

REVIEWS

It should be understood that all statements and opinions in reviews are those of the respective authors, not of the Society or Editor.

Joan Dils (ed.), *An Historical Atlas of Berkshire*. Berkshire Record Society, 1998. Pb., x + 126 pp. Available from Mrs. J. Dils, 47 Ramsbury Drive, Earley, Reading, RG6 7RT. Cheques payable to the Berkshire Record Society, £14.95 + £2 p&p.

The format of county atlases is by now pretty well established although the number of counties possessing them remains few: the history of the county is told by a series of spreads (pairs of facing pages), in which text (of 1,000 words or a few more) is on the left and a map – usually of the county in outline and scale standardised throughout the volume – is on the right. On the map, by symbols, shading (perhaps plus colour) or otherwise, the topic of that spread is illustrated. Reference maps at the front show parish boundaries, towns, villages and hundreds. The atlases necessarily stop at many of the same focal or well-documented points; variations arise from the need to deal with subjects peculiar to the county. Thus *An Historical Atlas of East Yorkshire* (Susan Neave and Stephen Ellis, Hull 1996) has maps on the Pilgrimage of Grace and the whaling industry. This atlas has a spread on the children of the Foundling Hospital at nurse in the county in the mid 18th century, which is justified by the high proportion of Berkshire people on the hospital's governing body, the consequent incidence of inspectors and wet-nurses for the hospital in the county and the volume of illuminating correspondence to which they gave rise.

Joan Dils worked under a severe handicap compared to the editors of some atlases which have been subsidised by a local authority. The Berkshire atlas was strictly priced by its publishers to cover its costs. The editor makes clear how invaluable was help in kind, perhaps most notably from the staff and students of the Departments of Geography and of Typography and Graphic Communication in Reading University; she also obviously had a marvellously good cartographer in Heather Browning, who was made available by the head of the university's geography department in return for the copyright of her maps. Even so, commissioning and co-ordinating 36 contributors to produce a handsome and compendious volume, well able to live alongside better endowed atlases of the same type, deserves unqualified praise.

No doubt because she had to make do with fewer spreads (58 compared to 66 in the Lincolnshire atlas, for instance), the editor made some severe decisions about what to leave out. Thus the atlas has no text or maps for the county prior to John Blair's on Anglo-Saxon minsters, unless one counts the opening geological spread and the two by Margaret Gelling (Berkshire place-names and pre-Conquest charters). There is in fact nothing on the Romans or the pre-Roman ages. This is the only serious deficiency in the overall content that might reasonably have been anticipated from the title of the atlas, although, on a strict interpretation of 'historical', we should not expect the *prehistorical*.

The point of the atlas format is that the text and the maps should enhance each other – and by this standard the Berkshire atlas is a great success. Almost all the texts are better for their maps and vice versa. Among the exceptions is the spread on 'Victorian churches and chapels'; John Elliott's text is unexceptionable but the facing map selects just four such which are embellished by tiny photographs – a wasted page. There are some other missed opportunities. Geoffrey Tyack's crisply authoritative page on 'Country houses 1750-1900' would have been better served by a map which included railways and perhaps turnpike

roads as well as the locations of the 86 houses concerned. Some maps are inadequate. That intended to illustrate Josephine Cormier's 'Berkshire vernacular architecture before 1600' is hard to decode and seems to be a map of record rather than of relative incidence. Brian Boulter's piece on 'The railways of Berkshire' needs a more informative map; on the atlas's standard scale (30 mm. = 10 km.) every station in the county could have been marked without difficulty, and named indeed. The map on recusancy employs shading of differing densities which are not explained in the legend. On the other hand, the maps which complement Kate Tiller's article on the 1851 religious census (a must for all county atlases) are a triumph of what can be done in black and white (much though the editor wished for colour). Such use of more than one map to a spread might with advantage have been used on other topics and thus made room for more in total.

The atlas has outstanding strengths, e.g. its handling of religion throughout – the persistence of certain areas of nonconformity (of all sorts) emerges clearly; industry and commerce in the modern period and the coverage of disease, epidemics and mortality (1500-c.1760) are excellently done. These successes owe much to the intelligent chronological grouping within themes which unobtrusively guided the choice and ordering of topics.

