

REVIEWS

THE FIRST FIFTY YEARS, Richard Sadler, Penn Country Branch of C.P.R.E., 1980.

This admirably written booklet commemorates a half century of devoted work on behalf of the countryside of South Bucks. The Penn Branch was the first branch of the Council for the Protection of Rural England to be started in the county and from the beginning has been a powerful and effective pressure group. The problems it has had to face have also grown enormously since 1930; in the early years they were 'ribbon development' and outside advertising, but to-day members have to be ready to spend many weeks at public enquiries about gravel extraction, motorways or immense housing schemes. Their many successes and occasional 'defeats' are candidly and amusingly described by their present chairman who rightly pays particular tribute to the now legendary Mrs. Pitcher, Hon Secretary from 1951 to 1980.

E.V.

REFLECTIONS OF LIFE IN HADDENHAM by Walter Rose, edited by Elsie Rose and Peter Gulland, 1980. £1.50, obtainable from Mr. L. L. Boyd, 10 Church Way, Haddenham.

This book contains a selection of chapters from two unpublished works by Walter Rose and articles in Haddenham Parish Magazine. It begins with open-field farming and ends in 1953, but far the most interesting and lively sections tell us about the village in his young days from about 1870 to 1914. He had a gift for describing exactly how business was done in the past – the payment of

tithes, the Court Baron with its traditional dinner, the repair of the roads with flints from the fields, and so on. It was a bad time for Haddenham with agriculture in recession, terrible suffering among the poor and a general decline in standards, but for the young a new world opened up with the invention of the bicycle. Here was a new sport which everyone could enjoy; it was better to be seen riding a bicycle than a horse. The story of the progress of the village boys from "bone-shakers" to the modern "safety" bicycle is the best in the book.

E.M.E.

A SOUTH BUCKS VILLAGE – THE HISTORY OF HEDGERLEY. Hedgerley Historical Society, 1980.

'Chapters from the History of Hedgerley' would perhaps be a more accurate subtitle for this modest book; it is encouraging to note that further chapters are in fact contemplated. Seventeen people have contributed to it; all praise to their industry, and to the energy of the compiler, Mr. Michael Rice. Inevitably their contributions are of uneven value, but the names of Mr. Clive Rouse (writing about the church) and Mr. Colin le Messurier (on medieval Hedgerley) assure us of a high standard of scholarship, and Dr. Audrey Baker has a learned chapter on the manorial history (a specialist reader may lament the lack of references here, but the book is not aimed at the specialist reader). Hilary Stainer's chapter on the local brick industry is of particular interest and value. There is a chapter on the parish register and the churchwardens' accounts, and the history of the older houses is outlined (The writer on The Quaker House may well be right in rejecting one of the Royal Commission's dates, but it is evidence, not assertion, that will convict them of error).

It is no dispraise to say that the book is heavily weighted towards the recent past; in a compilation of this kind this is inevitable, and it probably reflects the public's interests. The 'further chapters' may perhaps redress the balance. They might usefully include a piece on agrarian history, and also a more informative map – preferably with a scale.

J.C.T.

'*King Henry of Windsor and the London Pilgrim*' by Brian Spencer. COLLECTANEA LONDINENSA, ed. J. Bird, H. Chapman, J. Clark, London and Middx. Arch. Soc. Special Paper No. 2 (1978), £1.75. '*John Schorn*' by Canon Derek Eastman. REPORT OF THE SOCIETY OF FRIENDS OF ST. GEORGES AND THE DESCENDANTS OF THE KNIGHTS OF THE GARTER, 1979–80.

The last word about Master John Schorn, Rector of North Marston from 1290 to 1314, who wore his knees horny with prayer and put the Devil in a boot, will probably never be written. Two more brief publications have appeared during the last few years, throwing more light on different aspects of the life of this saintly (but not canonised) priest, whose career after his death was so much more restless than before it.

Brian Spencer, Senior Keeper in the Department of Medieval Antiquities at the Museum of London, shows how, when John Scorn's remains were removed from North Marston (where they had become an object of nationwide pilgrimage) to Windsor in 1481, his saintly reputation became somehow conflated with that of King Henry VI, also an object of pilgrimage since his burial at Chertsey. Mr. Spencer illustrates in his paper all known pilgrim badges of Master John Schorn.

