

REVIEWS

BEYOND SHERINGTON: THE EARLY HISTORY OF THE REGION OF BUCKINGHAMSHIRE
LYING TO THE NORTH-EAST OF NEWPORT PAGNELL. A. C. Chibnall, F.R.S., F.S.A.
Phillimore, 1979. £12.00. xx + 268 pp.

In 1964 Professor Chibnall opened our eyes with his *Sherington: Fiefs and fields of a Buckinghamshire village*. He reconstructed the medieval and post-medieval map of his ancestors' parish, and rescued from long oblivion the history of the creation, change and decay of holdings, fields, woods and lanes. Now he has dealt in a broadly similar way with a much wider area, the eighteen thousand acres between the Ouse and Lovat and the Bedfordshire boundary, including Tickford, Chicheley, Tyringham, Filgrave, Emberton, Clifton Reynes, Newton Blossomville, Hardmead, Astwood with Astwood Bury (Alizwood), Great and Little Crawley and the lost hamlets of Petsoe and Ekeney — the latter lost even from the map until he put it back.

Part I deals with the history of the area from the Anglo-Saxon to the Tudor period; Part II takes each village and hamlet in turn and recounts its history by reference to the reconstituted maps, schedules of names and tables which occupy Part III. Professor Chibnall deals appreciatively with the pioneer work of the young women graduates who wrote for the Victoria County History before the First World War at 30s a week — not enough to allow them to visit their parishes. One map shows the whole area as it would have appeared to the Domesday Commissioners.

No pre-conquest document has survived for the area, but those of us who sought to elucidate the Olney chart of 979 on the occasion of its millenary are grateful to Dr. Chibnall for anchoring its

starting point firmly to the southernmost point of that parish. The place-names point to numerous small groups of Anglian settlers taking their names from their leaders, with assarting proceeding gradually as the population increased; Astwood was probably settled in the 11th century, and there alone is there strong evidence of Danish participation. The fiscal grouping of vills indicates that Little Crawley was the foster-child of Chicheley, Great Crawley of Hardmead, Petsoe of Emberton, and Filgrave of Tynningham. Cold Brayfield, which has a 10th century charter, and what was to become Newton Blossomville were both devastated before the Conqueror came, and in 1086 their re-establishment had hardly begun; there were only four bordars in the former and two in the latter.

Dr. Chibnall has explained the tortuous boundary between Cranfield and North Crawley. The woodlands here were allocated about 1130 by an instrument which ends in Anglo-Saxon fashion with an anathema, and the strange kink in the county boundary was due to the Abbot of Romsey's insistence on including his assart in Cranfield. David, King of Scots, allowed his tenants who cleared the wood to hold it rent-free, but the lord paramount's duty to hold the view of frankpledge kept the lordship in existence, and Lord Exeter's court records have enabled Dr. Chibnall to recover the long-lost boundary between Great and Little Crawley. (Incidentally, he corrects a statement in *Sherington* that the principal manor there held the view of frankpledge; the claim made in 1681 proves to be bogus.)

In discussing pre-enclosure agriculture, it now appears that we should avoid using "field" for the primary component of a rotational cropping system: Homans and Titow propose "sector", but the vernacular term is "season", and each of the two or three seasons in a village might be fragmented; further, some furlongs (confusingly called "fields" at Chicheley in 1524) lay in two seasons, but the cropping programme was based on the season, not the furlong, however many fields, (in whatever sense) the season might include. In Newton Blossomville the two-course system was followed until enclosure in 1810, but with a small additional field of superior quality, the Every Year Land, shared between the open-field farmers and cropped continuously. In North Crawley the assarts were mostly held in severalty from the first; by the Tudor period such land exceeded the open fields, and the occupiers of the former rented small parts of the latter, turned their cattle without stint on to the common fields after harvest and thereby starved the cattle of the open-field farmers: this abuse was resolved only by enclosure.

Sherington proves to be unique in the area in that the lord's demesne was compact; elsewhere the demesne was dispersed in the open fields. Hence the conclusion that field names in a compact demesne were much more transient than corresponding names of open-field furlongs, rests at present on this one parish. To treat field-names as a population in the statistical sense, subject to generation and decay, with longevity measured by the 'half-life', one needs a more or less complete enumeration of the field-names within a defined area at more than one epoch.

The area Beyond Sherington must have been Christian almost from its first seventh-century settlement; it was served by the minister of St Finian in Great Crawley, which lasted until the 12th century when it was superseded by the emergence of new parish churches, though some brothers remained at Crawley to till the soil. Every hamlet demanded its own church, but not all the new churches lasted. The chapel at Little Crawley, served from Tickford Priory, is not mentioned after c. 1180, and the Priory's right to the tithes was soon questioned. Little Crawley people went to Great Crawley church, but still paid taxes with Chicheley; the confusion was not resolved until 1480 when the Chicheley Brook became the parish boundary, as it still is.

