

BOOK REVIEWS

Eric Wood, *Historical Britain, a comprehensive account of the development of rural and urban life and landscape from prehistory to the present day*, published by The Harvill Press, 1995, price £30.00 hardback, 624pp, graphs, maps, illustrations by Rex Nicholls. ISBN 1 860460313

Here is a most outstanding book by our greatly respected former President, and member of the Society for almost 50 years until his death in May 1996. It is a comprehensive account, an encyclopaedia, of Britain's environment, compiled by one person during a lifetime of study and observation. It describes the changes which have been made by man, whether through agriculture or building, and these events are set into their natural background of geology, landscape and climate. The reader will soon feel convinced that the sites or artefacts which are described have been visited and observed personally; they have not been just chosen as examples from some textbook. Sites in Surrey are well represented and even those of us who know it well are likely to find out things we were unaware of.

This work of immense scholarship is aimed, as was Eric's other great work, at the everyday reader; so it is written in straightforward language. He has said that his purpose has been 'to interest people as they go around, to answer the questions why things were built in the first place, why they are located where they are and why they look how they do; why they have changed through time, including the social background which has caused such changes'. Because of this broad view, delightful comments crop up to stimulate interest, such as that the change in climate in Jane Austen's time created a need for warm underwear and saw the end of women's thin and flowing fashions in favour of upholstered Victorian ones; or that Turner's splendid sunset landscapes reflect the dust in the atmosphere after volcanic eruptions. Later on we learn that witchcraft in 16th century England was quite different from witchcraft abroad and that 19th century pubs provided pleasure gardens where cockfighting or promenade concerts could take place.

It becomes obvious, from such instances, that this work has drawn on the scholarship of legions of other workers and it gives them full credit. In fact the last 55 pages form a total bibliography and index, beautifully sorted out so that anything can be located with no trouble. Each chapter or section within a chapter provides a thorough background to the subject it discusses, with extensive cross-references. This may mean that anyone reading the whole volume straight through will meet with repetition. But that problem was faced and dealt with by varying the text, and it is of secondary importance because the objective has always been to tell the reader as much as possible in answer to his first enquiry. (Needless to say, Eric's ultimate objective was to generate interest in preserving our heritage).

The book is delightfully illustrated. Very many technical points are instantly clarified by Rex Nicholls' maps, plans and vivid drawings — there are over 450 of these alone! An enormous undertaking. Then there is the index; those of us who set great store by good indexing must pay tribute to Eric's wife Pam, for the excellence of this part of the work, as well as to the interest she so obviously took in the layout and presentation of the whole volume.

To sum up: this book is a masterpiece and we should all be delighted if we can get a copy for our bookshelves. It is a 'must' for every archaeological or historical library. It is good that Eric lived to see it both published and acclaimed.

ROSAMOND HANWORTH

John Pink, *The Excise officers and their duties in an English market town, Kingston upon Thames 1643–1973*, published by the author, 1995.

This pioneering book describing the work of the excise officers in Kingston upon Thames is a model for what one would like to hope could be followed by many other market towns throughout England. John Pink has been an Officer of Customs and Excise and is a qualified guide for historic Kingston. A lifetime's experience has been supplemented by much research into the archives of HM Commissioners of Customs and Excise, the Public Record Office, the Surrey Record Office and elsewhere locally at Kingston upon Thames. The result is presented in a text of great clarity, amply illustrated with numerous appendices and documents.

The Excise was introduced by parliament during the English Civil War in 1643 to raise revenue for the fight against the king. At first duties were imposed on consumer goods, initially ale, spirits, cider and soap, but at various subsequent times they were also imposed on hearths, windows, malt, sugar, registration of births, marriages and deaths, auctions, hire of post horses, tea, coffee, armorial bearings, silver plate, clocks and watches, dogs, betting, and as entertainment tax, purchase tax, value added tax, etc. Nearly all excise duties were introduced as 'temporary measures solely for raising revenue'. The officers were also occasionally required to supervise certain non-revenue tasks such as the prevention of smuggling, billeting returns, press gangs, probate and old age pensions.

