

## REVIEWS

FIELD ARCHAEOLOGY IN GREAT BRITAIN (Fifth Edition), Southampton; Ordnance Survey, 1973, pp. ix, 184; 30 text-figures. £1.50.

One of the first results of the appointment of O. G. S. Crawford as the first Archaeology Officer of the Ordnance Survey in 1920 was the appearance in the following year of *Field Archaeology*, a pamphlet of a few pages for the guidance of beginners in archaeological field-work. Enlarged, the notes have continued to be of value. This, the latest edition, is a considerable book. The subjects have been given new treatment, there are illustrations, and a considerably expanded bibliography.

Following an introductory section concerned with the Ordnance Survey and the national maps there are sections dealing with field-work generally, including air-photographs and their uses and advice on the non-archaeological practical aspects. Then following a time-scale the archaeology is treated mainly by periods. But while enough general information is provided as a setting in which sites and monuments are to be better understood, the emphasis throughout is on field-work and in particular on field-work without excavation. This is an approach which should act as an antidote for the attitude which sees archaeology only as a series of holes in the ground from which the archaeologist scarcely raises his head. It has been very much out of fashion in recent years, with references to "Crawford-type field-work" as if it were some kind of esoteric activity practised only by a limited few, whereas in a better-ordered world it would be a regular and essential preliminary to most excavation.

It is interesting to observe that this view is now changing under the pressure of the requirements of "rescue" archaeology, which has produced the need to know by means of systematic field-work what we have before we can decide what we ought to do about it. Field-research may now proceed with a deeper sense of purpose, not to say greater economy. *Field Archaeology* could not have appeared at a more opportune time from this point of view. It should be immensely valuable to all who find themselves engaged in field-work, and not only those who are in this situation for the first time. The north is perhaps somewhat better provided for than the west both in the text and in the bibliography. The book also has value for the interested but non-active reader, who will find it easy reading with useful explanations of phenomena in the landscape which often puzzle him. There will be further benefit if the same reader notes the views of the Survey archaeologists (shared by others) on the activities of the "lining up" enthusiasts who sit at their desks drawing lines between totally unrelated sites. *Field Archaeology* should constitute an antidote to those tempted into such pursuits. But the fact that *The Old Straight Track* is still with us makes repetition of the warning necessary. On a recent train-journey the eyes of this reviewer were confronted by a new paper-backed reprint in the hands of a fellow passenger. Dead it may be; but it refuses to lie down.

One or two further comments. Something more might have been said about parish boundaries and perhaps also about more recent field-patterns: they are important for a number of reasons and particularly for the study of roads. And as to roads, the reader might have been warned that while Roman roads are straight, all straight roads are not Roman, at least in enclosed country. The planned roads of the 18th-19th centuries (and the fields that go with them) retain their straightness, which contrasts with the more erratic behaviour of a Roman road as seen on the ground. The direct line between points survives, but the road itself has suffered too many vicissitudes over a long existence to survive in its original form. Straightness *may* be a sign of youth.

Finally, it is said that the extreme heat required to vitrify the masonry of certain stone-built forts in Scotland (and occasionally elsewhere) is due to the scarcity of oxygen when the lacing timbers of the rampart were fired. Whatever the problems attaching to these structures this cannot be so. Fifth-form chemistry (or is it physics?) recollected in antiquity taught that oxygen is essential to burning of any kind. It might be more likely that the cavities in which the timbers were set acted as flues to create a vigorous draught, thus increasing the supply of oxygen and causing the fire to burn more fiercely.

But such criticisms are of little importance in a book which ranges clearly and succinctly over a very wide subject. In conditions which have not been easy it maintains the high standards of the Archaeology Division of the Survey, and appearing at an opportune time should command a wide public.

W. F. Grimes

THE CERTIFICATE OF MUSTERS FOR BUCKINGHAMSHIRE IN 1522, edited by A. C. Chibnall, Buckinghamshire Record Society, volume 17, Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts Joint Publications series, JP 18; Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1973.

It is twenty-five years since Professor Chibnall embarked on the ambitious task of transcribing all the early taxation records relating to Buckinghamshire, now triumphantly completed with the publication of this handsome volume. In their introduction to Volume 8 (1950) Chibnall and the late A. Vere Woodman described the subsidy of 1524-5 as the Kelly's Directory of its time. In fact it was rather the second edition of the earlier general musters, indeed an alternative version in as much as many of the persons listed—the poorest men in particular—are different. It is also a condensed version in that it states only the source of wealth, either land, goods or wages, on which an individual was taxed, in contrast to the earlier survey which purports to itemise his whole substance.

