

Reviews

The Oxfordshire Landscape. By Frank Emery. Hodder and Stoughton, 1974. Pp. 240, 36 Plates, 10 Figs. and End-papers. Price £3.50.

In 1955 W. G. Hoskins wrote the last pages of *The Making of the English Landscape* in his study at Steeple Barton. He dissected in detail the vignette of Oxfordshire landscape history which he could see from where he sat. Now, nearly twenty years later, Frank Emery has described the wider landscape of the whole county.

Although much of the ground covered is familiar, for anyone coming to local landscape studies for the first time *The Oxfordshire Landscape* should come as a genuine 'eye opener'. One simple example will illustrate the kind of fascinating facts that emerge: Five Mile Drive in North Oxford is to all appearances a suburban street; it was first established as an enclosure road during the enclosure of Wolvercote parish in 1834 but its origins are to be found in Horslow Field Way, a field path taking its name from one of the four common fields of the parish.

The author's concern is with both the origins of elements in the landscape that survive and, more important, the analysis of the constantly changing character of the Oxfordshire landscape, a phenomenon that he calls the 'flux and reflex of detail in the landscape at all scales'. Thus, he follows Dr. Hoskins' original contention that the landscape can be treated as a valid source of historical information.

The starting point of the book is the geology of the county and taking the familiar fivefold division, Mr. Emery emphasizes the effect of geology both on settlement patterns and the colour of the landscape. In describing prehistoric settlement he rightly stresses that the many discoveries of new sites, principally through rescue excavations such as those on the M40, will cause a radical review of some of the accepted ideas of settlement in the county. He also draws attention to the continuity into historic times of some elements of the prehistoric landscape. The example that he quotes is that of City Farm, Hanborough, but one wonders how many other elements of the medieval and modern landscape may at some future date be pushed back in origin to even more remote periods in time. It was perhaps unfortunate for Mr. Emery that Don Benson and David Miles, *The Upper Thames Valley: an archaeological Survey* (Oxfordshire Archaeological Unit, 1974) was published too late to be used, since it has for the first time made readily accessible crucial information on prehistoric and later landscapes in the county.

In discussing the Roman period Mr. Emery draws attention once more to the group of villas on the good corn-growing land near Woodstock. He refers to the problem of occupation in Wychwood which seems to be a reversion of woodland over a once densely settled area; this raises the question of what is genuinely primary woodland. Botanists would call Wychwood primary, but archaeologists have to disagree. Mr. Emery suggests that in this area a fruitful line of research would be an investigation of possible Roman estate boundaries following the pattern of research conducted at Shakenoak by Messrs. Brodribb, Hands and Walker (see also this volume, page 323).

Moving to the problems of the English settlement, Mr. Emery makes one rather strange statement: '... it is hard to imagine even the majority of the early Saxon villages—all those plain, honest Waltons and Kingstons—as standing by the sites of Romano-British settlements'. Surely behind the honest Waltons lurk some rather tantalizing 'serfs or Britons' as our own Oxfordshire Walcot ('cote of the serfs or Britons') reminds us. It is at precisely these sites that 'continuity' might be expected. But Mr. Emery is right to stress that one must not mistake 'continuity' for 'persistence'. There are some sites which simply invite settlement, although this settlement may not necessarily be continuous over long periods of time. One example quoted by Mr. Emery in another context perhaps demonstrates the point. In discussing the growth of medieval satellite settlements mention

is made of Chilson, not recorded until about 1200. But perhaps unknown to Mr. Emery, under the arable strips shown on the map in Plate 7, separated today from the cluster of houses by one enclosure field, a scatter of pottery indicates another Roman site. We must look to excavations of modern village centres and not simply of medieval failed sites or of late establishments for more information.