Offices of the Excise were set up in all market towns, usually in inn rooms, and two or three officers were appointed to issue licences, assess and collect the revenue. Kingston's main industries were malting, processing locally grown hops, brewing, tanning, candle making, etc, all of which received the excise officers' close attention. In dealing with the work of the Excise in general John Pink throws much light on the work of the inhabitants of Kingston, and on its excise officers and their long hours. As a major local industry brewing receives particular attention.

At first the collection of Excise had been entrusted to 'farmers' but in 1683 Charles II placed it under a board of commissioners and the Excise outside London was reorganized into areas called Collections. The Kingston Collection was based on Middlesex and Surrey: there were subsequent changes to the Kingston Collection in 1865 and in 1888, while in 1909 the Excise was amalgamated with the Customs.

This book is strongly recommended not only to those interested in the history of Kingston upon Thames but to all interested in local history in general.

MARK STURLEY

Celebrating our past, edited by Clive Orton. Beddington, Carshalton & Wallington Archaeological Society Occasional Paper 5 (1995), 40pp, £3.00.

This well-produced and well-illustrated booklet marks the 75th anniversary of the Beddington, Carshalton & Wallington Archaeological Society. It contains tributes to two stalwart members of the local historical and archaeological scene: Muriel Hayman, former Secretary and President, and Douglas Cluett, recently retired (if such active people ever really retire) as Borough of Sutton Heritage Officer. The current President, Beryl Palmier, offers some jottings from local records about the struggle against smallpox, mostly from the 1780s and 1880–1905. But the remaining half-dozen essays deal with historic buildings of secondary status which are often ignored by local guides.

Beverley Shew and James Kingswell provide a valuable study of Camden House, Beddington, a sadly decayed early 18th century mansion, which is of some contemporary interest in that during the 1790s it was occupied by members of the Baring family of bankers and East India Company directors. Margaret Cunningham writes about Woodcote Grove, originally a farm belonging to the Carews, rebuilt as a substantial Georgian-style house c1860, but so far off the beaten track that many local people have never seen it. On the other hand Honeywood by

Carshalton Ponds has become one of the best-known buildings in the area since it was turned into the Borough Heritage Centre. John Phillips' detailed archaeological investigation of the house comes to the conclusion that it was originally built in the late 17th century, and suggests that its initial purpose was as an adjunct to a cold bath. But perhaps the most interesting item is the wide-ranging article by Andrew Skelton on the buildings at Wallington Corner, not least because they have all now disappeared. The Elms, Wallington manor house, and the mysterious Wallington Chapel all had medieval antecedents, but by the early 1930s had been demolished and redeveloped.

This is an enterprising publication full of local interest which may well enjoy a wider audience, and must whet the appetite for the next Occasional Paper in the series.

MICHAEL WILKES

Gunpowder: the history of an international technology, edited by Brenda J Buchanan, Gunpowder Section of the 22nd Symposium of the International Committee for the History of Technology (ICOHTEC), Bath 1994, published by Bath University Press, 1996, price £50.00, xxviii, 404pp, illus. ISBN 0 86197 124 8

Interest in the archaeology and history of the gunpowder industry has greatly increased since the early 1980s. Pioneering work was done in the 1960s by Arthur Percival at Faversham in Kent and by Mike Davies-Shiel and the late Paul Wilson in Cumbria. Bryan Earl's book on Cornish explosives followed in 1978 and Brenda Buchanan and Malcolm Tucker's paper on the Woolley powder mills in Somerset in 1981. Then in 1984, when the Surrey Industrial History Group published my own history of the Chilworth gunpowder mills, I was approached by Phil Philo, then of Gunnersbury Park Museum, who was excavating the site of the Bedfont powder mills, with the suggestion that we should convene a meeting to bring together interested individuals. Suddenly projects appeared to be springing up all over the country. A meeting was held at Birkbeck College in the autumn of 1985 and thus the Gunpowder Mills Study Group (GMSG) was formed, an informal and friendly organization which still meets regularly twice a year and has given much pleasure and encouragement to the fifty or so members who have been involved. It has also been influential in prompting official bodies to take up the subject, resulting in the recording of several sites by the English and Scottish Royal Commissions on historic monuments and an evaluation of the physical remains of the industry under the Monuments Protection Programme of English Heritage.

