



REVIEWS

Joan Dils and Margaret Yates (eds.), *An Historical Atlas of Berkshire*, 2nd edition (Berkshire Record Society), 2012. Pp. xii + 174. 164 maps, 31 colour and 9 b&w illustrations. Paperback. £20 (plus £4 p&p in UK). ISBN 0-9548716-9-3. Available from: Berkshire Record Society, c/o Berkshire Record Office, 9 Coley Avenue, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 6AF.

During the past twenty years the historical atlas has become a popular means through which to examine a county's history. In 1998 Berkshire inspired one of the earlier examples – predating Oxfordshire by over a decade – when Joan Dils edited an attractive volume for the Berkshire Record Society. *Oxonienzia's* review in 1999 (vol. 64, pp. 307–8) welcomed the Berkshire atlas and expressed the hope that it would sell out quickly so that 'the editor's skills can be even more generously deployed in a second edition'. Perhaps this journal should modestly refrain from claiming credit, but the wish has been fulfilled and a second edition has now appeared.

The new edition, again published by the Berkshire Record Society and edited by Joan Dils and Margaret Yates, improves upon its predecessor in almost every way. Advances in digital technology have enabled the new edition to use several colours on the maps, and this helps enormously to reveal patterns and distributions. As before, the volume has benefited greatly from the design skills of the Department of Typography and Graphic Communication at the University of Reading. Some entries are now enlivened with colour illustrations as well (for example, funerary monuments, local brickwork, a workhouse), which enhance the text, though readers could probably have been left to imagine a flock of sheep grazing on the Downs. The maps are excellent; all were redrawn, and some have been redesigned by the cartographer for this edition, Clive Brown.

The volume follows the conventional historical atlas format which presents information on topics with both text and maps, ideally using each to illuminate the other. In many cases this succeeds admirably. The entry on Domesday Book, for instance, now has several maps showing the distribution of mills, plough-teams and meadow. A new entry on the 1663–4 hearth tax shows the higher proportion of middling to large houses in east Berkshire, while the text discusses the pattern's significance and sensibly warns against simple correlations of wealth and house size. Another excellent example is the expanded entry on agriculture in modern Berkshire where maps contrast the 1930s, when farming still closely followed the underlying geology and topography, and the radically different picture by 2006 after half a century of government policy changes, technological development and suburbanisation.

The content in the new edition has grown significantly from 58 to 78 entries. Coverage now begins with the Palaeolithic period and sketches what we know about the Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman era in Berkshire. New entries expand the medieval coverage, and some important topics previously overlooked are now added, including medieval landowners, the Civil War and nineteenth-century market towns. The twentieth century receives more attention with entries on the development of Reading Borough and Bracknell New Town, local authority housing, and the county during World War II. Indeed this new edition brings us right up to date with references to the establishment of micro-breweries and the future impact of Crossrail. Every entry has something interesting to say and many break new ground, even though a volume which brings together work by fifty amateur and professional historians will inevitably contain variations in quality. In the 'Sources and references' section at the end, contributors seem unsure whether or not to provide detailed references or to recommend wider reading to put Berkshire into context. No booklist accompanies the entries on vernacular architecture although the work of Christopher Currie and the recently updated

'Pevsner' on Berkshire (reviewed in *Oxoniensia*, vol. 76 (2011), pp. 300–1) could usefully have been mentioned.

The Berkshire historical atlas does not set out to present a synthesis of the county's past, and the editors have chosen not to provide an overview or introduction, preferring to leave the individual entries to speak for themselves. Yet the reader who peruses the whole volume will recognise many recurring themes (and these could be pursued more easily if an index had been provided – perhaps one could be added in the next edition). The topics selected for an atlas will naturally be those suitable for mapping so we are more likely to read about developments for which the evidence is organised by place, and this geographical perspective can give us insights into the county's history. An important geographical theme in Berkshire's history is the role of the Thames, which until 1974 provided a well-defined northern county boundary for over 100 miles between Buscot and Windsor. From prehistory, when findspots cluster along the Thames valley, to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when country houses and riverside villas proliferated around Windsor and Maidenhead, the river has attracted settlement. Berkshire maltsters sent laden barges down the river to London, and large-scale malting and brewing only disappeared from the county in the late twentieth century. Water transport brought prosperity to Abingdon, Wallingford and Reading, and as the river's use as a commercial highway faded in the nineteenth century the Thames took on a new role as a leisure amenity. The county's other major river, the Kennet, supplied essential water-power for the manufacture of woollen cloth at Reading and Newbury, an industry which sold to international markets and employed hundreds of rural spinners and craftsmen in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Berkshire's roads also demonstrate the importance of communications for the county's history. Alan Rosevear describes Berkshire modestly as 'a county that people pass through': it was traversed by a Roman road from Dorchester-on-Thames to Silchester, both just outside the county, and later by the busy Bath Road linking Maidenhead, Reading, Newbury and Hungerford with London, Bath and Bristol. This major east–west route was turnpiked in stages from 1714 and more recently superseded by the M4 in 1964. At a local level, the network of routes that linked villages with market towns is revealed in a fascinating entry by Joan Dils on nineteenth-century country carriers. With the exception of Wantage and Wokingham, all of Berkshire's towns lie close to the county's borders and their hinterlands ignored administrative boundaries.

Regions within the county, characterised by distinctive landscapes and agrarian economies, can be identified from the maps and text. The open chalk uplands of the Berkshire Downs occupy nearly half of the county's acreage; the atlas traces their long history of sparse settlement and classic sheep-corn husbandry, with large flocks producing high-quality wool. The eastern end of the county was another very distinctive region of poor soils, but its fortunes were transformed by Windsor's royal connections which probably date from the early ninth century, and a concentration of wealth and power is evident in the area from medieval to modern times. The effects of convenient proximity to London form another enduring theme, an advantage for Berkshire's trade and industries and an attraction to the well-heeled who have purchased estates and contributed to the county's notable buildings. The atlas also pays due attention to those who opposed the status quo, showing religious nonconformity of all varieties clustered in successive periods in the Vale of White Horse, in eastern Berkshire and in the towns, as well as active rural involvement in the Swing riots of 1830–1. All these and more thought-provoking connections and currents in Berkshire's history await the reader of this splendid volume. The editors and the Berkshire Record Society are to be congratulated, once again.

