

Reviews

Wytham: a record issued by the Oxford Preservation Trust on the acquisition of Wytham Abbey and Estate by the University of Oxford. By E. A. Greening Lamborn and Anon. Printed at the Oxford University Press for the Oxford Preservation Trust, 1943. Pp. 24; 9 plates, 1 map. No price stated.

This contains an article reprinted from *The Times* of 11 February, 1943, explaining the objects and terms of the acquisition, together with a valuable historical account of Wytham by E. A. Greening Lamborn, and a foreword. The historical survey begins with the first mention of the settlement in the 10th century and ends with a visit by the future Queen Victoria as a girl of fourteen.

It is to be hoped that this will be only the first of a series of surveys of the Wytham Estate to be published by the University when circumstances permit. It is a unique domain which would richly repay detailed investigation geologically, botanically, zoologically, and archaeologically (Seacourt and Ockworth sites), and which could be a valuable training-ground in all these subjects, as well as in agriculture. Such a series of surveys (which might eventually be bound together or reprinted as a single volume) would form a fitting appreciation of the princely acquisition and would be an invaluable record for the future; for the gradual realization of the building and agricultural plans will inevitably produce changes in the flora and fauna and probably obscure some of the geology.

W. J. ARKELL.

Boars Hill, Oxford. By Mary Bright Rix. Oxford, Hall the Printer, Ltd., 1943. Pp. 30; 3 plates, 1 folding map. 3s.

The author claims that her parents were the third residents on Boars Hill, the first being an Abingdon Baptist minister. Her reminiscences of the hill and hamlet and of the neighbouring village of Wootton in her childhood were well worth recording, and all interested in the fast-vanishing Oxford country will be grateful to her for making them readily available. The three plates of 'period' characters are delightful, and the pamphlet would be worth its price for the folding reproduction of the Tithe Award map alone. Perhaps the most valuable part of the text is the description of the old cottage industries and of the games and celebrations at Wootton Feast.

W. J. ARKELL.

The Land of Britain: Part 56, Oxfordshire. By Mary Marshall, B.A. London, Geographical Publications Ltd., for the Land Utilization Survey of Britain, 1943. Pp. 45; 16 text-maps. 4s.

The Land of Britain: Part 78, Berkshire. By J. Stephenson, B.A., with an historical section by W. G. East, M.A. London, Geographical Publications, Ltd., for the Land Utilization Survey of Britain, 1936. Pp. 113; 33 figs., 5 folding maps. 2s. 6d.

The work of the Land Utilization Survey deserves to be widely known, for its reports, and still more the admirable coloured maps to which they form a commentary, provide material not only for the student of agriculture and economic geography but for all who are interested in the interaction of human activity and physical environment.

The two monographs here considered furnish a detailed yet compact review of

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all the factors, geological, topographical, and climatic, which determine the economic life of the Oxford region ; moreover, although concerned chiefly with utilization of land to-day, the material contained in these reports and in the maps which accompany them is of considerable value to the archaeologist and historian, since it is clear that from the earliest times the utilization of the country round Oxford has been determined by the same permanent physical characteristics.

Both reports follow the same general plan, though that on Oxfordshire suffers inevitably from the exigencies of wartime production. They begin with a description of the physical background of their respective counties, under the headings of geology, relief and natural drainage, soils, and climate. The analysis of Berkshire topography is excellently done, and should be in the hands of every student of that county ; in Oxfordshire, due prominence is given to the fact that the whole of the northern and eastern parts of the county are drained by the Thames and its major tributaries, the widespread annual flooding of which has an important effect upon land utilization.

The description of Berkshire soils is summarized from Pizer's *Soils of Berkshire*, with the addition of notes upon their mineral deficiencies and the manures required. Oxfordshire is less fortunate, in that no complete work on the soils of the county has yet appeared, and the subject is in consequence only briefly treated here. It may be noted, however, that a fuller discussion of local soils, by Morison, is to be found in Orr, *Agriculture in Oxfordshire* (Oxford University Press, 1916).

The remainder of the reports is chiefly concerned with an analysis of land utilization, and with the division of the counties into regions according to their fertility. In Oxfordshire there is much variation ; good, though not first-class, arable land is found in the neighbourhood of Banbury, on the Cotswold Oolite, and along the ' Icknield Belt ' below the scarp of the chalk downs ; grass-land of fair quality characterizes the valleys of the Cherwell and the upper Evenlode, the clays of central Oxfordshire, and the banks of the Thames below Oxford ; the chief regions of mixed farming lie around Chipping Norton, on the Cornbrash near Bicester, on the Corallian of the Oxford Heights, and on such patches of the Chilterns as are free of woodland and heath ; while the poorest grass-land of all is to be found on Otmoor and the banks of the Thames between Oxford and Lechlade, both of which areas are subject to extensive annual floods.

