



Brave community (Politics, Culture and Society in Early Modern Britain)

John Gurney

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This is the first full-length, modern study of the Diggers or 'True Levellers', who were among the most remarkable of the radical groups to emerge during the English Revolution of 1640-60. It was in April 1649 that the Diggers, inspired by the teachings and writings of Gerrard Winstanley, began their occupation of waste land at St George's Hill in Surrey and called on all poor people to join them or follow their example. Acting at a time of unparalleled political change and heightened millenarian expectation, the Diggers believed that the establishment of an egalitarian, property-less society was imminent.

The book establishes the local origins of the Digger movement, and sets out to examine pre-civil war social relations and social tensions in the parish of Cobham – from where significant numbers of the Diggers came – and the impact of civil war in the local community. It provides a detailed account of the Surrey Digger settlements and of local reactions to the Diggers, and it explores the spread of Digger activities beyond Surrey. In chapters on the writings and career of Gerrard Winstanley, it seeks to offer a reinterpretation of one of the major thinkers of the English Revolution.

This book should be of interest to all those interested in England's mid-seventeenth-century revolution and in the history of radical movements.

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