The GMSG soon acquired a few overseas members, in Denmark, Greece, Australia and the USA, but it has been through the efforts of Brenda Buchanan that an international dimension has been systematically pursued and that gunpowder was chosen as one of the four main themes of the 22nd ICOHTEC Symposium held at Bath in 1994. This book is based upon papers presented at that meeting. It contains 24 papers grouped in three sections, on the evolution and early history of powder making, the development and diffusion of gunpowder technology, and powder making in its prime.

The subject is important to historians of Surrey because the county played a leading role in the British gunpowder industry in the 16th and 17th centuries and again for a short period in the late 19th century. Although only three of the papers deal primarily with the gunpowder industry in Britain, and none of these with Surrey, the book contains much that is of value to those who are researching the subject in our area. Comparative material on the physical remains of gunpowder mills is provided by papers on the Kongsberg silver mines in Norway 1734–1865, the manufacture of gunpowder in Spain and Latin America from the 16th to the 18th centuries, and on the Royal Gunpowder factory at Waltham Abbey (based on the RCHME report of 1994). The highly organized system of producing saltpetre from collected manure by 'The Saltpetre boilers of the Swedish Crown' is interesting to compare with that in Britain before imports by the East India Company made domestic production unnecessary, and with the system in France described in a paper on the organization of gunpowder production in France

in the period 1775–1830. The latter also deals with the application of scientific method to gunpowder manufacture in France under Lavoisier's administration which has contemporary parallels in Britain in the work of the Royal Laboratories under Congreve. In the field of later technology, the paper 'One hundred years of the Russian smokeless (nitrocellulose) powder industry' deals with a subject which in Surrey is represented by the later history of the Chilworth gunpowder mills. The only canisters for Chilworth gunpowder which are known to survive have been found in museums in Australia, so it is interesting to read how conditions there favoured importation over manufacture in the paper 'Living dangerously: gunpowder and other explosives in Victoria, Australia, in the nineteenth century'.

It has been particularly useful to see what light the book throws on certain problems in the history of gunpowder technology at mills in South-East England. In some respects, the book has been overtaken by recent research. The editor's own contribution, 'Meeting standards: Bristol powder makers in the eighteenth century', stresses the innovative nature of the Somerset industry and relates this to the economic imperative of the private markets it supplied, in contrast to the requirements of the Ordnance Board which was supplied by mills in the Home Counties. In particular, the Bristol makers were supplying private markets with several grain sizes at a time when the government was content with one. Also they are regarded as advanced in their adoption in the 1720s of edge-runner mills, instead of stamps, for incorporating gunpowder. Recent research on inventories to be published by the Surrey Record Society demonstrates the importance of private markets to powder makers in the South-East, and shows that they too were making a variety of products in the mid-18th century. Also the discovery of other inventories by Keith Fairclough has pushed back the date of introduction of edge-runner incorporating mills to the period of the French wars in the late 17th and early 18th centuries. This new evidence (to be published in the *Industrial Archaeology Review*) challenges Robert Howard's view, in his paper on the evolution of powder making from an American perspective, of the adoption of edge-runner mills as an essentially late development. It also begins to illuminate an aspect of the career of Sir Polycarpus Wharton, powder maker of Chilworth.

Wharton's experiences as a supplier to the Ordnance Board, which ended with him languishing in a debtor's prison, are well known from the account of his 'hard case' which was reprinted in John Aubrey's *History of Surrey*. He claimed to have made strong gunpowder near Windsor in the 1680s, using mills 'much differing from the common sort', following investigation of methods in use in Germany at the request of Prince Rupert. Since it now seems probable that he was using edge runners, one looks to the ICOHTEC book to give a lead on the German connection. It complicates the matter further. A paper on gunpowder production in the Electorate and the Kingdom of Hanover states that the most advanced technology was being employed in the Netherlands, rather than in Germany, during the relevant period and that the war departments of Hanover and Prussia preferred the superior products of Dutch edge-runner mills to those of local stamping mills until well into the 18th century. In her introduction to the volume, Buchanan points to the present lack of knowledge about the influence of the Netherlands, which was clearly considerable, and notes that a society, 'The Barbara' (in honour of the patron saint of artillerymen [and miners] and hence gunpowder historians), has been formed there to promote research in this field.