In Berkshire the northern part of the county is almost wholly grass-land, broken only by a belt of arable following the Corallian ridge ; a second arable belt follows the line of the Icknield Way at the base of the Downs. South of this, on the dip-slope of the Chalk, is an area of mixed farming broken by the Lambourne down-land. Further south still, the complex underlying geological formations are reflected in a number of small, varied, and irregular regions of land utilization, terminating in the extreme south-east of the county in unproductive heath-lands typical of the adjoining county of Surrey. Each of these Berkshire regions is well illustrated by a small map of a characteristic area.

Both reports show that agriculturally the Oxford region is unremarkable, having neither arable nor grass-land of first quality. With the rest of the country, it has shared in the gradual decline of arable farming, and probably to a greater extent than the average ; much of the area lies on clays, and the heavy-working character of these soils, together with the easy accessibility of the London market by rail and road, have persuaded many farmers to concentrate upon dairying.

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This branch of agricultural industry is thus gradually becoming predominant in many parts of the region.

Mention must be made here of the excellent maps published separately by the Survey (price 4s. per sheet) at the scale of 1 inch to 1 mile, which illustrate most strikingly the analyses made in the reports. Each sheet is based on a sheet of the Ordnance Survey 1 inch map (4th edition), and is overprinted in six colours which are combined with various hatchings in black to show fourteen categories of land utilization; the chief of these are arable (brown), permanent grass (light green), woodland (dark green), houses with gardens and orchards (purple), heathland and rough pasture (yellow), and quarries, factories, built-up areas, and land agriculturally unproductive (red).

A study of these maps suggests that they may be of value to the archaeologist, one of whose chief tasks is to reconstruct the primitive physical background of his region and to demarcate the areas of primary settlement, which would be most attractive to our early communities, and the areas of forest, which would at first be avoided, and only later gradually penetrated and cleared with the advance of material culture and equipment. The usual basis for such reconstructions is the geological map, but the method has certain limitations, chiefly because vegetation is governed by the type of soil, which is not always derived from or related to the underlying rock shown on the geological map. We have as yet no soil maps of the Oxford region, and it is therefore perhaps worth enquiring if the maps of the Survey, which show the pattern of land utilization worked out by practice, may not serve also to indicate the areas suitable for settlement in early times. This is the more possible, since owing to the great increase of dairying in recent years (the acreage of arable land in Oxfordshire fell by nearly 50 per cent. between 1870 and 1939) cultivated land at the present time is very closely confined to easily tilled soils. It is upon these areas of easy cultivation that one would expect to find the main concentration of early settlement; conversely, areas now down to permanent grass, which lie largely on heavy-working clay soils, would formerly have been forest, and only sparsely inhabited; while in the intermediate areas, now mixed pasture and arable, one would expect to find primitive settlement increasing with the advance of material culture and its attendant expansion of population.

In order to see how far this hypothesis was justified, all the localities from which archaeological finds are known, numbering over 400 (excluding all finds in built-up areas, river beds and banks, and stray finds of flint implements and Roman coins) were plotted on the maps of the Survey, the area covered being the counties of Oxfordshire and Berkshire, S. of Banbury and N. of a line joining Henley and Swindon. The percentages of sites in five archaeological periods on arable, arable-grassland, and grassland are shown in the following table:

				<i>Arable- Grassland</i> (Secondary Settlement)	<i>Grassland</i> (Forest)	
				<i>Arable</i> (Primary Settlement)		
Neolithic	53	15	32 per cent.
Bronze Age	46	29	25 „
Iron Age	44	29	27 „
Roman	51	29	20 „
Anglo-Saxon	47	36	17 „

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These figures do not, of course, *prove* anything, least of all that early settlement does conform to the present arable pattern; for naturally archaeological finds are always likely to be more numerous where the soil has been disturbed by the plough. This factor does not affect, however, changes in the percentages which take place in successive periods, and it is these which are significant, though it must be realized that they represent only general trends, which cannot be numerically evaluated.

The table has certain points of interest, of which the first is the high proportion of Neolithic finds from former forest areas. It should be remembered that at this period the forest, though very little inhabited, had an economic importance as a hunting-ground, an importance which gradually diminishes in later periods with the establishment of settled agricultural life.

