

Reviews

THE VICTORIA COUNTY HISTORY OF BERKSHIRE. Edited by W. Page, Esq., F.S.A., and the Rev. P. H. Ditchfield, M.A., F.S.A.; assisted by John Hautenville Cope (The Saint Catharine Press; 1924.)

One of the greatest historical enterprises of modern times is the Victoria County History scheme, which started many years ago from a noble impulse, with high ideals and with great courage to make an historical survey of our country. After some vicissitudes and difficulties, naturally attendant upon so great a scheme, causing it to be set aside for a time, one is rejoiced to welcome a continuation of the work and to find that certain counties which, when a hiatus occurred chiefly owing to the War, were in process of completion, are now largely, owing to the splendid zeal of the editor-in-chief, Mr. W. Page, about to be completed. The History of Berkshire was planned to be in four volumes, and after a considerable interval the third volume has now been issued under the editorship of Mr. William Page, F.S.A., the Rev. P. H. Ditchfield, M.A., F.S.A., and now with this third volume a much-honoured and well-known name also appears on the title-page—that of Mr. John Hautenville Cope, a zealous and able researcher whose good work is recognised and warmly welcomed. The importance of the continuation of this great history of Berkshire lies in the fact that while volumes one and two dealt in a thorough way with the earlier history of the county, there was little in either of these two volumes of a parochial nature. The various and important sections of volumes one and two, according to the uniform scheme of the work, were general treatises chiefly upon certain aspects of antiquity without special reference to particular parishes.

But now a great advance has to be recorded. Mr. Page, who we understand has taken over the whole of the great collections got together with such knowledge and at great cost by the original promoters of the Victoria County History scheme, has begun to complete those counties which have up to now been left half finished. He has luckily turned first of

all to Berkshire, and volume three of this county has now, after a long interval, appeared, and deals with all the parishes of ten different hundreds, some situated on the eastern side of the county and others on the west. With the publication of the fourth volume, which we understand is well on its way (and eventually an index), we shall possess for the first time an adequate history of Berkshire embodying a vast amount of entirely original research into the history of all the manors and into family history conjointly, besides crystalizing for our county, as has never before been done, much information regarding place names, relics, old buildings, heraldry, the history of advowsons and of charities. It has sometimes been urged against the Victoria County History volumes that they are lacking bibliographical notes and references to printed sources. It will be agreed by many that it would have been a good plan in the case of each county dealt with to have had critical notes upon printed sources, but this fine work 'goes one better,' because it gives references to thousands of documentary sources which have never before been tapped. Since Lysons pursued his admirable researches into the history of Berkshire, corresponding for the purpose with a great many antiquaries and historians, the Public Record Office has had its stores of documents set in order and systematised, so that it is now possible to elucidate the history of any place in the kingdom from original and authoritative sources. Then, too, since Lysons' day topographical and genealogical research have taken on new methods, and the ideal which satisfied our forefathers of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries no longer satisfies. In many cases there have been produced in recent years separate monographs dealing with individual parishes, such as Kerry's 'Hundred of Bray' and Mr. Walter Money's 'History of Newbury,' to name but two excellent specimens of Berkshire Parochial History, but by reason of the fact that there are still a very large number of parishes in Berkshire, which up to now have found no historians ready and willing to produce books upon them, this new volume is specially welcome because it takes in all places, and in the case of each one it gives at any rate a full historical outline, documented in such a way that anyone can easily enlarge upon it and fill in details. It may be as well to take some of the various 'Hundreds' dealt with in this en-

cyclopaedic topographical work to see how far in each case parishes have been dealt with of which previously it would have been difficult to find any systematic historical account, and among these places it will be noticed that there are a number which have the strongest historical claims to full treatment.

In the Hundreds of Ripplesmere the parishes of Clewer, Easthampstead and Winkfield are dealt with by Mr. Hautenville Cope himself, and are all most admirably done, and these are three parishes about which, apart from stray papers printed in Archaeological Societies' Journals, it would be difficult to find any good consecutive history. The history of Winkfield seems to be particularly well done, including as it does some curious and fugitive lore of strong human interest.

