

NOTES

Excavations at Magdalen College School, Oxford

Between May 2007 and September 2008 Oxford Archaeology carried out an archaeological excavation and watching brief at Magdalen College School, Oxford, prior to the redevelopment of the dining hall. An evaluation in the car park area, to the east of the development, revealed evidence for prehistoric postholes, medieval quarrying, a boundary ditch, and a ditch thought to form part of the south-eastern limits of the city's Civil War defences.¹ Consequently a 'strip, map, and record' exercise was carried out within the footprint of the proposed building, and a watching brief was carried out on associated services and groundworks.

The school is situated just off the Plain, bounded by Cowley Place to the west and Iffley Road to the east. Christ Church Sports Ground is located immediately to the south (Fig. 1). The redevelopment lay in the south-west of the school grounds (NGR SP 5221 0580) and occupied an area of 0.15 ha. Most of the site was used as a car park, with the redundant dining hall and utility buildings to the south-west. The site lies on the edge of the river Cherwell alluvial flood plain, overlying terrace gravel and sand, beneath which lies Oxford clay. It is located at about 59 m above OD, about 300 m to the east of the course of the river Cherwell. The site lies just outside the historic core of the city of Oxford, within the parish of St Clement.

RESULTS (Fig. 1)

Excavation Area

Within the main excavation area the natural gravel was cut by a large irregular quarry pit (315), which extended beyond the northern, western, and southern boundaries of the site. The pit was up to 0.8 m deep, which coincided with the level of the Oxford clay underlying the gravel. The pit was filled with slumped gravels and dumps of sandy and clay silts that contained sherds of nineteenth-century pottery. Residual sherds of pottery dating from the early to middle Saxon period and the thirteenth or fourteenth century were also recovered. The irregular nature of the pit and its sterile fills indicate that it probably formed an area of quarrying. Smaller pits were observed at the edge of the quarry. These measured about 0.3 m deep and were probably extensions to the larger quarry. Residual thirteenth- or fourteenth-century pottery was recovered from pit 329.

North-south aligned ditch 332/339 was flat-based, over 1 m wide, 0.75 m deep, and filled with dumps of clay and clay silts. One fill contained fourteen sherds of early to mid-nineteenth-century pottery and residual eighteenth-century pottery. The ditch was cut by a similarly aligned ditch (343), which was 1.5 m wide, 0.7 m deep, and filled with dumps of silty sand, brick, and stone; the feature probably formed a 'French' drain. Late eighteenth- or early nineteenth-century pottery was recovered from the fills. The drain and the fills of the quarry (315) were cut by a third phase of north-south aligned ditch (341 and 346), measuring 1.2 m wide and 0.3 m deep. It was filled with redeposited natural gravel and clay silt that contained nineteenth- or early twentieth-century pottery.

Several rectangular cuts had removed part of the quarry fills. They measured over 7 m long and about 4 m wide and were filled with dumps of clay silt, ash, charcoal, and modern waste.

¹ 'Magdalen College School' (OA TS report, 2006).

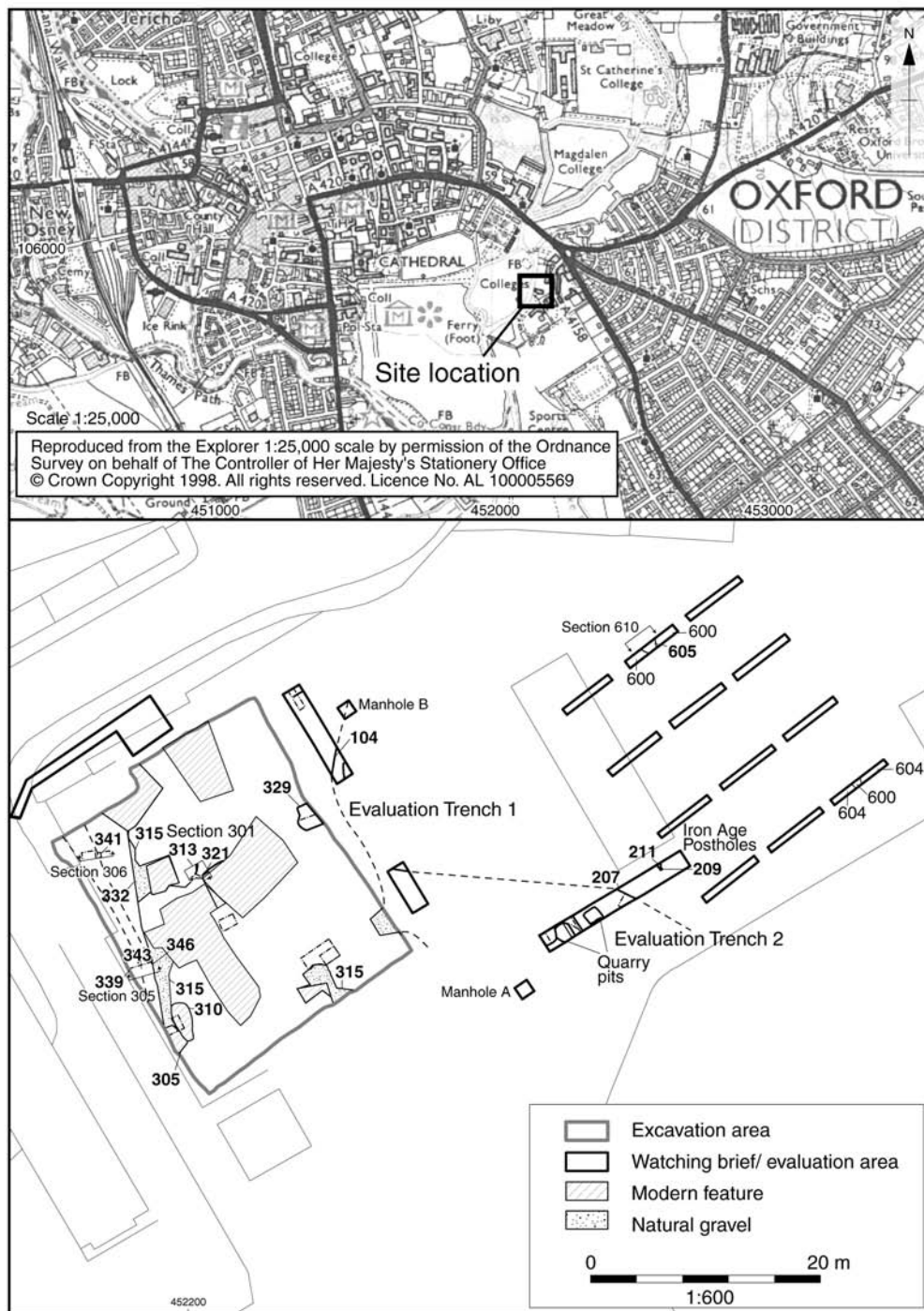


Fig. 1. Site location and plan

Their original function is unclear. A smaller pit (310) in the south of the site was similarly filled and contained nineteenth- or early twentieth-century pottery. Pit 305, to the south of pit 310, measured about 2 m long and 1 m wide; its base was not seen. The pit contained pottery broadly dated to the mid-sixteenth to eighteenth century, although all the fragments were abraded and likely to be residual. The deposits were overlain by modern levelling layers for the school.

