

Reviews

The Oxford Region. Edited by Trevor Rowley. Oxford University Department for External Studies, 1980. pp. vii, 258; 37 figures, 2 plates. Price £6.

This collection of 15 essays by 18 contributors consists of papers presented to a conference marking the centenary in Oxford of Adult Education. It is produced in typescript in about demy quarto size under a pictorial cover that includes, for some unknown reason, a photograph of a lost village. The matter has little continuity of time or correlation of content, and its combination derives from its concentration on Oxford or an Oxford Region that expands or contracts widely at the whim of individual authors. At least five of the essays deal more or less rigidly with Oxford, while most of the others keep strictly to Oxfordshire with occasional glances at what was nearby Berkshire before the county boundary changes of 1974. The book is not really on the Oxford Region; it might well have been entitled *Oxford and Its Neighbourhood* or some such term. Its lack of unity compels one to assess it on the quality of its components rather than as a finished model. The lack of an index seems peculiarly unfortunate.

The opening article (pp. 1-22) by Drs. Goudie, Day and Hart embraces, as might be expected of geomorphologists, a wide sweep of territory. Instead of a comprehensive analysis, they prefer to discuss selected features which have attracted recent attention, such as karstic phenomena, the origin of dry valleys, the flutings on the chalk escarpment and the sarsen blockfields. The quantitative details given are highly desirable and the account of sarsens or greywethers on the chalk downs will remind readers that anyone who has not yet visited Fyfield Down or Piggledene (near Marlborough and Avebury) has missed a geological treat.

This landform essay is followed by a masterly account of two hundred years of Oxford weather by C.G. Smith, based on data mainly from the Radcliffe Observatory station. The long record allows the setting out of notable weather sequences and weather spells and their dissection into temperature, rainfall and, for more recent decades, also of snow-lying and sunshine. The result is impressive but how far does Oxford represent the climate of its region? Although, as the author points out, the land altitude differences are less than 300m., because mean temperature decreases by about 1°C for 180m. rise in altitude and average annual rainfall increases by about 10cm. for 100m. altitude, surely the climate of the higher uplands must differ considerably, when considered over a lifetime, from that of the snug, polluted urban core?

The next article (pp. 47-54), by T.G. Hassall, discusses the major developments between 1954 and 1979 of archaeology in Oxfordshire. He stresses the growth of archaeology as a study and of its standing with local government officials and other agencies, before proceeding to mention some of the main finds and datings of recent excavations.

The following essay, by C.T. Bond, deals with the visual additions during the nineteenth century to the small towns in New Oxfordshire. Only Oxford, with a population of about 12,279 in 1801, was large enough to be excluded from the list of 17 market towns with under 4,500 residents. The growth, or more commonly the decline, in population of these centres and the causes of it are studied. The coming of faster transport broke down the traditional spacing of markets at 10 mile or so intervals, and the towns with better

communications and expanding industries began to absorb the regional marketing function of the less fortunate settlements, such as Burford which was 8km. (5 miles) from the nearest railhead. Social changes and administrative reforms brought, albeit to some more than others, functional buildings such as corn exchange, Union workhouse, hospital, almshouse, new cemetery, and new schools. The additions included houses, some with delightful eccentricities, and the unforgettable Albert Park, Abingdon, here shown in the plan.

Most of the remainder of this volume is concerned with planning, conservation, tourism and aspects of the non-visual side of Oxford University. John Minett deals (pp.81-86) with the history of official planning in Oxfordshire since 1919, while the professional problems of this planning are percipiently analysed (pp.87-96) by John F. Barrow and the transport policy in Oxford by J.M. Bailey (pp.97-123).

Then, the geographical nature and statutory status of the Green Belt are illustrated and explained by Dr. Ian Scargill. The advantages and disadvantages are clearly set out (pp.125-138) and his suggestion that the optimum policy would be to improve the Green Belt rather than nibble it away seems likely to meet with wide sympathy. The acquisition of a statutory outer Green Belt around a town with so small a population is indeed a remarkable achievement but the 'inner zone' is not yet confirmed and its divided control between District and County Councils does not aid its preservation.

In the following article (pp.139-147) M.J. Breakell discusses tourism in the Oxford Region, a traffic which is greatly augmented by a position about halfway between London and Stratford upon Avon. His proposals toward a more balanced tourist policy include mobile information centres, improved Park and Ride facilities and a widening of the sphere of interest of sightseers. To bring some sort of order into the existing tourist chaos would probably benefit both visited and visitors.

