

## REVIEWS

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

Stephen J. Yeates, *The Tribe of Witches. The Religion of the Dobunni and Hwicce*, Oxbow Books, Oxford, 2008. Pp. 195. Black and white illustrations. £30. ISBN 978-1842173190.

The contents of this extraordinary book are as arresting as the title. It can be read in conjunction with a shoal of other studies of the culture of Roman Britain and the succeeding centuries by, amongst others, Charles Thomas, Ken Dark, David Howlett, and in *The Heirs of King Verica* (Stroud, 2002), the present reviewer, but this is the book which more than any others in general, and for our region in particular, means that the landscape of what used for no good reason to be called the 'Dark Ages' will never be the same again. Of course, it builds on the past, and it is good to see Finberg's continuity thesis as applied to Withington, not far beyond our county boundary, dusted down. But Yeates's canvas both temporally (covering as it does a thousand years from the Iron Age to the early Middle Ages) and geographically (embracing Gloucestershire, West Oxfordshire, Herefordshire, Worcestershire, and parts of Wiltshire and Somerset) is vast.

In brief, he studies the evidence for the Iron Age Dobunni, their coin distribution and hill forts and other settlements, and their Romano-British manifestations in towns, villas, sacred sites, and sculpture and compares them with evidence, often onomastic, from later periods, when the territory was supposedly settled by a people known as the Hwicce. Their name, which is preserved amongst other places in Wychwood, means in Old English, 'the people of the sacred vessel cauldron'. Bede implies that they were British, and Yeates indeed shows that many more British names were preserved into the Middle Ages than previously thought and that the English toponyms are often simply translations of Celtic ones.

These names frequently encode the deification of the landscape, and Yeates pursues this through archaeological evidence, folklore, onomastics, and iconography. He has perambulated the region with great thoroughness, looking at excavation reports, noting field banks, barrows, boundaries, and features of the natural topography. He examines the names of rivers and streams, hillforts, woodland *nemets* (sacred groves), and ancient mines, like that at Lydney in the Forest of Dean, sacred to Nodens, derived from *neud-*, 'acquiring possession of'; the god's name may be preserved as the Nustles.

Yeates has thrown exciting new light on the Roman sculpture of the region, published by this reviewer some years ago in a volume of the *Corpus Signorum Imperii Romani*, entitled *Roman Sculpture from the Cotswold Region*, British Academy (Oxford, 1993). The Hwiccian cauldron turns out to be the familiar attribute of a deity found widely in the region, from Bath to Gloucester and Cirencester and probably Aldsworth. It exists in the landscape as in the vale of Gloucester in the heart of the region. In addition, we may note the survival of the mother goddess, called Cuda, on one relief from Daglingworth, of whom there are other images - from Cirencester and the Chessels, Farnworth, and now (since the book was published) at Gill Mill (Ducklington), in Oxfordshire. Cuda, of course, gives her name to the Cotswolds. Then there is the regional hunter god, Cunomaglos, or in Welsh *Cynfael*, a horse or rider-god exemplified in several sculptures, one again from Gill Mill, and deified trees, possibly with archaeological evidence from the same site, but with epigraphic evidence at Custom Scrubs, near Bisley, in Gloucestershire, where a genius-like figure is designated Mars Olludius, whose name means 'the great tree', and onomastic evidence at Beam and Bampton, in Oxfordshire, which may also reflect the continuity of this concept.

The demonstration of the manner in which the arrival of Christianity and the establishment

of minster churches both preserved some aspects of earlier organization, while at the same time marking a definite caesura with the past, is most convincing. The churches, as we know from Bede, were deliberately sited where there had long been important cult centres; in the Dobunnic-Hwiccian region these may well have included, amongst other places, Daglingworth, Deerhurst, and Blockley, in Gloucestershire, and Charlbury and Bampton, in Oxfordshire. The old deities might be Christianized in legend, like the triad of women at Evesham, or reduced to the 'demons' of witchcraft, symbolized by those who used cauldrons for devilish rites.