Saxon estate and parish boundaries naturally receive much attention. In discussing the boundaries of Fritwell and adjoining parishes, Mr. Emery points out that the Saxon estate was laid out on the line of Aves Ditch. Perhaps we should at least consider the possibility that estate boundaries such as this one aligned on Roman features might be considerably older than the first charter evidence suggests. Similar possibilities present themselves in the Chilterns where Mr. Emery opposes the usual theory that the long strip parishes were laid out to take advantage of the natural succession of land types. Instead he suggests that these advantages were incidental and that the boundaries were dictated by a series of ancient trackways at right angles to the Icknield way. If Mr. Emery is right, then this suggestion again raises the possibilities that the Chiltern boundaries may have their origins in a very much earlier period than has been generally considered. The problems of the medieval landscape, its growth, shrinkage and desertion, are fully discussed and Mr. Emery describes in detail the discovery of an unknown Deserted Medieval Village site at Nethercote. Three other D.M.V.s actually lie hidden and apparently unnoticed in the book itself: Plate 21 shows clearly the earthworks of the site of Pinkhill D.M.V. (the hedges of the early enclosure are alone referred to); Plate 22 contains the site of Langley D.M.V. (to the left of Leafield radio transmitting station which has been singled out for comment); and Plate 26 has Old Whitehill D.M.V. in Tackley parish in the very centre of the plate (again with no comment). (The Hordley D.M.V. is discussed at some length on pp. 120-1, but without mentioning that it appears at the top right of Plate 10. Ed.).

The last chapter on the 19th-century and contemporary landscape contains new material. One aspect of the effect of modern land use in the contemporary landscape is perhaps underestimated: this is the question of gravel extraction. This process is transforming the landscape around Dorchester-on-Thames and the 'Polderland' (to use Mr. Emery's very effective phrase) between Bampton and Eynsham. The point about Polders is that they represent land reclaimed from water, but between Bampton and Eynsham we are faced with an ever increasing area of open water which, by the end of the century, will be reminiscent of the Norfolk Broads. Gravel pits in Oxfordshire are not simply 'details' as Mr. Emery rather implies.

The book is disappointing for its lack of plans. This was presumably editorial policy. But the single plan of Open and Closed villages in 1900 compares unfavourably with the no less than 15 plans of sites in Oxfordshire, including crop marks, villages, deserted and shrunken sites, towns, parks and gardens which have recently appeared in Michal Aston and Trevor Rowley's *Landscape Archaeology*. If a similar series of plans could have been included in Mr. Emery's book it would have made many of his verbal points much more clear.

In writing his book, Mr. Emery states his aim to be 'to add an extra dimension, a sense of historical origins, to even the most casual viewing of the Oxfordshire scene, so that we realize how its component parts were endorsed'. Mr. Emery has largely succeeded by bringing together much previous, but widely scattered work. Much more detailed research on the lines of Dr. W. G. Hoskins' original comments in 1955 and along the further lines suggested by Mr. Emery remains to be carried out before the Oxfordshire Landscape can be finally read and understood.

T. G. HASSALL

A History of Oxford University. By V. H. H. Green. Batsford, 1974. Pp. 214+12 pages of plates and 4 reproductions of brass-rubbings. £3.50.

Since Sir Charles Mallet's three volume *History of the University of Oxford* (1924-7) went out of print there have been several attempts to write an up-to-date readable one-volume comparable work. There certainly is a need for something on a larger scale than the

Clarendon *Guide*, yet not as massive as the projected full-scale history which is being prepared under the editorship of Mr. Aston. The task is a difficult, if an attractive one. Dr. Green has brought to it his own expertise in the history of John Wesley and Mark Pattison, those two luminaries of Lincoln College.

He tells the story of the origins of the university clearly and sets Oxford in its European context, making comparisons with Paris and Bologna. He is able to make the elusive medieval period come alive through its struggle for privileges and frequent riots between north and south and between town and gown. The medieval constitution is well described so that the origins of officers, like proctors, and institutions, like convocation and congregation, which have come down to our own day, are seen in the setting of others which have since disappeared. Dr. Green is especially good on the humanists and on the revision of teaching for the syllabus and off it (p. 32). He makes excellent use of materials which have been published recently, such as the late Dr. Pantin's edition of the *Letter-Book of Robert Joseph at Oxford, 1523-1529* and W. Elmhirst's *A Freshman's Diary, 1911-1912*; the fruits of modern research are also incorporated at many points. For the sixteenth century he is able to print for the first time a poem in the form of a lament on behalf of the Mitre tavern, recently discovered by the former Rector of Lincoln, Dr. Oakshott. It comes from Commonplace Book MS. 116 of the Huntingdon Library. Out of the way personalities live again, such as Mr. Thomas Crossfield, fellow of Queen's College who in 1628 sketched his daily routine in verses.

