

Reviews

Marriage Register of Banbury, pt. iii, 1790-1837. Transcribed and edited by J. W. S. Gibson. Banbury Historical Society, vol. v, 1963. Pp. viii, 126. Price 30s. to non-members.

The third part of the marriage register is similar in content to the previous volumes, but a new method of printing has been adopted and is very successful. The editor has been able to consult the Bishop's transcripts and to obtain additional information from marriage licences and the Register of the Banbury Society of Friends. Once again the volume will be of value to genealogists but of less interest to local historians of the area, since trades are rarely given after 1812.

J. L. BOLTON.

Oxford Council Acts 1752-1801, by M. G. Hobson, with a foreword by Councillor P. S. Spokes. Oxford, 1962, pp. xxxvii and 333. Price 42s.

This is the fifth volume in the series of Oxford Council Acts published by the Oxford City Council, and continues the series of extracts from the records of the Corporation up to the opening of the 19th century. It covers a period when the city council, like many of the municipal corporations of England, was at the lowest tide of its effectiveness and use. The Royal Commission on Municipal Corporations was soon to come and to recommend the wholesale reform of all the municipal councils of the country. But as yet, in 1801, there was no hint of these radical proposals in the air.

The extracts from the council books show the corporation concerning itself with the small beer of corporation business—the election of corporation officers, the admitting of freemen, the granting of leases of corporation land, and the prosecution of unauthorized traders in the town. There are occasional Parliamentary elections, and a constant background of financial instability, but the Corporation continues to give its mind primarily to the problems of the freedom and the collection of fines for minor infringements of the trading regulations.

During this period, however, local government was not really dormant in Oxford, for the City and University came together and, in 1771, obtained the Mileways Act, establishing a board of Commissioners to improve the town. It is from this Act that the presence of University members on the modern City Council springs, and it is from this Act that many of our present planning troubles arise. After reciting that the roads of Oxford were inadequate for the traffic, it applied the wrong remedies; it aimed at letting the vehicles come into the city as easily as possible, instead of providing for them a more convenient way round. The Commission became in effect the local government of Oxford, widening, paving and lighting the streets, providing the simpler sanitary services, prosecuting nuisances, and preventing obstruction by the parking of vehicles in the highway.

The City Council, however, existed quite separately from the Commissioners,

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and there are only a few passing references to this important Act or to the work done under it. The Council was not concerned with such matters. (It would, however, have been more convenient if the references to this Act had been indexed more consistently in the present volume; some appear under 'Mileways Act', and some under 'Paving Act'.)

Another major event of this period in Oxford was the imprisonment of the Mayor and ten members of the Council in Newgate by order of the House of Commons on account of the more than usually flagrant way in which they put up the City seats in Parliament for sale to the sitting Members. This episode is described in Miss Hobson's preface, but, as she explains there, all entries in the City records referring to this matter were 'torn out and totally annihilated' as a result of a subsequent resolution of the Council.

The fact that these episodes, and particularly the Mileways Act and the developments which flowed from it, appear so slightly in the Council records illustrates how far the Corporation had got immersed in the minutiae of freemen and corporate offices. This volume gives a valuable and detailed picture of what the Corporation was doing at this time. It is probably typical of the business conducted by many other municipalities before the reforms of 1835. But the Webbs, in their great *History of English Local Government*, showed that if one wants to find the true springs of English local institutions one must look not to the borough and city councils, but to the Improvement Commissioners and other bodies set up under Local Acts. Here in Oxford the Mileways Commissioners were the body that was most concerned with the functions of local government as we know it today. Second in importance to them were the Guardians of the Poor of the Oxford Incorporation, established under a Local Act of 1771. It is to be hoped that the present Corporation, who hold the minutes and records of the Commissioners, will continue their admirable work by publishing similar volumes dealing with the records of these bodies.

This is not, however, suggested as in any way a denigration of the present series. These volumes of Council Acts, by showing both what the Council did, and what it did not do, provide invaluable raw material for the historian, and much of interest for the general reader.

B. KEITH-LUCAS.

The Prehistoric Ridge Way : A Journey. By Patrick Crampton. Pp. vi, 78, 8 line-drawings in text. The Abbey Press, Abingdon-on-Thames, Berkshire. Price 6s.

