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978-0-521-18266-9 - The Family in Early Modern England

Edited by Helen Berry and Elizabeth Foyster

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The Family in Early Modern England

This is the first single volume in recent years to provide an overview and assessment of the most important research that has been published on the English family in the past three decades. Some of the most distinguished historians of family life, together with a new generation of historians working in the field, present previously unpublished archival research to shed new light on family ideals and experiences in the early modern period. Contributions to this volume interrogate the definitions and meanings of the term 'family' in the past, showing how the family was a locus for power and authority, as well as personal or subjective identity, and exploring how expectations as well as realities of family behaviour could be shaped by ideas of childhood, youth, adulthood and old age. This pioneering collection of essays will appeal to scholars of early modern British history, social history, family history and gender studies.

HELEN BERRY is Reader in Early Modern History in the School of Historical Studies, University of Newcastle upon Tyne. Her previous publications include *Gender, Society and Print Culture in Late-Stuart England* (2003) and, with Jeremy Gregory, *Creating and Consuming Culture in North-East England, 1660–1830* (2004).

ELIZABETH FOYSTER is Lecturer in History and Fellow of Clare College, Cambridge. She is the author of *Manhood in Early Modern England: Honour, Sex and Marriage* (1999) and *Marital Violence: An English Family History 1660–1857* (2005).

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Preface

The selection of a theme for a volume of essays dedicated to our teacher, mentor and friend Anthony Fletcher was a peculiarly difficult task. His contribution to the field of early modern history has, in the course of a lifetime's career, encompassed a wide range of research interests. From his early studies on county history, notably of Sussex, to his powerful and meticulous account of the outbreak of the English Civil War, from his analyses of the dynamics of office-holding among local magistrates and county gentry, to the influence of the Protestant religion upon household and government in the early Stuart period, it is extremely difficult to categorise him as a particular *type* of historian. His name is familiar to most former 'A' level history students as the author of *Tudor Rebellions* (now in its fifth edition), a book which first inspired many young people to study early modern history through its engagement with archival material and clear communication of the excitement of interpreting primary historical documents. The impact of this book nationally was brought home at one of the present author's weddings, where a guest (a former 'A' level history student, now turned city lawyer and not usually given to over-excitement) glanced at the seating plan and exclaimed 'That's not *the* Anthony Fletcher is it?'

A former schoolteacher, Anthony's long-standing interest in the history of education, which has currently evolved into a large-scale research project on the history of childhood, reflects his own dedication as an educator who has inspired generations of undergraduate students at the Universities of Sheffield, Durham and Essex, some of whom (as this volume attests) went on to benefit from his tutelage at postgraduate level. Anthony's book-lined study, in which the inquisitive student's eye was drawn to his collection of framed prints and engravings (here, a portrait of Oliver Cromwell, there, his *alma mater*, Merton College), and his eclectic collection of colourful china jugs, was the setting for tutorials and – perhaps most memorably of all – group seminars, through which Anthony skilfully steered the attendant gathering of novice historians with just the right combination of probing queries and gentle

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corrections, listening attentively to what each student had to say, and displaying a willingness always to share his evidently vast knowledge of the social and political history of the early modern period. Whether the subject was Cromwell's Major-Generals, or the lesser-known early-Stuart conduct writers, he always had the ability to make his subject engaging, and to inspire his students to want to learn more.

The thirtieth anniversary of the publication of Lawrence Stone's *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500–1800*, following Anthony's retirement and sixty-fifth birthday, seemed a fortuitous coincidence that aided the process of selecting a theme for this collection. The contributors, chosen from among Anthony's former colleagues and students and representing the different stages of his career, were invited to present their latest research and to reflect upon the current state of early modern family history three decades after *The Family, Sex and Marriage*. Each responded to the call to honour Anthony in this way with enthusiasm, and more than fulfilled their remit. We would like to thank the contributors for their dedication to meeting the demands of editorial deadlines, and Patrick Collinson, Julie Gammon and John Morrill for their additional support.