In the pages devoted to the Hundreds of Cookham we may specially welcome the account of the ancient parish of Binfield, and in the parishes dealt with in the Hundred of Beynhurst the history of two are given which have strong claims historically. These are Shottesbrooke and White Waltham. Not quite enough has been made of the very numerous historical allusions to families as well as old houses in this division, which are named in Thomas Hearne's priceless 'Diary.' Nor does it appear that the late Nathaniel Hone's manuscript history of this Hundred has been referred to. It is in the Public Library at Reading. That curiously fascinating bit of Berkshire, which lies in part in the Hundred of Wargrave and part in the Hundred of Beynhurst, and comprises the parishes of White Waltham, Shottesbrooke and Waltham St. Lawrence, will, we hope, some day find an historian who will deal with it as fully as it certainly deserves. In the Hundred of Sonning the accounts given of Arborfield and Ruscombe are useful, though there must be a good deal more material hidden away relating to these two shy corners of the county.

Mr. Ditchfield has himself, we rejoice to see, dealt with the Charlton Hundred and he gives some valuable and well-arranged data regarding the Bullock family so long associated with the neighbourhood, and also of the ancient family of Kingsmill, now of Sydmonton Court, near Newbury. The parson economist, David Davies of Barkham, a very notable man in his day, comes in for adequate notice. In the Reading Hundred it is good to have full details of Bucklebury, one of the most historical

and picturesque villages in the county. Bucklebury and Blewbury are certainly two very notable parishes well deserving of separate treatment, and when they find their historians the details given in this volume of the Victoria County History will be of the greatest value. Among other specially interesting parishes of which the manorial history is given fully are Aldermaston, Englefield, Woolhampton, Aston Tirrold, Didcot, the Hagbournes and Moulsoford, places all hoary with antiquity. It is good indeed to see that both North and South Moreton were allotted to that fine veteran antiquary, Rev. J. E. Field, late of Benson. His knowledge was wide and was accurate and his industry in collecting data beyond all praise. It was most suitable that the parishes of the Moretons should be treated by Mr. Field as he had a life-long interest in them, his own family coming from there.

Apart from maps and plans, which are numerous, there are two hundred illustrations, mostly from Mr. C. E. Keyser's unrivalled collection of photographs. Could our ancestors of the eighteenth century see such a work of careful erudition and research as is this they would be startled and rush to support it. Do not let us in these more enlightened days lag behind in assisting such an admirable monument raised to a noble past.

A. L. HUMPHREYS, F.S.A.

THE ENGLISH VILLAGE. *The Origin and Decay of its Communities. An Anthropological Interpretation* by Harold Peake, F.S.A. (Benn Bros, Ltd., 8 Bouverie Street, E.C.4.)

We must apologise for a somewhat belated review of Mr. Peake's book, which has only lately reached us, and which has been followed by a more recent work on 'The Bronze Age and the Celtic World.' The material of this book now under review (it bears a name which is unfortunately the same as one by another author, but there is no copyright in titles, though it is usually deemed a matter of courtesy to avoid using a title that has already been adopted by someone else), formed the substance of a course of lectures delivered to the working men of Newbury.

The result of converting lectures into a book sometimes leads to unfortunate and what the Apostle calls 'vain repeti-

tions,' and it is tiresome to read on several pages the same facts stated in almost identical words. Thus on pp. 23, 102 and 131, and possibly elsewhere, we are informed that Maitland was of opinion that in early days the Saxon village was free and not subject to a lord, and also the explanation is given in each case that this statement was only true of a few Danish villages in East Anglia. The writer is an anthropologist and an ex-President of the Anthropological section of the British Association; he gives a learned chapter on the early history of Europe, and the meaning of 'Race.' After some elementary remarks on flint implements and palaeontology, he tells us about various Ice-ages, and therein runs counter to nearly all English geologists of repute, who do not accept the theory of multi-glacial periods, although many foreign antiquaries do so.

However, as an anthropologist Mr. Peake's theories are valuable and instructive, though only remotely connected with the subject of his book. He closely follows Seebohm in his description of the early English village community, a story which has been told fairly often, especially in the volume already referred to and in other books of the same writer. He usually plays for safety, giving the opposing views of various authorities and then trying to discover a safe *via media*, as, for example, in his remarks on the domesticity of animals.

The book will especially interest Berkshire people, as Mr. Peake's illustrations and examples are mostly taken from Wessex and the district around Newbury. But it has to be read with caution. On page 167 the author speaks of 'serfs' in the fourteenth century, but that is not correct. There are few serfs in Domesday. It is true tenants had to do boon work for their lord on certain days in the week and during harvest instead of paying rent for their holdings, but they certainly were not slaves. Later on this boon work was done away with and rent paid. Mr. Peake's reading of history is certainly curious, as when he says the Civil War was a trial of strength between the peasant and the squire, whereas there were many squires, who fought on the Commonwealth side.

