

REVIEWS

IMAGE AND DEVOTION IN LATE MEDIEVAL ENGLAND

Richard Marks

Sutton Publishing Ltd, 2004

viii + 344 pages including 176 illustrations and 15 maps, £25.00

ISBN 0-7509-1466-1

This book considers the importance of devotional images in parish churches to their individual users and the medieval society in which they became a vital element of religion and life. Historically, studies of stone and wooden statues and wall paintings tend to look at how styles developed, from the architectural, sculptural and artistic points of view. However, in Europe, there has recently been more concentration on the historical use of devotional images. This has naturally been a more difficult area to tackle in England, as the reformation destroyed most of the images themselves, although many, particularly in the form of wall paintings, have come to light since the mid 19th century. Richard Marks has taken on the challenge of writing a book, as he describes it, about images without images.

Richard Marks is a Professor in the Department of History of Art at the University of York. He is probably best known for being the curator of the 2003 V&A exhibition 'Gothic: Art for England 1400–1547', and for being an editor of the 496 page catalogue of that exhibition.

The book has a particular relevance to Buckinghamshire and Bedfordshire as the case-studies described in the book are within these two counties. Altogether 13 Buckinghamshire churches and 24 Bedfordshire churches are mentioned in the book. This is certainly unusual for a book on English churches, but Richard Marks explains that he has chosen these counties quite deliberately for two reasons. Firstly he tactfully describes how he wanted to concentrate on churches that were more the commonplace than the spectacular examples of parish church architecture. Secondly it transpires that the churches of Bedfordshire and Bucking-

hamshire have been familiar and accessible to him since childhood. To me, local knowledge gained over one's lifetime is far more valuable than sudden investigations for a particular project. However the text and illustrations in the book include examples from a vast number of churches across the country, and it is notable how often Marks has been able to use documentary evidence for his researches, particularly wills.

Different chapters deal with such subjects as Early Images of Our Lady, the Proliferation of Marian Images, Cult Images, and Ritual and Devotion. The Bedfordshire churches of Eaton Bray, Totternhoe, Luton and Marston Moretyne feature strongly in these chapters. Another chapter is devoted to the Patronal Image, and this opens in Buckinghamshire by looking at North Crawley church. This is, of course, highly important in that the chancel still has traces of its mid 13th century inscription dedicating it to St Firmin. It is even rare that a dedication can be proven to date back so far. As at so many other churches, there is now just a corbel each side of the east window at North Crawley which would have carried statues of the BVM and St Firmin, the patronal saint. The final chapters of the book deal with the Production of Images, and the End of Images. The churchwarden's accounts for All Saints church at Wing are used as an example of the immediate effects of the Reformation in obliterating images within the church, many of which had only just been installed.

'Image and Devotion in Late Medieval England' is certainly the culmination of research that needed to be done, and recorded in a book available to all those interested, rather than a highly priced academic work, only available to a few. Whilst it concentrates on the later part of the medieval era, I suspect that is mainly because the written evidence is far more common from the middle of the 15th century. The depth of detail is admirable, especially when one realises that Richard Marks has not even attempted to include certain items such as Roods or Easter Sepulchres. Surely most of us would imagine that Roods were once the most visible and

significant devotional images, and Marks thinks that as such central images for collective and personal devotion, they justify their own work in the future. He does not hint as to whether such a work will have his name on it though.

The book has been well produced, with all the illustrations appearing fairly close to the relevant pieces of text. It is well indexed, and has an extensive Bibliography. The location of notes varies in books, from individual pages, to end of chapters or end of book. Here the notes are all gathered at the end of the last chapter. Personally, I think a lot of flicking through pages is needed to locate a particular note. One has to find out the number of the chapter being read, then find the set of notes for that chapter, then the note. If the page titles could include the chapter number, and the notes could include their chapter numbers, it would be far easier. However, this criticism is slight compared to the value of this book that deserves a place on the bookshelves of many that are interested in our ecclesiastical history.