It is during the Bronze Age that the areas of secondary settlement first achieve any importance. This is in accord with the generally accepted view of the economy of the earlier and major part of the Bronze Age as being predominantly pastoral and nomadic in character; nomads need a greater total living-space than agriculturists, and the constant demand for fresh grazing would lead naturally to an expansion of settlement into areas not formerly inhabited.

In the Iron Age the same relative distribution appears to have been maintained, with perhaps a slight shift towards the forest areas. This period must have witnessed a considerable expansion of population as a result of a settled agriculture, and it is natural to suppose that clearing of forest land took place, though not on a great scale. This process was doubtless stimulated by the introduction in the first century B.C. of the heavy plough, which would make possible the breaking up of heavy grassland soils whose cultivation had hitherto been difficult and unprofitable. It is incidentally interesting to note that most of the arable 'islands' in Oxfordshire, which are cut off from the main areas of ploughland by tracts of permanent pasture, show traces of early settlement which in almost every case dates from the Iron Age or Roman period, but not earlier. Examples of such islands are Blackthorn near Bicester, Woodeaton, Elsfield, Beckley, Stanton St. John, Cuddesdon, and Garsington.

During the Roman period one might expect to find a decided expansion into the forest areas. Actually, however, while such expansion doubtless took place, the main Roman settlement appears to have been concentrated on the Cotswolds, the 'Icknield Belt', and the valley gravels, and to a lesser extent on the Corallian ridge of N. Berkshire. These are the areas of easiest cultivation, and it is these which an intensive system of agriculture, based on corn growing, would naturally select. It should be noted, however, that the local distribution of Roman settlement, and in particular of the villas where corn production was of greatest importance, was in part at least determined by the contemporary road-system.

In the ensuing Anglo-Saxon period the table shows a further rise in the importance of the areas of secondary settlement. This is in accordance with Leeds's statement of a movement of Saxon population into the valleys, for, with the exception of the valley gravels, all the land of easy cultivation and easy settlement is on higher ground.

Thus the figures of the table, while proving nothing, do yet tend to confirm what was already known or inferred of the utilization of the Oxford region in early times. The continuing importance of the arable areas is shown by an interesting map in the historical section of the Oxfordshire report, illustrating the progress of

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the enclosures by Act of Parliament. The earlier enclosures all lie on the rich land round Banbury and on the Cotswold belt ; and it is perhaps significant that the only township S. of Oxford of which more than half was enclosed before 1799 is that of Dorchester, which in prehistoric times was perhaps the most thickly populated area of the whole region.

The maps of the Survey raise many other problems of archaeological and historical interest which cannot be discussed here. It is hoped, however, that enough has been said to show that these admirably-produced publications may illumine the past no less than the present state of land use in the Oxford region.

Misprints are laudably few ; the numbering of the divisions of fig. 6 in the Oxfordshire report does not correspond with that of the text, and ' historical action ' for ' historical section ' should not have been overlooked on the Berkshire cover ; a more serious error is the wrong numbering of the list of maps on the verso of the Oxfordshire title-page : the number of the Stow-on-the-Wold sheet is 93, not 92 as printed.

R. J. C. ATKINSON.

Catalogue of the Plate of Oriol College, Oxford. By E. Alfred Jones. Oxford University Press, 1944. Pp. xxvii + 96 ; 20 plates. 50s.

Oriol is the fifth Oxford college whose plate has been catalogued and published by this author ; it is to be hoped that his recent death will not cut short this excellent series, but that others will continue, and in time complete, the work he started.

Oriol possesses in its plate one of its few remaining material links with the mediaeval college, and the magnificent ' founder's cup ' stands out, even among all Oxford plate. While the author himself repeats the theory of French origin for this cup, Mr. F. J. Varley, in a note added at the author's suggestion, emphasizes Provost Shadwell's discovery in the Oriol Treasurer's Accounts of a record of its purchase in 1493 (*The Colleges of Oxford* (ed. Clark, 1898), pp. 89-90 n.). Had not the ' French heresy ' already gained currency, this would surely have led to the general acceptance of this cup as late 15th century English work. This 1493 entry has never been printed in full and is unfortunately omitted even from the present volume, so it is included here :

Oriol Treasurer's Accounts, MS. Bk. III, p. 248. 1493-4.

SOLUTA PRO NECESSARIIS INFRA COLLEGIUM.

In primis 2^o die Decembris solvimus pro cratera stante deaurata signata cum E et S & coopertoris circumdente ponderantibus xxxj uncias & cratera argentea ponderante iij uncias di & quart.