ADRIENNE ROSEN, Kellogg College, Oxford

Helena Hamerow, *Rural Settlements and Society in Anglo-Saxon England* (Medieval History and Archaeology series), Oxford University Press (Oxford, 2012). Pp. xii + 194. 52 b&w

illustrations. £68. ISBN 978-0-19-920325-3. Richard Jones and Sarah Semple (eds.), *Sense of Place in Anglo-Saxon England*, Shaun Tyas (Donington, Lincs., 2013). Pp. xiv + 363. Approx. 97 illustrations, maps and plans. £35. ISBN 978-1907730177.

Oxfordshire has strong traditions in both Anglo-Saxon archaeology and place-name studies. Excavation of early medieval settlements in Britain began on the gravel terraces of the upper Thames, and these continue to yield important habitation and burial sites. Margaret Gelling's foundational work on the county's place-names has been enriched by subsequent research, including that of Ann Cole, who has brought a geographer's eye to landscape and communications. John Blair's *Anglo-Saxon Oxfordshire* (1994) joined the two disciplines and remains an essential synthesis of archaeological, historical and place-name evidence. Current work by Helena Hamerow and others on the early history of the *Gewis* in the region draws increasingly on metal finds recorded by the Portable Antiquities Scheme, and is providing suggestive new evidence about cultural and trade links as well as the formation of polities. Students of early medieval material culture of all kinds are especially fortunate to have ready access to the Ashmolean's superb research collection and the county's Museums Resource Centre in Standlake.

These two publications represent some of the best current research on early medieval England and offer essential food for thought for those interested in Anglo-Saxon Oxfordshire. Hamerow's book is a valuable synthesis of archaeological research on rural settlements and society from the fifth to eleventh centuries; it includes chapters on buildings, settlement forms, farming and socio-economic developments, as well as an interesting examination of the evidence for ritual and belief. The volume edited by Jones and Semple offers a cross-section of the latest thinking in place-name studies, with over twenty contributions ranging from thematic discussions of name survival and of name categories (notably those in *-tūn* and *-burh*) to more narrowly focused examinations of individual names and places. Ten per cent of Hamerow's key settlement sites are in Oxfordshire, but neither study has a particular focus on the county. Their importance for readers of *Oxoniensia* is that they help to set an agenda for future work at regional and local scales. In particular they suggest ways in which we can come closer to the activities and outlook of ordinary people as well as élites.

For Anglo-Saxon archaeology, such grass-roots analysis is possible because of the accumulation of sufficient data to explore settlements as 'dynamic social arenas' rather than 'passive agglomerations of archaeological "features"' (Hamerow, p. xi). In place-name studies the great leap has come from an expansion beyond taxonomy – the categorisation of names and identification of their earliest recorded use – to an examination of the way in which changing name forms can yield insights into values and perceptions, which Mark Gardiner describes as 'the social life of place-names' (Jones and Semple, p. 16). Given these advances, and by adopting imaginative and often interdisciplinary approaches, we are able to investigate the lives of inhabitants more closely and to understand better the decisions they made in a varied and changing physical and social environment.

The potential of the new approaches can be illustrated by thinking through patterns of dwelling, at a variety of scales. Place-name scholars have started to show the ways in which perceptions of place changed over time, partly as a result of changes to the landscape itself. In particular, it appears that, though some major place-names recall an older world, much place-naming relates to mid to late Anglo-Saxon settlement and landscape reorganisation (Jones and Semple, p. 11). Through names such as *tūn* (farmstead, enclosure, settlement) and *lēah* (wood-pasture, clearing) we can see strong differences between places and between emerging landscape zones, especially in terms of activities and the way in which social relationships were organised; between the built-up world of the *tūn*, where inhabitants were busy farming, often collaboratively, and the scattered settlement of the *lēah*, where people were engaged in more diverse activities, including grazing animals and hunting (explained by Ros Faith, pp. 239–40). Patterns of name distribution across Oxfordshire show developing differences

between landscape regions such as the lowland vales, which had many *tūnas*, and the Chiltern Hills or the core of Wychwood forest, where there were none. Some of the patterning has been highlighted by Ann Cole in the recent *Historical Atlas of Oxfordshire*, but there is much more work to do. A rapid comparison of the south Oxfordshire vale and the neighbouring Chilterns suggests that though both areas feature possessive names (relating to the creation of local estates in the later Saxon period), the Chilterns have a far higher proportion of names which denote topography and land type, and a far lower proportion relating to settlements or transport. Work at a regional scale is well suited to elucidating such differences and their long-term implications. There is surely scope for a research thesis here.

Some of the most interesting recent place-name research, including several studies reported in Jones and Semple, has looked at movement through the landscape. Iteration – whether long-distance travel, seasonal transhumance or the daily walk from farmstead to fields – shapes experience and perceptions. Brynmor Morris's contribution posits, through anthropological analogy, that élite perspectives and itineraries may have played a significant part in the naming, or rather renaming, of settlements through the establishment of a restricted lexicon of place-types. Work on the relationship between levels of mobility and perception is clearly an important emerging field. Research on early medieval Oxfordshire could make a significant contribution by linking names to archaeological and topographical analysis of routeways, great and small. In this respect, the names of routes themselves, including minor tracks and paths, are as important as those of roadside settlements. The variations in and changes to the nomenclature of routeways only really emerge through detailed local study of charter bounds and field-names. The latter, though mostly thirteenth-century or later in date, reveal much about the role of local oral tradition and documentation in preserving and adapting names as part of a shared tradition. We come here to a very intimate scale of association which cannot be captured fully through the study of major place-names alone.

The detailed view of dwelling is opened up further by combining names with the physical evidence of Anglo-Saxon farmsteads and settlements. By locating households in resource areas and communications networks as well as estate structures we can begin to reconstruct daily life in real places rather than through essential but otherwise rather abstract analysis of osteological and environmental data or metal finds and ceramic forms. Hamerow's building analysis reinforces our appreciation of the way in which society in the mid to later Anglo-Saxon period became less mobile and more tied to place: houses were starting to be built to last or to be rebuilt on the same spot (pp. 31–7). This must surely relate to the apparent emergence of regional building styles and variations in plan form in the same period. Can we see here a growing adaptation to and interaction with particular landscapes in a way which reinforces the place-name evidence for landscape variation? Was there, in other words, a shift from a more universal idea of home, planted temporarily in a particular spot – reflected in what Hamerow identifies as an early emphasis on 'regularity, formality, even symmetry' in plan form (p. 40) – to a closer and longer-lasting relationship with place, expressed through variation in the number and position of entrances and the relationship of house to surrounding enclosures (which appear for the first time in the mid Saxon period), routeways and other features? This developing relationship with place also raises the possibility of a tension between local particularity and outside, élite, generalised conceptions of settlement types.

