REVIEWS

CURIOUS BUCKINGHAMSHIRE
Roger Long
Published 2010: The History Press
ISBN 978-0-7524-5516-7. Price £12.99

Are you aware that the agreeably eccentric Roger Crab of Chesham is reputed to have been used by Lewis Carroll as the model for the Mad Hatter?

Thus it behoves the archaeologist and the historian to put aside those dry academic thoughts as to the material content of middle Anglo-Saxon pottery or the design of late Roman belt buckles to reconnect with the street where history fortunately remains as an entertainment.

Curious Buckinghamshire permits us to escape from the bubble and enjoy a rich sequence of short narratives ordered by location and then organised into the three main geographical categories of Buckinghamshire; namely, south, central and north.

An obelisk erected at Chalfont St Peter in 1785 reputedly celebrates the time when George III got lost in the fog and asked a passing yokel as to where he was. This son of toil replied 'Peter is down there, and Giles over yonder, but this 'ere ain't rightly a place at all'.

There are the usual romanticisms associated with ghosts, highwaymen, horrible murders, places where Oliver Cromwell stayed and others where Charles II hid. At one dreadful point ley-lines get mentioned, but the beauty of the gems makes it worthwhile.

At Long Marston a traditional English galley-trot, or spectral dog, has been observed frequenting the site of a gallows. At Bow Brickhill an anonymous but affluent lady lies drowned in a deep pond, and at both Wendover and Olney the churches were moved by unseen powers whilst under construction. These very traditional tales are told all across the land, addressing the modern in a language of times lost in the manner of cultures long gone, about those deeper beliefs that reside in our collective folk-memory. We forget these themes at our peril. Why was Cholesbury church built inside an ancient hill-fort? We can surmise, mutter darkly about Pope Gregory, but we don't really know why, do we?

There are the moments of incongruity where a coach labours up Ivinghoe Beacon on its way to Dunstable, and John Hampden fights with the Black Prince, but in these days of Harry Potter it is best not to be too pedantic. However, it would seem from evidence collected at Eythrope and Bishopstone that Buckinghamshire witches preferred to fly on hurdles rather than broomsticks: a fact unknown to J.K. Rowling!

We need to be grateful to Roger Long as he reminds us of the purchases of Buckinghamshire lace made by Katherine of Aragon. This wronged lady was much appreciated by the common sort in Buckinghamshire for her charitable acts and support for local industry. This small but eloquent truth allows the Reformation to appear in a finer context.

Curious Buckinghamshire admits to be entertaining and it does what it says on the book cover. It is designed to be put up and put down, to perhaps encourage a visit to certain places and to open doors to those who want to catch a glimpse of the past. This book acts as a gate-keeper to our native history. The price of £12.99 is a lot of money in these straightened times but no doubt the publisher knows his market-place.

Nigel Wilson

THE GRENVILLE LANDSCAPE OF
WOTTON HOUSE
New Arcadian Journal, Number 65/6, 2009
Patrick Eyres (editor).
Proceedings of the Wotton Landscape Conference, Wotton House, 16-17 October 2009.
New Arcadian Press, 13 Graham Grove, Leeds, LS4 2NF. www.NewArcadianPress.co.uk
138 pages with black and white illustrations. £20 (plus p & p). ISSN 0262-558X

This volume contains nine papers presented to the Wotton Landscape Conference in October 2009, all pertaining to the architecture, gardens and wider landscape of Wotton House in Buckinghamshire. The first Wotton Landscape Conference was held in 2007 and was "devoted to the origins and wider context of Wotton House" (p.7). In his preface, David Gladstone, whose wife inherited Wotton House in 1998, describes how the property was saved from destruction in 1957, and it is a story worth relating here.

