

REVIEWS

DR. JOHN RADCLIFFE AND HIS TRUST. Ivor Guest. 595pp. *The Radcliffe Trust 1991*. (£40 from The Trust, 5 Lincolns Inn Fields WC2A 3BT).

This is a fine book. It is beautifully written, very well produced and of particular interest to Bucks readers.

The name Radcliffe must be familiar to anyone who knows Oxford but few will know its significance. John Radcliffe was born in Wakefield in 1652, the son of an attorney. The waspish Oxford antiquary Thomas Hearne put it bluntly "he was a Yorkshire man and his father a Plebeian". From his impoverished undergraduate days at University College he was determined to be a physician and after some years practising in Oxford he moved to London and, by the late sixteen-nineties was the most successful doctor in the land. Medical science was not far advanced at that time and he certainly improved it for he had a genius for diagnosis and his cures were untrammelled by current dogma. But one feels that his success was also due to his outspoken methods, his bluff and often brutal advice. All complained of his rudeness but they flocked to him to be cured. As a result he was not only the most successful doctor of his time, with Queen Anne and all the good and great as his patients but became a very rich man indeed. He was a shrewd man of affairs, somewhat of a miser (although he could be generous in a good cause) and invested his income successfully, which is more than could be said of his executors who managed to lose £25,000 of his estate in the South Sea Bubble disaster.

His elaborate will dealt with an estate of four sizeable houses and cash and investments of some £62,000. After making provision for his sisters – he died a bachelor – his first benefaction was £5,000 to build a second quadrangle at his old college for new lodgings for the Master and fellows. This quad still exists almost un-

altered with his statue on the tower. It is an architectural curiosity, being built in an identical style to the original quad which dates from 1632. To the college he also gave his large Yorkshire estate to finance two travelling medical fellows, and the advowson of a rich living. All this the college still retains.

His most fruitful benefaction was the foundation of the Trust which bears his name. The intention was to build up a scientific library with a building to hold it. He stipulated that it was not to start till after his sisters' death so it was not until 1736 that the Trustees could begin work. They first had to purchase all the existing houses between the School's Quadrangle and St Mary's; on the cleared site James Gibbs designed and built the Radcliffe Camera. It was finished in 1747. For this Radcliffe had left £40,000 together with £150 p.a. for the Librarian and £100 p.a. for purchase of books. Although designed as an ancillary to the Bodleian it remained the property of the Trustees. Later the Science Library was transferred to the Museum and the Camera became the reading room of the Bodleian, but – and this will surprise most Oxford men – it was not until 1927 that the books and building were handed over to the University.

Two other great projects bear Radcliffe's name, although not foreseen by him; both, we may be sure, would have had his blessing. Following pressure from both town and gown the Trustees agreed to build an Infirmary on land between Walton Street and Woodstock Road. Stiff Leadbitter was the architect for the building, which opened in 1771 at a cost of £4,000. It was administered by the Trustees until the site was purchased by the future Lord Nuffield in 1929 but their connection did not end until nationalisation of the hospitals in 1948.

The fourth project was the Radcliffe Observatory which was first housed in the hospital

grounds where Keene designed and James Wyatt finally built a Temple of the Winds to house the equipment.

Later land beside the Infirmary plot was bought and new buildings erected; always important, it achieved great distinction after the installation of the Great Equatorial telescope early this century. By 1925 the skies over Oxford were becoming so murky that the Trustees decided to move to the clearer skies of Pretoria and, despite much acrimonious opposition from Oxford scientists led by Professor Lindemann, this was achieved in 1937.

Forty years later the telescope and the land were passed to the South African government.

For two hundred and fifty years after Radcliffe's death the Trustees' main source of income had been the Wolverton estate.

