

Heather Falvey, ed.: *The Receipt Book of Elizabeth Dimsdale, c1800*: Hertfordshire Record Publications 28, Hertfordshire Record Society, 2013: 264 pp. hardback, £22.00 (ordering: info@hrsociety.org.uk)

The Dimsdales were a giant dynasty of Hertfordshire doctors dating back to the early eighteenth century. One of them, Thomas (1712–1800) not only practised in Hertford, but also went off to Russia to inoculate Catherine the Great for smallpox and was made councillor of state for his pains, as well as a Russian baron. Later on he was MP for Hertford in the 1780s and wrote extensively on inoculation. He married as his third wife his much younger cousin, who had been part of his household as a sort of housekeeper, Elizabeth (1732–1812). In her sixties, not therefore as a blushing young bride, she wrote down a collection of recipes. Heather Falvey has done a grand job of transcribing and annotating them, not so much for their culinary content as for their context. The Baroness borrowed extensively from her friends and acquaintance and these, as far as possible, are identified and discussed. There is also an excellent glossary. The Baroness travelled to France as well as to Russia in the 1770s and 1780s (her Russian diary has been published). So people will be pleased to see her recipe for *Sauerkraut*, and for Russian cucumbers which was told her by Yakov Ivanovich Smirnov (1754–1840) Ukrainian chaplain to the Russian church in London from 1782–1837. There is also a goodly selection of recipes obtained from France, from a M. or Mme. Daubigny and Mme. De la combe. From the provenance of the recipes and the culinary annotations that besprinkle them, this is a manuscript recipe book that well deserved publication and we owe Dr Falvey an honourable debt for her undertaking.