Solecisms and literals are happily few: 'benefiting' has only one 't' and Jeremy Sims ('Markets of medieval Berkshire') needs to distinguish between inference and implication (rather important for one who is billed in the contributors' list as a solicitor). Not all writers explain their technical terms: Richard Williams, for instance, dealing with 18th-century rural JPs leaves *nomina ministrorum* and *dedimus potestatum* (*sic*) unglossed. He also ends his article by claiming that the JPs provided 'a vital infrastructure for the maintenance of law and order', which was no doubt how they saw their role but perhaps implies some unwarranted assumptions.

That these complaints are few only shows what a good job Joan Dils has done. She has managed a team of mixed amateurs and professionals with enviable editorial aplomb. She has made the most of exiguous resources. She has given us a work that will be immensely useful to academics, WEA and extramural classes and many others, and has set a standard which causes trepidation to those in other counties who seek to follow. Let us hope the atlas sells out quickly, so that the editor's skills can be even more generously deployed in a second edition.

CHRISTOPHER HALL

Jeremy Catto, Ralph Evans, James McConica, Simon Walker, Andrew Watson, *Unarmed Soldierly: studies in the early history of All Souls College. The Chichele Lectures, 1993-1994*. All Souls College, 1998. Pp. vi + 110. Available from the Bursar, All Souls College, £15.00 + 55p postage.

This volume is a record of the Chichele Lectures given in 1993 and 1994. There are six lectures in all, three from each year. The most assiduous collectors of college history might easily miss the volume, which is privately produced and sold, but they should not: it deserves the attention of anyone interested in college history as one of a new generation of college histories that take into account the enormous increase in our knowledge of early Oxford associated with the publication of the *History of Oxford University*.

It is a long time since a history of All Souls College appeared. The 19th century produced two general histories, Montagu Burrows' *Worthies of All Souls* and Grant Robertson's volume in the college history series. The 20th century has added many detailed footnotes, especially concerning the library, but, up until now, no general history beyond Jacob's pages in the third volume of the *Victoria County History*.

From the first three lectures it would have been reasonable to suppose that the series would provide a series of chapters that would grow sequentially into a college history. However, although the second series takes us almost to the death of Elizabeth, there are significant omissions: the nearly fatal crisis associated with the Yorkist succession, the new perspective of the generation of Leland, Caius, Latimer, and Linacre, and the effect on the college of the three visitations of 1535, 1549, and 1556. It is to be hoped that later lectures will fill such gaps as well as advancing the story into the 17th century.

The first group of three lectures deals with the foundation of the college and with its early members. All three lecturers start from Chichele's description of the purpose of the college and discuss in different ways whether and how the college fulfilled that purpose. The asking of this question is a measure of the distance that separates the authors from Burrows and the authors of the college histories. For the latter a college, whose purpose is manifestly education, is so obviously useful an institution that it is redundant to ask what it was founded for; maybe the founder offended the king, or recovered from an illness, or won a battle; Chichele is said to have regretted his support for Henry V's prosecution of his claim to the French crown. The origin of the debt is of anecdotal interest but the coin in which it was paid is of such obvious value as to make further analysis unnecessary: we all know what an Oxford college is for. Catto, Walker, and McConica construct a very different account, showing a college bequeathed a much more narrowly defined role by a founder concerned for the good management of the Christian state, a state that in his lifetime had been so severely threatened.

The first lecture, 'The World of Henry Chichele and the Foundation of All Souls' by Jeremy Catto takes issue with the conventional portrayal of Chichele as a member of Wykeham's circle; indeed he argues against the very idea of an integrated circle of Wykehamists as portrayed in Warden Chaundler's famous sketch. Wykeham's successors, notably Bekynton and Chaundler, had shifted significantly from the founder's original programme under the influence of developing humanist notions of citizenship; they left their mark on the king's foundations at Eton and Cambridge, whereas Chichele, in his seventies when All Souls was founded, was closer to Wykeham's original purpose. Catto detects an austerity, appropriate to a military chantry, in Chichele's programme – and indeed in his buildings – that is absent from the king's foundations.

The first warden, Richard Andrew, failed to engage the attention of earlier historians of All Souls: Robertson dismissed him in a single page devoted to the enumeration of his bequests to the college. He was, indeed, an absentee and his wardenship one of a number of errands he ran for his master Chichele. Walker's essay looks at Andrew's career as a connected story rather than as a sum of minor contributions to the histories of various institutions, and what emerges is not the life of one of the major figures of his time, but that of, in Walker's words, an able careerist, who eventually rose to be dean of York. He interests us not just because he held the office of warden – though Walker shows that his contribution during his few years in office was a vital one – but because we may well believe that the essence of Chichele's programme was to produce such men.

