

REVIEWS

THE ANCIENT BRIDGES OF MID AND EASTERN ENGLAND,
 by E. JERVOISE. ENGLISH WINDMILLS, vol. II.,
 containing a record of the mills in Bucks, &c., by
 Donald Smith. London: The Architectural
 Press. 5s. 6d. each. 1932.

These two volumes constitute a useful record, since they are not limited by any set date, and note the present state of structures which may or may not have existed in an earlier form.

Neither is exclusively a Bucks book, since the one dealing with bridges introduces our county in the two chapters dealing respectively with the Ouse and the northern tributaries of the Thames. They accordingly contain a few slips which might have been avoided by consulting our Society. Thus the London Bridge at Buckingham is attributed to the Marquess of "Bath," when "Buckingham" is meant, and the adjacent iron foot-bridge does *not* replace "an ancient structure," as a reference to J. T. Harrison's *Historical Buckingham*, p. 65, would have shown. Similarly the Windmill volume places the Waddesdon tower mill at Windmill Hill Farm; and it should have been described in the past tense, instead of as "slowly decaying." The Glossary may be adequate for the text, but it is very limited, not even containing such words as "burr" and "peak-stone."

The illustrations in both volumes are admirable and well reproduced.

ED.

SOME NOTES ON THE EARLY HISTORY OF STOWE, by A
 MEMBER OF THE SIXTH FORM. Printed by Walford
 & Son: Buckingham, 1932. 2s.

One of the commoner objects of the second-hand bookshop is a copy of someone amongst the thirty

or more Descriptions of Stowe listed by Gough. After the crash of 1848 these ceased to pour from the press, and it is a very different Stowe to-day which has taken the place of the showy seat of pomp and circumstance which made one of its most distinguished visitors cite it as a criterion:—

A Work to wonder at,—perhaps a Stowe.

The present little booklet (for it numbers only 25 pp.), compares very well with the Seeley publications of the late 18th and early 19th centuries. It is concise, accurate, exquisitely printed and intelligently illustrated; further, it is in good taste, which can seldom be said of its florid—sentimental—classic—romantic fore-runners in which “Pebble Alcoves” received the same treatment as the superb Corinthian Arch, designed by Lord Camelford.

This pamphlet was presumably designed to answer the questions of parents and other visitors to the school, but it deserves to be on the shelves of all who are interested in this curious monument of human vanity.

ED.

THE PARSONS AND PARISH REGISTERS OF MEDMENHAM,
CO. BUCKS. Royal 8vo. pp. xvi & 481. 15s.
Compiled by the REV. A. H. PLAISTED, this
volume is a continuation of the chronicles begun
by him in his THE MANOR AND PARISH RECORDS
OF MEDMENHAM, a book reviewed in these pages
in 1925; see vol. XI., 432.

The bulk of the book is, naturally, the register which takes up 278 pages and its index another 60 pages. Arising out of this basis, Mr. Plaisted adds lists and accounts of the parsons, parish-clerks, churchwardens, terriers and other items of a registral nature; the whole forming an exhaustive record.

The register comprises the bishop's transcripts for 1575-6 at the Bodleian Library, and for 1600-47 at Lincoln. The existing register in the parish begins 1653 and is printed down to 1930.

When register printing became active, 30 to 40 years ago, it was thought necessary to print beyond 1812. This has been since seen as a mistake; 1837 is now recommended to be the limit, it being the date when public registration became compulsory; though much evaded for several years by many people who did not register births, but with deaths it was another matter, for not being able to bury without the registrar's certificate, registration was un-evadable.

Perhaps it is as well to print baptisms up to 1840, but it is superflous to print weddings and burials after 1837.

In printing all down to 1930 Mr. Plaisted sets an unnecessary standard of completeness only attainable in a very small parish containing affluent supporters.

The register has no general interest. In 1653 the appointment of Richard Childe as 'regester,' in accordance with the Act of 1653.

Mr. Plaisted comments on the two chrisom children buried in 1654-5, and illustrates his note with an engraving from a Derbyshire brass, when he had a Bucks example, both the thing and the word, at Chesham, and the thing in alabaster on the Lee tomb at Aylesbury.

In treating of Medmenham it does not seem possible to avoid the notorious 'monks.'

1759. William ye son of John Clarke and Martha his wife baptised thursday March ye 22nd. in the Abbey Hall.

Mr. Plaisted considers this entry to be the unexpected record of a baptism at the Hell Fire Club.