In April 1957 Mr Gladstone's mother in law, a Mrs Patrick Brunner who lived in Beaconsfield, was taken to Wotton House by an antique dealer for a final view of the property, as it was scheduled for demolition within two weeks. The lady in question saved and restored the building with the help of architect Donald Insall and a grant from the Historic Buildings Council, in the process revealing the Soane interior which had been covered over in the 1920s. The associated land had by that stage been sold off, so Mrs Brunner spent the next twenty-five years purchasing pieces of ground, and in the 1980s and 1990s she restored the pleasure gardens, guided by an estate map of 1789, now in the Huntingdon Library in California. Upon Mrs Brunner's death in 1998, David Gladstone's wife April inherited the house and in 1999 the Countryside Commission provided funding for a full survey of the estate, which launched the current restoration project. One of the main reasons for the conference was a desire to establish who had originally conceived and executed the design of the landscape, and to explore the links between this house and other Grenville properties such as Stowe.

The papers within this volume, in the words of editor Patrick Eyres "encompass such a rich variety of expertise and perspectives that they not only encapsulate but also amplify the present state of knowledge" (p.9). The first paper, by Michael Symes, entitled "The Web of Wotton: Cubs, Connections and Counterpoint" discusses the Wotton landscape's conception and the sources of its inspiration, particularly the influence of Stowe. He also considers the personalities involved in its development, principally focusing on William Pitt the Elder. Michael Bevington's paper "Familial and Architectural Links between Stowe and Wotton" explores the links between certain architectural elements and some of the many notable family members at the two houses, including the Grenvilles, Pitts and Lyttletons. Paper Three, by Richard Wheeler, discusses the Wotton landscape in the context of three other similar landscapes, Petworth, Stowe and Croome Park, all displaying the work of Lancelot Brown.

Other papers explore such diverse aspects as sightlines and geometric design (John Phibbs), the development of Wotton's water features and its water management (Steffie Shields), the social and recreational functions of the landscape (Kate Felus), evidence for the landscape's development derived from written narratives (Michael Cousins) and an exploration of the iconography of commerce and Empire within the garden (Patrick Eyres). Of particular interest to Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society members is the inclusion, within a paper by Sarah Couch examining the layout and planting of the avenues, of an early map of the estate, circa 1767 (pp.74–75). This map, held within BAS archives (BAS maps 88), appears to be a copy of an even earlier map (1649) overlaid with the eighteenth-century landscape features including the avenues.

The New Arcadian Journal is published annually and includes papers on a range of issues relating to Arcadian and Utopian environments, both historical and contemporary, considering the meaning of "place" as explored through gardens, architecture and monuments. This particular collection of papers is undoubtedly academic in nature and may be a little too specialist in content for many readers. It would be useful however, to anyone interested in historic gardens and landscapes in general, and Wotton in particular. It is well illustrated, in black and white, with some beautiful line drawings of buildings, statuary and garden features, in addition to the helpful maps and plans. It also offers fresh perspectives on Wotton House, its surroundings and the personalities associated with it, and as such might prove useful to wider research on the Grenvilles, William Pitt the Elder and Lancelot "Capability" Brown. In the words of David Gladstone: "I believe the papers illuminate a much wider landscape than the one we see through the windows of Wotton House" (p.7).

Sue Fox

FROM BRONZE AGE ENCLOSURE TO ANGLO-SAXON SETTLEMENT: ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATIONS AT TAPLOW HILLFORT, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE, 1999–2005.
Allen T, Hayden C and Lamdin-Whymark H 2009
Oxford Archaeology: Thames Valley Landscapes Monograph 30.
ISBN-13:978-1-905905-09-6
Price £20

This welcome book describes an extensive excavation in advance of development at Taplow Court, near the well-known princely Saxon burial mound. The County Archaeological Service had initially required a series of evaluation trenches on the site the results of which, although not definitive, were sufficient to require full investigation of the development area. Burials peripheral to the principal burial might have been expected, as was the case at Sutton Hoo, but only one Saxon burial was recovered. What was discovered, unexpectedly, completely justified the considerable amount of effort and support that was eventually required from all parties involved.

