

REVIEWS

A GUIDE TO PREHISTORIC ENGLAND. By Nicholas Thomas. Pp. 268 with 69 figures. B. T. Batsford, Ltd. London 1960. 30s.

At a first glance it might appear that this book is superfluous in view of Jacquetta Hawkes' *A Guide to Prehistoric and Roman Monuments in England and Wales* published in 1951. Closer comparison of the two books, however, reveals that there are few similarities, and it is probable that each will appeal to different groups of people. Mr. Thomas refers to the earlier *Guide* and obviously knew of its success. In restricting himself in both space and time (a *Guide to Roman Britain* is promised) he allowed himself to compile a more detailed gazetteer. For it is the gazetteer in this new *Guide* that is of value. Miss Hawkes' book perhaps appeals to those who prefer more literary and picturesque guidance in their search for prehistoric and Roman remains with a minimum of archaeological fact.

The gazetteer of this new *Guide* is prefaced by a short introduction of 16 pages of text into which Mr. Thomas attempts to compress a summary of British prehistory. Naturally enough he fails to produce anything of value. An archaeologist of Mr. Thomas's calibre must have realized the futility of such a task, and one must assume that his publishers pressed him for its inclusion. The publishers' attitude can be discerned in their production of this book for the "amateur of prehistory." Could they not have realized that an unavoidably over-simplified account would be of little help to such an amateur? A short glossary of archaeological terms is included, which perhaps is intended to remedy any deficiencies in the text. In many ways this, too, fails in its purpose. For example, there is no definition in the text of "neolithic," and the glossary merely refers back to the text. It would have been preferable for this introduction to have been omitted, and some little space given to referring readers to easily available general accounts of British prehistory. As it is the inclusion of the introduction may persuade the new "amateur of prehistory" that it contains all he needs in the matter of background reading.

The need for over-simplification in his introduction has caused Mr. Thomas to put uneven emphasis on some of his interpretations. It is not true that England was being transformed by 2000 B.C. by Neolithic immigrants. Surely this gives the impression that the whole of the country was being colonized at this time. Similarly the choice of illustrations of Neolithic A, grooved-ware, Peterborough and Beaker pottery from one site (West Kennet) with approximate dates (accurate enough for the *floruit* of the individual pottery-types) is misleading. Does Mr. Thomas believe that this tomb was in constant use over a period of 750 years? Evidence for human sacrifice in the Bronze Age is not so plentiful that it can be suggested that it was a common practice. It is true that the henge-monument was replaced by the simple stone circle but only chronologically. Mr. Thomas's account suggests that the latter derived from the former, which is not so.

In the section on the Iron Age there is also some wrong emphasis. There is insufficient evidence to prove that hill-forts were permanently occupied during the last two centuries before the Roman Conquest and it is not true that by the time of Claudius the people were already conditioned to a measure of urban life. Neither did the small farmstead disappear to be replaced in southern England by the hill-forts. With evidence of chariot-burials among Iron Age B peoples in Yorkshire during the third century B.C. it is misleading to state that the two Belgic invasions introduced a number of important inventions including the wheel. In discussing ritual activity in the period it is strange that there is no mention of the temple-complex at Heathrow (Middlesex). Finally, it is inconsistent to illustrate in some profusion pottery of the

Neolithic and Bronze Age (albeit only from Dorset and Wiltshire) without including any illustration of Iron Age pottery.

The gazetteer is excellent and will be of value to readers other than the amateur of prehistory, particularly as brief details are given of artifacts and structures discovered during excavation. Entries are given under counties with the numbers of the relevant Ordnance Survey One-Inch sheets, National Grid References and directions to individual sites, although these may lead the reader into military danger zones, as at Standon Down (Devon). It is a pity that no general map or series of maps are included, perhaps something on the lines of the Ordnance Survey *Map of Ancient Britain* or that in Miss Hawkes' *Guide*. Arrangement by counties is useful for reference and it shows immediately the richness or poverty of individual counties. Wiltshire and Yorkshire are very well documented. After the richness of Dorset it is something of a shock to turn the page and meet the prehistoric poverty of County Durham and the restriction to Iron Age sites in Essex. Readers in each county will ponder on its wealth or otherwise and seek the explanation. Mr. Thomas is more generous in his allocation of space to the northern counties than was Miss Hawkes.