There is very much more to be explored in the region, both putting the elements of mythology revealed here into a wider European context of myth-construction in a landscape setting and also revealing far more of the manner in which the Church obscured the patterns of faith of the previous millennia. In addition, the evidence here deserves to be tested, especially in areas further to the west (in Gwent, the land of the Silures), where few people have ever doubted continuity of a sort until at least the Norman period, and to the south and east, in the territory of the Atrebates, who appear to be coterminous with the Gewissae of Wessex, and who may, in fact, have in part constructed their own identity as Saxon invaders, just as in another culture, that of the ancient Israelites, the long-accepted story of the conquest of Canaan has been shown to be in large part mythical: the Israelites, in fact, themselves originated locally!

In short, this book, not always an easy read, because the argument is sometimes quite complex, is a devastating assault on what everyone thought they knew. It establishes the author as one of the foremost authorities on state-formation in early Britain, and should be read by everyone interested in our region, including, of course, Oxfordshire, and the polities which preceded the creation of the county.

MARTIN HENIG

John Blair, ed., *Waterways and Canal-building in Medieval England*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2007. Pp. xiii + 315. Illustrations, maps. £55. ISBN 978-0199217151, ISSN 0199217157.

It is always interesting to see chickens coming home to roost, especially one's own; the present reviewers were intimately involved with the origins of research on this topic. The story (at least in recent times) began with research by Paul Hindle on the geography of the medieval road system of England and Wales, published in 1976.<sup>1</sup> Some years later his research student (Jim Edwards) began looking through the numerous State Rolls for evidence of the extent of navigable waterways as part of the overall transportation system, combining roads and waterways; this was eventually published by the two authors in 1991.<sup>2</sup> A counter-blast came from John Langdon in 1993,<sup>3</sup> who derided the idea of an extensive navigation system in England. There was a reply from Edwards and Hindle (described by Blair on p. 12 as 'perfunctory'; 'concise' might have been a better description).<sup>4</sup> There the matter rested until the authors of the present book met in an 'informal colloquium' in 1999. The next year an article by Evan Jones appeared (with a response from Langdon),<sup>5</sup> and John Blair's book began its long gestation period. It seems a little odd that only one of the original four protagonists in this long-running debate is represented in this book; the other three are all still around!

<sup>1</sup> B. P. Hindle, 'The road network of medieval England and Wales', *JHG* 2 (1976), pp. 207–21.

<sup>2</sup> J. F. Edwards and B. P. Hindle, 'The transportation system of medieval England and Wales', *JHG* 17 (1991), pp. 123–34.

<sup>3</sup> J. Langdon, 'Inland water transport in medieval England', *JHG* 19 (1993), pp. 1–11.

<sup>4</sup> J. F. Edwards and B. P. Hindle, 'Comment: inland water transportation in medieval England', *JHG* 19 (1993), pp. 12–14.

<sup>5</sup> E. T. Jones, 'River navigation in Medieval England', *JHG* 26 (2000), pp. 60–75; J. Langdon, 'Inland water transport in medieval England – the view from the mills: a response to Jones', *JHG* 26 (2000), pp. 75–82.

The book has an introduction by John Blair, followed by five chapters relating waterways to the general economic picture; inevitably some parts are more convincing than others. For example, Fiona Edmond's detailed theories about water transport in north-west England need to be more firmly placed in the context of how sparsely inhabited this area was. A recent estimate by Nick Higham is that Lancashire and Cheshire had a population of only 12,000 people at the time of Domesday Book; 'water transport resources' (p. 36) may have been available in the north-west, but were they much needed or used? The next two chapters, by Della Hooke and Ann Cole, make extensive use of place-name evidence, always best used (as Cole admits) to support other types of evidence. Mark Gardiner's chapter is perhaps the most interesting and innovative in the book; it deals with 'hythes, small ports and other landing places', and suggests that small-scale and local water transport was probably very important – but went largely unrecorded. This chapter is a useful counterpart to much of the other research which has looked at the larger ports and towns and the routes between them. In the next chapter John Langdon attempts to assess the effectiveness or 'efficiency' of the water-transport system, looking in particular at vessel types, sizes, and carrying capacity.

