

Reviews

Catalogue of the Plate of Merton College, Oxford. By E. Alfred Jones. Oxford University Press, 1938. Pp. xx+60; 12 plates. 31s. 6d.

Catalogue of the Plate of the Queen's College, Oxford. By E. Alfred Jones. Oxford University Press, 1938. Pp. xviii+90; 18 plates. 42s.

Catalogue of the Plate of Christ Church, Oxford. By E. Alfred Jones. Oxford University Press, 1939. Pp. xxii+54; 18 plates. 31s. 6d.

Though Mr. H. C. Moffatt's 'Old Oxford Plate' has stood the test of time extremely well, the initiation of a series of catalogues dealing with the plate of the University, college by college, is extremely welcome. Whilst few pieces of primary importance escaped the former book, the advance that has been made in the study of English plate has made desirable a fuller treatment than seemed necessary thirty-three years ago. For instance, until 1909, when Mr. A. J. Butler produced his account of the Brasenose plate, no serious use had been made of old college plate-books.

Mr. Alfred Jones has always shown himself equally good in working out the history of the collections which he catalogues, and in the actual descriptions of the individual pieces. Thus in the Queen's volume he presents us with a list of the plate which the college sacrificed to the king's necessities in 1643, as well as the recorded details of the pieces presented since that date but now missing. In the preface he notes the curious divergence of nomenclature with regard to the bulbous cups with two ring-handles, so characteristic of Oxford. Thus at Queen's these were known as 'plates,' at Corpus and St. John's as 'ox-eye cups,' at Magdalen as 'tuns,' and he might have added also as 'potts w' eares' at Brasenose. The statement that such cups never penetrated to Cambridge may be treated with suspicion. Though Cambridge no longer possesses any examples, it seems highly probable that the ten 'colledge potts' subscribed by Queens' College to the royal cause in 1642, belonged to this variety.

The preface to the Christ Church volume throws some light on the activities of the very obscure silversmiths who worked at Oxford.

When it comes to a comparison of the contents of these three volumes it is soon apparent that Queen's is by far the richest in material. The founder's drinking-horn is still a fine piece of mediaeval silversmith's work, however much we may regret the attempts of later generations to gild the lily. The trumpet of 1666 is no less rare, and it is interesting to note its close resemblance to the silver-mounted brass 'Luck of Woodsome Hall' recently sold at Christie's. With the more ordinary types of late 17th and 18th century plate the college is well provided, and it is satisfactory to note the good condition of the engraved ornament on the pieces illustrated. It is pleasant to find that all the more important pieces in the collection are not due to the generosity of benefactors who have been dead a century or more. The college is indebted to an honorary fellow, Mr. A. T. Carter, K.C., for the fine ostrich-egg cup of 1588 from the Earl of Home's

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collection, and for the superb cup and cover of 1675, which originally belonged to George Morley, Bishop of Winchester.

Amongst the chapel plate the most important pieces are the pair of flagons, of 1616, embossed with dolphin and strapwork decoration characteristic of the period.

A more attractive use of this ornament which is combined with floral motifs, is found on the rose-water dish of 1605, which is the most remarkable piece at Merton. Here we have also to note the simple but unusual bailiff's staff of the Manor of Holywell, dating from about 1620. Post-Restoration plate is well represented here also, the most pleasing piece being a caudle-cup, of 1672, with fine 'cut-card' decoration and a cover which is reversible for use as a stand. The chapel plate includes a pair of handsome altar-candlesticks, of 1705, richly embossed in the style more usually connected with the latter part of the reign of Charles II.

The secular plate of Christ Church is notable only for its unimportance. It is difficult to ascertain the exact extent to which this is due to the drastic meltings and re-fashionings of the last two centuries, but we gather that the college authorities had a very bad record in this respect. It is only fitting that the poverty of the silver in the hall should be compensated by the richness of the cathedral plate. A bible and prayer-book with covers mounted with delicately engraved silver in about 1630, owe their survival to the devotion of one of the canons who kept them hidden during the Commonwealth. A new set of altar-plate was commissioned immediately after the Restoration, and is finely decorated in the florid style of the day. A further set in a simpler style was made by John Chartier in 1699. Mention must also be made of the pair of vergers' wands provided in 1660.

A catalogue of college plate can never be regarded as final, for it is the duty of each succeeding generation to supply the wants which changes of fashion have created. Allusion has already been made to the unfortunate manner in which these deficiencies were only too often made good in the past. It should be remembered, however, that much of the plate acquired since the abandonment of melting has also got its interest as being inscribed with names which are celebrated in the academic world.

C. C. OMAN.

White Horse Hill and the surrounding Country. By L. V. Grinsell, The Saint Catherine Press Ltd., London, 1939. Pp. 66; 7 plates and folding map. 3s. 6d.

