

REVIEWS

Marie P G Draper, *Lambeth's Open Spaces, An historical account*, 96 pp, 62 plates and 1 map. Published by the London Borough of Lambeth, 1979. Price £3.00

This book describes the creation of the 48 statutory parks and open spaces existing in the Borough in 1976 and is intended primarily for people with a local interest. Chapter 1 explains the Victorian background in which individuals and public bodies first pressed for parks for the benefit of the poor. It also gives useful information on the development of local government and its early workings. The parks are individually described in the remaining four chapters where they are grouped according to their different origins, as Commons, Disused Burial Grounds, Private Enclosures and Municipal Open Spaces. The entry for each site gives its previous use and history, and it is clear that little could be discovered about the medieval and earlier periods from the written sources consulted. The formation of each park is accorded special attention, though later developments are discussed and the present-day appearance mentioned. The book has a good index and comprehensive references. The plates, which have reproduced well, consist of prints, drawings and photographs showing parks, associated buildings and the champions of open spaces. Also included are parts of Rocque's map of 1741-6 and several plans. The estate map of 1729 which shows part of Streatham and of which a portion is reproduced as plate 60 may not have been known previously to many readers of the book. The sketch key map is not as successful, and it would have been helpful if a list of the park names and their key numbers had been printed, perhaps beside the map. Marie Draper has, however, written an authoritative and interesting book that will remain a standard work for many years.

ROBIN DENSEM

Peter Gray, *Nutfield and Burstow – the history of the landscape and buildings*. 32 pp, 48 plans and figs. Published by Joint Parish Councils Conservation Committee, Tandridge Council Offices, Caterham. Price £1

The study of Vernacular Architecture has become very fashionable in recent years and it now has many adherents, most of whom enjoy visiting other people's houses, but few are willing to undertake the many years of academic study, which is necessary to understand them. Peter Gray has the advantage of training as a surveyor and is basically sound in his knowledge. He has produced an excellent booklet on Nutfield and Burstow, attractive also in format and price, although the printing method has not allowed the reproduction of photographs. The illustrations are by a series of sketches, good of their kind and adding to the pleasure of the publication, but it is to be hoped that the full notes include photographs, since recording should not rely on the skill of the artist. The camera may distort (in known ways), but cannot unintentionally omit details, the significance of which it does not understand.

The author has rightly not attempted to write a history of the two parishes but has contributed to such a history in a most practical way, by presenting the evidence of the existing buildings. Fieldwork is often under-estimated compared with documentary study and yet both are complementary to each other. Most important, he has included all the older buildings and demonstrated their relationship to topography in a series of maps based on the Tithe Award of 1844. In this way the pattern of settlement change may be studied. This type of work shows how the study of buildings has grown up, how it may contribute to wider studies, and how much more rewarding this is than scouring the houses for features to be claimed as 'discoveries' to impress other *cognoscenti*.

Only in one point may the author's emphasis (rather than interpretation) be challenged. Base crucks are rather more common than he suggests and are often post-medieval in date (even as late as 1912 !), but the largest and finest medieval examples in England are in the Guard Room at Lambeth Palace, which many of us still regard as part of Surrey.

It is good to see in his introduction, that Peter Gray has promised to study the other parishes of the Tandridge District and his work will be eagerly awaited. He is still a young man and it is to be hoped that he might continue to other parts of the County, where his skills are sorely needed.

I have no hesitation in recommending this book to those who wish to use their interest in buildings to further local history.

K W E GRAVETT