Readers of this journal will naturally turn first to the pages on Surrey. The well-known sites in the county are described simply and accurately, although here, as elsewhere, Mr. Thomas is too anxious to attribute a date to all sites, particularly round barrows and hill-forts, irrespective of whether or not the site has been excavated. The round barrows at Thursley, for example, are now known to be natural features, but in the gazetteer they are dated. Occasionally, however, Mr. Thomas is more careful, and the choice is given of interpreting earthworks at Thornhaugh (Northamptonshire) as either a henge monument (c. 1700-1400 B.C.) or a seventeenth- or eighteenth-century A.D. water garden. In discussing the northern counties of Northumberland and Cumberland he is careful not to force their prehistoric sites into the conventional periods of the south but refers to Periods I and II and the Late Prehistoric.

It is inevitable that any reviewer will find what to him are omissions, and will have minor disagreements. Cheshire has few visible field monuments, and it seems a pity that the round barrows on Werneth Low and the hill-fort at Helsby were not included. Lancashire, too, is not rich and the only known chambered-tomb extant, the Pikestones on Anglezarke Moor, and the promontory fort on Warton Crag are omitted. The more important hill-forts of the Marches are included, although some of Mr. Thomas's dates may be queried. The undisturbed chambered-tomb at Dorstone (Herefordshire), near Arthur's Stone, is not mentioned.

Wessex is given very full treatment, but Mr. Thomas cannot be accused of being too "Wessex-centric." This region must be acknowledged as pre-eminent in English prehistory but it is not necessary to relate sites in other counties so often to Wessex, and to refer to the "Stonehenge period," whatever that means. There is the surprising statement that at Avebury a circle of over 100 blocks of sarsen stands today. In discussing the south circle at Knowlton (Dorset) it is said that like all true henge monuments its ditch is inside the bank, yet at Stonehenge and the Priddy Circles (Somerset) the ditch is outside the bank. It is an over-simplification, and a denial of the megalithic tradition of Cornwall, to interpret the architecture of Chysauster as a translation into stone of the wooden house of Iron Age Wessex. There is little similarity between the ground plans of Little Woodbury and Chysauster. Mr. Thomas does not include the hill-figure at Cerne Abbas (Dorset) which he presumably will mention in his forthcoming *Guide to Roman Britain*. This is more likely to be a representation of a Celtic deity (perhaps the Dagda), and therefore prehistoric, than the generally accepted interpretation of Hercules. One final comment on the individual counties—do three round barrows constitute a cemetery, for example at the Air Balloon Inn and Snowhill (Gloucestershire)?

Throughout the book the illustrations are badly reproduced, presumably because they are inserted into the text and the cost of printing the whole book on superior paper would have been prohibitive. It is impossible to distinguish

the curves in the photograph of the barrow at Snail Down (Wiltshire). The Avenue at Avebury cannot be seen on the aerial photograph reproduced, the hill-fort at Dod Law (Northumberland) is hardly distinguishable and the photograph of Yarnbury Castle (Wiltshire) is appalling. It is regrettable to have to say these things about a book published by Messrs. Batsford whose standards are usually so impeccable. It must be admitted, however, that in every other respect the book is well produced.

Whereas the quality of reproduction is no concern of Mr. Thomas, the choice is; and the illustrations are generally not altogether appropriate to the gazetteer. Photographs of Wessex-Culture golden artifacts add little to the purpose of the book, and there are far too many photographs of the excavation of Maiden Castle (Dorset). The aerial photograph of Stonehenge is commendably up to date but the most valuable illustrations are plans, in particular those of the Bleasdale Circle (Lancashire), the sequence at Stanwick (Yorkshire) and the sketch map of barrows on Stanton Moor (Derbyshire). The amateur of prehistory would find plans of complicated sites such as Stonehenge and Avebury of greater value than photographs of sites which they will presumably be visiting.

The bibliography is good, but it would have been easier to consult if the entries were given after each site, or at least by counties. It is strange that there are no general references to the books on county archaeology which exist, although the reader is rather unfairly fobbed off with an omnibus reference to the first part of Volume one of the *Victoria County History of Wiltshire*. A full index of sites completes the book.

