

## Reviews

*It must be understood that all statements and opinions in reviews are those of the respective authors, not of the Society or of the Editor.*

*Wychwoods History*, No. 3. *Milton and Shipton in the 19th Century*, edited by Kate Tiller. Wychwoods Local History Society with Oxford University Department for External Studies, 1987. Price £2.50.

Unlike its two predecessors, No. 3 of the *Journal of the Wychwoods Local History Society* is devoted to one theme – an account of Milton- and Shipton-under-Wychwood in the 19th century. In six chapters a number of studies undertaken in an evening class are brought together to provide a picture of life in the two villages. The first two chapters set the agricultural scene and examine the workings of village government. The next two explore the changes brought about by the coming of the railway and the enclosure of the common fields. Chapter 5 is devoted to the village schools in the 1880s and chapter 6 to conditions at the turn of the century.

The whole provides us with many fascinating glimpses into what life in an Oxfordshire village was really like. Chapters 3, 4 and 5 are particularly good examples of local history studies, bringing the past alive by combining careful study of documentary sources with knowledge of and interest in the locality. The graphic account both of the physical changes in the landscape and of the practical changes in living standards which followed enclosure, the lively description of the construction of the Oxford, Worcester and Wolverhampton railway, and the sympathetic sketch of village schooling a hundred years ago together make a very 'good read' for anyone interested in local history in general or the Wychwoods in particular.

Historians who wish to follow up the information provided in this study will regret the lack of an index and of precise foot- or tail-notes. The lists of 'sources and references' at the end of each chapter are too general to facilitate further research. It is difficult to track down, for example, the 1552 survey of Shipton mentioned on p.7 or the 1836 estate map of Ascott quoted on p.9. It is not helpful to have the bibliographical details of the edition of John Simpson Calvert's diary only at the end of the last chapter, when use has been made of it in chapters 4 and 5.

Even without these refinements, the volume is a lively and useful contribution to the local history of Oxfordshire. The Wychwoods Local History Society and the Oxford University Department for External Studies are to be congratulated on their joint production. A continuation of the study into the inter-war years, hinted at in the final sentence of this number, will be awaited with interest.

Copies may be obtained from Sue Richards, Foxholes House, Foscot, Oxford OX7 6RW (plus 50p. p.&p.)

MARY CLAPINSON

*Banbury Gaol Records*, edited by P. Renold. Banbury Historical Society Volume 21, 1987. Pp. xxii, 248. Price £10.00 (plus post & packing, £1.00 in UK), available from Banbury Museum; free to record members of the Society.

During a summer weekend of touring recently I noticed the proud way in which two former boroughs, one English (Bishop's Castle) and one Welsh (Montgomery), displayed their old gaols for visitors. These were two of the 178 municipal corporations investigated before the 1835 reform: a third example could be Banbury, were this town not so noted for desecrating its historical background. We are reliant on an Indian ink sketch by Buckler in 1823 for a physical impression of its gaol, and thus to appreciate the easy commerce (in tobacco) from the Market Place and to envisage the escape of prisoners in 1839. This is more reliable than some documentary evidence from national sources: the editor reveals from the Bluecoat School records how far the corporation pulled the wool over the eyes of the 1823 Charity Commissioners over the background of this building. Thus it is welcome to see in print the written evidence for a decade of gaol life in the journal and associated accounts of Robert Gardner, deputy gaoler of Banbury until 1843, with the support of the Records series of that estimable 25-year old institution, Banbury Historical Society, for whom this is the 21st volume.

The volume supplements Gardner's Journal with other primary sources which illustrate the workings of the borough gaol in the 19th century: extracts from the 1782 report of John Howard, relevant Parliamentary Papers of the period 1819-40, official records showing the Banbury Corporation's interest in the gaol from 1836 to its closure in 1852, and lengthy memoranda of a year's prison visiting by the Quaker Samuel Beesley in 1841. The editor supplies a useful introduction to the context of borough gaols in general and Banbury's in particular, also showing source limitations such as the absence of early 19th-century Quarter Session records of the type used by Delacy in her recent Lancashire study. Finally, there are separate indices of individuals, both prisoners and prosecutors. The 1823 Gaol Act, which required the keeping of a journal of all punishments, and all 'occurrences of importance within the prison', appears to have been largely honoured in the breach, and Gardner's is a rare survival, though even this was never counter-signed by the chairman of the justices at Quarter Sessions. There are some unexplained gaps, and no reason for its termination in 1839.

