

While gifts and bribes are an old topic in studies of diplomacy, Talbot provides a wealth of specific detail. He notes Ottoman costs incurred shipping horses as a gift to the English king, and the “tradition” of the British ambassador presenting the Ottoman *kapudan pasha* (admiral) with Cheshire cheeses and strong beer. Gift exchange was based on “a sophisticated and long established set of conventions” that are illustrated in the detailed records of the Levant Company (117). Talbot argues that there was a shift in attitude regarding gift giving during the ambassadorship of James Murray in the second half of the eighteenth century: the British embassy attempting to avoid excesses; the Ottomans exercising some reserve in receiving gifts; and various European ambassadors agreeing to stop giving many of the customary gifts.

Talbot rightly argues, as Gülru Necipoğlu has shown in *Architecture, Ceremonial and Power: The Topkapı Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* (1991), that diplomacy involved a carefully choreographed performance of Ottoman (and British) worldviews. Charting changes in the ceremonial experiences of British ambassadors at the Porte, however, he adopts a model of ritual “tension” that seems somewhat forced, or unnecessary (143, 148). Instead, Talbot makes his case as he details British descriptions of coffee and other goods used to entertain Ottoman officials, or reports that Ottoman “haughtiness” diminished after 1730 (151). He avoids the common trap of exoticizing or demeaning Ottoman conventions of entertainment. But while he proposes that there was a “degree of equality” implied in English and Ottomans’ sharing the same table and food at Ottoman banquets, I would suggest that such hospitality reflected Ottoman strategic interest (159). Talbot expresses the relationship better when he calls the ambassador a “pseudo-subject” of the sultan (160).

The final chapter focuses on dispute resolution. Talbot argues that Ottoman documents suggest two main areas in which ambassadors intervened on behalf of British subjects: “to ensure the freedoms of person and movement guaranteed in the Capitulations,” and “to pressure the Ottoman government in cases of contentious commercial disputes” that could “not be resolved at a local and consular level” (174). For example, in 1749 the governor of Baghdad seized a highly valuable cache of British merchant-owned goods in order to pay his garrison troops, thus provoking an extended round of demands for compensation. Talbot richly illustrates the increasing involvement of the ambassador in such provincial disputes, illuminating the critical relationships among dispute resolution, gift giving, and ceremonial.

Talbot makes good use of the secondary literature, but his treatment would have been enriched by more commentary on the ways in which British commerce and diplomacy in the sixteenth century plugged into the well-established relations of other European nations with the Ottomans. Nonetheless, read in conjunction with Jerry Brotton’s *This Orient Isle: Elizabethan England and the Islamic World* (2017) and Daniel Goffman’s *Britons in the Ottoman Empire, 1642–1660* (1998), Talbot’s detailed study provides a decidedly more nuanced picture than we have had to date of British-Ottoman relations in the long eighteenth century.

Palmira Brummett
Brown University
Palmira_Brummett@brown.edu

CHRISTOPHER THORNTON, JENNIFER WARD, and NEIL WIFFEN, eds. *The Fighting Essex Soldier: Recruitment, War and Society in the Fourteenth Century*. Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2017. Pp. 189. £18.99 (paper).
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A compilation of papers from a conference organized by the Essex Record Office in 2014, *The Fighting Essex Soldier* appears to be aimed, at least in part, at a nonspecialist readership.

Correspondingly, some of the essays (and particularly the introduction, by co-editors Christopher Thornton and Jennifer Ward) provide rather more in the way of general background than might be considered appropriate for a hardcore academic audience. This is by no means, however, to disparage the high scholarly standards of the essays here presented. As well as providing the wider historical context, the introduction discusses the effect of the French wars on the county, using as case studies the parishes of Saint Osyth and Barking, and the manor and borough of Great Bardfield, derived from Thornton's work for the *Essex Victoria County History*. The evidence he provides seems to suggest that plague, disorder and climate change had rather more impact than war, though this point could perhaps have been developed more explicitly. Ward's own essay serves as an additional introduction, looking at the Essex gentry and their relation with the crown, and building on and complementing her previous work on the county community. Ward provides a good, detailed case study, although the subject of warfare is perhaps not quite as prominent as her title—and indeed the title of the book—might suggest.

David Simpkin's contribution uses Essex as a case study to illustrate his thesis, developed in his monograph *The English Aristocracy at War from the Welsh Wars of Edward I to the Battle of Bannockburn* (2008), of the high level of participation of the English gentry in the wars of Edward I and Edward II. He demonstrates the existence of a "vibrant military community in late thirteenth- and early fourteenth-century Essex" (62). And it is the Andrew Aytonesque model of the "military community" that largely shapes the remaining essays in the book. Gloria Harris examines the criminal career of the Essex soldier Sir Hugh de Badewe. She does a very good job of setting his criminal associations in the context of his military career, and of the county's military community; however, there could perhaps have been more analysis of the immediate social setting of the crimes themselves. It might also be added that by the standards of his day, Badewe was actually comparatively law-abiding; his entire criminal record consists of accusations of being party to two park-breakings and an abduction, which hardly puts him in the same league as more notorious contemporaries such as the Folville gang.

Sam Gibbs matches the poll tax records for Essex with the muster rolls of royal armies to look at the social status of archers, concluding that many of them were of low economic status. This is a fascinating study with some potentially important implications for the social structure of English armies. It might, however, be wondered just how securely individuals named in the Essex poll tax records can be identified with their namesakes in the muster rolls, particularly as the latter very rarely provide any explicit indication of where individuals actually come from. Essex landowners did not invariably recruit their men from their Essex estates; and those serving overseas would have been ideally placed to evade assessment for the poll taxes. Can we be sure then that the Thomas Chaumbres, John Newetons and William Somertons (for instance) recorded in royal muster rolls were indeed the same men as the Thomas Chaumbre, John Neweton, and William Somerton who paid poll tax in Essex in 1377 and 1381?

Service at sea during the Hundred Years War is a subject that has, until recently, languished in comparative neglect. The work of Andrew Ayton and Craig Lambert has now done a great deal to compensate for this neglect. Their essay, which examines the service in the king's wars of Essex mariners, may well be the highlight of the volume: it is an important piece that should be widely read. Employing crown records that helpfully name specific Essex mariners from specific ports, as well as detailing the numbers of men from the county who served at sea, the authors show that the crown made increasingly heavy demands for naval service; but they also show that the communities of the larger towns, such as Colchester and Harwich, were increasingly successful at using their political clout to pass on the burden to their smaller and less influential neighbors. What perhaps comes across most vividly from this study is the sheer weight of the crown's demands on the maritime community; and the authors' cautiously qualified suggestion that disaffection amongst mariners may have

contributed significantly to the revolt of 1381 is entirely plausible. The final piece, by Herbert Eiden, sets out to highlight “military aspects” of the revolt itself. In a rather short essay, though, there is perhaps a little too much narrative of events, and not quite enough analysis of their military aspect.

This is an attractively produced book, with a number of illustrations (of memorial brasses and seals) and maps and diagrams, all reproduced to a high standard; and it usefully includes a full bibliography (including archival references) and index. It is also attractively priced. If the quality of the individual contributions might be slightly uneven, the volume nevertheless offers some invaluable case studies, throwing light on the history of Essex, as well as providing the sort of vital details from which the larger, overarching picture can be pieced together.

Andy King
University of Southampton
a.king@soton.ac.uk