

**THE BEAUCHAMP PAGEANT.** Edited and introduced by Alexandra Sinclair. 2003. Richard III and Yorkist History Trust in association with Paul Watkins, Donington, £55. ISBN 1 900289 61 X.

Few readers of the *The Ricardian* will be unaware of The Beauchamp Pageant and most will know some of the illuminations which depict the life and times of the knightly paragon, Richard Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick (d. 1439), in the unique manuscript, British Library, Cotton MS Julius E IV, since they are so often used to illustrate books on late medieval English history, especially when matters of warfare and chivalry are under discussion. Already partly reproduced as early as the eighteenth century, the first full published facsimile of the manuscript was presented by the earl of Carysfort to the exclusive (and still extant) Roxburgh Club in a strictly limited edition in 1908 that is rarely found on the open market. Even the cheaper but still serviceable edition, which Viscount Dillon and W.H. St John Hope published as the *Pageant of the Birth, Life and Death of Richard Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick KG, 1389-1439* as long ago as 1914, has also become a bibliographic rarity. So that this elegant new edition, reproducing all fifty-three of the full-page pen-and-ink drawings and the two genealogical tables of the manuscript, in actual life-size, together with an additional eleven plates helping to place the manuscript in its artistic context, is extremely welcome. Like its two predecessors, it chooses to balance each of the drawings with a facing transcript of the short pieces of text which accompany each of them, together with commentary upon them. There is also a substantial introduction on technical aspects of the manuscript, notably a wide-ranging discussion of the possible origins of the artist/s responsible for the drawings and the styles that influenced them, on who ordered the manuscript and for what purpose, together with a fairly detailed resumé of Richard Beauchamp's life as a warrior, diplomat and courtier. This begins with his birth in 1382 (*contra* Dillon and St John Hope), his upbringing under Richard II and his varied and loyal service to all three Lancastrian monarchs, including his rather unrewarding task as Henry VI's tutor.

Naturally this editorial material reflects advances in knowledge since the first two reproductions were published on the eve of the First World War, not least on the Beauchamp family itself to which Dr Sinclair herself has already made a distinguished contribution. She is also especially careful in her technical descriptions of dress, heraldry, arms, armour, architecture and other objects like ships depicted in the drawings. The lack of a glossary is perhaps the most pertinent criticism that a hyper-critical reader might make of the volume as a whole, though it is furnished with a good bibliography and a substantial index. Like anyone who bravely provides transcriptions alongside original text, the editor lays herself open to the closest scrutiny of her accuracy over the minutest detail, but passes with flying colours (I noticed *shippes*, and an omitted *e* from *Erle* in Plate I). There are also a few missing cross-references, but otherwise production throughout is almost impeccable (though *descendants* and *descendents* occur). Errors or questionable statements in the historical commentary are commendably few (Louis XI rather than Louis XII is intended on p. 19; the suggestion that Henry V should marry Catherine de Valois first occurs not in 1414 (p. 35) but before the death of Henry IV, while the duke of York broached the subject of their marriage at Paris in August 1413, reporting back to Henry on Catherine's lovely figure, and their marriage occurred on 2 June 1420 rather than 'in the spring' (p. 36)). There is also some confusion over the status of the barony of Laval, allegedly part of Duchess Anne of Bedford's personal property in 1427, though it legally belonged to the native counts of Laval, and was largely then in the hands of a dowager, also named Anne (p. 41). A few sentences later 'John Ragnell and the vicomte de la Bellier' are not two separate individuals as stated but one man: Jean Ragueneil, Vicomte de la Bellière (en Pleudihen, Côtes-d'Armor), taken prisoner at Pontorson on 17 April 1427, still owing a ransom to the English in 1430 and dying on 25 November 1436.

But more relevant than such pedantic points to readers of this journal, must be the general conclusions of Dr Sinclair on the patronage and purpose of the manuscript. She argues strongly for the traditional view first proposed by E.M. Thompson in 1903 that it was Countess Anne of Warwick (d. 1492), the Kingmaker's widow, but more importantly the residual heiress to the Beauchamp fortunes, so shabbily treated by Edward IV and her own son-in-law Gloucester, who was responsible for commissioning the manuscript. This was probably in the early 1480s, rather than post-1485 as Thompson and others have argued, when it seemed likely that her grandson, Edward would eventually inherit the throne. Dr Sinclair plausibly sees the *Pageant* as intended for 'the edification and entertainment of Prince Edward to set before him an *exemplum* of noble and worthy conduct (in this case, drawn from his own ancestry) in much the same way as Earl Richard himself had taught the infant Henry VI' (pp. 22-23). The incomplete state of the manuscript may thus be explained by the premature death of Edward in April

1484, while supporting the argument for a pre-1485 date for the manuscript Dr Sinclair pertinently notes that ‘nobody aware of the political realities of a post-Bosworth world would have been foolish enough to present a work which included a portrait of the crowned and sceptred Richard III to the new Tudor king’ (p. 21). In addition she shows convincingly that the main artistic analogies for the *Pageant* are to be found in contemporary Flemish art so that we can see it as yet another example of the general indebtedness of the Yorkists to Burgundian culture and fashion, as well as a pæan in praise of the House of Beauchamp. (Nigel Saul has interestingly examined the Beauchamps’ promotion of their own historical image at greater length in his own acute review of Dr Sinclair’s work in *Nottingham Medieval Studies*, vol. 48 (2004), pp. 262-66 to which readers may refer for discussion of this aspect of the significance of the *Pageant*.) The question as to whether the artist was himself Flemish or simply trained in Flanders remains open. It is also somewhat surprising, given much of the chivalric content of the *Pageant*, that more consideration was not given to the possibility of the influence of René of Anjou’s celebrated *Livre des Tournois* on the Master of the *Pageant*, since the main manuscripts of the *Livre* are also Flemish, nearly contemporary and depict several tourneying and other scenes analogous to those in the *Pageant* with similar realism, attention to detail, fineness of line and composition.

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