To some, it may seem peculiar to have chosen Stone's book, rather than one of Anthony's, as a starting point for this collaboration. This deliberate stratagem was pursued, however, much in the manner of organising one of the seminars which the dedicatee of this volume so relishes, provided they are *colloquia* in the true sense of the term. Anthony's long-standing interest in the family may be traced back to his studies of local gentry families in Sussex, but came much more to the forefront of his research during the 1990s, marked with the publication of *Gender, Sex and Subordination* (1995). His influential publications on gender, the household and family form a rich seam of reference in each of the chapters that follows.

It is also fitting that a collection dedicated to someone for whom good teaching has been as much a part of his achievement as a distinguished list of publications should be accessible to the newcomer to early modern family history, as well as to the expert, and it is with this in mind that an over-view of the relevant historiography relating to Stone and his subsequent critics is included in the Introduction, as well as a Select Bibliography. For a historian who is as forward-looking and research-active as Anthony, who enjoys the stimulating friendship of impertinent youth as much as the august company of his eminent peers, it is also appropriate that this volume should not only highlight the past and present state of the field, but indicate the new directions that might be taken in the future. We dedicate what follows to him, with gratitude and affection.

HMB and EAF

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HELEN BERRY is Reader in Early Modern History at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne. She is the author of *Gender, Society and Print Culture in Late-Stuart England* (2003) and has published articles on the history of print culture, gender and sexuality, and consumer culture in early modern England.

BERNARD CAPP is Professor of History at the University of Warwick and a Fellow of the British Academy. His books include *Cromwell's Navy* (1989), *The World of John Taylor the Water-Poet* (1994) and *When Gossips Meet: Women, Family and Neighbourhood in Early Modern England* (2003). He is currently preparing a book on the 'culture wars' of England in the 1650s.

ELIZABETH FOYSTER is a College Lecturer in History and Fellow of Clare College, Cambridge. She has published in edited collections and journals on subjects such as childhood, parenting, marriage and widowhood. She is the author of *Manhood in Early Modern England: Honour, Sex and Marriage* (1999), and *Marital Violence: An English Family History 1660–1857* (2005).

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TIM STRETTON is Associate Professor and Chair of the History Department at Saint Mary's University in Halifax, Nova Scotia. His publications include *Women Waging Law in Elizabethan England* (1998) and a document volume for the Camden Series, *Marital Litigation in the Court of Requests 1542–1642* (forthcoming).

INGRID TAGUE is Associate Professor of History and Chair of the History Department at the University of Denver. She is the author of *Women of Quality: Accepting and Contesting Ideals of Femininity in England, 1690–1760* (2002). She is currently working on a history of pets and pet keeping in eighteenth-century England.

GARTHINE WALKER is Senior Lecturer in History at Cardiff University. She is the author of *Crime, Gender and Social Order in Early Modern England* (2003), editor of *Writing Early Modern History* (2005), and co-editor of *Women, Crime and the Courts in Early Modern England* (1994), and has written a number of articles and essays on early modern gender and crime and on historiography. Her current projects include aspects of subjectivity and emotion, and rape and sexual violence in the early modern period.

JOHN WALTER is Professor in History at the University of Essex. He is the author of *Understanding Popular Violence in the English Revolution* (1999), awarded the Whitfield Prize by the Royal Historical Society, and of *Crowds and Popular Politics in Early Modern England* (2006), and he has published articles on famine, early modern crowds, and popular politics. He is currently working on a monograph on the Protestation Oath and popular political culture in the English Revolution.

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Anthony Fletcher

R. I. Moore

A certain kind of English crime novelist might describe Anthony Fletcher, with restrained approval, as a certain kind of Englishman. That, born in 1941, he was shaped not in the golden age of that genre but in that of post-war nostalgia for it, goes some way to accounting for the striking combination of traditionalism in his concerns with the fabric and institutions of English country life, and the increasingly radical individualism, not to say rebelliousness, of his sympathies and approaches. He came from just such a background as our novelist might have invented for him. His father was a distinguished scientist in government service, and in later life an antiquarian who pioneered the use of dendrochronology in dating medieval buildings; an uncle was a Labour MP and junior minister. On his mother's side soldiers and Anglican clergymen – including Richard Chenevix Trench, archbishop of Dublin at the time of the disestablishment of the Irish church – abound; in the Merton room in which Anthony lived in his second year a plaque commemorates a Chenevix Trench killed in the Great War.

