

BOOK REVIEWS

The 1851 Religious Census: Surrey, transcribed by Cliff Webb and edited by David Robinson, Surrey Record Society volume 35, 1997, price £25.00. Hardback, ccxxxvi, 165pp, illus, maps. ISBN 0 902978 10 1

As David Robinson says in his introduction: 'The Census of Religious Worship, 1851, was the first and last official religious census on the mainland of Britain.'

As such it is a peculiar animal, in that it presents a snapshot of all the churches in Britain in 1851 — something that had not been undertaken before, and not since. At the time it caused great controversy — the non-established churches felt very threatened by it, to the extent that some, such as the Catholic Apostolic Church, Guildford, protested vehemently: 'We protest against any sectarian name or being classed with Dissenters from the Church of England and in giving answers to the 1st and 3rd queries we make no claim to the exclusive use of these titles.'

And after its publication, which revealed that only around 50 per cent of the population had attended church on the particular Sunday, the churches were thrown into great consternation. It had always been assumed that most of the country went to church! This may have resulted in the frenzy of church building that followed its publication, but at least the census reveals the church situation in 1851.

This (at the time of reviewing) latest volume from the Surrey Record Society again means that a major set of records relating to Surrey is available in transcription, avoiding painstaking copying and trips to record offices for the researcher into church history. For that purpose alone this volume is invaluable, and many thanks to Cliff Webb for the work he has undertaken for us. However, as with so many Surrey Record Society volumes, this one contains a very helpful and explanatory introduction from David Robinson. This explains what the census was all about, what information was required and what it all meant — incredibly useful if you are a novice in the study of church history.

The carefully chosen illustrations of some of the churches are excellent, although I'm sure we would all like to have had more, particularly if the churches we are interested in are not included.

For the non-metropolitan Surrey historian it is surprising to find much of the introduction devoted to what are now London boroughs, where, of course, churches were more prolific. Thankfully, though, the whole of Surrey is covered, despite being split into two dioceses, Southwark and Guildford. Useful maps allow you to trace the relevant parish entries. Altogether an invaluable tool.

ANNE MILTON-WORSSELL

Peter Brandon, *A History of Surrey*, published by Phillimore, Chichester, 1998, price £15.95. Hardback, 144pp, illus. ISBN 1 86077 031 2

Although there have been various revisions and reprints since the original book appeared in 1977, it is good to have a completely new edition of this history of Surrey, which retains its well-tried format, dealing chronologically with the different periods from contrasted thematic viewpoints, eg 'Remodelling the landscape (1740–1840)' and 'Agriculture (1780–1860)'. This is a popular history, which is aimed at the general, rather than the specialist reader. The short chapters facilitate ease of reading.

The book covers the 'geographical' county as it existed before 1888, but Dr Brandon is careful throughout to stress the influence of London upon the personality, the feel of Surrey, while showing that parts of the county retain their rural society, together with a rural way of life. Clearly, he feels that this is due, in part, to the close correspondence between the natural regions and their underlying geological structure, and he shows how this has been reflected in the development of the landscape and of land use.

There is a valuable study of Surrey towns, although there is no apparent reason for the order in which the towns are arranged, and it is unfortunate that there is no cross-referencing between the studies of Guildford on pages 125–7 and that of the town in the mid-16th century on pages 49–50, which could well have been combined.

The appeal of the book is greatly enhanced by the careful selection and reproduction of the wide variety of monochrome and colour photographs and maps of various dates. Norden's map of 1607 (plate V), however, loses much of its interest from such reproduction. The modern maps are clearly drawn, although it would have been helpful, for instance, if there had been additional dates on the railway map (page 116), particularly in the Leatherhead-Guildford area.

There is an extensive bibliography and a comprehensive index.

ALAN GILLIES

Melvyn Blatch, *The Churches of Surrey*, published by Phillimore, Chichester, 1997, price £30.00. Hardback, 232pp, 255 illus of which 43 in colour, ISBN 1 86077 002 9

In this attractive and well-produced book published shortly before his death Mervyn Blatch describes the churches of pre-1965 Surrey, including the area lost to Greater London but excluding inner London (the former LCC area) and Spelthorne. He covers all the pre-19th century churches and many 19th and 20th century examples. Victorian village churches are fairly comprehensively covered; urban churches are treated more selectively. A small number of non-parochial buildings are included, notably Guildford cathedral, the Lovekyn chapel at Kingston, Watts' chapel at Compton and Charterhouse school chapel, together with one church of a non-Anglican denomination, the Catholic Apostolic church at Albury.

