

Reviews.

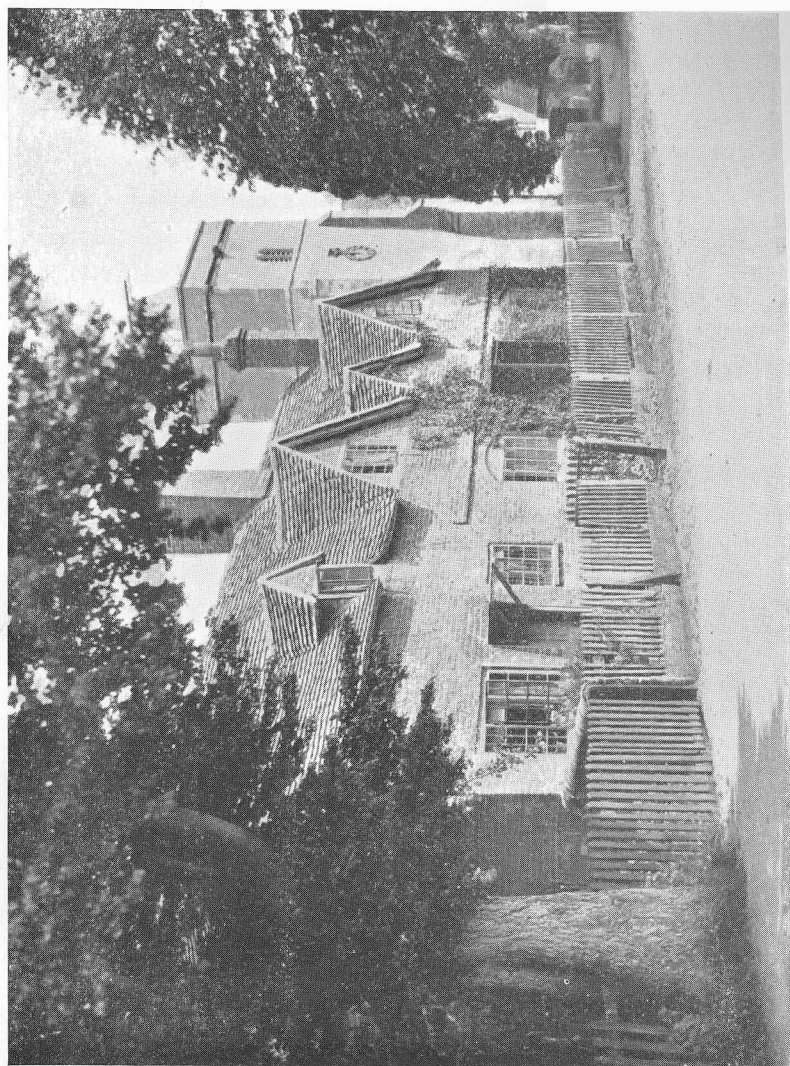
BUCKLEBURY : A BERKSHIRE PARISH. A. L. HUMPHREYS, F.S.A.

£3 3s. net.

Mr. A. L. Humphreys, to whom we are indebted for many excellent volumes on topography and archæology, including the well-known work on East Hendred, has recently published what will probably prove to be his *chef d'œuvre*. The book has long been awaited and its preparation has been at various times hindered by the author's illness and other causes. Now that it has arrived it is possible to assess the vast labour and deep research that went to the making of it and the care with which it has been compiled.

As the author remarks in his introduction, the history of Bucklebury falls into three main divisions. In the first it was an ancient demesne of the Crown before the Norman invasion, and remained as such until Henry I. gave it to the Abbot and Convent of Reading in the twelfth century. The influence of the Abbey continued here, as elsewhere, until the Reformation, and in 1540 the great Winchcombe family came on the scene. But of the remote beginnings of the first of these three main divisions the author is abundantly cautious. In Domesday Book the name of Bucklebury appears as "Borgedeberie," and Mr. Humphreys has tabulated no less than forty-three variants of this form with the actual authority for each. It is now generally accepted that women were land-owners from very early times, and gave their names to certain places. Authorities state that a lady named Burghild, a daughter of Cenwulf, King of Mercia (796-819), gave her name to Bucklebury and that it was anciently Burghildebury, as indeed it appears in the Assize Rolls of Berkshire in 1240. But the author can find no trace of this lady in any of the charters or records extant and wisely leaves the etymological puzzle to other hands.

But if the origin of the name of the village is obscure little else in this book comes within that category. From very early times there are records fully documented that give an interesting insight into the communal organisation of the parish.



Bucklebury Church with the glebe cottages.

(Use of block by permission of Author of "Bucklebury : a Berkshire Parish.")

