

## Reviews

Robert McKinley, *The Surnames of Oxfordshire*. English Surnames Series, Vol. III. Leopard's Head Press, 1977. Pp. 311. Price £8.00.

This is the third volume in the English Surnames Series, a project designed to throw light on the evolution of English surnames and to suggest ways in which their study can provide evidence for aspects of social and economic history. Mr. McKinley achieves both these aims in his very full and well documented discussion of Oxfordshire surnames. After an introductory chapter on the rise of hereditary surnames, he divides those surnames into five main groups, each of which is treated separately: topographical surnames (those derived from topographical features, whether natural, like brooks or hills, or man-made, like bridges or towns); locative surnames (derived from place-names); surnames derived from occupation, status, or office; surnames derived from personal names; and surnames derived from nicknames. There are also chapters on women's surnames, particularly those of married women which, so far as the evidence goes, were often not, in the early Middle Ages, those of their husbands, and bondmen's names, which differed in some respects from those of freemen, notably in being derived more often from personal names than from place-names. The discussion of each of the main groups of names draws on a massive amount of material, collected mainly from the hundred rolls of 1279, the subsidy rolls of 1327 and 1524-5, the poll tax of 1380, the protestation returns of 1642, and the hearth tax returns of 1665.

One of the main themes discussed is the stability of surnames, and their geographical origins, a contribution to the study of mobility and migration in at least the earlier Middle Ages. Mr. McKinley is able to show how some names persisted in the county, or, even more interestingly, in one part of it, for centuries, while others disappeared in the course of time. For instance, Lamprey is shown to have continued in the county from the 13th century to the present day, for most of that time in the Banbury area. The use of early medieval locative surnames as evidence of migration is well established, and Mr. McKinley's thorough analysis here produces few surprises, but the differences now becoming apparent between one county and another in the formation of topographical and occupational names and patronymics suggest interesting lines of study both for the historian and the linguist. Why, for instance, should Oxfordshire, in the Middle Ages, have favoured the formation of topographical names with the prepositions 'above' and 'beneath', while Norfolk preferred 'over' and 'under'? And why did the Oxfordshire names disappear by the 17th century? Why, too, should the name Boulter, a sifter of flour in a mill, be common in Oxfordshire, but less so elsewhere? In one case Mr. McKinley suggests an answer, stating that, when occupational surnames in '-ester', such as Webster or Brewster, are studied, Oxfordshire conforms 'reasonably well' to the pattern previously recognised as 'Saxon', in that the names were originally those of women. Yet Oxfordshire is by no means a clearly 'Saxon' county, being very much a border area, influenced both by 'Saxon' Wessex and by 'Anglian' Mercia.

Mr. McKinley is well aware of the shortcomings of his sources, notably of the difficulty of identifying the places from which locative surnames are derived, the problem

of whether a name is already hereditary and thus does not describe the place of origin or occupation of its bearer, and the near impossibility, often, of knowing what Middle English word a Latin surname is translating, and he makes full allowance for these shortcomings in his discussions.

This book will be of interest to the general reader; it will be useful for the family historian, interested in the origins of names, but it will be particularly useful to the local, economic, or social historian for the evidence it supplies on stability and movement of population, on the position of women, and on occupations. As the series progresses, more and more comparative material will presumably become readily available, and this will add to the value of the Oxfordshire study.

JANET COOPER

Michael Hall and Ernest Frankl, *Oxford Pevensey Press*, Cambridge, 1981. 103pp., 81 illustrations. Price £2.95

This book is good value both for the tourist and for those who live locally. Ernest Frankl's photographs are always good, and often unusual and striking. Michael Hall's text begins with a combined history of the town and university which is clear and generally accurate, making use of recent historical work. This is followed by brief histories of the university buildings and of the colleges, with comments on their most interesting architectural features. A section on later foundations brings the story up to the founding of Green College in 1979, nor are the smaller theological colleges forgotten. In addition much interesting information is contained in the captions to the photographs, although occasionally these are misleading, as when St. Cross church is said to be used as a chapel by St. Catherine's. The final section, explaining the workings of the university and the college system, will be helpful to visitors.

Although the four maps are clear, it is a pity that a number of buildings mentioned in the text are not included and that no scale is given. Nor will the visitor find it easy to use the map of 'Walks beside the River Cherwell', which fails to show what road to take to reach Parson's Pleasure or Mesopotamia. However, these are minor points which do not detract from the beauty and usefulness of this book.

U. REES