

## Reviews.

MURRAY'S BERKSHIRE ARCHITECTURAL GUIDE. Editors: J. Betjeman and J. Piper. (Murray. 18/-).

The Berkshire Architectural Guide contains a Map, Introduction (4 pp.), Acknowledgments (1 p.), Illustrations and Text (112 pp.), a Gazetteer (42 pp.) and an Index (6 pp.) for the sum of 18/-.

Berkshire may be considered unfortunate in having in the past a somewhat indifferent series of "Guides" written about its history and architecture. A possible exception to this was Murray's Guide (1902) which was welcome for the comparative accuracy of its concise statements. But this new edition of Murray's is indeed different. In fact, it strives to be "different" at all costs. It seems to have been written in order to start people talking about, rather than thinking about, its contents. The editors appear to inflict a "pose," sometimes flippant, upon the reader, to affect a certain bias where there has been no bias before—and should not be now—and to present a certain sophisticated and studied mental curveting, all of which may well bemuse the victim. To be "different" is a modern tendency, we know, but it does not lend itself, in this case, to the full appreciation of the architectural merits of Berkshire. For all the time one is asked to think "how clever, how slick, to put it like that." And this kind of divertissement is, of course, quite out of place in the true "Guide."

However, the Introduction is well written and gives an accurate summary of the characteristics peculiar to Berkshire. The editors say that buildings do and should inspire love and hate and that their reactions in this respect will put them in some bad company and that their remarks will very likely offend. Thus we have been warned what to expect in the "different" book. They do, at any rate, appreciate the important fact that buildings are often meaningless without an understanding of their purpose and surroundings. Some of the photographs have been taken to illustrate this.

The Illustrations and Text form the greater part of the book. Here there are 171 illustrations with short informative, and often provocative, captions. The latter and the Gazetteer (42 pp.) which follows the Text are not uniformly accurate. Some of the necessary corrections are listed at the end of this review. These corrections refer to facts and not to any captious opinions expressed by the editors on the buildings for sometimes they are flippant and frivolous as when, for instance, they interpolate "a blasted aeroplane" in the quoted description of the White Horse Hill. Nor do we usually wish to know in an architectural guide where the "regulation walk for courting couples" may be, even if it is, as in the case of Uffington, suggested in connexion with magical pagan rites.

It is a pity that as much care was not taken over medieval facts as with details given in connexion with some comparatively obscure nineteenth century architects. For instance, in writing their notes on the remaining parts of Abingdon Abbey, the editors speak of the Checker and the Long Gallery as being the Prior's House and the Guest House respectively, a careless repetition of well-worn inaccuracies. The effort made to find out facts already recorded seems to be unequal throughout and there is a suspicion in some cases (e.g. at Stanford-in-the-Vale) that errors in the V.C.H. have been repeated in lieu of a little observation on the spot.

To illustrate the curious emphasis on the nineteenth century buildings throughout we may take the description of Maidenhead. Here a comparatively long and detailed account is given of Street's effort at All Saints, Boyne Hill, described as a "Tractarian cathedral of an upper class suburb," whereas not even a brief mention is made of the eighteenth century monument to Maidenhead's Mayor, Robert Bever, and the all too rare Royal Arms of Queen Anne, both in St. Andrew's Church. An example of the latter, however, at Waltham St. Lawrence, is duly recorded.

Perhaps the most successful of the descriptions is that of Newbury with the right emphasis on the eighteenth century houses of which it mainly consists. That of Reading is almost as good. But there is even a tendency here, as unfortunately elsewhere, to ascribe buildings to various architects rather on stylistic than on documentary evidence. In the case of the Gothick Donnington Grove, which rightly receives notice, the designer has hitherto defied discovery and if the striking suggestion that it was "probably John Pinch" then a line or two giving the evidence for this new fact should surely have been added. For later on it is boldly stated in the list on page 71 that John Pinch built it. Which (if either) statement is right? Thus is posterity ill served.<sup>1</sup> However the lists of architects and their buildings on pages 71, 90 and 106 are useful and are a welcome addition not usually provided in architectural guides.