These examples illustrate the lively state of research on gunpowder which made the Bath symposium a stimulating event for those of us who attended. The volume does it justice, down to the book jacket with its amusing illustration from the Royal Armouries' copy of the medieval *Firework Book* and photograph of the editor firing a cannon during conference festivities. She is to be congratulated on bringing together such a wide range of contributions, not all of which can be acknowledged here, and on seeing them through the press.

Mark Sturley, *The breweries and public houses of Guildford*, published by Charles W Traylen, Guildford, 1990, price £9.95, 240pp + 61pp photographs. ISBN 0 000753 39 0; *The breweries and public houses of Guildford, part 2*, published by the author, Guildford, 1995, price £10.95, 188pp, illus.

The first part of this work, a scholarly but very readable study of the breweries and public houses of the town of Guildford, took the author twenty years to write and reflects his vast knowledge of the subject and the depth of his research. He was fortunate to have been granted access to the Estates Departments of all the appropriate breweries and has clearly made full use of this resource.

The book starts with a good brief introduction to the history of both the town and the brewing industry. This is followed by a chapter on Guildford public houses from the 16th to the 20th century which includes details of relevant legislation and its impact on the industry, up to the report of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission which so radically changed the market. A detailed chapter on the breweries of Guildford includes coverage of a number of other breweries which had important estates in the town and is well illustrated with maps, site plans and photographs, including the spectacular demolition of the Friary tower which marked the end of local brewing. There is also a brief comment on the breweries of over 30 other Surrey towns to add to the picture.

It was most welcome to see coverage of the related industry of mineral water manufacture and, in particular, of the temperance movement in Guildford, much of which was new to me and which adds to the picture of the social life of the times. Just over half the book is devoted to two chapters on the great inns and public houses of the town, again full of detail and interest with many names long since lost.

Well produced, with around 100 illustrations on art paper, glossary, bibliography and index, this comprehensive book is essential reading for all those with an interest in the industry, either for the full picture or simply to dip into to discover more about your local, although you will not be able to resist reading more.

The companion to the 1990 volume covers the breweries and public houses of some 30 towns and villages in the former Guildford Rural District which are now within the modern borough. It includes more than 130 illustrations, mainly contemporary photographs of public houses. An addendum to the first volume is included covering changes which occurred in the intervening five years. While this book does not have the same immediate impact as the first volume, it holds the attention once started and reflects the same level of research. The introduction includes brief histories of the national and regional brewers now serving the area. The remainder of the book is arranged alphabetically by place and is completed by an index.

JEFF SECHIARI

Gertrude Jekyll, essays on the life of a working amateur, edited by Michael Tooley and Primrose Arnander, published by Michaelmas Books, 1995, price £20.00, 245pp, maps, plans, illus. ISBN 0 946426 06 6

Gertrude Jekyll died at her home at Munstead Wood near Godalming, aged 89, on 8 December 1932. The inscription on her stone at Busbridge Church reads simply 'Artist, Gardener and Craftswoman'.

In 1934 her nephew, Francis, who lived at The Hut and carried on running the plant nursery at Munstead Wood for nine years after Miss Jekyll's death, published *Gertrude Jekyll, a memoir*. Thirty-two years later, in 1966, Betty Massingham brought out *Miss Jekyll, portrait of a great gardener*. Jane Brown wrote *Gardens of a golden afternoon — the story of a partnership: Edwin Lutyens and Gertrude Jekyll* in 1982; and in 1991 Sally Festing published her biography *Gertrude Jekyll*.

