

# REVIEWS

## PORTRAIT OF A SHOOT

Caroline Hyman

Published 2010: CH Photography

ISBN 978-0-9566496-0-7.

132 pp, 128 colour photographs. Price £40

Ten years ago Caroline Hyman produced a book of black and white photographs of the Hambleden valley which offered a fascinating visual portrait of the lives and landscape of this attractive area of Buckinghamshire. This is now followed by her pictures of a country pursuit, which some may find offensive because she records aspects and personalities of driven pheasant and partridge shooting.

From the eighteenth century the country squire walked his estate gun in hand – Rev William Goodall of Dinton was shooting twice a week in the 1820s – but the Edwardian era saw ostentatious country house weekends and the growth of shoots with huge game bags. Such grand scale slaughter required landowners to reorganise their parks and farms to provide sufficient birds, and to engage employees with specialist skills to maintain the standards of the shoots. The decline of the country house in the twentieth century has not been accompanied by a decline in the popularity of the shoot. Indeed, companies and syndicates are prepared to put considerable sums of money into the sport. It is, of course, an expensive pastime and therefore the fluctuations of financial fortunes have an impact upon the ability to keep up these shoots. At present they seem fairly secure but who can be certain about the future? This is why this book is such a valuable contribution to future understanding.

Caroline Hyman's photographs show how farms are cultivated to provide cover and how many people earn their livings from involvement in shooting. This is a comprehensive and very detailed book, each section preceded by a portrait and a short quotation from one person who contributes to the successful shoot. The farmer, the landowner, the gamekeeper, the gunsmith, the beater, the caterer, the dog handler, the customer, all are here in the photographs, mostly taken in the

area neighbouring the Hambleden valley. The photographer has a good eye for both landscape and for people doing their work and it is a pleasing volume to leaf through, even for anyone who does not approve of the killing of animals for sport. One gains many small insights: for example, because hatchery reared young pheasants must be naturalised to fend for themselves, so crops need to sustain insect and butterfly populations which give spin-off benefits for song birds from the retention of wild flowers and weeds on field margins. It makes a strong case for the conservation benefits of shooting estates. Each phase of the shoot is examined and the photographs combine to give a very sympathetic over-view of a country industry that is important not just to the participants but also to those who live around the shoots, and it is truly a portrait for those of us who are only bystanders. One small criticism is that there are no captions and little explanatory text till one gets to the end of the book.

*George Lamb*

## AN HISTORICAL ATLAS OF OXFORDSHIRE

Edited by Kate Tiller and Giles Darkes

Published in 2010 by Oxfordshire Record Society  
ISBN 978-0-902509-63-4 (paperback) and 978-0-902509-68-9 (casebound). Price £20 paperback, £35 casebound.

## AN HISTORICAL ATLAS OF HERTFORDSHIRE

Edited by David Short

Published in 2011 by Hertfordshire Publications  
(an imprint of University of Hertfordshire Press)  
ISBN 978-0-9542189-6-6. Price £25.

After a long wait, two come along together. The first historical atlas of a county covered Cheshire, and was published in 1958; it was followed by Suffolk in 1988 and by further counties at a quickening pace since then. As 2010 turned into 2011 the Oxfordshire and Hertfordshire offerings came out

within months of each other.

With similar formats (201 pages at 8½" x 11¼" for Oxon, 218 pages at 9½" x 12" for Herts), both atlases follow a generally-disciplined format with paired pages carrying a map illustrating an aspect of the county's history on the right hand side and explanatory text on the left. The more compact shape of Hertfordshire results in its maps taking up only two-thirds of a page, so that text can spread on to the lower part of the map page; this allows the Herts text to be more widely spaced, and thus easier on the eye, but does not produce any more text than is used in Oxon. Both atlases start with a list of maps and end with well-arranged indexes, so there should be no difficulty in finding a subject. Both have extensive bibliographies.

In Oxon the general arrangement of the book is chronological while the Herts maps have been grouped into subjects, with the maps which make up each subject arranged in date order. The Herts approach makes it more difficult to simply open the book and find topics without resorting to the index (for example the Civil War 1642-48 comes just after the post-1945 new towns). This minor disadvantage is compensated by the benefit of bringing together all the material on each subject in one place.

