

*The Wives of the Berkeleys: families and marriage in Tudor and Stuart England.* Jan Broadway. Xmera Ltd, 2021. xiv + 101 pp., 5 figs. Paperback. £8. [ISBN 978-0-9567428-1-0]

For the Berkeley family of Berkeley Castle the period of Tudor and Stuart rule in England was a tumultuous time. At its inception William lord Berkeley was attempting to beggar his brother and heir by granting all his lands to the crown. Two of the later heirs inherited young and endured long minorities and another pre-deceased his father. In 1572 Queen Elizabeth I revived an old claim to a third of the family estates and assigned her supposed rights to her favourite Robert Earl of Leicester. After his death in 1588 his heirs pursued the claim for another twenty years, costing the Berkeleys tens of thousands of pounds in legal fees. And during the Civil Wars the Castle changed hands five times and was sacked and robbed of all its furnishings.

This short book considers the history of the family from the standpoint of the wives of the three lords Berkeley who held that title between 1532 and 1658, as well as the wife of Thomas who died before he could succeed, showing how they affected the fortunes of the family both financially and politically. It follows a broadly chronological sweep interspersed with generous accounts of the actions of the wives, their ancestry, siblings and wider kinship groups. Helpful simplified family trees assist the reader to grasp these relationships. The author makes extensive use of the great work of John Smyth of Nibley and also draws on a wide range of primary and secondary sources to add detail or offer alternative judgements to those of Smyth.

There is no glossary so when technical terms such as jointure and dower are introduced short explanations are supplied for readers who may not be familiar with them. Unfortunately the latter term does not

feature in the index so if they want to refresh their memories readers will need to remember whereabouts in the text the explanation appears. This reviewer finds footnotes easier to use than endnotes but combining the abbreviations, notes and bibliography at the end of the text works well here. Although the index is good at linking women's birth surnames with their married names it is not helpful if you want to know who was Earl of Surrey at any time as titles are only listed under the family name of the holder.

There are a few careless mistakes. The author gets her Sir Michael Stanhopes mixed up. The one who was a close adherent of Lord Somerset, wrongly described as groom of the stole (*recte* stool) was made chief gentleman of the privy chamber on the accession of Edward VI, not his later namesake who held the monopoly on imports of wool from Spain. In the chapter dealing with the Townshends there is fugitive mention of a Robert but as he does not figure in the index, was Roger intended? The index includes a county of Deryshire [*sic*]. In acknowledging the help of a former county archivist the author gets his name wrong.

But it would be unfair to allow a handful of minor errors to diminish the value of this book. It deserves a wider readership than its title suggests.

DAVID SMITH

Gloucester