Watching Brief Area

The natural gravel was cut by a quarry pit (605) in the northern part of the area. The pit was over 2 m long, and over 0.6 m wide. Its base was not seen, being below the limit of excavation. The feature was filled with a silty clay, which contained animal bone, pottery, and clay-pipe fragments. The pit fill was overlain by a probable cultivation soil, measuring up to 0.4 m in thickness. The soil was also seen in Trench 2 in the 2007 evaluation, where it contained pottery dating from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries. Overlying the cultivation soil was a make-up layer for the existing car park. Similar deposits were also observed within the trenches for two manholes (A and B). The edge of a quarry pit and a continuation of cut 104, seen in Evaluation Trench 1, was observed in manhole B. Quarry-pit fills were also revealed in the service trench to the north of the new dining hall.

DISCUSSION

Two Iron Age postholes were revealed in Evaluation Trench 2, but, with the exception of a worked-flint flake (probably of Mesolithic date), no further evidence of prehistoric activity was observed. It is unlikely that the postholes were isolated features: the centre of the site's elevated position beside the Cherwell would have made it an ideal settlement site, and natural gravel is almost 1 m higher within the car-park area than it is within the area of the new dining-block area. It is more likely that other evidence of settlement was lost to the post-medieval quarrying.

Although no Anglo-Saxon features were excavated, the early to middle Saxon pottery is very important. Little is known of Oxford prior to the tenth century: St Frideswide's minster is thought to date from the late seventh century and to lie within the grounds of Christ Church;² a stone surface at the south end of St Aldate's may have formed a middle-Saxon river crossing, and settlement evidence has been found predating the tenth-century *burh*.³ The pottery recovered from Magdalen College School may be indicative of early to middle Saxon activity on the banks of the Cherwell, possibly relating to a river crossing on the site of Magdalen Bridge. However, the pottery was recovered from a nineteenth-century quarry, and we cannot be certain of its provenance. It is possible that material from elsewhere in Oxford was dumped within the quarry.

The medieval and early post-medieval finds may have derived from nearby activity, possibly farming within Cowley parish. Three north–south aligned medieval ditches were revealed during work on the St Hilda's library extension, to the north-west of the site, and were thought to form boundary ditches, possibly defining the western limits of the parish of St Clement, or St Clement's churchyard, though they could have represented field boundary ditches.⁴ A thirteenth-century ditch (207) revealed within Evaluation Trench 2 may also have formed a field boundary. The ditches located at St Hilda's may have continued into the site of Magdalen College School, and the nineteenth- and twentieth-century ditches revealed during the excavation may have represented a re-establishment of this boundary. It is likely that this boundary was established prior to the

² Anne Dodd, *Oxford before the University: the Late Saxon Crossing and Norman Archaeology of the Town*, Thames Valley Monograph, 17 (Oxford, 2003), pp. 17–19.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

⁴ Andrew Norton and David Thomason, 'Excavations at St Hilda's College, Cowley Place, Oxford', *Oxoniensia*, 70 (2005), p. 336.

nineteenth-century quarry. The quarry generally respected the edge of the ditches and appears to post-date the construction of the late eighteenth-century Iffley Road; it may have been dug to provide gravel for the construction of nearby buildings. The twentieth-century rectangular features may have been associated with the construction of Magdalen College School in 1928.

There was no evidence of the seventeenth-century Civil War defence ditch, thought to have been observed in the evaluation.⁵ What is more likely is that the defences lay about 100 m to the north, as extrapolated in the Oxford Urban Database, and that the 'ditch' seen during the evaluation was actually the edge of the quarrying.⁶

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks are extended to the staff of Magdalen College School and Chris Bates for their co-operation throughout the work. Brian Durham (Oxford City Council) monitored the works, which were carried out by Robin Bashford and Steve Leech. Information on the finds was provided by John Cotter (pottery) and Geraldine Crann (flint). The figure was produced by Julia Moxham. Fuller site description and finds reports can be found in the site archive deposited with the Oxford County Museums Service (accession number: OXCMS 2006.126).

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⁵ Ibid., p. 333, n. 1.

⁶ 'Oxford Urban Archaeology Strategy Project. Urban Archaeological Database Users' Manual' (OA TS, 2002).

Another Giant ‘Peasant’ House? The Site Identification of Priory Cottages, Steventon, Oxfordshire

Priory Cottages forms half of a larger complex of timber-framed buildings at the west end of The Causeway, Steventon. The complex has been divided since 1843 or earlier between two properties, now called Priory Cottages, on the west, and Priory House, on the east. The deeds of Priory Cottages go back no earlier than the 1890s,¹ and there is no firm evidence of the descent of either property before 1843, when the present Priory Cottages were owned by W. Stone and let to six tenants, and Priory House was owned and occupied by Thomas Stevens.² The combined building will be referred to here as the Priory.

Previous assessments³ of the tradition that the Priory was the site of the house of Steventon Priory until the late fourteenth century, and subsequently of the manor house that belonged to Westminster Abbey after 1399, argued that the tradition ‘must *prima facie* be rejected’, and ‘remains unproven’. The Priory is not shown on a map of the manor demesne in 1757, and is separated on the west from the site of the 1757 farmhouse, now Manor Farm, by Mill Street and a moat.

Despite that, those assessments accepted the traditional identification as ‘probable’ – firstly because the Priory had the same plan as the sixteenth-century manor house, with a hall and west and east cross wings of varying dates (a plan rare locally in non-gentry houses), and secondly because the Hearth Tax assessments of the 1660s list only one house, the manor farm, with as many hearths as the Priory would have had; other circumstantial evidence appeared consistent with the identification. The hypothesis required that the Priory had been sold off between a survey of 1654 and 1757, despite no direct evidence of such a sale, and only the indirect evidence of a change in size of the curtilage between the first survey and modern maps.

The dendrochronological results on Priory Cottages,⁴ however, reveal several discrepancies with the extensive documentation of the manorial site.⁵ Some of the discrepancies are irreconcilable.

It is necessary at this point to recall the nature of the documentation. For the fourteenth century and earlier, although the descent of the manor can be reconstructed in detail from official sources, the only direct evidence about the manor house and farm of the prior and his successors are inventories made by royal officials during the war with France, and a mention in 1302 of a recent enlargement of the prior’s court.⁶

After the acquisition of the manor in 1399 by Westminster Abbey, however, the manor became subject to Westminster’s bureaucracy. Unlike the small alien house, with its intermittent priors, and then the short-lived lay lessees and owners who had preceded it, the abbey maintained continuity of administration, and its officials were subject to annual audits, for which enrolled accounts were prepared at both local and central levels. The fifteenth-century accounts were compiled, after

¹ Information from the National Trust, c.1970.

² Bodl. Tithe Map 359, plots 2 and 4 (consulted 1969).

³ For this and next paragraph, C. R. J. Currie, ‘Smaller domestic architecture and society in North Berkshire c.1300–c.1650, with special reference to Steventon’ (Oxford D. Phil. thesis, 1976), pp. 32–4; idem, ‘Larger medieval houses in the Vale of White Horse’, *Oxoniensia*, 57 (1992), p. 182.