Michael G Hardy

SEEKERS AND FINDERS: QUAKERS IN HIGH WYCOMBE 1650-2000, A BRIEF HISTORY

Hugh and Joyce Mellor

Published by William Sessions Ltd, York 2003

vi + 98 pp. including 7 illustrations and 2 maps; illustrated paper cover.

This attractively produced and impressively researched history delivers much more than it seems to offer. Not only is it a fascinating record of the High Wycombe meeting of the Society of Friends over three and a half centuries, set firmly against the background of national and local events, but it incidentally provides many illuminating insights into Quaker society and organisation generally. It can thus be recommended confidently to anyone interested in the subject. Individual chapters are supplemented by appendices containing documents and illustrations relating to particular topics of interest.

In the first three chapters dealing with the heroic early days of the Society prior to the Toleration Act of 1689, the authors bring out *inter alia* the importance of the interlocking structure of local meetings established by George Fox in holding together a

scattered membership, the most important gathering being the monthly meeting, in this case the Upperside monthly meeting, established in 1669, which embraced the whole southern half of the county from the Aylesbury area to the Thames. One consequence is that the history of any single meeting cannot be told entirely in isolation. Other topics discussed include the significance of the Women's monthly meeting, established in 1675, and the social composition of the earliest membership which included Thomas Ellwood of Chinnor, 'bred a gentleman', the first secretary of the monthly meeting, and the irascible John Raunce of Wycombe, a physician, as well as several others described as 'labourers', though evidence is provided that the latter description cannot always be taken at face value, at least as far as judicial records are concerned. The authors point out, too, that the Quaker passion for record-keeping, much commended by archivists, did not extend to lists of members or to noting attendance at meetings, so that information about individuals is in fact often hard to come by before the nineteenth century.

By 1687 the Wycombe Friends had acquired a permanent meeting place in Crendon Lane and the standing of Quakers locally can perhaps be gauged by the fact that in 1698 John Archdale of Loakes Manor, a leading member, was elected to Parliament for the borough, the first ever Quaker MP (his conscience prevented him from taking the oath and he was accordingly unseated). But the eighteenth century was to see a gradual decline in membership leading eventually to the closure of the meeting house in 1869. The period also saw an evangelical revival in the county and the reasons cited for some defections suggest that the two phenomena were not unrelated.

The final chapters chart the renewal which eventually came after 1911 and was triggered in part by the death in 1913 of Elizabeth Steevens, member of a well-known Quaker family and the last link with the original Quaker meeting. The meeting was formally reconstituted in 1926 and in 1931 a new meeting house in London Road was opened. The passage of time saw a broadening of horizons. Involvement in the allotment garden scheme for the unemployed in the early 1930s was followed by a growing commitment to wider social issues generally, including the peace movement, help for refugees from Nazi Germany and, later, help for conscientious objectors and prisoners of war and

concern for post-war issues such as nuclear disarmament. One regular attender between 1944 and his death in 1954 was Seebohm Rowntree, author of a pioneer study into urban poverty.

Hugh Hanley

AYLESBURY QUAKERS AND THEIR MEETING HOUSE 1689–1933

Jack Davis

50 pp., including introduction by Michael Davis, 9 illustrations and 1 map.

Aylesbury 2004.

Aylesbury Quakers is the work of two different hands. The earlier portion, covering the period to 1933, is by E. J. Davis, former County Archivist, and a member of the Aylesbury meeting for over fifty years prior to his death in 1993. Mr Davis's text is edited by his son Michael, who also brings the story up to the present, drawing in large part on personal knowledge as the longest-serving member of the meeting.

Although, as the site of the county gaol, Aylesbury was in the years after 1660 not infrequently host to more Quakers than any other place in the county, the Aylesbury meeting was, it transpires, always small in number and its membership largely dispersed in surrounding villages rather than in the town itself. Quakers had been worshipping at Weston Turville as early as the 1650s, where they were visited by George Fox in 1668, and it was not until 1689, when part of the house of Sarah Lamburn was registered under the Toleration Act of that year that a permanent home was found within the town. The existing site at Green End was acquired in 1703 and the present building dates from 1727. The building's history, which forms the centrepiece of the book, is well and fully told and will be of particular interest to all who visit this venerable place of worship.