Indeed Dr. Green's history really comes into its own in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In the last two he contributes a notable feature by interrupting his narrative to make two long studies. In the first of these he sees the eighteenth century through the biographies of two of its leading, if very different personalities, John Wesley and Parson Woodforde—two clerical dons. For the nineteenth century he chooses inevitably Gladstone, and Pattison, rather than Jowett, in a chapter entitled 'The Statesman and the Don'. This is a good idea even if it decidedly unbalances the book. It certainly demonstrates the real understanding which Dr. Green has of these two centuries of the history of the university.

The narrative flows right up to 1973 so that the reader has the sensation of actually sharing in the events described in the last chapter. Indeed the notable transformation of All Saints Church into Lincoln College Library (described as in progress on p. 111) is just complete as this review goes to press. The pace is almost too rapid in places as when St. Antony's and Nuffield appear confined to a footnote (p. 197, no. 1) and in the past tense as though they might have shared the fate of the pre-Reformation monastic colleges. However a very real sense of immediacy has been achieved. There are a few slips. Maldon (p. 9) needs the Surrey spelling (Malden) and not the Essex one, and Farleigh is in Surrey and not in Hampshire. There is a most useful select bibliography. At £3.50 the book is excellent value.

J. R. L. HIGHFIELD

The Roll and Writ File of the Berkshire Eyre of 1248. Edited by M. T. Clanchy. Selden Society, Vol. XC, 1974.

The rolls of the general eyres after 1222 have been comparatively neglected by all but a few local record societies, whose interests and limited financial resources have prevented them from publishing any roll in full. Dr. Clanchy's edition of the Berkshire roll for 1248, in Latin with an English translation, is the first complete roll for any later eyre to be published and is thus particularly valuable, especially as he also prints the related writ file, the earliest surviving such file, and the first to be published.

Although the eyre rolls have been considered primarily local records, the eyre was an integral part of the central judicial system; the eyre justices were the king's justices who at other times sat on the Bench at Westminster, and until 1249 the bench was closed down

during an eyre and cases pending there were adjourned to a convenient point on the eyre. In addition to the pleas adjourned from the bench, cases brought in one county during an eyre might be adjourned to a later date in another place, so all eyre rolls contain a large number of 'foreign' pleas, which are separately entered in the roll of the 1248 eyre. Thus the Berkshire roll includes pleas for several other counties, including Oxfordshire, Gloucestershire, Yorkshire, Wiltshire, Buckinghamshire, Somerset, and Essex. The main division of the roll, however, is into civil and crown pleas. The former are mainly pleas involving land, often on one of the possessory assises, and of nuisance, such as the obstructing of roads or the breaking of dykes. Such pleas often contain considerable information about the ownership of an estate, or about customs or conditions in a town or village. One case on this roll (no. 208), an assise of novel disseisin over common of pasture in Thatcham, records a claim to common in a field after the corn and hay harvest, which failed because the jurors stated that no common of pasture in Thatcham pertained to any free tenement in Colthrop; another (no. 388) recorded that the manor of Wargrave was of the king's ancient demesne. The crown pleas included not only the modern criminal pleas of homicide, larceny, arson, etc., but also deaths by misadventure, the selling of cloth or wine contrary to the assise, and statements as to the value of the hundred or vill, or the number of ladies in the king's gift. One plea on this roll (no. 854) relates to the killing in Oxford of the baker from the household of Aymer de Lusignan, the king's brother; another (no. 756) records that Simon de Montfort, the later baronial leader, would not allow the king's bailiffs to enter the vill of Hungerford to distrain for debts.

In addition to the texts of the eyre roll and the writ file, there is a most valuable introduction, the appendices to which include an interim list of writ files to the end of the reign of Henry III, an account (with dates) of Roger of Thirkelby's eyre circuit in 1246-9, the text of two of the earliest sheriffs' precepts (the letters from the sheriff to the bailiff of a liberty ordering the execution of a royal writ), and short calendars of ten more such precepts. The Introduction itself contains, as well as a general account of the eyre and its records in the reign of Henry III and a detailed account of the Berkshire eyres, interesting and illuminating discussions of franchises, of the collection and allocation of profits of justice, and of the jurisdiction of sheriff and bailiffs and of the execution of writs, which, while drawing on the Berkshire eyre of 1248 for most of their illustrations, are of far wider interest and significance. Part II of the introduction contains a detailed account of the history and contents of the eyre roll and writ file, and discusses the light which the marginalia and endorsements throw on the procedures of the justices and of sheriffs, bailiffs, and their clerks.

