

Reviews

John M. Steane, *The Archaeology of Medieval England and Wales*. Croom Helm, 1985. pp. xvi, 302. Price £19.95

Despite the fact that the Society for Medieval Archaeology is almost 30 years old and has been publishing the results of excavations and other research projects vigorously over those three decades, there are surprisingly few general books on the subject. One of the constraints must surely be the sheer scale of the archaeological evidence, both above and below ground, and the formidable body of historical data of various types. Medieval archaeology has the difficult task of welding together these diffuse forms of evidence to produce a coherent narrative. One approach, tried with differing degrees of success over the past few years, has been through landscape studies: the analysis and description of the surviving medieval landscape. It is therefore particularly pleasing to welcome a new contribution to the slim library of general books on medieval archaeology, particularly as it is by an author with strong Oxfordshire associations.

In this book John Steane does not completely eschew the landscape approach, but he does adopt a more institutional and perhaps conventional framework by examining topics such as the archaeology of medieval government, the archaeology of justice, the archaeology of pilgrimage, towns, ports and trade, and finally the archaeology of the necessities of life. In doing so he is able to create a broad canvas which encompasses an impressive amount of detail; indeed, Steane is at his best when covering details, particularly concerning buildings about which there is a considerable amount in the book. He is perhaps weaker on topography and interpretation of the medieval landscape, but in view of the number of books on that subject this may not be such a bad thing.

There is a considerable amount of material on Oxfordshire both narrative and illustrative; most of it is familiar, but it is cleverly welded into the national narrative. However, one would perhaps like to have seen more effective use of the Oxfordshire Sites and Monuments Record, to produce the type of detailed statistical data which it is capable of generating. On the other hand Wales, which features in the title, appears only rarely. Similarly, although the book does contain some Anglo-Saxon material, it is heavily weighted to the post-Norman Conquest period. This imbalance tends to mask the evolutionary character of some topics such as the medieval church.

The book is uncharacteristically well produced for a Croom Helm publication: in this instance the publishers have not stinted on the number either of diagrams or of photographs, though some would have been clearer if they had been reproduced in a larger format.

While the reader seeking a definitive exposition of medieval archaeology will not find it here, a wealth of information is well presented and well narrated in an easy style. It is a highly individual book which will remain with us as a text for many years, though it should not deter others from writing their own version of Medieval Archaeology.

TREVOR ROWLEY

S. Rahtz and T. Rowley, *Middleton Stoney: Excavation and Survey in a North Oxfordshire Parish 1970-1982*. University of Oxford Department for External Studies, 1984. pp. viii, 165; 84 figs., 48 tables, 30 plates. Price £7.00

The Oxford University Department for External Studies, under the leadership of Trevor Rowley, its Staff Tutor in Archaeology, has for the past 14 years been intermittently conducting a training and research project in rural archaeology at Middleton Stoney, a village in North Oxfordshire. Interim reports have already appeared in *Oxoniensia*, xxxvii (1972), 109-136 and R. T. Rowley, *Middleton Stoney Excavations 1970-77* (Oxford University Department for External Studies, 1977), and this report aims to complement rather than to replace them. The planning of the volume is to be commended. It is a triumph of orderly composition, given the fact that it consists of dozens of contributions written by various people at different times. The research has taken three forms; investigation into the documents, non-excavational field survey and archaeological excavation.

It is evident that the topographical examination of the parish by means of field survey and the analysis of the fortuitously rich archive of maps and documents has been outstandingly successful. Elizabeth Leggatt discusses the field system, the medieval park, the abortive medieval 'town' and the communications network. Her suggestion that 'Home Wood' (67 acres) represents one compartment of a putative larger medieval park is an interesting one lent some support by the comparatively large number of deer introduced as stock in the 13th century. The road from Oxford to Brackley is likely to have been important before the 14th century; ceramic evidence from Oxford suggests that there were trade contacts between Oxford and the north-east by the 12th century at least. Mrs. Leggatt has also built up a convincing story of the evolution of the post-medieval landscape by drawing a series of maps based on the fine collection of 17th to 19th-century estate maps. She shows how the third Earl of Jersey created, partly at the expense of the old open fields, an extensive park which included a great new lake and former moorland, and resulted in the re-routing of the Lower and Upper Heyford ways. These changes led, by the early 19th century, to the final severance of the church, park and mansion from the old village. The manor, farmstead and houses round Claridges Close were destroyed and the inhabitants rehoused further to the east. The most drastic effect was the dislocation of the circular village street system.

