

REVIEWS

Murray's Buckinghamshire Architectural Guide. Edited by John Betjeman and John Piper. (John Murray, London, Sm. Quarto. xiii + 132 pp. Illustrated by 166 photographs and a map. 15s. net.)

This is the best illustrated and most penetrating book on Buckinghamshire that has appeared for some time. But it is also highly controversial, or at least prejudiced. And it is not a guide in the accepted sense. It is a guide to what Messrs. Betjeman and Piper have enjoyed or found amusing or unpleasant, and think you should too; and in that sense it is entertaining and stimulating, though really rather naughty. This, then, as the editors are careful to point out, is a personal view of Bucks.: of what struck two witty and well-informed people as beautiful or typical in the county.

Many of the photographs (a large proportion by Mr. Piper himself and Mr. Avery Colebrook) are superb. One must be extremely grateful for such studies as plates 9, 11, 13, 29, 32, 40, 47, 71, 83, 84, 85, 94, 97, 108, 116, 126, 130, 134, and 165, which all have atmosphere and texture as well as valuable detail not often photographed. But the editors' sense of proportion sometimes deserts them, as when no fewer than thirteen plates are devoted to one place or area (West Wycombe) and ten to another (Stowe, though with more variety and justification). And their enthusiasm for Victorian stained glass and other details is very hard to swallow. They are right to feature some of the better modern buildings—and a few of the horrors to serve as a warning.

It is inevitable that such a work should not be quite up-to-date on some points, and should contain some inaccuracies. The photograph of the Kederminster Library at Langley was taken very many years ago, the chairs having been removed by Sir John Harvey's executors long before the war. The picture of the unique plaster fan-vault at Hartwell, and the happily optimistic note that 'the building has lately been saved from destruction', unfortunately do not tell the story. The decision to demolish the building has been postponed; meanwhile a good deal of the plaster vault has already fallen, and the rest of this remarkable building is a wreck which is a disgrace to the Church and the county.

Elation over the 'atmosphere' of Hanslope spire (largely rebuilt) and its setting has apparently rendered the editors oblivious to the splendid Norman external arcading, pilasters, and corbels in the chancel, which are not mentioned or illustrated. Some of their summaries are devastating—as for instance 'Buckland: at a Chiltern foot near the main road at Aston Clinton. Bungalows in back lanes. Brick Methodist church with gallery, 1836. The single-aisled church has an early Tractarian-style interior of white-washed beauty. The main structure is mediæval'. It is quite true. But I should have thought the discerning eye and mind would have seen Church Farm, one of the best houses in the area, and the church font, and ignored the Methodist horror.

Wall paintings (in which the county is unusually rich) receive scant treatment, though Butterfield's horrible little church and rectory at Dropmore (1866-77) have to be mentioned *and* illustrated.

Something like six pages are devoted to modern villas; and though they are admittedly unfortunately typical of a large part of South Bucks., I should have preferred to find a little more said of a church like that at Chalfont St. Giles, which is packed with interest of every

sort, than that it was 'restored by Street', who incidentally did incalculable damage there, as elsewhere.

This is a mixed bag. And whether you like it or not, you will certainly learn many things from it that you didn't know before about Bucks. Whether some of them are worth knowing (to the exclusion of others, not mentioned, which certainly are) is a matter of opinion.

E. C. R.

Episcopal Visitation Book for the Archdeaconry of Buckingham, 1662. Edited by E. R. C. Brinkworth (Buckinghamshire Record Society (Sidney Press), 1947). Being vol. VII, issued for the year 1943. 10 × 6 inches. xiv + 111 pp. Price not given; obtainable from the Hon. Sec., Bucks. Record Soc., Twitchells End, Jordans.

This volume makes an important contribution to our knowledge of the state of Buckinghamshire churches, and of matter connected therewith, in the difficult period immediately following the Civil War.

The documents from which Mr. Brinkworth has made his transcripts and his scholarly commentary are among the records of the Archdeaconry of Buckingham deposited in the Bodleian Library at Oxford, MS. Archdeaconry Papers, Bucks., c. 230. This volume is the first issued by the Buckinghamshire Record Society on its own account, the previous six in the series having been published when the Society was affiliated to the Bucks. Archaeological Society as its Records Branch. The same high standard of scholarship and production is maintained.

The state of religion in this country, and the state of the fabrics and fittings of churches in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are matters of absorbing interest.

In 1637 a visitation was made which is a most interesting supplement to the present volume; and the returns then made relative to Bucks. were edited and printed in volume V of our *Records* by Robert Gibbs, F.S.A. That survey disclosed a picture of parish churches in a state of neglect, ruin, and decay that beggars description. The turmoils of the Civil War only aggravated matters; and to these was added the preoccupation of the authorities (aided by informers) with Popish recusants and their supposed plots, Anabaptists, Quakers, and Conventicles. This volume covers a most interesting period, when the persecution of the Quakers was at its height. Wm. Russell of Jordans was presented at Chalfont St. Giles for not coming to church. Edmund Waller of Gregories, Beaconsfield, had not paid his church rate. In place after place one reads: 'Our church is out of repaire, but we will amend it as soon as possible we can.' In many there were not even the bare necessities for decent worship. At Turfield (Turville) for example: 'They have noe carpet for the Communion Table, noe pulpit cloth, noe booke of homilies, nor canons, nor table of degrees, etc., nor surplice: noe booke to record strange preachers in, never had a hearse cloth.'