⁴ Daniel Miles and Michael Worthington, ‘Tree Ring Dates, List 126: Oxford Dendrochronological Laboratory, General List’, VA 33 (2002), p. 5; ‘Tree Ring Dates, List 152: General List, Oxford Dendrochronological Laboratory’, VA 35 (2004), p. 100.

⁵ Currie, ‘Larger medieval houses’, pp. 182–8.

⁶ *VCH Berks.*, 2, p. 112.

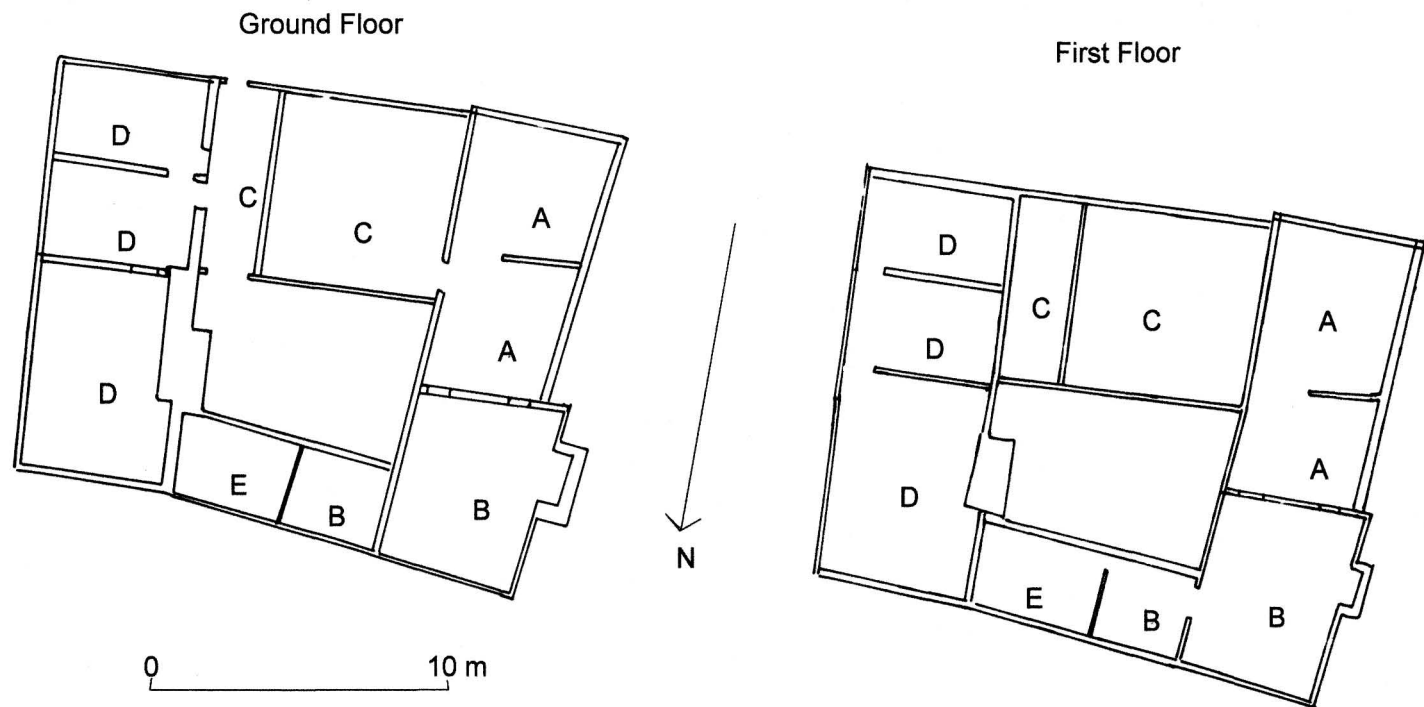


Fig. 1. Priory House and Cottages, Steventon: sketch plans of medieval structures.

checking, from bills submitted by the men on the spot: increasingly those bills were on paper and were intended to be temporary, but a few of them, particularly those for more extensive works, survive in the archives.

For the fifteenth century most of the enrolled accounts of the sergeants, and later rent collectors and lessees, of the manor survive,⁷ and in the mid-fifteenth century all but one (1457–8) of the gap years can be checked against the accounts of Westminster Abbey's warden of the manors of Richard II and Anne of Bohemia, which included Steventon.⁸ None of those officials had any incentive to incur, or reimburse, expenditure on buildings without recompense and acquittal from the abbey.

After 1518 the series of manorial account rolls no longer survives, but in the middle decades of the sixteenth century the abbey, and its successors – the dean and chapter, the revived abbey, and the revived dean and chapter – retained the bills submitted for building works on the site. It was only when the effects of long leases to gentle tenants became apparent in the Elizabethan period that the institution stopped reimbursing building work, and therefore stopped having to retain accounts of what it had paid for. It is precisely during the period of regular control by the abbey that the most serious discrepancies between the tree-ring dates on the Priory Cottages and the accounts of work on the manor site arise.

Priory Cottages' north-west block and its small western projection (B on Fig. 1) was formerly thought to be a chamber erected in 1463, after a long period when existing buildings of the manor house were kept in repair, but not substantially added to; but the only datable sample from it was felled in winter 1443/4, when no new chamber is recorded at the manor site, and only very minor repair works – thatching on various manor and rectory buildings;⁹ in the following year, substantial repairs to the sheephouse, and patching up an inner wall (*paries*) of the solar with laths and daub costing 1s. 8d.¹⁰

On the other hand, the small linking part of the north range of Priory Cottages (E on Fig. 1), adjoining and supported by the east courtyard range (D) (part of Priory House), was dendro-dated to 1462, and timbers from the hall (south range) (C) to 1462 and 1463. Putatively the east courtyard range (D), since it supports range (E), and is abutted by the hall, must also date from 1462 or earlier. The new chamber at the manor house in 1463, for which not only the engrossed account, but also a detailed bill survives, did not include any replacement for the hall.

The phenomena might appear to be saved in part by supposing that the east courtyard range (D) was the manor house's new chamber built in 1463. But that is impossible, because in 1551 the east cross chamber adjoining the hall of the manor house was taken down and rebuilt, and very detailed accounts survive of the process. Moreover, it would be impossible to have demolished the wing (D) in 1551 without causing the collapse of the range (E), which, as seen above, dates from 1462. Also in 1551 the manor house's west cross chamber was extensively repaired, but as this writer observed in puzzlement in an earlier analysis, there is no evidence of such work in the surviving buildings; he presumed that the work related in part to the north linking building (E), now (as seen above) dated to 1462, not 1551, and in part to a lost southern extension. Aerial photography, however, gives no sign of the footings for any such extension.¹¹ Finally, the manor house in 1558 had only one parlour, and it was necessary to explain what looks like a second, service-end, parlour in the east courtyard range as a kitchen.¹²

⁷ Currie, 'Larger medieval houses', pp. 182–8.

⁸ Westminster Abbey Muniments 24020–30, 24032–4.

⁹ Ibid., 7468.

¹⁰ Ibid., 7469.

¹¹ English Heritage, National Monuments Record, Swindon, Aerial Photography of England, Meridian Airmaps Ltd, Sortie: MAL/70002; Frame: V 102; 23 Jan. 1970. I owe thanks to David Clark for access to this photograph.