One general shortcoming is the lack of aerial photographs in this otherwise well-illustrated volume. (The only air photograph, on the back of one cover, is printed the wrong way round.) These might have shown the remnants of former field systems described on p. 21. The mapping of the ridge-and-furrow is unsatisfactory in two ways. Fig. 7 shows the direction but not the actual number of ridges, and Fig. 4, which shows the earthworks, does not include it at all. In many other village earthwork studies ridge-and-furrow, or lack of it, is valuable in showing the location and extent of vanished or shrunken villages. A cross reference to Fig. 7 is required on p. 9. The maps on Fig. 11 have wrong captions. They should read 'The village centre in (a) 1767 and (b) 1841.'

The second part of the report deals with the excavations. The initial aim of the research programme was 'to investigate a village which, from historical evidence, had been on the site from the Middle Ages to the early 19th century.' However, the discoveries made during the excavations tended to direct the digging side of the project away from this aim, and it must be admitted that the excavations by themselves cast very little new light on the evolution of the village. They do, however, demonstrate the previously unsuspected existence of a Romano-British estate, although the buildings found do not appear to have been the central focus of the farming complex. The function of an estate based here may well have been to provide an agricultural surplus for the nearby walled town of Alchester,

although if this is so it is odd that the two roads in the area claimed to be Roman both go north-south and that Akeman Street, which does go to Alchester, gives Middleton Stoney a wide berth (Fig. 3). One or two comments on the interpretation of the Roman plans of the excavations may be added. The extension of Building A is surely an outshut rather than a verandah (p. 44). Buildings E, F and G are rectangular not square structures (p. 46). The captions on plates 4 and 5 are transposed (opposite p. 45).

Investigation of the later phases of the site concentrated on the eastern enclosure and the castle mound. 'The identification of what may be a late Saxon enclosure represents one of the most important results of the research programme at Middleton Stoney' (p. 53). Unfortunately there is no indication that bank FF (Fig. 13, period 4) actually went round anything and, in any case, it was not a very formidable barrier compared with the ring works at Sulgrave and Goltho. The lack of dating evidence, too, must reduce the credibility of this hypothesis. The excavators were led on to the exploration of the castle 'mound'. Here they found, in common with the excavators of other Norman castles, that all was not as it seemed. The 'mound' was a heap of demolition rubble rather than a motte, obscuring the foot of a tower built on ground level and dated to the 12th century. It appears that the bailey accompanying this tower must have been to the north-west and not to the east as the excavators, very reasonably but wrongly, assumed. It is difficult not to agree with the words of the report (p. 63) that 'it would be very desirable to excavate the western bailey at Middleton Stoney to see whether there were any pre or post conquest structures like those of Deddington and Sulgrave.' Unfortunately, none was found in the eastern bailey.