Canon Eastman gives an admirably lucid account of all that is known about his subject and the circumstances surrounding the removal of his remains a century after his death. He admits – and every Buckinghamshire person will applaud him – to a feeling of some guilt at this piece of asset stripping, and when he moved to St. Georges he caused some amends to be made, 598 years after the event, by organising a pilgrimage of 100 North Marston parishioners to the Windsor shrine. There they poured a libation of water from the sacred well at North Marston on the floor of what is now the Lincoln Chapel, Canon Eastman also illustrates and discusses the wall painting of John Schorn revealed and recognised in a private house in Sherborne, Dorset, in 1962. There is no doubt about the authenticity of the attribution of the picture, but equally no explanation as to how John Schorn comes to be shown as a bishop – mitre, staff and all.

M.D.

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE RECORD OFFICE. Annual Report and List of Accessions, 1980.

How encouraging to read that there were 2,839 personal visits to the County Record Office in 1980 – 22% more than in 1979. And how splendid if some of the results were to find their way into the pages of this journal!

Encouraging, too, to note the steady flow of acquisitions – surely there is an increase in that quarter too? Particularly worthy of note are Professor Chibnall's princely gift of his personal collection of deeds and other documents, extending back to the thirteenth century, and Lord Howe's public-spirited deposition of his entire estate archive. For the importance of the latter this reviewer is able to vouch – the Penn material goes back to at least the mid-sixteenth century, and none of it has ever been mined by historians. Even more important for Buckinghamshire studies – because covering a wider area, and spanning a longer period – are the papers of the Spencer-Bernard family of Nether Winchendon. These moreover are already catalogued.

It is good that contemporary records are taking their proper place among the accessions, and not only those of local authorities, but of voluntary bodies and local businesses too. Yet out of the vast flood of paper which flows through our lives every day, how little, really, is being panned for gold even now. If more were to come in, Mr. Hanley and his hard-pressed staff would no doubt cope as valiantly as ever; but it is reassuring to read that their staffing problems are viewed with sympathy by the responsible committee.

J.C.T.

OBITUARY

CICELY BAKER 1900–1980. Miss Cicely Baker, Vice-President and Honorary Member of the Society died on 10 September 1980, a month after her eightieth birthday. At the memorial service at St. James, Birtton on 17 September the President gave the following address:

It is not easy to speak on occasions like this; friends say afterwards “You didn't mention this” or “I never knew that”. This is because so many people have facets of character or of interests which they manage to keep in separate compartments. But to-day when we, her friends, are gathered here to remember Cicely Baker, and to bid farewell, no such difficulty arises. For if anyone was all of a piece it was Cicely. She was the same to all – direct, witty, out-spoken, opinionated perhaps, but with massive commonsense. Her more outrageous sallies – and they could be outrageous – were always tempered by her sense of humour and of the ridiculous. She could certainly upset the thin-skinned or the conventional, but those who disagreed with her – and who at times did not? – never doubted her absolute honesty. Her mind was sharp and quick; her use of English exact. Driving with her on some outing in the 'fifties, she said, “I cannot understand it – that's the second village we've passed called 'Labby' – I explained that it was a new-fangled roadside parking place called a 'lay-by'. “How ridiculous”, she said, “and in any case it ought to be 'lie-by' and she was, of course, correct.

If her life had developed differently she might well have been a great explorer in the mould of Freya Stark; as it was, she loved travel even if she had reservations about foreigners. She told me once that she was going to Russia and, because I had just been there, asked for advice. I suggested that she did not contradict Intourist guides too violently and refrain from arguing with anyone in uniform. “Well” she said rather ominously, “I'm going to take my *heaviest* walking stick”. I had visions of our Ambassador having to bail her out of the Lubianka prison but happily no international incident occurred.

Buckinghamshire, and Aylesbury in particular, were her life. Her Father, Doctor Baker, moved from Surrey where Cicely was born, to Ceely House in Church Street when she was two years old. It was only six years later that the Bucks Archaeological Society purchased the old Grammar School