

Reviews

History of Bedfordshire, 1066-1888 by Joyce Godber (Beds. C.C. 1969, £3.00)

First impressions related to a vision like a Phoenix rising out of the morass. For so long, serious scholars working on Bedfordshire have laboured like Christian in the Slough of Despond, relying on the labours of the pre-World War I generation of scholars that produced the three volumes of the *Victoria County History of Bedfordshire*, respectively in 1904, 1908 and 1912, supplemented by the volumes of the *Bedfordshire Historical Record Society*, the *Bedfordshire Magazine* and more recently the *Bedfordshire Archaeological Journal*. The County Archivist Emerita has now altered this: a fine volume, finely produced, that is the *History of Bedfordshire, 1066-1888*. Now it will be for other, less endowed counties to look, to admire and to say "would that our shire had been so well served".

Of course, an archaeological reviewer may cavil at the opening chapter, entitled 'Before the Conquest', but who would doubt that the changing viewpoints over the last half-century on Anglo-Saxon archaeology leave all but the specialist in that field at times perplexed and baffled as one tries to relate a paper of 1962 to one of 1964 or one of 1966, let alone the problems when relating an even older study to present day viewpoints? This, specialist, field is not Miss Godber's and it is only right that her attempt to tread the Strait Path through this should have taken the form it did; an account of each cemetery from the most recently available account of it. If anything, this serves to demonstrate our changing interpretations in a field where the greater percentage is still ignorance.

Equally it would be petty for a reviewer to point to those areas where research subsequent to Miss Godber's book has deepened our knowledge. This is as it must be but we shall always remember that here was one of those rare volumes that without pretension set itself to do the near impossible—to write the history of a single English county for the last millenium and more within a quarter million words—and achieved it! Now we may walk from the House Beautiful to the

Interpreter's House and still remain within the confines of Miss Godber's book. There will be points where it will be modified, where new interpretations replace older ones, where fuller publication of the source material will amplify a hazy outline, but these are the ways and the objects of historical research and publication: to deepen men's knowledge of the past. But for Bedfordshire's past, we will turn, as we still turn to Dugdale for Warwickshire or Nichols for Leicestershire, to Miss Godber's book for this century's remaining three decades and the decades still to come of the twenty-first and succeeding centuries, Miss Godber, you have done the county proud; may we, your friends and admirers, continue with you to do it proud by solid scholarship, well-written and superbly illustrated, as we hope your scholarship will be rewarded in the ways it should be: by long and fruitful use — and by your University.

D.H.K.

Discovering Regional Archaeology: Eastern England. By James Dyer (Shire Publications, 1969, 22½p)

This little book is the first in a projected series of regional guides—by various authors—designed to accompany James Dyer's recent handbook *Discovering Archaeology in England and Wales* (also published by Shire, and reviewed in our volume IV by D H K [ennett]). Usually, such guides have to give over much space to a general introduction to the subject; but Dyer has had the good idea of giving this information in a separate book—that already mentioned—thus allowing the authors of the regional guides to come to grips with their subject straightaway.

The book covers the counties of Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Huntingdonshire, Lincolnshire, Norfolk, and Suffolk. A number of important sites from each of these counties is mentioned, and a brief, though on the whole remarkably adequate, description of each is given. The O.S. map sheet and grid reference

are given and the location of each site mentioned. Since the book is intended primarily for the travelling lay archaeologist this feature of the book is particularly valuable. The principle of selection appears to be that all important prehistoric sites are described, and *some* important Roman and Saxon sites are also described. Such a principle is obviously needed in a short book like this, but I think that the principle should have been stated at the outset. The author is most at home in the prehistoric period (which is, in fact, his speciality); on (e.g.) Anglo-Saxon churches he is less good; in particular I must stress that the surviving work at Wing is manifestly of 7th or 8th century date (Taylor period A), and not, as Dyer states, of 10th century date, though it is true that alterations were made in the latter half of the 10th century or in the 11th century (Taylor period C). And whilst on the subject of Saxon churches, surely Clapham, in Bedfordshire, is worthy of mention?

The line drawings, sadly, are not up to the standard of the text. Often they have a grubby look, and the symbols are far too large; this latter point is especially noticeable on the map of Lincolnshire, with its liberal sprinkling of huge neolithic pots. On the map of Bedfordshire one of these pots is apparently falling over! Further, the key to the symbols (inside front cover) is—at least in some cases—misleading; for instance, it suggests that Viking ships have been found at Renhold and Shillington in Bedfordshire (which they have not). To be sure, this impression will be dispelled by reading the text, but it is surely better not to give the impression in the first place.