By good fortune the Manor Court Rolls, which, as the author appropriately remarks, are the sinews and marrow of the history of the place, have been preserved and are wisely printed in full. They cover a long period of time—from 1564 to the present day, with one or two fragments of an earlier roll (1357-1408), and this source of information is of the greatest possible value in any attempt to reconstruct a picture of bygone village life. The extreme importance of these records lies in the fact that all tenants, whether bond or free, owed "suit of court," that is, they were bound to attend a certain number of courts in the year, varying according to their tenure, to give evidence, serve on inquisitions, and pronounce judgment in the multitudinous major and minor offences which constantly arose in even the best-regulated manors. Penalties for infraction of the customs of the manor were generally severe, and even minor offences were seldom condoned. Husbandmen were ordered by the court to scour out ditches on their holdings, to cut away bush growth that overhung and "annoyed" the lane to the Common, to hang and repair gates, to amend highways, to repair and renew stiles in footpaths, to remove ordure from the roadway before their doors, to thatch messuages with straw before St. Thomas's day under pain of a grievous fine. By similar authority the lord of the manor is assured of his heriots in cash or kind, of vagrant swarms of bees, of oaks felled without the court's knowledge or consent, and the fines and issues to his use on renewed copyholds. Mr. Humphreys has made very full use of these records and has elucidated and amplified obscure allusions. As a result we get an intimate picture of the internal administration of the village from the sixteenth century until within quite recent times.

The third main division of the history of the parish concerns the Winchcombes. Their coming to Bucklebury is one of the most important incidents in its long history. It was the son of the famous clothier of Newbury to whom the manor was granted, with other wide acres, by Henry VIII.; but John Winchcombe the second did not live long enough to reside on his newly-acquired estate. He was, however, of considerable national as well as local note in his day. In 1539, he was appointed one of

the esquires to receive Anne of Cleves in the county and a year or so later was placed upon the Commission of the Peace for Berkshire. In 1544 he was returned as member for West Bedwyn, in Wilts, and again as member for Reading in 1552.

When Bucklebury was in the possession of the Abbot of Reading there was a house of the vestment-keeper, who took the revenues of the manor. This house has long disappeared, but the cool and inviting fishponds remain as mute evidence of the once long ecclesiastical dominion of the district. John Winchcombe the second demolished the abbatial house and erected on its site another more in keeping with his station and the spacious days in which he lived. The new house was built between the years 1557-59, and as the mansion or manor house it is referred to in a grant dated 1605. It remained as the home of the Winchcombes and their descendants until the year 1833, when, being found in need of considerable repair and much damaged by fire, it was pulled down and the materials sold by public auction. "It has been described as a spacious mansion consisting of a centre with wings on either side, the rooms being large and ornamented with panelling and carved oak chimney pieces, extending to the ceilings. There was also a long picture gallery, like that at Littlecote and other houses of the Tudor period." The only portions of an early house now standing are a small part of one of the wings and a large and lofty kitchen, but the latter and a coach house with extensive stabling are said to have been added by Lord Bolingbroke.

There are full details of the succession of the Winchcombe family, their wills and biographical details culled from sources in some cases only available to a student of wide reading. The Sir Henry Winchcombe who died in 1703, had three daughters, one of whom was named Frances, and a co-heir to his estates. It is this lady who gives to Bucklebury a share in national affairs, for in 1701, at the church of St. Dunstan-in-the-East, London, she was wedded to Henry St. John, afterwards Viscount Bolingbroke, who took an important part in the government of the reign of Queen Anne, and who was, as Walpole says, "so brilliant a writer, so disappointing as a thinker, so famous as an orator, so

shifty as a statesman, and so faithless as a man." With the coming of Bolingbroke—he was then Henry St. John—the village enters upon a new experience. Into the leafy glades of Bucklebury is brought a waft of the hectic atmosphere of London town, and, although it cannot be said that the daily round and common task of the husbandman and his kind were in any considerable degree affected by this alien irruption, the parish takes on an association which in after years was destined to give it a minor place in the polite and elegant affairs of the 18th century. In the early days of their married life St. John seems to have had a strong affection for Bucklebury, and "in the retired situation, whence he was accustomed to contemplate and admire the works of nature, this distinguished man received visits from the most eminent of his contemporaries, including Harley, Pope, Swift, Prior, Arbuthnot, Gay and other members of the coterie of 'all the talents.' " Swift, in a letter to "Stella," gives the following account of a visit to his friend Bolingbroke at Bucklebury: "He smoked tobacco with his neighbours, he enquired after the wheat in such and such a field, he went to visit his hounds and knew all their names; he and his lady saw me to my chamber just in the country fashion. His house is just in the midst of £3,000 a year he had by his lady, who is descended from Jack of Newbury, of whom books and ballads are written; and there is an old picture of him in the room."