We need not follow Mr. Peake through all his muddled descriptions of village life in modern times, wherein he seems to follow Mr. Fordham, the apostle of the Independent Labour Party, but not a word does he say of the unjust Land Laws

which have pressed so heavily on the owners of land and half ruined them, or of the toil of the parsons who have borne the heat and burden of the day in ploughing their lonely furrroughs and have always been the friends and supporters of the peasant. As a social reformer, the author can scarcely be deemed a success, nor as an interpreter of history, but as an anthropologist he has studied much and read widely, and it is well for a shoemaker to stick to his last.

DOWNLAND ECHOES. By the Rev. Victor L. Whitechurch.
(T. Fisher Unwin; 5/-.)

Several of the Rev. V. L. Whitechurch's thoughtful and quietly humorous books deal with the North Berkshire Downs, where for some years he was vicar of a country parish, but in none of these has his gift for skilful characterisation been better exemplified than in his new book, 'Downland Echoes.' Mr. Whitechurch, in the course of his residence on the Berkshire Downs, got to understand the reticent but strong-charactered inhabitants, who by the townsman are apt to be regarded as slow in reception, if not as almost stupid. His long acquaintance with them enables him to interpret the thoughts which stir their minds and the motives which explain their sometimes incongruous actions. And such is the insight and the sympathy which Mr. Whitechurch brings to his task that no one can lay down this book without a warm feeling for the residents of Downland, and a greater appreciation of their fine, sturdy characters and the unquenchable spirit with which they face the trials of life. Perhaps none but a parson, and only a parson who had won their confidence, could have so successfully penetrated the reserve which characterises them as a community, and revealed their distinctive virtues. And so we read with delight these vivid sketches of the poacher and policeman; the young 'bloods' and the village vocalists; of the reflections of the grave-digger and his considerable thirst (a gallon, he said, did not seem to go far in very hot weather); of the dour farmer who got level with the vicar; of the village dance and of the hopes and fears of Michaelmas hiring; of the visit of the bishop and the celebration of the coronation; of the bravery displayed during the dark days of the war, and the parson's

comments on the war's aftermath. It is all so human, with so little of the critic and so much of the man that the reader finds the series of sketches extremely entertaining and illuminating. And the dedication is characteristic of the human and brotherly spirit of the author: 'To all who love the open Downland, the wide expanses, the sweet hill breezes, the glow of fair sunsets and drifting clouds; to all who love the sturdy folk of the Downland—in clustering villages remote from the outer world, in lonely upland dwellings, I dedicate this book.'

It is a fine spirit.

MONUMENTAL BRASSES OF BERKSHIRE (14th to 17th century).

Illustrated and described by H. T. Morley, F.S.P., F.R.S.A.

One guinea. 1924. (The Electric Press, 40 King's Road, Reading.)

'I am the first Antiquary of my race. People don't know how entertaining a study it is. 'Who begot whom?' is a most amusing kind of hunting. . . One grows so pious in the memory of a thousand persons one has never heard of before.'

Thus writes Horace Walpole a century and a half ago to his friend the Rev. W. Cole. We can but faintly imagine the unmingled delight and the unbounded astonishment with which 'the Prince and Patriarch of Dilettanti,' as Monkton Milnes calls him, would have hung over the handsome volume before us. 'Of the making of many books there is no end,' said the Preacher, but as far as antiquaries are concerned the appearance of this important work will be hailed with almost unqualified approval. Mr. Morley has consecrated to this elaborate collection many more years than the nine demanded in the Horatian adage. Stimulated at first, some thirty years ago, merely by the beauty of the lettering on some of our ancient brasses, his interest widened and extended in turn from the lettering to the effigies, to the individuals commemorated, to the costumes of the times, to the heraldry, in fact to all the incidental problems suggested by such records of a distant past. But 'people don't know how entertaining a study it is,' and, as Mr. Ditchfield tells us in his 'Foreward,' sheer delight of discovery, of making perfect impressions, and of securing these admirable reproductions mitigated the toil such efforts involve—'the labour we

delight in physics pain.' In this volume, so appropriately dedicated to the President and Members of the Berkshire Archaeological Society, Mr. Morley, having ransacked every record within his reach, has compiled with dates a lamentable list of the lost brasses of our county, and has thereby earned a transference to himself of the epigram made on another antiquary :

Says Father Time to Thomas Hearne,
Whatever I forget, you learn.

