealing, pleasant and at times entertaining collective picture of early modern relations between the English and the French; as usual little appears to have changed. My only reservations are the editor's tendency to favour the spelling 'sise', 'siseable' and 'seise', and the price of the volume.

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