The excellent index to the register is almost exhaustive enough to be another transcript, and perfection is attained by the list of 199 names of people buried in the churchyard without memorial.

A list of 53 'parsons' of Medmenham is given, each of whom has a biography varying in length from a few lines to a whole page or more. Several have miniature portraits in the text.

The use of the term 'parson' is rather inappropriate, for Medmenham is a vicariate, and only a rector in *persona ecclesiæ*. The Abbot of the Cistercian monastery appointed the vicar down to the dissolution temp. Henry VIII.

Religious changes in England are best studied in clerical biographies. Sir Roger Fodergill, vicar in 1526, was the last to receive in official records the title "Sir." He conformed to every change during his vicariate until his death in 1563, equalling the record of his neighbour at Bray.

Joel Barnard, vicar in 1624, was an active Puritan and was rewarded by the Committee for Compounding with a grant of £40 per annum from the living of a recusant. He was succeeded in 1651 by Thomas Brookes, an Independent minister, who disappeared in 1661, when John Gilbert, probably a firm upholder of divine right, became vicar, to be deprived in 1689 for refusing to take the oath required on the accession of William and Mary.

That useful official, the parish-clerk, is suitably remembered as worthy of posthumous recognition. Since 1607 fourteen of him and her have functioned at Medmenham. One was a woman, the widow Gray, who succeeded her husband, Robert, who after serving 20 years died in 1774; the widow drew the wages and competently did the duties till 1787 when she rejoined her husband.

Joseph Collier appointed in 1855 was clerk for 45 years; no other reached 40.

The first clerk recorded is Joseph Austin in 1607, when he and his wife were reported to the Bishop; he for 'insufficiency,' she as a 'common sclander.'

A list of churchwardens is given from 1537 to date, not quite complete in the early years; a woman, Mrs. Morton, was vicar's warden in 1782-3.

Fifteen terriers, with list of moveables, are printed, the earliest 1605 and the latest 1896. These are perhaps the part of the book which is of most permanent value, for they deal with property. The real estate inventoried being the source of stipend and subject to the exactions of the State is not likely to be forgotten. It is not so with the moveables, loss, neglect and alienation have been the fate of much church property in the past. Lamentable instances of mis-appropriation are known to many of us. This should be prevented by ordinary care on the part of church officers.

Every parish church should possess an inventory of the property attached to it, which should be kept accurate by periodical revision.

The volume is adorned by a dozen full page pictures. Some of these are portraits, quite charming, whose connection with the text is not very apparent. One has distinct interest, that of Mr. Henry William Caslon, the last of his line in the family ownership of the Caslon type foundry, fifth in succession to William Caslon, the founder of the business. Mr. H. W. Caslon died at Medmenham and was there buried in 1874.

A good all-round production like this book is always a gift-horse to the public, for which the Rev. A. H. Plaisted must be thanked.

W. BRADBROOKE.

THE BLECHELEY DIARY OF THE REV. WILLIAM COLE, M.A., F.S.A. 1765-1767. Edited by FRANCIS GRIFFIN STOKES. With an Introduction by HELEN WADDELL. Demy 8vo., pp. lx & 392. London: 16s.

During the last three years Bletchley has been fortunate in the amount and quality of notice it has received in print. There was the Rev. William Cole's *Paris Journal*, followed after a short interval by his *Bletchley Diary*. The first contains many references to the parish and the second is a delightful chronicle of two years life therein. The Diary is ably edited, annotated and presented, with a charming introduction by Miss Helen Waddell, who, from the natural chaos of a daily record of unrelated miscellaneous incidents, has constructed a connected narrative of the rectory life. The perusal of the Diary is much helped by the 'Description of the Principal Persons' frequently mentioned.

The period written about is short, only two years, but the amount of detail is such that we seem to get quite an extended view of the district and people in it; *e.g.*, on 2 Jan., the day after his return, Cole records much about the roads and waywardens' duty.

The weather is first noticed and if a saint's day, as S. Matthew. Foggy morning and Shrove Tuesday. Miserable Weather. Then follow the doings of the day, the names of those enjoying hospitality either in the parlour or the kitchen. The subjects recorded comprise every aspect of this life from the accidental scalding of the parlour cat to the inheritance of an estate.