¹² Currie, 'Larger medieval houses', p. 195.

A lesser discrepancy also arises in relation to the pre-Westminster period. The south-west block of Priory Cottages was thought to be the prior's great chamber. The prior's house had a chamber in 1324, and owing to the confiscation of most of his income during the Hundred Years War, any rebuilding would have taken place before 1337.¹³ Dendrochronology, on the other hand, indicates that the building is much more likely to date from wartime than the years immediately before.¹⁴ There are essentially three ways of dealing with the discrepancies. One is to assert that the dendrochronology is simply wrong. That is most unlikely. Secondly, to assert that the documents are 'wrong' is to assert that fifteenth-century accountants put up a succession of substantial buildings, all but one of them out of the goodness of their hearts without seeking repayment, and could have afforded to do so, even though they continued to claim for other repairs almost every year; and that, conversely, their successor submitted a very detailed week-by-week claim in 1551 for demolition work and then a new structure that was never actually built, as the chapter's staff could readily have verified. These claims are perhaps even more unlikely than that the dendrochronologists are in error. The third and simplest explanation is that the tree-ring dates and accounts do not relate to the same site: that the unproven identification is incorrect; the manorial documentation relates to a building which was not Priory Cottages, and which presumably stood on the site of the later Manor Farm. This explanation does not require an implausible degree of special pleading.

If Priory Cottages and Priory House were not the manor house, what were they? How can the apparent absence of a second large house, besides the manor 'farm', in Steventon in the Hearth Tax assessments be explained? Who could have added such substantial extensions in the fifteenth century to an earlier house?

Firstly, the Priory was not the rectory or vicarage. There was no rectory house in the fifteenth century,¹⁵ and the vicarage house was the Old Vicarage, further along The Causeway, enfranchised in 1841¹⁶ and still with a medieval house on the site.¹⁷

There was only one manor in Steventon, and the tenants' tofts were mainly held by customary tenure, later copyhold, in the late Middle Ages; some copyholds survived until the 1920s.¹⁸ A few medieval tenements were freehold. Of the freeholds, only two still had houses in the mid-sixteenth century; one was a cottage, and the other can be identified as the site of the present no. 99 The Causeway.¹⁹ Thus Priory Cottages and Priory House, whenever they were enfranchised, were evidently held by customary or copyhold tenure in the fifteenth century.

The problem of the Hearth Tax list can be explained if we suppose that the two parts of the house, now Priory House and Priory Cottages, separated before 1843, were already separate by 1663. The Hearth Tax lists repeatedly show the Old Vicarage five entries after the 'farm', and the assessors may thus have started at Manor Farm and worked east along The Causeway. In that case the Priory may have included two or three of the houses which in 1663 were held by Richard Smalbone (two or four hearths), John Smalbone (four or five hearths), and Anne Stevens (three or four hearths).²⁰ But it would be rash to assume the identification, and even if it is correct, an attempt to work back through the court rolls to establish the descent would be very prone to error, because of long mid-seventeenth-century gaps in the rolls, multiple holdings of unnamed houses, and duplication of personal names. The Smalbones and Stevenses were leading yeoman families of Steventon in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

¹³ Currie, 'Smaller domestic architecture', pp. 21–2.

¹⁴ Miles and Worthington, 'Tree Ring Dates, List 152', p. 100.

¹⁵ Currie, 'Larger medieval houses', p. 182.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 195.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 196–7.

¹⁸ E.g., Tudor House, 67 The Causeway: *ibid.*, p. 199.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 197, 205, 207.

²⁰ TNA, E 179/243/25, nos 522, 537.

Nevertheless, if the Priory was built by customary tenants, a context can be suggested for its fourteenth- and fifteenth-century development. In the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries discrepant total numbers of tenants of the manor may be explained on the assumption that Steventon contained the equivalent of eighty-eight half-virgate holdings.²¹ If all had standard frontages on The Causeway, the Priory eventually covered several such frontages. The south-west chamber block at Priory Cottages is one of five apparently fourteenth-century wings still standing in the village.²²

A succession of wealthy tenants, with multiple holdings, emerged in Steventon during the fifteenth century, though usually the most successful of such families leased the manor, and presumably lived in the manor house. In the later 1430s the integrity of customary tenements – including the rule that houses could not be conveyed separately from land – was apparently abandoned, and from the 1440s onwards, and especially from the 1460s, the market in small pieces of land and in houses was brisk.²³ Those conditions for the first time allowed the accumulation of rows of houses along The Causeway.

Possibly, therefore, the fourteenth-century chamber (A) had a small hall, perhaps even to the west, and following the chamber's extension northwards (B) in 1443–4, a later owner combined it with the adjoining house to the east and built, in 1462–3, an ambitious new hall (C) and east cross wing (D), and a linking front range (E).

Following, presumably, still later accumulations of further curtilages eastwards, the house was further enlarged in the post-medieval period, including a building with a partly smoke-blackened roof (kitchen, brewhouse, or malthouse?) and a long barn. After the hall had been ceiled over, the function of rooms could be rearranged, permitting the house eventually to be redivided, probably by 1663 and certainly by 1843, on different lines, separating the hall in Priory Cottages from its service wing in Priory House. The removal of the hall ceiling by MacGregor in 1949²⁴ has inadvertently made the task of understanding those later phases more difficult.

C. R. J. CURRIE

²¹ Currie, 'Smaller domestic architecture', pp. 83–5.

²² Currie, 'Larger medieval houses', pp. 197–203.

²³ Currie, 'Smaller domestic architecture', pp. 90–110.

²⁴ Plans in possession of the author.

E. A. Greening Lamborn: Benefactor of *Oxoniensia*

Contributors to *Oxoniensia* have every reason to be grateful to the late E. A. Greening Lamborn. In the months before his death at the age of 72, on 24 August 1950, he had started to draw up plans to set up the Greening Lamborn Trust for ‘the furtherance of the study of the history, architecture, topography and heraldry of Oxford and its neighbourhood’ – aims very like those of the OAHS. The Trust has been, and continues to be, a generous benefactor to *Oxoniensia*. Yet, despite this, no appreciation of Greening Lamborn has ever appeared in its pages. Given the extent of his achievements, the range of his interests, the amount of evidence available, and the affection and admiration he inspired, this is surprising. The sixtieth anniversary year of his death seems an appropriate time to remedy the situation.

Edmund Arnold Greening Lamborn was born on 19 November 1877, possibly at 101 Cowley Road, where he spent his early childhood.¹ He was the second son of Arnold Edwin Lamborn, a ‘carrier’, but formerly an auctioneer and subsequently an insurance valuer, and Susannah, daughter of Richard Greening of Temple Cowley, a farmer.² He had an elder brother, who died aged only six months, and a younger sister, Elsbett Mary, born in 1879.³

Greening Lamborn, or E.A.G.L., as he referred to himself, was not a graduate, and declared himself to have been educated by ‘books, buildings, and the companionship of wild creatures.’⁴ His love of animals is apparent in the first known photograph of him, which features a bulldog (Fig. 1). Despite his lack of university education, he excelled, and received recognition, in a remarkable variety of fields – education, local history, especially heraldry, archaeology, architecture, poetry, drama, and mathematics.