The excavation revealed a hillfort with a very complex developmental history whose earthworks had been completely levelled over the centuries. Towards the later phases of the earthwork's life when the ditches were still visible, the Taplow barrow had been constructed at the southern end of the fort, overlooking the Thames 40 metres below; the mound can still be seen today in the former churchyard of St Nicolas.

Opportunities to examine the defences and interior of a hillfort on an extensive scale rarely present themselves and Tim Allen of Oxford Archaeology, the director of the main work in 1999, made good use of the situation. The main occupation of the area commenced in the Late Bronze Age with construction of a 'defensible hillfort enclosure' consisting of a palisade and ditch, probably of the eleventh century BC. An early defensive site of this complexity is unusual. Several hundred years later in the early Iron Age, probably the fifth century BC, a more conventional fort was constructed. This had a large ditch accompanied by a rampart laced with timber that overlay the late Bronze Age ditch. Traces of the timber-lacing were preserved as charred wood, as the defences appear to have been burnt down. Although its place in the sequence is not completely clear, a large outer ditch had at some stage converted the fort into a multivallate work. Part of an eastern entrance to the fort was exposed, but the full extent of the fort has not been precisely determined.

By the early Saxon period both ditches of the multivallate fort were still visible and debris dating to the sixth-seventh century AD accumulated in them at about the time that the Taplow mound was being constructed. Amongst the rubbish was a sherd probably from an eastern Mediterranean amphora, quite a rare find for this period in southern England and indicating both the significance of the site and the importance of the Thames as a trade route at this time. Interestingly, imported pottery of similar date had previously been recorded at Dorney a little downstream.

The complexity of the excavation and the potential cost of the post-excavation process meant that the developers SGI-UK found themselves in an unpredictably difficult situation, but recognising the importance of the site English Heritage agreed to fund both post-excavation work and publication. The resultant report is clearly written and well illustrated with extensive use of colour photographs, plans and reconstructions, Definitely a credit to all concerned and a very significant piece of work for Buckinghamshire.

Michael Farley

DESERTED VILLAGES REVISITED
Christopher Dyer and Richard Jones (editors)
Explorations in Local and Regional History volume 3
University of Hertfordshire Press, February 2010
xxii and 207 pages, with 40 figures and illustrations
ISBN 978-1-905313-79-2: £14.99

It wouldn't have happened 50 years later, and it certainly wouldn't happen today.

'In 1912 the huge double deserted village of Quarrendon in Buckinghamshire was apparently not even noticed, let alone recorded' by the newly formed Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England, writes Christopher Taylor. His first chapter of this book, a celebration and review of fifty years of 'deserted village studies', shows just how things have moved on since then.

Initially, after W.G. Hoskins had published his

seminal 1946 article on the deserted villages of Leicestershire, the question historians sought to answer was 'why was the village deserted?' The popular response was either 'plague', meaning that those villagers who didn't die abandoned their village, or 'sheep', meaning that they were removed by the local landowner in favour of large-scale pasturing of sheep. Fifty years of scholarship have shown a more complex picture.

Village desertion as a result of plague or sheep is desertion by external intervention. It happened, certainly. In chapter 2 Richard Jones notes William the Conqueror clearing villages to make way for his New Forest hunting ground, Cistercian monks removing settlements 200 years later to gain monastic isolation, Scottish border raids in 1346 and French incursions on the south coast during the Hundred Years' War – even the destruction of Kynaston in Herefordshire by a huge landslip in 1571.

But this is like judging our own society on the basis of headlines in the Daily Mail. These were the sudden events that people remember, but they were remembered because they were extraordinary.

The key factor for a settlement is whether its economic balance – the pattern of cooperation between its people, the relationships of exchange with the surrounding society – puts bread on its tables. The gradual failure of that balance over a long period is likely to go unnoticed by the headline writers of the day.

