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BOOK REVIEWS, 2009

Reviews in this Journal are published as the views of the persons who write them and are accepted by the Journal in all good faith as accurate and honest expressions of opinion.

P. R. Hill and J. M. Watkinson, *Major Sanderson's War. Diary of a Parliamentary Cavalry Officer* (History Press, 2008), ISBN 13: 978-1862274686. £16.99.

Hill and Watkinson's book follows a year in the life of a Parliamentarian cavalry officer, identified as Major John Sanderson of Colonel Lilburne's Regiment. The terse, cryptic and sometimes encoded personal diary of the year 1648 is supplemented by detailed biographical research and reference to Sanderson's other writings. The Second Civil War in the north-east of England has been an unjustly neglected aspect of the period, and this book is a welcome reminder of these events. Sanderson's year encompassed the full range of conflict from the well-known Preston campaign to the skirmishing at Haltwhistle and Tosson.

The first impression is of density; the typesetting is close and the writing is impressively detailed, while remaining readable. It is written with a feel for the landscape that is rare in military history of the period, but essential for understanding the course of the events which are described in the diary. It also gives a convincing image of the bureaucracy, boredom and routine of much military service. It is the main body of the book that is most effective; appendices are used to add supporting information, and usefully include a new transcription of the diary with a detailed itinerary and transcriptions of Sanderson's attested writings. However, some of the material, such as the discussion of the structure of the New Model Army could probably have been abridged and included within the text to better effect.

There are some minor problems with the interpretation of the source material. The argument for Major John Sanderson being the author of the diary is not made explicitly; but what evidence exists is scattered through the text and could have been deployed more convincingly. There are also some difficulties with the proposed itinerary. For example, the epic day's march from Harterton via Tosson and Cartington to Branton and then to Morpeth on 1 July is stated by Hill and Watkinson as a total of 80 miles, although the distances given in their itinerary total only 52 miles. Several other aspects of the interpretation of this event are open to question, as are other details of the itinerary, particularly on the occasions when the diarist recorded only the outward half of a journey, leaving the authors to reconstruct the return. However, these difficulties invite readers to engage with the evidence themselves, drawing them into the discussion of military manoeuvre within the landscape.

These problems should not be overstated, and Hill and Watkinson's achievement is in using an unjustly neglected source to shed new light on the daily experience of an equally neglected campaign. The appreciation of the relationship between landscape and warfare at such an intimate level is the most successful aspect of the book and should provide an appeal beyond the Civil War specialist.

John Mabbitt





Maureen M. Meikle and Christine Newman, *Sunderland and its Origins: Monks to Mariners* (Chichester: Phillimore), 2007, x + 214 pp., numerous maps, plans and ills. ISBN 978-1-86077-479-9, £14.99.

This is a really excellent publication. Written with all the authority of contributors to the Durham *Victoria County History*, it is designed to reach out to a non-specialist readership in both its style and its attractively illustrated format. In this aim it is totally successful.

The book covers the complex growth of Sunderland from prehistoric times until the eve of the Industrial Revolution. Written with clarity and verve, it charts the history of the settlements around the river mouth whose evolution was far from straightforward: encompassing a major monastic site in the seventh and eighth centuries, achieving borough status by the late twelfth century, a modest port in the thirteenth yet reduced to little more than a fishing village two hundred years later. The late sixteenth and early seventeenth century was to see a revival based on the salt industry and coal exporting. From this developed a distinctive urban community which was to play a major role in the Civil War. The general outlines of this story will be familiar to members of our Society but its telling here is packed with surprising details and illuminating juxtapositions. Endnotes and bibliography are filled with useful leads to further reading and the book is complemented by an interactive website which allows the reader to explore relevant images, documents and audio-visual material. All concerned with the project deserve the highest praise.

Richard N. Bailey