One corner of the castle tower was examined and produced two features, a stone staircase and a stone-lined latrine shaft. The shaft contained about a third of the 10,966 identifiable bone fragments found on the site. The excellent bone report (pp. 108-149) by Bruce Levitan is a model of the interesting evidence that such an assemblage can demonstrate. The complicated methods of bone analysis are clearly explained, and the report should be of wide value in disseminating these methods to finds from other sites. Among the conclusions of interest is that in period 3 (later Roman) cattle were primarily reared for milk, traction and transport rather than for meat, since the bones indicate that they were killed when mature. Pig tended to become a more important element in the meat diet as time went on. The comparative proportions of the main meat-producing animals at different periods are graphically displayed on Fig. 81. Sheep were mainly reared for meat in the medieval period, but there was a possible change to a milk/wool-orientated husbandry towards its end. Dogs were scarce but the place seems to have been haunted by cats: twelve of their corpses, together with unwanted kittens, were shot down the latrine shaft. Among surprises is the lack of fallow deer bones, and the presence of 193 bones of red deer which documentary sources suggest were becoming rare in Southern England in the 13th century. Middleton Stoney is shown to be another site which has produced evidence for the black rat.

James Bond, in a short but valuable section (pp. 125-7), illuminates the animal resources from the documentary record. He points out that sea-fish were being marketed into the heart of the Midlands by the 14th century, a fact born out by recent excavations in medieval Northampton. His suggestion that the likely source of freshwater fish and fowl at Middleton was the nearest major wetland, Otmoor, six miles to the south, conflicts with the likely location mentioned in the bone report, the Upper Thames Valley (p. 125). Another inconsistency is found in the environmental discussion. The earlier molluscan analysis (J. G. Evans, 'The environment of the Inner Bailey ditch', *Oxoniensia*, xxxvii (1972) 109-136) indicated an open habitat, but this conflicts with the evidence of the small mammal remains which suggest a mixture of good ground cover, such as woodland, coppice and hedgerow, together with a nearby open zone.

The second major element in the finds report is that devoted to pottery. Lisa Brown and Elizabeth Leggatt carefully and exhaustively review the non-Samian Roman pottery wares. They produce useful analyses of fabric types but, owing to the extensive degree of disturbance, are unable to contribute greatly to the dating of the wares they describe. Catalogues of various key groups, selected on grounds of stratigraphic reliability as well as on the quantity and quality of the pottery they yielded, are added. These confirm that Middleton was a fairly high-status establishment in the earliest period.

The notes on medieval pottery by Simon Woodiwiss include interesting conclusions about the marketing of wares, some of which are likely to have come from New Woodstock where a pottery industry is recorded in 1279 (presumably in succession to the Bladon potters of 1086). Some of the Middleton pots also came from Brill/Boarstall, but probably only after the castle, whose destruction was ordered in 1216, was out of use. In sum, Middleton Stoney seems to have been in the same marketing system as Oxford.

A rather worrying feature of the excavations is that no notice was taken of post-medieval pottery: as the report puts it, 'not reported on as it was only found in small quantities and not systematically kept' (p. 69). Despite great strides made in the recording and description of post-medieval pottery in the region, we still need to know far more about the forms, sources and marketing of such pottery. In a training excavation such as Middleton Stoney it seems unwise to have imposed a cut-off point at the end of the medieval period. The dearth of post-medieval wares implies the important point of lack of occupation, which may or may not confirm the documentary record.

The small-find report is also unhelpful in several ways. The drawings are separated from the descriptions (available only to readers in museums and libraries because they are buried in the fiche); consequently no assessment can be made of locations of the objects found, and their evidence is not used in the discussion of the interpretation of the site. There is no mention of parallels. Figs. 56 and 57 are confusingly printed after Fig. 58. Nails are not studied as regards size or form and no attempt at interpretation based on their distribution has been made. There is no attempt to establish the geological provenance of the worked stone, surely as important as discovering the pattern of marketing of the pottery.

This report, besides making a valuable contribution to our understanding of the history of a North Oxfordshire parish, has a further profounder value. The collection of this formidable body of information has been made possible because it is the integrated team product of hundreds of adult students and volunteers. The Middleton Stoney experience has made an enduring and rewarding impact on their lives. The place of the well-informed and trained amateur in British archaeology is assured when public funds financing the professional archaeological units begin to falter, as may well happen in the 1980s. The ultimate value of the Middleton Stoney report is that it was the triumphantly successful conclusion to a major educational enterprise.