The complexity of detail with which the compiler has been confronted in his study of brasses from the fourteenth to the seventeenth centuries is so great that it is almost impossible that here and there we should not find slips, incursions on debateable ground, errors of interpretation and the like. It would indeed be remarkable if such were not the case. With characteristic modesty he appeals to all who care for the subject he has gone so far to make his own, and, we make no doubt in particular to the subscribers and the members of our Society, to send him any further information on Berkshire brasses, and to inform him of any 'errors, omissions, and imperfections' they may detect as they study this collection. And he rather prettily disarms any hostile criticism by asking his readers 'to read first some of the epitaphs which are herein recorded (where all the faults of those commemorated are forgotten) and then deal with my faults as kindly.' Mr. Morley may sleep soundly; no very substantial addition will be made to his own first list of errata. At any rate, none can rob him of the credit of being the first to treat the subject of the brasses of Berkshire in a manner so eminently worthy of the importance of the subject and of its interest to every antiquarian. Prophecy has been called the most gratuitous of human follies, but we will venture to say that this volume will find a place on the shelves of all who are interested in antiquities as well as on the shelves of every public library.

We hope that all Berkshire people who take an interest in the antiquities of their county will place the book in their libraries and we are glad to be able to say that H.M. King George V has accepted a copy so that this account of our Berkshire brasses will, as is but fitting, find a home in the royal library at Windsor.

To attract the attention of the public in general as well as that of the cultivated few, a few copies ought to make the round

of the hundred and thirty or so of the village libraries started recently under the auspices of our own County Council. This would not only increase the interest of villagers in the treasures at their own doors, but might bring to light other treasures of the existence of which we at the moment are unaware.

W. J. GREENSTREET.

THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF HEREFORD: ITS HISTORY AND CONSTITUTION. By A. T. Bannister, M.A., Precentor and Canon Residentiary of Hereford. (S.P.C.K. 7s. 6d. net. 1924.)

OXFORD CATHEDRAL. By S. A. Warner, M.A. (Oxon). (S.P.C.K. 7s. 6d. net. 1924.)

The ancient Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge is doing excellent work and admirable service to the Church and Realm of England in publishing scholarly and fairly exhaustive historical and architectural works on the glorious cathedrals that stud our land. We have guide-books in plenty, short architectural descriptions with notes on the history of diocese, which have their uses for the casual visitors who need direction, but these books have a far fuller and wider intention, and are based on the exploration of ancient documents and the fuller knowledge which twentieth century scholarship has amassed. The Diocese of Hereford is fortunate in having its Cantilupe Society, which has published the *Hereford Episcopal Register*, a valuable mine for the historian, and also the important collection of 'Charters and Records of Hereford Cathedral,' edited by the late Canon Caper, to whose memory this volume is dedicated by the author, who has himself been associated with that useful Cantilupe Society, so named after Bishop Cantilupe, who after a stormy episcopate was canonized, chiefly through the exertions of his successor and former chaplain, Bishop Swinfield. The 'Historic Dawn' of the See of Hereford gives only a faint light, owing to the sack of the city and the burning of the Cathedral in 1055, when the Welsh and Danes triumphed over the English and Normans led by the incapable Earl Ralph. Only one document which dates before the Conquest is in existence among the archives of the Cathedral. But though the dawn is hazy, certain figures are discerned moving in the faint light. There is the local Saint Dyfrig (in its

Latinized form Dubricius), who is described as 'a genuine sixth-century ecclesiastic,' grandson of the King of Archenfield, who had his famous school at Hentfield on the Wye. Authorities conjecture that Hereford may have been a British see before it was a Saxon, and probably one of its British bishops came to the conference with Augustine in 601. We hear of Saxulf and Putta, who is credited with having founded the See of Hereford, and William of Malmesbury gives a list of names and nothing more, save that of Cuthbert, who in 737 erat Mertiorum apud Herefordian episcopus.

