

Reviews

Cuddesdon and Dorchester-on-Thames : two early Saxon ' princely ' sites in Wessex. By Tania M. Dickinson. British Archaeological Reports I, 1974. Pp. 54, 4 plates, 4 figs. Price 75p.

This monograph, the first in the series British Archaeological Reports, sets a high standard in both content and presentation.

Tania Dickinson presents a scholarly and critical evaluation of the archaeological and historical significance of several chance finds, most now lost and known only from illustrations and summary publication, discovered in the 18th and 19th centuries at the site of the Bishop of Oxford's palace, Cuddesdon, and at Dorchester-on-Thames, whose importance in Anglo-Saxon studies have not till now been fully realized.

An account is given of a trial excavation conducted by the author in 1970 at Cuddesdon which unfortunately failed to supplement the somewhat ambiguous report of the 1847 discoveries, apart from recovering some of the original skeletal material which is fully discussed in Appendix I. In spite of having only the original reports to rely on the author provides us with a detailed discussion of the original finds : two blue glass squat bowls (one of which was rediscovered in 1971), a Coptic bronze bucket, a gilt-bronze fragment set with cabochon garnets and two possible swords which the author concludes all came from a barrow-burial of early seventh century date. The case made for considering the Cuddesdon finds as a single grave assemblage worthy of a ' prince ' is a convincing one. Speculation on the place-name ' Cuddesdon ' suggests a connexion with a Cutha of the West Saxon Dynasty.

The case for considering Dorchester-on-Thames the site of a second ' princely ' burial is slender, although one must admire the author's ability to extract every ounce of archaeological and historical inference from the scanty material available to support her argument. This includes discussion of a cloisonné pyramidal stud, a stray find known only from an 18th century drawing in the Minute Book of the Society of Antiquaries, London. The piece has apparent affinities with the jewellery from the Sutton Hoo ship-burial (an undoubtedly royal site).

There are full and comprehensive references to the text and an extremely valuable bibliography is provided, but no index. The figures, distribution maps and excavation plan are of a consistently high quality and the illustrations which are mostly half-tone reproductions from 19th century engravings and aquatints are remarkable for their clarity.

GEORGE SPEAKE

The Register of Congregation, 1448-1463, ed. W. A. Pantin and W. T. Mitchell. Oxford Historical Society, New Series, vol. xxii 1972, pp. xliii, 478. Price £4.20.

This is the last of the medieval records of the University to be printed. In an epilogue to the volume Graham Pollard valuably surveys what is known about the different types of records which existed before the burglary of the muniment and treasure chests in 1544 led to their dispersal. This register is the sole survivor from before 1500 of the proceedings of the congregation of regent masters, or *congregatio minor*, and Mr. Pollard argues convincingly that its commencement marked the change from vellum rolls to paper folios and was associated with the appointment of the first registrar, John Manningham. The folios of the following years, from 1463 to 1505, which must have contained three times as much as the present volume, together with the 600 odd rolls of the proceedings from the previous two hundred years, were victims of sixteenth century negligence. We owe the survival of

this register to the rescue work, done at the eleventh hour, by Brian Twyne in 1603. What can this fragment, painstakingly transcribed and edited by W. T. Mitchell, tell us about the regulation of studies in the University by the teaching body which was then, as Dr. Pantin reminds us, at the height of its power? The register contains some memoranda of university business (which might range from imposing penalties on drawing a knife in anger to the appointment of officers and the review of books in the University library), lists of those receiving degrees, and, more numerous than either of these, the awarding of graces or dispensations from the letter of the degree requirements. Dr. Pantin's lucid guide to the complexities of these, which forms the latter part of his Introduction, is of great value. Occasionally the King wrote to secure a grace for a clerk in or about to enter royal service; otherwise there was little external pressure on the University. These were turbulent years in national politics, but they have left little mark in this record. Only in January 1450 when the University despatched one of its masters to secure the books bequeathed by the murdered bishop of Chichester, Adam Moleyns, and in December 1459 when Henry VI wrote from Coventry to demand the imprisonment of the two bedels who had been guilty of treasonous language, did the cruel world of politics impinge. The picture is of a University immersed in its academic routine and its slow accumulation of benefactions, books and buildings.

G. L. HARRISS

Strangers in Oxford. By Margaret Toynbee and Peter Young. Phillimore, 1973. 292 pp., 12 plates. £4.75.

Despite its title this book is not an addition to the groaning shelf of Oxford guide books. It is a detailed and heavily annotated study of just three folios of a Bodleian Library manuscript which list the strangers resident in St. Aldate's parish, Oxford, in January 1644. For good measure there is also a transcript and exegesis of another folio listing further, but fewer, strangers resident in three other Oxford parishes at that date. The aims of the book are to investigate the population of the royalist capital, both landlords and strangers, and to say something of their housing conditions. The lists form part of the papers of a royalist, Edward Heath of Cottesmore (Rutland), a fact first established by this study. The introduction, after an unreasonably thorough account of Heath's life, contains a valuable summary of the main points to be made about the strangers, the landlords, and the topography of mid 17th-century Oxford. There follows an unusual and interesting survey of Oxford's garrison and a special study of the King's Lifeguard of Foot, to which regiment most of the soldiers in St. Aldate's belonged. Heath's lists are reproduced photographically, and the rest of the book is taken up with biographies of the people listed, each landlord's life being followed by an account of his house. The book is thus a rich treasure-house for anyone interested in royalists, civil war military arrangements, or 17th-century Oxford social life and topography: the ingenuity and patience of the research undertaken to identify often obscure individuals commands respect. And yet, judged even by the standards of other works on this favoured city, such a lengthy *explication de texte* reveals a quality of obsession and self-indulgence. We are told in a confidential aside that the husband of Ann, Lady Fanshawe 'was a first cousin once removed of Edward Heath's future son-in-law'; one or two other banal discoveries are heralded by a reminder that this book is first with the news; a whole appendix is taken up with the analysis of 70 known Christian names of St. Aldate's residents in order to shoot down 'the popular idea' that 17th-century Englishmen had names like Obadiah; the 200 pages or so of potted biographies are straight research notes. Little of the biographical detail is strictly relevant to the stated aims of the book, and a few more pages of introduction would have saved the reader doing the work of synthesis himself.