JOHN STEANE

Oxfordshire Sessions of the Peace in the Reign of Richard II, ed. Elisabeth G. Kimball. Oxfordshire Record Society, vol. liii, 1983 for 1979 and 1980. Pp. 171. Price £10 to non-members.

This exceedingly interesting volume has a wider scope than its title may suggest. In addition to rolls of the Sessions of the Peace for Oxfordshire for, respectively, 1387 and 1397-8, it includes extracts from presentments made before the King's Bench in Oxford in

Easter Term 1398, extracts from relevant trials in King's Bench, and a generous selection of material from a gaol delivery roll for the years 1389-98. We are thus enabled to see how these interlocking jurisdictions functioned in a particular locality at the end of the 14th century. The years in question, 1387-98, belong to a critical period in English politics, and the administration of justice, whether at the centre or locally, was a controversial issue at the time. Reading this volume, we are caught up in the operation of the system which the parliaments of 1388 found much in need of reform, and which to some extent they succeeded in reforming. The Editor and the Oxfordshire Record Society are to be congratulated on a publication that so skilfully relates local events to national history. Despite some slips and misprints, the well-chosen sources are finely presented to the reader in a format that is a pleasure to use. The long introduction is to the point.

It is of the nature of judicial records that they present only a partial view of contemporary society and the way in which it behaved. Moreover, each such kind of record has its own bias: it will inevitably throw up more felonies than trespasses, for example, or vice versa. In the present case, therefore, it is pointless to count types of offence or types of offender. But the violent episodes recorded in this volume fit very well into the picture of late 14th-century England that we derive from other kinds of sources and may not have been isolated occurrences in Richard II's Oxfordshire. One, indeed, the three-day riot in Oxford at the beginning of April 1389, had precedents in much earlier periods. This time, the special victims of violence in the university town were Welshmen, but, as we should expect in the case of mob violence of this kind, indiscriminating attacks on persons and property occurred too. Alleged rioters were subsequently indicted for breaking into a number of halls and stealing books, clothes, bed-linen, and weapons, and, from one chamber, a pen and inkhorn, for killing four persons, only one of whom is described as 'of Wales', and for barricading themselves for a night in a portion of the High Street by St. Mary's church. Those who stood trial and were acquitted included Adam Usk and Robert Alynton, the latter soon to be chancellor of the University. The rising in the hundreds of Bampton and Wootton nine years later, on 31 March 1398, was very different. Rioters from a number of places in the two hundreds converged on the village of Bampton. Their cry was: 'aryseth', aryseth' alle men et goth' wyth' us et ho so wilnot gou wiht' us he schal be ded.' Their leader, Henry Roper, was commissioned to seek out the king, then believed to be in the parts of Bristol and Gloucester. He did not get far and was eventually condemned to a traitor's death. We know the names of thirty participants in this rising and some vivid details of their actions. Yet their grievances elude us: the whole episode illustrates nothing so well as the limitations of legal records as historical sources.

The justices of this period in Oxfordshire were not always dealing with violent offenders. Three cases of alleged or proven counterfeiting of coins are recorded in these sources. Among many robberies, that perpetrated in St. Cross church, Holywell, in 1393, by a gang which included five clerks, catches the eye, not least on account of the high value (more than £100) of the stolen goods. In 1398, Walter Conbryghe of Chadlington was presented for keeping greyhounds although he did not possess rents to the value of 40s. per annum. Many interesting items of information are fortuitously recorded. For example, William Burlee, the rector of Cornwell, had an acknowledged son; a householder at Goosey (Berks.) stored beans and peas in his barn, not in sacks, but stacked; and in a single chamber in Deep Hall the rioters of 1389 allegedly found two swords, a buckler, two bows, and twenty-six arrows - a striking illustration of how common it was to possess weapons in late medieval Oxford. In sum, this is a volume that repays study.