The chapel at Ekeney was among the tiniest in England. Dr. Chibnall found one large stone with hand-worked edges on the ploughed site, the dry spot which gave its name to the oak-island. The name survived only because Lincoln College kept it alive (In the same way New College retained the name Hasley for the part of Radclive south of the Ouse for five centuries after it was otherwise obsolete). At its zenith Ekeney had at least seven families and 17 parcels of land, of which 10 were assigned to Emberton, 5 to Chicheley and 2 to Hardmead. Petsoe lasted longer; Dr. Chibnall has located its little chapel, which eluded Browne Willis, and it is still a civil parish; but the cottagers

moved to Emothwell, much nearer to Emberton where their open-field holdings lay, and called it Petsoe End, though it is not within the bounds of the old village.

Beyond Sherington has cleared up one long-standing problem in Domesday Book. The five hides in Moulsoe hundred held by William son of Ansculf must be placed in Emberton, not in North Crawley (so V.C.H.) or in Astwood, since the estate included a valuable mill which must have been on the Ouse or the Lovat, and no mill in Emberton is otherwise recorded. Thus that village proves to be another ten-hide unit. The mill-site would surely have been at Millcroft (no. 56 on map 9, p. 196), by a small holme in the Ouse; this could well have been the *kekan wer* of the 979 Olney charter, where Emberton folk not only caught fish but drew water (*keach* has that meaning in Bucks dialect).

Space does not permit even the enumeration of Dr. Chibnall's fascinating discoveries, such as the grisly *qualmstowe* (place of execution) on the county boundary, the close at Clifton Reynes to treat the inhabitants on boundary processions (which should be revived) and the furlong called "against the other man's land". In future, whenever we venture Beyond Sherington, we shall see that quiet country with new eyes. Professor Chibnall has placed us all deeply in his debt, and his splendid book will not be superseded in our lifetime.

Arnold H. J. Baines

MAPS OF BUCKS, Gordon Wyatt, Barracuda Books Ltd., 128 pp., £12.00.

Dr. Gordon Wyatt's book unhappily had to appear after his death last year. It has been handsomely edited by Clive Birch and Julie Nuttall and provides a valuable catalogue or handlist of maps of our county in a "Carto-Bibliography" beginning with Christopher Saxton's map published in 1574 and concluding with the last editions of the large scale maps of the whole county of the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth, the most important of which are Bryant's and John Cary's. There is also a list of some 120 other maps covering portions of the county before 1800 and county maps after that date.

Dr. Wyatt's text gives a fairly slight account of the history of map making in Bucks and throws some interesting lights into odd corners. In the Civil War, for example, many a reluctant host to billeted troops had Hollar's pocket "Quartermaster's Map" to thank for the burdens laid upon him. The text, however, provides little guidance on the amount of detail to be expected from the various maps. Nor is this more than vaguely deducible from the many illustrations of maps which can do little more than give a general, small scale idea of the *sort* of map portrayed with a closer look in many cases at the very decorative title shields and other devices and illustrations that adorn them.

The historical researcher must pursue the maps themselves to the County Record Office, the public library or the Bodleian's Map Room to suffer the frustrations for himself. Let him try, for example, to sort out which main roads were turnpiked from Bryant's map of 1825 compared with the very different story in Pigot's map of 1826. One just wonders, in fact, whether the generous provision of small scale monochrome maps in this book was worth the inflation of the cost to £12. A longer, textual account of the nature of the various maps might have given more helpful guidance to the scholar and the collector, while the present price of an admittedly visually more attractive volume surely puts it out of reach of the general reader.

The most valuable part of the book to the historical scholar is without doubt the Carto-Bibliography, the further list and the exhaustive list of sources which provide an impressive monument to Dr. Wyatt's industry and knowledge, likely to be consulted for years to come.

M.D.

VILLAGE LIFE IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY, Herbert Green, Longmans, Then and There Series. 96 p. Paperback.

West Wycombe in Bucks provides the real-life model for this attractively written description of life in an eighteenth century village which, although primarily aimed at schools, will appeal equally to

most adults interested in the social history of the county. As a village West Wycombe has obvious advantages for this kind of exemplary study – a big house and park of the right period, a remarkably complete ensemble of village houses, and a comparative abundance of records. The latter include parish papers, maps (a map of the village in 1767 is reproduced), estate accounts, and even that rare find, a parish census listing the inhabitants in 1760 – enough, in fact, to make the average local historian turn sour with envy. Mr. Green makes skilful use of his varied material; the chapter on Village Homes is particularly successful in combining the physical with the documentary evidence. The result is a satisfyingly rounded sketch of village life which, in its authenticity and particularity, cannot fail to stir the imagination of anyone who reads it.

H. A. H.

THE HISTORY OF STOKE COMMON, A POOR'S FUEL ALLOTMENT CHARITY.