On the whole the villages are well described as in the case of Shrivenham and the mention of the late seventeenth century summer-house on the lake at Beckett will, we hope, persuade the War Office at its so-called "College" of Science of the need for its preservation. An "Architectural Guide" should rightly and on all possible occasions call attention to objects of merit in danger of desecration. In some villages, however, local observation by the editors would have avoided the repetition of errors. To return to the case of Stanford-in-the-Vale the incorrect dates and locations appearing in the V.C.H. seems to have been copied *in toto* whereas even cursory inspection of the buildings themselves would have afforded the necessary corrections. It seems a little inaccurate to dismiss the very notable and perfect early fourteenth century armorial glass in the church here as "fragments." But this is an example of the unequal bias in the descriptions throughout. No mention is made of the early fourteenth century glass at Buckland which is comparable in size and technique with that at Westminster. It also seems unfortunate that the notable and historic effigy of the father of the Kingmaker at Burghfield should be included as among "decayed alabaster tombs," *tout court*. But these are examples of the all too frequent unequal bias throughout on the nineteenth century work to the detriment of that of earlier and medieval times.

Far too much space has been given to the efforts of the mainly undistinguished Victorian designers of stained glass. That some Victorian glass is worthy of mention is not disputed, particularly in the case of Willement who returned to the medieval methods, using in the pot-metal technique to a great extent. But when the latter's work at Radley comes to be described the editors say that it is "the grandest collection of heraldic glass of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries to be found in any parish church in Berkshire." But in a few lines later they say Willement "set it with armorial glass of his own, scarcely distinguishable from the original." What is the reader to make of this? Such confusion of thought displayed by the editors, albeit among their own respected Victorians, is unfortunate. There is, however, a useful list of the works of nineteenth century designers of stained glass. But surely how much better the space could have been used if, in place of the colour plate (Fig. 147) and some others (but not necessarily all) of the nineteenth century work in monochrome, the early fourteenth century North Moreton glass, or even of the early seventeenth century Hobby window at Bisham, had been given. It is also difficult to see the use of giving a whole page to illustrate the 1852 rebuilding at Welford church when no photograph, or even mention, is given of the fine monument with the kneeling effigy of Anne Rede, 1585.

<sup>1</sup> Since the above was set up in type it has been discovered that Donnington Grove was to the designs of John Chute (1701-1776) of The Vyne. Horace Walpole had the designs in his possession at Strawberry Hill.

It will come as a shock to many to know that Uffington church was built in 1150 (twice repeated) and in the next few lines that it "is as complete an Early English parish church as exists." There is, according to the editors, also "the large Decorated (c. 1250) south window." All this presumably is the result of careless proof reading. Also if it is thought necessary, when describing Uffington, to mention Piggott and Marples on the White Horse, then, for the sake of completeness, Grinsell's work should be included.

The photographs are, on the whole, good and well chosen. Some are excellent (Figs. 13, 14, 104 & 158) and the best are those of St. George's, Windsor (Figs. 36, 37 & 39). But some of them seem to have been taken with inadequate apparatus unsuited to architectural work, so falling are the verticals. That this does not matter in architectural photography is, of course, nonsense, and no photographer of any worth would wish to produce such bad work. There can be no excuse, for instance, for the "freak angle shot" of the Scheemakers monument to Jane Pusey (Fig. 86), for there is plenty of room for an accurate and pleasing photograph to have been taken. The same applies to Figs. 20, 42, 58, 82, 99, 145, 146, 147 and 133. The printing has been too dark, or from inadequate blocks, in some cases (Figs. 17, 19, 79, 111, 118, 149) so that no detail is visible in the shadows that should be rendered luminous. This may be intentional in order to give a dramatic effect but it is quite out of place here in what should be a factual guide and is of little use to the student. On the other hand it is a pleasure to note that white margins have been retained and that the tendency to print over the entire page, a maddening habit, has been successfully resisted.