Compensating for the less than good quality of the maps is the superb selection of photographs. All are of very good quality—even that of the 1883 excavation of the Taplow barrow. This latter is particularly absorbing. The choice of photographs is judicious. The only fault one can find is in the too heavy dotted line used to show the position of the rampart of the Roman town of Ancaster (pl. 15).

What does emerge from this publication is that it is written by a man who knows his subject, who has the desire to impart this knowledge to others, and whose desire is matched by an obvious ability to do this. So far as content goes it will (I think) serve well those for whom it is intended.

At this point a reviewer normally concludes. But in this instance I must say something about the

production of the book. Dyer has been done less than justice by his publishers. First, the book is skimmed: the map of Bedfordshire looks as though it has been placed in a convenient space and that of Cambridgeshire almost bumps into the text above it! And was it really necessary to print the last page of text on the inside back cover? Secondly, the pages of my copy are already beginning to come out; this is always a sad thing, but particularly when the book is intended for a good deal of use in the field. Of the mediocre cover drawing I shall say nothing.

Dyer's useful and well thought-out text deserves better treatment from his publishers.

T.P.S.

Anglo-Saxon Pottery and the Settlement of England by J N L Myres (Oxford at the Clarendon Press, £5.00).

Anglo-Saxon pottery has for long been the special field of the President of the Society of Antiquaries and Bodley's Librarian Emeritus. It is therefore fitting to welcome his Rhind Lectures for 1965 on his especial field. Here is presented an account of the nature and distribution of the material; its formal and decorative typology; an historical analysis of the settlement of England, divided by Myres into three phases; and some aspects of the social and economic features of the settlement. Embodying a lifetime's research, Myres' views command respect but when, for instance, he is discussing Buckelurnen one finds his use of the evidence of associated brooches and other metalwork less than convincing. It is strange to present as 'fifth century and predominantly in the second half of it' the birth of a type whose main associations, as Myers' footnote lists, are with objects of the second half of the fourth century.

Myres has given us also the fullest publication yet of the Anglo-Saxon pottery of England. Some 346 pots are illustrated by line drawing and thirty by half-tone plate. It barely represents a tithe of the four thousand that one hopes Myres will publish as a *Corpus Vasorum Saxonum* but the pieces selected have the good blend that is the familiar, like the Sandy Buckelurnen, and the unknown, like the plain vessels from Kempston or the small ones from East Shefford. Certainly

the illustrations are good, and, as most of Myres' drawings, informative about the vessel shown.

The price, however, is something this reviewer finds a little steep; five pounds for 267 pages with 51 line drawings and eight plates with 31 half-tones. Even in these days of high learned book prices, a volume that should be on every archaeologist's shelf may gain less than its due use through no fault of its distinguished author who has given us his considered verdict on the field of study that has been his lifetime's work. We are grateful for this: it is with renewed anticipation and interest that we await the Corpus that must surely follow the Rhind Lectures.

D.H.K.

Discovering Castles in Eastern England. By John Kinross (Shire Publications, 1968: 22½p)

Since the fairly recent formation of Shire Publications (Tring) a number of interesting and helpful little books has been produced: all are aimed, of course, at a non-specialist public. Several of these are of general archaeological interest; such is *Discovering Castles in Eastern England* by John Kinross, which sets out to describe briefly some of the more outstanding castles in the region (Beds., Cambs., Essex, Herts., Leics., Lincs., Northants., Norfolk, Rutland, and Suffolk). In this review I shall deal only with the general matters and with the Bedfordshire material.

The book opens with a short introduction presumably designed to set the scene, as it were, for descriptions of individual castles which follow. Unfortunately, Kinross seems not to be fully cognizant of the more recent research into the question of castle origins in this country; for instance, there is no mention of ring-works, which are coming to seem as important as mottes in the development of the castle. Moving to a slightly later time, we may note that Kinross makes no mention of those motte-and-bailey castles which were abandoned after the conquest: very many of the smaller motte-and-bailey and ring-work castles must have suffered this fate. Some mention should also have been made of those stone keeps—such as Colchester (c. 1080) and Castle Rising (c. 1140) in the region covered by the book under review—which were constructed of stone *de novo* and so did not replace earlier mottes on the same

site. For the later Middle Ages Kinross is a little better; though the gunports at Kirby Muxloe (1480) are scarcely early (*pace* Sidney Toy) gunports appear in the Canterbury Westgate and at Southampton at least a century earlier. By 1480 they were quite common, occurring at (e.g.) Herstonceux, Raglan, Warwick, and Someries. Kinross then goes on to deal with defences (but not *castles* surely?) in the Civil War period.