Lionel Rigby, 40 pp. map and other illustrations, 1975.

The proposal for the enclosure of Stoke Poges in 1806 led to a lengthy struggle between the lord of the manor, anxious to improve his estate, and local gentry who wished to safeguard the rights of the poor to cut turf for fuel. Eventually Stoke Common was allotted to the poor and in 1822 a charitable trust was set up to administer it. This trust has done useful work ever since. In the nineteenth century coal was provided for poor inhabitants in place of turf and now grants are made to housebound parishioners. Since 1972 the common has been scheduled as a Site of Special Scientific Interest, natural heathland with its flora and fauna being rare in this part of the country.

E. M. E.

IN PITSTONE GREEN THERE IS A FARM. Text by Jean Davis and photographs compiled by Mary Farnell. Pitstone, Bucks.: Pitstone Local History Society, 1979. 50 pp. £2.00 incl postage.

This book is "an attempt to illustrate the development of a rural community on the edge of the Chilterns through the medium of one farming family and one particular farm". In this attempt it undoubtedly succeeds, presenting a balanced account of the nineteenth and twentieth-century village, based on the dispassionate evidence of original documents and illustrated by both contemporary and modern photographs. The documents, extracts from which are included throughout the book, are principally the farm records of the Hawkins family, who have farmed Pitstone Green Farm as both tenants and owners since 1810.

The history of the farm is firmly placed within the social and economic context of its wider community. The book examines the role of the Ashridge estate (to whom the Hawkins were tenants until the 1920s), the impact of the canal and railway (facilitating the transport of farm produce to London and bringing back coal, manure and building materials), the occupations of the straw plaiter, gate hurdle-maker, thatcher, miller, wheelwright and blacksmith (all closely linked to the farm's economy) and additionally provides an account of the village school and of social and family life. It is, however, the activities of the farm itself that supply the book with its central theme.

Pitstone Green Farm was essentially a typical enterprise of the period with its modified Norfolk four-course rotation of cereal and forage crops and sheep folding on the arable at night to provide the necessary manure. The figures of stock quoted in the 1906 valuation, 61 pigs, 241 sheep, 35 head of cattle, 13 horses, 12 ducks and 191 fowls is a significant reminder of the quantity of livestock held on a predominantly arable 300-acre farm before the days of cereal monoculture. The text emphasizes the continuity of farming practice at Pitstone Green from 1800 and earlier until the Second World War, although the changes effected by nineteenth-century mechanization are not neglected (incidentally the "portable" steam engine shown cutting oat chaff is almost certainly an early example of a self-moving or traction engine). The great changes that have taken place since 1945 are emphasized by the modern photographs: the 15 men and 5 boys employed a century ago have been replaced by the farmer and two men, the livestock have vanished entirely and only weedkilling tractors and giant combines now occupy the empty fields.

The history of individual farming enterprises and of farming families has been generally neglected. The appearance of other studies, similar to this one of Pitstone Green, would therefore be a welcome development, although it is realized that the particular blend of local farming knowledge and historical interpretation that has produced this volume is unusual. Certainly the Pitstone Local History Society's museum with its collections of farm implements, craft tools and domestic items, photographs and documents is a rare, if not unique, local enterprise. It is based on co-operation between a farmer with long established roots in the area and the volunteers from Pitstone and neighbouring villages, whose knowledge and enthusiasm has already contributed much to the restoration of the oldest windmill still standing in Britain. This book indicates above all, the value of an intelligent interpretation of surviving record material. A list of the farm records consulted would help other historians and this addition, with the provision of a Hawkins family tree, might be considered if the book goes into a second edition as a result of the success it surely deserves to achieve.

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BUCKINGHAMSHIRE RECORD OFFICE: ANNUAL REPORT AND LIST OF ACCESSIONS 1978.

Confronted with the annual report of a record repository, one cannot help beginning by scanning the acquisitions, to find out what exciting things have come in. In the year under review, the Chequers muniments were safely gathered in. The material they contain for the history of the estate itself is disappointing, but Henry Lily's superb estate map, which was transferred many years ago from the housekeeper's room at Chequers to grace the hall of the Record Office, is no mean consolation.

Beaconsfield has yielded up some important documents from its parish chest, with churchwardens' and other parochial accounts going back to the seventeenth century.

The estate, Church and sundry papers as listed form a corpus of no great bulk. But when one turns to the report itself, one is aghast to learn of the gigantic size and weight of the records awaiting admission: the records of the district councils within Milton Keynes weigh several tons; the Planning Department of the County Council wants to rid itself of over a hundred linear feet of files; and these are only examples.

But all is well: we are in good hands and all these horrible problems get sorted out; yet the small staff contrives to keep in reserve an ample stock of time, patience and good humour, to sort out the problems of its visitors, and assist them in their researches.

G.R.E.