

Reviews.

A HISTORY OF MAIDENHEAD.—By J. W. WALKER. Publishers : HUNTER AND LONGHURST.

Maidenhead, unlike most other Berkshire towns of importance, has long been without a written history. Happily that defect has now been remedied, and we can heartily congratulate the town on having found, in so capable a burgess as Mr. J. W. Walker, its first historian.

Maidenhead's history centres largely in the bridge, and in the Parish Church, formerly the Chapel of St. Andrew and St. Mary Magdalene, and Mr. Walker has recognised this by devoting a large portion of the earlier part of his book to the history of the bridge and of the chapel respectively.

The first bridge at Maidenhead was built about 1280. On this bridge there was a hermitage, and an interesting account is given of the induction of the first hermit of Maidenhead Bridge, Richard Ludlow, in 1423. The present structure was commenced in 1772 and finished five years later. Mr. Walker brings the history of the bridge right down to the series of events which resulted in the freeing of the bridge in 1903.

The chapel was built about 1270, probably by some member of the Hosebund family, and our author emphasises the groundlessness of the tradition perpetuated in a memorial presented to George the Fourth in 1824, that it was built "by Queen Marguerette of France, the second consort of Edward I." He says:—"This wholly inaccurate statement was founded on the delusion that a certain royal grant of land to one Adam le Spicer in 1313 had some reference to the building of the chapel. That it could not possibly have done so is obvious from the facts that the grant is dated forty years after the chapel was erected, and the land is wholly in the parish of Bray, while the chapel was almost entirely in the parish of Cookham."

This chapel, dedicated to St. Andrew, seems to have been placed in the middle of the street, and it was entirely against the wishes of the Vicars of Bray and Cookham that it was built at all. So strongly did these two clergymen object to it that they moved the diocesan authority to act in defence of their view of the matter, for the Bishop of Salisbury placed an interdict upon it. This interdict was continued by the succeeding Bishop, and was not, indeed, removed for half a century, the Primate, Walter Reynold, removing it in 1324. In that year a conference on the matter between the parties chiefly concerned therein was held in Sonning Parish Church, and as a result:

"The final order was made on 15th July, 1325, when the Vicar of Cookham was given the right to present annually, with the consent of the Vicar of Bray, one priest to officiate in the Chantry of Maidenhead Chapel."

In 1352 an additional foundation of a "Chantry of one Priest" was founded under the will of one John Hosebund, citizen and corn-dealer of London, the nomination to this chantry being placed in the hands of Hurley Priory. This new chantry was dedicated to St. Mary Magdalene, and it is thus that the present parish church of St. Andrew and St. Mary Magdalene derives the second part of its dedication. A list of Chaplains and Vicars is given in a separate chapter, and biographical notes are given of several of the most noteworthy of

these men, as also of the Rev. G. C. Gorham, who was once a curate at St. Mary's.

Mr. Walker traces very clearly the development of the modern corporation from the ancient Bridge Guild. This Guild of St. Andrew and St. Mary Magdalene was formed in 1451, and, like other guilds in this country, was dissolved in 1547. Its dissolution created a blank in Maidenhead life which was so seriously felt that an application was made by the people of Maidenhead to Queen Elizabeth, praying for the re-establishment of a guild or corporation. As a result of this petition Maidenhead's first Charter of Incorporation was granted by 'good Queen Bess' on the 7th of March in the 24th year of her reign.

Mr. Walker's careful research into the history of the borough has completely exploded the fallacious idea, which has obtained considerable currency through various gazetteers, guide books, and directories that Edward III granted a charter of incorporation to Maidenhead. Similarly Mr. Walker discards altogether the picturesque tradition that the Vicars of Hurley used to receive extra pay for braving the dangers of Maidenhead Thicket. Mr. Walker has come to the conclusion that Mr. Darby proved this to be incorrect in an article which he wrote for this Journal a few years back.

A very interesting account is given of some of the more notable of the High Stewards of Maidenhead.

There are chapters on the Regalia, on the Courts and Recorders, on the Ecclesiastical History of Maidenhead, on Maidenhead in National History. In the last-mentioned chapter we read of the gallant defence of Maidenhead Bridge against Henry the Fourth, by the Earl of Kent in 1400, of the pathetic last meeting of King Charles the First and his children at the Greyhound Inn, and of the farcical discomfiture of James the Second's Irish brigade in 1688. Schools and charities, too, are lucidly and carefully dealt with.

There is an entertaining chapter entitled "Round About," dealing with places of interest in the immediate vicinity of Maidenhead. The reference on page 201 to the Cherry of Shottesbrook, who had "Hic Jacet Peccatorum Maximus" inscribed on his tombstone should be to Francis and not to William Cherry.

The closing chapter gives a delightful account of the changes which a person who had known Maidenhead in the time of George the Fourth would note in the town to-day.

All readers will owe the author a special debt of gratitude for the conscientious way in which he has given his authorities for every important statement of fact. O si sic omnes!

The book is well produced and clearly printed, and the illustrations are excellent.

In an appendix Mr. Walker gives no fewer than thirty-three different forms of spelling the name Maidenhead, with references to the documents in which they are thus found and to the dates of the documents.

Mr. Walker's "History of Maidenhead" is a distinctly valuable addition to the bibliography of Berkshire.

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