Musters were held frequently during the 16th century, and the renewal of war with France in 1522 naturally occasioned a fresh survey of military resources. War was also expensive, and financing it a perennial headache for Tudor monarchs. Recent subsidies had fallen well short of what they had confidently been predicted to yield, mainly because of the near impossibility of obtaining realistic assessments. In an effort to mend matters the musters of 1522 were expanded into what the 18th-century historian Rapin de Thoyras likened to a new Domesday inquest. The commissioners were instructed to get from every man a sworn statement of the value of the whole of his real and personal property. The work was closely supervised by the government; commissions which complained of obstruction were told to begin all over again using any means, not excluding the malicious gossip of neighbours, to obtain accurate estimates of wealth, while at the same time taking care to reassure reluctant citizens that the sole purpose was to determine their ability to contribute to the furnishing of arms and harness. The catch was that as soon as the survey was complete, by the autumn of 1522, men worth £20 and more (and later those worth £5 as well) were compelled to subscribe to a loan to the King levied at a rate of ten percent.

In reaction to this chicanery, not to mention the enormous sum of a quarter of a million sterling resulting from it, the Parliament of 1523 bitterly opposed Cardinal Wolsey's demand for a general subsidy at twenty percent based on the new assessments and conceded very much less, while the so-called Amicable Grant in 1525 provoked so much resistance that it had to be abandoned. There can be little doubt but that under cover of organising the defence of the realm the government had come disconcertingly near to discovering the real wealth of the nation, close enough to rouse Englishmen to defend their cherished birthright of never being effectively taxed.

So far as known these assessments were never again used as a basis of taxation, and their subsequent history is obscure. Most of the books disappeared. Originally remitted to the Star Chamber, they could well have perished when that Court was abolished in 1641. It is tempting to see in this the hand of some zealous reformer bent on expunging the executive records of an institution which had come to be regarded as an instrument of tyranny—the Decrees of the Court have likewise vanished without trace—in much the same way that Antonio Llorente burnt most of the archives of the Spanish Inquisition. A few volumes found their way into other departments, possibly borrowed for reference, and so survived; copies may have been retained locally in some cases.

The original of the Bucks return went the way of the rest, happily not before it had been transcribed early in the 17th century, very possibly in the course of early antiquarian research. Chibnall argues that the source was a copy preserved among the sheriff's papers which at some stage was annotated by Sir William Fleetwood of Great Missenden, some time Recorder of London, and Francis Thynne, both of whom were founder members of the Elizabethan Society of Antiquaries. He further suggests that the extant copy was commissioned by Francis, fourth earl of Bedford who was both a student and a friend to literary men. All that is known for certain is that it turned up at a London bookseller's in 1922 and was purchased by the Bodleian Library.

There is every indication that the transcript was made with great care: the scribe notes the apparent tearing out of the leaf which he assumed to have contained the entry for Simpson parish. It is impossible to say for certain whether he overlooked other sections; Caversfield, a small detached parish, might easily have been forgotten in the first instance, while the little townships of Cholesbury and Hawridge might have been lumped in with neighbouring parishes. As to individuals, there is no mention of Thomas Ramsey, lord of the manor of Hitcham, perhaps because the fact of his being a minor in ward to the Crown caused some confusion during the original compilation; he is not recorded in Little Marlow either where he owned the manor of Losemere. But whatever blemishes the book may contain—and most appear to be trivial—it remains almost a unique record. There is a book for Gloucestershire, wanting one whole hundred as well as the city of Gloucester itself, and a complete survey of the tiny county of Rutland. Beyond these only fragments have survived, the largest covering roughly half of Berkshire. The Warwickshire volume, reported by the Historical Manuscripts Commission a century ago, has since vanished without trace.

The Buckinghamshire volume may not quite match up to those for Rutland and Babergh hundred in Suffolk, failing as it does to state the name of the lord of each man as well as his status or occupation, as called for by the instructions governing the survey. Yet in some ways it is the best of the lot, embracing a large area and 7,800 persons, exclusive of the great number of non-resident freeholders listed in many townships. Gloucestershire may be a much bigger county, but although nearly 9,000 inhabitants are returned the lists appear defective in parts, and moreover the subsidy rolls are far more complete. It is here that Buckinghamshire scores heavily since in order to make full use of the musters it is essential to combine them with the subsidy of 1524-5. Despite the shortness of the interval between the making of them there was a very large turnover in personnel, far greater than can be reasonably accounted for by the obvious explanations of death and migration. The conclusion must be that neither was perfect, and hence that they are complementary.

