

Reviews

The History of All Souls College Library. By Sir Edmund Craster. Edited by E. F. Jacob.

All Souls Studies VI. Faber & Faber, London. Pp. 128, 8 plates. Price £2.50.

After his retirement from the Bodleian Library in 1945, Sir Edmund Craster took charge of the Codrington Library at All Souls. Here he was able to examine both the College archives and the Library's contents, preparing several notebooks on the latter's history used as a basis for this book, found uncompleted at his death in 1959. He had finished five chapters covering the period from 1438, when Archbishop Henry Chichele sent forty-nine books, to the furnishing of the Codrington Library in 1751, and a sixth on the later 18th century had been started. This has been completed by Professor E. F. Jacob, who has added a chapter on the 19th century and a memoir of Sir Edmund as well as editing the whole; it is sad that he did not live to see publication either. Dr. R. W. Hunt contributes an appendix listing seventy-six fragments of medieval manuscripts found in bindings, supplementing the 126 described by Dr. Neil Ker in his *Pastdowns in Oxford Bindings* (1954).

The history of some Oxford college libraries has received attention in the past, generally briefly and treated in isolation, with the notable exception of Dr. Ker's account of them in the mid-16th century. Sir Edmund also draws parallels, a difficult task with so much unpublished. All aspects are dealt with in a chronological narrative. The medieval system of a chained reference library and a loan collection is explained, with references to existing literature on that subject. The surviving early shelf-lists are gone through, the benefactions and benefactors, purchases and finance, the subjects covered and how they changed, the administration, cataloguing and staff are all described. The buildings receive much attention; the architectural history of the Codrington Library is particularly well done, with many details from the archives of the men concerned—Hawksmoor, Gibbs and their workmen, William Townesend, Bartholomew Peisley, Robert Tawney. The driving force of Sir William Blackstone is emphasized.

The difficulty of finding parallels is exemplified when the catalogue compiled about 1630 is described; Sir Edmund mentions those at Magdalen of 1630 and at Brasenose in 1635, but it is not pointed out that these had been preceded at St. John's in 1604, New College in 1623-4 and Oriel in 1625.

A pleasing feature is the treatment of Library staff, and tribute is paid to two antiquaries, Benjamin Buckler (d. 1780) and John Gutch, Sub-Librarian, 1771-1831. Regulations drawn up in 1751, when the Library was finally completed, included the establishment of a Library Committee, the first college one in Oxford; it is still in existence in an altered form.

All Souls was also the first college library to have a finely bound and inscribed Benefactors' Register, set up in 1606, similar to that introduced by Sir Thomas Bodley a little earlier. Sir Edmund does not point out its priority, but it was eight years before another college, Christ Church, had one, while the majority of Oxford colleges did not adopt this way of flattering benefactors until after the Restoration. All Souls was also a pioneer in specializing, concentrating on law and history from 1865.

Sir Edmund has successfully managed to turn all these details into a readable narrative, revealing a remarkable facility for synthesizing the published works of other scholars with the facts gleaned from the archives. Since his history does not neglect architecture, finance and administration, it is more comprehensive than the studies of the libraries of Jesus, Magdalen and Worcester in the publications of the Oxford Bibliographical Society, while the easy-flowing story has advantages over the treatment of Christ Church Library by the late W. G. Hiscock. It is to be hoped that other colleges will emulate All Souls.

The binding for Archbishop Matthew Parker is unfortunately reproduced upside down and the drawing of Sir Charles Oman, Librarian, 1889-1945, is credited to the wrong artist. There is a good index.

PAUL MORGAN

The Oxfordshire Election of 1754. An Archive Teaching Unit, compiled by G. H. Dannatt.

The idea for this publication originated at a conference of history teachers at Oxford in 1968 which had the dual aims of acquainting the teachers with the resources of the County Record Office, and discussing the most useful way of making these resources available for use in schools.

The well established 'Jackdaw' series has for long provided the model for this type of publication, and the concept of a 'local Jackdaw' is a good one. It can do a great deal to enliven school history by reproducing original material for children to use for themselves, and by relating national topics to familiar places within the child's own experience. *The Oxfordshire Election of 1754* does both these things.

The particular topic chosen for this unit is a good one. There is clearly a wealth of material available, ranging from portraits of the four candidates and Hogarth prints, to extracts from *Jackson's Oxford Journal* and original plans of the polling booths to be built in Broad Street. At the same time it is a topic of more than merely local significance, and one which forms a regular part of a school syllabus.

