

Reviews.

A HISTORY OF MAIDENHEAD. Second and Enlarged Edition.

By J. WESLEY WALKER. (The St. Catherine Press, Stamford Street, S.E. 7/6 net.)

Twenty-two years ago Mr. Walker published his *History of Maidenhead*, which was reviewed in this *Journal* at the time. The first edition being exhausted, Mr. Walker has now produced a second, and has enlarged it to include a certain amount of new material which he has gleaned in the interval. The careful documentation of every statement of fact which was so conspicuous and valuable a feature of the first edition is equally apparent in the new volume.

In a new paragraph a common misapprehension as to the status of St. Mary's Church is put right by Mr. Walker, who states that "It is incorrect to speak of St. Mary's as the Parish Church of Maidenhead; it shares that honour with All Saints' and St. Luke's, but its long connection with the Corporation, possibly from 1270, certainly from 1451, gives substance to its claim to be the 'Borough Church' of Maidenhead."

Some very interesting fresh facts have been obtained as to the rebuilding of this Church in 1724, the information being obtained from an old account book, which has come to light since the publication of the author's first edition in 1909.

In the new edition the author cites an important suggestion by the late Sir George Young, Bart., to the effect that it was practically impossible for the invading Danes to drag their long ships over the shallows and marshes of Cookham, and that therefore in all probability they wandered overland from Maidenhead to Reading. Mr. Walker adds that :

"This conjecture is strengthened by the fact that the battles were fought over the fords of the Kennet, and not over the Thames."

The History is brought thoroughly to date in every particular; the valuable list of Mayors is, for example, carried on to the current year, and the long Roll of Honour of Maidenhead men

who fell in the Great War is added as an appendix. No important change which has taken place in Maidenhead during the last twenty years, and no salient fact of the town's history that has been discovered during that time has been overlooked by the vigilant and painstaking author. The work includes several very interesting and well-executed illustrations, and the format of the book is pleasing.

Nobody interested in the history of the towns and villages of Berkshire can afford to be without this edition, even if he is already fortunate in possessing the earlier one.

H.E.B.

THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF BERKSHIRE. By HAROLD PEAKE, M.A., F.S.A. (Methuen. 10/6 *net*.)

This volume is one of a series entitled the County Archaeologies, produced under the general editorship of Mr. T. D. Kendrick, M.A., Assistant Keeper of British and Mediaeval Antiquities at the British Museum. The series has been designed to present in handy form a concise and adequately illustrated description, in chronological order, of the antiquities of a single county, and covers the whole range of the archaeological material from the earliest times to the Norman Conquest.

The Berkshire volume has been entrusted to Mr. Harold Peake, M.A., F.S.A., who has been an enthusiastic student of the subject for many years. In conformity with the plan laid down for the series the book leads off with a summarised account of the geography and geology of the county and this is followed by chapters on the Stone Ages, the Bronze and Iron Ages, the Roman arrival and occupation, the coming of the Saxons and the Danes and a final chapter which brings the story down to the Norman invasion. There follows an archaeological gazetteer which the author is of opinion will probably prove the most attractive part to the specialist. In many ways this is correct, for it is the first attempt to publish in a concise and readily

traceable form "every monument, every antiquity, every event and every document" within the prescribed period relating to the royal county.

The chapter upon Geology is succinct and in part speculative ; particularly that section dealing with the gravel deposits. We should not, in the present amount of knowledge at our disposal, wish to ally ourselves with the theories Mr. Peake advances, particularly regarding the association of various "spreads," and it is questionable also whether the division of these gravels into "plateau" and "valley" is helpful or necessary.

Chapters II and III deal with the Stone Ages : Palaeolithic, Mesolithic and Neolithic and, so far as the Palaeolithic and Mesolithic are concerned, are a concise and reasonable exposition of those remote epochs.

The sites where the artefacts of primitive man have been located in Berkshire are probably now more numerous than when they were recorded and mapped in the first volume of the Victoria County History. But the extreme difficulty in keeping abreast of the labours of solitary and retiring archaeologists is appreciated to the full. The present writer has some half dozen implements of the so-called Acheulian type found within the last five years in the liberty of Earley and one of which has been illustrated and described in a printed publication relating to the County. It is possible, however, that the volume before us had gone to press before the illustration appeared. Some of the most remarkable examples of the work of palaeolithic man have been discovered in the eastern part of the County and an illustration or two of these might with advantage have been included in the book.