This is a pleasantly-written account of a journey along the Ridge Way from Avebury to Streatley with a donkey. The archaeological setting is reasonably up-to-date with only a little slip here and there: Egyptian faience beads were normally worn by women and not men (p. 14), and the ancient British coin was found near and not in Uffington Castle (p. 37). Proof-reading was not quite up to standard, and errors occur on pp. 8, 26, 28, 31, 32, 37 and 40. There are one or two grammatical errors and on page 77 Sir Charles Fox should read Sir Cyril Fox. Apart from these few blemishes, the book is fundamentally good and should sell rapidly. In a second edition which will with little doubt be needed, it would be advantageous to split the very long chapter 3 (The Ridge Way) into two smaller chapters, the first covering the route from Avebury to the Uffington White Horse (pp. 19-41), and the second dealing with that between the Uffington White Horse and Streatley (pp. 41-71). A good map should certainly be added.

L. V. GRINSELL.

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A History of Deddington, Oxfordshire. By H. M. Colvin, S.P.C.K., 1963. Pp. ix, 122, illus. Price 12s. 6d.

Within the past thirty years Deddington has been the subject of two studies, both excellent in their quite different methods of approach. In 1933 Mrs. M. V. Turner printed her *Story of Deddington*, a commendable example of a village history sponsored by the Women's Institutes. In 1963 Mr. H. M. Colvin has published the volume under review, devoting to it the untiring industry and impeccable scholarship which we associate with his name.

Deddington is fortunate in that, with the exception of the defective parish records, the materials for writing its history are abundant. Mr. Colvin states in his Preface that neither time nor space has permitted him to exploit them all to the full, but within the imposed limits he has worked his mine vigorously. That the records of four of Deddington's former manorial lords—two corporate bodies and two county families—have been preserved in their entirety is matter for rejoicing.

The existence of good sources does not, however, ensure an exciting past, and it must be conceded that, in comparison with some Oxfordshire towns, that of Deddington lacks incident. In spite of its position at main crossroads, the place has rarely made its appearance on the stage of English history. Of the three manors into which it was divided, one, the Duchy, was held by various exalted, even Royal, personages, but they were remote from the life of the locality. After the Castle manor was sold to the canons of Windsor in 1364, no member of the English aristocracy has lived in the parish. Sir Thomas Pope, the founder of Trinity College, Oxford, is its most distinguished native. Although in 1086 Deddington had been worth twice as much to its lord as Banbury, by 1225 the latter had far outstripped it in urban growth, and Deddington was to continue to decline in importance. After 1305 it returned no burgesses to Parliament; by 1277 its castle was in decay.

This is not, of course, to say that, because Deddington has not made much splash through the centuries its story will not be found infinitely rewarding by the student of local history and the local inhabitant, as they trace the familiar pattern of English parish life with Mr. Colvin as their guide. In his detailed account of the numerous interesting buildings in the town they will recognize and appreciate his expert knowledge; for his lucid tracing of the complicated manorial descents (helped by a good table) they will be grateful. Other chapters deal with such subjects as the borough and market town, local government, church history, and the parish church. The present writer has found 'Fields and Farmers', for which, as everywhere, Mr. Colvin has drawn copiously on manuscript sources, particularly enjoyable.

The book is very well produced and illustrated with good photographs, plans, and other figures. A sketch-map of the parish, showing the position of the hamlets, would have been useful. Altogether, this is a notable addition to Oxfordshire local histories, for which author and publishers alike deserve our thanks and congratulations.

MARGARET TOYNBEE.

The papers of Captain Henry Stevens Waggon-Master-General to King Charles I, transcribed and edited by Margaret Toynbee. Oxfordshire Record Society, vol. XLII, 1961 (for 1962). Pp. 1-78. Price 25s. to non-members.

Historians of the Civil War, and especially those interested in the Royalist Army, will be particularly grateful to Miss Toynbee for the skill and erudition she has

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lavished on this apparently slight collection of documents which under her editorial care becomes a source of real importance.

