

## Reviews.

PARSONS AND PARISH REGISTERS OF MEDMENHAM, BUCKS.

By ARTHUR H. PLAISTED. (Longmans Green, 15/- net).

Those who have read with interest his previous volume "The Manor and Parish Records of Medmenham" will turn with pleasurable anticipation to this new work by the vicar of that parish. They will not be disappointed, even though the author himself finishes his introduction with the words "now it is finished (it) seems to be more of a monument to human patience than to represent any great contribution to sound learning." Truly it is somewhat of a ponderous tome, containing no less than 481 pages; but such a work as this cannot from the very nature of its contents be encompassed within narrow limits. Moreover, a record that commences with the 12th century and is sufficiently complete to include a report of the excellent work of the village schoolmistress in 1931, may be said to have surveyed a wider field than is usual in such compilations. With the present volume and the volume that preceded it one may certainly assume that the story of Medmenham's past is as complete as is humanly possible and will only need in future years to be carried on from the point where the present author has left it.

The book is divided into three sections; the parsons of Medmenham; the officers of the Church; and the parish registers. There is also an appendix which contains a general index, an index of place names and an index to the parish registers. As to the clergy the first of whom there is a record is Geoffrey Gibewin, who was rector before 1185. The patron of the living was Hugh de Bolebec, grandson of another of the same name who was cousin to William the Conqueror. It was Hugh the grandson who founded Medmenham Abbey, took the habit of a religious and died in the house of his foundation. It is not known who instituted the rector, nor how long he served in his office; but in 1222 John de Hornel appears as chaplain and the patron is the abbot and convent of Medmenham. He was

presented to " the Vicarage of Medmenham, newly ordained by the Bishop of Lincoln." Hornel's predecessors—whether few or many—had been rectors and enjoyed emoluments which were considerably curtailed when the Abbey became the owners of the rectorial tithes.

In these early years there are gaps in the list of vicars because of defective registration ; but, as Mr. Plaisted points out, the fact that one of the parsons of Medmenham met with a violent death has preserved his name from oblivion. The Assize Rolls of Henry III. have the record thus : " Walter the Priest of Medmenham fell into a certain marlpit in the fields of Medmenham so that he died and he had upon him 10s. 2d." There had been a brawl seemingly and it was murder ; but the facts are not complete. It is noteworthy that there were no less than three vicars instituted in 1349 and of these two died of the Black Death which killed off a vast number of the people. Such was the havoc wrought among the clergy by the contagion that the third of the trio instituted in the year 1349 was a deacon who had only recently been ordained. The author brings his list of vicars down to 1915, when he himself was instituted and with becoming modesty touches upon things and matters other than his own known valuable and untiring ministrations for the past sixteen years.

As has been stated the second section of the book deals with the officers of the church ; the parish clerk and the churchwardens. The former office is of great antiquity and those who have read " The Parish Clerk " by our late President, the Rev. P. H. Ditchfield, will not need to be reminded of the multifarious duties and splendid services of this old-time worthy. One of the parish clerks of Medmenham held his office for forty-five years and another found the local inn, the " Dog and Badger," a convenient and pleasant venue in which to announce banns of marriage before they were read in church. There was at least one parish clerk of Medmenham who was a woman and sad to relate, in 1607, " Joe Austin parish clerke " was reported to the Bishop for insufficiency, and Margery Austin, presumably his wife, for being " a common sclaunderer of her neighbours."

The author has found it necessary to go to many sources for the names of the churchwardens of his parish and the list he gives from 1537 is a testimony to his thoroughness. The duties of churchwardens generally are touched upon and it is noted that the social legislation of the 19th century has largely relieved these officers of many of the duties which formerly fell to their lot, particularly in regard to the administration of the imperfect poor laws. The first woman who held office as a churchwarden of Medmenham was Mrs. Morton of Danesfield Park in the latter half of the 18th century.

The Registers of Medmenham are treated in great detail and are prefaced by a brief introduction of the origin of the system by Thomas Cromwell. As the author rightly states, "it is possible to trace in parish registers the history of English churchmanship for the past four centuries. In the early pages may plainly be seen the bewilderment of the Revolution. The Church of the Restoration seemed to make a new beginning after the Puritan chaos, and it is illustrated in the orderly entries of John Gilbert as compared with preceding years. Slovenly indifference is written all over the records of a later period when the spiritual life of the nation was almost dead."

We are tempted to linger over Mr. Plaisted's book to pick out some of the charming touches that lighten and humanise its pages; the cameos of village folk and the lives they lived in bygone centuries. Much care and erudition, showing the wider implications in our national history of a study of this sequestered spot, have gone to make this volume something more than the "monument to human patience" which the author far too modestly describes it.

E.W.D.

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THE GORING CHARTERS, 1181-1546, Vol. I. Edited by T. R. GAMBIER-PERRY, M.A., Oxford. Issued for the Oxford Record Society.

