

and range of his scholarship is excellent, while the standard of the book's large-format design and production makes it a real pleasure to handle.

It is impossible to adequately describe either the depth or the breadth of its content in a brief review such as this. However, it commences with an account of the origins of the Company, its development under the Tudors, Stuarts, Commonwealth, and on into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. During the latter period much of its regulatory function was absorbed into national and local government organizations, but it continued its role as a social and charitable institution. It supported the National School of Cookery in the 1870s for example, and is still actively involved in the training of young cooks and in lectures exploring modern food issues.

As the story of a City Company, it includes much information on the Cooks' regulations, practices, liveries, artefacts and ceremonials, but there is a great deal more of interest to the food historian, with interesting references to foods, meals and individual cooks. The range of full-colour illustrations taken from sources of all periods is also extremely useful. As an example of Dr Borg's detective work, the city of Hull's fine portrait of John Smith, its mayor in 1563, is now revealed to be of John Smythson, Master Cook to Elizabeth I, and perhaps the finest surviving portrait of a great English cook. Although we must regret the violent loss of so many of the Company's records, which would have greatly informed our knowledge of generations of cooks, we must be extremely grateful to all concerned in the preparation of this timely volume. It should be on the shelves of everyone interested in the history of English food.

PETER BREARS

Lizzie Collingham: *The Taste of War. World War Two and the Battle for Food*: Penguin Books, 2012: 634 pp., paperback, £12.99.

I was reading two perfectly harmless, indeed captivating, books about France and Europe at the time: *Coryat's Crudities* and Lady Morgan's *France*, but had to put them to one side as I pursued the gripping narrative of this book by Lizzie Collingham, hitherto known as the chronicler of curry. The book is so big, so important, so enthralling, that I can't really write a review. The only thing I can do is suggest you read it. There is now, as I have noted, the Penguin paperback, which reads and handles very well. Even though it's very long, the spine does not break. Perhaps my book of the year so far.