McConica's first essay, 'The Early Fellowship', takes a similar theme; but where Walker examines one career in depth, McConica makes a survey of the entire early fellowship. Andrew was a high flyer, and it is no surprise that he left his mark in the written records of the institutions that he served; what is extraordinary about McConica's survey is the quantity of evidence that turns out to exist for the careers of the less distinguished.

Ralph Evans's lecture examines the college's handling of its estates. This is another area to which earlier college historians paid less attention than we should like; Aston's chapters in the *History of the University* were the first full scale treatment of early college estates, and the example of Merton has always dominated the field. Like Merton, All Souls has been

fortunate in preserving its 15th-century records. Evans draws on account rolls for evidence of how the college managed its estates; as at Merton, one is struck by the extent to which early fellows were involved in the administration of the estates. The steward's book affords plentiful evidence of how money was spent on food and drink for the fellowship, two-thirds of the college's total outgoings.

Several colleges have preserved enough records of their library's holdings (together, in some cases, with the books themselves) to enable historians to attempt an assessment of the triple impact of printing, humanism, and reformation on college libraries. Watson presents a useful enumeration of the different catalogues and inventories of the library; the most easily accessible and most important is the Vellum Inventory, published and extensively annotated by Ker under the title *Records of All Souls College Library*. These sources make clear beyond dispute that many books and manuscripts vanished from the library and many more were added in the course of the 16th century. This is hardly surprising, but a detailed reading of Ker's work warns us that the processes involved were of great complexity; surviving anecdotal evidence of the various upsets of the period should be treated with due caution. Watson's lecture is a further nail in the coffin of the tragic old story of bonfires of scholastic or popish texts held on the orders of the Tudor commissioners in Oxford quadrangles. Librarians under pressure to provide adequate numbers of new printed texts in cramped conditions will have required little ideological coercion to persuade them to clear their shelves of apparently obsolete material, especially when it belonged not to the library proper but to the collection of books for loan to fellows; and the fact that it was worth exporting unwanted manuscripts to be cut up by continental bookbinders should surely remove any doubt about the fate of most of the vanished texts. Within a generation the new fashion for antiquarianism had made the same manuscripts sought after items. In an age that discovers and abandons new media each decade we should be particularly attuned to the considerations that vexed the librarians of the middle of the 16th century.

McConica returns in the last lecture to analyse the career of Warden Hoveden. At once we are in a very different university, in which power rested in the hands of a few heads of house. The halls, which had been the foundation of the anarchy that often dominated medieval Oxford, have been identified as a problem and have been regulated; but Hoveden had just as hard a time containing anarchy in his own college. Though he successfully repelled a serious raid on the college's income by greedy courtiers (the full story is told in *Collectanea*, i, OHS v, 1885), in a larger sense he was one of the queen's party, Leicester's appointee, and a devotee of the Tudor cause of order and centralisation. It is pleasant to think of him going with his fellow heads of house wearing their scarlet gowns and footclothes, 'notwithstanding the foulness of the weather', to Godstow bridge in 1592 to welcome the queen to Oxford for the last time. Her concern, she said, from the start of her reign had been *ut respublica tam externis inimicis, quam internis tumultibus, servaretur, ut quod diu et multis saeculis florisset, sub manis meis non debilitaretur*. No doubt Chichele would have approved.

TONY DODD

Nicholas Orme, *Education in Early Tudor England: Magdalen College, Oxford and its School, 1480-1540*, Magdalen College Occasional Paper 4, Oxford, 1998. Pp. xi + 84, illus.

From its foundation in 1480, Magdalen College School was in many respects unique. At the close of a period when the city was a leading centre for school education, other Oxford colleges organised tutors in grammar locally for choristers and potential students, but only Magdalen provided teaching on a large scale, in a school incorporated with the college, and

to boys drawn from outside it. In the early 16th century, Jesus and Trinity Colleges at Cambridge had schools, but they were short-lived. Not only did Magdalen fail to spawn successful imitations, but, in contrast to other celebrated schools, even its statutes remained uncopied. None the less, drawing on his unparalleled knowledge of late medieval education, Professor Orme is able to present the early history of Magdalen School as a convincing case study illuminating a wider context. Some aspects of the school's past have long been known and remain undisputed, but he builds on the pioneering biographical work of predecessors like Emden and draws on a wider range of evidence from the exceptionally rich archive to construct a broader yet more subtle analysis.