These are just some of the many potential avenues of investigation suggested by two excellent books. Local historians and archaeologists are strongly encouraged to explore them for themselves.

STEPHEN MILESON, St Edmund Hall, Oxford

Jeremy Haslam, *Urban–Rural Connections in Domesday Book and Late Anglo-Saxon Royal Administration* (BAR BS, 571), Archaeopress (Oxford, 2012), Pp. iv + 144. 25 tables, 24 figs. Paperback. £28. ISBN 978-1-4073-1056-5. Trevor Rowley, *The Man behind the Bayeux*

Tapestry: Odo, William the Conqueror's Half-Brother, The History Press (Stroud, 2013). Pp. 192. 55 b&w, 29 colour illustrations. Paperback. £16.99. ISBN 978-0-7524-6025-3.

These two books attempt to shine a light on the organisation of eleventh-century England, but do so in quite different ways. Jeremy Haslam's book uses a geographical approach to examine the origins of the administrative organisation inherited by the Normans; Trevor Rowley's looks at personalities involved in the Norman Conquest, particularly that of a main protagonist: King William's half-brother Odo de Conteville.

Haslam's book attempts to show that the urban-rural connections evident between some towns and their hinterlands in Domesday Book derive from military arrangements established between the late eighth and late ninth centuries, arguing against the prevailing view which sees these connections as deriving mainly from economic developments of the later tenth and eleventh centuries. In doing so he aims to recast F.W. Maitland's 'garrison theory' (published 1897), which argued that the creation of strongholds (*burhs*), particularly by Alfred the Great (ruled 871–99), involved the simultaneous organisation of 'territories of obligation' around them. Landholders above a certain status within these territories owed service to a *burh* for its physical construction and garrisoning, and were assigned tenements (*hagae*) within the *burh* as part of this arrangement. By plotting the spatial pattern of these connections Haslam attempts to reconstruct the original territorial organisation around the *burhs*.

Following on from the work of E.M. Jope and John Blair, Oxford and Oxfordshire feature prominently in the discussion, with chapters 10 and 11 being of particular interest. Through detailed reconstruction of the links between several *burhs* and appurtenant estates, Haslam argues that the original burghal territory of Oxford comprised an area stretching across the Thames into the Vale of White Horse to the south-west, and a section of what would later become Northamptonshire to the north, but excluded much of what is now south Oxfordshire, which belonged to Wallingford. According to this model, Oxfordshire in its pre-1974 form only emerged as the result of a secondary phase of administrative reorganisations in the mid tenth century.

Haslam's general thesis seems sound, but aspects fail to convince. Haslam's prose is partly at fault for this. His arguments are often dense and wordy, and are also marred by occasional hackneyed metaphors; and little attempt is made to explain arcane theories to the uninitiated. More significantly, one feels that time and again his arguments involve special pleading. For example, he claims that Domesday hidations should be multiplied upwards by 113 per cent or 131 per cent to achieve the 'real' hidages (pp. 21–2); and that while figures recorded in the source known as the Burghal Hidage may be correct for many places in southern England, in the case of Oxford the hidage should be amended to 2,400 hides in place of the recorded figure of 1,500 (pp. 105–7). Underlying these issues is the larger problem of whether or not Domesday Book should be used to infer administrative relations two centuries earlier. Haslam is at pains to argue that the recorded patterns of tenure can indeed be read in this way, but his argument might have benefited from cross-reference to other sources. Archaeological evidence is given very cursory treatment, as are the forms and patterns of smaller administrative territories – the hundreds (and their meeting places) – which formed the burghal territories, despite the observation of David Roffe that the hundred, not the hide, is the key to unlocking the pattern of burghal obligation. Unfortunately the eleventh-century hundreds of Oxfordshire, unlike those of most other shires, cannot be securely reconstructed from Domesday Book; but this problem is never discussed by Haslam.

Urban-Rural Connections in Domesday Book assumes familiarity with Haslam's previous writings, the central arguments of which are not reiterated until the final chapter; it functions seemingly not as an independent work but as the continuation of a much longer argument. The same is not true of *The Man Behind the Bayeux Tapestry*, which provides the first substantial biography of someone who, even by the Normans' ambitious and ruthless standards, was one of the more colourful characters of the Norman Conquest. But was he the loveable rogue that

some have imagined? Rowley seeks to provide a balanced account, portraying someone who achieved much in many spheres but whose “sin” was that he was never content and always wanted still more’ (p. 182).

Odo spent large sums of money on churches and monasteries, money he extracted from vast estates stretching through Normandy and England, including Oxfordshire. An important group of estates lay west of the River Cherwell in Wootton Hundred, which were managed through Odo’s manor of Deddington. Had Odo not been disgraced by his plans to raise an unauthorised army for a campaign in Italy, these estates might well have become a significant organised barony. But instead, Deddington Castle – once among the most important castles for the control of Norman England – suffered a long period of decline from the thirteenth century onwards. All that remains today is an earthwork enclosure on the town’s eastern edge.

Rowley’s crisp and accessible prose rests on considerable scholarship. He draws on written, archaeological and landscape evidence, as well as from the Bayeux Tapestry itself. Odo is, understandably, the hero of the story, looming large over the proceedings. In his ambition, skill and character, Odo grasped for the enlarged horizons that characterised his generation of Norman lords: they took him from Conteville to England, and to his eventual death from natural causes at Palermo, Sicily, while participating in the First Crusade. Like Haslam’s book, Odo’s fate reminds us, inadvertently, of the extent to which eleventh-century England was shaped by warfare and by the people who waged it.