But as David McKenna, Gertrude Jekyll's great-nephew (grandson of Sir Herbert Jekyll, Gertrude's closest brother), writes in the foreword to this new volume: 'This book is not another

biography. It is rather a carefully researched and authoritative account of the background and achievements of Gertrude Jekyll in the form of a series of essays by a number of acknowledged experts in those fields which she herself had explored'.

The book begins with the history of the Jekyll family and descriptions of Gertrude Jekyll's parents and siblings. These chapters have been contributed by two of her great-great-nieces — Primrose Arnander (second daughter of David McKenna) and Annabel Freyberg (eldest daughter of the second Lord Freyberg, whose grandfather was also Sir Herbert Jekyll).

Gertrude Jekyll's earliest interest in all forms of art and handiwork is discussed in the following chapters on her embroidery and an analysis of her workbook, acquired by the Royal Horticultural Society at auction in 1993, which contains sketches and designs created between 1866 and 1900.

Mavis Batey, President of the Garden History Society, places Miss Jekyll in context in the wider field of the Arts and Crafts Movement in the country, as well as discussing formative influences in her artistic life.

Gertrude Jekyll's later career as a nursery owner, and the particular plants she developed, is discussed by Michael Tooley, and Richard Bisgrove explains why he considers her 'a gardener ahead of her time'.

Other chapters deal with her talents as a photographer, the gardens she designed in America, and an analysis of a pair of her gardening boots which now reside in Guildford Museum.

Of most obvious interest to Surrey readers will be the detailed description of the garden she created at Munstead Wood between 1883 and 1932 and the survey by the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England carried out in 1991. The garden is discussed, with reference to Miss Jekyll's own photographs, by Martin Wood, who has an intimate knowledge of the subject acquired over many years study.

Paul Everson gives an interesting and detailed account of the reasons for the RCHME survey, its methodology, and the results gained from carrying out such an exercise in a relatively modern garden. It showed that the type of survey normally associated with archaeologically interesting earthworks could play an important role in a very different historic landscape.

The site, 15 acres in extent, bought by Gertrude Jekyll, lies across the road from what was her mother's home at Munstead House. A number of buildings within the original site, designed by Edwin Lutyens, are now listed but the site is now subdivided into five separate curtilages. No plan of the whole site ever existed (except for the 1:2500 Ordnance Survey map) though detailed planting layouts for small areas of the garden, especially those in close proximity to the house, were produced by Miss Jekyll.

The scale chosen for the survey was 1:500 and only one small area of the whole site 'The Quadrangle' was not included in the survey (though this could be done at a later date should the owner be willing).

Trees were mapped and an accurate survey produced, giving the position and species of over 1,300 trees. The remains of the old orchard (now in separate ownerships) was plotted and the fruit trees identified by Jim Albury, the Royal Horticultural Society fruit specialist. He considered them an interesting collection of Edwardian fruit trees, including apples, such as Lanes Prince Albert, Beauty of Stoke and King of the Pippins. There were also pears and quinces.

The survey also highlighted the 'pre-history' of Miss Jekyll's garden, as the southern area of the site contains a complex network of linear hollows identified as pack-horse trails, characteristic features of open moorlands and commons in all parts of England, dating from medieval and post-medieval times. The creation of a garden in this landscape did not wipe out the trackways but rather enhanced them as Gertrude Jekyll planted them with hundreds of bulbs to create 'waving rivers of bloom'.

The work carried out by the Royal Commission also included a photographic survey which intentionally reused many of the viewpoints used by Miss Jekyll more than 60 years earlier. The completed survey has been deposited with the National Monuments Record where it is hoped it will be of use to students in the future, and as an addition to published information on one of the most famous gardens in the world.

The book also contains an extensive bibliography of books and articles written by Miss Jekyll, as well as the most complete list to date of her garden design commissions and a map of their distribution in the British Isles. There is also an interesting Calendar, by date, her age and her life, from 1843, the year of her birth, to her death in 1932, side by side with events in the contemporary world. It is well illustrated, with drawings and photographs, many of which have not been published before.