I met Anthony in early October 1959, two of Merton College's ten History freshmen eyeing one another with all the suspicion and unease of a first tutorial meeting. Alone among us he wore a tie (and out of doors, it became apparent, a scarf) in the colours of his old school – an unpleasing combination which quickly became familiar, since it denoted an institution whose alumni appeared peculiarly and unfathomably determined to advertise their association with it. In Anthony's case, however, I discovered that this was not for any of the reasons which first occurred to an admittedly slightly chippy outsider – not from social conformity, still less snobbery or exclusiveness, and certainly not as an expression of devotion to Wellington College, or the causes and values for which it stood. It was a disguise, and part of a larger disguise that he has always worn, not for deception but to avoid the appearance of distinctiveness, and with it distraction. He is not only an unassuming man, but one very focused, very consistent, in his own quiet way even ruthless, in following his chosen path. It was ever thus: while others, like all freshmen, expected

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to talk through the night, Anthony invariably and silently disappeared at his regular bedtime; if the gathering happened to be in his bed-sitter he would retire for his bath and then to bed, while cheerfully bidding the rest of us to carry on for as long as we liked.

The most obvious mark of that independence is that Anthony belongs to no historical school, and can be identified as the student or follower of no great predecessor in seventeenth-century studies. He has no PhD, and once shocked S. T. Bindoff, a notable devotee of academic pomposities, by declining to follow up a professorial intimation that he 'might be allowed' to embark on one. The Merton tutors, R. H. C. Davis, J. R. L. Highfield and J. M. Roberts, formed an outstandingly congenial and talented team, but none of them was especially interested in the seventeenth century. There was, of course, no shortage of great figures in the Oxford of the time. Christopher Hill, Hugh Trevor Roper, Lawrence Stone, John Cooper, were in their prime; Keith Thomas was a rising star; and Conrad Russell, still a graduate student in our first year, taught us Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* (in Latin of course) and often shared our late-night coffee – not that his conversation kept Anthony out of bed. I doubt that any of them influenced Anthony as much as W. G. Hoskins, whose seminar on Tudor economic documents he attended in his third year. Hoskins's *Making of the English Landscape* was among the not particularly impressive (that is, pretentious) collection of books I inspected on my first visit to Anthony's room, along with several volumes of Pevsner's *Buildings of England*, in their original Penguin-sized format, with shabby paper covers and minute soot-and-starch illustrations, and of the works of A. L. Rowse. In short, and with hindsight, his historical curiosity was already formed. It would be hard to think of a historian less like Anthony in personality and temperament than Rowse, but his deep and deeply romantic attachment to the English countryside had found an echo, and more than an echo.

It would be quite wrong to conclude that the road to *A County Community in Peace and War* (1975), *The Outbreak of the English Civil War* (1981), and *Reform in the Provinces* (1986) already lay open, or was mapped out. As an undergraduate Anthony had no thought of making historical research his trade – perhaps because it had long been a hobby for him – and, Hoskins notwithstanding, the sort of history for which he cared did not, in the early 1960s, beckon the ambitious. It was only in his final year that he decided to become a history teacher, and probably only the combination of his scholarly energy and the unusual opportunities created by the sudden and rapid expansion of universities in the wake of the Robbins Report on Higher Education (1963) that made him, after three lively years at Kings College School, Wimbledon, a university rather than a school

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teacher. For a short time in the mid 1960s university departments – especially History departments – recruited rapidly while graduate education – especially in History – remained more or less static. Even so, a shortlisting on the basis of an article in the *British Journal of Educational Studies* and *Tudor Rebellions* in press (in a series designed mainly for sixth-formers) must count as a lucky break. It turned out that the luck was mostly Sheffield's. Expansion had brought to that department as to many others several enthusiastic and excellent young teachers. Anthony was remarkable among them not as a glamorous or charismatic figure – there were plenty of those about in 1968 – but for the transparent sincerity of his interest both in his subject and in his students. He did not bother with showmanship, never believed in lecturing *ex cathedra*, and irritated some of his senior colleagues by his enthusiasm for small group teaching, an activity then associated, like sex, soft drugs and student demos, with the 'new' universities at places like York and Sussex. Students were captivated by his honesty, his perceptiveness and his kindness – especially to those who lacked the intellectual self-confidence that some of his less sensitive colleagues were inclined to take for granted: when I mistakenly supposed that a fresher would be encouraged by advice to put in the waste paper basket the textbook from which she had carefully compiled her essay it was on Anthony's shoulder that she retired to weep.

