

## REVIEWS

THE LETTER-BOOKS OF SAMUEL WILBERFORCE, 1843-68, transcribed and edited by R. K. Pugh, with the assistance of J. F. A. Mason, being Vol. 16 of the Buckinghamshire Record Society and published jointly by them and the Oxfordshire Record Society, MCMLXX.  $9\frac{3}{4} \times 6$  ins., Pp. xviii, plus 438.

Samuel Wilberforce (1805-73) was the third son of William Wilberforce, famed for his work in the abolition of the slave trade; he was a High Church Evangelical, who had enjoyed a number of important Church appointments (Archdeacon of Surrey, Canon of Winchester, Dean of Westminster) and was in high favour at Court before he became Bishop of Oxford in 1845, a post he held until 1869 when he was preferred to the See of Winchester.

The 700 odd letters contained in this volume cover the period of Wilberforce's term as Bishop of Oxford during which time, as the Dictionary of National Biography says, "he introduced reforms and greatly improved the organisation of his diocese". The letters have a very important bearing on this aspect; but they do far more than that. They afford intimate glimpses of the man, and many of his contemporaries, and the manners and customs of ecclesiastical and parochial life in the middle of the last century.

This astonishing collection of letters came to light only in 1955 in the attic of a bungalow attached to a well-known rest-home in Sussex founded by Elizabeth Robbins and Dr. Octavia Wilberforce. They were eventually acquired by the Bodleian Library. And Dr. Pugh's and Mr. Mason's painstaking transcription is a valuable and monumental task.

Apart from matters of Diocesan organisation and episcopal policy, the main impression that emerges from these pages is of the amazing industry, versatility and personal involvement of the Bishop in what many of us to-day would regard as trivial or domestic matters which ought to have been handled by Rural Deans and Archdeacons. There was the case, for instance, of the troublesome incumbent of Padworth, Berkshire, who had upset his parishioners by changing the position of the prayer-desk; and outraged the influential Lord of the Manor and many others by adopting the dangerous practice of preaching in a surplice. These difficulties with the Rev. G. W. Curtis necessitated no fewer than seven letters and several interviews. And one can see in this instance alone not merely the profound pastoral

responsibility felt, but also something reflected of the Bishop's own doctrinal fears, remembering that a number of members of his own family and connections had gone over to the Roman Catholic Church in the great Manning-Newman epoch.

Again, there was the case of the Rev. F. Burgess, a truly sporting parson, whose over-indulgence in hunting, shooting, fishing and race-meetings, brought him into collision with authority, with a stern letter from his Bishop, and another seeking advice in this difficult case from the Archbishop of Canterbury himself.

The transcription and editing of this massive correspondence is immaculate: and even spelling mistakes or slips in the original are painstakingly noted. The task cannot have been easy in view of the orthography and primitive methods of copying in those days. It would have been interesting to have reproduced in facsimile a page of the original, and perhaps a portrait of the Bishop.

The method of presentation adopted is of course the only one possible, namely to arrange the letters in chronological order. But this has some disadvantages when one wishes to follow the fortunes of an individual, or the outcome of a particular case, or matters concerning one place; scattered references have each to be searched for and looked up in turn. Fortunately there is a very complete index—indeed three—of persons, places and subjects.

This volume is of course of particular interest to Buckinghamshire, since that County had only been taken out of the vast Diocese of Lincoln in 1845 and added to Oxfordshire and Berkshire (1836) to form the present Diocese of Oxford, originally created by Henry VIII. It was fortunate, therefore, that such a profound Churchman, able administrator and shining public figure should have been in charge at that time. And this is reflected throughout the correspondence.