The second half of the book has seven chapters, looking at improved waterways and canals; the first of these, on the human modification of river channels, seems oddly out of place. The next (overlong) chapter by James Bond is about canal construction from the Roman period onwards; the sections on European canals (pp. 158–62, 170–5) could have been omitted, and the section on Roman canals in Britain (pp. 162–9) shortened. But he has very interesting local studies of canals in the Fenlands and Yorkshire and brings out the importance of the monasteries in canal construction. Next there are four short, local studies of water routes in Somerset and Hampshire; Charles and Nancy Hollinrake (p. 229) sum up the whole topic neatly: 'Rivers are the forgotten highways of early medieval England.'

John Blair concludes the book with a detailed study of transport and canal-building on the upper Thames, returning to one of the main points of contention between Edwards/Hindle and Langdon. In 1993 Langdon had derided the notion of navigation on the Thames above Henley, but Blair now accepts that navigation continued above Henley and indeed beyond Oxford (p. 285), as previously substantiated by Edwards and Hindle. There is now a general acceptance of the importance of river transport at various levels; the dogged trawling through the 108 volumes of the State Rolls done by Edwards seems finally to have paid off (Blair, references 19 and 27, pp. 259–60). The present reviewers are flattered by the number of references to their research!

The book is well produced, with clear maps throughout. Perhaps more of the duplication (which Blair notes in his Preface) could have been removed. Curiously we are not told anything about the contributors: who are they? where are they? As its title implies, the book is very much focused on the waterways and does tend to ignore the rest of the transport system (roads, coastal shipping) and the economy (trade, urban growth); Mark Gardiner's chapter is the main exception. But at the end of the day it is very useful to have the topic of medieval waterways published in book form, rather than in the less accessible pages of a research journal.

JIM EDWARDS and PAUL HINDLE

Robin Darwall-Smith, *A History of University College, Oxford*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2008. Pp. xxvi + 605. 12 colour plates, black and white illustrations throughout. £75. ISBN 978–0199284290, ISSN 0199284296.

Robin Darwall-Smith, the doyen of Oxford scholar-archivists, is well known to readers of *Oxoniensia*. But his article ['The medieval buildings of University College, Oxford', *Oxoniensia*, 70 (2005), pp. 9–26], a harbinger of the present *magnum opus*, is only the tip of his iceberg. His output is copious, mostly on aspects of the history of Magdalen and University Colleges, which

have the good fortune to share him as their archivist. Ten years ago, the Master of University College, Lord Butler of Brockwell, KG, commissioned him to write a new, detailed history of the college, and the project has come to fruition in timely fashion just before the Master's retirement. It was a perceptive commission he would delight in.

Darwall-Smith's book is the new model of its kind – exhaustive, critical, and affectionate, but not over adulatory, though he is a 'Univ. man' himself and could have been forgiven for that. It is written with a light, elegant touch and is full of new information. He covers the whole period of the college's long history to 2007, starting with its endowment in 1249 and collegiate reality from about 1280, making it the first Oxford foundation according to the criterion of endowment date. I favour the criterion of established existence on today's site, as any sound *Balliolensis* would. Little is known of the early membership of University College (or Balliol, sadly), but much is squeezed out of limited material, and there is rich detail of social life for later centuries, together with a fair amount of scandal and political intrigue. As ever in such works, the amount of information about what students actually studied, and what if any the guidance their tutors gave, is scanty through dearth of material: these were essentially private matters between a student, or rather his father, and the tutor. 'What did he study?' must be the family historian's frequently asked question. 'Sorry, I don't know', the sadly inevitable answer.

The book is very nicely illustrated, and has useful appendices (one of them listing University College men in the *ODNB*, an excellent idea I wish I had had in my time; future college historians would do well to follow suit) and a full index. A notable scholarly feature is the frequent comparison of Univ. with other colleges; and the allusions to Oxford City properties take up a full page of small print in the index. It is written in a much broader scholarly context than most college histories.

A tour de force, Univ. men will devour it – indeed, I believe they have already done so by the hundred. But it is not only for that pious parochial clientele: it should be read by anyone interested in the history of universities. Indeed, historians of all waters will find it illuminating. At this time of national appreciation of the sixtieth anniversary of the NHS, for example, it is worth remembering that William Beveridge, a Balliol man in the first place to be sure, was Master of University College when he wrote the epoch-making report which led to the welfare state in Britain.