There are good indexes, not only of persons, places, and subjects, but also of pleas and writs, arranged by actions.

JANET COOPER

Medieval Portrait Busts at New College, Oxford. By Selby Whittingham. Phillimore, 1973. Pp. 24, 24 figures and 1 plan.

The author acknowledges in the Foreword the pioneer research on these sculptures done by Mr. S. E. Rigold who was the first to discover and recognize the importance of the corbel busts at New College together with those at All Souls and at Adderbury church. The use of the head as a decorative motif in medieval architecture is discussed and it is suggested that some were intended as portraits of particular persons from the second half of the 14th century onwards. The local examples in Adderbury church, Merton, All Souls and Magdalen Colleges are discussed.

The author makes the particular point that this series in New College is a group of twelve kings and sixteen bishops. Two of the kings represent Richard II, the remainder are of his predecessors from Henry II downwards, and three remain unidentified. The sixteen bishops are identified on the supposition that the patterns for the busts were all

made c. 1385, but virtually none of these have left an identifiable portrait except in the case of Wykeham himself, Thomas Arundel and William Courtenay, and even here the portraits tell little of their actual appearance. The New College series had an important influence on others, notably the one at All Souls College chapel where the chief sculptor is identified from the accounts as John Massingham, who was employed by Henry VI on royal work (Fig. 23).

The author's final conclusion is that in the busts at New College 'the best are more portrait-like than any other sculpture surviving in England from the reign of Richard II' and stylistically 'are virtually the sole examples of International Gothic sculpture in England'. The chief sculptor for the New College work may well have been John Sampson who was working in Oxford from 1388 at the latest onwards.

The very useful bibliography is much welcomed. The difficulty of access for adequate lighting and the use of long focus lenses may be the reason for the poor quality in the printing of some of the blocks.

The question of the identification of early portrait busts in England has exercised many antiquaries presented with the difficulty of determining how far the carver intended to create a definite likeness. It is a matter of congratulation that the author has presented such well argued conclusions.

P. S. SPOKES

Agricultural Trade Unionism in Oxfordshire 1872-81. Edited by Pamela Horn. Oxfordshire Record Society, Vol. XLVIII, 1974 (for 1970). Pp. 144. Price £2.60 to non-members from the Society's Treasurer, The Bodleian Library, Oxford.

Dr. Pamela Horn's work on 19th-century agricultural trade unionism is well known to Oxfordshire historians. *Oxoniensia* has carried illuminating articles by her; and although Joseph Arch, whose biographer she is, was a Warwickshire man, he exercised considerable influence in this county. In the present volume she has edited some of the documents which provide the evidence for her studies.

The history of trade unionism has not been a field into which record publishing societies have previously entered. It is fitting that Oxfordshire should be the first into it, since the minute book of the Oxfordshire District of the National Agricultural Labourers' Union (1872-9) is the only such district minute book known by Dr. Horn to survive, and that of the Horspath branch of the Union (1873-4) is one of only two such branch minute books known. Both these books are edited here, together with three sets of evidence from the anti-Union side: the rules of the Oxfordshire and Adjoining Counties Association of Agriculturalists (1872), a correspondence of four letters between the Old Shifford farmer George Wallis and Hugh Hamersley of Pyrton, chairman of Quarter Sessions (1873-4), and extracts from clergy answers to the visitation articles in the archdeaconry of Oxford (1875, 1878, and 1881).

Dr. Horn's introduction draws evidence from the local press and contemporary Trade Union periodicals to show how these documents fit into the story of the rise and fall of Oxfordshire agricultural trade unionism between 1872 and 1893, a saga which she has told at greater length in her chapter in J. P. D. Dunbabin, *Rural Discontent in Nineteenth-Century Britain*. The documents certainly need some explaining for the minute books in particular, like many other minute books, are laconic almost to the point of obscurity (the Oxfordshire District minute book, for instance, makes no reference to the *cause célèbre* at Ascott-under-Wychwood in 1873 when sixteen women and two babies were consigned to prison). But these materials, chronicling the efforts of men such as Joseph Arch, G. G. Banbury of Woodstock, Joseph Leggett of Milton-under-Wychwood, and the indefatigable Oxford chimney sweep William Hines to keep trade unionism healthy and vigorous, and of the attempts by their adversaries such as George Webster of Duns Tew and Robert Hambridge of Ascott-under-Wychwood to thwart them, tell a fascinating story—and one not without relevance for their great-grandchildren a century later.