To those who are unfamiliar with the excellent work of the Oxford Record Society it may be said that this is the thirteenth

substantial volume that has been issued under its auspices and there are envisaged ten more. Among those already published we recall the admirable "History of Glympton" by Canon Barnett, which we believe received very favourable notice far beyond the confines of the area with which the Society is legitimately concerned. And this observation is not in any way meant to belittle the merits of the remaining publications. The present volume may be said to be equal in all respects to its predecessors and discloses an intimate knowledge of the district and subject matter. The editor, apart from his obvious qualifications, has a close claim to the duty of editing these records, and he has pleasantly alluded to his early associations with the district in his prefatory remarks: "I would venture to state, as a reason for undertaking the present work, that Goring and Streatley have been known to me since my earliest childhood. I first went there in the year 1888, when the broad-gauge engines with their brass fittings were still running through the old Goring station, and less than a dozen of the modern houses had been built. Goring was my home for over thirty years, and every field and path there and in the neighbourhood was intimately familiar to me. When, therefore, I was asked to produce an edition of the Goring Charters, I gladly made use of an opportunity to do something on behalf of a place that holds for me so many pleasant memories."

The collection of charters dealt with in the present volume consists of 336 deeds, all in Latin except two in English and about eight in French. In addition there are two fine deeds of Henry VIII., both with the great seal attached. As the editor remarks, it is extremely rare to find such a collection relating to one small district. They continued to be in use till the seventeenth century, as many of them have endorsements of that period. Unfortunately their history is buried in complete obscurity. They were acquired by the Bodleian Library in 1893, upon terms which must now be considered to have been extremely easy. A few of them deal with Goring Priory, a house of Augustinian nuns founded by Thomas de Druval in the first half

of the 12th century. The rest relate principally to the Manor of Goring, including the smaller manors of Gatehampton, Elvendon and Applehanger, and are more especially concerned with lands acquired by the Loveday family in the fourteenth century.

In some sixty pages of introduction the author has dealt briefly with the history of the Manor of Goring and of Goring Priory; and there are also notes on the owners and tenants of lands, the roads, place-names, neighbouring manors, pedigrees, seals and associated heraldry. Mr. Gambier-Perry reminds us that in a manner similar to other villages with a river frontage, the parish extends some miles into the hills to the district called Goring Heath. He is of opinion that in the Middle Ages it must have been a busier and more important place than it afterwards became. The great Isabella de Fortibus, countess of Aumarl (Albemarle) and Devon and Lady of the Isle of Wight, was a "free tenant" at Goring in 1279, although there is no evidence that she lived there. But Sir John and Lady Mohun did, and Sir John fought at Crecy and was one of the original Knights of the Garter. His lady, Joan, was a Lady of the Garter, and their daughter Elizabeth, afterwards Countess of Salisbury, was born at Goring. Where they can have lived is somewhat of an enigma, for nowhere in Goring are there any vestiges of the type of baronial residence with which so important a family would have been associated.

The actual charters included in this volume occupy 133 pages and as previously stated mainly concern the territorial acquisitions of the Loveday family. As such, a considerable part of the book is bound to be tedious to the general reader, but that does not in any way detract from its value to those who are able to judge of the labour and care which have gone to its compilation.

E.W.D.

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DOMESTIC UTENSILS OF WOOD: 16TH TO 19TH CENTURY.

By EVAN-THOMAS. (Owen Evan-Thomas Ltd., 20, Dover Street, London, W.1., £1 1s. net).

This is a fascinating book. Not only is it the first of its kind,

but it has been produced in such a way that both the expert and the general reader may turn to it with pleasure and profit.

Among collectors it has long been known that for many years the author has been sedulously acquiring what is now admitted to be one of the most complete and interesting collections of "Treen" in existence; and it was inevitable that he would be urged to favour a wider public with an account of his *lares and penates*. This he has now done in an exceedingly attractive volume.

As is rightly observed in the introduction only a very few people are aware how many and varied are the purposes for which wood has been used as a material for the manufacture of domestic utensils in past ages. "Before the days of easy transport, people living in the country were comparatively isolated and were consequently obliged to fashion articles for domestic use from whatever material was the most suitable and the most readily accessible. This, of course, was at a time before glass was used in the manufacture of domestic utensils and before the superiority of earthenware for this purpose had been recognised; indeed the cost of articles made of either of these two materials would have prohibited their general use in the centuries dealt with in this monograph." Examples of vessels of wood, both crude and artistic, are numerous. The chief place, undoubtedly, is held by the vessels designed to contain wine and those other potations whose delights have been celebrated in rhyme and song throughout the ages. There was more care taken in fashioning these than in the simple utensils fashioned for solid food. Among the many items the author describes and illustrates are mazers, wassail bowls, cups, tankards and methers, platters, and bowls, trenchers or "roundels," mortars, coffee and spice mills, knitting sheaths, love-spoons, stay-busks and lace bobbins.

Ancient inventories refer to many similar items. As an example, the "Unton Inventories," relating to the houses of the Unton family at Wadley and Faringdon, Berks, in 1596 and 1620, an account of which was published by the Berkshire Ashmolean

Society in 1841, contain some interesting references to such items as trenchers, salt-boxes, billowes (bellows), mustard mills, bolles (bowls), platters, runlets, trays, sugar-boxes and spice mortars, and although the majority of items which have been illustrated in the volume before us date from the 17th and 18th century, there are several early examples of rarity and beauty included. Notably among these are the mazers and the magnificent series of wassail bowls of *lignum vitae*.

The author states that he has compiled this book "in the hope that it may prove of interest to those who delight in studying the manners and customs of former times, but who have hitherto overlooked the fascinating subject of 'Treen' which is so rich and informative in historical allusions and antiquarian lore."

We congratulate him upon his venture and his wish and have only to add that with the greater interest which his book will most certainly evoke Mr. Evan-Thomas may feel inclined to revise the period to which he has assigned a few of the items in his collection.

E.W.D.