STUART BROOKES, UCL Institute of Archaeology

Ben M. Ford, Daniel Poore, Ruth Shaffrey and David R.P. Wilkinson, *Under the Oracle: Excavations at the Oracle Shopping Centre Site 1996–8: The Medieval and Post-Medieval Urban Development of the Kennet Floodplain in Reading* (Thames Valley Landscapes Monograph 36), Oxford University School of Archaeology for Oxford Archaeology (Oxford, 2013). Pp. xxv + 314. Approx. 190 illustrations, many in colour. £25. ISBN 978-1-905905-27-0.

Reading has always been a vibrant town, constantly changing and developing in response to economic challenges. Its name is Saxon, but its origins are much older, stretching back into Roman and prehistoric times. A major stimulus to its growth and prosperity came in 1121 when Henry I founded his royal abbey and made its abbot lord of Reading. Until its dissolution by Henry VIII in 1539 the abbey dominated the town – attracting influential visitors, including several monarchs, hosting important political events, and becoming a major centre for pilgrimage. We know much about significant historical events and developments, such as the siege of Reading during the English Civil War, the skirmish that led to the only bloodshed in the Glorious Revolution of 1688–9, and the industries that grew and flourished as improved roads, canals and railways opened up new markets. However, the evidence for the details of daily life and for the traces of very early Reading lies buried beneath the modern town, and it is only when archaeological investigation can be undertaken ahead of development that the fragmentary remains of these elements of the past can be revealed and recorded.

The Oracle Shopping Centre development provided one of the best opportunities in recent years to examine a large area next to the old town centre and to record its history. *Under the Oracle*, the report on excavations between 1996 and 1998, combines detailed archaeological analysis with contextual historical information. As with any publication of such breadth and complexity, the book amalgamates work by several specialists and this has led to some repetition when the same information has been approached from different perspectives. The major part of chapter 1, the introduction, is devoted to the historical and archaeological background to the excavation, while chapter 4 reviews documentary evidence and chapter 6 discusses how the evidence derived from the excavation contributes to our knowledge of the area’s development. The book might have been more coherent if these three chapters had been grouped together at the beginning to give the general reader a clear historical progression

and an appreciation of how the excavation has enhanced our knowledge. The archaeological minutiae presented in chapters 2 and 3 would then have followed logically as supporting evidence, and the volume would have concluded with the fascinating review of the area's trades, crafts and services given in chapter 5.

This small grumble aside, it is a delight to see historical and modern plans and photographs of the site brought together here, vividly illustrating change and development through the eyes of earlier cartographers and photographers. The excavation plans are clear, and the photographs are well chosen – although the pinkish hue of a few betrays the fact that they were taken in the early days of digital photography. Information technology has advanced rapidly in the fifteen years that it has taken to produce this report, a fact acknowledged by Ben Ford (p. xxv). For anyone who wishes to inspect the archaeological finds, the report provides the archive's location (p. 1), albeit without its accession number. The volume has been well produced and is very reasonably priced. However, the concordance of the project phases and site sub-phases, as well as specialist reports on the finds, are contained on a CD-ROM inside the back cover. This has obviously kept the price down, but it means that when the CD format becomes obsolete this body of information will become inaccessible. A few mistakes have also crept in, such as the failure to identify the ryepeck in fig. 5.40, but overall the volume provides a comprehensive account of discoveries from the site.

Three aspects struck this reviewer as being of special interest. The quantity of Roman tiles found by the excavators matches evidence from other town-centre sites; cumulatively the finds indicate that there must have been a significant Roman settlement at Reading. The account of the abbey cookshop, built in the mid twelfth century and later enlarged, brings alive the pressure involved for the abbey in feeding its many guests. And the identification of a clay pipe-making industry at Reading, which began in the seventeenth century, helps to throw light on this most ubiquitous of finds. *Under the Oracle* is an excellent addition to the growing archive of Reading's archaeology and history. It should be on the bookshelf of anyone interested in Reading or in urban archaeology and history in general, but it might be wise to print out or otherwise permanently record the sections on the CD-ROM.

JILL GREENAWAY, Reading Museum

Richard Wheeler, *Oxfordshire's Best Churches*, Fircone Books (King's Sutton, 2013). Pp. x + 270. 340 colour illus., 13 line drawings, 15 plans. £25. ISBN 978-1-907700-00-2.

Rich in historic buildings and archaeological sites, its county town home to the oldest institution of advanced learning in England, Oxfordshire is a well-studied and well-published county. Nevertheless, this volume is a welcome addition to an already groaning bookshelf of high-quality works for the general reader. Richard Wheeler, a conservation officer for West Oxfordshire District Council, has selected 116 churches from the 550 or so in the county and has supplied a richly illustrated account of each. Of these, 51 are selected for longer mini-essays. The result, which also includes a detailed introduction, a glossary and a reading list, is an attractive, well-written, and beautifully produced labour of love.

Wheeler is not foolproof, however, and there is a scattering of odd assertions in the text: for example, the stepped lancets at Stanton Harcourt are surely c.1220 rather than c.1260 (p. 192), when they would have been twenty years out of date; and it is strange to read that Abingdon abbey was possibly 'Britain's first monastery' in 675 (p. 33), given the precedents set by St Augustine and his British predecessors, or (p. 11) that congregations were growing in the thirteenth century – how do we know? In general, however, the texts are clear and detailed, even if they do not always reflect the latest thinking on a particular building.

In addition to 247 pages of narrative text and 340 photographs, the book contains 13 church plans, drawn especially for the book by Mike Salter. Good published surveys of parish churches are rare, so the accuracy of these will be of particular interest to the more specialist

reader. Such crucial subtleties as relative wall-widths appear to be accurately shown, though phasing is simplified, and depiction of the precise extent of each phase is relatively schematic. It is a shame that a generic 'north = up' compass point has been added to the plans regardless of precise orientation (on that for Dorchester abbey, gremlins have interchanged the hachures for the sixteenth century with those for the thirteenth). In spite of all this, these plans rather hide their light under a bushel, and one would have appreciated an explanatory note on them.

But Wheeler does not just want to be a more expansive proto-Pevsner: he wants to talk about some of the intangibles that make these buildings so compelling, such as atmosphere, aesthetics, a sense of place. As a result, sudden passages of poetic prose burst unexpectedly into his accounts. Sometimes these are acutely perceptive: the Iffley west door appears as if the wall had been 'unzipped to leave deep openings jagged with zigzags'; and 'there is something of a maw' about 'the nightmarish crowding in of beakheads daring you to pass through' (p. 136). We overlook at our peril the extent to which medieval art might be designed to be un-beautiful: to impress, shock or even terrify.

