

REVIEWS

Britons and Saxons: the Chiltern Region 400-700. K. Rutherford Davis, pp. xiv + 172. Phillimore & Co. Ltd, 1982. £9.95.

By 'the Chiltern region' Mr. Rutherford Davis means Buckinghamshire, Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire south of the Ouse, with Bedford itself, and the seven south-eastern hundreds of Oxfordshire. It thus comprises the Chiltern zone proper and the Ouse-Thame basin. These contrasted but contiguous areas formed the major part of the old Catuvellaunian territory ruled from Verulamium, which lasted until Cuthwulf defeated Catraut at Bedford in 571 (the author prefers 'Cadrawd', and that warlord would have pronounced his name thus, though spelling did not yet recognise lenition). Until then, the frontiers fixed after Mount Badon had held. This was the pivotal event in the long process which had begun at Dorchester-on-Thames before 400 and was hardly completed three centuries later; *Wealabroc* 'Britons' brook', recorded in 792 on the border of the British refuge of Bernwood, could be a later name, when *broc* had replaced *burna*.

Britons and Saxons is a bold endeavour to bring together different strands of evidence — written sources, place-names, physical remains — in a first attempt to write the total history of this region during what we must still call the Dark Ages. It is a region, though it did not become, or at least did not remain, a kingdom.

Mr. Rutherford Davis fully accepts the late Dr. J.R. Morris's contention that all the 5th century Saxon sites in our area were the stations

of auxiliary forces, located not where they would have chosen but where the British authorities decided to place them, on main roads and near river-crossings. In particular, he interprets Walton beside Aylesbury as such a garrison, and your reviewer thinks he is probably right. He could have cited the well-worn limestone floors of the earliest Saxon sunken houses, the horse gear, the counters for reckoning, the absence of property boundaries within the palisade and the military buckle with horse-heads, which may have turned a Germanic headman into a federate cavalry officer.

The central mystery is what happened in the Chilterns, especially the Bucks Chilterns, where the invaders did not settle until well into the seventh century, except along the Thames valley and at Wycombe (is this a *wic-ham* by a Roman vicus?). Besides the lack of pagan Saxon traces, there is an almost complete absence of the normal habitative place-name elements (*ham*, *-ingas*, *-ingham*, *worth* and even *tun*). Instead, the Chiltern hamlets were named from hills, valleys, heaths, streams, woods, glades, stones and water-meadows. Mr. Rutherford Davis's solution is that even in middle Saxon times the delectable Chiltern valleys were still occupied by a Celtic population, the ancestors of the abnormally high proportion of *servi* recorded in the inner Chilterns in the Domesday survey (Mr. Chenevix Trench had already associated this with the concentration of villas, cf. the comment on p. 117). This study seeks to accommodate the *Cilternsæte* within the Chilterns proper, though the 4,000 hides assigned to them in the Mercian assessment of

c. 660 makes it almost certain that most of them lived not in the hills but in the Vale under Chiltern eaves — especially as we have to find room for the *Waeclingas* near Verulam and the *Hicce* round Hitchin.

Reluctantly one finds it difficult to believe that a Chiltern villa estate such as Latimer (an example of 'prior Saxonisation' c. 400) was taken over as a going concern by new owners after 571, without loss of identity and with social continuity of the rustics. Latimer has a continuous history until the early sixth century, but hardly longer. It seems more likely that after the pandemic of 547-51, comparable in its impact to the Black Death, there was a relapse into barbarism in the regions remote from Verulam — not even the higher barbarism of the late Iron Age, but primitive hunting and food-gathering, leaving no artefacts. In the words of Richard Jefferies in *After London*, "starting from all sides at once, brambles and briars in the course of about twenty years met in the centre of the largest fields . . . by the thirtieth year there was not one single open space, the hills only excepted, where a man could walk, unless he followed the tracks of wild animals or cut himself a path". We should not readily reject the idea of a Chiltern wilderness (part forest, part heath) in the seventh century. Perhaps it was ceded to the Middle Saxons; the City of London still exercised hunting rights in the Chilterns in the twelfth century, and in 767 Abbot Stithbert exchanged his land at *Wicham* in *Ciltinne* for crown land at Harrow in Middlesex. The boundary of the *Haemele*, who are first mentioned in a St. Paul's document of 705, ran up the Chess and then up the dry valley past Latimer, in a way which ignores the villas; it is just the kind of boundary which would be drawn through wild country.

In the Icknield belt, however, the villa estates could still function as land units long after the villas were in ruins. The name *Wendover*, 'clear streams', correctly transferred to English as a plural (nearly all place-names are singular) and then regularly declined, is evidence of a thoroughly bilingual population. In contrast, the Anglian settlers who poured into North

Bucks after 571 were clearly monoglot; they treated the river-name *Geht* as indeclinable, and they formed tautological compounds like Brill, Brickhill and Chetwode, in which the first (British) element is roughly synonymous with the second.

The supporting details of sites and place-names are relegated to appendices, where, the preface claims, all the references can be found. Would that it were so: they were included, with much other detail, in an earlier draft now deposited in the Department of Medieval and Later Antiquities at the British Museum, but the publishers have deprived us of what would have been an invaluable work of reference. Even so, the lists and summaries in the appendices will prove of great assistance to all workers in this field. (A few dates, mostly taken from *The Place-Names of Buckinghamshire*, need some revision: the names Haversham, Marsworth and Wing are first recorded c. 970, not 1012, Tiddingford in 906 rather than 966, Walton by Aylesbury in 1190, not 1237-40, and Wotton Underwood in 845 instead of 848).

Professor Martin Biddle says in his foreword, "No one will map this difficult area aright to begin with. We shall do our best to ensure that Ken Rutherford Davis has to bring out a second edition in a few years". Historians and geographers as well as archaeologists will say Amen, and meanwhile will thank him for rendering a most valuable service to all those who are struggling with the problem of how Britannia became England.