To sum up. We have, on the whole, a disappointing book, with too much emphasis laid on the nineteenth century, which period happens to be patronized by the editors. But it has its good points undoubtedly and with more care in revision and in presenting the architectural merits of the County in a less biased mood how good a "Guide" it might have been. Why did the editors, with their real and potential qualifications, try to be "different?"

The following misprints were noticed:

Page 8. Abingdon, not Abindon Town Hall.

Page 38. Abingdon. Roysse's Grammar School (1563), not 1553.

In the Gazetteer:

ALDERMASTON. Sir Geo. Foster died in 1533, not 1539.

FYFIELD. Gordon, not Jordan.

LAMBOURN. Edmund, not Edward, Seymour, 1798.

LYFORD. Yate, not Yates.

NEWBURY. Golf Course, not Gold Course.

PADWORTH. Griffith, not Griffiths.

SPEEN. Castillion, not Castillon.

SHELLINGFORD. Hannes, not Harnes.

The following are some corrections which appear necessary in the Gazetteer:—

ABINGDON. The Checker and Long Gallery instead of the "Prior's and Guest House." The "brick extension of the hospital (1797)" should be the churchyard front of the Brick Alley Almshouses, 1718, and the caption to Fig. 46B. altered accordingly. It is not the Jacobean hall of Roysse's Grammar School that lies to the south side of the Abbey Gateway, but the Guildhall and Council Chambers.

The caption to Fig 50, "Abingdon Town Hall" is misleading. The photograph is of the County Hall or Market House and is not to be confused with the Guildhall.

ALDERMASTON. The "beautiful eighteenth century armorial glass" is mid-sixteenth century. It was once in the manor house, then in the east window of the church, was incorrectly restored and finally reset in its present position in the present century.

- CHILDREY. The Royal Arms, although inscribed George III are in fact those of Victoria.
- FARINGDON. The Crown Inn is the one probably meant, and not the Globe Inn.
- LETCOMBE REGIS. Alexander Fettiplace was buried in 1712. It was his youngest son, George, who died in 1730.
- MARCHAM. There is no documentary evidence yet discovered to confirm the story that there was a priory here.
- NEWBURY. The photograph (Fig. 48) is not of "St. Bartholomew's Hospital," but is of St. Bartholomew's Close (once Jemmet's Almshouses), restored and altered in 1929.
- PURLEY. The arms on the church tower are those of St. John.
- SHAW. Thomas Dolman was not a cotton spinner.
- SHEFFORD, WEST. The sixteenth century panelling, if ever there, is now no longer in evidence.
- SHRIVENHAM. The three pieces of glass in the east window of the church (and having the dates 1505, 1607 & 1793) are all by Egginton.
- STANFORD-IN-THE-VALE. Coxe's Hall has a rainwater head dated 1739. The sixteenth century house mentioned must have been refronted at least a generation earlier than stated. The manor farm is to the south of the church; it contains some eighteenth century painting on the panelling worth mentioning and similar in style to that at Abbey Farm, Goosey, and Stanton Harcourt parsonage.
- SUNNINGWELL. Beaulieu Court Farm was built by Charles Holloway, sergeant at law, Oxford, in 1658; his cartouche is, or was, over door.
- WALLINGFORD. Calleva House is in High Street, and not Thames Street.
- WANTAGE. The alabaster tomb, with its effigies, is of Sir William Fitzwaryn, K.G. and Amice (Haddon) and not of Sir Ivo, whose brass (1414) is nearby.

Mention of the following seems to have been omitted:

- CAVERSHAM.
- DONNINGTON GROVE. The "Gothick temple."
- BAGNOR MANOR HOUSE (C.16, largely rebuilt C.18).
- MARSH BENHAM MANOR HOUSE (C.16 brick and timber).
- CHAMBERHOUSE IN THATCHAM (1714).