This strong aesthetic sense is reflected in one of the glories of the book, the high quality of Wheeler's photography. His images must be the result of weeks of early starts and hours of quiet waiting for the right light. Subjective factors also appear to have guided decisions about what to exclude. All of post-1974 Oxfordshire's truly essential churches (almost, but not quite, all medieval) are here; at the other end of the scale, he includes Easington, a tiny church not far from celebrated Chalgrove and Ewelme, which has no outstanding art-historical or archaeological qualities: what it does have is the 'loudness of the silence' within (p. 107). I must go there.

JON CANNON, University of Bristol

John Steane and James Ayres, *Traditional Buildings in the Oxford Region c.1300–1840*, Oxbow Books (Oxford, 2013). Pp. xvi + 464. About 500 diagrams, tables, maps and plates. £45. ISBN 978-1-84217-479-1.

John Steane and James Ayres have recorded and interpreted historic buildings and artefacts for decades. For this publication they set themselves the ambitious task of presenting a large and diverse body of accumulated survey material and analyses. The survey material included drawings and paintings which, in addition to their function as records, have strong aesthetic qualities. After preliminary chapters on survey methods and building materials, the authors' surveys are grouped into loose thematic chapters such as 'Primitive Houses', 'Cruick Buildings', 'Manorial Buildings, Moated Houses' and 'Town Houses'. The volume includes eleven appendices on more arcane topics such as 'Ferramenta' (metal fittings), 'Apotropaic Marks' (inscriptions to deter malevolent spirits) and 'Secrets under the Floor Boards'.

Advancing in the footsteps of W.G. Hoskins and R.W. Brunskill, Steane and Ayres assert that observation and drawing are integral to the process of understanding the historic environment. They argue that looking carefully at physical evidence is the only way to understand how buildings are put together: looking and drawing 'forces the mind to ask questions, something a camera cannot do' (p. 3). They are on firm ground as they demonstrate that surveying and recording are an indispensable complement to the more traditional skills of documentary research, and are the only effective resource when documentary sources are lacking. They see off the view that the 'mechanical arts' are intellectually inferior to writing and theorising. Their vivid sketches, drawings and notes demonstrate how observational and analytical approaches may be converted into interpretations and reconstructions.

Traditional Buildings describes surveys of over ninety buildings. The authors commend their own particular approaches to recording, analysis and interpretation. Their method is explained and amply illustrated, and set out almost as a *vade-mecum*. However, the discussion of their approach rather excludes consideration of the alternative survey techniques, analytical

levels and drawing conventions that are embodied in national standards advocated by English Heritage, published in such works as *Measured and Drawn* (2009) and *Understanding Historic Buildings – A Guide to Good Recording Practice* (2006). In the professional sphere, most recording of historic buildings has been carried out as the result of legislation (beginning with the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act), policy guidance and statements, and most particularly 'Circular 8/87' and 'PPG15'. Applicants for listed building consent have been increasingly obliged to demonstrate the effect that proposals for change would have on the significance of historic structures. Thus much survey and analytical work has been focused on the significance of historic fabric, and the capacity of a building to absorb alterations without loss of that significance. In this volume there are ominous references to clients having made up their minds about changes before surveys were carried out. In that context, it would have been useful to know the background to the surveys, the alterations that were contemplated, and if and how the research informed planning decisions and implemented work. However, little information relating to such concerns has been included.

Whilst the title suggests that this is a regional study, it proves to be more a compendium or miscellany of the very diverse material that was assembled by the authors for a variety of clients: many of the survey reports were commissioned by building owners, and some by the Oxfordshire Buildings Trust and Oxfordshire County Council. The difficulties of ordering such a diverse body of material for publication must have been considerable and this to some extent remains apparent. The wide geographical distribution of the reports and their variety have also sometimes resisted the authors' attempts to assemble neat thematic chapters. There are some rather surprising groupings and, as the authors admit, the eleven appendices comprise material that 'escaped' from the main text during preparation.

Vernacular buildings are artefactual constructions which in close combination with natural elements give rise to distinctive local character. Brunskill argued that geology and topography influence the layout, construction and architectural details of buildings, which combine to produce the recognisable character of local vernacular buildings. This was powerfully demonstrated by the work of R.B. Wood-Jones in the area of the ginger Lias around Banbury (published in *Traditional Domestic Architecture of the Banbury Region*, 1963) and reinforced by later similar studies in other parts of England. The buildings surveyed by Steane and Ayres lie in or near the area asserted by A.F. Martin in 1954 to be the 'Oxford Region': 'It lies not far west of the geographical centre of the English plain, roughly equidistant from the three great outlets of the Thames estuary, Southampton Water and the Bristol Channel, and equidistant from the great towns of London, Birmingham and Southampton' (from *The Oxford Region: A Scientific and Historical Survey*, cited on p. xv). How useful this diverse terrain is for modern vernacular building studies is open to debate, since current methods of assessment identify at least five distinct character areas within this zone: Upper Thames Vales, Midvale Ridge, Cotswolds, Berkshire and Marlborough Downs, and Chilterns. Each exhibits particular local building characteristics. In any event, the buildings described by Steane and Ayres do not evenly cover these character areas, a disparity that may have arisen from the distribution of commissions received by the authors. The buildings come overwhelmingly from the two district council areas south and south-west of Oxford, with the highest concentration being in the Vale of White Horse. The skewed distribution inevitably means that other parts of the 'region' are much less well served. The uneven structure is compounded by a whole chapter on a single site, Ashbury Manor, and another on Abingdon – other historic towns are scarcely mentioned.

Within the thematic chapters, the buildings are not always presented in the same way. The chapter on cottages includes four studies of working-class houses. The material on two cottages is exemplary in its clarity, with plans, axonometric sketches, building details and conjectural development. The setting and geology are explained along with a brief historical summary. But for the next cottage only two sketches of roof details are provided and no plans, and for the last cottage there are no plans or sketches at all. This unevenness rather characterises the book.