Personal characteristics are nowhere more profuse than those given for the inmates when Gardner took over his post on 5 October 1829. Hannah Hitchman served two months' imprisonment, being a native of Hook Norton, but with a settlement at Buckingham by service, 'short, stoutish made, very short teeth in front and A devil for Water in Swilling and Washing down'. Thomas Hollyhoke was a later inmate: four times between 1832 and 1837 he was brought there for assault, drunkenness or theft. On two occasions he served time - 22 days and 187 days' hard labour, as listed in the bread accounts - but on the last occasion his drunkenness was at a Banbury parliamentary election, when he was merely brought before the Mayor and discharged. After 1836 sessions, as opposed to summary, prisoners, served their term in Oxford Prison. Beesley in 1841 commented that 'about 4 out of 7 prisoners appear to be strangers. The remainder are chiefly boatmen from the canal: there are very few agricultural labourers or poachers'. However, 6 of the 20 ultimately tried for involvement in the Swing machine-breaking riots at Neithrop in 1830 passed through the local gaol. There were in fact cases of poaching, as well as theft (once of a plush waistcoat, a local product), desertion from armed service (I take E T Company in the indices to be the East India company), desertion from masters, defrauding the Mendicity Society (surely a stranger's act), body-snatching (the Bodicote case) and finally deserting the new workhouse to go to Hanwell Club Day in 1834. There were no prisoners for debt.

The conduct of the gaol is also revealed: one reform in 1835 was the installation of a treadmill, fixed so as to be labour for one person or six persons. In 1838 it was reported 'not a suitable punishment for women', removed in 1844 and sold in 1848. An earlier version must have been available for the insubordinate at the new workhouse, 'brought to the treadwheel' on 13 August 1834. The gaoler on occasion slipped into the sub-culture of the inmates, and the editor is obliged to remind us that 'a regular prig' is a petty thief. However, we are not told the contemporary slang term for the male-oriented treadmill.

All in all, this is a welcome addition to the Banbury Record Series, of interest to penologists and social historians alike.

GEOFFREY STEVENSON

Christopher Platt, *The Most Obliging Man in Europe. Life and Times of the Oxford Scout*. Allen & Unwin, 1986. Pp. 138, illus. Price £10.95.

Readers seeking a rounded and detailed historical study of the Oxford college servant will not find it in this decorative and decorated volume. Rather the figure of the scout provides a peg on which is loosely hung much entertaining and nostalgic reminiscence of Oxford in the 19th century and up to the Second World War. The style of writing is anecdotal, sometimes repetitive and unashamedly idiosyncratic, confronting the reader with statements such as 'Organised games were the hideous product of an imperial century'. Many familiar Oxford stories will be encountered and may be savoured afresh, with Spooner and Jowett of Balliol figuring large. The latter was known for his shyness, unnerving silences and occasional cutting remarks. Professor Platt recounts that 'F.E. Smith was the only person who seems to have been able to stand up to Jowett's silences. He and the Master went for one of those long Oxford walks together [a characteristic afternoon and Sunday pastime]. They said not a word until even Jowett could keep silent no longer: "They tell me you're clever, Smith, are you?" "Yes", said Smith and was silent again. No more words were exchanged between them until they reached the college gate. F.E. then paused, held out his hand, and wished the Master good day: "I've so much enjoyed our talk."'

Here and in much of the book, it is the heads of house, dons and undergraduates who hold centre stage. They have done so in many other Oxford books and it is frustrating that they should loom so large in a volume that promises a fresh angle in its concentration on the college servants. Much of the book is given over to description of the stages of the college day, including a chapter on 'the Oxford afternoon that evokes the most powerful nostalgia. Scouts had little part in it, since they were off duty, and at home most afternoons from around 2.30'. A description of student pastimes then follows, but what of the homes to which the scouts returned? Where exactly did they live? Who owned their houses? What rents did they pay and what proportion of their wages did this take? What ages were college servants? Did their wives become involved in the college economy of Oxford through sewing or laundering? How did the prolonged but spasmodic hours of the college day affect the scouts' lives outside? How far were successive generations of scouts recruited from the sons of old servants? What were the social and political attitudes of Oxford college servants? Did these vary within the hierarchy of posts, between colleges from the grandeur of Christ Church down, or at different times between 1800 and 1950? Possible answers to several of these questions are briefly touched on but seldom fully explored. To do so, in the style of the History Workshop, could reveal much of the identity and experiences of scouts, not least in their own words. It is encouraging to note that Professor Platt makes use of interviews by himself and Brian Harrison with college servants. Other sources include contemporary printed material, novels, verse and later secondary historical works.

References and bibliography are not included, always an obstacle to those wanting to enjoy a text more fully or follow up a point, and this produces some uncomfortable compromises, e.g. 'John Burnett has explained (*Useful Toil*, 1974). . .'