The light breaks upon the scene in the opening year of the eleventh century. The blind Bishop Æthelstan had built, or rebuilt, the Cathedral and enriched it with ornaments and relics. In the time of the Confessor the land was flooded with needy Norman adventurers, who built castles, and were hated by the English, and over the Cathedral rose the Norman donjon, an ominous forboding of the days which were soon to come. Soon came the sack of Hereford, to which already allusion has been made. It is impossible in this review to follow the varied fortunes of the see. It was not a peaceful chapter. This was composed of secular canons, and the Cathedral was never monastic, and there were ever continuous disputes between the bishop, the citizens, and amongst themselves. Being near the Welsh border there was not much chance of secular peace. There was a time when two deans contended for office. Aliens, Lorrainers, Savoyards, Burgundians were appointed to the see, and were often used by the King in his services abroad, so that the bishops were notorious absentees, much to the detriment of their flocks. Canon Bannister has much to tell us about the 'consuetudines' of Hereford, and of the changes wrought in the Reformation, when a very reforming prelate was set over a band of strong adherents to the 'old faith,' with natural results and dissensions. Although the story of the erection and maintenance of the fabric is not specially dwelt on, we can trace its history from the author's erudite pages, and a brief account is given of the mutilation of the building and the sad havoc wrought by Wyatt. Happily his west front has been removed through the exertions of the late Dean Leigh, who did much for the fabric of the Cathedral he loved. Nearly half the book is occupied by the Appendix, which contains a very large amount

of information on many topics. We congratulate Canon Bannister on his achievements. His book is a valuable addition to 'Studies in Church History,' of which series this forms a part.

The volume on Oxford Cathedral is of a different type. It is more of the guide-book order than an elaborate treatise on the history of the diocese; but the description of the fabric is so carefully done and all authorities so diligently studied that, however well the reader may know Christ Church Cathedral, he will find its story as told in these pages helpful and interesting. Moreover, its author, Mr. Warner, has a pleasant style, and has had the experience of writing on Canterbury Cathedral, and this appeals to the general reader more than a severer study would be likely to do. As Mr. Warner says, 'the book aims at being a more or less full account in a general way of what there is to be seen and known about this Cathedral,' not a lofty ambition, but eminently useful. It also appeared appropriately on the eve of the Church Congress, which was held at Oxford in October, and many visitors found its pages all they needed as a faithful guide to study history and architecture. The author tells again the well-known story of St. Frideswide, and also the battle of experts about the apsidal terminations of the aisles at the east end, in which controversy Mr. Harrison took a leading part. Mr. Warner examines minutely every part of the Cathedral, both outside and inside, and gives details of glass, plate, organ, bells, etc., and his volume is a very useful and comprehensive guide.

MONUMENTAL WOODEN EFFIGIES IN ENGLAND AND WALES. New, Revised and Enlarged Edition. Sixty-seven Illustrations from Original Photographs. By A. C. Fryer, Ph.D., F.S.A. (Elliot Stock, 7 Paternoster Row, E.C. 1924. 10/6 net.)

To those interested in archaeology and old churches the book just published by Alfred C. Fryer on 'Wooden Monumental Effigies in England and Wales' can be heartily recommended. It is not often that the only complaint about a book is that it is not long enough, but in this volume we finish the last page with regret. The illustrations are excellent.

Fifteen years ago appeared the first edition of this valuable work, and the present volume is a second and enlarged volume bringing up to date all discoveries of wooden figures. Mr.

Fryer's idea is that these figures were originally the effigies placed on the bier and carried in procession to the church; but many of them are works of art and could not have been executed at a moment's notice, nor is it likely that young warriors would prepare funeral figures during their lifetime. More likely is it that a rough wooden figure would be used for the funeral ceremony and after that the elaborate figure would be carved to replace it permanently.

The actual date of these figures is obscure. With many there is a similarity which suggests a master hand; obviously they were not the work of a 'prentice hand. Mr. Fryer does not tell us if they are all carved from the same sort of wood; this would be a valuable clue. Since his original volume issued in 1908, only two more figures have been discovered, bringing up the total to 97, while it is known that 24 others have disappeared. The inference is that all date within a very short period of each other, and the fourteenth century is about the time to locate them.

The custom of carrying a body to burial on an open bier was discontinued before the end of the sixteenth century, if not earlier, then when it was found possible to model waxen images for the purpose. It does not seem likely that these beautiful wooden figures were merely models for stone or alabaster duplicates. With regard to alabaster figures much is now known, and that they were of English manufacture, but these wooden ones were probably carved in London and came from some special workshop. But they are of too early a date for any bills or notes of payment to exist now, and the localities are too various to suggest any local place of manufacture.

We confidently recommend all interested in archaeology to purchase Mr. Fryer's charming book and study it carefully. Berkshire, possessing six of these figures, is luckier than other counties. The price is 10/6, which is extraordinarily low, and the whole of the printing and workmanship is a credit to Messrs. Elliot Stock, the publishers.