Reviews.

SOME BEAUTY SPOTS IN A CORNER OF NORTH BERKS. An illustrated description of some towns and villages within ten miles of Didcot, by W. J. Street, A.R.P.S. and S. Allen Warner. *The Wessex Press, Didcot.* 8/6d.

New books on this rapidly developing portion of the Royal County are scarce and the authors have made a most praiseworthy attempt to cover the scene. The area chosen is bounded on the South by the Ridgeway, Wantage lies to the West, to the North is Abingdon, and the Thames and Wallingford lie to the East. Prehistoric discoveries are frequently mentioned but the references are mainly to finds made over a century ago when the science of archaeological interpretation was not so exact as it is today. The reader may be confused by references to supposed battles between the Saxons and Danes in the region of Wittenham Clumps where the evidence, much of it recent, is of the Roman period. The early history of Wallingford might have been enlarged upon, numbers of Old and New Stone Age implements have been found here, there is an imposing list of Bronze Age finds, whilst in the late Iron Age there must have been a trading centre, for more coins of this period have been found here than anywhere else in Berkshire. It is difficult to understand why it is stated that "there is no evidence that Wallingford was a Roman town" when Roman coins have been found here in thousands. There is still a difficulty in distinguishing between native Saxon and Danish finds, but it might now be possible to produce a chronology amongst the large collections of grave objects found in the region. In dealing with domestic buildings, more emphasis might have been given to cottages showing the "Cruk" construction, a feature of this region to be seen at Long Wittenham (several examples) Drayton, Brightwell and Harwell. Some further attempt might be given to dating the half-timbered buildings but it is satisfactory that the date 1415 has been recorded on the one Cruk cottage described at Didcot. It would be interesting to know whether this is in Arabic or Roman numerals. There seems to be a gap in the story from Norman times to the 19th century and this could be filled with some records through the centuries of the lives of the inhabitants, taken from parish records and diaries. It is most satisfactory that the influence in the late 19th century of Lord Wantage should be remembered. The results of the breaking up of the landed estates are only too apparent in many of the villages hereabout. It is surprising that so many old cottages have survived, not in many instances through the care of local people who now tend to be housed in "Council" dwellings, but from the efforts of newcomers who have found pride in the ownership and restoration of these picturesque buildings. Some 30 blank pages are included at the end of the book so that the reader can continue the story and add more illustrations.

The photographs of Mr. W. J. Street are well known to many in the County but excellent as the 81 illustrations are, many might have been better reproduced. There is an uneven tone in over 20 pictures in the copy received for review, and some attention might be given to this part of the production when further copies of the book are printed.

F. M. UNDERHILL.

WINDSOR CASTLE, by Sir Owen Morshead. *Phaidon Press*, 1951. 30s.

A century ago Tighe and Davis made that invaluable collection of sources for Windsor history known as *Annals of Windsor*; half a century later Sir William St. John Hope published his exhaustive Architectural history of the Castle. And there have been a series of specialist publications about Windsor—notably the Monographs relating to St. George's Chapel. Too few writers, however, have attempted to tell the story of the castle in

brief compass, with a proper respect for the canons of historical criticism, and therefore the warmest welcome should be extended to Sir Owen Morshead's latest work, *Windsor Castle*. Sir Owen has made skilful use of Hope and other authorities; but he has done more; as he says, "I have tried to solve the problems which have formulated themselves in my own mind during the course of twenty five years' residence in the Castle" as Royal Librarian. These problems he discusses in the course of a general account of castle history from 1070 to 1830, a succinct narrative of some 25,000 words. Sir Owen outlines the essential facts about the Conqueror's foundation,[1] Edward III's College of St. George, and the remarkable changes effected by Charles II and George IV in the Upper Ward, illustrating them with a series of little known details (beginning with a royal ghost story). He reminds us that the 'Star Chamber' of Westminster was dismantled and its panelled walls brought to start a new and quieter life in the recesses of the Upper Ward at Windsor; that George III intended to turn the half finished Lady Chapel of St. George's into the Chapter House of the Garter, and started by having 300 wooden shields of past knights painted for it before doing any building. (The shields were later placed as decorations in the royal kitchens). Sir Owen treats with especial care and understanding the transformation effected by Wyatville between 1820 and 1830. Charles II's ugly round-headed windows were removed and the facades 'mediaevalised'; an extra storey was added to the Upper Ward buildings for the royal servants and, since this made the Round Tower appear squat by comparison, Wyatville then doubled its height, thus creating the present impressive outlines of the castle. Over a million was spent, with an outwardly splendid result, but the damning verdict of George IV was that "the rooms were too small and the furniture too large".

In the course of his description of XVIIIth and XIXth century alterations in the Upper Ward Sir Owen suggests a most interesting architectural pedigree. The old domestic chapel had for long made free circulation round the state apartments impossible—the apartments were like all principal rooms in royal palaces, not at ground but at first floor level. George III therefore lined the Horn Court which lay on the chapel's northern flank with a two-tier cloister, 'flagged and open on the ground floor, but enclosed and carpeted above'. This linked the rooms around the Horn Court and thus by-passed the chapel. Sir Owen suggests that the King copied this idea from the Cloisters 'at his beloved Eton College' and that although the Horn Court cloister was swept away later when the present Waterloo Chamber was constructed, the double-storied cloister 'provided the basic idea for the Grand Corridor which Wyatville built twenty years later around the Quadrangle'. 'My eye, what a spot for a walky walky' Creevey wrote to Miss Ord on first seeing it, and ever since, it has formed one of the most impressive features of the Upper Ward.