The tenth essay (pp.149-165), by Dr. D. Whiting on Labour and the Motor Industry, analyses the collective response of workers to the developing motor industry in Oxford between 1919 and 1939. While Morris Motors remained almost free of strikes and untroubled by union organizations, Pressed Steel under much the same employment conditions, had frequent strikes over piecework payments and conceded trade union recognition. The former had much labour from the region roundabout while the latter had a higher proportion of workers from far afield, including industrial areas. Morris himself was strongly opposed to unions and paid wages and provided fringe benefits above union demands. Most of his labour force, although they resented being sent home summarily when orders for cars slackened, were glad to return and had a high regard for a chief, a millionaire who in principles and precepts remained at heart a working man.

In the next article (pp.167-183), Sir Norman Chester who served on Oxford City Council for 21 years, discusses the direct involvement of the University in the city administration from 1771 to 31 March 1974, since when interconnections have been informal and at best spasmodic and dons seeking a place on the City Council must face the public election process.

There follows an analysis (pp.185-201) by E.J.S. Clarke of the setting up at Harwell of the Atomic Energy Research Establishment and of the profound influence it has had and continues to have on the increased prosperity of a wide area. These acute details demonstrate vividly how choice of site was dependent on existing aerodrome and transport facilities, on various personal considerations and a slight element of chance.

In the thirteenth article (pp.203-225) Dr. J.P. Dunbabin reveals the nature and variations of Oxford college finances in the twentieth century. Many aspects are cleverly analysed and reduced to simple statistics which will no doubt prove caviare for dons and cold porridge for the wider public. In the same way the following essay (pp.227-237) by

F.V. Pickstock on Adult and Further Education in Oxfordshire will presumably appeal mainly to educationalists.

The concluding article by Dr. A. Kadish deals with Oxford economists and the Young Extension Movement of the last third of the nineteenth century. This influential upwelling of economic socialism lacked in its courses continuity of subject matter. Some of the lecturers were not primarily concerned with socialistic, co-operative ideas and were not members of the Oxford Economic Society, for example H.J. Mackinder who lectured prodigiously in fostering a 'new geography' and in September 1882 became principal of the newly-established Reading College.

This brief review does not do full credit to the many intimate details to be found in these essays but the general impression is that although the themes will be highly entertaining to experts in their topics, their combination within one cover under a broad title cannot conceal their heterogeneity and disjointed specialism.

R.P. BECKINSALE

Sandra Raphael, Christopher Thacker, Mavis Batey and Denis Wood, *Of Oxfordshire Gardens*. Oxford Polytechnic Press, 1982. £9.95.

This attractively produced book consists of four essays. Denis Wood provides a personal anthology of extracts from poems on gardens and landscapes. The other three essays are historical. Sandra Raphael writes on Oxford Botanic Garden and Christopher Thacker gives us an account of 'the Superlative Prodigal', Thomas Bushell, and his lost garden at Enstone, full of 17th-century conceits, 'artificial Thunder and Lightning, Rain, Hail-Showers, Drums beating, Organs playing, Birds singing, Waters murmuring, the Dead arising, Lights moving, Rainbows reflecting with the beams of the Sun, and watry Showers springing from the same Fountain' — and watery jokes to catch the unwary visitor. (It is unfortunate that the view of the grotto, taken from Plot's *Natural History*, should have been reproduced in pale brown; the detail is barely visible.) The general reader, however, will probably enjoy most the pioneer discussion by Mavis Batey of the development of the landscape garden in the county. She takes us from the Restoration to the 20th century, from Lord Clarendon's new park at Cornbury and the first layout at Blenheim to the Duchêne water gardens there and to Jellicoe's work at Ditchley. The subject is too large for the available space and we must hope for a future book. Meanwhile a certain amount must remain speculative until landscape theories and designs can be fully married to dated execution on the ground. It is easy, for instance, to over-rate the achievement of that versatile and ingenious publicist John Claudius Loudon. Research for the *Victoria History of Oxfordshire* vol. xi has revealed that not all the projects shown on the Great Tew maps in Loudon's *Observations on Laying out Farms in the Scotch Style* (1812) were in fact carried out. He held his Great Tew lease only from Michaelmas, 1808, to February, 1811, and it is doubtful if he can have influenced the picturesque alterations to Great Tew village; they were carried out from 1819 by a different architect under the auspices of a new landlord, Matthew Robinson Boulton of Birmingham, and they are in a different style from Loudon's own building in the parish. For reasons of date there must also be doubt about his association with the beautiful landscape at Swerford Park.

All but three of the illustrations are line drawings by Meriel Edmunds. They are elegant in their way, but they decorate rather than inform. It is difficult to bring gardens alive on paper; Sandra Raphael's 'Botanic Garden' would have gained from the bird's eye views of Loggan or Williams and Mavis Batey's parks from a few sketch plans showing the changes in landscape design as exemplified in Oxfordshire.