Another feature of the volume having an especial bearing on Buckinghamshire matters is the Appendix concerned with the founding of the Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society in 1847. Wilberforce became its first *ex Officio* President; and since the inaugural meeting had taken place in the vestry of Aylesbury Church and a high proportion of its original members were clergy, the Bishop made clear his attitude in such a society. He considered "at once the dangers and the advantages of a society like ours". He had undertaken the Presidency, and would only retain it, to avoid those dangers and to secure those advantages. If the Society wandered into Romanising paths, he would leave it. In fact this danger was avoided, and Wilberforce remained President until he left the Diocese. And in later years the Society was urged, led by the clergy, to turn its attention to matters more in keeping with its title—the collection of plans of churches, schools and parsonages, the provision of guidance to those engaged in church restoration, etc. It is regrettable that today only a handful of clergy are members or evince any knowledge of or interest in the historic buildings in their care.

This volume, in short, is invaluable alike to the student of Diocesan organisation and development, church history, individual character and the whole of ecclesiastical and some lay parochial life in mid-Victorian England.

E. C. R.

HILLTOP VILLAGES OF THE CHILTERN: CHOLESBURY, HAWRIDGE, ST. LEONARDS AND BUCKLAND COMMON, by David and Joan Hay. Phillimore (London and Chichester) 1971. £2.50. X + 245.

Of those who love the delicate colouring and pale clear air of the high Chilterns, few are privileged to live there. H. J. Massingham called them the 'unhistoric hills'; Group Captain and Mrs. Hay have refuted him. Much of their book deals with prehistory, and must be provisional until Grim's Ditch and Hawridge Court earthworks have been dated, and the Cholesbury hill-fort further studied. Its banks

enclose a permanent source of water on a plateau where the dry valleys cannot have contained winterbournes; indeed they represent 'summerbournes' at the close of the Ice Age, when the subsoil was still frozen.

Evidence from the 1932 Cholesbury excavation fits in well with recent findings from the Chess Valley; the resettlement of the Catuvellauni along the rivers (c.80-150) was encouraged or enforced by Roman policy, and caused a thousand years' gap in the history of the area. There may have been a Dark Age reoccupation, but the evidence for Saxon Cholesbury and Hawridge is at yet confined to their names, which would originally have described physical features rather than settlements (the derivation at p. 64 is, I fear, unacceptable). The authors would take the church site within Cholesbury ramparts back to the ninth century, but it was surely somewhat later that land-hunger in the Vale of Aylesbury led to secondary settlement in Chiltern woodlands. Weston Turville gave rise to The Lee, Aston Clinton to St. Leonards (Blackmere) with Chivery and Dundridge, Buckland belatedly to Buckland Common, Drayton Beauchamp to Cholesbury, Marsworth surprisingly to Hawridge (for a neat explanation of the pre-Conquest link here, see p. 77). Excavation of the original enclosure at The Lee, where the village shifted eastwards, would help with dating, but there must have been earlier shielings in "alps", related to Vale homesteads as *hafod* to *hendref* in Wales. The practice of transhumance is utterly forgotten and with it the associated English vocabulary.

The hilltop villages emerge as separate manors with their own fields in the 12th and 13th centuries (except Buckland Common, firmly in ecclesiastical hands). The rectors of Hawridge and Cholesbury retained land in the parent parishes. St. Leonard's chapel was endowed before 1187, and the Hermit of the Woods appears on the 1196 Pipe Roll, but the modern chapel trust is shown to date from 1509; a hostile inquiry in 1549 found that it was not confined to religious uses, and by 1587 the chapel was in decay. Cornelius Wood restored it 80 years later, and for a time it was a local Gretna Green. At Hawridge in 1520 the rectory was ruinous and the rector absent; his curate, living in Chesham, came to say all the services, including compline, before 8 a.m., even on Easter Day, and played dice and football. Cholesbury could hardly support an incumbent until the Neale lectureship was founded in 1705; the authors have made effective use of letters from the lecturers to the trustees. Buckland Common had no church except from 1860 to 1939. More could have been said of Nonconformity; William Dyer was not a Quaker in 1662 (p. 133, not indexed) though he inclined to them later.

Some later chapters cover much the same ground as *Records*, xvii, 57-71; xviii, 34-42, 288-305, but with material from wills and court records and, not least, evidence concerning building. An appendix traces one house from 1599 to our own time. There are accounts of enclosure, of potteries and brickworks, of tinkers resorting to Braziers End, of inns and crafts and celebration and yeoman families—the gentry are generally absent. Cholesbury's parochial bankruptcy in 1832 passed into the textbooks, and was seriously quoted in the County Council as late as 1916.