E.A.G.L. was first and foremost a pioneering educationalist. He had started as a pupil teacher in 1892, at the age of 15, and then, at the age of 20, probably attended Culham College, Abingdon, for two years, where his father had also been a student.⁵ He taught at St Mary Magdalen Boys’ School, in Gloucester Green, until 1908, by which time he was headmaster, and was then appointed headmaster of East Oxford Council Boys’ School, Union Street, at the age of only 30. He held this position for thirty-six years, until he retired in 1944 (see Fig. 2). East Oxford School comprised three related schools, the boys’ school, a girls’ school, and an infants’ school, which acted as a preparatory school for the other two. Each one had its own buildings, each holding about 200 children, on one site.

Lamborn was a spectacularly successful and inspiring teacher. Although in some ways he was a traditionalist – a strict disciplinarian, who did not spare the rod, and who demanded the highest academic standards of his pupils, his methods at East Oxford were progressive and experimental. He introduced a semi-tutorial teaching system: about twenty of the brightest pupils, regardless of age, were taught in a private study group, where they had individual attention. Figure 3 shows that this group included girls, almost certainly from the East Oxford Girls’ School. A report from a schools inspector in 1930 wrote, ‘The School’s main aim, as described by the Headmaster, is to

¹ Susanne Shatford and Trevor Williams, *The Changing Faces of St Clement’s and East Oxford*, bk 1 (Witney, 1997), p. 117. The house was formerly 43, but was renumbered in 1893. The Cowley St James Marriage Register, 30 Apr. 1872, gives his father’s address as 32 Cowley Road.

² Ibid., gives his occupation as auctioneer; Cowley Saints Mary and John, Baptismal Register, 21 Nov. 1877, entry for Edmund Arnold, gives his father’s occupation as carrier, as does that for his daughter, Elsbett Mary, 17 Sept. 1879. Shatford and Williams, *Changing Faces*, p. 177, describe him as an insurance valuer, working from his home, 101 Cowley Road.

³ Cowley Saints Mary and John Baptismal Register, 23 Feb. 1873, Roland Edwin Charles Lambourne [*sic*]; Cowley St James, Burial Register, 7 Aug. 1873, Roland Edwin Charles, ‘6 mos’. For Elsbett Mary’s baptism see n. 2 above.

⁴ *Who’s Who* (London, 1940), p. 1811.

⁵ Shatford and Williams, *Changing Faces*, p. 117.



Fig. 1. The earliest known photograph of E. A. Greening Lamborn. (*By kind permission of Oxfordshire Studies.*)



Fig. 2. E. A. Platchey's 1939 sketch of Greening Lamborn ('Ikey'), which used to hang in the assembly hall of East Oxford School. (By kind permission of Oxfordshire Studies.)



Fig. 3. The private study group at East Oxford School. 'Ikey' is standing at the back.
(By kind permission of Oxfordshire Studies.)

train boys to study for themselves. ... The teacher's part is mainly that of tutor.⁶ As a result of this, a record number of children gained scholarships to grammar schools. The headmaster also gave detailed careers advice, and many ex-pupils went on to have distinguished careers.

Boys would be unlikely 'to study for themselves' unless their interest was aroused. As Lamborn reflected in some manuscript notes for a lecture on the teaching of local history:

It matters very little what a child *knows* when he leaves school, he can't know much, but it matters everything what his heart is set upon: the things he loves, his tastes and interests, these are far more important than any knowledge that we can cram into him in the few years of his school life.⁷

He tried, with considerable success, to awaken the children's interest in whatever he taught. He took his boys on field trips, usually in a lorry lent by Messrs Tuckwell, nearby builders' merchants and themselves ex-pupils, to help them to appreciate the things he loved – bird song, wild flowers, and medieval parish churches.⁸

In English he introduced creative writing by chalking up half of an exciting telephone conversation on the blackboard and inviting his pupils to fill in the other half.⁹ In mathematics his emphasis was on mental arithmetic, as outlined in his aptly titled book *Reason in Arithmetic*,¹⁰ for he considered that far too much teaching time was spent on cumbersome mathematical paperwork,

⁶ OxS, Box 417, Report by H. M. Inspector, C. B. Hunt, 2 Dec. 1930.

⁷ OxS MS SV920.

⁸ Maida Stanier, 'Headmaster half a century ahead of his time', *Oxford Mail*, 29 Nov. 1977.

⁹ Stanier, 'Headmaster'.

¹⁰ E. A. Greening Lamborn, *Reason in Arithmetic* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1930). For an appreciation of this see David Harding, pp. 200–1 below.

which squeezed other subjects out of the curriculum.¹¹ He was known to dislike examinations.¹² In *Who's Who* he described one of his hobbies as 'educating the education officials',¹³ and indeed school inspectors dared to inspect East Oxford only when he was absent. His methods were so widely admired that the school was visited by teachers from all over Europe and even as far afield as India.¹⁴ Lamborn was himself an occasional Board of Education Inspector, and the President of the Board, H. A. L. Fisher (also President of the British Academy, and known as the 'historian in the cabinet of Lloyd George') described him as 'the greatest elementary teacher in the United Kingdom'.¹⁵

One of E.A.G.L.'s main interests was in local history. Among his earliest publications was *Stories from the History of Berkshire*,¹⁶ and among his last was *The Golden Cross and its Guests: Seven Centuries of an Oxford Inn*.¹⁷ His article on 'The churches of Bix' appeared in the first volume of *Oxoniensia* in 1936, alongside contributions from such legendary figures as H. E. Salter, E. T. Leeds, F. M. Stenton, Helen Cam, W. A. Pantin, and J. N. L. Myers. He followed this up with two more articles, in 1937 and 1940, on 'The ruins of Beaumont Palace' and 'The arms of the Chaucer tomb at Ewelme'. He frequently contributed to *Notes and Queries*, and there is a collection in the Bodleian of no less than eighty-nine of these articles, mostly on heraldry and genealogy.¹⁸ He took a keen interest in archaeology – indeed, the historian C. R. L. Fletcher called him 'the best self-trained archaeologist in the British Isles'.¹⁹ In this capacity he wrote several excavation reports for the Oxford Archaeological Society, along with H. E. Salter and G. N. Clark.²⁰ He was an authority on heraldry, especially armorial glass, and his final publication, in 1949, was *The Armorial Glass of the Oxfordshire Diocese*.²¹ He was also an architectural historian. *The Story of Architecture in Oxford Stone*, published by the Clarendon Press, initially in 1912, is still widely consulted.²² Much of his heraldic and architectural writing focused on parish churches – for example, *The Parish Church: its Architecture and Antiquities*. In this he linked parish churches with another enduring love – poetry: 'The most precious inheritance of the English is their poetry and their parish churches. These are our unique possessions, our peculiar treasures.'²³ Accordingly, he published widely on literature – among other works a guide to the appreciation of *The Golden Treasury*²⁴ and, with G. B. Harrison, *Shakespeare, the Man and his Stage*.²⁵ Harrison is still well known as an authority on Shakespeare, and merited a lengthy article in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, but correspondence shows that Greening Lamborn was the senior partner and held the copyright, paying Harrison an, apparently inadequate, fee for his work.²⁶ His interests also extended to literary criticism and to prose.²⁷ He was president of the Oxford branch of the English

¹¹ Ibid., preface and p. 1.