Most maps in the Herts atlas, and about half of those in Oxon, are based on a background of parish boundaries which are drawn at too small a scale to include parish names. This is successfully overcome in Herts by having a larger-scale fold-out map of named parishes inside the back cover; the fold-out can be left open while using the atlas. Oxon, however, places two enlarged index maps of parish names within the text *near* the front of the book (making them awkward to find), and prints them at right angles to the main set of maps, so that it is quite difficult to directly compare atlas maps with the index maps.

Both atlases start with predictable maps of topography and geology. They continue with such "bread and butter" features as Iron Age settlements, the spread of Saxon settlement, the dissolution of the monasteries, parliamentary enclosure of open fields, the building of canals, and population change. Beyond the core topics the wide diversity of subjects covered reflects the contrasting characters of the two counties and the different emphases of historical research within them. Thus Oxon has two maps dedicated to minster churches, while

Herts only mentions them briefly in its page on medieval parish churches; Oxon has a map of university and college property holdings before 1500, while Herts records bell founders 1570 – 1825, executions 1733 – 1914, and ice houses. Medieval and Tudor graffiti are only covered in Herts, apparently because that county has one of the largest collections of the genre in England. In modern history the contrast between the two counties continues. Oxon has maps of tourism, Cold War sites, and the motor industry, while Herts shows the pharmaceutical industry, gravel extraction, and film and TV studios.

The reviewer found a number of small omissions, inaccuracies, and inconsistencies in both atlases. For example, the potentially useful map of stage coach services in Herts is undated and the Oxon map of turnpike roads omits four of those roads in the area adjoining Bucks. But these are pin pricks in the quality of these two widely-researched and well-written books by an impressive array of contributors (50 in Herts and 42 in Oxon). In them an absorbing array of information about these counties is easily accessible, making them a "must" for any Bucks historians who want background to put their researches into context. Will a Buckinghamshire atlas fill the gap between them in the foreseeable future?

*Peter Gulland*

GONE WITH THE WIND: Windmills and those around Tring

Ian Petticrew and Wendy Austin

Published 2010: *thinkink*, 11-13 Philip Road, Ipswich, Suffolk, IP2 8BH.

202 pages with photographs and illustrations.

ISBN 978-0-9537924-7-4

£12.99. All proceeds from sales go to charities in Tring.

This delightful and well researched book covers not only the five main windmills in the Tring area, but also includes fascinating information on windmills in general, their construction and function, the history of milling, descriptions of millers and millwrights and even a chapter on windmills in literature. So, although its title suggests that it might be only of local relevance, in fact this volume will appeal to anyone with even a passing interest in

these impressive buildings within our rural landscape. In the forward, the authors explain how the project grew, out of an initial desire to simply record the windmills in and around Tring, into a book which covers “most facets of windmilling” (p.xvii).

Opening with a helpful section on the history of watermills from the prehistoric to the present day, chapter 1, entitled “Who Owns the Wind”, discusses the legal aspects of mills and milling, concluding that “with the proliferation of wind turbines.....cases of ‘ownership of the wind’ might well re-emerge” (p. 2). Food for thought for those involved in the current debate about the appropriate placement of these modern day mills.

Chapters 2 and 3 describe the different types of windmill and how they function, and include a number of helpful diagrams and sketches for the uninitiated. Chapter 4 gives some particularly interesting insights into the miller himself; his character and work, the hazards of his trade, and his place in literature and common speech. It appears that, at least partly thanks to Geoffrey Chaucer’s *The Reeve’s Tale*, people came to regard millers as cheats:

*A rumbustious cheat of sixteen stone  
Big in brawn and big in bone  
He was a master hand at stealing grain  
And often took three times his due.* (p. 32)

Unscrupulous millers were known to take more than their agreed corn toll from the peasants, keeping the surplus for themselves, and in later years millers added gypsum, chalk or alum to flour, a practice which carried on into the nineteenth century. To counter this character assassination, the authors go on to describe the costs and hardships of a miller’s life, with some heartbreaking tales of horrendous accidents, including the miller from Ongar whose “...leg has been amputated ...and his right hand mangled in a most frightful manner...” (p. 44) when his mill was struck by lightning.