Between 1480 and 1540 the school was served by a succession of distinguished men. The 14 masters and 31 ushers were mostly young and their tenures relatively brief, until death removed them, other schools enticed them away or, as most notably in the case of Thomas Wolsey, they caught the eye of a powerful patron and received promotion up the church hierarchy. Yet the college valued them and the work they did. Among them were a notable number who wrote influential grammars, and it is in the dissemination of their publications, particularly through the 'diaspora' of masters and former pupils, that the general significance of Magdalen School lies. The *Compendium totius grammaticae* (1483) and the complementary *Vulgaria* of John Anwykyll, the school's first master, are the only works to be attributed to an early teacher while still in post, and give invaluable evidence of the teaching programme. While the methods of Anwykyll and his successors were conservative, the content of their curricula was not; through them the classical Latin of the humanists percolated through to the classroom, initially in Oxford, but rapidly to other parts of southern England and to the founder's home county of Lincolnshire.

A map setting out Magdalen's connections with other schools is one of several illustrative features of this attractively produced booklet. Eight fine early 19th-century line drawings of the original building, exterior and interior, just before its demolition give a clear impression of its visual impact, somewhat lacking in the otherwise appealing 16th-century representation which is also included. Biographical and documentary appendices permit the serious student to probe the details of personnel, geographical connection and (through letters) parent-teacher relations, while the well-referenced text remains accessible to the many general readers who will no doubt wish to consult it, and a full bibliography and index benefit both. Pains-taking research has been carefully digested without losing its underpinning authority: all sections of the audience for this history have been well-served.

VIVIENNE LARMINIE

W.T. Mitchell (ed.), *Register of Congregations 1505 – 1517*. Oxford Historical Society, NS vols. xxxvii and xxxviii, 1998. Pp. x + 552, and 585. Available from the Hon. Treasurer, Oxford Historical Society, 38 Randolph Street, Oxford, OX4 1XZ. £28.00 per volume.

In the period covered by these volumes the day-to-day governance of the University of Oxford was in the hands, principally, of two bodies: Congregation, the assembly of regents of the university, and Convocation, the assembly of regents and non-regents. Generally stated, Congregation was the university's executive assembly and Convocation was its legislative body; and 'day-to-day governance' can be interpreted literally in the case of Congregation for it normally met on almost every day during term, at 9 a.m. summoned to St. Mary's by the big bell if it was to be a 'solemn' Congregation at which important decisions or elections were made, and by the small bell (or the big bell rung in a different way) if the Congregation had only routine matters to deal with.

The earliest surviving register of the decisions made in Congregation runs from 1448 to

1463 and it was edited by the late Dr. W.A. Pantin and Mr. Walter Mitchell as NS vol. xxii of the Oxford Historical Society's publications in 1972. Appendix III to that volume, by the late Graham Pollard, explains why the next register of Congregations to survive is the one now edited and which begins in 1505: the intervening volume or volumes were the victims, along with all the university's ready cash, some of its archives, and many of its valuables, of two spectacular burglaries eleven days apart in February and March 1544.

This, then, is the second register of Congregations to survive in the university archives where its reference is *Registrum G*. The original consists of some 321 folios (641 pages). It is now painstakingly transcribed with superb accuracy by Mr. Walter Mitchell to fill some 745 pages and is equipped with an introduction of great scholarship which runs to 346 pages. The two-volume set is completed by 45 pages of indexes of personal names, places, and subjects. Hard-bound, on good paper and in clean type, these volumes are produced to the very high standard which we have come to expect, and relish, from the Oxford Historical Society.

The university going about its usual business of teaching, lecturing, learning, and moving its members from one degree level to the next was governed by rules and regulations and laws developed over the centuries, and the greater part of this register records dispensations (that is to say decisions allowing something prescribed by the law not to be done) and graces (allowing something not prescribed by the law to be done). For those not steeped in the intricacies of early Tudor university governance these decisions and their attendant vocabulary, all recorded in Latin, can be pretty impenetrable. This is where Mr. Mitchell's deep knowledge of these matters, his great scholarship and his wide reading are put at our disposal. He draws in information from other volumes, both published and unpublished, in the university archives to elucidate the details of teaching and learning and examining in the Arts (including its 'offshoots' – Grammar, Music, and Medicine), Civil and Canon Law, and Theology. From Mr. Mitchell's work we can see, for instance, exactly how the senior bachelors' disputations were conducted. These were called 'Austins' after the place where they were originally held, the house of the Augustinian friars (the most convenient place for large gatherings prior to the construction of the Divinity School) and were held on Saturday afternoons; and Mr. Mitchell shows who arranged them, who responded and who opposed the questions, who authorised the questions, what standards were expected and so on. The section on inception (the ceremony or 'act' at which the master's degree was conferred and the period of necessary regency formally entered upon) has some fascinating paragraphs, amongst other matters, on the form of dress to be worn.