This book will be of use to serious students as well as to the amateur of prehistory, and it will find its place pre-eminently in the rucksack, or the parcel shelf of the motor car, alongside the A.A. or R.A.C. handbook. As a guide and gazetteer it leads the reader to those pre-Roman earthworks which are visible today. Glastonbury and Meare lake villages (Somerset), Star Carr (Yorkshire) and the round barrow at Hove (Sussex) are included, although there are no visible remains; but reference is made to the important artifacts exhibited in the relevant museums. Mr. Thomas has compiled a most useful book, and it is hoped that he will be able to publish revised editions in future, to bring up-to-date entries relating to sites which have been excavated since the gazetteer was compiled.

J. X. W. P. CORCORAN.

BRITISH ARCHÆOLOGY, A BOOK LIST. 8½ × 5½. Pp. 44. Council for British Archaeology, 10 Bolton Gardens, London, S.W.5. 1960. 5s. 6d.

To assist the widespread amateur interest in archaeology, nowadays exemplified in television programmes, the birth of numerous new local field-groups, and the huge "gates" at accessible excavations, the C.B.A. has issued this book-list. An original edition came out in 1949, but so many new books have appeared since then that this is more than a revised reissue. It is subdivided into three parts. The first has a section listing general books, and then others listing by periods, from Prehistory through Roman Britain, Migration and Medieval, down to Renaissance and Industrial Revolution. Part 2 lists publications by Regions "since a knowledge of the archaeology of the reader's own district is both interesting and important." Parts 3 and 4 gives works suitable for children, repeating the general pattern of Parts 1 and 2.

It need hardly be said that this Book List will be found most valuable, not only by the adult amateur anxious to widen his interests, but by all those who teach Geography, History or Classics in schools, or who have the ordering of school or public libraries. Indeed the compilers have assumed "that anyone using this list has access to a good library service, since this is true, both in country and town, to a degree which was not so in 1949." So not all books listed are necessarily still in print; "the omission of its price usually indicates that a book was out of print when the list was compiled." Priority has been given to listing as many titles as possible rather than giving fewer with consequent space for guidance as to content and quality. Nevertheless the mere

presence of a title in the list is some indication of quality, since a glance shows us that the less reliable works (purely popular or lunatic fringe) are not mentioned. The compilers assume, too, that readers "know what they want, and know how to use books."

Attention is drawn to the advisability of joining the local archæological society, not only for its library facilities, but for its lectures, publications and excavations, and to the fact that the C.B.A. is willing to put enquirers in touch with the appropriate society.

S. S. FRERE.

ST. JOHN'S CHURCH, WOTTON. Revised by H. V. Molesworth Roberts. Typescript. 1959. 1s. 6d.

This guide-book is a praiseworthy attempt to avoid the high cost of printing, and its only serious defect is the absence of a plan of the church, which however, the visitor can find hanging in the building itself. Mr. Roberts ignores the monument of Sir John Evelyn, 1778, signed by Robert Chambers, but he rightly records most of the modern material in the church. The late Mr. Bond's note about a supposed Danish sacking of Dorking and Wotton could have been omitted.

T. E. C. W.

HORLEY, ITS CHURCH AND PEOPLE THROUGH TEN CENTURIES. By Elizabeth Lane. 8½×5½. Pp. 64 with 5 plates. Privately printed. 3s. 6d. 1960.

This sixty-four page, paper-covered booklet with five illustrations, has much interesting and entertaining material, primarily of interest to those living at, or in the district of, Horley, but also likely to appeal to a much wider circle of those interested in the history of Surrey, or even of the country as a whole.

It is written in a pleasing, discursive style which will be familiar to readers of the Author's other works (*viz: Early Days in Horley, Sidlow and Salford*, and, in part, *Free Men of Charlwood*) and should make an especial appeal to the public in general. It also, through the variety of subjects touched upon, will provide an excellent starting point for those (of whom there are many nowadays) who may wish to carry out some detailed research on their own in one of the many branches and ramifications of local history.

It is in as far as the booklet deals with the history of Horley Church that there is a serious omission. There is no plan of the church (not even a "sketch plan") to illustrate the various changes and alterations mentioned throughout the text. It is true that three of the plates show the church; one its extension in the eighteenth century and the others (from photographs) the interior prior to 1880 and in 1939, but these do not compensate for the absence of a plan, and of the type which is on page 6 in *Blechingley, a Short History* by Uvedale Lambert, which this Society published in 1949. It is to be hoped that there will be future editions of this booklet, and that such a plan will be incorporated in it.

A. W. G. LOWTHER.