The estate had been held by only two families – the de Wolvertons and the Longuevilles – since the Norman Conquest. Sir Thomas Longueville died in 1685 (there is a fine baroque monument to him in Old Wolverton church) leaving an encumbered estate to his son Edward who sold it to Radcliffe in 1713. The administration of these 2,500 acres of good farmland by the Trustees was enlightened but they had many problems to face. The first of these – the building of the Grand Union Canal in 1802 – was overcome but when, in 1833, the bill authorising the

BURIED AROUND BUCKINGHAM. Shelagh Lewis, B.Phil., M.A. *Friends of the Old Gaol Museum, Buckingham, Publication No. 1. Paperback, A5, 40 pages, numerous illustrations.* (£4.95 from: 14 Castle Street, Buckingham, or the Old Gaol.)

Not about where the bodies are buried, but about archaeological finds, usually casual, in the Buckingham area, set in their contexts.

The background to the millennia of prehistory is rehearsed and illustrated by descriptions and photographs of finds of Neolithic, Bronze and Iron Age artefacts.

London & Birmingham Railway was passed they could hardly have realised what would occur. The land needed was a mere twenty-seven acres; what they did not foresee was the establishment of the railway company's main carriage works next to the station, an immediate need for housing, for schools and for a new church. The Trustees contributed to all these projects, often sharing the cost with the Company. They sold some land but the bulk of the estate remained as farmland until 1970 when, with the beginning of the new city of Milton Keynes, the whole estate was compulsorily acquired leaving only Wolverton Mill in their possession.

So by 1970 the Trustees' connection with the Library, the Infirmary, the Observatory and the Wolverton Estate had all been dissolved. Since then The Trust has become a general charitable one making grants to a variety of educational, scientific and, especially, musical activities. Meticulous appendices list every grant made between 1714 and 1990; they fill 69 pages.

Mr Guest has written a most scholarly book which is also easy to read and is an important addition to the history of Oxford and of Buckinghamshire. We can be proud that, apart from 1952–60, between 1921 and today two distinguished Buckinghamshire men have been Chairman of the Trustees – the third Lord Cottesloe and Sir Ralph Verney.

E.V.

Aerial photographs identify putative Iron Age enclosures at Norbury Camp, Padbury, and near the Twins by the Great Ouse.

For the Roman period, the major focus of interest is the area around Thornborough's medieval bridge. The two Roman burial mounds were dug in 1839, one yielding handsome grave-goods. Pre-Roman and Roman roads crossing the ford beside the bridge have been excavated and, nearby, a Romano-Celtic temple, burials and other features. Finds of Roman material along a line leading toward Buckingham suggest a substantial settlement, the status of which is discussed. The Roman

road network around Buckingham postulated by the Viatores, for which indisputable evidence is awaited, is noted with due caution. There is a fine drawing in colour of the mosaic from the Foscott villa – now invisible under the carpet in the National Trust shop in the Queen's Temple at Stowe.

Between the Romans and the Norman conquest, the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle records the fortification of *burhs* on both sides of the river at Buckingham by Edward the Elder in

ROMAN MILTON KEYNES. Bob Zeevat. *Milton Keynes Archaeology Unit, 1991, ISBN 9509501 1 4. Paperback, A4, 43 pages. Full colour cover, 3 plates 24 illustrations (£2.95 plus 50p p & p from the Unit.)*

The Unit describes this as a "popular" book about life in Roman Milton Keynes which should be of particular interest to teachers seeking up-to-date source material for National Curriculum Key Stages 2 and 3 "Invaders and Settlers". Topics include – the Iron Age background, Roman occupation and government, towns, communications, countryside, villas, trade and industry, religion and burial.

Lucky school-children to be able to benefit from a lucid account of the general history of the times, summarised from standard authorities, to provide a context for the discoveries made by the Unit and others in Milton Keynes and adjacent areas. In addition, these discoveries are used to paint pictures of the lives and activities of the local people, besides relating these to the wider context. The text is illuminated by many attractive illustrations and informative maps.

Of particular interest are the suggestions that the Roman "town" of Magiovinium (across the river Ouzel from Fenny Stratford) had administrative status as a *vicus* and was the centre of a *pagus*, a sub-division of the tribal territory of the Catuvellauni. In Roman Gaul, *pagi* are well attested and, most probably, they existed in Britain although none has been proven beyond doubt.