Separate sections of the book are devoted to the fortunes of the meeting as a group and to the lives of some of its members. Among the more notable of the latter are Sarah Lamburn, already mentioned, who made it her mission to bring succour to the Quaker prisoners in Aylesbury gaol; Samuel Jennings, who with his family emigrated from Aylesbury to America in 1681, becoming governor of New Jersey in 1683; and, in a later generation,

Jasper Jackson (d. 1836), cabinet maker, and active political reformer, who was twice elected to the office of churchwarden of Aylesbury. Among the Aylesbury Quakers who suffered imprisonment in the 1680s was Thomas Olliffe, described as a 'mealman'. He is unusual in that, while still remaining resident in Aylesbury, he also figures in the Mellors' book in the role of benefactor to the Quakers of High Wycombe where he had an interest in a brewery. No doubt there were other such overlaps between the two trading communities.

Ironically, by the time the new meeting house was completed the Aylesbury meeting had already entered upon a decline that was to be even more prolonged than that which occurred in Wycombe and, despite something of a rally at the turn of the new century, it closed its doors for worship in 1836. The closure was to last for just under a century, during which time the building was let out for various uses, sacred and profane. Crucially, ownership was retained so that when revival finally came in 1933 it was possible to restore the building to its original purpose. In more recent times, too, the two adjacent cottages which formed part of the property were eventually recovered and by judicious management were able to assist in the programme of outreach which is so strong a feature of recent Quaker endeavour – a valuable, and valued, legacy from the past.

Hugh Hanley

A JARVIS TAPESTRY. THE EARLY HISTORY OF A BUCKINGHAMSHIRE FAMILY FROM TUDOR TO VICTORIAN TIMES.

Gloria Jarvis-Smith.

Published by the author in 2003 at The Bungalow, Tylers Close, Canterbury, Kent, CT2 7BD.

96pp. illustrated with laminated cover £5.99

ISBN 0 9543656 0 7.

A JARVIS TAPESTRY PART 2. THE STORY OF AN EDWARDIAN FAMILY OF AYLESBURY AT HOME AND BEYOND, THROUGH THE TWENTIES AND THIRTIES TO MODERN TIMES.

Gloria Jarvis-Smith & Rupert V Jarvis.

Published by the author in 2003 at The Bungalow,

Tylers Close, Canterbury, Kent, CT2 7BD.
120pp. illustrated with laminated cover; £5.99
ISBN 0 9543656 1 5

The publication of ones Family History is the aspiration of many genealogists, which seldom progresses beyond its compilation. This inevitably is due to the limiting nature of the subject. Tables of family trees and the inevitable bunch of photographs recalling family gatherings are, no doubt, interesting to the immediate family members but can be wholly uninspiring to the average or casual reader.

Gloria Jarvis-Smith has avoided this pitfall and approached her subject of the Jarvis family by using a wider panorama. She has woven a picture of contemporary life – age by age – through, if not the eyes, then the demeanour of her forebears; hence the word tapestry is part, and an important part, of the titles of these two volumes. Scattered amongst the nearly one hundred pages of this first hardback volume are many illustrations of rural occupations linked to the activities of the Jarvis farmers of Haddenham; they enhance the overall topic as do other illustrations of events affecting the family over the years including the English Civil War.

In a chapter entitled *A Lady's Wardrobe 1735*, Gloria Jarvis-Smith reproduces somewhat indulgently twenty pages of her costume designs for the production at the Theatre des Beaux Arts, Brussels of Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer* as she observes "to give a flavour ... of the kind of clothes there might be in a family wardrobe."