The last chapter deals with village life early in the present century, the end of the manorial courts (Lord Rothschild was amerced sixpence for an encroachment) and the union of the villages into one parish at the 1932-4 review, with Grim's Ditch as boundary. Much has happened since; parish historians are well advised to adopt a 40-year rule, but the reviewer can say that the character of the central Chilterns survives because it is defended, and foremost among the defenders are David and Joan Hay.

Arnold H. J. Baines.

LATIMER: BELGIC, ROMAN, DARK AGE AND MODERN FARM by Keith Branigan. Chess Valley Archaeological and Historical Society, 1971. £2.50.

Dr. Branigan's report on the excavations which he directed at Latimer 1964-70 includes an account of previous excavations and an assessment of all finds from the site of the Roman villa. He compares Latimer with other Chiltern villas and discusses its significance in the history of Roman Britain. Mr. A. H. J. Baines and Mrs. A. Thomas trace the history of the farmstead from the mid-fifth century to the present day.

A review will appear in the next issue of *Records of Buckinghamshire*.

THE PICTURE BOOK OF BRASSES IN GILT, with 242 illustrations in gilt and black, by Henry Trivick. John Baker, 1971. £3.25.

Mr. Trevick's technique brings out the beauty of the brasses which range in date from the middle ages to the present day. Twenty-six Buckinghamshire brasses are reproduced, including the remarkable memorials to Margaret Dayrell at Lillingstone Dayrell and to Robert Ingyhton and his three wives at Thornton. John de Swynstede, last rector of Edlesborough, 1395, may be a portrait.

WEST WYCOMBE, ITS HISTORY AND ATTRACTIONS, by Herbert Green, Pitkin Pictorials Ltd. 1971.

Mr. Green has skilfully contrived to do justice to the work of Sir Francis Dashwood, second baronet and Lord le Despencer, who created West Wycombe House, Park and Mausoleum, and rebuilt the Church of St. Lawrence, and to the less sophisticated attractions of the village. The illustrations are excellent and varied.

A PLAN FOR THE CHILTERNNS, with Foreword by R. B. Verney, Chairman, Chilterns Standing Conference, 1971. 65p.

The Chilterns Area of Outstanding Beauty stretches along the hills from Goring to Dunstable, with a detached district to the north of Luton, and lies within the counties of Oxford, Buckingham, Hertford and Bedford. The beauty of the region is largely man-made, the work, for the most part, of farmers and foresters through the ages. Modern man could quickly destroy it. The main threats are commercial exploitation and the influx of vast numbers of town-dwellers for recreation. The report outlines policies for the land, minerals, wild life, archaeological sites, communications, leisure and recreation. (This authoritative account of the past and future of Chiltern woodlands should allay the extraordinary passions which forestry arouses). The Plan is comprehensive and shows that a balance can be struck between modern requirements and the conservation of beauty. It is illustrated with photographs, diagrams and maps. The attractive presentation will make sure that it is widely read and discussed.

E. M. E.

LONG CRENDON, A SHORT HISTORY, by Joyce Donald, Part I, with illustrations and maps, 25 p.; part II will extend from 1800 to 1914. A review of the two parts will appear in a later issue.

REPRINTS. Paul Minet, bookseller and publisher of Chicheley House, Newport Pagnell has republished several important Bucks books, long out of print. These reprints are made by photographic means and are not therefore corrected or brought up to date, but will be of considerable value. Those issued to date are:

A History and Topography of Buckinghamshire by J. J. Sheaham (1862) 940 p.p. £8.50

A History of Aylesbury by Robert Gibbs (1885) 688 pp. (£8.50).  
The Romance of the Lace Pillow by Thomas Wright (1919) 271 pp. £3.50  
A Handbook of Hand-Made Bobbin Lace Work by M. Maidment (1931) 184  
pp. (£4.00)