Of a number of editorial oversights which the careful reader will notice, the mis-spelling

A.D.914. The shire of Buckingham originated to provide for garrisoning these *burhs*. Strangely, no physical trace of either has ever been recorded. The earlier status of Buckingham is discussed in relation to the legend of St Rumbold.

The booklet is timely, comprehensive in content, well presented and well illustrated. The discussions are such as to provoke thought.

R.P.H.

in the text of Alchester (the modern name for the Roman town near Bicester) as Alcester (a Roman and modern town in Warwickshire) results in the author appearing to invent Roman roads from Towcester (Lactodurum) to Alcester and to the Roman site at Dorn (near Moreton-in-the-Marsh). "Further Reading" could have included *Roman Roads in Britain* by Ivan D. Margary and *Roman Roads in the South-East Midlands* by the Viatores. Presumably the latter was the source for the minor roads in the Milton Keynes area of which passing mention is made.

Discoveries of the greatest interest are those made on the hill-top at Blue Bridge, comprising farmsteads of the Late Bronze and Iron Ages, early and late Roman cemeteries and an elaborate second-century Roman mausoleum. The farmsteads are suggested to have been the precursors of the Roman villa at Bancroft, down the slope toward the Loughton Brook, although continuity cannot be claimed. The mausoleum may not be unique in Britain but few have been properly excavated. Even fewer complexes of villa, farm buildings, gardens, mausoleum and cemeteries have been excavated in Britain, although such complexes have been investigated elsewhere in the Roman Empire.

This is a well-produced and worthwhile booklet aimed at a wider readership than the detailed technical publication Society Monograph No 1 *Roman Milton Keynes, Excavations and Fieldwork 1971–82* on which this booklet is largely based with later discoveries added.

R.P.H.

Windows on the Past. Milton Keynes Archaeology Unit. Milton Keynes 1992. ISBN 0 950 9501 2 2. £3.95 from the Unit.

This is an attractive small book, packed full of interesting archaeological facts derived from both historical work and excavation discoveries made over the last two decades. It will appeal to a wide variety of readers: the people of Milton Keynes and the wider, tourist or general interest public. It will be of particular value to schools and teachers, who will find it the proverbial mine of information. The book is the distillation of many years of dedicated work in Milton Keynes by a talented team, and it is a real treat to find archaeology presented in such an accessible and interesting form. It is not too difficult to forecast it as a best seller.

The format is unusual, in that the book is square, and it is an unusually luxurious publication, most pages sporting a number of illustrations, and over 60 pictures in full colour. The text is clearly thought out and well written, without recourse to technical jargon; Marion Blockley is to be congratulated on welding together information from a number of disparate sources into a highly readable and harmonious whole.

This said, there are a number of criticisms, both in terms of presentation and organisation. There is, for instance, almost too much crammed into a volume of this size. Presumably as a way of dealing with this, and in an attempt to create a lively, modern product, up to five type faces or point sizes are displayed on any one page, the dominating letter face being a rather unpleasant *sans serif*. In addition, on a page only 21 × 21cms there are up to seven illustrations, and these a mix of black on white line drawings, black and white photographs, full colour photographs, line drawings set in peach or sometimes buff coloured blocks, coloured drawings, and the occasional object drawing filled with colour. It's all a bit much on a small page.

Some sense of order has been attempted in terms of design layout by the use of horizontal

yellow stripes to contain the text for the main sub headings, and occasionally a vertical band of buff or peach has been used to pull the layout of the page together. As a matter of general style the illustrations are set square to the page, except for page 59, where the picture blocks are suddenly arranged at an angle: possibly they would not fit in straight-wise. Nevertheless, it is a valiant, and largely successful attempt, and Denis Mynard has clearly taken a great deal of time and effort in piecing together a very difficult jigsaw. Less would have been easier, but nevertheless, the overall impression is attractive and professional. What to leave out would have been an even more difficult choice.

As for the individual illustrations, though too crammed to be properly appreciated, they are of high quality. Clearly there are a number of hands at work, but the cost of redrawing for a "house style" was probably rather high for the benefits that would ensue. On the whole they are very well chosen and amply illustrate the points the authors are trying to make. Many of them deserve to be seen at a larger scale, and without so much competition, but this would have meant a much larger, much more expensive book that would not have reached such a wide audience.