JOHN JONES

Geoffrey Smedley-Stevenson, ed., *Early Victorian Squarson: the Diaries of William Cotton Risley, Vicar of Deddington, Oxfordshire*, pt 1: 1835–1848, Banbury Historical Society, vol. 29, Banbury, 2007. Pp. 276, plates, illustrations, maps. £15 + £3 p.& p. (from BHS, c/o Banbury Museum, Spiceball Park Road, Banbury, Oxon, O16 2PQ). ISBN 978–0900129278.

William Cotton Risley (1798–1869) would move easily in a novel by Anthony Trollope. He was born into a clerical family, and his good prospects when a young man were fulfilled by inheritances from his own family, by a substantial share of the temporalities of the Church of England, and by a marriage to a woman of property. His landholdings extended across several of the Midlands counties to the Welsh border. He began, a little hesitantly, to write a diary in 1835 and continued to do so until the year of his death, although there are some short gaps in the surviving manuscripts. Risley was inducted as vicar of Deddington in 1836, but was compelled by family illness to resign the living eleven years later. His incumbency at Deddington is the focus of this long-awaited edition of the diaries. Geoffrey Smedley-Stevenson has handled the text with sympathy and skill, and the reader is left with the impression that nothing of historical significance has been omitted. The introduction explains the provenance and archival history of the diaries and concisely describes Risley's family background. A list of *dramatis personae* identifies people mentioned in the text, and there is a comprehensive index.

The diaries provide copious insights into the thinking of one who seems never to have questioned his right to discipline the lives of his less wealthy neighbours. They show how Risley carried out his duties as magistrate, committing some malefactors into custody, while dismissing others with reprimands. Risley took into his own hands the management of the village clothing society in December 1836, confessing that it would enable him to see, and doubtless to discipline, more of his poor parishioners than would otherwise be the case. The diaries show the perturbation that troubled magisterial minds when a prize fight was in the offing, as it was in north Oxfordshire in April 1837. It is scarcely surprising that Risley held Conservative opinions in politics, but the diaries provide insights into the fears that he and men like him entertained of those who held other views. When two vagrants were detained in Deddington in 1839 he considered that a knife found on one of them was evidence that the man was a Chartist. He was equally suspicious of teetotallers.

The diaries provide vivid details of elements of both continuity and change in Oxfordshire society in the 1830s and 40s. Risley refers to Deddington as a village, although most historians would regard it as a town whose fortunes had decayed in the eighteenth century. There was a lodging house in Deddington, an essentially urban feature that gave Risley considerable cause for concern, not least because he feared that its itinerant inmates might bring in smallpox. The diaries show the extent to which a wealthy family used local shops and also reveal their purchases from retailers in Oxford, Banbury, and London. They reveal the importance of the wharf on the Oxford Canal at Aynho, which in Risley's time was the principal source of Deddington's coal. As a landowner, Risley had a considerable interest in agriculture, and he reveals much of the day-by-day, season-by-season pattern of farming activity in north Oxfordshire.

Risley's activities extended far beyond his own parish and properties. Geoffrey Smedley-Stevenson skilfully illuminates the clergyman's friendships and connections, with friends, relations, and institutions, particularly with New College, Oxford. For the historian of transport, the diaries provide a vivid picture of the impact of railways on passenger transport. In the first diaries in this volume he describes journeys by stage coach, but made his first railway journey, from Windsor to Paddington, in 1839, and thereafter made increasing use of railways to go to London, at first by way of Steventon or Wolverton, and to the south coast.

This is a delightful volume to read, but it is also a source that illuminates many aspects of nineteenth-century social and economic history. It will be of interest to many historians whose concerns are not principally with north Oxfordshire. Publication of the second volume of the diaries will be eagerly awaited.

BARRIE TRINDER

Antonia Catchpole, David Clark, and Robert Peberdy, *Burford, Buildings and People in a Cotswold Town*. England's Past for Everyone, Phillimore, Chichester, in association with the Institute of Historical Research, University of London, 2008. Pp. xi + 244, illustrations, many colour, maps, plans. £14.99. ISBN 978-1860774881.