D. G. VAISEY

Catalogue of the Anglo-Saxon Ornamental Metalwork 700-1100 in the Department of Antiquities, Ashmolean Museum. By David A. Hinton. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1974. 76 pp., including Figs. 20 plates. £9.50.

The Ashmolean Museum is perhaps most famous for its collections of prehistoric, Aegean and Classical material, but its late Saxon objects are of importance surpassed only by the comparable collection in the British Museum. This London material was published by D. M. Wilson in 1964, and Mr. Hinton follows Professor Wilson in the arrangement and manner of treatment, to produce for Oxford a companion catalogue.

The work is of national importance, but merits the particular attention of this Journal partly because the collection is housed in Oxford, and partly because many of the objects in it are from the Oxford area, notably the Minster Lovel jewel and the Abingdon sword (both, incidentally, of types not represented in the British Museum collection).

Each object is described in detail, with find-spot and a full bibliography. The straightforward narrative embodies much exact observation. Then follows lengthy and most useful discussion of parallels and significance. The comparatively small size of the collection (39 objects attributed to the period) allows this section more space than usual in a catalogue (8 pages in all on the Abingdon sword, nearly 20 on the Alfred jewel), and the whole is characterized by common sense no less than by scholarship. All but one item (a suspected forgery) are represented at life size in clear attractive line drawings; all are illustrated by photographs, but of varying quality. Many of these would have benefited from greater enlargement, and the necessity of following the London catalogue in publishing photographs of tiny objects at only life size is not obvious: compare, for example, Plate VI, no. 8 (b)—scale 1/1—with the much clearer line drawing in the text at the same scale and with the same photograph enlarged to a scale of 4/1 at 8 (a). This apart, the catalogue is an excellent production, and one can expect the reference 'Hinton (1974)' to take its rightful place with 'Wilson (1964)' in late Saxon studies.

PHILIP DIXON

Historic Churches of the Thames Valley. By Graham Martin. Bourne End, Spurbooks (Ltd.), 1975. 159 Pp., inc. photos. Price £3.00.

Historic Buildings. By William Collier. Bourne End, Spurbooks (Ltd.), 1975. 137 pp., inc. photos. Price £3.00.

Neither of these books can be recommended with any enthusiasm. Mr. Martin discusses only those Church of England churches whose parishes are bounded by the Thames in an area stretching from Staines to Oxford and adds little to what is already available in a more accessible and scholarly form in the relevant volumes of Pevsner. For someone actually travelling on the river it would have the advantage of greater portability.

Mr. Collier's book, despite his all-embracing title, is concerned with secular buildings along an even shorter stretch of the Thames Valley, from Windsor to the borders of Oxford, although, fortunately, he does not confine himself to riverside parishes. However, he does manage to describe the architectural history of his chosen region without reference to a single Oxford building. A singular achievement, matched only by his coverage of the Victorian period in half a chapter in which the only buildings mentioned by name are Windsor Castle, Bradfield and Cliveden. If Mr. Collier's grasp of the recent advances made in the study of vernacular architecture were not so slight, it would have been pleasing to note how much space is devoted to this subject. Much of the impetus for our greater knowledge in this field has come from the Department of the Environment where Mr. Collier is a Senior Investigator of Historic Buildings. One wonders whether he has ever bothered to discuss his theories on, say, jettying or crucks with his colleagues.

The photographs, many of which were specially taken by Nicholas Cooper, are often more rewarding than the text, although Plate 55 is of Culham College (not mentioned in the book) not Culham Manor House as indicated, and to ask the reader to note the posts

and beams in an interior view of the timber framed barn at Drayton St. Leonards is to insult his intelligence.

MALCOLM AIRS

A New Oxfordshire. By Frank Martin. Bourne End, Spurbooks (Ltd.), 1975. 144 pp., inc. photos. Price £3.50.

This book welcomes the New Oxfordshire by giving it two new villages, Great Mitton and Harwen, on the map inside the front cover, and another, Cropedy, on the first photograph caption. The University gains two new colleges, Hereford and Dorchester. Editorial stone-throwing may be dangerous, however, and the book does tell several good stories quite well. One of them I had not heard before. It is a guide-book for those who like villages to nestle, cottages to peep, and gardens to delight. Everyone else will prefer the new Pevsner.

DAVID A. HINTON