¹² Stanier, 'Headmaster'.

¹³ *Who's Who*, p. 1811.

¹⁴ Stanier, 'Headmaster'.

¹⁵ Obituary, *Oxford Times*.

¹⁶ E. A. Greening Lamborn, *Stories from the History of Berkshire* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1908).

¹⁷ Blackwell, Oxford, 1949.

¹⁸ Bodleian Library Catalogue ([Telnet library.ox.ac.uk](http://telnet.library.ox.ac.uk)), bookstack 2194.e.49. The collection of articles (1941–50), includes MS notes by the author.

¹⁹ Obituary, *Oxford Times*.

²⁰ Bodleian Library Catalogue, bookstack 2194.e.39 (v.).

²¹ *The Armorial Glass of the Oxford Diocese, 1250–1859* (Oxford University Press, London, 1949).

²² For an assessment of this see David Clark, pp. 198–9 below.

²³ E. A. Greening Lamborn, *The Parish Church: its Architecture and Antiquities* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1929), preface.

²⁴ *Poetic Values: a Guide to the Appreciation of The Golden Treasury* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1928).

²⁵ *Shakespeare, the Man and his Stage* (Oxford University Press, London, 1924).

²⁶ Bodl. MS Eng. Misc. c.331, fols 21–2: letter from G. B. Harrison to Kenneth Sisam, Secretary of OUP, 1 Feb. 1923.

²⁷ *The Rudiments of Criticism*, 1st edn (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1917), 2nd edn (Oxford, 1925); *Expression in Speech and Writing* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1922); *Present-day Prose* (Sidgwick and Jackson, London, 1928).

Association, and in the East Oxford School log book declared that he was succeeding Michael Sadler and W. B. Yeats, and that Gilbert Murray and John Masefield were his vice-presidents.²⁸ He was an examiner in English poetics for the University of London's Diploma in Dramatic Art, along with such distinguished figures as F. S. Boas, for over a decade.²⁹ He had himself been awarded a University of London Diploma for his poetry and prose in 1927, which was renewed in 1935–7.³⁰

Lamborn was clearly regarded as an authority by contemporary scholars in several disciplines. As an undergraduate, R. H. C. Davis, later a Fellow of Merton College and a distinguished Professor of Medieval History at the University of Birmingham, wrote to him from Balliol in 1939: 'Without you, I should soon have been struggling in the mire, for besides giving me detailed help, it was only you who taught me the importance of local history.'³¹ To judge from numerous letters written to him during the 1940s, the architectural historian John H. Harvey admired him greatly and regarded him as a friend and mentor, using him as a referee when he applied to the University of London for an extension lectureship there.³² Commenting on his 'fine account' of the Golden Cross, Harvey admitted, 'I had not the faintest idea that even in Oxford an inn with such a history existed, but it takes an EAGL to point these things out!'³³ Apart from Harvey's acknowledgements, Lamborn's name still features in footnotes and acknowledgements to a number of books, both as teacher and learned authority.³⁴ In 1921 he was awarded an Honorary M.A. of the University of Oxford,³⁵ and in 1946 a road in Rose Hill, Lambourn Road, was named after him at the request of Lincoln College. The College Steward appears to have been responsible for the all too frequent misspelling. In a letter to the City Engineer recommending various names he wrote, '... in view of Mr. E. A. Greening Lambourn's close association with the history of the district it would be a fitting gesture if the name of Lambourn, which appears to be a very old local name, could be included.'³⁶ So strongly did Lamborn feel about the spelling of his name that he used to return letters to their senders if it was incorrect.³⁷

'Ikey', as his pupils affectionately called him, was one of Oxford's great characters – of diminutive stature, with a small pointed beard and round-rimmed spectacles (see Fig. 4). He usually wore bright red or yellow socks, and often his trousers were at 'half-mast'.³⁸ He was eccentric, immensely learned, strict, yet generous and humane, and had a great sense of humour. Neither his deep love for the natural world nor his love of parish churches was inspired by religion, for he was an agnostic.³⁹

²⁸ Quoted by Stanier, 'Headmaster'.

²⁹ I.e., 1927–37: *Who's Who*, p. 1811.

³⁰ Brian J. Mobley, 'E. A. Greening Lamborn: Oxford Historian/Headmaster', *Oxfordshire Local History Association*, 3 (1989), p. 63.

³¹ OxS MS, 'Letters and notes found in books which belonged to Mr Greening Lamborn', unfoliated, letter of 6 July 1939.

³² MS Bodl Eng. Misc. c.331, file 2, letter of 30 June 1948. Most of the contents of files 3 and 4 are letters from Harvey.

³³ OxS, 'Odd letters and notes found in books which belonged to Mr Greening Lamborn', Letter from John Harvey, 3 July 1949.

³⁴ See, e.g., John H. Harvey, *Henry Yevele c.1320 to 1400. The Life of an English Architect* (London, 1944); *Gothic England: a Survey of National Culture, 1300–1550* (London, 1947). In the latter he quotes Lamborn directly for his view that the Perpendicular style, rather than being a decadent form of Gothic, is 'its finest manifestation'. I am indebted to David Clark for these references. See also Peter Sawyer, *From Roman Britain to Norman England* (London, 1978, p. 1 '... to my own teachers from E. A. Greening Lamborn to Christopher Cheney'.

³⁵ *University of Oxford Supplement to the Historical Register of 1900* (Oxford, 1934), p. 29.

³⁶ Lincoln College Archives, letter of 29 July 1946, reproduced by kind permission of the Rector and Fellows of Lincoln College, Oxford.

³⁷ Ann Spokes Symonds, personal communication.

³⁸ Mobley, 'E. A. Greening Lamborn', p. 64.

³⁹ Ann Spokes Symonds, 'Peter Spokes: an early conservationist', *Seventieth Report of the Oxford Preservation Trust* (1996), p. 35.