Burford has been fortunate with its histories. They range from the book written by a former schoolmaster, W. J. Monk (1897), to the monumental *Burford Records* of R. H. Gretton (1920, from the pioneering survey of its old buildings by M. Laithwaite, 1973), to the wide-ranging studies of Raymond Moody (1990–2006). This book, however, does something different. It combines a close examination of the town's buildings and physical layout with documentary research into its history and people. It is also unusual in that it is a collaborative study, combining the research expertise of the county staff of the *Victoria County History* with the active involvement of a voluntary group, the Oxfordshire Buildings Record. These last have accumulated a vast amount of information in their survey, strengthened by the painstaking analysis of a thousand probate inventories.

Burford's origins and plan form have been unravelled by Antonia Catchpole; the results are displayed in a remarkable series of maps analysing the evolution of the existing patterns of streets and house-plots. The town is seen as part of a European phenomenon of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, in which planned towns spread across the landscape. Burford grew to be an important nodal centre of the wool and, subsequently, the cloth trade. A substantial number of its buildings date to the later Middle Ages, although it is not always obvious, because much of the building stock was refronted with new, more fashionable doorcases, and windows inserted. It acquired a large central market place, along which were houses or burgage plots stretching back on either side of the four main streets. These were served with back streets. A church, whose evolution mirrored the economic and population growth of the town, was not accompanied, in Burford's case, by a manorial centre. Bury Barns, it is claimed, may have played this role – a focus of the lord's agricultural interests and the site of his manor court.

Burford went into relative decline in the sixteenth century and became an undistinguished market town serving its immediate locality. Small-scale malting and coaching, together with the usual crafts, took over. Comparative economic stagnation was compounded by the re-routed turnpike road to Gloucester, which avoided going through the town, and the railways never came. This meant that whereas Burford was remodelled, it was never rebuilt, unlike Witney, where prosperity powered by the local cloth and blanket industries led to an almost complete rebuilding in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The effect of this on Burford is that its buildings remain a fascinating amalgam of differing architectural styles from the fourteenth century onwards. These reflect changing priorities and functions. The second part of this book is a gazetteer of buildings, with thumbnail descriptions of individual houses, attached to which are summaries of what is known of the people who once (and maybe still) lived there and their occupations. Greatly helping their identification are coloured photographs, albeit postage-stamp sized. Armed with this handbook, the visitor will be able to walk along its streets picking up on Burford's architecture and history.

The book is laid out in an imaginative and elegant way. It is printed on smooth paper, pleasant to the touch. There are a series of well-illustrated panels, dealing with individual themes. The gazetteer is accompanied by little maps, pinpointing the part of the town being described. There are literally hundreds of colour photographs, at least one for each building, in the gazetteer. The book is fully referenced, with notes following each entry, directing the reader to the bibliographies.

With such a rich offering it might seem churlish to complain. There is, however, an aspect where the book fails to satisfy. The building descriptions are not accompanied by measured plans. Where a plan is produced, that of the parish church, there is no attempt to recognize the different periods of building, something the *VCH* has usefully and traditionally set out to do. Also, the illustrations are nearly always of the outsides of buildings. Hardly any show interiors or hidden features. One building whose description is missing is the bridge.

It is to be hoped that following this outstandingly successful work, there will be similar studies of other Oxfordshire towns, notably Henley and Chipping Norton.

JOHN STEANE

S. J. D. Green and Peregrine Horden, eds, *All Souls under the Ancien Regime: Politics, Learning, and the Arts, c.1600–1850*, Oxford University Press, Oxford and New York, 2007. Pp. vii + 400. Black and white illustrations. £70. ISBN 978–0199276358, ISSN 0199217157.

In the century and a half since Montagu Burrows wrote the *Worthies of All Souls*, Oxford college histories have tended to follow two patterns. Traditionally heads of houses and grand history fellows have written accounts that give the majority of space to the subsequent careers of equally grand old members; more recently, histories written by archivists and specialist historians of institutions and education have concentrated on the institutional histories of the colleges. This

volume makes no claim to be a history of All Souls – it is a collection of essays adapted from the annual Chichele lecture on All Souls history – yet its contents still fall largely into these two groupings.