Because it is a collection of essays by different authors, there is some overlap and the differing styles means that it is not perhaps a book to be read from cover to cover at one go. However, it contains a wealth of information for anyone interested in Miss Jekyll's life and works, much of which has not appeared in print before. Readers will find it valuable on many levels, whether their interest is in Miss Jekyll as an artist, gardener or craftswoman, or as the author of *Old West Surrey*. She also deposited household artefacts with the Surrey Archaeological Society, and these are now housed in Guildford Museum.

BRENDA LEWIS

W R Trotter, *The hilltop writers: a Victorian colony among the Surrey hills*, published by The Book Guild Ltd, 1996, price £15.00 hardback, ix, 294pp. ISBN 1 85776 108 1

Haslemere is a small town located on the watershed between the rivers Wey and Arun, nestling in the hills with Blackdown on one side and Hindhead on the other. After losing its status as a parliamentary borough in 1832, the town became a quiet backwater. All this changed in 1859 with the coming of the railway. Haslemere could now be reached from London in an hour and a half and it was possible to work in the capital and to escape to the wholesome air of the hills around Haslemere without losing the facilities of London. Among the earlier men to do this was Jonathan Hutchinson, a prominent surgeon and physician who was to found, in 1888, the Haslemere Educational Museum.

In the library of this museum Dr Bob Trotter found the papers and notebooks of William Austen Sillick (died 1955) who had been the *Haslemere Herald* reporter in the town for more than 50 years. Sillick had taken a great interest in the history of the locality and, in particular, the literary figures who had resided and written there. Bob Trotter used these papers as a starting point in writing a fascinating review of the authors, both great and small, who came to the area, attracted by its peace, quiet and great natural beauty.

The book starts with a series of essays on the background and chronology of the writers' 'colony', their homes, their politics, social issues and religion. The section on social issues concentrates on the 'woman question', as problems concerning relationships between the sexes were collectively known to the Victorians and Edwardians. As well as mentioning exponents of feminism and women's suffrage, the wife of one of the authors is described as having helped to found a branch of the 'League Against Women's Suffrage'!

The main section of the book consists of biographical notes on the writers, 63 in all. The more famous authors who lived or worked in the area include Arthur Conan Doyle, George Eliot, Christina Rossetti, Bertrand Russell, George Bernard Shaw, Alfred Tennyson, Sidney and Beatrice Webb and H G Wells. Robert Hunter, one of the founders of the National Trust, retired to Haslemere and Edward Wymper, the leader of the first successful expedition to climb the Matterhorn, wrote most of his books at Town House in Haslemere High Street.

At least three violent deaths are mentioned — a poisoning (albeit unintentional), a stabbing followed by a suffocation and another stabbing. The poisoning was of the eminent scientist (described as a 'natural philosopher') John Tyndall, the successor of Faraday at the Royal Institution in London, who was given the wrong medicine by his wife. The suffocation was of the wife of an astronomer, Richard Carrington, who built an observatory on and in one of the Devil's Jumps, a series of hills on the heathland near Haslemere. The other stabbing was of the wife of the postmaster at Grayshott, near Hindhead, who had working for him at one time Flora Thompson, a historian of rural life. Among minor or forgotten writers, a number of people more

famous in other fields are mentioned. These include Field Marshall Garnet Wolsley and a retired Bengal civil servant who taught himself Portuguese by studying the bible in that language, so that he could research and write books on Portuguese colonial history. As well as writers, the publisher Sir Algernon Methuen lived in the area, in a house built for him by the architect C F A Voysey and surrounded by a garden designed by Gertrude Jekyll.

In the end most of the writers left the area. They had been attracted by the beauty and solitude which, by writing about it, they helped to destroy.

Bob Trotter has written a most entertaining and interesting book, a valuable addition both to the history of the Haslemere area and of Victorian and Edwardian authors. If there is ever a second edition, and there certainly deserves to be one, two suggestions. Firstly, although there is an excellent index, the table of contents does not list the writers described; such a list would be useful. Secondly, a map showing the locations mentioned would be helpful, especially to those not too familiar with the area. Neither of these minor omissions detract from what is a very good book.

RICHARD MUIR