Ashmolean Museum: *Guide to an Exhibition of Air-Photographs of Archaeological Sites, November 1948 to February 1949.* pp. vii + 19, 16 Plates. 2/-.

This is a useful illustrated catalogue of an exhibition of fine air-photographs. There is a brief summary of air-photography as an archaeological technique, followed by sections on each class of site. All the illustrations included in the catalogue are of Major Allen's photographs, now in the keeping of the Ashmolean. Most of them we have seen before in print (even some of which blocks were apparently made anew, such as the fine view of the Roman road in Pl. XIII which appeared some years ago in *J. Rom. Stud.*), but it is useful to have them collected together in this way. We should have been grateful for a few more unpublished ones, especially of the recently excavated enclosure on Roden Downs, Compton, Berks, and of that also on Lowbury Hill nearby (p. 14).

It is disappointing to note how little trace of the Saxon village at Sutton Courtenay can be seen in Pl. IV; are we to get so little help from air-photographs in the difficult work ahead of filling in an archaeological background of settlement to that of the Pagan Saxon cemeteries? On the other hand the mediæval strip fields of Pl. X open up possibilities for the identification of the lost sites of some settlements recorded, for instance, in the Domesday Survey, but depopulated during the Middle Ages.

The illustrations here show the excellence of Major Allen's photography. It is no reflection however to say that recent work has shown that photography of these same sites under different conditions may show up yet different details (*e.g.* D. N. Riley in *Oxoniensia*, 8-9 (1943-4), 64-101).

The scope of the exhibition opens out at the end with the North British and foreign material, some of which is published elsewhere.

E.M.J.

BLECHINGLEY, by Uvedale Lambert (Surrey Archæological Society, Local History Series, No. 1, 1949) pp. vii + 40, 4 Plates and folding map. To members of the Surrey Archæological Society, 3/6; non-members 5/-: obtainable from Surrey Archæological Society, Castle Arch, Guildford.

This admirable little book is intended to initiate a new era in Parish History writing in Surrey—Berkshire and many other counties would do well to follow the example. By using the work of different authors, but co-ordinating such histories through a central committee which organises facilities for expert checking of all the varied matter of a Parish History, a higher standard may be attained than has hitherto been usual in such writings. This series is intended largely for the intelligent layman, but to be useful also to the student. Mr. Lambert's work brings his father's 2-volume History of Blechingley up to date in many matters, especially Geology, place-names, and history of minor properties. Such accounts will be even more valuable for those parishes which have never had any sort of standard History. Those who become interested in Blechingley will find a good series of reproductions of old prints in the 2-volume History (1921). The illustrations in this small volume are on the whole good, and Mr. Harvey's detailed map of the parish is most pleasing—and, most important—can be opened out to remain totally visible while the book is being read.

The whole study of Local History requires very serious attention in this country at present, for much future growth of our knowledge of national history will come from the building of a mosaic of local studies of different periods. This particularly applies to the Universities, and Reading started so well in 1910-13 with four excellent volumes from the Local History publication fund, and a fifth by Donald Atkinson on Lowbury Hill in 1916. But since then it has surprisingly fallen by the wayside, and it would do well to follow the example of University College, Leicester, in the appointment of a Reader in English Local History (at present Dr. W. G. Hoskins). Berkshire history would indeed greatly benefit from such an appointment at Reading. The Surrey Archæological Society Local History Committee are certainly to be congratulated upon their initiative.

E.M.J.

ABINGDON ABBEY: based on the late Arthur E. Preston, F.S.A.; by Agnes C. Baker with architectural descriptions by W. H. Godfrey, F.S.A., F.R.I.B.A. (1/-: Friends of Abingdon, 1949).