From many people, whether those directly interested in archaeology and local antiquities or those who without expert knowledge couple a curiosity about the meaning of things with an appreciation of the beauties of the North Berkshire Downs, this little guide should receive a warm welcome. Such a guide can often be, to the lay reader at any rate, dry reading; this one is not. For, while it gives an accurate account of the many monuments and features of the area it surveys, the author has succeeded in producing a happy blend of scientific knowledge, folk-lore and anecdote with numerous extracts from older investigators and writers, showing how with the progress of archaeological research, theories and conjectures of two hundred and three hundred years ago have given place to a degree of certainty to which the future can contribute little more than a few finishing touches.

The guide is furnished with an extensive bibliography and a useful map, on which are clearly indicated not only all the archaeological features, but also the many paths by

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which pedestrians can approach them. Included in the illustrations are three of Major Allen's superb air-photographs: among them that of a stretch of the Ridgeway (pl. vi) is particularly noteworthy. Many of the monuments and earthworks described have now become national monuments under the immediate charge of H.M. Office of Works, and one of the Office's duties for the future will be the periodical 'scouring' of the White Horse. 'Fancy'd on the side of a whitish chalky hill,' as Camden describes it in 1586, or 'impertinently' scoffed at by Philaethes Rusticus in 1740 as owing its strange form to nothing more than the haste of the 'scourers' to be finished and away to receive their reward of ale, we now know that its form is fully documented by the earliest coinage struck in Britain and by the little bronze horse discovered at Silchester. It may here be worth recording that in 1914, when the need arose to scour the Horse anew, Lord Craven's agent applied to the Ashmolean Museum for advice, and the Museum was able to submit as a record of its form the accurately measured diagram prepared by Mr. Henry Hurst under the personal supervision of Sir Arthur Evans about fifty years ago. This survey bridges us over the interval from the latest festive scouring of 1857 noted by Mr. Grinsell (p. 5) to the present time, and we may thus be happily assured that under the care of its official guardians the Horse will for the future retain but little changed the outline which was cut by its original draughtsman of two thousand years ago.

E. T. LEEDS.

The following articles and notes on subjects of local interest have appeared since the last volume of *Oxoniensia* :—

- Antiquaries Journal*, xix, 82 ff., 'Iron Age pottery from Lent Rise, Burnham, Bucks.,' by A. D. Lacaille; 166 ff., 'The palaeolithic contents of the gravels at East Burnham, Bucks.,' by A. D. Lacaille; 193, 'Palaeolith from the Upper Thames.' [1 mile NE. of Lechlade]; 194, 'Roman fir-cone of terra-cotta.' [from the Roman villa at Witcombe, Glos].
- Archaeologia*, lxxxvii, 275 ff., 'Colne Priory, Essex, and the burials of the Earls of Oxford,' by F. H. Fairweather.
- Archaeological Journal*, xcvi, 1 ff., 'The excavation of the Iron Age Camp on Bredon Hill, Glos., 1935-37,' by Mrs. T. C. Hencken.
- Berkshire Archaeological Journal*, xlii, 93 ff., 'An Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Wallingford,' by E. T. Leeds; 102 ff., 'Berkshire Barrows, pt. III, Evidence from the Saxon Charters,' by L. V. Grinsell; 117 ff., 'Medieval floor-tiles at St. Mary's Priory, Hurley, Berks.,' by J. B. Ward-Perkins and P. D. R. Williams-Hunt; 133 ff., 'Coats of Arms in Berkshire churches,' ctd., by P. S. Spokes.
- Id.*, xliii, 9 ff., 'Berkshire Barrows, pt. IV,' by L. V. Grinsell; 22, 'Norman pottery from Blewbury,' by L. R. A. Grove; 23 ff., 'Excavations at St. Mary's Priory, Hurley,' 2nd report, by C. N. Rivers-Moore; 31 ff., 'Coats of Arms in Berkshire Churches,' ctd., by P. S. Spokes; 38 ff., 'Early British coins found in Berkshire and in the Silchester district,' ctd., by W. A. Seaby; 46 ff., 'Fresh light on the history of Wokingham in the 17th and 18th centuries,' by A. T. Heelas.

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British Archaeological Association Journal, 3rd series, III, 83 ff., 'Windsor Castle, New College, Oxford, and Winchester College: a study in the development of planning by William of Wykeham,' by L. G. Wickham Legg.

Oxfordshire Archaeological Society Report, 1938, 43 f., 'Descriptive notes on 1938 excursion (Upton House and Horley Church; Hornton Church; Middleton Cheney Church)'; 45 ff., 'Mediaeval domestic architecture in Oxfordshire,' by E. T. Long; 57 ff., 'Some recent discoveries: I. Arms on the corbels of the nave roof, Tackley. II. The painted window at Newington. III. The armorial glass in the Knollys chapel, Rotherfield Greys. IV. An ancient mounting-block, recently unearthed at Sandford ferry. V. The donor of the pulpit at North Aston,' by E. A. Greening Lamborn; 69 ff., 'Masons' marks in Oxfordshire and the Cotswolds,' by R. H. C. Davis; 85 ff., 'Castle Hill, Swerford,' by E. M. Jope.