BARBARA F. HARVEY

Probate Records of the Courts of the Bishop and Archdeacon of Oxford 1516-1732, indexed by Ernest Cheyne, revised by D. M. Barratt, with supplementary indexes by Mary Clapinson, 2 volumes A-K, and L-Z. British Record Society Index Library Vols 93 and 94, 1981 and 1985. Pp. xv+x, 651. Price £21 plus postage and packaging for 2 volumes, from the Hon. Treasurer, The British Record Society, Dept. of History, University of Keele, Staffs, ST5 5BG.

Historians of Oxfordshire now have at last, with the appearance of the second volume of this index to the wills, inventories, administrations and bonds to be found in the bishop's and archdeacon's probate records, an accessible and flexible reference, which offers them the key to one of the richest of all local historical sources. Previously researchers were reliant on the splendid, but massive, cumbersome and increasingly timeworn manuscript volumes of Ernest Cheyne's index, prepared during the records' sojourn at the Public Record Office between 1858 and their transfer to the Bodleian in 1955. Cheyne's work has provided a secure and reliable base for this first printed edition, but Dr. Barratt, and Mrs. Clapinson through her supplementary indexes of places and trades or occupations, have provided a much more flexible tool. Where before one had to begin with a surname to lead one on to details of place and occupation, now those studying a particular social or occupational group can go straight to all examples of mercers or spinsters, gardeners or gentlemen. The occupational range is vast, beginning with an abbot (Thomas Ware, late abbot of Flaxley, Gloucs., who died at Aston Rowant in 1546) and ending with a writing and counting master (Noah Newport of Burford, 1723) and a 'young woman', one Annes Hoare of Bletchington, 1592, whose occupational position is less clear. The potential of probate documents to help us answer questions about relative wealth and lifestyles, furniture, house-plans, family relationships and attitudes, or farming practices – to name just some – has long been known. It has been well illustrated for example in Michael Havinden's *Household and Farm Inventories in Oxfordshire, 1550-1590* (1965). Now it will be infinitely easier to identify the available information on the family name, status or occupational group or place one wishes to study. This new-found accessibility will pose challenges of its own, not least in the large numbers of documents surviving. A town like Henley has 648 entries, whilst Bampton has 337, Mister Lovell 92, and even 'deserted' Tusmore 5. Nor, as Dr. Barratt is careful to point out in her concise introduction explaining the administrative background to these documents, do these present the sum total of probate records relating to Oxfordshire. Major gaps exist for the Commonwealth period, whilst other documents may be found amongst the records of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury (PCC) in the Public Record Office, and in the separate archives relating to peculiar jurisdictions, areas exempted from having to use the archdeacon's and bishop's courts. The areas of Oxfordshire affected in this way are clearly mapped and explained.

Between the publication of the first volume in 1981 and that of the second in 1985 two important events have occurred. First, Dr. Molly Barratt has retired after many years of service in the Department of Western Manuscripts at the Bodleian Library, where the diocesan archives – of which the probate records indexed here form a part – were the subject of her special interest and enormous knowledge. It is fitting that these two volumes should be published at this time, forming as they do a permanent record of her knowledge, her precise and accurate way of working, and her dedication to making records more accessible to more people – not least local historians. Secondly, the probate records themselves have been moved from the Bodleian to the Oxfordshire Record Office. It is admirable and fitting that the Bodleian, in supporting the publication of these volumes, has

helped to make some outstandingly valuable sources all the easier to use properly in their new home. It is to be hoped that historians of Oxfordshire will accept these new opportunities enthusiastically.

KATE TILLER

Baptisms and Marriages at Merton College, transcribed from the registers of St John the Baptist's Church, Oxford, the College Chapel, by Alan Bott. Merton College, 1981. Pp. vii, 165. Price £15 + £1.04 p&p, from the Domestic Bursar.

Burial Registers of Banbury, Oxfordshire: Part III, 1723-1812 transcribed by J. S. W. Gibson and Mrs. N. Fillmore. Banbury Historical Society Volume 18, 1984. Pp. x, 176.