Returning from France, Cole arrived in Bletchley on 1 Jan., 1766, was welcomed by a ringing of the bells, the ringers being subsequently entertained in the kitchen, where they drank as much as they pleased

'in Reason and Sobriety.' During the next week several of his friends in adjacent parishes called and others sent enquiries; and on the Sunday after matins seven of his principal parishioners dined with him in the parlour, and five more in the kitchen. This was not an exceptional occasion, just Cole's ordinary hospitality; he kept open house, and his servants and many parishioners particularly if employed by him at any time, fed at the Rector's expense.

He writes 'my Cellar cost me the last year above £30, though I never touch a drop of ale myself and rarely drink any thing better than small beer.' Even at pre-war prices that represents a large amount, the modern equivalent would be at least £200.

In Cole's time the population of the parish was about six to seven hundred, so that it was not impossible for the Rector to know them all. With the exception of the Willis family at Water Hall, there were no gentry; of the seven guests dining on the Sunday after his return Mr. Thomas Cooke, of Water Eaton, was perhaps the most important. He had an estate of his own in the parish of about £200 per annum, and was a sort of steward for the Willis family.

Much of the information given in this Diary can be amplified from other mss. of Cole's as well as supplemented from other sources.

Cooke is an instance of this amplification. Mr. Thomas Cooke was one of the ten children of John Cooke, of Eaton (Bletchley), yeoman; he died aged 77 in 1781, and was the father of at least eleven children. The family lived at Water Eaton for many generations, the description most used in the register is 'farmer'; yeoman is used for the earlier generation or two, the title 'Mr.' was first applied in 1751 to Thomas Cooke (after his daughter Sarah had married, none too soon, the Curate's son), and the family attained its social

apogee in the person of Thomas Aldwin Cooke, who is described as 'gent' in the baptismal entries of his offspring, and, though dying at the early age of 64, lived nearly long enough to be a great-grandfather and to see his grandsons described as laborers. Ecclesiastical and civic apotheosis was attained in the offices of churchwarden and constable held by two or three of the family.

This record is that of commonplace village people engaged in agriculture, neither gentry on the one hand nor paupers on the other; a sample of thousands of English rural families in the 18th cent.

Another diner on that Sunday was Jonathan Daniel, who was drowned on 5 Nov., 1767. In another ms. Cole records this fatality: "Jonathan Daniel, of Eaton, farmer and shopkeeper, was drowned by the bridge between Eaton and Fenny Stratford footway, by the Saffron Garden, age 66. He was the most regular churchman in the parish, and a harmless, inoffensive man." He fell from the bridge, perhaps in a fit, to which he appears to have been subject. One Sunday he had a fit during service.

The first visitor on Cole's return was the Rev. John Gibbard, A.M., of Magdalen Hall, curate of Whaddon. Miss Waddell notices that he was one of the few souls with whom Browne Willis had no quarrel. In his last letter, scarcely legible, to Dr. Ducarel, Browne Willis says how ill he is (6 Jan., 1760) and asks interest with His Grace of Canterbury to do something for a most valuable minister who has served Whaddon for nine years. This must be Mr. Gibbard; he read the service at Willis his funeral.

One noticeable thing is the sociability and mutual hospitality of Cole's friends. He mentions about 150 occasions when he dined out or entertained friends at dinner in his rectory, as well as many times when he

declined invitations on account of ill-health. He always records the names of the guests, usually six. The number of people who fed in the kitchen was legion, *e.g.*, 1766, Christmas Day, about 25 poor people dined in the kitchen; and again after the last load of hay was brought in, about 30 people had supper in the kitchen.

Living was good, abundant and varied; gifts of game, fruit, preserves and wine are frequent. Fish, both fresh-water and sea, were plentiful and appreciated. The pond at Water Hall was drawn. "They took 32 brace of carp, a perch of 2 pound, a jack of 8 or 10 pound," etc. At a dinner party Cole praises the lobsters and "a most noble trout of 8 pounds," the sort of fish which would charm an apostle. Again, he gives to Mr. Pomfret a fine pair of soles and a score of smelts. Oysters were had from London; a barrel of Colchester oysters comes from an unknown friend; his sister Catherine sends a barrel, and he in turn sends some to friends. In October, 1766, a company of the gentry dined at The Bull, Stony Stratford, a turtle of 80 pounds being the resistance piece. Venison is often mentioned. Mrs. Willis sends a fine haunch; "Mr. Taylor brought me as fine a shoulder of venison as ever I saw, weight 11 pounds, I paid 4/-, which is as cheap as beef or mutton at this dear time. Mr. Reddall of Simpson sent me a good piece of sturgeon." He dines at The Saracen's Head, Towcester, on a turbot and venison.