For many other buildings a less-than-complete description is offered. Sometimes the text appears only as edited field notes and there is much unexplained reconstruction and phasing. Illustrations enliven each page, but photographs, presumably taken during the surveys, are often of poor quality. The context and significance of the sketches of individual features are frequently hard to link with the accompanying text or other drawings. Nonetheless, this is an attractive and engaging book – assertive, insightful and idiosyncratic.

ROB PARKINSON, English Heritage

Lesley Peterson (ed.), *The Mirror of the Worlde: A Translation by Elizabeth Tanfield Cary*, McGill-Queen's University Press (London, 2012). Pp. xii + 248. 12 b&w plates. £64. ISBN 978-0-7735-4072-9.

Elizabeth Cary, née Tanfield (1585–1639), is best known today as the author of the play *The Tragedy of Mariam* but her literary career began, at twelve years old in Burford Priory, with *The Mirror of the Worlde* (c.1597), a translation of descriptions of countries from Ortelius's *L'Epitome du Théâtre du Monde* (1590). The work survives in a unique manuscript prepared as a presentation copy for her mother's uncle, Sir Henry Lee of Ditchley, the queen's champion and, most probably, sponsor of Queen Elizabeth's visit to the priory in 1592. Owned by the vicar and wardens of St John the Baptist Church, Burford, the manuscript is currently on deposit in the Bodleian Library (Dep. d. 817), and is here printed for the first time with a lengthy, informative introduction and a meticulous commentary largely concerned with noting alterations to, and deviations from, the source text. 'Collectively', Lesley Peterson argues, 'these departures from the original convey a critique of imperialism; a condemnation of cultures that restrict women's freedom of movement; enthusiastic admiration for women's intellect and for the heroic qualities of strong, virtuous women' (p. 22). For Peterson, the future author of *Mariam* is clearly evident in the young translator, as too is the future recusant.

Cary's choice of title is taken not from *L'Epitome's* title-page but from its concluding leaf which contains the imprimatur and printer's privilege. 'By privileging the title that is, in this edition of Ortelius, found only on that closing page', Peterson contends, 'Elizabeth's translation draws the knowledgeable reader's attention to that same page, an act that signals respect for that page's contents and, by implication, for the institution that granted the "Approbation" printed directly above the "Privilege": "Nihil habet contra Catholicam fidem" [It contains nothing contrary to Catholic faith].' The evidence, Peterson concedes, is 'not conclusive' but 'raises an important question: whether Elizabeth's interest in Catholicism could have begun at a much earlier age than that stated in the *Life*' (pp. 20–1). The real question posed by Peterson's suggestion, however, is the validity of such retrospective interpretation. *Pace* information in the hagiographical *Life* written by Cary's daughter, it was not until 1626, twenty-nine years after producing the *Mirror*, that Cary publicly converted to Catholicism. The danger inherent in Peterson's approach is that suggestion insidiously congeals into affirmation. Within a short while we find 'the young translator practising a balancing act which could be said to characterize her adult life: respecting the authority of those whom she believed herself legally and morally bound to honour and obey, while finding ways strategically to oppose or distance herself from them, particularly in matters of religious affiliation' (p. 35). By the end of the introduction she is credited with membership of the 'virtual community' of Roman Catholicism through the act of translation (p. 93). Orthographical as well as textual evidence is pressed into service. The flamboyant penmanship that distinguishes the chapter title 'Italye' from the relatively dowdy 'Englande' is seen as indicative of alienated affections (pp. 64–5). 'The rest of the *Mirror* reinforces the implied distinction', Peterson argues, 'by stressing the ubiquity of Catholicism on the European continent, and by doing so in consistently positive terms, while having nothing to say about England's religious landscape and little good to say about European Protestantism' (pp. 87–8). The problem with this interpretation is that

it oversimplifies both the text itself and the complex psychological journey which someone like Cary would need to undertake in order to convert. It is not immediately obvious, for example, how a mind as challenging as hers – one that so precociously stormed the male bastion of chorography (description of areas) – could find inspiration in an imprimatur, an instrument of limitation and control. Nor it is clear how an incipient ‘condemnation of cultures that restrict women’s freedom of movement’ would finally issue in the consignment of four daughters to a convent.

Peterson has done us a signal service in making Cary’s text available in a fine edition, but her determination to read it retrospectively loses the child in the adult. What is reflected in the *Mirror*, I would suggest, is not a twelve-year-old closet recusant, but an eager young mind discovering a wide and wonderfully diverse world beyond the walls of Burford Priory. At Ditchley she might have pondered Lee’s great portrait of Queen Elizabeth standing on a map of England featured on an enormous globe: it presents Elizabeth as a truly international figure bestriding the world. Ortelius takes Cary on a comparable journey not just to Italy but to the Netherlands, Germany, Spain, Denmark, Scandinavia, and Transylvania, and then even further afield to Russia, China, India and Africa. For Peterson, the exclusion of maps from the manuscript ‘suggests an active resistance to the mercantile and military applications to which maps were so often put’ (p. 29). But how could a twelve-year-old reproduce what it took a company of professional cartographers and engravers to create? If she worked from the 1590 edition of *L’Epitome*, as Peterson argues, Cary had the maps open before her as she wrote. And if we are indeed to indulge in retrospective speculation, who is to say that the future wife of Ireland’s lord deputy, commercially active and politically involved as she became, did not take as much inspiration from what she saw as what she read?

RICHARD McCABE, Merton College, Oxford

Barrie Trinder (ed.), *Victorian Banburyshire: Three Memoirs* (Banbury Historical Society, 33), 2013. Pp. viii + 310. 25 plates, 5 maps, 5 pedigrees. £20 (plus £3 p&p in UK). ISBN 978-0-900129-31-5. Available from: Banbury Historical Society, c/o Banbury Museum, Spiceball Park Rd, Banbury, Oxon., OX16 2PQ.

Many market towns can boast of a volume of memoirs or reminiscences compiled by a Victorian resident in old age; but few can also claim an autobiography and a diary. To have such works edited by a historian of Barry Trinder’s calibre elevates this new collection of writings about Banbury into a category of its own. Trinder has provided an introduction to the whole volume, and a separate, comprehensive introduction to each item, including copious local, family and personal material. Extensive footnotes display his deep knowledge of the area and the period, and much original research. The annotated engravings, photographs and drawings were obviously chosen carefully for their relevance, and together with the maps they not only help the reader to understand the texts but also to absorb something of the period’s flavour.