These two volumes add to the stock of printed parish registers for the county. They also add to the existing printed extracts for the two parishes concerned: the burial register for Merton College having been published in *Monuments in Merton College Chapel* (1964); and six previous volumes in the record series of Banbury Historical Society (Volumes 2, 3, 5, 7, 9 and 12) with the present volume, and the intention to publish baptisms and burials from 1812-1838, completing the demographic record for this important example of an English market town from 1558. It is salutary to have in this published form exemplary registers, to bear witness to the volume of transcription taking place, now thanks to information technology capable of computer as well as manual retrieval; for this materially helps local historians and genealogists whilst permitting the Oxfordshire Record Office to preserve the original registers. However, it needs to be said that both volumes make some important antiquarian contributions, and both incorporate appendices recording monumental inscriptions. They reflect many wider concerns, and it should be noted that Banbury's record forms part of major research on English population history: it is one of the 404 parishes in Wrigley & Schofield's sample and one of 35 parishes capable of the more refined 'family reconstitution' technique developed by the Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure.

The registers deal, of course, with the fate of individuals, and constitute a record made by other individuals. With Antony Wood recording the Merton events from 1662 to 1697, extended comment is to be expected. Thus when on 1 January 1665/6 George Palmer 'sonne of Roger Earle of Castlemaine' was baptised, Wood was compelled to add in the margin 'filius naturalis Regis Car. II'. A family historian might also note the legal correctness of attributing parenthood to the husband, however cuckolded, and ignoring the role of Barbara Villiers, the mother. They are however records of three selected rites of passage in English society - in the case of Oxford those of baptism and marriage, and in the case of Banbury that of burial. There is no record of the churching of women after childbirth, though a marginal note in the Merton registers records the fee for performance of this ritual. There are no bar-mitzvahs either, since the records are of rituals in the Anglican rite: the Banbury volume seeks out relevant contemporary burial information from the local Quaker monthly meeting, and from Roman Catholic records at Warkworth Castle. The marriage record is clearly also influenced by prevailing custom and legislation. The Merton registers are more parochial than collegiate in this respect, owing to the celibacy rule for Fellows until the mid 19th century. They also show a marked change at the time of the passage of the major codifying act, the Hardwick Marriage Act of 1753: in the thirty years following the Act, the Merton marriages only total 25, one-seventh of those in the preceding thirty years. It is interesting to note that only 40 per cent of these post-1753 marriages were

by banns rather than by licence, and that the 50 partners concerned exhibited a high degree of signature literacy, since only seven attested by mark. The convenience of extra-parochial marriages in Merton Chapel before 1753 is clear, and in small ways of assistance to local historians of parishes outside the city. For instance, we read that in 1716 a marriage took place between Richard Berry of Rollright and Ann Buswell of Wescot Barton.

The registers are of interest in a wide range of enquiries: antiquarian and genealogical, anthropological and historical (in many branches such as familial, demographic, social and economic). The transcribers themselves select social history as an area illuminated by the record, and in the Banbury register this is related to wills and testamentary documents found elsewhere. The Merton registers bring the reader to a world of practitioners of physick, maulsters, turners, servants in coffee-houses, coach-harness-makers, apothecaries, ale-house keepers, whitesmiths, peruke-makers, dealers in coals, dye sinkers, image makers, blacking manufacturers, gas fitters and (a 'Brideshead' touch this) tennis-court proprietors in Merton Street. Yet Banbury's occupational structure is not to be underestimated in its variety: in 89 years there were buried 22 maltsters, 17 apothecaries and no less than 3 peruke-makers!

GEOFFREY STEVENSON

Banbury A History, reprinted from the *Victoria History of the County of Oxford* Vol. X, edited by Alan Crossley. Oxfordshire County Libraries, 1984. Pp. 123, with maps and plates. Price £4.95.