For most of Anthony's time in Sheffield a system of study leave was a distant dream, and replacement teaching from any source not even that. Nevertheless, it was in those years, despite heavy teaching loads so enthusiastically shouldered, growing administrative responsibilities as his unfailing and unobtrusive efficiency was inevitably exploited, and the pleasures and distractions of family life, that he laid the foundations of the three substantial books on which his first reputation was founded, and published two of them. All were based on extensive research in county as well as national collections and all appeared to combine an orthodox, regionally based approach to 'mainstream' preoccupations with traditional, 'national' issues of politics and government and an increasingly distinctive identification of the issues themselves.

It is fair to suspect that the former quality contributed more than the latter to his appointment to the Chair at Durham, not at that time generally regarded as a hotbed of the new historiography. Certainly, accession to the professoriate might have engendered a degree of intellectual complacency, a sense that a chair hard won might be comfortably sat upon: it has been known to happen. That was not Anthony's way. The second half of his career was, by any standards, exceptionally taxing. In a succession of senior posts, at Durham, at Essex and finally as Director of the Victoria County History, he has suffered more than his share of

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interesting times. The quality of the students he met with at Durham, and the enthusiasm he inspired in them, are attested by the present volume, but he probably found the less traditional ambience and ethos of Essex more congenial. For the Direction of the VCH he was ideally equipped – too well, perhaps, for comfort. During his brief tenure he endowed it with a vision for the twenty-first century to match that of his great predecessors for the nineteenth, founded like theirs on the conviction that his fellow countrymen and women deserved nothing less than the highest standards in scholarship, and scholarship of the highest standard nothing less than exposure to all his fellow countrymen and women by the most accessible means available. Still more remarkably, he communicated that vision to the Heritage Lottery Fund so compellingly as to win for its realisation in his ‘England’s Past for Everyone’ one of the largest endowments that historical scholarship in this country has ever received.

In these years Anthony also became increasingly involved in the affairs of the discipline at national level, in a period when his courteous unflapability, his ability, and concern, to seek every view, and take as many of them as possible on board without losing direction, and to combine flexibility in inessentials with firmness when it mattered, were greatly at a premium. History and historians remain especially in his debt for the skill and determination with which, as chair of the History Benchmarking Group of the Quality Assurance Authority and of HUDG (History at the Universities Defence Group, now History UK), he fought to ensure that national benchmarks in History would define the coherent and adaptable intellectual structure appropriate to the discipline, rather than the quanta of information which the bureaucrats wanted, and succeeded in foisting on other disciplines.

While thus engaged Anthony has found time to redefine his historical interests not once but twice, and each time in ways that required him to come to terms with quite new areas of specialism, and with the modern, as well as the early modern, period of British history. It might seem in retrospect that a move from community to family was a natural one, much as it had been for Lawrence Stone, and certainly it is more likely that Anthony reached it by that route than through the theoretical debates that had been intensified through the 1980s. Theory has never really been his thing, though his ability to make use of it, and to appreciate its capacity to point history in new directions, is fully apparent in the three papers which announced, in 1994, that he had set himself on an entirely new course. The implications and influence of that change are the concern of others in this volume, but it is worth commenting that the qualities which made it possible are those which have marked him out since he was an undergraduate – that he has followed his own path without regard for

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conventional demarcations of field, intellectual fashion or career advantage, led by his own curiosity, by a flair for spotting what might be done with neglected kinds of documentary evidence, and by his rootedness in certain traditions of English country society. Latterly the same instincts have led him to another and even more dramatic shift. Reggie Chenevix Trench, commemorated on that plaque in Anthony's room at Merton, was his grandfather, and the brother of Cesca, the very remarkable young woman whose papers are leading Anthony himself down a path he had never dreamed of, through the dying days of Anglo-Irish society to the wilder shores of Irish republicanism and the Easter Rising. It seems a long way from Tudor Rebellions. Or perhaps not.