The three writings vary in style, period and content. Two of them (both republished here) – Sarah Beesley’s *My Life*, an autobiography, and Thomas Ward Boss’s *Reminiscences of Old Banbury*, a printed version of a lecture – recall many decades of the town’s history though the former covers the longer period (1812–92) and describes many events in detail. The latter work, as beffited a lecture, picks out occasions that had some significance and interest for the speaker and his audience. Both works provide valuable commentaries on the changing topography, economy and society of a rapidly growing community.

By far the longest item is *My Life*, though some of Sarah Beesley’s substantial descriptions of events such as the Swing riots were culled from newspapers and directories. More valuable is her discussion of social changes made possible by such technical advances as gas lighting, the telephone and especially the railway. Banbury’s railway facilitated visits to London (including

the Great Exhibition) and other towns and resorts, both to visit family and for entertainment. Sarah Beesley almost always travelled via Reading, which was a transport hub and the home of relatives. The record of her obvious affection for her many relations is a useful contribution to our understanding of the Victorian family, as are her comments on the infectious diseases of childhood and about family deaths, though unfortunately she provides few indications of the emotions such events evoked.

At the age of seventy-eight, T.W. Boss's memory was occasionally at fault, but this does not mar his vivid recollection of Michaelmas fairs, concerts in schoolrooms lit by oil lamps, and the mayhem of parliamentary election days in the 1840s. The bare details about wagons recorded in trade directories cannot compare with his masterly description of 'the London Waggon' and of the clinical efficiency with which its cargo was stowed. Important local and national events, such as the erection of Banbury cross and local celebrations on royal occasions, became as deeply engraved on Boss's memory as they were on that of Sarah Beesley.

The third item in this volume, Thomas Butler Gunn's unpublished diary for just the second half of 1863 – the year in which he returned from a long period in the United States – is more narrowly focused. Much of his time was spent in London looking for a publisher for a book, though he also took the opportunity to buy furniture for the home he would share with Hannah Bennett after their marriage. The most interesting aspects of his diary are, arguably, his descriptions of two country weddings (especially that of his future wife's sister) and his record of rail travel from Oxfordshire to the capital where he also used the new underground railway and the omnibus, and took a trip on the Grand Union Canal.

No one interested in the history of Banbury or of Victorian market towns will want to miss this book. The Banbury Historical Society and the editor are to be congratulated on adding another excellent volume to a distinguished series of local history publications.

JOAN DILS, University of Reading

John Carey, *The Unexpected Professor: An Oxford Life in Books*, Faber and Faber (London, 2014). Pp. xii + 361. £18.99. ISBN 978-0-571-31092-0.

John Carey's description of his work as an Oxford undergraduate in the 1950s contains all the makings of a future professor. He graduated with a first and the congratulations of the board of examiners at his viva. He secured top place in the civil service exams and the offer of a post in the Treasury. The only possibility to be 'unexpected' – the key word in the book's title – would have been a failure to secure an Oxford chair because of political manoeuvres in the faculty of English. In fact his application for the Merton chair of literature was accepted without dissent. He was only forty at the time of his appointment.

The first part of this memoir reads like a hymn of praise for the Richmond and East Sheen Grammar School, which had a good staff and an academically competitive atmosphere. It is also an appeal for the return of grammar schools. Yet Carey's account of his boyhood demonstrates that he would have gone to public school but for a sudden reduction in his father's prosperity after losing the post of accountant to a French firm. His reading went beyond Richmal Crompton and W.E. Johns. Few grammar school boys of his age would have browsed in *Le Figaro Illustré*. Born in 1934, Carey was evacuated from London in 1941. He returned to Barnes in 1947 when he was thirteen, and at puberty was launched into a disciplined approach to the structures of English, French and Latin in ways not anticipated at his previous grammar school in West Bridgford, Nottinghamshire. Other secondary schools promoted to grammar school status across the country did not have the Richmond drive which he enjoyed; many of them lacked effective sixth forms and only gradually escaped from the tradition of preparing for the school certificate and then entry into local clerical jobs. Carey won a scholarship to St John's College, Oxford, and also had 'the voice of command' that took him into the East Surrey Regiment as an officer for his national service. Other

grammar school boys rarely got beyond the rank of sergeant. At Eaton Hall officer training school he 'first came across the English class system' (p. 75) on seeing the dominance of public school boys.

As well as the value of grammar schools there was the issue of reforming Oxford University. As a fellow of Keble College (1960–4), where Etonians were admitted solely for their skills as oarsmen, Carey inaugurated a scheme for encouraging applications from disadvantaged schools. He objected strongly to the system of 'closed scholarships' whereby certain scholarships at many colleges were restricted to candidates from specific schools. (Their abolition was recommended soon afterwards, by the report of the Franks Committee in 1966.) Surprisingly there is no reference in this book to Carey's essay of 1975 called 'Down with Dons', which was provoked by Maurice Bowra: *A Celebration* (1974), edited by Hugh Lloyd-Jones, and is reprinted in Carey's *Original Copy: Selected Reviews and Journalism, 1969–1986* (1987). Written apparently just before Carey's promotion to the Merton chair, it examines the assumptions of Bowra's generation of dons, castigating their snobbishness. It also shows how much Carey had placed himself 'on the left'. He appears to have borne a grudge against the disdain shown to him in Christ Church by Roy Harrod during the year when as a graduate student he took over the teaching responsibilities of J.I.M. Stewart (1957–8). Carey was also very critical of the conservative approach in the faculty of English to the construction of the syllabus, but he failed to obtain sufficient support from his colleagues to secure the changes he wanted. He notes that they did not honour him with a Festschrift on his retirement.

John Carey presents a strong sense of independence of mind in the era when 'the idea that everyone should live in universal chumminess had not yet taken hold' (p. 101). Not surprisingly he is perhaps best known for his forceful book *The Intellectuals and the Masses* (1992), in which he argues that something now called 'modernist literature' was created to exclude ordinary people from high culture. He thought that he was merely explaining the consequences of mass literacy and was amazed by the reaction of so many reviewers to his presentation. Perhaps this was naive as the memoir reveals the importance of book reviewing for Carey himself. He also shows the value of regular contact with publishers and editors. Charles Montieth of Faber and Faber was clearly important in his life, as were several editors of the *New Statesman*. The discipline of writing reviews of books by other authors had the effect of keeping him in contact with a myriad of subjects. Every reader of this book will want to follow up on some items in the author's experience in reading. There is a list of authors and titles, but no general index.