The various stages of a man's progress through the university were reckoned in numbers of terms and years, and we are here given a most important section on those reckonings of time. There were, for instance, at least five different meanings of the word 'year' at use in the university; and the four 'terms' were not of equal length nor were they the same length from year to year. Trinity Term, for example, could vary between two and six weeks in length, and Michaelmas Term could start as late as 3 November and could last between six and nine weeks. This is not just a point of antiquarian interest. It really mattered for the general rhythm of university life, and produced a scheme of things that men could join at any time (not just, as now, at the start of Michaelmas Term). This being the case, it made understanding a course of lectures very difficult unless one began it at the start of one's second full year. This was probably the reason why the time allowed by the statutes as required to complete the necessary work for a degree – expressed in 'terms' and 'years' – seems far too long for the work involved.

The combination of the text edited here (with its bald decisions on, for instance, who were appointed as clerks of the market or keepers of the various chests) and Mr. Mitchell's introduction (telling us what they actually did, once appointed) makes this a valuable

addition to our knowledge of life in the early modern university. In his foreword Mr. Mitchell states his aim as editor as one of elucidating the text rather than recording all the errors. 'The technical terms, though often universal', he writes, 'differ in meaning according to time and place. Some are used strictly, others loosely. Practice frequently diverges from theory. The present attempt to describe the academic and administrative machinery may therefore fill a need. If it does not solve every question, it may at least show what the questions are'. He has done excellently what he set out to do, and he and the Oxford Historical Society are to be congratulated on another significant contribution to our body of knowledge of the university's life almost half a millennium ago.

DAVID VAISEY

David Eddershaw, *The Story of the Oxfordshire Yeomanry: Queen's Own Oxfordshire Hussars, 1798-1998*. Oxfordshire Yeomanry Trust, 1998. Pp. 87. Pb. £7.95.

The Yeomanry cavalry were once a familiar sight in the English countryside and country towns, their colourful and sometimes archaic uniforms the cynosure of rustic admiration, and their bands, drills, competitions, and sham fights popular public spectacle and entertainment. In 1899 there were thirty-eight Yeomanry regiments, in 1905 fifty-two, and in 1914 fifty-five: more Yeomanry than regular cavalry regiments. Since then much has changed. Today Yeomanry titles linger on among an odd assortment of Territorial armoured, artillery, engineer, signals, logistic, and even infantry units, but it is arguable to what extent the Yeomanry still exists.

The Story of the Oxfordshire Yeomanry outlines the history of one Yeomanry regiment, from its formation by George, earl of Macclesfield, in 1798, through its late 18th- and early 19th-century home-defence, counter-revolutionary, and police roles; Queen Adelaide conferring the title 'Queen's Own' in 1835, its late Victorian splendour, the Boer War, the Great War – when it served on the Western Front – the interwar change from cavalry to artillery, the Second World War – when it served in Europe and liberated Belsen – to its post-war vicissitudes which included disbandment in 1967, followed, in 1971, by the assumption of the historic title by a TA signals unit based at Banbury. There is much of interest in the book, including the role of the Oxfordshire Yeomanry in the suppression of the Swing riots, the Otmoor enclosure riots, and the 1845 Chipping Norton anti-police riot; the social composition of the officers and other ranks – the latter about a third farmers – the Churchill connection – apparently a mixed blessing – and training at Blenheim and Port Meadow. Sometimes the officers were billeted in the Randolph Hotel and a ceremonial guard in full dress paraded in front of it each evening. The book is attractively produced and well illustrated with numerous and fascinating photographs including three colour plates. One of the latter reproduces an atypically peaceful Caton Woodville painting of an Imperial Yeomanry open air service in South Africa in 1900, now in the possession of the Oxfordshire Yeomanry Trust. There are a list of sources and a half-page bibliography but no footnotes. The author, Mr. Eddershaw, is an Oxfordshire local historian and former museum education officer. A military historian would have approached the matter somewhat differently.

