

Reviews and Notices of Publications.

THE GEOLOGY OF OXFORD. By Dr. W. J. Arkell. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1947. pp. viii+268, 6 plates and 49 text figures. 20/-.

This excellently produced book deals with an area of about 30 miles radius from Oxford, and therefore embraces much of northern Berkshire. It is of greatest value to the geologist and a delight to workers in other fields who require a little geological understanding to pursue more fully their other interests, ecological, archaeological or historical. One finds oneself reading on, far beyond the matter relevant to one's original reference, with sheer pleasure at the lucidity, charm and vigour of Dr. Arkell's prose. Although it is the later chapters which are of special interest to the archaeologist and historian, the whole book is filled with references to the relationship of the geology to the pageant of man's occupation of the land, his water supply, building stone and agriculture.

The formations are described in descending order of age from N.W. to S.E., the Lias, Oolites, Oxford Clay and Kellaway beds, where Berkshire enters the picture. For the first time perhaps the Corallian receives an adequate geological description, its topography with the hills, hedges and rag-built villages of the Coral-Rag contrasting with the leached sands of the lower Calcareous Grit, "so light and hungry as to be hardly worth cultivating," Radbrook Common or the west of Wytham Hill, Tubney wood and Frilford heath. The true structure of Wytham and Cumnor hills is observed for the first time, the Coral Rag resting over the Calcareous Grit like a tarpaulin over a loaded truck ("cambering"). This is due to the sapping away of the underlying Calcareous Grit at the spring line, probably since Middle Pleistocene times. There follows the Kimmeridge clay with its disused Berkshire brick-pits at Stanford-in-the-Vale (Bow pit) and Marcham, and the still working Chawley pit at Cumnor.

The Greensands, Gault, and Chalk have a special significance for the Berkshire scene. In the Faringdon Sponge Gravels (Lower Greensand) the county possesses a feature unique in the whole world, and it is good to know now that the sections through the red and underlying yellow gravels are to be preserved open to view in the Faringdon pit by the Faringdon Rural District Council. Dr. Arkell hands a bouquet to the Berkshire chalkland scenery and draws attention to the hard fine white building stone used for a thousand years in the villages of the Vale, with the Norman tool-marks still showing sharp on the outside of Woolstone Church. Dr. Arkell points out that the dividing line between the picturesque wooded Chiltern scenery (due to the Tertiary outliers and pockets of Clay-with-Flints) and the sparser Berkshire Downs vegetation is not at the Goring Gap but further west, at the crest of the ridge by Aldworth.

The chapter on the Tertiary Era contains an account of the formation of flints. There follows a description of the Early Pleistocene deposits, the Great Glaciations, when man's implements first appear in the gravels, and Dr. Arkell gives in a table his correlation between the English glaciations and the continental succession, based on typology of these implements. It is to be hoped that this will stimulate the similar study of the gravel deposits lower down the Thames Valley. An account is given of the formation of the River Valleys and their Gravels with their fauna and palaeoliths: there is much here of interest to the archaeologist about the siting of early settlement on these gravel terraces. The "fan," or "delta," gravels of the Chalk country are also described.

The final chapter on the Middle Stone Age to the Present Day describes changes in climate and vegetation, effects of rainfall, and, of especial interest the formation of the peat deposits of Otmoor, Cothill Fen and the Kennet Valley. The last few pages on recent changes represent a penetrating study of the historical topography of the region, the interaction of man on his environment and his own contribution to geological change, his draining of boggy valleys and clearing of woodland, the persistence of the uncultivated intractable areas such as Frilford Heath and Buckland Warren, with their beetles and lizards like those of the wild Norfolk Brecklands.

We are brought finally to a view of Tom Brown's School at Uffington (which at the moment appears to be in not too good a condition) and are led out of the details of Geology to a panorama of the countryside through the ages. The whole book is written with deep feeling, and is founded upon a personal topographical knowledge and an intimate understanding of the underlying elements which go to make the character of a countryside which has left its spell on these pages. This book should be, not on the shelves, but on the desk or at the bedside of all those who love the north and west Berkshire country.

E.M.J.

W. J. Arkell: OXFORD STONE. (Faber, 1947, 25/-).

Within the same year Dr. Arkell has given us his study of the building stones used in Oxford from Saxon times to the present day. In masonry, Oxford's contacts with its countryside are, of course, largely with the Cotswolds, but much of this book is relevant at least to north Berkshire, which often drew its better quality building stones from the same sources as Oxford itself. Like his *Geology of Oxford*, this volume is also a great pleasure to read. He deals with building stones used at all periods and of all geological formations, with the preservation and repair of old stonework, with the stone slate industry, past and present, and concludes with a few cogent pages on future policy in renovation and choice of materials for building anew. For those concerned with buildings it is certainly a most important book. E.M.J.

RECORDS OF BUCKINGHAMSHIRE, Vol. 15, 1947.

In this volume the Buckinghamshire Architectural and Archaeological Society celebrates its Centenary, George Eland describing the century of the Society's activity. Of most interest to Berkshire readers will be H. M. Colvin's Architectural History of Great Marlow, on our borders. He has much to say of the Georgian Architects and Builders who worked in Marlow, and points out that it is to the Bricklayers and the London tradition that we must look for the master-builders of Marlow and other Chiltern towns, and not to the stone-mason's tradition of Oxford, the upper Thames and Cotswolds. The paper is spaciouly illustrated with photographs, but its usefulness would have been increased by the inclusion of some plans, especially one showing the different periods of the Old Parsonage, with its mediaeval remains. Mrs. Esdaile writes on the Renaissance Monuments of Bucks, and Mr. Greening Lamborn describes the Purbeck Marble Altar-Tomb of Robert Ingilton (*d.* 1472) and his family at Thornton, near Buckingham, remains of which he found, overgrown by thorns, set up in the grounds of the Manor house. This monument is now re-erected in the nave of Thornton Church, and retains some of its original colouring. There are also two papers on Birds; those of Buckinghamshire by K. Price and those of the Tring Reservoirs by H. H. S. Hayward. Some means must surely be found by which the *Records* can publish separately the results of Natural History and of Historical and Archaeological research: those who desire both could still acquire both, and those whose interest is confined to one only would be spared expense and accumulation of paper on their shelves. We wish our neighbour Society every success at the start of its second century.

E.M.J.

Publications of the Council for British Archaeology. Two publications have so far been issued: *Notes for the guidance of Archaeologists in regard to Expert Evidence* (1947, 3d.), deals with evidence from Geology, Petrology, Soil Science, Botany, Zoology, Physical Anthropology, Metallurgy, and analysis and identification of miscellaneous materials, with names and addresses of those willing to help with reports in these subjects. *A Survey and Policy of Field Research in the Archaeology of Great Britain; I. Prehistoric and Early Historic Ages to the 7th century A.D.* (1948, 5/-, or 3/- to members of affiliated Societies) is a most significant publication packed with stimulating observations, and is a valuable survey of the present state of knowledge of the subject. Both these should be in the possession of every archaeologist, and can be obtained from the Council for British Archaeology, c/o Institute of Archaeology, Inner Circle, Regent's Park, London, N.W.1.