From the paucity of military equipment itemised it is clear that the art of war was neglected, more so even than in a good many other shires. However, it is the meticulous details of wealth and who owned it which makes this document an indispensable

source for the historian of the local community. The reliability of the assessments must of course be open to question, nevertheless the values assigned to the property of the Church closely match those stated in the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* of 1535, while in a few cases assessments of lay-owned land can be checked with broadly satisfactory results. Figures given for goods and chattels must in general be accepted at face value, although the occasional surviving probate inventory tends to confirm their basic veracity. Perhaps the most revealing feature is the very large number of persons said to own no goods at all; in practice this should be taken as meaning "less than one pound", a category defined in the Subsidy Act of 1523, in accordance with which a good many were in due course taxed on wages. This was the only attempt to record the whole of the population during the 16th century, and not until the Hearth Tax of the Restoration period were the poor listed again with anything approaching thoroughness. Thus we have the data for reconstructing the social pyramid as it existed before the Reformation and the price revolution. Even more important is the evidence of the distribution of wealth controversy over which raged just as fiercely then as in our own time. The rights and wrongs of the debate on the state of the common weal in the 1540s have often proved tantalisingly elusive to scholars thanks to the failure of the protagonists to quantify their premises. Yet the necessary data had already been gathered, and Charles Chibnall has earned the gratitude of all students of the Tudor age in making this substantial piece of it easily and attractively accessible.

Julian Cornwall

RESCUE ARCHAEOLOGY, ed. Philip A. Rahtz, Penguin Books (1974), 299pp. 34 plates. £0.90.

In Philip Rahtz's own phrase, this book is intended as a 'tub-thumper' and opens with a dismal conspectus of the wholesale destruction of large chunks of our historic environment by road construction, urban renewal, extractive industry and, less obviously, agriculture and forestry. But it is a collection of essays written by practitioners not preservationists, twenty authors who accept the reality of destruction and are actively involved in picking up the pieces, and the resulting book is lively, extremely readable and at times even entertaining.

Archaeology has changed drastically with the last decade, largely through the pressure of the rescue situation. Amongst the most striking changes has been the arrival of the full-time excavator and his team in response to realisation that earth-moving on any scale virtually anywhere may destroy important facts about the past and that the past in Britain consists not only of villas and hill-forts, important as they may be, but of countless other traces of man's past activity on the landscape. Inevitably certain essays stand out.

Philip Rahtz, now Senior Lecturer in Medieval Archaeology at Birmingham and among the pioneers in the field of rescue archaeology, gives an entertainingly personal account of his early work as a free-lance excavator working for the Inspectorate of Ancient Monuments. Dubbed a sort of "archaeological tramp" by one academic, his achievements during these years were impressive. With growth of awareness on a wide front of the true scale of the problem, in recent years a number of groups have emerged funded to a great extent by the Department of the Environment and concerned exclusively with rescue work. Some of these are based on *ad hoc* committees, others work from museums, planning departments or Development Corporations.

An interesting account of one team working in Wales is given by Chris Musson. This group of experienced diggers believe firmly that the actual processes of excavation, direction and interpretation are inseparable, and that there is no substitute for doing the work with their own hands, thereby keeping close control over the recovery

of information. They are concerned to advance excavation techniques to the limit and find much in favour of excavation during winter months for instance, when soil differences can often be more easily observed than would be possible during traditional summer digs. Whilst there is little place for the amateur in this sort of close-knit team, Brian Philp has approached the matter quite differently. The achievements of his group in Kent are substantial, the excavation of Faversham Abbey and the discovery and excavation of the fort of the Classis Britannica at Dover to name but two. Having little time for archaeological establishments, he built up over the years a large volunteer group at the same time as insisting on sacrifice, dedication and discipline, also giving (rumour has it) "digger of the month" awards. A sort of General Walker of the archaeological world, under his stern directions "armies of volunteers have travelled thousands of miles to sweat in sun or freeze in snow". Although able to whip up tremendous local enthusiasm, even he has eventually found the formation of a nucleus of permanent paid staff to be necessary.