The Story of the Oxfordshire Yeomanry is an attractive and useful short introduction to its subject, but one should not expect too much from it. With its limited size much has been omitted. The book is often disappointingly vague and lacking quantification. There is very little on uniforms, weapons, accoutrements and equipment, no mention of the strength of the regiment at any date, and nothing specific on the costs of being an officer. Even the year the regiment acquired its Hussars title is not specified. There are too many questions unasked and unanswered. There are also errors. It is untrue that 'throughout the Victorian

army ... professionalism was positively discouraged': the Royal Engineers, for example, were expert professionals, and structures they designed and built in Victoria's reign still stand today throughout Britain and the former Empire. The Boers did not begin the sieges of Mafeking, Kimberley and Ladysmith in 'black week' 1899; F.E. Smith was the first, not the second, Lord Birkenhead, and Haldane in 1907 was not a lord. 'Conscription on the continental model' was not 'only resisted' by Haldane's reforms: in fact, not even Lord Roberts and the National Service League advocated it, only a more limited compulsory military training, and leading politicians considered it was never politically viable in peacetime. The oddest error is the statement that when the Prince Regent visited Oxford in June 1814 he was accompanied by the king of Poland. In fact the last king of Poland had died in 1798. The short bibliography is idiosyncratic and apparently indicative of a limited acquaintance with recent military historiography. It includes Gann's and Duignan's *The Rulers of British Africa* but omits such standard works as the Marquess of Anglesey's multi-volume *History of the British Cavalry*, Peter Dennis's *The Territorial Army*, and Edward Spiers's *The Late Victorian Army*. Yet despite its limitations, Mr. Eddershaw's book can be recommended for school and public libraries, and for those interested in the Yeomanry and in Oxfordshire history. However, the Oxfordshire Yeomanry still awaits its historian.

ROGER STEARN

Brian R. Law, *Building Oxford's Heritage*, Symm and Company, 1998. Pp. 135, 136 plates. £29.95. Available from Prelude Promotion, Avoca, Brookhampton, Stadhampton, Oxford, OX44 7XR.

Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*, we are told in this lavish company history, could well have worked for Joshua Symm, the builder responsible for most of the restoration work carried out at Christ Church during the 1870s. Here, in the novelist's words, 'was a centre of effort as worthy as that dignified by the name of scholarly study within the noblest of colleges'. The causes of that effort, which was paralleled in all the older colleges of Oxford University, were twofold: the need for more accommodation, as the numbers of students grew and the university took its academic responsibilities more seriously; and the ageing of the historic buildings which for most visitors and many residents were and are inseparable from the very idea of a university. These needs were already apparent in the early 19th century, when Daniel Evans, a builder from London (though probably born at Fairford, Gloucestershire), first established the business. And they remain equally pressing at the beginning of the new millennium, when the firm of Symm and Company, with its subsidiaries Sharp and Howse and EPS Masonry, is one of the most respected building firms in Oxford, its business extending outside the city to encompass work on historic and pseudo-historic buildings in both Britain and the United States.

While the architects of Oxford's historic buildings have been much studied in recent years, their builders have received less attention. W.G. Hiscock put William Townesend, Oxford's most successful early 18th-century builder, on the map in a chapter in *A Christ Church Miscellany* (1946), and Sir Howard Colvin has elucidated the complicated history of the Townesends and Peisleys, as well as more obscure figures like James Pears, builder of the Radcliffe Observatory and later mayor of Oxford, in successive editions of his *Biographical Dictionary of British Architects*. But the men responsible for the massive construction and renovation programmes of the 19th and 20th centuries have been largely ignored. Now, within two years, two scholarly books have appeared charting the history of two of Oxford's major 19th-century firms, both of which still flourish today: David Sturdy's *A History of Knowles and Son: Oxford Builders for 200 Years, 1797-1997* (British Archaeological Report 254,

Archaeopress 1997) and the volume under review, to which Sturdy has contributed a stimulating introduction. They throw new light both on the city's buildings and on an important aspect of its economic life.

The Symm firm flourished partly through creating what would now be called a niche market, both in restoration and in new collegiate and university building, partly through training a succession of able deputies who could inherit the firm when the senior figure died. Thus Daniel Evans was succeeded in 1846 by his son-in-law and foreman Joshua Symm, a stonemason from Northumberland, and in 1874 Symm established a partnership with his own foreman, Thomas Axtell, who headed the firm after Symm's death in 1887. Evidence of the firm's 19th-century activities can be seen all over Oxford: at Pembroke College, and also at Exeter, University College, Christ Church, and Hertford, as well as in the science buildings which hide behind the massive bulk of the University Museum. The 1881 census recorded a workforce of 155, and it is clear that the success of the enterprise owed much to the cultivation of a good relationship with certain colleges and also with a handful of architects, notably Gilbert Scott, Thomas Deane, and T.G. Jackson. Work declined in the early 20th century, when the firm was undercut on several tenders, and reached a nadir between the wars, but there was a revival in the 1950s and 1960s, when major restoration work was carried out at Merton, Christ Church, and Worcester, *inter alia*. More recently Symm's have continued to enhance the lives of residents and visitors through the rebuilding of Magdalen tower, the creation of the Pizza Express restaurant out of the former Golden Cross inn, and many other projects.