As Richard Jones writes: 'Even Tusmore in Oxfordshire, once thought to be a victim of the Black Death, is now known to have been in serious decline long before and was already half-abandoned in 1341', seven years before the plague crisis. Fieldwalking at Lillingstone Dayrell, three miles north of Buckingham, dates its initial decline to the years 1350-1400, when one whole village street was abandoned. When its manorial lord enclosed eight peasant holdings in 1491, displacing perhaps forty people, he was taking advantage of an already weakened peasant communal economy.

In each case, the accumulation of minor social and economic failures that left the community vulnerable to external intervention is less easy to discern. At Brookend in Oxfordshire, however, Christopher Dyer does just that, tracing the increase in dilapidation and social dysfunction in the village through an analysis of its manorial court records.

Closer to home, John Broad offers two Buckinghamshire case studies – Boarstall and Middle Claydon – where changes in the social economy in the 17th and 18th centuries left earlier village sites deserted, but with the movement of people rather than complete depopulation.

In this way, the study of deserted villages can be turned to enrich our understanding of the workings of living medieval communities, but only up to a point. We can analyse the deserted village precisely because it is deserted, leaving the evidence of its failure as a medieval or post-medieval pattern in the fields for excavation and analysis.

How can we compare evidence from the deserted village with that from the 'successful village', now a town whose medieval pattern has been overlaid by five centuries of later rebuilding?

Take our own county town of Aylesbury. To the north, across the River Thame, was the manor of Quarrendon. To the south, separated by the Bear Brook, was the manor of Walton. Quarrendon today stands deserted in the fields. Walton has been absorbed by Aylesbury, but still has historic buildings as evidence of its growing prosperity during the years of Quarrendon's failure. A historical comparison between the two would be instructive.

This is a useful and wide-ranging collection of papers, offering a variety of perspectives on the study of both deserted and partly deserted settlements. Much of the evidence its authors present is from Buckinghamshire's own deserted or shrunken villages and from surrounding counties.

Finally, a message from the present. South Bank, an estate of terraced housing on the edge of Middlesbrough, lost its steelworks in the 1980s. Today its community is still without a source of local employment. As *The Guardian* reported (*Weekend*, 23 October 2010, page 45): 'Many former residents have moved away, leaving homes that no one wants to move into, their windows and doors swiftly nailed over... Gradually, whole streets have been demolished, replaced by nothing.'

Sometimes, as historians, we need only look at the present to see the past.

Peter Marsden

AYLESBURY – A HISTORY
Hugh Hanley
Phillimore
ISBN 9Y8-1-860YY-496-6: £18.99

"History begins yesterday": so how appropriate that "Aylesbury – a History" Hugh Hanley's latest contribution to the local history enthusiast's bookshelf has, as the concluding illustration, our wonderful new Waterside Theatre: "scheduled to open in 2010", his caption says, and open on time it did indeed.

This highlights two of the outstanding characteristics of this history – the comprehensiveness of its pictorial coverage and the author's accurate precision. Waterside Theatre is illustration 150, which shows how richly the 112 pages are visually endowed: but ultimately it is the satisfying balance achieved between all the elements – text and binding, captions and typography, erudition and deft detail, all in harmony with the pictures – that makes this so enjoyable a book. As the acknowledgements testify, it called for willing teamwork – and what a team, with members from Buckinghamshire County Archives, the County Museum, the Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies, the Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society, the Aylesbury Society as well as individuals from near and far: and Hugh Hanley seems to have achieved this book rather as a composer or a conductor creates satisfying music by drawing out and combining the talents of individual instruments. Produced by Phillimore, local history publishers par excellence, it meets their usual high standards.

Among this history's qualities, I find accessibility particularly attractive. Youngsters will recognise many of the pictures from what they see en route to the Roald Dahl gallery and inside the County Museum. A new resident can gain a rapid appreciation of the wealth of interest that Aylesbury offers, from the Royal Manor onward, simply by scanning the chapter headings; and the knowledgeable can gain insights by, for instance, identifying traces of the re-cut Iron-Age hill fort from Illustration 8 which shows its conjectured line or, on page 99, glimpsing Walton Grange before its destruction by a land-mine in the Second World War. The bibliography (modestly said to be 'select') lists over 60 items for further reading; and the index is thoroughly comprehensive.