The arrangement is alphabetical from Abinger to Wotton. The descriptions, although reflecting personal knowledge, are largely expansions, fully acknowledged, of entries in the Buildings of England volume for Surrey. By comparison with BOE Blatch's judgements are bland and echo an earlier generation of church visitors: 'pleasing', 'notable', 'much to enjoy'. The early historical content is the least satisfactory part of the text. Experts will notice errors and non-experts will not appreciate the significance of much of the information. It is not always clear whether Blatch is referring to a date as the earliest existence of a church, the earliest surviving feature or the earliest evidence of a link between the place and a religious house. The earliest reference to a rector or vicar may reflect the survival of evidence rather than the inception of the benefice, as sometimes seems to be implied, and the relationship between religious houses and the worship and fabric of the churches they appropriated or of which they were patrons requires more sophisticated discussion than is provided here. The background to Victorian building, rebuilding, extension and furnishing is more reliable and made more meaningful to the reader and there is often useful discussion of new furnishing and reordering over the past twenty years.

The introduction is predominantly a chronological account of church building and furnishing in Surrey, complementing the parochial descriptions. Here also there are weaknesses in the historical background, 'Surrey, however, became Christian about AD 393' being a good example. Blatch assumes that when the king presented to a church because of the voidance of a see or an abbacy this is evidence of ecclesiastical dereliction of duty.

The great strength of the book lies in its illustrations, most of them taken by Blatch himself. Over 200 black-and-white photographs incorporated in the text and 43 colour photographs provide an attractive and often informative record of the county's churches. The colour photographs in particular, usually of details or of furnishings, are quite mouth-watering. The page showing the chancel of Lower Kingswood and exteriors of Pixham church and Watts' chapel provides images of the unconventional to refresh the most jaded church crawler and the page with Woking convent Lady chapel, Beddington's organ gallery and the East Horsley look-out presents an exhilarating tonal range. The black-and-white photographs are also well composed and well lit and many of them show infrequently illustrated subjects.

The Churches of Surrey will appeal to many people who would not be tempted by the Buildings of England. It deserves to attract a wide range of readers to visit Surrey churches and enjoy the delights which, although more in details and furnishings than in overall impact, await them. If they do so, the book will have achieved its purpose.

DAVID ROBINSON

Alan Bott, *Godalming Parish Church: A Guide to the Parish Church of Saint Peter and Saint Paul*, published by Alan Bott and the Parochial Church Council of St Peter and St Paul, Godalming, 3rd edn 1997, price £5.00. 88pp, 141 illustrations and photographs, ISBN 0 9530939 0 5

The word 'Guide' in the title very much understates the wealth and depth of material that Alan Bott has gleaned and marshalled in this study of an undeniably fine living example of church architecture. Indeed, this is a study benefiting fully from the author's direct experience and close involvement with repair, conservation and building works to this church over twenty years as churchwarden.

This book should not be confused with the short *Guide* (also written by Alan Bott) which fits better one's normal expectations of a church guide. This latter is not the subject of this review but in itself gives a very succinct introductory flavour.

Starting with a short historical overview of the parish, the reader is led chronologically through the development of the church in detail up to the present day — all well supported by contemporary prints, drawn detail and photographs. As the centuries pass, one is given increasing pastoral and human insight into the various changes and development culminating with a sense of strong expectations for the future — and all in only the first third of the book!

In the middle third, detailed reviews are given on the decorative features, furnishings, fixtures and artefacts ranging from carved Anglo-Saxon stones and medieval wall painting (*SyAC*, 83, 21–35, 1996) to altar furnishings and silver plate. This is followed in the last third by Appendices presenting further information on the carved roof bosses, the organ, and the altar plate and other silver as well as reviewing previous restoration work, links with important individuals/families and recounting previous vicars and rectors.

This church presents features for virtually every period and was, thanks to the enlightened views of some of those who have gone before, fortunate not to have been corrupted by the Victorian desire to 'improve on history'. Alan Bott does full justice to these aspects and provides a work which complements numerous books on church architecture and artefacts, and also provides a useful basis for comparison with other churches.

ANDREW NORRIS