Law's book, like David Sturdy's, is factual rather than analytical, and it too relies heavily on the firm's own records. The author, who has drawn on research begun by Anne Sharpe, does not possess Sturdy's encyclopaedic knowledge of Oxford's building history, and he sometimes seems unaware of the significance of the information he presents. So, in discussing the 'delicate task of extending the 17th-century hall' at University College in 1903-4 he fails to mention the resulting loss of Henry Keene's fascinating Gothic interior of 1766. There is a useful chronological appendix of works undertaken, with costs and architects where known, although some projects, like the rebuilding of Magdalen tower, are unaccountably omitted. The book is beautifully designed, and there are many well-chosen, clearly reproduced illustrations, some of which will be unfamiliar even to *aficionados*, like the old photograph of the underpinning of a brick-clad Bartlemas Chapel, off Cowley Road (p. 70). For many the pictures will be the main attraction of the book, although readers should be warned that the splendid Henry Rushbury drawing of the masons' yard at Christ Church comes from the Oxford Almanack of 1927 not 1881. But in general the merits of the book far outweigh its blemishes, and both author and firm should be congratulated on making a significant contribution to our enjoyment of Oxford's buildings, and to our knowledge of the building industry without whose labours they would not exist.

GEOFFREY TYACK

Christine Bloxham, *The World of Flora Thompson*. Robert Dugdale, 1998. Pp. 232. £9.95.

There is something of a Flora Thompson cottage industry, with biographies by Margaret Lane and Gillian Lindsay, the publication of *Heatherley* (Thompson's revealing account of her 1898-?1901 time as a telegraphist at Grayshott on the Surrey/Hampshire border) and of her 1920s nature writings *The Peverel Papers*, and the dramatisation of *Lark Rise, Candleford Green*, and 'Flora's Peverel'. These are now joined by two books on the places through which she moved, John Owen Smith's (Hampshire) *On the Trail of Flora Thompson beyond Candleford Green* (1997) and – our present concern – Christine Bloxham's *The World of Flora Thompson*.

This concludes with four chapters on her later life, but centres very much on Oxfordshire. It follows first her ancestors and then Flora herself through life, using the skills of local history to elucidate family trees, identify characters, verify or disprove statements in the text, and above all describe the late 19th-century aspect of the places in question. There is an element of free association; thus the account of Fringford begins with a paragraph on its principal residents, the Addington family, from 1597 to the early 19th-century Prime Minister, that on Banbury with an interesting disquisition on Banbury cakes. The book reads easily, partly (though not entirely) because of its extensive quotations from Thompson's own writings, and is liberally illustrated with contemporary and family photographs.