J.M. LEE, University of Bristol

Steven Gunn (ed.), *Treasures of Merton College*, Third Millennium Publishing (London, 2013). Pp. 160. 187 colour plates. £35. ISBN 978-1-906507-96-1.

Institutions need icons. Just as schools record past successes on honours boards, and regimental victories are remembered in silver plate gracing officers' messes, so it is with colleges. Such institutions use their icons to rally their membership, recall their traditions and adorn convivial gatherings. Merton has celebrated its icons, on the occasion of its 750th anniversary, with a richly illustrated book. It consists of fifty-seven short essays divided into a three-part chronological framework: 'Medieval Merton', 'Merton Maturing', and 'Modern Merton'.

The work begins with an analysis of the founder's statutes, which is followed by reference to documents concerning the acquisition of land encumbered with debts to Jews. Some of the college's architectural treasures are reviewed: the early warden's house occupying the north-east corner of Front Quad, the magnificent iron decoration of the hall door, the medieval sculpture over the gatehouse, and the treasury with its unique stone roof – the fireproof repository of the

college's title deeds and records. The scholastic studies of early Mertonians are represented by a manuscript of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. Other early treasures from the college library include a ninth-century manuscript of Jerome's translation of the *Chronicle of Eusebius* and Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* as printed by Caxton. From here it is natural for the 'Old Library' to be described: it is the oldest academic library with an unbroken tradition in the western world. Although originally its books were chained and fastened to horizontal desks, from the later sixteenth century they were kept upright as today in presses with shelving. Library treasures also include two chests, one dating from the thirteenth century and associated with the storing and pledging of books, and the other a 'loan chest' donated by Sir Thomas Bodley (died 1613). We are then taken back into the chapel and our attention is drawn to monuments to the two foremost Mertonians of the Jacobean period, Bodley (founder of the university library that bears his name) and the polymath Sir Henry Savile, creator of Oxford University's Savilian chairs of astronomy and geometry.

Alan Bott, who has written a number of the essays, spells out the importance to the history of British architecture of the classical elements in the design of the frontispiece in Fellows' Quad and in the less well-known portal of St Alban's Hall, each possibly inspired by writings on classical architecture such as Serlio's *Five Books of Architecture*. Concern for indicating the passing of time is represented by sundials and a sphere, and the conviviality of the community is remembered in the college plate, which was in daily use though it could also serve as a kind of financial buffer to be cashed in in emergencies. In the eighteenth century the fellow Joseph Kilner collected coins for the college. Coin collecting was a favourite occupation of antiquaries and other travellers on the 'grand tour' as coins were portable, easily datable, and attractive for their combination of text and image. Pictures were also donated to the college, such as the pastel portraits of fellows by Lewis Vaslet (1742–1808), and satirical drawings by Max Beerbohm (1872–1956). Merton also holds sales ledgers of 1794–1800 from Parker's bookshop of Oxford, which illuminate the reading habits of 'the nervous freshman, the dilettante gentleman commoner, the connoisseur bibliophile, the industrious Fellow and the impecunious scholar' (p. 100).

One essay recalls a notorious quarrel between the fellows and Warden Sir Thomas Clayton. It rumbled on for thirty years and seems to have provoked the creation of the college's senior common room (1661), the first such designated room in Oxford, which was adorned in 1680 with oak panelling commissioned from the Oxford craftsman Arthur Frogley. Attention is also drawn to William Butterfield's re-gothicisation of the chapel furnishings and to the chapel roof painted in 1850 by Hungerford Pollen, a fellow whose work was admired by William Morris. But Butterfield's work included the dispersal of older furnishings, among them the screen designed by Christopher Wren (it was happily reinstated in the twentieth century). Merton almost demolished Mob Quad in 1861 to provide space for more student accommodation.

When we approach more recent times, a lighter note is struck by an essay about a stylish Edwardian waistcoat, part of the uniform worn by members of the Myrmidons dining club. The linear nature reserve known as 'Holywell Meadow', by the River Cherwell, is rightly appreciated, while Merton's achievement in going 'head of the river' in 'Eights Week' in 1951 is commemorated by a silver bowl. *The Times*, reporting on the college's success, noted the rowers' 'fair length and swing, good rhythm and plenty of dash'. The bowl's central finial is a gilded mitre, representing deference to the college's founder, Walter de Merton, bishop of Rochester.

Treasures of Merton College is an informative book, and is extremely well illustrated mainly with photographs by Colin Dunn. It is interesting not just for those with Merton connexions but in its own right. Though it may seem an aggregation of disparate items, it expresses a unity by representing the high regard that Mertonians have consistently shown for their college through 750 years.

JOHN STEANE, Oxford

Other Publications Received:

Tim Ayers, *The Medieval Stained Glass of Merton College, Oxford* (Corpus Vitrearum Medii Aevi, Great Britain, vol. 6), Oxford University Press for The British Academy (Oxford, 2013). Pp. cliv + 566 (2 parts). About 520 b&w illustrations, 41 colour plates. £165. ISBN 978-0-19-726544-4.

Neil Christie and Oliver Creighton, with Matt Edgeworth and Helena Hamerow, *Transforming Townscapes: From Burh to Borough: The Archaeology of Wallingford, AD 800–1400*, Society for Medieval Archaeology (Monograph 35, London, 2013). Pp. xiv + 476. About 315 b&w illustrations, 30 colour plates. Paperback. £45. ISBN 978-1-909662-09-4.

Anthony Geraghty, *The Sheldonian Theatre: Architecture and Learning in Seventeenth-century Oxford*, Yale University Press (London, 2013). Pp. x + 160. 65 colour and b&w illustrations. £35. ISBN 978-0-300-19504-0.

Tim Jordan and Lionel Walrond, *The Cotswold House*, Amberley Publishing (Stroud, 2014). Pp. 192. About 320 colour illustrations. £20. ISBN 978-1-4456-0840-2.

Jean Stone, *River Cherwell*, Amberley Publishing (Stroud, 2014). Pp. 96. 4 maps, 59 colour illustrations. Paperback. £14.99. ISBN 978-1-4456-3443-2.