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Wills of the Archdeaconry of Suffolk, 1620-1624

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it is necessary to deny the significance of the Jacobean constitutional debate to arrive at a positive assessment of James; to do so, indeed, robs his spirited defense of monarchy of its historical point and renders it pedantic if not quixotic. One of the merits of Lee's book is its stress on the continuity between James' style of governance in Scotland and in England; here alone, it remains unclear why the author of *The Trew Law of Free Monarchies* should have found it necessary to repeat his homilies so often in England.

As for James the man, Lee remains equivocal, and though he labors hard to acquit him of succumbing to the influence of his favorites on a political level a faint Victorian distaste still hovers over his account of them. He notes that there is no direct evidence that James had sexual relations with any of the young men on whom he doted, and suggests that the king "was one of those people...who are simply not much interested in physical sex at all" (p. 249). This conclusion is quite unsupported. Apart from the racy gossip and the lurid descriptions that appear even in ambassadors' dispatches, apart from the anguished love letters he wrote, James' public demeanor was that of a lover in the full sense of the word. If he was not one, I can think of few historical figures whose virtue will not be safe.

Lee has relied heavily, though not uncritically, on the work of recent scholars, notably Jenny Wormald, Linda Peck, Peter Lake, Ken Fincham, Roger Lockyer, and Conrad Russell. He has limited himself to published sources, so there are no factual surprises. This is a book of summation and retrospection, and of judgment formed by long pondering. It ably articulates the new consensus about James, one which Lee has shaped as well as shared. One need not accept all the presuppositions on which it is based to agree that the first Stuart king of England was all in all the best.

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ROBERT ZALLER

Marion E. Allen, editor. *Wills of the Archdeaconry of Suffolk, 1620–1624*. (Suffolk Records Society 29.) Rochester, N.Y.: Boydell & Brewer. 1989. Pp. xvii, 555. \$37.00.

This work contains abstracts of 784 wills probated in the court of the Archdeacon of Suffolk between 25 March 1620 and 24 March 1625. Executed principally by yeoman, tradesmen, and laborers these wills offer readers insights into the economic and social status of south Suffolk's working class and details on their possession and use of lands, the contents of their houses, and intimate glimpses of family relations. Culled mainly from extant will registers, and augmented by original wills, this publication is part of a projected series by the Suffolk Records Society and the New England Historic Genealogical Society to provide abstracts of extant Suffolk wills to the end of the seventeenth century. Wills for 1629–1636 and 1637–1640 were abstracted and published in 1986 by the latter.

The contents of these wills provide historians few details that allow for further elaboration on Jacobean history, but genealogists will find them a rich mine for reconstructing family structures. Most historians can safely ignore this publication. Tedious and boring repetitions of detailed lists of personal property, similar to copyhold and freehold lands in that no estimated monetary value is provided them, deny readers an opportunity to estimate the real wealth of individual decedents. The same holds true for pious preambles in determining individual religiosity. Most practices and procedures reflected in these wills for the disposition of real and personal property and the avoidance of dower claims by widows are commonplace throughout England and are already well known. So, too, is the pettiness of

many testators and the inherent tendency of children to squabble over bequeathed property, despite written threats by the testator that such would lead to disinheritance. The editor is to be commended for his skillful job in abstracting and editing the wills and for providing readers four separate indexes (testators, persons, places, subjects) and a glossary. Readers will find a full explanation of his editorial method on page xvi. An introduction places the probate and testamentary jurisdiction of the archdeaconry court within its ecclesiastical context and provides an overview of the contents of the collection.

One hopes that the Suffolk Records Society will opt to employ electronic technology in the production of all future volumes in this series. This reviewer finds wills to be eminent candidates for placement in computerized data bases owing to their limited value as a historical resource. Electronic technology will facilitate not only rapid recovery of needed data by genealogists and local historians but also the freeing of needed money for publication in traditional form of more universally appealing documents from Suffolk's rich depository of historical manuscripts.

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Gerald Hammond. *Fleeting Things: English Poets and Poems, 1616–1660*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 1990. Pp. 394. \$35.00.

In this book, Gerald Hammond uses by his own count about 250 poems by more than fifty poets to explore English society in the period between the death of Shakespeare and the Restoration. Although the book is neatly divided into five sections of three chapters each, the chapters are not hermetically sealed. There is a great deal of overlapping from one chapter to another, as a theme from one chapter will continue into the next or resurface at some further point in the book. A game such as push-pin or a custom such as the churching of women may surface at intervals throughout the book. Hammond has made such customs and games a part of his repertoire; they provide a context for reading, and linking, a number of seemingly disparate poems. He is also particularly attentive to things and words. "Too often," he says in the introduction, "critical discussion ignores the thing and explores only the idea" (p. 2). He wants to focus on the things of the poems and on the meanings of significant words such as "obdurate" or "reformation" as a way of understanding the "living present" from which the poems sprang. He will, for instance, follow the implications of a word like "common" and its variants through several pages and many poems.

The title comes from Waller's "Of the Last Verses in the Book," where Waller speaks of "fleeting things so certain to be lost" that "conceal that emptiness which age describes." After quoting Waller, Hammond adds, "This book's concern is with the things which temporarily hid the emptiness from the century's eyes—fans and muffs, kings and queens, wine and roses" (p. 3). Ships too. In Chapter Seven, he makes an interesting blend of poems and facts about Charles's navy focusing particularly on the great flagship *The Sovereign of the Seas*, which serves almost as an epitome of the growing tensions between king and Parliament. He also is interested in the games that people play, whether they are simple games such as push-pin, cherry-pit, or draw-gloves or the more elaborate wooing games of sophisticated society.

The two poets that he cites most often are Herrick and Jonson, with Herbert, Waller, and Lovelace following somewhat at a distance, and Milton, Shakespeare, Donne, Carew, Marvell, Davenant, Vaughan, and Fanshawe appearing fairly often, but less frequently than