

Short Reviews

A Bibliography of Printed Works relating to the City of Oxford. By E. H. Cordeaux and D. H. Merry. Oxford Historical Society, XXV (1975-6). Pp. xiv+377.

This volume completes the authors' bibliographical trilogy, and it will be as warmly welcomed and as frequently used as its predecessors, whose format it follows. The Bodleian's collections are valuable both in major *oeuvres* and in ephemera, and the Cordeaux and Merry volumes bring the two together in fascinating juxtaposition, so that they are not only a tool of scholarship, but a pleasure to consult. Who would not be tempted to turn aside to 'The trimmer trimm'd; or, The washball and razor used to some purpose, by a real barber', 1749, 15pp. (no. 556), when checking the bibliographical details of Ker, N. R., 'Fragments of medieval manuscripts used as paste-downs in Oxford bindings', 1954, 278pp. (no. 560)?

Messrs. Cordeaux and Merry conceived a project of awesome magnitude when they began their work. In achieving its completion, they have placed all whose research involves Oxford, city, county, or university, in their debt.

Iron Age and Romano-British Monuments in the Gloucestershire Cotswolds. By The Royal Commission on Historical Monuments. H.M.S.O., 1976. Pp. lvi+157, 68 plates, and 14 fold-out plans and maps. £25.

Although this volume by the R.C.H.M. does not include Oxfordshire, it should be carefully consulted by those seeking to elucidate the county's monuments. The gravels around Lechlade are part of the Upper Thames, and in the same eco-system, both pre-historic and modern, as those of Stanton Harcourt and Abingdon. Similarly the county boundary divides the Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire Cotswolds, but geology does not: the Roman villas at Shakenoak or Ditchley must be considered in relation to Barnsley or Chedworth, and to the market at Cirencester. Shakenoak, with its Saxon complexities, brings Withington to mind, and the seminal paper by H. P. R. Finberg. It is a pity that the chronological horizons of the volume precluded post-Roman evidence, so that the problem of 'continuity' does not get illustrated. Nevertheless, the parallel between Shakenoak, with its Saxon burials, and its association with a Wickham place-name, has a remarkable parallel at Whittington (2). Criticisms of the R.C.H.M.'s geographical and temporal straight-jackets are easily made: let it be acknowledged that British archaeology needs the field-work of the R.C.H.M. to continue to set the standards to which all should aspire.

Archaeology and Agriculture. By George Lambrick. Council for British Archaeology and the Oxfordshire Archaeological Unit, 1977. Pp. ix+46, inc. 18 figures. £1.00.

This is another survey by a member of the Oxfordshire Archaeological Unit. It is only too obvious to any one who observes the English countryside that agricultural methods are changing, with adverse effects on archaeological sites. This pamphlet explains the various different mechanical methods which allow a modern farmer to plough land to a greater depth than his predecessors were able to reach, and tries to assess the damage which each causes. It is not as easy to locate the 'villains' as it might appear, but limited restrictions may be all that is necessary to prevent a site from being destroyed, and compensation payments need not therefore be enormous. Unfortunately, however, any schemes of that sort involve bureaucracy and interference, and few farmers would welcome them, even if the necessary finance were forthcoming. A large number of archaeological sites have only a brief future.

The Landscape of Towns. By Michael Aston and James Bond. Dent, 1976. Pp. 225 inc. line drawings, +8 pages of plates. £5.50.

The first author was, and the second is, a Field Officer at the museum at Woodstock, and this Oxfordshire connection means that their book should be mentioned in *Oxoniensia*, although its scope is the whole of Britain. The book has a wide perspective both of place and period, and carries a useful Bibliography.

Oxfordshire gets its share of attention, of course, and its towns receive treatment which is often illuminating in showing them in their national context, but which is often questionable in detail. To call Oxford and Wallingford 'late Saxon military towns' (p. 62) seems to imply a role far beyond that of garrisoned fortresses; we do not know that Wallingford's central area was 'cleared' for 'an intrusive market place' (p. 86)—it is at least possible that it was left as an open space *ab initio*; the Newland Street tenements at Eynsham (pp. 82-3) do not run 'parallel with Mill Street' in any positive fashion. Their lay-out on the north side looks much more as if they follow former ridge-and-furrow lines. That Newland is later than Mill Street is not in dispute, but the nature of demonstrating it by the existing topography is suspect.

Despite reservations like these, this book deserves to achieve a wide audience, and it will have served its purpose if it draws attention to the importance of the landscape of towns, and the lessons which still have to be learnt about our urban history.

The Last of their Line. The Bible Clerks of All Souls College Oxford. By R. E. Eason and R. A. Snoxall. All Souls College History Series, 1. Pp. viii+24. 60p (75p by post from the College).

Every visitor to Oxford soon learns that All Souls is a college without undergraduates. This is not a state of affairs that goes back to time immemorial, however, but only to 1924, for until then the College had four Bible Clerks, undergraduates maintained and in part taught by the Fellows, in return for reading the lessons in Chapel services. The College has now invited two of the last of its Bible Clerks to write briefly on their recollections, and the pamphlet which has resulted provides a delightful and unusual insight into the history of All Souls.

Although the First World War had only recently taken its toll, the world of the All Souls' Bible Clerks sounds as though it was much more Victorian than Georgian. Self invented games and slang, private jokes and minor social misdemeanours, make up a story of lives which at first glance seem petty, and a justification of the 1919 Royal Commission's dictat which led to the Clerks' abolition. But underlying the recollections is a sense of purpose which is probably more typical of Oxford students in that 1920s post-war world than are the self-conscious memoirs of those gilded few whose recollections have recently appeared in *My Oxford*.

Rare Brass Rubbings from the Ashmolean Collection. By Jerome Bertram. Ashmolean Museum, 1977. 17 illustrations of rubbings, with notes. 75p.

It always troubled my conscience while I was at the Ashmolean that I was not doing anything to make its important collection of brass rubbings better known. So it was a pleasure to receive Jerome Bertram's pamphlet, in which he publishes rubbings of brasses which are no longer extant. His selection is not therefore necessarily of the best brasses, or of the most easily-reproduced rubbings, and some of the inscriptions perhaps hardly merited such lavish treatment as they receive. Nevertheless the booklet is a useful addition to the bibliography of brasses, and the Museum is to be commended for publishing this, rather than a more obviously popular compendium.

DAVID A. HINTON