Thompson's work has been much quarried by social historians. But she was an aspirant writer who, in *Lark Rise to Candleford*, produced a work of literature, not a strictly accurate autobiography. She said she described 'Miss Lanes's' post-office forge ... as it actually existed' – and Bloxham's researches broadly confirm this – but 'Candleford Green ... is not Fringford' and indeed contains 'far more of a village in Surrey' (Grayshott). 'Candleford', too, is an amalgam of 'Banbury-Bicester-Buckingham'. But even in *Lark Rise* there are inventions – it was not snowing when Flora was born, and her visit as a two-year-old to her mother's former patron the rector of Ardley cannot have happened since he was five years dead. Nor is the account of Sally [Sarah] and Dick [Richard] Moss quite right. They had not been married 'nearly sixty years', but only (a second marriage in both cases) since 1869. Their house was not in fact Sarah's but Richard's – Sarah had come to Juniper only after 1847, and much of the account of her helping her father croft on the unenclosed waste, and being left the house in recompense, must be fictional. But both Richard (then apparently a notorious poacher) and Sarah's first husband, George Fox (who had just built a squatter's cottage on that waste) were involved in an 1848-53 resistance to enclosure that had some resemblance to Highland reaction to 'clearances'. When the constables finally arrived with writs of ejectment, resistance collapsed, Fox accepting a cheap 14-year lease and Moss being found to be a freeholder. Whether, as Bloxham hints, Thompson was using 'Sally as a vehicle' to describe a simpler and better way of life – a theme seized on in H.J. Massingham's fashionable 1944 'Introduction' to the trilogy – or whether, as a helpful young teenager, she had simply known less about Sally and Dick's past than she imagined, we cannot now tell. It is, as Bloxham says, odd that she nowhere mentions the enclosure disturbances (which divided the Moss family). It may also be the case, as Bloxham suggests, that the reason people would not live in the Moss cottage, or in Flora's grandparents' round house, after their departure was that squatters' cottages had been badly built; certainly there is a tension between this and *Lark Rise's* references to 'the newer, meaner dwellings that had sprung up around them'. This reviewer is conscious of one other possible tension. Thompson begins by stressing that *Lark Rise* was a healthy, if drafty, place – 'for years together' the doctor visited only at difficult births and old people's deaths, while toddlers, playing out of doors in all weathers, were incredibly tough. Yet of Flora's nine siblings, two died within days, two at the age of two; a few miles away, of her mother's seven siblings, two did not reach that of four. In many other respects, however, Bloxham's researches tend broadly to confirm Thompson's picture, identifying the people (though they were often younger than they had seemed to the youthful Flora) and places, and, in the process, telling us much else besides – in 1871 there were, at the great house of Tusmore, sixteen female and five male servants to look after a family of five.

J.P.D. DUNBABIN

Malcolm Graham, *Oxfordshire at Play*. Sutton Publishing/Oxfordshire Books, 1997. Pp. 128, 206 plates. £9.99.

Malcolm Graham has brought together a fascinating selection of over 200 photographs to represent *Oxfordshire at Play*. Largely culled from the county's museums and photographic archive, the book covers a very broad range of leisure and sporting activities between 1876 and the mid 1970s. The book is structured thematically, with the sections arranged around nine distinct topics, including 'recreation', 'customs', 'pubs', 'home and family', and 'royal occasions'.

Play, like the associated word culture, is notoriously difficult to define satisfactorily and so Dr. Graham has chosen, quite properly, to depict it in the most comprehensive way. Historically the ability of individuals to enjoy recreation has been determined by a complex interplay of factors like wealth, time, age, class, geography, technology, gender, and morals, and this is reflected in the abundance of images presented. Everyone should find something of interest; be it the representation of local fairs, fêtes, weddings, street parties, musicians, annual works outings, drinkers, abstainers, seaside holidays, morris dancing, or village Club Days.

Photographs are a useful addition to the sources available to the historian providing that they can be dated and the subjects identified. As it is a matter of chance that any of these images have survived it emphasises the importance of accumulating and retaining photographs as historical evidence. Since the 1980s there have been a great number of books published containing photographs gathered from both the public and personal domain, and arranged around a particular historical motif. Such books often relate to a distinct locality and vary greatly in terms of their production values. This book, one of a series on Oxfordshire produced by Dr. Graham and Sutton Publishing, should be judged as one of the more thoughtfully constructed of its breed.

Within each section the photographs are arranged chronologically and reflect the aesthetic, technological, and scientific progress of photography. The earliest images (1876-c.1900) are more static and posed as the demands of using unwieldy cameras and plate-film formats dictated. Subsequent innovations popularised photography, making it an affordable hobby for millions. Eastman's celluloid roll film was introduced in 1888, his cartridge roll film in 1895 and the Brownie box camera (initial cost 5 shillings) in 1900. Thus, after the 1880s, the photographs are more intimate, spontaneous, and the subjects show greater movement. Moreover, the book illustrates its main theme (recreation) successfully, and provides evidence of fashion, class, travel, social conditions, occupation, childhood, and gender in Oxfordshire during the period 1875 to 1975.

Any criticisms are minor. A map indicating the location of the communities featured would have been useful for anyone lacking knowledge of the county's geography. Perhaps a separate chapter on, say, recreation within villages would have been preferable to one centred on the not uncommon theme of university life? Understandably, there are relatively fewer images from North Oxfordshire than from the Thames-side settlements, since the river is a magnet for leisure. Finally, it is not explained that a number of photographs come from places, like Abingdon, which at the time they were taken (pre-1974) were outside the old county boundary.

Generally, the photographs have been carefully selected for their clarity and are well annotated. Dr. Graham has illustrated a varied and significant topic in an extensive and stimulating manner.

MARK HATHAWAY