

example. Few of us could hope to be able to take our family tree back 42 generations, as he can. But I would not encourage anyone to follow his example too closely. Ultimately I came to the conclusion that the structure of the book was mistaken: by trying to be both a history of England and a history of the Twisleton-Wykeham-Fiennes family, it fell between two stools and finished up being neither.

Paul Hayter

Warwickshire Hearth Tax Returns: Michaelmas 1670 with Coventry Lady Day 1666, ed. Tom Arkell with Nat Alcock. Hardback. xiv, 566pp., colour illus. and demographic maps, indexes (2 col. x 88pp.). The British Record Society and The Dugdale Society (c/o Shakespeare Centre, Stratford upon Avon CV37 6QW for price), vol. 43, 2010.

This is the seventh in the magnificent B.R.S. series of Hearth Tax volumes, but the first for a midland county. Whilst for most local and family historians the main value of the tax is its listing of all householders, providing the nearest we have to a country-wide census for the seventeenth century, the aim of the project is also to investigate the demographic information which can be extracted. An earlier attempt at publishing Warwickshire HTs had been made by the late Philip Styles, but only one volume (Tamworth and Atherstone Divisions of Hemlingford Hundred) was published. Due tribute is made to this pioneering work. Our own Society also published the 1663 lists for ten parishes near Banbury (*C&CH* vol. 1, 1960-61). This wonderful coverage of the entire county is very welcome.

J.G.

Oxford Quarter Sessions Order Book, 1614-1637, ed. Robin Blades, intro. by Alan Crossley. xxviii, 206pp., indexes (48pp.). Oxford Historical Society, N.S. vol. 29 and Boydell Press (price from PO Box 9, Woodbridge, Sfk IP12 3DF), 2009.

Though of course almost entirely relating to the city, there are county references, including in 1623 to one William Ryme, indicted for having two wives, one of them Jane Mayor in Banbury. Although the petty jury of Oxford men discharged him as not guilty, having little interest in the troubles of a woman in distant Banbury, there may have been more to it. We have no surviving civil court records for the borough, but we do have the Peculiar (or 'Bawdy') Court (1625-38) [BHS vol. 26]. A Mary Rine or Ryme died in October 1634. 'The occupier' of her goods (ie executor) 'appeared Anne Owen, daughter of Elizabeth Maior', alleging goods listed in her inventory 'are in the custody of the said Elizabeth Maior, sister of the said deceased who is old, poor and impotent and could not go abroad.' and not worth above £6.10s. What's more, John Ryme had married Anne Mayior back in 1610.

William Ryme may not have been a bigamist (and we hope he wasn't incestuous) but it seems likely that he did have some family connection with the Mayor family. Court records show us tantalising glimpses of wider stories that are rarely revealed, but do not necessarily confine themselves to single locations.

J.G.