Servants were one of the largest and most rapidly growing occupational groups in late 19th-century England. Professor Platt interestingly discusses how far Oxford college servants were different from the mass of domestic servants. As one of his interviewees, Albert Thomas, summed it up, they were more secure and less exploitable because they lived out, worked for men alone with no women employers, and 'were considered as more than just domestic servants and thus nobodies'. Wages compared well with any alternative Oxford jobs until the coming of the motorworks in the 1920s, although an important element of servant income depended on tips and perks. The other side of the equation was the need to call undergraduates 'sir', carry water and coal for their open fires, and clear up after them when they over-indulged. Some scouts also seem to have acted at times like tactful NCOs and as more experienced mentors and welfare advisers. The most long-serving appear as prime repositories and protectors of college continuities and tradition. All this is suggested as Professor Platt's account moves back and forth in place (Cambridge gyps make several appearances), time, college, and kind and status of college servants. The text (part or all of 72 pages) and the numerous pictures whet the appetite to know more. Did the students of Ruskin, pictured in 1906, always do their own washing up?

KATE TILLER

*Royal Arms in Oxfordshire Churches*, compiled and written by Paul Morgan, edited by Rosemary Pardoe. Published by Rosemary Pardoe, 38 Marina Village, Preston Brook, Runcorn, Cheshire, WA7 3BQ, 1987, Pp. 11, Price £1.65 including postage and packing.

The energy of Rosemary Pardoe has produced a series of very valuable pamphlets describing Royal Arms in churches of various counties and also of the City of London. Sadly, several of them are already out of print. Mr. Paul Morgan has now produced an admirable handbook to those in the Archdeaconry of Oxford, which is virtually coterminous with the pre-1974 county of Oxfordshire.

The author has carefully listed 54 examples of the Royal Arms in churches in this area. Two date from Tudor times (Sandford St. Martin and Stadhampton). There are fine examples from the present reign at both Great and Little Milton, no doubt due to the sympathetic scholarship of the late Rev. E.P. Baker. Each item is carefully described with any relevant information, while on the inside cover is a practical sketch of the eight variant forms exhibited in the Royal Arms between the Tudor period and today. Within these heraldic boundaries the entries are listed alphabetically.

Mr. Morgan is to be congratulated on a very serviceable guide to an all too often neglected field of church decoration. It is to be feared that there have been sad losses in this technique in the last century or so. Mr. Morgan has already published a similar list for Warwickshire, while Buckinghamshire has been covered by Mr. Elliott Viney. May we hope that the author will now complete the Diocese of Oxford by turning his attention to the old County of Berkshire? This is a scholarly and useful little work.

MICHAEL MACLAGAN

*The Earliest English Brasses: Patronage, Style and Workshops 1270-1350*, ed. John Coales. Monumental Brass Society, 1987. Pp. 234; 219 figs. Price £12.95.

This important collection of essays is the culmination of some twenty years' rigorous re-appraisal of long-accepted, but often erroneous, views on pre-Black Death brasses. The groundwork for this work was provided by John Blair. Relatively few early brasses retain any inlay, and a study which confined itself to surviving examples would be unbalanced and suspect. During the last fifteen years he has listed and recorded over 800 indents and antiquarian notices of lost brasses, providing a properly representative basis for further study. By a methodical and meticulous analysis of the component parts, notably the individual inlay lettering and the cross-head types, combined with such documentary evidence as is available, he has built up a clear picture of the pattern of workshop operation across the country. Paul Binski's paper concentrates on the figure brasses made in the main London workshop. He views his subject from a broad art-historical perspective, relating the development of brasses to contemporary art-forms, thus adding a valuable new dimension to previous studies. His typology is well-presented and convincing. Finally, Nicholas Rogers's review of episcopal monuments, both surviving and lost, demonstrates the innovative and influential role of this section of the clergy in artistic patronage, particularly relating to funeral monuments. It is a fascinating and well-researched study, complemented by a useful essay by the same author on the origins of monumental brasses.

Although the survey covers all English brasses, there is much in this book to interest the Oxfordshire reader. Over 50 examples have been recorded in the county, all of which are described and many illustrated. Additionally, the Bodleian Library is one of the major sources of antiquarian records of lost brasses referred to in the summary list.

Altogether this is a very sound and scholarly book on a subject too often given a populist approach. The volume is copiously illustrated by well-reproduced photographs, rubbings and drawings. One can criticise points of detail on the interpretation of antiquarian records and the workshop attribution of individual brasses, but the main body of the findings presented is beyond dispute. The Monumental Brass Society is to be congratulated on producing such an excellent volume to mark its centenary.

SALLY BADHAM