Back on track, the life of ancestors from other Buckinghamshire villages are discussed including that of a Jarvis mining pioneer settled in Nelson, British Columbia. Part 1 finishes with extracts on Gloria Jarvis-Smith's career as a journalist and artist by a fellow enthusiast.

In Part 2 of this companion volume we are brought into the 20th century and in thirty odd chapter headings, we are given finger nail sketches of Gloria Jarvis-Smith's immediate family and its exploits, again amply illustrated with sketches and photographs of individuals and their persona. This includes a small selection of her late father, Rupert V Jarvis's enormous output of advertisements and dust-jacket covers during his professional life with the Iliffe Press. The colour reproduction quality of these and of many other photographs in both

volumes is of a particularly high quality. The tapestry has been well and expertly woven.

The volume ends with an entry from *Who's Who in Art* about the author together with a repeat from Part 1 of the 600 word resumé on her previous work and achievements taken from *The Woman Journalist*.

Alan Dell

HISTORIC VIEWS OF BUCKINGHAMSHIRE
Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society
Published by the Society 2004

iv + 104 pages including 50 illustrations; available from the Society at the County Museum, £20
ISBN 0-949003-18-2

Buckinghamshire, its buildings and landscape, has been a subject of study for many years and our own dear 160 year old BAS have published several useful books on this subject, of which this is the latest. Fittingly the book is dedicated to the late Elliott Viney, FSA, who gave so much of his life to the preservation of the county and who was involved with the running of the Society for much of the last half of the twentieth century. Within the soft A4 cover are fifty images of buildings, structures and events in the county. All are taken from the collection of the Society, even though some have now passed into the care of the Museum. Those of us used to ferreting about in the Local Studies collection, the Society's library, or indeed the excellent BCC photographs website, may have come across some of the illustrations herein, but isn't it good to have them all readily available in the one volume? All remain accessible by appointment. Each illustration is given its current name, original title, accompanying details of artist, publisher and date (if given), as well as its original size and the technique used in its production. The compilers point out that they have chosen sites that are perhaps less well-known than those illustrated elsewhere, and to give an idea of the range of styles used in illustrating the county over a period from the seventeenth to early-twentieth century. Indeed they range from quite primitive hand-coloured engravings to watercolours, and from cheery magazine illustrations to sophisticated drawing room plates. The compilers of the collection have obviously spent a considerable effort in visiting the

various sites so that we also get a brief commentary on the history of the site illustrated and its current condition. It is surprising how many of the sites are still recognisable, given the continuing threat of development throughout the county, and of course disappointing to see those that are now lost.

The pictures are arranged more or less from the north to south of the county, though one feels a rather haphazard route was taken. Whilst some thirty-two feature aspects of the country houses that stretch across the county, there are also working buildings, townscapes, churches, a ruined abbey and even a railway bridge (at Pitstone). Here you will find one aberration, though a personal favourite of mine, in plate 22 'Aylesbury from the south-east', in fact the Birmingham Mail Coach stuck in snow in 1836, a wretched way to spend Boxing Day, but the mail still got through, even if 24 hours late.

At first glance the country house parks and gardens illustrated tend towards the landscape style, but as one gets further south and among those along the Thames and A4 & A40 corridors, a

greater range of periods and styles come to the fore. Kenricks, Hambleden, of 1752, has a topiary arcade comparable to those at Nebot's Hartwell and at Winchendon. The grand enclosed forecourt of Cliveden, in 1753, echoes that at Tythrop of seventy years earlier. Dropmore shows a face we still hope to see again, whereas Ditton Park, Slough, has already regained its appearance as J Gendall depicts it. Finally I would like to mention Dorney and Upton Parks both of which have reverted to earlier aspects. Although allowances must be made for artistic licence, and in some cases considerably so, it is in the small detail of some of the pictures that much study is repaid. I should also point out that the brief texts appear excellent as pointers to further exploration.

A second copy of the book could usefully be broken up to produce your own print collection. The work is completed with a three-page bibliography, which makes a very helpful Bucks reading list.

Charles Boot