There will be many students in the archaeological field who will receive with reserve the statement at the foot of page 34 regarding the duration of the Neolithic age, and the expression "to-day we have more information", and the context that follows, should have been supported by authority. The present writer, who perhaps, in dealing with these distant periods, errs on the side of abundant caution, recalls the mighty pylon of deductions

set out in the late Dr. W. Allen Sturge's presidential address on prehistoric chronology read at Norwich in December, 1912, before the Prehistoric Society of East Anglia ; wherein the President deals with the patination and glacial striation of post-palaeolithic implements. In the face of the vast age assigned by Dr. Sturge to the artefacts of Neolithic man the latest observations of Mr. Peake are surprising, and the studious amateur may well find it difficult to reconcile such widely divergent hypotheses and be forgiven for taking refuge at present in the older and safer theories of prehistoric chronology. That the Neolithic period is not a development of its forerunners, but was a culture introduced from the Continent "not many centuries before 2000 B.C." is a statement that is far from universally held.

The author does not appear to have any new evidence to bring to the study of the Bronze Age in Berkshire and the chapter is mainly confined to the discovery of examples of the handiwork of the invading race.

The author has dealt ably with the Iron Age, basing his cautious deductions largely upon the La Tène chronology ; and the settlements of the Romans in Berkshire have been reviewed in detail. The County has been thoroughly combed for evidence of their occupation. The Saxon settlements have also been carefully surveyed. It was inevitable that the northern and western parts of the County should be treated in greater detail than the eastern section which cannot boast either the amount or quality of archaeological remains. But it is also true that the thickly wooded section of the County is gradually unfolding a tale of interest comparable with the wide and open spaces of the north and west. The province of the powerful tribe of the *Sunni*, which exercised so far-reaching an influence in eastern Berkshire in Saxon times, together with the pre-Norman ecclesiastical administration of this part of the County, has not, we notice, been touched upon by the author ; and nowhere does *Sonning* itself, the centre of this tribe's influence and a place probably of considerably greater importance than Reading in pre-Conquest days, appear in the narrative, although "finds" are recorded in the *Gazetteer*.

In dealing with the Christian-Pagan cemetery discovered in Kings Road, Reading, opposite the "Jack of Both Sides" inn (p. 127), we note that the author does not make any mention of the discovery of the foundations of a building of some kind which stood on this site and was in all probability associated with the community who had established themselves at this point.

With regard to the list of museums and libraries exhibiting Berkshire antiquities it should be noted that Reading University has possessed for many years a collection of palaeoliths from the drift gravels in the neighbourhood of Reading; and it also may be mentioned that the list of private collections recorded on page 254 is not necessarily complete.

Coming to the Gazetteer we notice several corrections of minor importance which may be incorporated in future editions. There seems no legitimate reason why the record of the important discovery of a Saxon cemetery in the liberty of Earley in the parish of Sonning should be included in the Gazetteer under the heading of "Reading"; especially as there are, on pp. 193-4, several references to "finds" in Earley as such; and we strongly suspect that the "Blagrove Farm" referred to under "Reading" is the farm of that name at Mapledurham in Oxfordshire. "Swanston" Road, on p. 221, should be "Swainstone" Road and "Chomeley" Road should be "Cholmeley" Road. The "Rew" Brick Co.'s works at Tilehurst should read "Kew" and the marble urn with Roman inscription referred to on p. 194 would possibly be more correctly described as a waif from a "grand tour" to Rome than an antiquity of the royal County. Indeed, there is some ground for the belief that it came from Whiteknights, the Duke of Marlborough's estate at Earley, when the effects of that peer came under the hammer in or about 1818. Again, the alleged battle axe which Mr. Peake assumes a Dane lost in pursuing the flying English from Reading to Whistley, bears a remarkable likeness to a forester's axe of very much later date. On p. 184 (Burghfield) the finding of a bronze sword in two parts is recorded. The year of its discovery should presumably be 1892, not 892.

Finally we would remind Mr. Peake that by the Reading (Extension) Order, 1911, Caversham, on the northern bank of the River Thames, was transferred from the Administrative County of Oxfordshire to the Administrative County of Berkshire ; that Caversham is one of the classic sites for evidences of pre-historic man ; but that nowhere, by a curious omission, does any mention of it appear in the book before us, although it was published twenty years after the Extension Order came into force. It is possible, of course, that mention of Caversham has been reserved for the projected volume on Oxfordshire. We hope that this may be so.

We have not hesitated to criticise Mr. Peake's volume where we considered it to be justified ; but at the same time we must allow that he has performed a difficult task with considerable ability and commendable thoroughness ; and we have little doubt that his work will find its way to the shelves of all who have an interest in the historic and pre-historic past of the royal County.

ERNEST W. DORMER.