

important a contribution to seventeenth-century studies as was *The Paradise of Women*.

Mark Charles Fissel. *English Warfare 1511-1642*. London and New York: Routledge, 2001. xviii + 382 pp. + 38 illus. \$25.95 [library edition \$85]. Review by IAN GENTLES, GLENDON COLLEGE, YORK UNIVERSITY, TORONTO.

Mark Fissel advances a strong and ably-supported thesis—that the English accumulated a great deal of military experience in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, that they were conversant with the new techniques and technologies of the “military revolution,” that they sometimes achieved military victories against the best armies of Europe, that they were courageous, adaptable, and eclectic, but that they refused to become a military culture. He thus effectively challenges the argument of David Eltis and others that England was militarily backward and inexperienced during this period.

English Warfare is grounded in a breathtakingly impressive quantity of research. It is densely factual, and up to date with the most recent historiography in the field. Fissel writes clearly, but his prose is some times less than sure-footed, resulting in a book that takes considerable effort to read. But the effort is rewarded.

For example, Fissel highlights the relatively little-known fact that Elizabeth sent more men to the wars than her bellicose father. Her reasons were also more compelling than those of Henry VIII: the genuine defence of the realm and protestant commitment. It is surprising to learn that English involvement in the Dutch war of independence dated, not from the Earl of Leicester’s expedition of 1585-6, but from 1572, when Elizabeth sent a contingent of ‘voluntaries.’ Within a few years these troops had won their spurs, demonstrating that they “could work in unison with allies, hold their ground, and perhaps even more importantly, maintain discipline in the crucible of battle, even against the best forces in Europe” (141).

Their most glorious moment came under the Earl of Leicester at the battle of Zutphen in September 1586. There a combined force of fewer than 600 cavalry and infantry routed a much larger force of Spanish and Italian troops. The cavalry won the day by the sheer fury of their attack, during which they held their formation and penetrated Spanish lines under a withering barrage of arquebus fire. The consistently impressive performance of the English troops bears eloquent testimony to Elizabeth's unwavering resolve to back the protestant cause on the continent.

Not only did English soldiers master the new weapons based on gunpowder—the musket, the caliver, and the many varieties of cannon—they also learnt about drill, formation, and troop deployment from the greatest commanders of the age, including Henry of Navarre, Maurice of Nassau, and Gustavus Adolphus. They became equally adept at siege warfare, and showed great skill in making the new siege works, based on the so-called *trace italienne*. Thus between the summer of 1601 and January 1602 Horace Vere conducted a brilliant defense at the siege of Ostend against a massive assault by Catholic forces. The English won respect for both their bravery and their mastery of siegecraft. They had become expert miners and sappers, and had more than kept abreast of contemporary developments in artillery, to the extent that their small cannon (sakers, minions and falcons) were in great demand on the continent.

England had its share of military fiascos: the Earl of Essex in Ireland; the Duke of Buckingham at Cadiz and the Isle of Rhé. But these were offset by Mountjoy's conquest of the Earl of Tyrone whose formidable army had been stiffened by the addition of 3500 Spanish *tercios*, at Kinsale in 1601, and Thomas Wentworth's creation of a superb army in Ireland during the 1630s. Had Wentworth been permitted to deploy this army against the Scots in 1640 Charles would have suffered no humiliation at Newburn, nor been compelled to summon the Long Parliament, Fissel persuasively argues. Nor, had Wentworth been alive to lead his army, would the Irish rebellion of 1641 have had a chance of getting off the ground.

Fissel is right to emphasize English pride in their mastery of the longbow, and its continued relevance as a weapon well into the seventeenth century. However, he allows himself to be misled by a contemporary military writer, Sir John Smythe, into thinking that the bow, along with the pike “be natural weapons and therefore need not teaching” (288). On the contrary, as Charles Carlton has shown, the chief reason why the lethally accurate longbow was abandoned by Charles I in favour of the laughably inaccurate musket, whose range was also much shorter than that of the longbow, was that acquiring the strength and skill to be an effective military archer was the work of many years. On the eve of the civil war there were not enough men in England who had kept up the training, thanks to Charles’s failure to insist on it. A musketeer by contrast could be trained in a matter of weeks.

A second point of dissent: Fissel accepts perhaps too uncritically J.M. Hill’s thesis about celtic warfare and the celebrated Irish or highland charge, which was supposed to be so devastating in its effectiveness for nearly two centuries. Hill’s claim has been treated with scepticism by Stuart Reid and Pàdraig Lenihan.

English Warfare is graced with many illustrations, portraits, and exquisite maps, several taken from contemporary manuscripts. The ones specially drawn for this volume, while useful, are unfortunately much less appealing to the eye.

These cavils apart, *English Warfare* makes a solid contribution to the military history of early-modern England. Fissel demonstrates incontrovertibly that, through their involvement in warfare in Ireland and on the continent, many tens of thousands of Englishmen gained first-hand experience of the military revolution. They mastered the new infantry and artillery weapons, as well as logistics, drill, and siegecraft. Above all they won respect in battle, both for their skill and for their bravery under fire. In 1642 several thousand of them returned from foreign theaters to England where, for the next decade, they turned their hard-won skills against one another.