

## REVIEWS

*The Wiggs of Mentmore*. Gerald and Elizabeth Elvey, pp. 72. Barracuda Press, 1984. ISBN 0 86023 178 X.

The story of the Wiggs is part of the social history of England—but an England personified in identifiable individuals, not the abstractions that chroniclers of whole societies must perforce deal with. Very dimly they can be discerned through the mist within a century of the Conquest—a Saxon family, free men with their own land. In the following centuries they emerge into clearer though still fitful light. They are shown ramifying widely, some sinking into obscurity, some rising to positions of substance and influence. The Mentmore Wiggs became armigerous. Then we see at last falling on hard times, and a son setting forth to rebuild the family fortunes in the New World.

The interest of *The Wiggs of Mentmore* is thus wider than its title might suggest. And it has another claim on our interest, especially that of anyone assembling material for a family history: it is a model of how such things should be done. Here one will find pointers not only to the sources that are available but to how they should be used. The key that unlocks the information concealed in the laconic and haphazard notices vouchsafed by the records is a profound understanding of their historical context. Thus equipped, Gerald and Betty Elvey have been able to extend enormously the field of legitimate inference, venturing often into conjecture but never into speculation. (The difference—an important one for anybody occupying an editorial chair—is that conjecture never loses touch with the evidence; speculation is untrammelled by any such restraints.)

The book is the fruit of the family piety of Mr James Lewis Kirby Jr, whose mother is descended from the Wiggs of South Carolina. Buckinghamshire historians are in his debt for this enlightened essay in patronage. It is, incidentally, very handsomely produced.

J.C.T.

*The Life and Times of Thomas Harding.* A. H. J Baines and Shirley A. P. Foxwell, pp. 40. The Parish Church of Chesham, pamphlet, out of print.

More interest is now being shown in the Lollards than for many years past. This pamphlet honours the memory of Thomas Harding of Chesham, the last Lollard martyr. It is in two parts. First there is a general account of heresy in the Middle Ages and a detailed survey of the Lollard Movement from the time of Wyclif to the persecution of the early sixteenth century. Then the focus shifts to Thomas Harding, who is shown to have had a long record of appearances in ecclesiastical courts.

With his wife he was condemned to severe penances in the court of William Smyth, bishop of Lincoln 1496 to 1514, but these penalties were almost all remitted by William Atwater, the next bishop, in 1515. Like other 'knowne' men, Harding was investigated during bishop Longland's campaign against the Amersham Lollards in 1521. Nevertheless he was able to retire to Chesham, where he lived quietly for many years.

In 1532 he was detected reading forbidden books in a wood near his home. Dr Baines explains what the books were and why it was so dangerous to be found with them. He goes on to deal with proceedings in the bishop's court, leading to the condemnation of Harding as a relapsed heretic and his death at the stake in May 1532. We are fortunate to have such a clear account of his last days, based on a transcript of the registers, and both amplifying and correcting Foxe's account.

The two authors have consulted a long list of books, to which should be added *An Episcopal Court Book, 1514 to 1520*, edited by Margaret

Bowker for the Lincoln Record Society, the records of the Court of Audience of Bishop Atwater. It shows the work of a conscientious bishop and his charitable treatment of the Lollards of Amersham.

E.M.E.

*Hatchments in Britain iv: Bedfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Wiltshire.* Ed. Peter Summers, pp. xvi + 167. Phillimore, 1983. £9.95.

Hatchments are diamond-shaped panels (generally canvas stretched upon a wooden frame) bearing coats of arms. They were hung in front of the house during periods of mourning, generally for one year, and then deposited in the parish church. Mr Summers and his friends are engaged in recording and blazoning all examples in Great Britain and Ireland. His Buckinghamshire survey was undertaken in 1952, with a final check thirty years later (still within the pre-1974 boundaries). Of the 166 hatchments noted in the county at the earlier date, three have since been lost, and one, at Chenies, has been added on the death in 1953 of the twelfth Duke of Bedford, though it is still stated on p. 43 that the most recent example is that for our Society's late President, M. R. James, Provost of Eton (d. 1936). For comparison, there are or lately were 75 hatchments in Bedfordshire, 55 in Berkshire, 97 in Oxfordshire and 150 in Wiltshire. All but twenty of the Bucks hatchments have been dated with sufficient precision to support the following distribution by quarter centuries.

1700-24	4	1850-74	21
1725-49	6	1875-99	8
1750-74	11	1900-24	2
1775-99	19	1925-49	1
1800-24	33	1950-74	1
1825-49	41	1975-	nil

One unidentified hatchment at Stoke Poges (formerly in the Hastings almshouses) is probably of seventeenth-century date; several armorial boards elsewhere have not been listed, because they bear inscriptions showing that they were intended as memorials. Such quasi- or proto-hatchments will be included in a final volume when the county series is completed.

139 of our hatchments are in parish churches (including 10 in the Russell chapel at Chenies), and two now lost were formerly so; 20 are at Wycombe Abbey, probably from the parish church; two are at Eton College, two inaccessible at Chequers, one in the County Museum, and one, over a pool in West Wycombe caves, has perished.

A few hatchments may not be original: some of those at Chenies have been replaced or repainted, and one has an heraldic error. All blazons are noted exactly as they appear, not as they ought to be.

It was fairly common for the family motto to be replaced by a pious sentiment. In Bucks we have *Resurgam* 28 times, with *Resurgemus* once; there are 17 instances of *In coelo quies* and 12 of *Mors janua vitae*, with single examples of *Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori*, *Memento mori*, *Non omnis moriar* and *Requiescat in pace*. In English we have 'Be ye also ready' and 'Regard the end' (twice each), while a Mayor of Wycombe, identified as such by mace and *fascies*, chose *Jehovah jireh*, 'The Lord will provide' (cf. *Olney Hymns* i.7).

The editor of the survey offers to advise incumbents and other custodians of these heraldic records how to have them satisfactorily repaired at minimal cost. His cottage at North Stoke, Oxon, is adorned with a duchess's hatchment, and he has assigned all his royalties

from this valuable series to the Ockenden Venture.

A.H.J.B.

#### *Now in the Library*

*The History of St Margaret's Church, Tylers Green.* Miles Green, pp. 32. Penn & Tylers Green Jubilee Committee, 1984.

An attractively written and carefully researched account of one episode in the great church-building drive by which, in the mid-nineteenth century, the Church of England strove to catch up with the demographic changes of the previous hundred years. Useful insights into social attitudes and assumptions.

*Buckinghamshire: Maps and History.* Valerie Scott and Eve MacLaughlin, pp. 32. Quiller Press, London, 1984. Board, £4.95. ISBN 0 90762 130 9.

Handsomely produced book consisting of a sort of history primer accompanied by—but not linked to—reproductions of pre-Ordnance Survey county maps. The history is unreliable and the maps uninformative: either they lack topographical detail or the scale of reproduction renders the detail unreadable. The decorative quality of the cartographers' work is clearly brought out, however.