Summa soluta soll cum feudo stacionarii, iij li. xvijjs. jd.

As Mr. Varley says (p. 96), the fee *pro feudo stacionarii* (payable to the Goldsmiths' Company for inspection, see Charter, 30 May, 1462) is the real evidence that this cup was wrought in England. It is practically unique for such a commemorative vessel to be paid for out of corporate funds.

The other two pre-reformation vessels are also late 15th century, the coconut cup, and the mazer with the beautiful engraved inscription : it is not certain, however, that the foot-ring of this mazer is a later addition.

Apart from the simple but fine chapel plate of c. 1640 (pl. 3) the remainder of the Oriol plate is post-Civil War, with many attractive examples almost up to

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the present day, but especially fine are the grace cups of 1654-5 and 1669-70 (pl. 13) and the Wenman tankard of 1678-9 (pl. 17).

The reproduction of the photographs is of the finest quality collotype, yielding a wealth of detail under a lens. Not in every case, however, is the photography of comparable perfection. Sometimes (pls. 8, 9, 10) the highlights on the vessels are allowed to extend as reflections into the foreground. These, even if unavoidable in the photography, could have been subsequently blacked out, thus enhancing the clarity of form of the vessels themselves. Pl. 15 gives the impression of a glass vessel with silver mounts, an illusion which might have been avoided. The omission of scales from the plates, and the lack of any means of rapid reference from the plates to the relevant text, are inconvenient, but in general the plates themselves are of high quality, perhaps slightly better than in some of the earlier volumes.

The 'inventorye of suche plate as is abroade for the publique use of the Colledge taken Decemb. 21 1596' (pp. 89 ff.) makes sorry reading, as only the 'founder's cup' and the mazer are still extant (the coconut cup is not in this 1596 list). Doubtless much of this plate went during the Civil War, though Mr. Jones emphasizes (p. xx) the continual loss of plate by melting down or exchange for new, regular practices of colleges at least until the last century.

The author has himself previously emphasized the importance and quality of the engravings on English plate, and it is disappointing to find so little illustrated in detail here: pl. 15 is a welcome exception. Ideally the catalogue itself should have been more profusely illustrated, though one would not wish to sacrifice quality for quantity. However pleasing and indispensable this catalogue is, it is not an exhaustively illustrated study of Oriel plate, and future students will be asking many questions which cannot be answered by the illustrations of this or its companion volumes.

E. M. JOPE.

Oxfordshire: County of Imperishable Fame. Edited by Arthur Mee. The King's England Series. London, Hodder and Stoughton, Ltd., 1943. Pp. x+415; 127 plates. 10s. 6d.

The dust cover claims this series as 'the indispensable companion of the Motor age'. 'Every ride' it continues, 'brings you to the scene of its stories. Every signpost points you to its wonders.' You have at least been warned.

There are two ways of writing an alphabetical guide-book—the astringent and the dithyrambic. As an example of the first, the Oxfordshire volume of the *Little Guides*, begins thus (1919 ed.): '1. Size and Extent. Oxfordshire may be called the central county of the southern half of England.' There follow nearly 300 pages of closely packed information 'sufficient for the ordinary tourist of literary tastes', to quote the professed object of the series. The severity of the text is mitigated by a few illustrations, mostly from the delicate pencil of Edmund New.

We do these things differently in the Motor Age. 'Oxfordshire', begins the present work, 'is gathered into the very heart of Southern England, and well is it named after that ancient city which is at once the home of learning, the cradle of Democracy, and the inspiration of noble movements that have reinforced the English spirit throughout the world.' Having got off to this dashing start, the pace hardly falters for over four hundred pages. A hundred and fifty are devoted to Oxford, but every other town and village is described, with its buildings, monuments and historical associations. It may fairly be said that nothing obvious is omitted, and a

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surprising number of the most popular episodes in what the editor would doubtless call the 'Unfolding Pageant of our Island Story' get hitched on at length to the descriptions of places with which the leading character was in some way connected.

The book is copiously illustrated with photographs of the picture-postcard variety, and as he turns the pages the reader is further assisted by sub-titles. Thus 'A Jewel Set in the Hills' introduces Great Tew, and 'By the Clear Waters of the Isis', Iffley. 'Citadel of Our English Heritage' is Oxford, and 'Bridge of Strife' is—did you guess it?—Radcot. So the artless rhapsody continues through the alphabet to Yarnton ('Medieval Treasure') and finally to Yelford, the former seat of Warren Hastings's family which he sought but failed to redeem. Here the catalogue concludes with a strong finish: 'the old house stands forlorn, like the palace of a sleeping beauty waiting for the prince, and waiting in vain.'