The book distils the wisdom and experience of a lifetime's scholarship, including the author's long service as Buckinghamshire County Archivist. It compliments Hugh Hanley's earlier detailed contributions to the story of Aylesbury, his authoritative histories of the prebendal and three of the town's major charities, Thomas Hickman's, William Harding's and Bedford's. Aylesbury is fortunate indeed to draw on such expertise.

Graham Aylett

THE ENGLISH PARSONAGE IN THE EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY
Timothy Brittain-Catlin
Spire Books, 2008
ISBN978-1-904965-16-9. Price £71.98

More than a century and a half after the death of Augustus Welby Pugin, Timothy Brittain-Catlin is obviously an admirer of this visionary architect. He is also a major Pugin scholar, and places him in a central position in the development of the English parsonage as a building type.

Pugin's designs were frequently idiosyncratic. The first house he designed for himself, St Marie's Grange, had no corridors on its principal floor, the rooms leading off each other. It was approached across a working drawbridge, and the facade facing the road was completely blank. When he came to sell the house six years later, he was forced to make modifications and it was sold at a fraction of its construction cost. In his much grander house for the Roman Catholic Bishop of Birmingham, the great hall was located almost immediately above the entrance door, but to reach it involved an extended circuit of the entire building along corridors and up steps, around a central courtyard. Pugin may have taken his 'medievalism' a trifle too literally – after all corridors were not invented until the late seventeenth century – and hence it may have been just as well that he designed only two Anglican parsonages. But there can be no denying Pugin's importance to the Gothic revival and it is his more general influence on the layout, style, and detail of domestic architecture in the first half of the nineteenth century, particularly on parsonages, that is at the heart of this book.

The book is large format, and well illustrated with recent photographs and original drawings that provide sufficient detail to satisfy this fellow archi-

tect, and those interested in architectural history. The spatial organisation of the houses is analysed and displayed diagrammatically, and there is some interesting discussion about architectural detailing. Many individual designers are identified and considered, along with some of the problems they encountered when trying to satisfy their clerical clients.

While the focus is on design, there is an interesting account of the institutional background that facilitated so much building. We learn about the procedures involved in commissioning the parsonages and how the Gilbert Acts meant that public finance could be used for grants or mortgages. The Parsonage Act of 1838 allowed the funding of a new house on a different site, by the sale of the old house and up to 12 acres of land, in some cases breaking the link with medieval sites. The need to apply for grants and mortgages explains the presence of thousands of plans and documents now in church or county archives – major sources for this book.

To enable a parsonage to be built, the newly developing architectural profession provide*d* increasingly comprehensive technical information. For instance, Bartholomew, editor of *The Builder,* published '*Specifications for practical architecture' (1840)* setting out in precise detail standard clauses to be used when commissioning work. It includes separate specifications for a 'small rectory' for a living valued at £400 pa and another for a living with £800.

But if the book is good on the architecture, it has little to say about the life that went on in the parsonage. Instead we are referred to other literary sources, such as Jane Austen. It would be interesting to know how these parsonages differ, if at all, from other domestic buildings of this period. And surely at a time when society was changing so dramatically, there must have been immense changes, technical, social, and organisational, in the way life was lived inside these buildings?

Seven Buckinghamshire parsonages are mentioned:

Location	Date	Architect	Style
Aston Clinton*	circa 1839	Habershorn	Tudor Gothic
Great Woolstone	1851	Butterfield	Puginesque
Hillesden*	1870	GG Scott	Puginesque
Mentmore	1851	Ferrey	Puginesque
Turweston	1844	Edward Freeman, a local builder	Tudor Gothic
Wavendon*	1848	Ferrey	Puginesque
Weston Turville*	1838	GG Scott	Classical Georgian

* illustrated

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