There are many interesting references to preachers, schoolmasters, lecturers, midwives, physicians, etc., etc. An Appendix gives the Articles of Visitation and Enquiry within the Diocese of Lincoln, which I would like to see answered by some of our present-day country clergy—for instance: 'I. Is your Parish Church or chapel kept in good and sufficient repair: Are the Roofs thereof well covered with lead, Tile or Slate; the windows well glazed, the floors well paved, the seats well fastened and conveniently placed; and all things so decently ordered as becometh the House of God?'. Or 'VI. Doth your Parson, Vicar or Curate in reading the daily morning and evening service, administration of the Holy Sacraments, etc. . . . use the form and words prescribed in the Book of Common Prayer without any addition omission or alteration of the same? and doth he use all such Rites and Ceremonies in all parts of Divine Service as are appointed in the said Book?'. I fancy a good many incumbents to-day would have difficulty in satisfying the Visitors on that head.

This is altogether a most valuable book. The Introduction makes clear many points about

the circumstances of the Visitation, the methods of procedure, and the reasons for many of the entries which would otherwise be meaningless to the ordinary reader. Moreover, the work has been admirably indexed, both as to persons and places and as to subjects.

E. C. R.

History of Stony Stratford, by F. E. Hyde, M.A., Ph.D., and S. F. Markham, M.A., B. Litt. xi + 192 pp., including 25 illustrations and 2 maps. (McCorquodale & Co., Ltd., Wolverton, 1948.) Price not given.

This latest addition to the histories of the small towns of Buckinghamshire is sure of a warm welcome, more particularly from those who live in or near Stony Stratford. Not much has been written on this corner of the county since Mr. Bull published his *History of Newport Pagnell* at the beginning of the century, and it is a matter for regret that this should be so, for, as this volume amply testifies, there is no lack of interesting and important material awaiting the attention of the local historian. Too often his zeal to undertake and publish his research is damped by the fear of financial loss, and it is worthy of note that in the case of the work under review this difficulty has been overcome by the wise generosity of the Ancell Trustees in making a grant to cover the cost of its publication.

The authorship of the history has been subjected to a strict division of labour. Dr. Hyde is responsible for the first section, which covers Stony Stratford from the earliest times to the end of the seventeenth century; while Major Markham deals with the history of the town from the time of Charles II to the death of Queen Victoria. It may perhaps be questioned whether a mere sixty pages can be regarded as adequate, not only for the whole medieval period, but for the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as well; though it must be admitted that in these closely printed pages a great deal of information, based on both printed and manuscript sources, is competently presented. Dr. Hyde has rightly emphasized the economic and social importance of Stony Stratford arising from its geographical situation on Watling Street, where it crosses the River Ouse, and he has skilfully portrayed the gradual passage from a manorial to an urban economy. The suggestion might be made that hardly enough attention has been paid to the greatest of all medieval institutions, the Church, and in this connexion one would have welcomed a list at least of the incumbents of the local churches.

In writing a local history, it is always difficult to decide whether the chronological is preferable to the topical method, whether one should write the history of a parish in the same way as one would write the history of England as a connected story from beginning to end, or whether it is better to isolate a certain number of subjects and to treat each one historically. Major Markham in the second section of the book has attempted a compromise between these two methods. His first chapter is entitled 'Stony Stratford in the Seventeenth Century', and his last, 'Stony Stratford at the end of the Nineteenth Century'. Between these two are interspersed nine chapters of a somewhat miscellaneous character, as their titles indicate—'Properties and Personalities'; 'Trades and Occupations, 1700–1800'; 'Fires, Churches and Chapels, 1730–1830'; and so on; and the total effect seems a little disjointed. Tribute must, however, be paid to the vast amount of research which has produced these pleasantly written chapters, and it is clear that the author's informed curiosity, whether it is engaged in the selection of illuminating extracts from the Overseers' Accounts or in tracing the numerous inns with which Stratford seems to have been so bountifully supplied, has brought to light a wealth of historical information. In his interesting account of the lace-making industry, of which Stony Stratford was one of the centres, the author tells how the long hours of the pupils in the local lace schools were lightened by the singing of chants, a collection of which is in the possession of a local family. Major Markham was unfortunately unable to include any specimens of these chants in his book, but they would surely be an excellent subject for treatment in a future number of the *Records*. The extracts from the Over-

seers' Account Book, 1749-62 (pp. 122-4), include the payment of £1 10s. for the inoculation of 'Kirby's mamilee', and the author expresses his doubts, as well he might, of what a 'mamilee' could be; the reviewer's suggestion is that it is simply a *lapsus calami* for 'familee'.

It is much to be regretted that a work of this importance should have been published without an index, certainly of persons and places, and ideally a subject-index as well. Its usefulness as a work of reference is seriously marred by this omission, and it is to be hoped that if a further edition is called for, this lack may be remedied. A bibliography of the printed and manuscript sources consulted by the authors would also have been useful. A word of praise must be accorded to the excellent maps of Stony Stratford in 1680 and 1825, drawn by Marian R. Hyde, and to the delightful sketches of old buildings by C. W. Green; they do much to enhance the attractiveness of a volume for which all lovers of our county and its past must be truly grateful.

J. G. JENKINS.