However, few publishers of this kind of book have yet succeeded in dealing with a single topic in such detail without being in danger of pricing themselves out of the market—and the schools are a market with very limited resources. There cannot be very many schools who can afford to buy sufficient copies of this publication for use by a class of 30, especially when it is remembered that this must be only a small part of the history syllabus for which they will be making provision. The fact that printing costs have been kept as low as possible, and that it is still excellent value in the adult market, does not alter the case for the schools, for whom it was intended. However, Xerox copies are available separately of some of the material from the C.R.O.

Miss Dannatt and her team of helpers are to be congratulated on an excellent publication which one hopes will be read far beyond the classroom. Meanwhile one must also hope that the schools will find enough money to make use of it as well.

D. G. T. EDDERSHAW

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Oxford Past and Present. By C. W. Judge. The Oxford Illustrated Press. Pp. 58. Price £1.25. AND: *Victorian and Edwardian Oxford.* By John Betjeman and David Vaisey. B. T. Batsford Ltd. Intro. and 156 illustrations. Price £2.10.

Old photographs of a town appeal to many people for a great variety of reasons. To the historian, they are a useful source material, to the long-term resident, they bring memories to life, and to that elusive figure, the man in the street, they recall a time when towns seemed more attractive, and less dominated by the roar of machinery. In view of this widespread interest, it is no surprise that a large number of books have begun to appear, showing towns as they were sixty or more years ago.

In Oxford, the first of these books was Colin Judge's *Oxford Past and Present*, published by Oxford Illustrators in 1969. The author set out to compare Minn photographs taken at the turn of the century with modern views 'taken—wherever possible—from the exact spot where Harry Minn's camera may have stood'. This was an interesting and ambitious project, fully deserving its success, but the first edition was spoiled by several glaring errors in the text. B. H. Blackwell, for example, was said to have resigned his post as City Librarian, when in fact, he died in January 1855—

only six months after his appointment. These faults have been put right in a much improved second edition, and, apart from the incorrect attribution of some Taunt photographs to Minn, the book is a refreshing example of its kind.

Victorian and Edwardian Oxford, by Sir John Betjeman and David Vaisey, appeared in 1971, and is a larger, more straightforward collection of photographs, which seeks to recapture the atmosphere of Oxford before the First World War. Faced by a bewildering number of photographs, the authors selected 156, and arranged them under such subject headings as the Town, Fairs and Churches. These headings do not always seem to be in a logical order, and three photographs of the University Museum are separated from views of other university buildings by subjects which are quite unrelated. The dust jacket has Ruskin's road-menders working at Iffley not North Hinksey, but this mistake is not repeated in the text, where the only serious error is the description of the bearded gentleman in plate 76 as W. W. Merry, when the photographer, Henry Taunt, specifically noted that it was H. G. Woods, president of Trinity. It would be unjust to condemn the work on these grounds, however, for it has made available many photographs of old Oxford, and offers very high quality at a reasonable price.

Books of old photographs have sometimes been scorned as coffee table decorations, but they are much more significant than cynics would admit. They may show a popular, unacademic approach to history, but history, like biography, is 'about chaps', and bringing it straight into people's homes is bound to have beneficial results. Other collections of photographs may come to light in attics and cellars, and a glimpse of the world we have lost may encourage more to conserve the world we still have.

M. GRAHAM

Mid-Oxfordshire Churches. A miscellany of rural churches drawn and described by John Brookes.
B.C.A. Publications, Thame. 1970. Price 75p.

This booklet deals with the exploration of an area of mid-Oxfordshire's countryside in the quest of thirty-one parish churches which appear to the author to be buildings of character rather than of great architectural or historical importance and affording in addition, as the author intended, a record of social history over the last 800 years. Each church is illustrated by drawings by Mr. Brookes and are excellent in recording the architectural details of the building. Those readers who remember with pleasure the author's *Country Corners in Oxfordshire*, published in 1969, are now grateful to him for his faithful and delightful illustrations in this publication of the churches.

Each drawing is accompanied by brief notes on the topography of the parish and include a description of the building materials of the houses in the village. The architectural description of the fabric of the church is adequately dealt with and notes on the fittings, wall paintings and stained glass are given. Detailed drawings of the interior and fittings are given in the case of Cassington (chancel), Dorchester (Jesse window), and Lewknor (font).

Of the outstanding illustrations of the general interiors mention must be made of the Rycote Chapel and of Wheatfield Church and of the altar tombstones at Asthall and Lewknor. A useful map is to be found on the back cover of the booklet.

This publication can be wholeheartedly recommended to those readers who can learn more about these churches under the able guidance of Mr. John Brookes.

P. S. SPOKES