

Lord Lexden

Conservative peer and historian

A clever and captivating book, Lucy Hughes-Hallett's learned study of George Villiers, the 1st Duke of Buckingham, is written with a novelist's verve and skill

The Scapegoat

The Brilliant Brief Life of the Duke of Buckingham

By **Lucy Hughes-Hallett**
 Publisher **Fourth Estate**

King James I of England and VI of Scotland (1566-1625) liked men around him – lots of them. Lucy Hughes-Hallett, a jolly, high-spirited author, writes: "James' favourites slept with him. They knew the feel of his skin. His body warmed theirs; theirs warmed his." As this passage suggests, Hughes-Hallett is an acclaimed novelist as well as a historian.

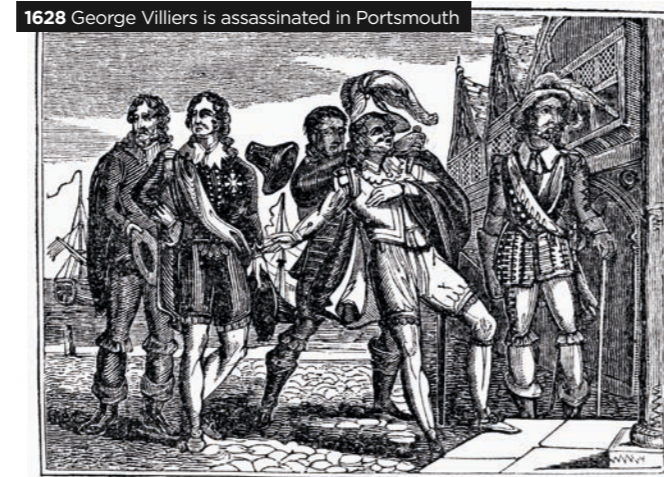
How far did things go? It is a matter for speculation, in which Hughes-

weapon to remain unused by his many enemies.

In 1614 a young man appeared at court who was to satisfy all James' needs in and out bed for the rest of his life. Everyone agreed that George Villiers, then 22, was breathtakingly beautiful. "One of the handsomest men in the whole world," one admirer drooled.

Lucky James, whom no one would have put in a beauty parade, would refer to Villiers as his husband, or sometimes wife, or sign himself dad (he never seemed clear about their respective roles in the partnership). In eight years he raised his lover from a lowly position among the landed gentry to a dukedom. This did not stop the now Duke of Buckingham from

making a conventional marriage and having children on whom James doted. Hughes-Hallett depicts him as a gender-fluid charmer who would have been at home in the 21st century.



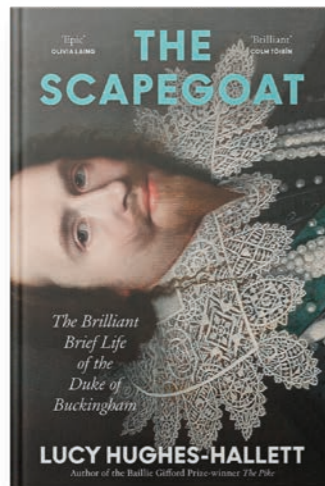
Honours and great offices of state were showered on him, along with immense wealth. He spent lavishly. His many mansions included a palace on the site of what is now Charing Cross station. Peter Paul Rubens declared that Buckingham's art collection was the finest in Europe.

The lovers ruled England together. They were not very good at it. No one ever described Buckingham as a man of great ability. He worked much harder than might have been expected, and had some good plans for the modernisation of the navy,

but they could not be implemented for lack of money. In the 1620s the lovers asked Parliament to provide generous sums. The first tranches were wasted on disastrous military and naval expeditions, in which thousands died uselessly. No more money was forthcoming from Parliament. Rich individuals kept the regime going through loans, which the King forced them to make without hope of repayment.

In 1627 Buckingham led a naval taskforce to attack the French at La Rochelle. The expedition was a fiasco. The country which had destroyed the Spanish Armada nearly 40 years earlier was humiliated.

Buckingham should have been sacked on the spot. The following year an unpaid naval officer who



"Hughes-Hallett depicts him as a gender-fluid charmer"

Hallett joins eagerly in the early chapters of this clever, learned, captivating book.

Sodomy was widely regarded with horror, which James apparently shared. He broke his men-only rule for his wife, Queen Anne, alone. They had 10 children, only three of them surviving beyond infancy. No one in the family seems to have thought the less of him for being gay. Those outside it were not so tolerant. It was too good a political

The Duke of Buckingham with his family



had been wounded at La Rochelle stabbed him to death in Portsmouth.

Hughes-Hallett has gathered together a vast amount of information to create a panoramic survey of early 17th-century England, written with a novelist's verve and skill. At the centre of it all stands the beautiful Buckingham, who loved a king but, through mismanagement of public affairs, inflicted serious damage on his kingdom.

He was not the scapegoat of the book's title, accepting the blame for the mistakes of others. He made many blunders, for which he paid the ultimate price at the age of 36.

Lord Sandwich

Retired crossbench peer

Andrew Gilmour has made a rare attempt to understand the triple nexus of climate change, conflict and migration

The Burning Question

By **Andrew Gilmour**
 Publisher **Berghof Foundation**

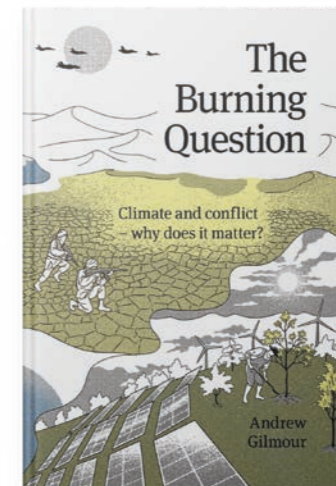
The questions raised in this book are so formidable one must admire the author's tenacity in writing it. What he calls the "increasingly acute triple nexus" of conflict, climate change and migration is the most pressing and complicated issue of our time.

The problem is these three points are never equilateral or global; they arrive in many

different forms and disguises. Fortunately, Andrew Gilmour has been close to the scene as a senior UN official and is now director of the Berghof Foundation, an organisation dedicated to these issues.

As a peace-builder concerned about the environment, he criticises the West's failure to help the poorest countries both to mitigate and to adapt to climate change – a state of affairs he says "cannot be allowed to continue". His major achievement here is to lift our eyes to the probability of mass migration from many causes and the possibilities of doing something about it.

Historians have found that past economic and political failures have resulted from climate changes such as El Niño or water shortages on the Nile or the Tigris and Euphrates. Yet there is academic controversy – and some confusion – about the various links between conflict and climate change. Some point to direct effects on security: for example 1,774 US military sites will apparently be subjected to sea



level rise and will need to be "climate-proofed".

At another level, local conflict in Africa between farmers and herders can be aggravated by climate change, as is occurring in Abyei, on the border of Sudan and South Sudan, or in Mali and Niger, now that the UN has withdrawn its protection in all these countries.

Gilmour's conclusion is simply that policymakers must pay particular attention to conflict-prone areas. He says he is not alarmist but that we have to be aware of increasing numbers of migrants heading our way. In this context he warns of the growing response of right-wing groups all over Europe – and of our own pro-Brexit movement.

One reason for promoting this book is its rarity: we all, including politicians, badly need further education to understand how the world is responding to all these problems.