Of course, a short introduction must of necessity leave out much of importance, but Kinross has left out far *too* much important material. One is left wondering whether an introduction of little more than one small page is really any better than no introduction at all.

A short bibliography follows this introduction. This should prove useful to readers of *Discovering Castles*; it includes all the more important books at introductory level except (strangely) R. Allen Brown's *English Castles* (Batsford, 1962).

Bedfordshire is the first county to be dealt with in the section that follows. Bedfordshire is not rich in castle remains, and in consequence only one building is dealt with fully, though seven others are mentioned. The one receiving fuller treatment is Someries Castle, near Luton; as Kinross points out, this is not really a castle at all but a manor house. This building, until recently, had received less attention than it deserves and it is pleasing to see its inclusion in this book, together with an excellent photograph by J.W. Whitelaw. It is therefore particularly sad to have to record the entirely hopeless muddle into which Kinross has got himself in dealing with this monument. Someries was not founded by Sir John Rotherham at all; the present brick building was started by John Lord Wenlock, and was later added to by Thomas (not John) Rotherham. The estate of Someries itself existed much earlier than this, at least as early as 1309, when it is mentioned in the *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem*. Kinross slightly misquotes Leland's *Itinerary* relating to Someries, and his inserted date of 1448 is incorrect: the *Close Rolls* record that Wenlock received Someries in 1464.

Kinross has obviously not read any of the more recent considerations of Someries (e.g. by this reviewer in volume 3 of this JOURNAL). And despite his careful instructions on how to get to the site he seems not to have taken the trouble himself. Otherwise he would have seen that there is no 'inclined footway that corkscrewed to the

top', but a perfectly normal newel staircase. The 'whispering-pipe which carried a whisper from the basement to the parapet' is sheer nonsense: this is a semi-circular hand-hold built into the brickwork. The chapel is not 'the first building we come to' if the site is walked around—unless one enters through the chapel window! Kinross also mentions the 'squint which once looked into a large south hall', but there is no evidence that any room which may have existed there was a *hall* (a term not to be used carelessly).

Having finished with Someries, Kinross makes mention of Ampthill, Bedford, Clophill, Eaton Socon, Odell, Risinghoe, and Yelden. It should perhaps have been stated that the motte at Bedford may still be seen. At Eaton Socon excavation by C.F. Tebbutt and Peter Addyman in 1962 showed not that Castle Hill was a Saxon earthwork, but that a wattle and daub hall possibly of Saxon (but equally possibly of early Norman) date had existed on the site; similar buildings had been cut through when the later motte had been constructed. There is no evidence that the mound at Risinghoe is of Saxon date.

A useful feature of the book is the inclusion of the name of the owner of each of the more important castles described, together with hours of admission where these are applicable. At the end of the book is a helpful glossary, generally adequate, although 'drawbridge' should have been distinguished from 'turning bridge' by mention of chains in connection with the former. The term 'hall' might have been included to advantage.

A book of this sort is not intrinsically worth reviewing at such length, but it is obviously intended for, and will probably get, a wide

public; it is important therefore that its many errors and inadequacies be pointed out. The series is not intended, of course, for serious scholars and specialists, but that is no excuse for sloppy standards and lack of scholarship.

This small book has some potential—within its clear limitations—and I sincerely hope that there will be a chance for future revision in order to eliminate its far too numerous infelicities.

T.P.S.

Miscellanea edited by Joyce Godber (*Bedfordshire Historical Record Society* 49 (1970) £2.00 to non-members).

As this volume goes to press, the forty-ninth volume of the *Publications of the Bedfordshire Historical Record Society* appears. Of its contents, there is much to interest the readers of the *Bedfordshire Archaeological Journal*. One article in particular will appeal to those with architectural interests: 'The building accounts of Harrold Hall' edited by John Weaver. Here is a paper that reviews the building of a large house, 1608-1610, and reminds the archaeologist who may dig such a post-medieval site that the documentary evidence is of vital importance and should be studied *before* the excavation commences, so that the questions asked of the site may be formulated in relation to what is known already. The economic historian will find evidence of stability of wage rates at the time of a lull in the Tudor Inflation and the general reader will be fascinated by the detail of the account. This and the other papers of the volume may be commended to our readers.

D.H.K.