Mr. Humphreys has dealt at some length with the story of Bolingbroke and has not spared the lash; of the gentle lady whose love was broken on the wheel of circumstance he has some tender passages, and one feels that, with all the wealth of mediæval, monastic and later chronicles with which the volume is replete, the sad story of the neglected Viscountess fills a large area of the village canvas. The author tells us much of the profligate husband in town and the pining wife in rural Berkshire and finishes his review of their associations with Bucklebury on a poignant note: "There are two entries in the parish registers which few can read with a dry eye who know aught of the details of Frances Winchcombe's life. The first entry is her baptism: '1679. Frances W——— dr. of Sr. Henry Winchcombe and

Elizabeth his wife was baptised December the 15th.' Thirty-nine years later there is another entry among the burials. ' 1718. The Right Honble. Frances Viscountess Bolingbroke was buried in Linnen October the 28th.' Between these two dates what tragic happenings and what sad gossip in the village. . . . Bolingbroke was, as Macaulay said, a brilliant knave, but his brilliance was of a kind that too quickly burned itself out. Of Lady Bolingbroke no words would be adequate to express the beauty that was in her soul. She rests in peace in the village where she was born and which she loved to well."

Viscount Bolingbroke lived thirty years after the death of his wife, dying without issue in 1751. It is doubtful if he ever came again to Bucklebury after her decease, although he was able to cause a certain amount of confusion and trouble in the administration of the estate. The manor descended to the nephew of the Viscountess, the son of her sister Mary, who had married Robert Packer, of Shillingford, the son being a minor at the time of his succession. From the Packers the estate came to the Hartleys by the marriage of Elizabeth, the sister of Henry John Packer. The last of the Hartleys died in 1881, and the present lord is a descendant of the original Winchcombes.

It would be difficult to make even brief allusion to the many aspects of Bucklebury's history which are contained in this volume of over six hundred pages ; but we must spare space for some of the remaining features. For instance, there is the church which dates in part from the latter half of the eleventh century and has not suffered from the kindly but misguided " restorers " of the past ; and which contains, both inside and out, those marks of dignity and architectural beauty which place it among the treasures of the county. The south doorway has one of the most ornate of Norman arches in the district, and a technical description, accompanied by an excellent illustration, has been included by the author. The bells, church goods, church plate, registers, monumental inscriptions, churchwardens' presentments and terriers are also dealt with, followed by a list, with biographical details, of the vicars from 1173, many of whom have connections with Reading and in some cases a larger notoriety.

In pursuance of the author's desire for a wholesale review of his subject there follow a list of the curates, with similar biographical notes, and details and abstracts from the wills of many of the yeoman families—an exceedingly valuable chapter is that dealing with family histories—including a trial pedigree of a family of the curious name of Headache (anciently *atte Hache*), who are mentioned in the village archives as early as the first half of the 14th century. Such personal chronicles and catalogues assist us to visualise the everyday life of the more substantial members of the village population in bygone times. There are also notes on the small but vigorous groups of Nonconformists including the Society of Friends, in the 17th and 18th centuries, and a chapter on folk-lore, giving extracts from the diary of the Rev. Winchcombe Henry Howard Hartley (1787-1832), who was both manor lord and vicar of Bucklebury at the same time. For lack of space we must resist the temptation to quote from this fascinating diary, which is still in the possession of the present lord of the manor. The Common, its share in the Civil War, and the more practical details of its past and future management, are also ably dealt with, together with the important local industries of iron-founding and bowl-turning, the latter still carried on in sylvan surroundings by George Lailey, the last, perchance, of his race. The appendices include an exceedingly valuable collection of letters, arranged in chronological order, from or to Bolingbroke and the whole circle of his friends. Each letter in some way illustrates Bucklebury history or was written and dated there. The book also contains eighteen illustrations, five pedigrees and a map, and an index extending to no less than sixty-four pages. If there be still in existence, as is possible, further facts concerning the past of this typical English village, the future investigator will need to delve very deeply indeed to find them, for the author has raked with meticulous care among the national as well as local archives, and little must have eluded him. And one word more. The author is a lover of fine books, and by this we mean fine in all that that expression conveys. The present volume comes to us in a sumptuous livery; the paper-maker, the type-setter, the printer and the binder have all combined to produce

a work which will bring joy to the lover of artistic things and remain for long a monument to the industry, learning and care of one who has a very high regard for the historic past of the neighbourhood in which he resides. E.W.D.

JARN MOUND: WITH ITS PANORAMA AND WILD GARDEN OF BRITISH PLANTS. By SIR ARTHUR EVANS, D.Litt., F.R.S., F.B.A., Hon. Fellow of Brasenose College, Oxford. (Oxford: Joseph Vincent. 2/6 net.).