Modern Oxford: a History of the City from 1771, C.J. Day, reprinted from the *Victoria History of the County of Oxford* Vol. IV, edited by Alan Crossley. Oxfordshire County Libraries, 1983. Pp. 82, with maps and plates. Price £2.95.

When the *V.C.H.* began it was the practice to offprint fascicules of individual sections for sale, but this had ceased in recent years. Now that the price of each volume has risen to impossible levels, the initiative of the County Library in arranging these reprints is greatly to be welcomed. The price and low print-run has restricted these monuments of exact scholarship to reference libraries, and it has hardly been possible for the results of years of research to have their proper impact on the audience for whom they are intended. Additionally, the appearance of imposing volumes belies the fact that they are not merely reference works, but eminently readable histories; the availability of these reprints will now allow the interested public to possess for themselves at modest cost the most up-to-date accounts of their subjects.

In *Banbury*, the scope of the original volume allows the whole to be reprinted, with topographical descriptions, buildings, manorial history, local government and church history, with all the footnotes (and original pagination) but necessarily lacking the full apparatus and index. With *Oxford*, where a whole volume has been devoted to the city, there is need to be more selective, and this part only includes the most recent part of the general history which takes up the first half of the book (in larger type), and could not possibly contain the detailed treatment of individual topics that make up the rest of it. Nevertheless, this gives a full and balanced account of the development of the modern city, its growth, economy and government.

Both of these, it need hardly be said, replace most of what has been written before on these towns, and are therefore essential reading; it is much to be hoped that sales will

encourage the County Library to continue their imaginative policy, and reprint the earlier sections of the Oxford volume (and others), whilst they may give the Institute of Historical Research thought about how they can best reach their audience with future volumes of the History.

JULIAN MUNBY

Wychwoods History, No. 1. Wychwoods Local History Society, 1985. Price £2.00

This is the first issue of a journal devoted to the history of Shipton- and Milton-under-Wychwood. The main contents deal with a hedge survey of both parishes, a survey of Milton graveyard, and Shipton manor in Domesday Book. There are also some notes and reviews. The area has considerable potential for future work, both as the centre of a royal multiple estate and minster parish, and because of its role in the development of Wychwood Forest. The journal should provide an excellent vehicle for exploring these and other themes in the future. Copies may be obtained from the editor, Sue Richards, Foxholes House, Foscot, Oxford, OX7 6RW.

JOHN BLAIR

A. V. Simcock, *The Ashmolean Museum and Oxford Science 1683-1983*. Museum of the History of Science, Oxford, 1984. Pp. viii, 48. No price.

Those of us who live in Oxford often tend to take for granted the Colleges and University buildings, walking rapidly past and giving them scarcely a second glance. There is also a popular fiction which holds that Oxford has only lately accepted the study of scientific disciplines. Both of these attitudes are regrettable, since some of Oxford's buildings are of exceptional merit and studies in science have been actively and successfully pursued in the University for well over 300 years.

This present book admirably brings these two themes together, as it traces the development of the Old Ashmolean Building from its opening on 21 May 1683 to the present day. This building was originally designed as the Ashmolean Museum. The top floor was intended to be an exhibition gallery for Ashmole's natural history and ethnographical specimens. The middle floor, which is where a visitor enters the building, was used as a lecture room, whilst the basement contained a chemical laboratory which was, in fact, the first purpose-built teaching laboratory in the country. For over 150 years this building remained the centre of science teaching in the University, until in 1860 the Science Collections and teaching were moved to the present University Museum on Parks Road.

Mr Simcock's well-researched monograph presents a detailed account of the construction of the Old Ashmolean building, bringing into prominence the hitherto relatively unappreciated role of Thomas Wood, stonemason, who was its architect and was in charge of the construction. The Old Ashmolean was built in a small section of the 'Town Ditch', just outside the City walls, squeezed between Wren's wall around the Sheldonian Theatre yard and Exeter College's 'privy-house'. It is interesting to note that there is documentation of how this latter collapsed, together with its contents, into the site during the

digging of foundations for the Old Ashmolean building and so provided later generations of chemists with a fruitful source of study in the white efflorescence which subsequently permeated the walls of their basement laboratory!