Henry Stevens (1597-?1655) was the son of Richard Stevens of Easington near Watlington. In 1638, as servant to the Earl of Berkshire, he was given a bailiff's place in Oxford, in 1643 he took up arms 'at the King's command', was a 'receiver' of the weekly loan for the support of Royalist horse, and in November 1643 was appointed Waggon-Master-General. He also acted as Commissary General of Victuals for the Oxford Garrison and held a Captain's commission in the regiment of the city of Oxford. The surviving papers date from 1 November 1643 to 20 December 1644. Thereafter there is no record of Stevens as Waggon-Master-General and nothing more is known of his military service. By 1651 he had sold Easington manor, probably because of his losses due to service in the Royalist cause, and about 1655 he died. Of the forty-six documents included in Stevens' official papers eight are brief instructions from Henry Percy, General of the Ordnance, one is from the Council of War, and one is subscribed as coming from the Commission appointed to fortify, victual and cleanse the city of Oxford. The editor concludes that most of the other orders directed to Stevens and signed by members of the Privy Council and men such as Sir Arthur Aston (the governor of Oxford) are also in fact from this Commission which was especially active during the absence of the King from Oxford in the summer and autumn of 1644.

Although the papers cover only fourteen months in the career of a not very distinguished Royalist officer their importance for the historian is considerable, partly because Miss Toynbee has made them the occasion for an illuminating introductory essay on the office and activities of a Royalist Waggon-Master and an Oxford Commissary General. In this she has used not only the material available in Oxford, but also such rich veins as the Royalist Ordnance Papers in the Public Record Office and the British Museum Harleian collection of Sir Edward Walker's minutes of the Council of War. Even more useful are the notes in which she has concentrated on biographies of the less well-known persons mentioned in the text, with detailed accounts of men like Henry Washington, later governor of Worcester, Sir William Vavasour, later governor of Hereford, and George and Sebastian Boncle (or Bunckle or Bunckley), whose names crop up so often in local civil war papers and cause so much confusion to the unwary. These brief biographies are a model of careful scholarship and in themselves form an important contribution to the history of the Oxford garrison and of the Civil war in the south and west during 1643-4.

I. G. PHILIP.

Clockmaking in Oxfordshire, 1400-1850. By C. F. C. Beeson. The Banbury Historical Society, vol. iv, 1962. Pp. 160; end map and plates. Price to non-members 30s.

As an Oxford graduate, a County resident and a former editor of 'Antiquarian Horology', Dr. Beeson is particularly well qualified to write this book, and he has carried out his self-imposed task most successfully, using to full advantage his skill in writing and his great knowledge of and enthusiasm for antique clocks of all kinds, particularly church clocks. With characteristic modesty he emphasizes in his preface the incompleteness of his survey, but the reviewer is impressed not by any sense of incompleteness, but by a wealth of well-digested information. His main hunting-

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grounds are parish records, private sources brought to light by circular letters and appeals in the Press, auction catalogues and the more obvious sources such as museums and antique dealers ; the records of guilds and crafts in Henley-on-Thames, Banbury and Oxford itself are also used.

After ten pages of a general historical survey, Dr. Beeson proceeds to detailed information. He describes in the first place over 100 turret clocks within the County, of which about twenty are in Oxford City. Among this latter group is the clock formerly in Wadham College and now in the History of Science Museum in Oxford. Dr. Beeson puts forward strong evidence that it was made in 1670 by Joseph Knibb of Oxford ; it is fitted with an anchor escapement and thus anticipates by one year the somewhat similar clock made by William Clement of London in 1671 for King's College, Cambridge, which is now in the London Science Museum and which is usually claimed as the earliest known example of this well-known escapement. Other well-preserved turret clocks by Oxfordshire country makers are those at Hanwell St. Peter, made by George Harris of Fritwell in 1671, and at Great Milton, made by Nicholas Harris of Fritwell.

The survey of sundials and sun-glasses which follows shows that many Oxford Colleges formerly possessed sundials, which have now disappeared. Of the surviving ones the two most interesting perhaps are those at All Souls and Corpus. The All Souls dial, made originally in 1658 by William Bird of Holywell Street, is a fine and typical example of a south mural dial, and may well have been designed by Wren, then College Bursar. The column dial at Corpus by Charles Turnbull is the best-known of existing Oxford dials, dating from 1581 with additions made in 1605, and with inscribed dials on its vertical and sloping faces and on the vertical column. An equally famous polyhedral sundial with twelve faces surmounted by a sphere was by Kratzer, the distinguished Bavarian astronomer who became a fellow of Corpus in 1517 ; it formerly stood in the College grounds and a pedestal dial by the same designer was in the churchyard of the University Church.