Since the early days of the Ancien Regime (a definition of which is discussed in S. J. D. Green's introductory chapter) All Souls has always tolerated, if not prized, the frequent non-residency of its fellows in the service of Church and State, so it is perhaps more forgivable to have a volume, purportedly on All Souls, spending half its pages discussing the careers of its alumni than it might be for other colleges. Some of these essays, such as R. H. Helmholz on Sir Daniel Dun or Tim Clayton on George Clarke, are little more than expanded *ODNB* articles, and it is difficult to see at whom they are aimed, though Patrick Neill's life of Blackstone will be of interest to the general reader.

Others are probably of greater interest to experts in particular fields. Robert Franklin discusses the theology of Sir Richard Steward and brings out the subtleties of his thought, which included Arminian and Calvinist elements. Dominik Perler discusses the epistemological philosophy of John Norris, and the late John McManners holds up Bishop Heber as the absolute embodiment of the Ancien Regime in everything he touched, despite some radical policies in India. Jim Bennett shows us Christopher Wren before he became the great architect and reminds us of the range of his scientific interests, and Roger White usefully discusses all his Oxford buildings in one essay. The best of the alumni essays, however, is Scott Mandelbrote's article on Christopher Codrington, showing how his legacy, including the library that bears his name, grew out of Caribbean politics and Codrington's failure while Governor-General of the Leeward Islands to carry out reform.

These essays tell us little about All Souls beyond the extraordinary range of careers held by its fellows. The essays feature a Dean of the Court of Arches, Dean of Chichester, Surveyor of the King's Works, Secretary at War, Governor-General of the Leeward Islands, and Bishop of Calcutta. A general failing, however, is that although the essays state the date of a fellow's election, they rarely give the date of his resignation. It would be interesting to know whether these far-ranging posts are held in conjunction with a fellowship of All Souls or whether it had already been relinquished.

The essays that will be of most interest to the general reader, particularly one interested in Oxford, are those that concern the institutional history of All Souls. Scott Mandelbrote begins with the history of the college from Civil War to Glorious Revolution, focusing on the various attempts to stop the corrupt elections, whereby fellowships were sold by the holder to his successor. All attempts at reform failed; those of the archbishops of Canterbury (as Visitor) before and after the Civil War, and the Parliamentary Visitors. John Clarke picks up the story with an excellent essay on the attempts by Warden Gardiner to make the fellowship more clerical and resident, beaten, Clarke argues convincingly, by the lack of career opportunities in the Church that All Souls could offer. It is curious, however, that the essay is given the date range of 'c.1688–1760', given that the final reference in the text is to the 1730s. Warden Gardiner also features in an excellent essay by John Davis, here fighting against the growth of Founder's Kin fellows, and it would be interesting to see some reference by Clarke and Davis to each other's accounts. Davis goes on to show how the Founder's Kin grew throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and the family connections between them.

In a second essay John Clarke argues that Warden Niblett, as Vice-Chancellor of the university, played a vital role in the defeat of the Mortmain Bill in 1736, and Peregrine Horden discusses the purchase of the *Noli me tangere* by Anton Raphael Mengs, which once hung in the chapel, showing how the academic interests of the fellows led to this spectacular piece of cultural patronage. The volume ends with two essays by S. J. D. Green on the end of the Ancien Regime. In the first he explains how three fellows challenged the college on what constituted 'merit' in the election of fellows. They wanted the elections to be decided on examination alone, with no weighting to social, religious, or cultural 'merit'. The subsequent legal case, which went as far as Queen's Bench, led to a debate on what All Souls should become, but determined that it could never be the same

again. In a final, fascinating essay Green demonstrates that Burrows's *Worthies* is not the laudatory, self-congratulatory history that it is often taken to be, but was written as part of the debate on the future of All Souls, a debate that to a large extent Burrows won.

This volume therefore provides biographical essays, of interest to the specialist, and snapshots of the development of an extraordinary Oxford college, of interest to the general reader. What is missing, though, is any sense of the intellectual life of the college (particularly amiss as the subtitle claims the volume to be a study of 'Politics, Learning, and the Arts'). One hopes that this will be covered by the histories of the college we are told that the editors of this volume are preparing. And no doubt those histories will be the better for having these essays (at least most of them) to build on.

MICHAEL RIORDAN