The Friends of Abingdon are to be congratulated on producing this straightforward account of the Abbey and on doing so much to preserve what little remains of its buildings. Abingdon is indeed fortunate in those who have taken an interest in its Abbey: the researches of Mr. Preston and the architectural descriptions of Mr. Godfrey, director of the National Building Record, have been admirably brought together by Miss Baker. The restoration work is also in the experienced hands of Mr. Godfrey. The illustrations are good, and it is a relief to see at last a plan of the Abbey based on the excavations of 1922. It is to be hoped that the Friends of Abingdon will be given all possible encouragement.

E.M.J.

GUIDE TO THE PARISH CHURCH OF ALL SAINTS, FARINGDON (ed. P. S. Spokes, published by the Berkshire Archaeological Society, and the Faringdon Parochial Church Council, 1949; pp. 16 (plates), 1/6).

This is the fifth of these Berkshire Church Guides to be issued, and the series is already becoming most valuable. This guide is well illustrated, and the printing of the plates on the ordinary text paper of the guide cannot obscure the fine quality of the photographs, which, it should be recorded, were taken by Mr. Spokes and Mr. Ian Taylor. We need many more guides of this quality in the county, and that with all due speed, and we are all exceedingly indebted to those whose efforts produce them for us.

E.M.J.

## Bibliographical Notes.

*Trans. Newbury & District Field Club*, 9, No. 1 (1948), contains appreciations of the late H. J. E. Peake, and Sir Robert Soundby's Presidential Address. This number is mainly a full account of Sinclair Hood and Hilary Walton's excavation of *A Romano-British Cremating Place and Burial Ground on Roden Downs, Compton, Berkshire*. They trace the development of the site as a cremating and burial place from the 2nd to the 5th centuries: cremating places have been rarely recorded in Roman Britain. Traces of wooden, and one leaded, coffins were found. Remarkable were the unruined nails from the pyres, and technical reports are given by Dr. Norman Davey and Dr. Plenderleith.

*Archaeological Journal*, 104 (1948), 82-111; *The Plough in Ancient Britain* by F. G. Payne, a most important paper, discusses the plough-shares from Silchester (pp. 94-6).

THE WAR AND ARCHÆOLOGY (H.M.S.O., 1949, 1/6) describes briefly Mr. Grime's emergency excavations at Membury, on the Wilts-Berks border, giving an illustration of the Early Mediæval circular tower found (p. 25). This remote site might have remained unexamined but for the war. During the early middle ages it was a small fortified residence, later completely ruined and built across by a larger normal type of house, subsequently enlarged.

WHITE HORSES AND OTHER HILL FIGURES, by Morris Marples, discusses the Uffington horse and its history in some detail, without adding much, however, and shows how it is probably the progenitor of most of our hill-figures. There are numerous illustrations, both good and bad, useful and superfluous.

THE ARMORIAL GLASS OF THE OXFORD DIOCESE 1250-1850. By E. A. Greening Lamborn. 8½ × 5½. Pp. xxxi + 179 with 65 plates and 8 pedigrees. Published for the Society by Geoffrey Cumberlege, London, 1949.

Heralds and glaziers alike are deeply indebted to Mr. Lamborn, to the Society and to the Pilgrim Trust for this book. The mere record of the glass is a most important contribution, but its value is enhanced many fold by Mr. Lamborn's scholarly and often elaborate notes, the fruit, it must be, of many, many hours of loving toil. The introduction will be specially helpful to tiros but even those who are already adepts in the "misteries" of armory and glass-painting will find in it matter of interest. Mr. Lamborn's foibles are, no doubt, well enough known to members of the society for them to need no such warning, but others must not take his thunderings against the heralds seriously; there is another side to the question. In the matter of terminology, for instance, even if, and I say "if" advisedly, even if the "jargon" was invented by professional heralds, it was amateurs, such as Upton and Gerard Legh, who are mainly to blame for its propagation.

Mistakes in a work of this range are inevitable. Mr. Lamborn's are venial. Some are referred to elsewhere, as for instance the misnaming of Lord Danvers' leopard and Henry VI's antelopes as yales; the rather surprising