The sections devoted to the Chapel of St. George contain a particularly useful summary of the probable stages in which it was constructed, information singularly difficult to extract from Hope, and incorrect in many popular works. At one or two points work in progress can supplement Sir Owen's narrative: it now for example, does not seem likely that the *roses-en-soleil* on the outer Chapel walls were consecration crosses, or indeed that the chapel was ever consecrated; whilst many writers agree that the sword of Edward III preserved in the chapel was a ceremonial sword, Mr. Cyril Bunt has held that it was a sword intended to be used by the king in battle. Sir Owen's suggestion that chantry priests originally lived in the Horseshoe or Priest Vicars' Cloisters is attractive, especially as there were more houses there than there were priest vicars. Later, of course, the cantarists lived either in various lodgings on the north of the chapel, or in 'flats' actually built into the chapel. (Edward IV's cantarist lived in a room above the north choir aisle).

[1] The recent excavations at Old Windsor make it likely that the original Saxon and Norman Palace was at Kingsbury, on the river bank, and not at Bear Rails, a mile further from the river. (cf. p. 8).

Sir Owen draws attention to the ancient and beautiful Dean's Cloister and it might be added that much of its outer walls is Henry III's work: it is indeed worthy of note that Henry ordered in 1240 that a grass plot be left between his royal buildings and the new chapel, and that this 'plot' is still there, in the centre of the Dean's Cloister, surely one of the oldest lawns in the country.

Sir Owen completes his volume with a magnificent collection of 80 illustrations, mainly full-page plates. The choice of subject and viewpoint is invariably original and revealing; the interiors of the Upper Ward are of particular interest. The photographs have been well reproduced, and one plate is outstanding—that of the view from St. Leonard's Hill, revealing a castle of great beauty, wonderfully placed in its forest and valley setting.

MAURICE F. BOND.

HINTON, MICHAEL. A History of the Town of Reading. George G. Harrap. 1954. 176 p. 10s. 6d.

This new history of Reading was written primarily for use in local senior schools and secondarily for the use of the general public; it is, as the author states in his preface, in no sense a work of original research and was written exclusively from certain more accessible printed sources. Within these limits the book is to be welcomed; it is written in a lively style, more suitable for junior, perhaps, than adult reading but it has been carefully done so far as factual matter is concerned, and can confidently be recommended for the general reader.

The earlier histories of Reading were mostly published over a century ago, three of them within a generation. Coates, published in 1802, is reasonably detailed and accurate, Man (1816) is more shipshod, while Doran (1835) completes the trio. W. M. Child's history of 1921 is a delightfully written book of chapters of history.

Mr. Hinton's approach is slightly different from that of Childs; whereas Childs illuminated his anecdotes against a background of national history, Hinton holds more closely to the thinner thread of the town and its history. The books, as Mr. Hinton states in his preface, are complementary.

Mr. Hinton's early chapters, which take the story to Tudor times, are very well done, and there is much interesting quotation from original sources. He tells a story well and there is no doubt that he evokes an atmosphere of the times which cannot help but hold the general reader. The later chapters are perhaps more prosaic, there is less incident for the author to work on, and the later 19th and the 20th centuries need much research on them to enable a true picture to be painted.

The illustrations are excellent and well-chosen, and both Harraps, the publishers, and the author are sincerely to be congratulated on their courage in producing such a badly-needed work.

S. H. HORROCKS.

K. G. BURTON. The Early Newspaper Press in Berkshire, (1723–1855). Published by the author, c/o Central Public Library, Reading. 1954. 290 p. £1.

A work of considerable research and worth, and one from which the author will undoubtedly gather more kudos than pence.

Berkshire has been singularly well served, both in extent of time and quality of material, by its local press. The *Reading Mercury* founded in 1723, while by no means among the earliest in the country, is one of the few with a continuous history, and the author states that this paper "was not seriously rivalled for almost the entire first century after its commencement". Its early contemporaries the *Reading Journal* (founded 1736–7), the two early *Berkshire Chronicles* of Wokingham (1770) and Farringdon (1798) lasted but

a short time and hardly counted as rivals. The *Windsor and Eton Express* (1812) was, however, more successful, probably due to its happy geographical location and its accent on court news, and is today a firmly established favourite. Similarly placed so far as continuity of publication is concerned is the *Berkshire Chronicle* of Reading, which was founded in 1825.

Mr. Burton divides his book into two parts. The first deals with general organization, and in fact tells in a well-documented fashion the coverage of these early newspapers, their policies and availability. It is an important contribution to this specialized branch of our social history. The second part deals individually and briefly with the development (and in some the demise) of the nine early newspapers which form the substance and purpose of this book. It is very pleasant to note that the earliest of them is still printed today.

The appendices are mainly statistical, but tabulate also a list of early newspapers in contiguous counties, Oxford, Buckingham, Wilts, and Hants. Not the least important part of the book is the bibliography, which, *inter alia*, gives a finding list of the earlier and rarer issues of the newspapers of the royal county.

In these days of expensive and sometimes slipshod work, it is a pleasure for a librarian to be able to state that this book of infinite pains is well worth the twenty shillings asked for it.

S. H. HORROCKS.