The diarist has his troubles. His horse flesh was a continual expense and loss. The prices he paid seem in these days to be very low. In May, 1766, he is told that a pair of horses at his offer of £21 is not to be found, "for a pair of sober horses that had their flightiness pretty well over." A few days later he bought one for £11:11:0. Another from Aylesbury Fair cost £13:13:0, but he proved so jumping a one

that no fences could keep him in pasture; this Pegasus was sold later for £10. Another coach horse was then purchased at Dunstable Fair, purchase price not mentioned, but $3\frac{1}{2}$ guineas was all that he fetched later. The horse, Captain, bought of Henry Travel for £12, was sold for £7. Bought Blackbird for £14; less than a month later "found my best new horse very ill, with the use of his hinder legs taken from him." Horse stealing was then common, and several of Cole's neighbours lost their horses, so Cole had all his branded with W.C.

A reminder of horse stealing was laid bare about 1900 on the demolition of a cottage at Fenny Stratford. The skeleton of a horse was found on excavating the ground floor. Probably the stolen animal was hidden in the cottage, and the thieves finding it impossible to get away with it, killed and buried it in secret.

Another trouble was the misbehaviour of the 'curate' at Fenny Stratford, the Rev. Ralph Leycester. This divine was reluctantly appointed to the curacy or living in 1761, and at once became hostile to the Rector. Trouble became acute over the celebration of S. Martin's Day. This festival had been regularly observed by Browne Willis for 26 years. At his death in 1760 he exhorted Cole to continue the festival. Disagreement about the date was the first thing, Willis always kept Nov. 22. Cole adopted the corrected calendar date, 11th Nov. In 1765, having invited several gentlemen to join in the observance, Cole went to S. Martin's Chapel and found it locked, and the keys taken by Leycester to Heath-and-Reach. Someone was put through a window and opened the door from the inside, and the service was held. Leycester did not come to the dinner, but abused the Rector in The Bull yard before a crowd which his noise had collected. For three years the curate

collected funds for a second observance on 22 Nov. In 1764 when preparing to do so, the bayliffs laid hold of him and put an unexpected stop to the solemnity.

Cole wrote a complaint to the Bishop detailing Leycester's delinquencies, but failed to rouse episcopal displeasure. He then reported one more instance of wrong-doing: "On the first Sunday of 1765, the bells rang so long for Leycester that the tired ringers gave out, the psalm singers also so fatigued that they had to go out and refresh with gin; they returned and sang another psalm, but their chaplain never came nor sent a substitute." Whether Leycester ceased from troubling or the wearied Cole sought rest is not certain, but no reference occurs in the diary after 1767.

Cole records a great deal about the Willis family, all of so dubious a character that it seems there was a definite streak of abnormality.

Dr. Browne Willis was an interesting anachronism. His physical ill-health accounted for his eccentricities. His life, extended to 78 years, was a long fight against disease. He appears to have first suffered from epilepsy in 1700 when 17 years old; fits troubled him for many years. In 1717 he writes that he is afraid to venture out, having parted with "my man John Hopcraft who has been with me eleven years and used to my fits." He preserved his eyesight by two issues in his neck 40 years.

He was an individualist, opinionated and obstinate. His parliamentary career was short. He never spoke but attended regularly, and often voted against his party. His virtues degenerated into the corresponding vices. Loyalty to the Stewart House was such that he refused to take the oath of allegiance to George I. Strictly religious, he was bigoted in his opposition to

dissent. His generosity became prodigality and he ruined his estate. His masterfulness became domineering egotism in his dealings with those he thought indebted to him. It was his custom to send to everyone he had done a favour a printed "Exclamation" on the duty of gratitude. His regard for ancestors caused an 'inveteracy' to his children. However, he was sober and temperate, his servants remained with him a long time, and he was liberal to the poor. Such was the man who largely dominated North Bucks for 60 years.

Of his ten children only two survived him, his first born twin-daughters, Catherine and Gertrude, who are "foolisher the older they grow." He quarrelled with all his sons, especially with the two who were rectors of Bletchley. One of them locked his father out of the church. With son Henry, the difference was acute enough for the son to conceal his marriage, which was only known after his death.