Phillimore's are rightly noted for their encouragement of works on local history; but it is to be hoped that the printing style adopted for the book was 'experimental'. The lack of indentation for paragraphs, the intermittent pagination, the proliferation of square

brackets, the use of a 'general' index which excludes, without comment, two other separate indexes, make the book unpleasant to look at and difficult to use.

ALAN CROSSLEY

Wallingford : The Archaeological Implications of Development. By Caroline Simpson. Oxfordshire Archaeological Unit Survey No. 1. Pp. 19, inc. 11 figs. Price 35p, postage free.

The Upper Thames Valley : An Archaeological Survey of the River Gravels. By Don Benson and David Miles, with C. J. Balkwill and N. Clayton. Oxfordshire Archaeological Unit Survey No. 2. Pp. 113 and 6 Plates. Price £2.50, postage free. Both available from the Unit, 3 Luther Terrace, Oxford.

With these two *Surveys*, the newly-created Oxfordshire Archaeological Unit both proclaims and justifies its existence. The expansion of towns and the encroachment of gravel pits are familiar facets of the Midlands scene ; but their pace during the 1960s grew, and the resulting threats to archaeological remains could not be met by existing archaeological resources.

Wallingford was one of King Alfred's 'de novo' burhs, and its plan retains much of its original lay-out just as its outer circuit retains much of its burh defences. These survivals are an indication of the importance of the town to the Saxons, and so to the 20th century historian. The archaeologist has the opportunity to find out more about the history of a town which has national significance. Mrs. Simpson has demonstrated how important it is that this opportunity should be seized.

How many aspiring archaeologists have cut their teeth on the gravels of Stanton Harcourt, scraping furiously before the drag-lines and scrapers in O.U.A.S. expeditions led by Leeds, by Harden, by Case, and by Sturdy? It seems amazing that there can be any sites left after so much destruction. Messrs. Benson and Miles show how much has gone, but also how much there is still to do. The afternoon efforts of the O.U.A.S. and the Ashmolean must now be replaced by full-time teams of trained excavators. This survey shows the extent of the problem, in a well-produced and illustrated volume.

The new Unit makes a most promising start with these two policy documents. If the fruition bears out the promise, the Unit will achieve some fine results.

DAVID A. HINTON

Oxfordshire : A Handbook for Students of Local History. Edited by D. M. Barratt and D. G. Vaisey. Published by Basil Blackwell for the Oxfordshire Rural Community Council. 83Pp. Price 50p.

If this book had been available when I worked at the Ashmolean, much of my time in answering visitors' questions would have been reduced to the blissful simplicity of saying, 'You will find it in *Barratt and Vaisey*.' This is not a book of answers, but a book on how to find the answers. The introductory chapter is a masterly review of the county's history and its best surviving monuments. Then, with the student's appetite whetted, the book leads into a review of sources, publications and repositories, and a list of local historical societies. Finally it shows how a typical student can find the answers to some of the questions that he is likely to ask.

There is an enormous amount of information of astonishing variety in these few pages, presented with a clarity that makes the book lively to read despite its very factual content. If you want a model on which to base anything that Barratt and Vaisey inspire you to write, that too you will find in *Barratt and Vaisey*.

DAVID A. HINTON

Newsletter 4, 1974. Council for British Archaeology Group IX. 36 Pp. Available from Trevor Rowley, Rewley House, Wellington Square, Oxford. Price 35p, plus 5p postage.

This is not a review but a policy statement. Trevor Rowley and Bill Fowler have made the Group IX *Newsletter* a regular and well-presented journal, and it is now a well-established medium for the rapid publication of short field-work notes and of interim excavation reports. These items will therefore no longer appear in the back pages of *Oxoniensia*, which this year publishes 'Notes' but not 'News'. In general 'Notes' will contain final excavation reports of lengths that do not demand separate monographs or articles—however short they may be, provided that, like my own report on Thame (p. 100), they are positively the last that will be said of the site! Occasionally it may be appropriate to publish an interim report on a site of considerable importance when final publication is some way off, like that on the Devil's Quoits (p. 96). In this way, costs can be reduced, and duplication avoided.

DAVID A. HINTON

Medieval Pottery of the Oxford Region. By David A. Hinton. Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. Price 20p.

The Ashmolean Museum has one of the finest collections of English medieval pottery and this small booklet, including photographs and short descriptions of 19 vessels or groups of pottery, introduces the visitor to it. The texts are informative and well written but unfortunately the grey and flat quality of some of the photographs hardly does justice to the pottery. The removal of all backgrounds to the photographs is acceptable when one pot is represented but for the groups of pottery it gives a distinctly odd impression. It is a pity that the main articles on medieval pottery which have appeared in *Oxoniensia* are not precisely indicated since this would have helped those whose interest has been enlivened by this booklet.

J. CHERRY