Subsequent chapters detail the development of chemical studies in the basement laboratory and the activities in the so-called 'School of Natural History' on the floor above. The monograph concludes with a survey of the growth of the Science Area and the current University Museum following the establishment in 1849 of the Honour School of Natural Science which created a new degree in Science. Action by the then current teachers led by the Reader in Anatomy (Henry Acland, later Professor of Medicine) resulted in the erection between 1855 and 1860 of the present University Museum in its resplendent Victorian Gothic style. The large centre court of the Museum served for the display of the collections, and was surrounded on three sides by buildings for teaching and research in Chemistry, Geology, Experimental Philosophy, Mineralogy, Anatomy, and the Hope Department of Entomology. Mr Simcock surveys the subsequent development of this complex to encompass all the specialised Sciences which are now actively pursued in the University.

Oxford has truly served Science well. From the early beginnings, the Old Ashmolean building formed a focus, where Dr. Plot and Christopher White experimented in their basement chemistry laboratory. The construction of the Museum complex near the Parks, envisaged and built by the activities of Daubeny and Acland, led directly to the large multi-disciplinary complex we see today.

This monograph provides those of us interested in this development with a most valuable source book, well annotated and illustrated by carefully-chosen lithographs and photographs. There are also useful lists of scientific personnel active in Oxford from 1683 to the latter part of the 19th century, together with extensive notes and references which will assist future scholars interested in the growth of Oxford Science. This well-produced publication (financed partially by the University's Science Departments) is to be thoroughly recommended both for its scholarship and for the fascinating story which it tells so clearly.

S. BRADBURY

The Epwell Hunt by Edward Goulburn, ed. Paul Morgan. P. Drinkwater, 1984. Pp. x, 18. Price £1.00

Paul Morgan calls his book a *jeu d'esprit*. He is too modest. It is a meticulous piece of scholarship such as is rarely applied to the history of fox-hunting, and it is a model of bibliographical research.

Mr. Morgan reprints a fox-hunting verse describing a famous run of John Corbet's Warwickshire hunt in December 1808. Corbet is one of the fathers of modern fox-hunting. He kennelled his hounds at the White Lion Inn at Stratford, and the excellence of the sport he showed attracted outsiders. They formed a club in the Tempest Room – the White Lion was the first Stratford inn to capitalize on Shakespeare's fame. As in all these hunt clubs, there were regular dinners at which hunting verse was recited. Having had to read a great number of such jingles I can vouch for the relative excellence and readability of *The Epwell Hunt*. It is, in my view, superior to the classics of the genre: *the Billesdon Coplow Hunt* and *The Raby Hunt*.

This excellence reflects the talents of its author, Edward Goulburn, brother of the Tory

Chancellor of the Exchequer, Henry Goulburn. Goulburn's satirical gifts had already landed him in trouble: a skit on his fellow officers in the Royal Horse Guards brought down on him a libel suit and he was forced to resign his commission.

The Epwell Hunt got him into hot water with a fellow sportsman, Richard Bayzand. Bayzand was described as 'this Worcestershire zany', as a knave and a fool not above using unfair methods to sell his horses to members of the hunt. Bayzand contemplated suing Goulburn for libel; counsel acknowledged that the verse constituted a libel but thought that Bayzand would be better advised not to pursue so petty a matter in the courts. Goulburn clearly had no love for Bayzand, to whom he owed money. He became a respected lawyer, with few traces of the vindictiveness of his attacks on Bayzand and remembered by his fellow lawyers with affection.

The result of the row with Bayzand seems to have been the withdrawal of the first printed edition of the verses. Mr. Morgan prints the first version with erudite notes, and details the history of the later less satisfactory editions of what had clearly become a well-loved piece of hunting verse.

This is a charming, beautifully produced and scholarly piece of local history.

RAYMOND CARR