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*The Journal of William Dowsing: Iconoclasm in East Anglia during the English Civil War.* Edited by Trevor Cooper. 240mm. Pp xxiv + 351, ill. Woodbridge: The Boydell Press in association with the Ecclesiological Society, 2001. ISBN 0-85115-833-1. £50.00.

In this important, informative, and horribly enjoyable book, Trevor Cooper and his collaborators, John Blatchly, John Morrill, S L Sadler and Robert Walker, have integrated Dowsing's *Journal* of his nine-month iconoclastic rampage (20 December 1643 to 1 October 1644) through Cambridgeshire and Suffolk into what they argue was its original, chronological form. All churches mentioned have been visited, sometimes at personal risk – at Mickfield Blatchly crawled through 'a small square hole in the north door' of a ruin now sealed because of its dangerous condition; a commentary links Dowsing's notes to the current state of the buildings and discusses other documentary evidence to assess his depredations. Though these were substantial (estimates for the amount of glass and number of brasses that he destroyed are included in appendices) the editors give salutary instances of parallel vandalism continuing into the present.

Introductions and appendices discuss Dowsing's life, his working methods, his collaborators, the nature of the opposition he encountered, how representative he was of events in other areas, and his legacy – including the classic 1948 parody, *Babylon Bruis'd*. This well-written study adds to our understanding of seventeenth-century theological disputes, the Civil War, the class system, ecclesiology, local history and the psychology of the iconoclast. Where the editors have been forced into speculation they are careful to signal this, and, in an intelligent use of modern resources, the book has its own website ([www.williamdowsing.org](http://www.williamdowsing.org)) which invites commentary from readers.

Dowsing was a chippy, self-righteous autodidact (the editors enjoy pointing out his hopeless Latin) with a particular animus against angels (a collaborator seems to have had a similar reaction to bell-inscriptions). There was much to object to in seventeenth-century Anglicanism – Mr Price of St John's College took Laudian ritual into the realms of high camp – but there is something very unpleasing about the 'bureaucratic Puritan's' systematic depredations. There is no baying for broken glass, no profiteering, just an efficient dedication to the destruction of the glories of English medieval art. It is depressing how few were prepared to resist him, where when his orders were ignored, as at King's College, Cambridge, or Ufford, great works were saved. A few heroic ministers stood out – William Ling at Girton seems to have been particularly muscular – but on the whole, as in more modern times, the English silently acquiesced as an unelected jobsworth destroyed the beauties of their environment.