It will be seen that this is hardly a book for thin-skinned intellectuals, and it seems rather too comprehensive for the mentally arrested. Perhaps we may find a clue to the puzzle by considering the editorship. The late Arthur Mee—this must have been one of his last enterprises—is gratefully remembered as the editor of the *Children's Encyclopædia* and the founder of the *Children's Newspaper*. The present work is really for the same, or slightly older, readers, and would form an excellent work of reference for intelligent boys and girls in their early teens. Perhaps, like some parents and more nurses, Arthur Mee could not bring himself to feel that his charges ever grew up; if so, when he edited the *King's England* (if the present volume is typical), though his pen may have written for the Motor Age, his heart yearned for the Cycling Age. And it was his heart that prevailed. K. MCGREGOR.

Towards a Plan for Oxford City. By Lawrence Dale, F.R.I.B.A. London, Faber and Faber, Ltd., 1944. Pp. 1-60; frontispiece and 9 other plates, 2 text-figures, plan duplicated on end papers. 6s.

It is an old principle of British justice that 'what the soldier said is not evidence', but, as the horizon broadens and other realms come more closely into ken, it becomes increasingly apparent that this standard does not reign elsewhere. So evident has the fact become that even in this country there is now a widespread tendency, not least among those who are determined to advocate their case by totalitarian means, to maintain that 'what the soldier said' is evidence of a most material kind. So it comes about that we are treated in this book to a prologue comprising a considerable portion of the book's length, which creates an atmosphere of prejudice and treats the question at issue as a *chose jugée*. The material which it contains is as entertaining as its presentation is perverse, but it has nothing to do with the case.

The presentation of the case begins on p. 14, with a curious account of early Oxford. Having observed that Oxford is of Anglo-Saxon foundation, the writer sagely points out that no legionary set foot in it, one of the fleeting glimpses of the obvious in which the work abounds. But to continue by stating that the Romans by-passed it, is to convict the Romans of a curious regard for the non-existent. The original ford which conditioned the rise of the town was on the west, and tradition confirms this (Salter, *Antiquity*, II, 458 and *Medieval Oxford*), but the author arrives at the conclusion by gratuitously ascribing a non-existent southern ford to tradition and deducing that the Norman castle influenced the Anglo-Saxon lay-out. This unpromising beginning is the prelude to a history of mediaeval

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Oxford which starts from the inference that the collegiate plan is introvert and leads on to the conclusion that Town and Gown represented modern and classical side, a Marxist way of looking at history which has nothing to do with truth or its enucleation. Finally, at the end of this so-called analysis, the present war is represented as Nemesis and Hitler as a representative of a class of despised craftsmen who had lost their integrity. Altogether, this is a strange preparation for the suggestions which follow, for it is not an analysis of facts but a crude selection of smart sophistries and *ex parte* statements.

The author does his case no good service by this kind of introduction, which occupies six pages short of half the book. For, when he finally reaches the statement of existing difficulties there is much that is reasonable and correct in his exposition. The awkward relationship of the town, the University and the newer industrial activities are well put (pp. 26-27), and while the statement of alternatives is spoilt by its misconception of what a University represents, the protest against an industrial development of Oxford is well timed. The plea that the industrial balance should not be upset in favour of industry might have been matched by a plea that the academic balance might not be upset in favour of non-humanitarian science, both scales having been heavily weighted by unsolicited industrial development and its consequences.

We may also echo with pleasure the plea for the preservation of all buildings which make up the entity of ancient Oxford, while the replanning of the south-west quarter of the city and of St. Clement's suburb is undoubtedly required.

But the sequel is curious. It is almost as if the author, in the name of economy of bridging and shortness of distance, were determined to destroy one of the outstanding features of the University which he vows he is anxious to preserve. Why should the quiet seclusion of Christ Church meadows be destroyed and desecrated in order to provide a southern by-pass? Is not a by-pass road south of Folly Bridge and crossing the Thames below the junction with the Cherwell practicable? Granted the bridging would be more costly, but at least one of the most distinctive features of Oxford would be saved. This is not a matter, as the author seems to suppose, of a little sentimental regret. It is a question of preserving a feature as distinctive of the University as the buildings themselves, and one of their most beautiful settings. As the author says, 'the final object of all art, including even the art of town planning, is unification'. But the outstanding achievement in these proposals is disruption, at a point where all who know and love the characteristic things of Oxford, be they townsmen or gowmsmen, would most regret to see disruption take place.

I. A. RICHMOND.