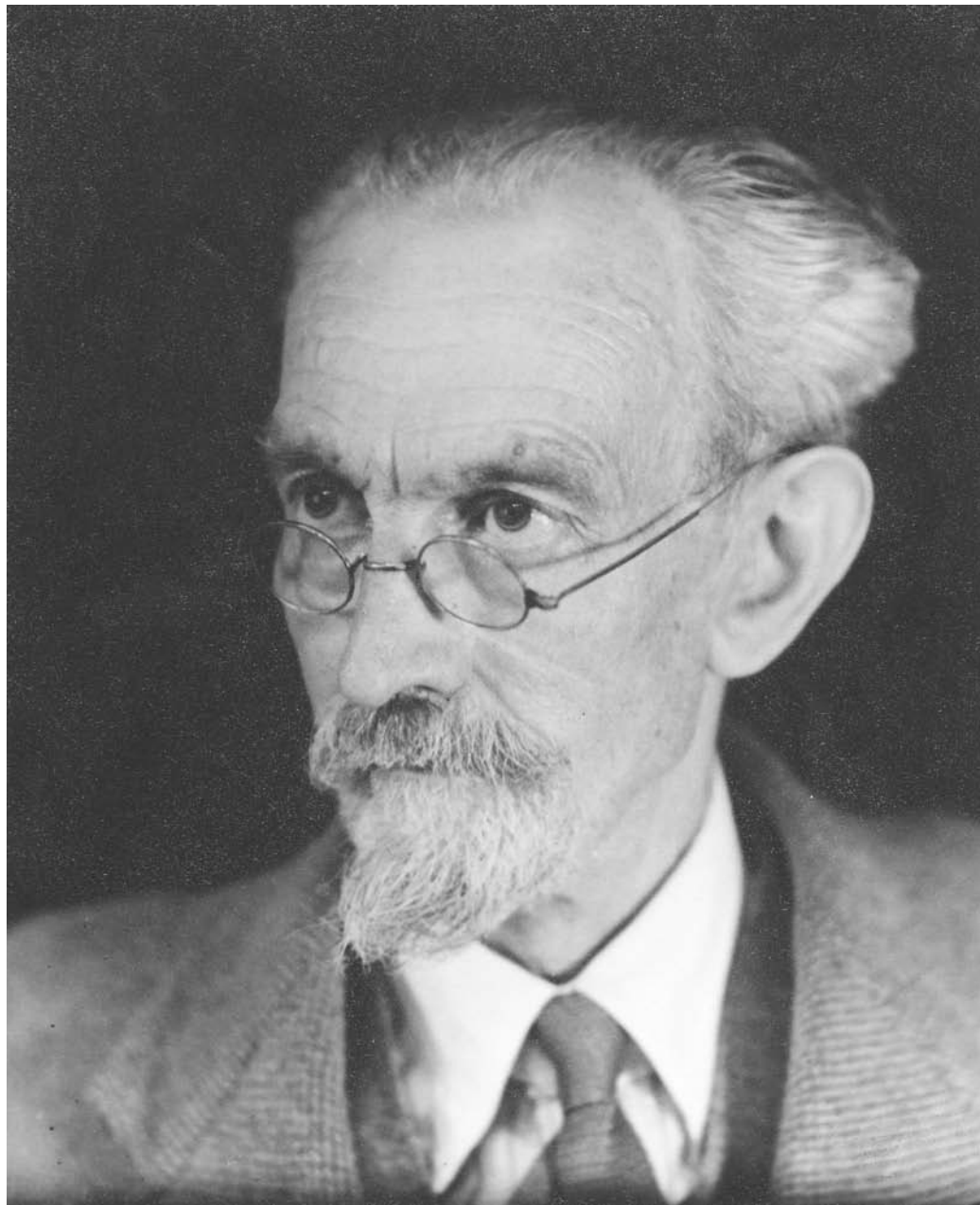


Fig. 4. E. A. Greening Lamborn. (*By kind permission of the Bodleian Library.*)

For many years E.A.G.L. lived at 34 Oxford Road, Littlemore (see Plate 17), where he eventually died. He had moved there from a house on the Cowley Road by 1936.⁴⁰ His sister, Elsbett, who was a district nurse and midwife, lived with him, keeping house and looking after him devotedly. She continued to live in the house until 1965.⁴¹ Lamborn was an avid book collector, and book annotator,⁴² and when he died Elsbett presented his papers and much of his library to the Bodleian and completed the setting up of the Greening Lamborn Trust.⁴³ He described himself as a 'man of letters'; in a former age he would surely have been a Renaissance polymath. Perhaps he deserves an entry in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* or even a blue plaque to commemorate him on the walls of 34 Oxford Road, Littlemore.

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DIANA WOOD

⁴⁰ *Kelly's Directory of Oxford*, 1936, lists him as living at Oxford Road, although no house number is given. *Kelly's Directory* for 1907 lists him as living at 20 Cowley Road.

⁴¹ *Kelly's Directory* lists her for the last time in 1966.

⁴² OxS, 'Four exercise books, 3: MS notes by P. S. Spokes of books in the Lamborn collection with marginalia.'

⁴³ OxS, Box 417, Will of Elspeth Mary Lamborn, dated 6 Feb. 1958, refers to a deed dated 30 March 1951 'constituting' the Greening Lamborn Trust.



Plate 17. 34 Oxford Road, Littlemore, Oxford. (*Photograph by author.*) [Wood, p. 197.]

***The Story of Architecture in Oxford Stone* by E. A. Greening Lamborn (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1912)**

One of E. A. Greening Lamborn's most accessible books on architecture is a small volume, *The Story of Architecture in Oxford Stone*, published in 1912 by the Clarendon Press. The main theme – that architecture evolves in response to structural requirements – reflects the confidence of the times in Darwinian explanations and seems to have been developed as a reaction to a perceived view that medieval architectural history can be described by a focus on the development of window styles (Early English, Decorated, Perpendicular). Lamborn held that as architectural form follows the function it is required to perform ('like needs produce like results'), it evolves as these functions change over time, adapting to new requirements in an evolutionary way as if it were an organism in a Darwinian world. Architectural history is thus the study of this adaptation from a single primitive type to the variety of buildings available for study when the book was written. He regarded the fixation on window style as misguided, holding that it was a more fundamental change – from the post-and-beam construction of the ancient world to the arch – and then the evolution from the Romanesque rounded arch to the pointed Early English to the flatter sixteenth-century arches, and the systems of vaulting associated with these – which represented the true evolutionary process in architecture.

Greening Lamborn regarded Classicism as 'arrogant and ugly' and the triumph of the rich and powerful over the inspired craftsman. He praised buildings of the Gothic Revival when they adapted the style to modern needs, such as for St Swithun's building at Magdalen (Bodley and Garner, 1880–4) and churches which had wide open interior spaces rather than being nave-and-aisle medieval copies. On the other hand, he described the buildings of Keble College as 'unfortunate'. He was against decoration which had no function – mini-battlements in the sixteenth century and applied 'half-timbering', for example – which he regarded as a 'sign of failing artistic sense'. In the book he has an ongoing concern that buildings should be beautiful. Man having evolved 'higher senses', he believed that all buildings should aspire to be 'architecture', and in one of his pointed attacks on the state of building in the early twentieth century, that the *quid pro quo* for getting planning permission should be that the result enhanced its environment.

The evolution of architectural styles is also seen in Banister Fletcher's *History of Architecture*.¹ Concern about truth and craftsmanship echoes the position of the Arts and Crafts Movement, as expressed by William Morris and others, while his distaste for unnecessary decoration was becoming a popular feeling, memorably expressed in Adolf Loos's '*Ornament und Verbrechen*' ('Ornament and Crime').² As this was not available in English until 1913, it seems unlikely that he would have read it. On the other hand, his argument that architecture has developed as a response to structural problems is carefully argued and plausible, and he also recommends his readers to study real buildings rather than photographs.

This is part of the difficulty which today's reader will encounter when reading the book. On the one hand, he demonstrates a familiarity with buildings the length and breadth of England, and particularly those in Oxford and Oxfordshire, and has studied them carefully, while, on the other, the evidence supporting his thesis is circumstantial. His interpretation of the buildings he has seen suffers from three main faults – firstly, an acceptance of the mythology of the time regarding the architects of some key buildings. He does not hesitate, for example, to attribute the Canterbury Quad at St John's to Inigo Jones and the Old Ashmolean to Wren. Secondly, he is overly ready to make value-judgements based on his stylistic preferences, and to some extent these cloud his

¹ Banister Fletcher, *A History of Architecture for the Student, Craftsman and Amateur*, 1st edn (London, 1896).