The contribution of amateurs, or part-time archaeologists as many prefer to be called, will always be vital to Archaeology, but for effective long-term work of high standard in any area skilled permanent staff are clearly demanded, both for the process of excavation and, of equal importance, subsequent publication. A glance at the article by Martin Biddle on Winchester or Peter Addyman's on York will show why this has to be so. Biddle's distinguished work at Winchester is well known, so it might be helpful to indicate the sort of problem which the York Archaeological Unit was created to deal with. Here a well-intentioned ring road aimed at preserving above-ground structures was routed through "six major Roman cemeteries, six Roman roads, at least two Roman suburbs; through areas of possible Anglo-Saxon and Viking occupation; through the centres of three medieval suburbs; across the sites of five medieval churches long since demolished; across one major priory; through the medieval Jewish cemetery; through or near the sites of perhaps six medieval hospitals or similar structures; and doubtless through other yet undiscovered archaeological sites." Since publication of this book and fortunately for the archaeologists' sake, construction of this particular road has been postponed, but continuing piecemeal development within the City will continue to keep the York Unit busy. As a number of the essays show only too clearly, it is time that archaeological survey and, if necessary, excavation be considered a routine part of any major earth-moving operation, whether in town or country, and the proportionately small costs involved built into projects at the estimate stage.

Other essays of particular note include Iain Crawford's highlighting the sad state of archaeology in Scotland and Graham Webster's who stresses that changing times call for a new approach to the training of personnel. David Leigh strikes a cautious note when he reminds excavators that there must be adequate facilities for conservation and storage to match the increased output of excavated material, and last but not least Thomas Arnold stresses the need for publicity and urges archaeologists to communicate the results of their work to as wide a public as possible.

There are a few essays which might have been best left unwritten. Robert Kiln's jolly approach for instance does little to enhance either archaeology or the role of the part-timer. But on the whole it is a stimulating book, well illustrated and a good introduction to one important aspect of archaeological work in Britain today. Inevitably the reader will be drawn to consider the archaeological challenges of our own County and perhaps hope that some day the full cover now available to the Milton Keynes Development Corporation may be matched by similar provision for the remainder of the County.

Michael Farley

A HISTORY OF MILTON KEYNES AND DISTRICT. Vol. 2, 1800-1950, by Sir Frank Markham. White Crescent Press, Luton, 1975 £3.50.

To write the history of a district, particularly one so varied and so recently created as Milton Keynes, is not easy. In his first volume Sir Frank was successful in linking local events and personalities to the national story. In this second and final volume his task is far more difficult as Sir Frank recognises in his preface. To keep the text within a reasonable length he has had to be much more selective in the subjects he chooses to record and this does mean that at times the amount of space given to one aspect of his theme may seem arbitrary. This particularly applies to recent years; Sir Frank has an enviably wide range of acquaintances in the area and makes full and good use of personal reminiscence, but the amount of space devoted to recent parliamentary elections in which he himself was involved for instance does at times seem out of proportion. It should of course be said that his recollections of these contests are interesting and valuable in themselves.

That being said the final result is most impressive. As in the earlier volume Sir Frank has read very widely and has digested a large body of material from which his selection is generally satisfactory. He writes fluently and racily and covers almost every aspect of his subject—transport and the railways, agriculture, schools, chapels, industry and sport amongst them. There is one admirable chapter called *The Parish Pump* where the author writes "... But there is a gentler side to history, the history of industrious men coming together fortified by democratic election, who patiently month after month face up to the problems of ensuring good water supplies, sanitary sewage arrangements, paved roads and street lighting. It is the history of the parish pump, of the district sludge cart. But it is not dull history." These are wise words and it is a tribute to the author that he can make even the minutes of a District Council come alive.

The book is illustrated with forty excellent plates, well produced as indeed is the whole book.

E.V.

EXCAVATIONS AT BRADWELL PRIORY, D. C. Mynard, *Milton Keynes Journal* no. 3.

Mr Mynard prints a transcript of the well-known survey of the priory buildings in 1529, and is able to show that most of the buildings survive there at the present day. Mr Stuart Rigold describes the chapel. This important paper is illustrated by four coloured plates.

THE BOOK OF CHESHAM by Clive Birch, Barracuda Books Ltd 1974. 12 × 9 Pp. 160.

The chief praise of this work is that it collects within its covers a large quantity of valuable illustrative material from many sources, each being accompanied by a helpful note. A number of slight but scholarly historical essays introduce the reader to the past of the town and give cohesion to the whole. The series is to continue.