I was interested to see the "Time Line", very similar to that in the *Beginnings of Bedford*, but improved by a date line and being keyed into local events. Also the illustration and text on page 61 describing a Roman cremation ceremony show a truly remarkable similarity to a broadsheet published by the Bedfordshire Archaeology Service in 1988 – *Mr Pitts' Pots*. But we all know what the sincerest form of flattery is, and we are glad to have been of use.

The striking figure of a pilgrim bestriding the page (57) works very well, giving the page a cohesion that would otherwise have been difficult with all the little coloured blocks; the single subject matter helps here, and the delightful little snippets of quotation make a very pleasing entry. It is by no means the only one. The whole production is, of course, helped

enormously by the range and quality of sites and objects excavated. Perhaps a more serious criticism of the book is of the thematic handling of it, which has resulted in a somewhat confused sprint forwards then backwards through time according to each heading. It might have worked better if the archaeology and history of Milton Keynes had been presented in chronological order in the conventional manner, with the subsections being thematic within a chronological framework. This would have avoided leaps from Iron Age head hunting, to Roman temples and gods, to Roman Christianity, forward to pilgrims, across to the Bradwell priory seal, then suddenly backwards to Bronze Age memorials, and on again through time to Roman burial rites, the Blue Bridge Roman mausoleum, Saxon burial, life and death in the Middle Ages, churches, and then sideways to a priestly burial. Aspects of medieval religious life have been fragmented: churches, priests, Christian rites and objects are handled separately; religious buildings or sites such as Roman temples, churches, priories and prehistoric memorials are not discussed together. For those without a clear idea of archaeological chronology, and they tend to be in a minority, the sudden switches between chapters could be very confusing.

Given the book's chosen form, (and such choices are notoriously difficult) surely flint tools, Bronze Age metal working, the Roman smithy at Bancroft, and medieval pottery production, would have been happier in the Crafts and Technology chapter along with Roman pottery kilns, medieval tile kilns, rather than spread in Country Life and Farming, and Home Life. The technical description of Roman currency forging comes in under Transport, Travel and Trade, albeit along with other coinage.

However, the book is intelligently prefaced at the beginning with a series of period maps showing site locations, and concluded by an intriguing (too brief?) postscript on the archaeological processes behind the scenes. Useful lists of readable publications and places to visit are included, so that the reader has a ready made means of pursuing any of the fascinating items touched upon. I am sure these will be taken up by many

Lord Chilver, Chairman of the Milton Keynes Development Corporation wrote the foreword, and is justly proud of both the impressive archaeological programme they have generously funded, and of the discoveries made by the archaeologists as presented in *Windows on the Past*. The new city has retained its roots through the discovery of its rich heritage, and not least by this publication. More indeed remains to be done, and what Lord Chilver prophesied is at least partly coming true

"The archaeological programme in Milton Keynes has been one of the most extensive to be undertaken in Europe. The work has been led by the Archaeology Unit which started as part of the Development Corporation and now comes under the Buckinghamshire County Council. While that work has been thorough, there will almost certainly be further discoveries as the new city continues. It is to be hoped that the lead which has been given by the Development Corporation will be followed."

Alas and alack! I wonder if he knows the actual fate of the talented team of archaeologists whose many years of dedicated excavation and analysis has made this book possible? While new discoveries are indeed being made, the Archaeology Unit's irreplaceable years of experience are being wafted away on under the four winds. Far from being taken on under the County Council's wing, the Unit has been given its marching orders, and is in the process of being disbanded. There will be no resident archaeological presence in the City of Milton Keynes, and any further archaeological recording will be covered by the County Museum team at Halton near Aylesbury instead.

This book is also, therefore, a form of memorial to the members of the Archaeology Unit who created it. I have made my criticisms, yet standing back and looking at the book again, it is difficult not to admire wholeheartedly the richness of the gift of heritage encapsulated within it. These dedicate archaeologists have bequeathed something very special to the fortunate citizens of Milton Keynes, and I hope that they will enjoy reading it as much as I did.

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