A.H.J.B.

Buckinghamshire Record Office. Annual Report and List of Accessions, 1981.

In 1981 the Record Office greatly increased its holdings of church and educational records, many of very recent date. The successors of Sidney and Beatrice Webb will work on them and so will the parish historian.

More important are the transfers from the Bodleian to Aylesbury of many maps made under the Tithe Commutation Act of 1836. Some are very large indeed and show whole

parishes with their boundaries and detached portions lying inside other parishes. It is these maps with their field-names which encourage beginners to take up local history.

The Bodleian has also sent most of the material relating to Buckinghamshire peculiars, parishes independent of the archdeacon's jurisdiction. The Act Book for Aylesbury, 1533-40, is particularly valuable, for in addition to a few wills it contains a reproof to the congregation for misbehaviour during church services. The Buckingham wills are useful. In an agricultural county it is good to have townsmen's wills, especially as some are accompanied by inventories.

The large Drake collection of documents will enable the management of a great estate to be traced through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and beyond. The family had no political ambitions and so avoided the downfall of many other large landowners. The property that they purchased they kept and let on lease. Leases are more informative than conveyances, since they contain stipulations for cultivation, forestry, and repair and construction of buildings.

The fifth Lord Paget's Account Book will not only tell us about 'Life in a Noble Household' under the Commonwealth, but also about Marlow itself, its valuable woodland and its barge trade. In 1583 the third Lord Paget's London houses were supplied with a hundred and fifty two loads of firewood from the Marlow estate.

The County Archivist and his staff are to be congratulated on producing such an interesting and detailed list. It must have been difficult to raise the money to buy at auction in these hard times.

E.M.E.

Needlemaking. John G. Rollins. Shire Publications, 1981. 95p.

Buckinghamshire has a vested interest in needle making. For some three centuries up to

the 1860s the village of Long Crendon on the county's boundary with Oxfordshire sustained, against all economic probabilities, a cottage needle-making industry which achieved national importance. It has been admirably documented by Mrs. Joyce Donald (*Records of Buckinghamshire* Vol. XIX, pt. 1, 1971) but it has not been easy hitherto for the general reader to find a more wide ranging account which will enable him or her to put Long Crendon into a broader context.

Mr. Rollins's little book does this most ably. With engaging zest the author gives an outline history of needles and their manufacture from the sometimes astonishingly elegant bone artefacts of prehistory to the present day. This he does in the compass of 32 pages of notable concision and lucidity, generously illustrated.

Long Crendon is given its due. The industry "was established by London needle makers seeking relief from guild restrictions in 1560" and there is an interesting (though unsupported) suggestion that "there may have been earlier needlemaking here, possibly under the patronage of the Augustinian monks of Notley." (It was on writing to Mr. Rollins to discuss the basis of this idea that the present writer was saddened by the news of Mr. Rollins's death soon after the book was published.)

On the technical side the author deals fully with the difficult subject of the heat treatments which transform raw wrought iron into burnishable, flexible and massively strong steel, an aspect which Mrs. Donald understandably touches on only lightly. It seems hard to believe that the Elizabethan craftsmen could master the sophisticated and critical series of heating, cooling, reheating and quenching without gas or electric furnaces, pyrometers, thermostats or any of the modern aids, but master it they did. Small wonder that they tended to be called "moors" and were suspected of black arts.

On one point Mr. Rollins did Long Crendon less than justice. "The last man to make needles by hand" he wrote, "was William Bradbury . . . in Studley . . . (up to) 1851." Not

so. Matthew Shrimpton, as Mrs. Donald made clear, was making sail needles and bodkins in Long Crendon up to the day of his death in 1894.

This heresy apart, *Needlemaking* is an admirable little book. Like the needle itself, it is a precise example of *multum in parvo*.

M.D.

The Rose Family. Rayners and Tylers Green. Miles Green & Evelyn Clark. Penn & Tylers Green Jubilee Committee Local History Group, 1982.

Squirearchy came late to Tylers Green, Penn, so late indeed that this modest book covers the last age of that ancient institution. It tells how Sir Philip Rose, a Wycombe-born solicitor of great drive and ability, built up an estate in the hamlet (as it then was), and from 1845 devoted himself, with considerable success, to acting the part of the benign, paternal squire, where none had been before. It is clear that the benignity was entirely genuine, and that the family was held in much affection. Their ascendancy lasted, in effect, only two generations, and the estate was broken up in the early 1920s, an event still remembered with regret.

Mrs. Clark, born into the long-established local family of Winter, contributes her own reminiscences of the early years of the century, and there are many interesting photographs. The book is attractively written and produced and is warmly commended.

J.C.T.

The Aylesbury Duck. Alison Cole. Buckinghamshire County Museum. 40p, or £1.11 incl. postage and packing.

By 1981 only one small flock of Aylesbury ducks survived, and that was not at Aylesbury but at Chesham. In 1891 one village alone, Weston Tirville, was sending 25,000 ducklings to London every year, and the part of Aylesbury round Friarage Road was known as Duck End.

That the Aylesbury was a distinct breed, and not just a white duck that happened to have been hatched near Aylesbury, is clear from Alison Coles' most interesting monograph. She charts its progress from an unrecorded process of selective breeding in the eighteenth century, through to years in the nineteenth when it brought a modest prosperity to many poor men in the Vale, and on to its decline thereafter. The reasons for this decline are made clear; not surprisingly they included greed and laziness.

The economics of duck rearing are discussed, and many of its techniques described. Since the latter included indoor raising of a creature that cannot be house-trained, they might prove difficult to revive.

This attractively written and meticulously documented little book is most welcome.

J.C.T.