CHRISTINA COLVIN

David Sturdy, *Twelve Oxford Gardens*. The Ark Press, London, 1982. Pp.36. £1.50

Most guides to Oxford are predictable. They are written for the visitor to the city and are consequently of little use to the local historian. This one, originally prepared for an exhibition at the Museum of Oxford, should interest both the tourist and the scholar. Its subject is the gardens of Oxford, monastic, collegiate and private, formal plantings for enjoyment and useful herb gardens. Of those shown on David Loggan's map, the basis of the study, some have vanished and others have been transformed not once but many times. Save for archaeological remnants such as walls (grand walls in the case of Danby's Physic Garden) and the New College mound there is nothing earlier than the Romantic gardens of Corpus, Exeter, New College and Worcester.

Sturdy reminds us of the delights of Oxford's 17th-century gardens from the doctor's garden behind 86-87 High Street, small compared with the Physic (Botanic) garden but essentially serving the same purpose as a source for healing herbs, to the formal garden of Wadham with its talking statue and a figure of Atlas on a mound, and the armorial and sundial beds at New College, revealing how much the baroque was valued in Oxford. It is a pity that the formal garden in the Brasenose Front Quadrangle (surely a prime candidate for reconstruction) does not find a place.

Apart from this omission, and those of the gardens of Trinity and St. John's, the only substantial criticism of this otherwise admirable guide is that the gardens are not arranged in the order of a coherent perambulation, but with the aid of the numbered map a walker can easily devise his own itinerary.

MARTIN HENIG

John Fletcher and Jan Whittaker, *The Harwell Trail*, Abingdon, privately printed, 1981. 32 pp. Price £2.50.

This booklet traces the history of the Harwell family from its origins in 13th-century Harwell, Oxfordshire (formerly Berkshire), to the present day, when its numerous American members are scattered over much of the southern U.S.A. It is an interesting story, and one which might with benefit have been expanded into a longer book. The account of the many American branches of the family, in particular, is extremely brief; one would like to know more of such men as Grieff Harwell, supplier of clothing and beef to the army in 1782, Lemuel Harwell, owner of 6 slaves, 3 beds, 2 horses and a gun in 1805, or William Berry Harwell, the early 20th-century Kansas pioneer. Nearly a third of the book is devoted to a description of early medieval Harwell, or at least to the part of it which formed the Upper Manor, and to its buildings, another topic which deserves a fuller treatment, though not necessarily as part of a history of the Harwell family.

JANET COOPER

Bishop Fell and Nonconformity: Visitation documents from the Oxford Diocese, 1682-83. Edited by Mary Clapinson. Oxfordshire Record Society, Vol. lii, 1980.

This volume opens with a most useful introductory essay on the official treatment of Dissent in the diocese of Oxford after the restoration of Charles II. Its main contribution, however, is to publish, with very detailed annotation, a set of thirty-five letters from Oxford incumbents in 1682 to Bishop John Fell together with Fell's queries and his archdeacon's answers after the triennial episcopal visitation in that year. The third document

printed includes the archdeacon's list of numbers of dissenters in 1683 and, as an appendix, there is provided the 1669 return of conventicles in the diocese as ordered by Archbishop Sheldon. Careful and exhaustive indexes of persons, places and subjects are also given relating to all four documents. The only omission which would have helped the reader further is a map of the diocese showing the areas to which the documents referred.

Both historians of Dissent and of the Church of England will welcome this evidence concerning a period when the pressure upon dissenters was being increased by the authorities. While there is no reason to believe that Bishop Fell would fail to use other means available to him for the discouragement of Dissent it is interesting that he was requiring his clergy to visit and talk with their schismatic parishioners in an attempt to win them over by argument. That these attempts were not largely or immediately successful is hardly surprising: twenty years of persecution had hardened attitudes on both sides.

Among the letters two seem of special interest. That from the vicar of Aston Rowant lays bare some of the non-theological pressures operating upon the dissenters. One man for example, was approached by the vicar through a relative, a loyal churchman from whom the man had hopes of a legacy. The economic motive operated in the other direction for another who said his father, described as 'long a stubborn and Resolute seperatist', from whom he expected to inherit must die before he could come to the parish church; another 'dares not while his father lives'; while several had wives who, it was thought, would not necessarily agree with their husbands; two men had hastily left the village when they first heard that the vicar would be raising the question of their absence from the parish church with them. Meanwhile all of them had been protected by a man who held the office of constable. The cross currents within a small community were interestingly hinted at here. The most lively of the letters came from South Weston (pp. 30f.) where the rector gave a rather full narrative of his encounter with a spirited and articulate Quaker which served to outline the major issues over which they were at odds.

These tantalisingly brief glimpses into the ecclesiastical conflicts of the time, not through the classic theological statements, but as reflected in ordinary parish life are both on the one side exciting and, on the other, in the sketchiness of their attempts at statistical surveys, a warning against any easy generalisations about what was happening in the years which were moving some dissenters to the desperation which led to their support of Monmouth in 1685.

This is a very useful contribution to the publications of the Oxfordshire Record Society.

B.R. WHITE