

Reviews

The History of Nuffield. By Phyllis M. Briers, B.A., B.Litt. Oxford, Morris-Oxford Press. 188 pp., 34 plates and maps (some in colour), 13 pedigrees. Privately printed and limited to 50 copies.

This historical study of the village of Nuffield has been written at the request of Lord Nuffield for private circulation; it is a model of its kind. The book deals principally with (1) the manor of Huntercombe, and the various families who have held it; (2) the farms in Nuffield—Huntercombe Manor Farm, Hayden House Farm, Mays Farm, and English Farm—and the families connected with them; and (3) the parish church and its incumbents. Thus both the topographical and the biographical elements are worked in together in a clear and orderly manner.

It is remarkable how a small and at first sight insignificant village like this can be shown to be, when intelligently scrutinized, a commentary upon, or cross-section of, English history. The village is crossed by a section of Grim's Dyke, one of the major problems of English archaeology, which still awaits exploration in this particular region. The land known as Gangsdown was part of the great Honour of Wallingford, one of the most famous and privileged feudal units in the country, specially mentioned in Magna Carta. The manor of Huntercombe was connected with something even more ancient and august—it was an outlying part of the royal manor of Benson (pp. 25, 47). The story of Huntercombe in the early 13th century illustrates the constant litigation, conveyancing and other legal transactions to which almost every parcel of land in England was subject, and whose elaborate and faithful records make possible such a history as this (pp. 26–7). The remarkable career of Walter de Huntercombe (d. 1313) in Northumberland, Wales, the Isle of Man, Scotland, ranging from maritime robbery to royal service and a kind of temporary barony (pp. 31 ff.), shows how unsafe it is to picture the mediaeval country gentleman as 'parochial' or in any way 'bound to the soil.' About 1329 the manor passed to Dorchester abbey, which unfortunately has left very little record material, so that, contrary to general experience, it is precisely the two hundred years of ecclesiastical tenure which are more or less blank.

In the story of the farms the most interesting feature is, perhaps, the family of English of English Farm (they sound like something out of Kipling); Benet English has left a good brass, and Richard English, the 'King's Yeoman,' sometime in the service of the Black Prince, is a humbler pendant of Walter de Huntercombe. Other characteristic figures include Ralph Warcopp, another tenant of English Farm, whose inventory in 1605 shows that the farm house was sumptuously furnished with plate and furniture—the great gilt high standing cup, the tapestried hangings and cushions in the great chamber, the Turkey carpet for the long table in the dining chamber, and so forth; George Carleton, Fellow of Merton in the days of Savile and Bodley, rector of Nuffield 1609–18, later bishop of Llandaff and Chichester, and representative at the Synod of Dort (pp. 160 ff.); and Thomas Cole, who opened a Dissenting Academy at Nettlebed where John Locke was pupil (pp. 68 ff.).

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The rectors of Nuffield seem to rival the abbots of Cluny in their length of tenure : four incumbents cover the years 1690-1867. The constitutional history of the living presents something of a problem which Miss Briers has not entirely succeeded in unravelling ; it seems to have been appropriated to Goring priory from 1181 to about 1362-4, and then to have passed into the hands of the Trinitarians, yet at a later date it appears as a rectory. In the church itself one of the outstanding features is the Norman font with its puzzling Leonine inscription *Ite sacro lotum . . .* ; for the solution of this and similar problems we badly need the compilation of a European corpus of mediaeval Latin metrical inscriptions. As regards the maps, a modern map, based on the Ordnance Survey, would have been a useful addition, for comparison with the old maps that are reproduced.

For the benefit of the non-specialist reader, Miss Briers supplies a running commentary or glossary of historical terms such as Honour (p. 16), Book of Fees (p. 24), Feet of Fines (p. 26), the manorial system (pp. 47, 86), and so forth. The footnotes show how thoroughly Miss Briers has ransacked the printed and unprinted resources of the public records. This makes the book particularly valuable as a model and guide to anyone undertaking similar research elsewhere, and represents a real triumph, in view of the special difficulties of the case, for, as Dr. Salter remarks in an introductory note to the book :

' the usual sources to which we turn in beginning a parish history are here of little value. Nuffield itself is not mentioned in Domesday, or in the Book of Fees (formerly known as the *Testa*) ; the Feudal Aids, the Red Book of the Exchequer and the Pipe Rolls give no direct help, and none of the monastic cartularies deal with the parish. Without these aids to supply the framework of the history, I was doubtful whether Miss Briers would be able to accomplish much as regards the mediaeval period. What she has produced is beyond anything that I had expected.'

W. A. PANTIN.

A History of Magdalen College School, Oxford. By R. S. Stanier. Oxford Historical Society, new series, vol. III. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1940. Pp. 252. 10s. 6d.

It cannot often have happened that a school history was thought worthy of inclusion in so learned a series as the publications of the Oxford Historical Society. Mr. Stanier's book owes its selection for this honour to the remarkable part played by Magdalen School in the history both of the university and the city of Oxford ; it merits it by the scholarly way in which the subject has been treated.