Part II of the work covers domestic clocks and consists mainly of an extensive biographical dictionary of over 300 names. Among these are a round half-dozen whose work has a special interest, e.g. the two outstanding brothers, John and Joseph Knibb. John Knibb (fl. 1650-1722) spent the whole of his working life in Oxford, making chiefly domestic clocks of high class, while Joseph (fl. 1640-1711) moved his main business to London about 1670 and there produced some of the finest specimens of long-case and bracket clocks. Other Oxfordshire makers of quality were the Harris family of Fritwell and the Gilkes family of West Oxfordshire, many of whom were Quakers. Finally there is Humphrey Gainsborough of Henley-on-Thames, who was a Congregational minister and engineer as well as clock-maker and was, incidentally, a brother of the great Thomas Gainsborough.

The work of these Oxfordshire makers is illustrated by half-tone plates of over forty examples, well chosen for variety and well reproduced. There is also a list of makers' names grouped according to the towns or villages in which they worked, and a sketch map of the County showing place-names, prepared by Mr. L. S. Northcote.

This is a thoroughly scholarly volume and a welcome addition to the literature of the crafts and craftsmen of the counties of England.

F. A. B. WARD.

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Marriage Register of Banbury Part One 1558-1724, transcribed by Mrs. N. Fillmore and Mrs. J. Pain, edited by J. S. Gibson. The Banbury Historical Society, vol. II, 1960. Pp. i-xv, 1-200. Price to non-members 30s.

Marriage Register of Banbury Part Two 1724-1790, transcribed by Mrs. N. Fillmore and J. S. W. Gibson, edited by J. S. W. Gibson. The Banbury Historical Society, vol. III, 1961. Pp. i-xii, 1-178. 1961. Price to non-members 30s.

'*Cake and Cockhorse*', The Magazine of the Banbury Historical Society, Volume 2, 1962-3. Price per quarterly issue 1s. 6d.

As part of their series of Record Publications the Banbury Historical Society has produced a transcribed abstract of the parish marriage register from 1558 to 1790, with a third part (see above, p. 100) up to 1837. The register itself is large, since many of the surrounding hamlets were chapelries of the parish, and the town was the market centre for areas of the four neighbouring counties, where many came to be married. The duplicate paper register from 1580 to 1707 also exists, an unusual survival, and the editor has been able to use this as a check on the official parchment copies. He has also obtained additional information on Quakers married in the parish church in the late seventeenth century from the registers of the Banbury monthly meeting of the Society of Friends, which begin in 1660. By an oversight, however, the bishop's transcripts in the Bodleian Library were not consulted until it was too late to include additions or variations in the main work and the index. The volumes have been duplicated to save money for the more ambitious publication on Oxfordshire Clockmaking by Dr. Beeson. Their form and clarity quite justify this, although it would have been better to put notes at the foot of the page, rather than in the middle of the text, and to have had them in a more normal form. The abbreviations are irritating, although easily understood: 'botp' for 'both of this parish' could well have been omitted altogether. The whole has been well indexed, with separate sections for surnames, place names, divided by counties, and trades and professions.

The result is a work which will be particularly valuable to genealogists of North Oxfordshire and the surrounding counties. It might have been wiser, to avoid possible confusion, to have included the large numbers of unfulfilled 'intentions of marriage', issued in the Commonwealth period instead of banns, in a separate section, and some reference should have been made in the otherwise excellent index to those Quakers who were married in the parish church, an interesting aspect of local non-conformity. They cannot be found otherwise without wading through the text. For the local historian, however, its value is small. The register itself contains few details of trades and professions, although the list does show the variety of weaving done in the district and it was only to be expected that the market town would be a popular place for marriages of people from the surrounding areas. We hope for the speedy appearance of the proposed volume on sixteenth-century Banbury Corporation Records.

Cake and Cockhorse, the quarterly journal of the Society, is a lively and well-produced magazine. Each issue contains one or two long articles on a variety of subjects, ranging from a study of the poor law administration at Wigginton by Dr. Price (who might have made it a little clearer that the experiment of having a workhouse lasted for a very short time) to telling comment on the architectural future

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of Banbury. Most of these articles are of a high standard, though it is doubtful whether Alfred Beesley's poetry deserves so much space. With its news of local historical events and book reviews it makes interesting and entertaining reading. Other local history societies would do well to try to emulate it. J. L. BOLTON.