This booklet is an excellent example of what individual persistence, allied to taste and vision, can do for the preservation of the beauty of the English countryside. Too often do we find pious resolutions of well-meaning societies synchronising with the fall of the woodman's axe and the commencement of a modern "ribbon-building" development of rural areas. Too seldom is it recognised in time that the legitimate undertakings of modern speculative enterprise can become a menace to the green and pleasant shires of England. And if there be one spot where, by a consensus of opinion, the garish products of our modern civilisation should not intrude, that spot is assuredly the immediate environs of the city of learning by the Isis and the Cherwell. "Jarn Mound" tells how this, in part, has been accomplished. It also tells of the obstacles that had to be surmounted; how almost daily the needs of circumstance and the appetite for gain launched their well-equipped forces at the beleaguered garrison of hope and desire. But the assault was withstood and the outcome is an achievement of which the Oxford Preservation Trust and its many friends may well be proud.

But what is this oddly-named "Jarn Mound"? It is the culmination of an ideal. In 1928, Sir Arthur Evans addressed an appeal to the Trust urging them to continue the good work they had already done in acquiring the north-eastern portion of Boar's Hill towards Foxcombe, by the purchase of the neighbouring part of the crest of the hill. If this were done, Sir Arthur offered to raise a mound, in a plot set apart for it, that would open out a view, much more comprehensive than any yet obtainable, over the whole surrounding country. "It would extend

not only over the Vale of the White Horse and the Berkshire Downs, embracing a wide expanse to the south and west, but on the other side to the central towers and spires of Oxford, backed by the Cherwell Valley, with the Stow Wood and Shotover heights to the right, continued by the long line of the Chilterns, with Dorchester Clumps guarding, as it were, the gap of the Middle Thames. . . . It would not derogate from the ancient dignity of the hills. Overgrown with gorse and heather it might, in time, almost become a part of Nature. In this case, too, it would fitly range with the wooded mound that breaks the skyline of the opposite right to the south, known as "Scutcham's Knob," marking the burial place of the West Saxon King Cwichelm, and on the North-eastern side with the grassy knoll, below a Beacon Hill of the Chiltern range, that bears the still more ancient name of Cymbeline."

But quite apart from the panorama that would be thus unfolded to the eye there was a further inducement to keep this spot inviolate from the obtrusive attentions of the speculator. It is the country of Matthew Arnold, the devoted proclaimer of beauty and light, and the whole area is redolent of "Thyrsis" and "The Scholar Gipsy." "The poet's vision was, of its nature, ideal and took in objects in the surrounding country that could never have been visible at the same time from any one spot. But it is to this point beyond all others of the hill crest that the poet's path from Oxford actually leads us :

'Runs it not here, the track by Childsworth Farm,
Past the high wood to where the elm-tree crowns
The hill beyond whose ridge the sunset flames?
The signal-elm, that looks on Ilsley Downs,
The Vale, the three lone weirs, the youthful Thames?'"

Luckily the trustees were able to see, with the author, the tremendous possibilities of the scheme, and, after much labour and some disappointments, the Mound arose upon the hill. The name was already to hand. Hereabouts, from time immemorial, a portion of the hill has been known to the villagers of Wootton as "Jarn." The old elm tree at the neighbouring corner is still called "Jarn Tree." The origin of the name had long been a

puzzle, but a suspicion that it might be a corruption of the French word *jardin* has found striking corroboration in a word in the Cornish dialect where the word "jarn" is in use for "garden." The Mound thus constructed, rising fifty feet above the mean level of the crest of the hill at this point, attains a height of 530 feet above sea-level and the view to be obtained is by far the most spacious to be found in this part of England. For those who wish to study the outlook a dial of indication has been set up on the summit terrace. It consists of a copper plate with an engraved plan of the panorama, showing the principal points beyond it, inlaid with red, black and blue enamel. A print of the plan accompanies the booklet.

The author has given a brief account of the historic features of the panorama and this adds considerably to the interest and value of the booklet. He has also devoted a chapter to the formation at Jarn of a Wild Garden of British Plants. As he very properly observes, for the sake of giving better cohesion to its surface and also with a view to its natural beauty, the Mound has been planted with winding alternate zones consisting of dwarf Cornish gorse, the purple Lizard heath, and the rosy variety of Dorset. The culmination of the scheme, however, was the Wild Garden, in which plants and flowers of many British species from a very wide range have found a nurture free from the destructive attentions of the countryside wanderer. A folding plan of the garden is given and this plan also shows the linking-up of its path system with the footpaths to Oxford and elsewhere.

Thus has been accomplished a herculean task. The enthusiasm which gave it birth will alone ensure its conservation. "Jarn Mound" must remain an immemorial landmark like the White Horse, Wittenham Clumps and the Hlaewe of Cwiclem. Only right thinking and generous support will preserve it. Any profits arising from the publication of this booklet will be reserved for the upkeep of the Mound and the Wild Garden. We shall hope that there will be a call for a succession of generous editions in order that the spirit and enterprise and labour of its promoters may be duly recognised.

E.W.D.