Although Magdalen was by no means the first Oxford college to attach a school to its foundation, it seems not to have done so for some thirty years. But, within a few years of its beginning, the new school took a lead in the teaching of the New Grammar which was the foundation of the New Learning. Its first Master, John Anwykyll, published in 1483 a *Compendium totius Grammaticae*, together with *Vulgaria quaedam abs Terentio in Anglicam linguam traducta*, in which a first attempt was made to adapt classical Latin to daily conversation. He may also have been the author of *Parvula*, the first Latin grammar written in English. John Stanbridge, who succeeded Anwykyll, carried on his work with an *Accedence*, a *Vocabula*, and a *Vulgaria*. John Holte, who was Usher at the School a few years later, combined all these books in his *Lac Puerorum or Mylke for Children*. It was not until thirty years later that the Magdalen monopoly of Latin grammars was challenged, and then it was by a Magdalen schoolboy, William Lily,

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whom Colet appointed as the first Master of St. Paul's. The work of these men, says Mr. Stanier, 'forms the greatest glory of the school;' and he describes it with a keenness and erudition which make this part of his book of real value to historians of English education.

During the succeeding century the school shared in the decline, and during the 18th century in the decay of intellectual life at Oxford. But few schools of the time can have had more distinguished pupils than William Tyndale, Richard Hooker, William Camden, Thomas Hobbes, and Edward Hyde (Lord Clarendon). Of these and others Mr. Stanier gives interesting biographical sketches.

The history of the revived school, since the middle of the last century, occupies the second half of the book, and naturally deals with some matters of less archaeological or academic interest. Mr. Stanier ends by reprinting the appeal made by a distinguished recent member of the school, Dr. John Johnson, the Printer to the University, which has enabled the old foundation to face a difficult future with fresh confidence. Dr. Johnson's affection for the school can also be traced in the immense care which has evidently been given to the printing and illustrating of the history. The volume is in every way worthy of its theme.

J. M. THOMPSON.

Oxford : Report of the Committee on Planning and Reconstruction. Published by the Oxford University Press for the Oxford Preservation Trust. In two parts (1941 and 1942). Pp. 30 and 96. Two maps. Price 3d. and 1s.

The first reaction on reading these admirable reports is of regret that such wise guidance was not available, and acted upon, a century ago. The second is a feeling of doubt whether they are not, even now, ahead of the times, and whether the sacrifices they demand, financial and in the abandonment of old habits, may not make them unpalatable to the public as a whole.

Part I is somewhat in the nature of an introduction, and deals with matters which are of national interest. It is therefore not altogether suitable for discussion here, though the proposals merit careful study.

Part II contains matter of more local importance, and deals with the planning of Oxford, and of its immediate neighbourhood. The success of the planning will ultimately depend upon its effect on the traffic problem, and the Committee's proposals for dealing with this are of great interest. There will be general agreement with them on the desirability of completing the outer ring roads, though there is a tendency to be too optimistic about the relief that this will give to the traffic at Carfax. Comparison between the scene on Thursday afternoon and that on any other week-day must lead to the conclusion that most of the traffic in the centre of the City is local, and in connexion with shopping.

The route for the inner northern ring road is not given, but the same reservation as to its traffic value must be made. The layout of the city must compel it to make a fairly long detour, and there is some risk that it would pass so close to the northern by-pass as to become almost a duplication of that road. The arguments for and against the 'Christ Church Mall' proposal are very fairly stated, and the Committee's suggestion for the deferment of this very controversial scheme until after the other roads, and the other main proposals, have been given a fair trial, is very wise.

It would seem possible that the most promising of the Committee's plans, from the point of view of the traffic problem, is that for the decentralisation of the shopping

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centre. This measure would do more to relieve the traffic at Carfax than any other, and the pity of it is that here is just that measure which most conflicts with the twin vested interests of business, and of the ingrained habits of the people. One can but hope that these wise counsels will prevail. If anything, they do not go far enough, and the complete removal of the shopping centre from Cornmarket Street and its neighbourhood would probably make the 'Christ Church Mall' unnecessary.

One direction in which the Committee's proposals seem still inadequate is in connexion with the river. At present, if it were possible to waft a stranger suddenly to the towpath above Folly Bridge he would think he were in the Black Country, and there can be little doubt that the mile or two of river between Folly and Osney Bridges is far and away the ugliest stretch of the Thames from source to mouth, and the contrast with Cambridge is most glaring. The problem is admittedly most difficult. The suggestion for opening up the cut by the Castle is most attractive, and should be carried out, but it is a minor issue. A hint of a promising scheme is given in the report of the Engineer to the Thames Conservancy, attached as an appendix. He refers to a proposal for an alternative river channel from King's Weir to Kennington, roughly on the line of the Hinksey and Seacourt streams. If this new cut could be made suitable for navigation, at least by small craft, and not too aggressively new in appearance, it would make a valuable supplement to the present channel, and might even replace it. It would certainly extend the boating facilities of Oxford, which are hardly equal to their reputation, and which would need improvement to keep pace with that of the rest of the City.

In general, the Committee and the Trust are to be congratulated on a wise report, which all interested in the development of Oxford should read with great care. The Committee have not hesitated to face all the facts and the difficulties of the case, and, if their proposals are carried out, Oxford will be transformed. L.