Writing to Dr. Ducarel, Willis in 1756 refers to the death of his only surviving son in a fourth fit of inward gout, which he had brought on himself early. This seems to have been a family tendency, for Cole attributes the death of more than one descendant of Browne Willis to the "too free use of liquors." Other particulars recorded by Cole of this family show incapable, irresponsible people. No wonder the good estate left by the famous physician, Thomas Willis, was frittered away. Cole's diary is the chronicle of an intensely human man. He notices and delights in everything, his parochial duties were punctiliously performed. His farming being done vicariously was naturally imperfect, human nature creeps out when he sells his tonquin sow "as something seemed to be the matter with her." When Tom bought a lame horse with a spavin for £15, he puts it down without comment.

Writing to Mr. Walpole, Cole calls his diaries his only delight, though "I think the greatest part of them stuff and trash." We could do with much more of such stuff and trash.

WILLIAM BRADBROOKE.

A HISTORY OF THE MANOR AND PARISH OF IVER by
W. H. Ward and K. S. Block. London: Martin
Secker. 10s. 6d.

The standard of parochial history has become very high of late years; the Rev. A. H. Plaisted's *Medmenham* set a criterion which might daunt all but the stoutest scholars. Luckily for Iver it has been blessed with the patience and erudition of the late Mr. W. H. Ward, and the zealous learning of Miss Block has completed his labours in this excellent volume.

In her preface she apologises for having had to omit the footnote references. This unlucky blank is met by depositing a fully authenticated copy in the Aylesbury Museum, but no reader can fail to see that this is very different from the second-hand work of the ordinary topographer, and that it will constitute a source-book which may safely be quoted.

From the late 12th to the early 15th century Iver belonged to the Claverings. Edward III. then obtained it by exchange from their heir, and bestowed it upon his newly-founded College of St. George, Windsor; as a result the manorial rolls have been preserved, and afford valuable matter for a picture of the social life of the times.

The arrangement of the book is one of six chapters which are chronological in intention, though only the last is defined as covering "From 1700 to 1850." In these chapters the manorial, ecclesiastical and social history is drawn with a wealth of facts illustrative of

the periods; as a whole they form a series of pictures which show us the life of Iver from age to age, but they illustrate faithfully the influences which successively bear upon a parish with such a geographical relationship to Windsor and London.

All sorts of curious pieces of information drift to the top, as it were; thus we have some early 13th century quit—claims using “the word *judaismus* as equivalent to a loan.”

Other curious words are *schullen* (1374), which apparently meant a bridge, and *hiltre* (1370), which is conjectured to be some kind of fish-trap. The dictionaries do not seem to help, and one wonders if it could be a corruption of *eel-trap*, or some similar phrase. At the beginning of the 19th century, Iver Grove was owned by Admiral Lord Gambier, whose “gardener Thompson undertook the experiments with the field pansy that resulted in the decorative giants of the seed catalogue of to-day.” One wonders whether the late Dr. C. G. Druce knew that?

A slightly earlier inhabitant of Iver was Sir Thomas Bernard, whose philanthropic zeal led him to take a deep interest in the “village soup shop,” and the conditions of the local poor in general.

The book is packed with good things, but the pages are set rather solidly, and the indexes are not good; there are three of them when there should be only one, and the entry of a surname with half-a-dozen references to different people ought to be prohibited by law.

The present reviewer has failed to find mention of the very interesting thatch-hooks found by the late vicar in the church tower in 1928, and illustrated in *The Times* of 17 October; they may be mentioned, but they are not in the index.

The fee-book kept by John Spencer is just mentioned (p. 142), but from an article upon it in *The Times* of 10 September, 1929, it deserved quotation.

One would not, however, close by dwelling on some venial sins in the way of omission (if indeed they are omissions); one would rather finish on a note of gratitude for what is given us, and of congratulation to Iver that it has been twice blessed—with a W. H. Ward and a Miss Block, both eminently fitted by knowledge and sympathy to be the chroniclers of the parish.

THE PENN COUNTRY OF BUCKINGHAMSHIRE printed for
the Penn Country branch of the C.P.R.E.
London: Evans Bros., Ltd. Price: 5s. & 7s. 6d.

The aim of this work does not require it to contain much original matter of interest to our Society; at the same time it is an extraordinarily cheap record of some of our historic monuments, most beautifully illustrated. The topographer of Bucks will gather some useful material from Sir Frank Mackinnon's contribution, which deals with the roads and paths of the area; and everyone will be really grateful for the charming account of Lord Beaconsfield at Hughenden by his nephew, our Chairman. Though lightly sketched it has an *intime* touch which makes literature of it; the illustrations to that essay could not be bettered.

EDITOR.