² Adolf Loos, 'Ornament und Verbrechen' was an article published in 1908.

judgement: for example, his damnation of mass housing as 'pigeon-holes, rabbit-hutches and dog-kennels'. These are, however, venial faults, but more serious is his difficulty in interpreting the physical evidence that he discovers. For example, his discussion of the architectural history of Oxford Cathedral is confused by statements such as 'the Norman builders covered the aisles with stone vaults, but did not venture to arch the ceilings of the nave or the choir ... the nave, like most Norman naves, remains incomplete ... being still covered by a timber roof.' Close study of the building³ shows that the cathedral was a complete Norman church. Indeed, there is visual evidence in the south transept that this had a stone vault, and the same is probably true of the choir and chancel, where there are similar springing pilasters. The building was damaged in a fire of 1190, rebuilt, extended in various phases, and re-roofed in about 1500. The incompleteness of the nave, to which he refers, may be because Wolsey demolished a number of bays after 1524, while he was building his college on the site – his intention being to build a new chapel at the north-west of the main quadrangle.

We must, however, forgive Lamborn for this, too, as what shines through the book is his passion for the subject and his wish to inform by forcing the reader to question past orthodoxies and examine the buildings themselves in search of the answers. As the present writer is only too well aware, our understanding of buildings can in many cases only be imperfect, and future generations will bring different techniques and insights to bear on topics which puzzle us today. So it was a hundred years ago when Lamborn was writing, but he is worth reading today for the view he gives of the concerns of the time – many still with us today – and his personal approach to the subject.

DAVID CLARK

³ John Blair, ed., 'St Frideswide's Monastery at Oxford: archaeological and architectural studies', *Oxoniensia*, 53 (1988), pp. 2–275.

***Reason in Arithmetic* by E. A. Greening Lamborn (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1930)**

When primary education is preparing for still more changes, it is timely to look again at Greening Lamborn's *Reason in Arithmetic*, which sets out what in 1930 were considered revolutionary ideas. It is a slim volume, a mere 140 pages, but it poses several questions. Why, for example, is it currently priced at over £90 on Amazon, when much of it is apparently out of date? Why have its enlightened ideas not made more of an impact on the teaching of mathematics in the past eighty years? Why has it not been reprinted?

In fact, the book is out of date only because its numerous examples deal with the plethora of different units which schoolchildren were forced to struggle with until decimalization in the 1960s. What makes this book valuable is Lamborn's inspired insight into what a child needs to understand mathematics. The essential ideas behind his thinking are still applicable today.

Lamborn's concern was to make arithmetic both relevant and accessible to children, while simultaneously giving them a firm grounding in the subject. He urged the educational mandarins to think again: 'Nine tenths of school arithmetic is meaningless and purposeless to children, because it bears no relation to anything they will have to do when they have left school.'¹ He recognized the fear that many children have of mathematics and the problems of teaching the subject. He saw that it is understood by different children in different ways, so from a very early age they need to be taught by experts who are sympathetic to this fact. Because each child is an individual, a classroom where everyone is expected to tackle a particular problem the same way, following an artificial set of rules, is far from ideal. Worst of all is the mechanical learning of meaningless tables and mystifying formulas, which some children find extremely difficult. Lamborn's emphasis was on practical, mental arithmetic rather than on academic problems:

The vast majority of their [children's] arithmetic has been paper-work. And their paper-work has not been directed, as it should have been, to help them to set out clearly their *reasoning* [author's italics] about numerical processes so that ultimately they may think and calculate without the aid of pen and ink.²

This approach had the added advantage that it cut down the school hours normally devoted to arithmetic, 'the cuckoo in the educational nest', as Lamborn called it, freeing time for other studies.³

Lamborn began by encouraging his boys to explore how numbers work through playing with everyday objects such as sticks, boxes, and real money. They would measure and weigh objects and explore different combinations of numbers, until they understood what they were doing. Decimals were introduced right at the beginning, because, said Lamborn, it is more logical to move a decimal point to multiply by 10 or 100 than the abstract concept of 'put a nought on the end'.⁴

He had enlightened ideas about multiplication. At many schools, even today, children still chant multiplication tables, and many of them find this bewildering. They are also duplicating what they have already learnt, since 7×3 is the same as 3×7 , yet they have to learn two tables to get the same answer. It is just as easy to say 'double 7 and add another 7', and the real value is that they know what they are doing. They really *are* finding out what three sevens make. To take another

¹ E. A. Greening Lamborn, *Reason in Arithmetic* (Oxford, 1930), p. 6.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 3–4.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

example, why learn the ‘five-times table’, when it is far quicker to multiply by 10 and halve it? To multiply 54 by 8, 8 is double 4, and 4 is double 2, so you get the answer by doubling 54 (making 108), then doubling 108 (making 216) then doubling 216 giving 432. Once you understand this, you have a key to multiplying by 16 or 32 or even 64, as it follows the same principle. Similarly, to multiply 768 by 999 (which is sometimes asked as a scholarship question), you merely multiply 768 by 1000 then take 768 away from the result. Quick, easy, and logical.

Lamborn applied similar principles to addition and subtraction, by showing children how numbers behave. To begin with, a child will probably count on its fingers, which is accurate, but slow. Then he or she begins to see that 9 is one less than 10, so it is easier to add 9 by adding 10 and subtracting 1. When it comes to subtraction, many children get thoroughly confused when they are told that ‘it won’t go, so you have to borrow ten’. As Lamborn realized, a shopkeeper never subtracts. If he bought an ounce of tobacco for 1s. 1½d. and gave the shopkeeper a pound note, the shopkeeper would work out the change by saying, ‘A halfpenny, 4d, 6d, and 8 shillings makes ten shillings, and a ten-shilling note makes a pound’.⁵ In other words, he is not subtracting, but adding back. It is easier and far more accurate to adopt this method for all subtraction. Lamborn applied similar concepts, based on how numbers behave, to division. So, for example, if a child is asked to divide 15 by 1¼ the logical way is to say, ‘Well that’s the same as 30 divided by 2½, which is the same as 60 divided by 5, which is the same as 120 divided by 10. Move the decimal point one place to the left, and the answer is 12.’ Far better than the confusing rule ‘Make the divisor an improper fraction and turn it upside down then multiply’, which is meaningless to a young child. This procedure he refers to as *cancelling*,⁶ though his use of words here is not quite accurate – cancelling usually means reducing downwards, whereas the example above means increasing upwards.

Of course, it is possible in this brief review only to scratch the surface of this fascinating volume, and it does not delve into the more intricate problems analysed by Lamborn. Nor does it take account of his delightful humour. If there is a reservation about the book, it is that having set out his extremely persuasive arguments, he then fills the second half of the book with out-of-date and indigestible mathematical problems, which largely repeat what he has already said. But, that aside, it is high time the book were rewritten, brought up to date, and made compulsory reading for some of today’s teachers and educationalists.

DAVID HARDING

⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 29.

⁶ *Ibid.*, ch. 4, pp. 38–50, ‘The Principle of Cancelling’.