To finish this chapter, a number of figures of speech associated with milling are explored. For example, did you know that ‘rule of thumb’ refers to the testing of flour’s coarseness by rubbing between finger and thumb? And how about ‘grind to a halt’? This referred to anything that stopped the milling process, such as a breakdown of machinery or lack of wind.

Before describing the five Tring mills in detail, chapter 6 identifies a number of vanished mills around Tring, drawing on map and documentary evidence, and referring to the work of Stanley Freese, who travelled around the area in the 1930s, mainly by bicycle, recording the locations and conditions of all the water and windmills. Readers might recall that his archived notes on watermills were published by the *Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society* under the title “The Watermills of Buckinghamshire: A 1930s account by Stanley Freese with original photographs”.

Five Tring windmills are then discussed in separate chapters: Pitstone, Gammel (New Mill), Goldfield, Hawridge and Wendover. In each case, the authors provide a wealth of information about the mill and its history, right up to the present day, using well chosen photographs and drawing on wide ranging documentary evidence. Readers might be interested to know for instance, that flour milling continues on the Wendover Arm of the Grand Union Canal, at Gammel Mill Wharf, which is now in the ownership of Heygates. Wendover Mill, in contrast, is now a five bedroom grade II listed property, which might have started life as an old fortress or castle keep.

The book ends with a fascinating chapter entitled “Windmills in Literature” which explores mills in poetry, prose and song. From the most famous episode, Don Quixote’s tilting at windmills, through Shakespeare, Belloc, Tennyson and Rossetti, to local man Herbert J Brandon’s lyrics “The Miller of Tring”, written in 1917 and set to music by Barton Charles.

This book is a real treat for anyone wishing to know more about windmills, or about the role they have played in the social, economic and landscape history of Tring and its surrounds. It can be read from cover to cover quite easily, but could equally well be dipped into, each chapter having something of interest and appeal. There is a useful list of windmills which can be visited, references for further reading and a helpful glossary of milling terms. The volume is a credit to its authors and their extensive research, and it is to be hoped that Tring charities will benefit greatly from its sales.

To conclude, a few words from Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, in praise of the windmill:

*Behold! A giant am I!  
Aloft here in my tower*

*With my granite jaws I devour  
The maize, and the wheat, and the rye  
And grind them into flour.* (p. 159)

Sue Fox

AN ILLUSTRATED HISTORY OF EARLY  
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE, edited by Michael Farley  
Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society 2010  
pp 224, many illustrations

This interestingly written and attractively illustrated volume reflects the vast increase in information and understanding about the land contained within the historic county of Buckinghamshire since the 1970s. It amply justifies embodying archaeological considerations in environmental planning and the development of archaeological field organisations to implement the resulting project work. Derived from a series of technical papers comprising an archaeological research framework for the county, it shows how work occasioned by development can expand and alter the inherited narrative of prehistory and history.

An Introduction by Michael Farley, editor of the volume and the first County Archaeologist, and a Postscript from Sandy Kidd, current holder of that post, sandwich five substantial papers. Barbara Silva and Lucy Farr give an account of the Palaeolithic and Mesolithic prefaced by the reminder that the later county is a slice across a wide range of geology; necessary illustrations of flints are leavened with an evocative mammoth filled landscape reconstruction at Marsworth, also used as the inviting cover to the book. Sandy Kidd's chapter on Prehistoric Farmers, taking the story up to the Roman conquest, brings out and discusses different patterns of activity in the north, centre and south; he sets a research challenge for the future by highlighting the paucity of evidence for the 'missing millennium' of the later Neolithic. Bob Zeepvat and David Radford's account of Roman Buckinghamshire properly gives prominence to the Bancroft Roman villa, but also deals with the organisation of the countryside and issue of continuity from the later Iron Age. Wisely, there appears to be no reference in text or bibliography to the web of Roman roads proposed by the 'Viatores' in the 1960s. Michael Farley himself writes on the period nearest to his heart, Saxon Buckinghamshire,

pointing out how work arising from the construction of Milton Keynes has thrown a possibly disproportionately strong light on the Dark Ages of that part of the county. In this and the preceding chapter modern colour printing techniques allow the arresting presentation of key objects from the County Museum's collections, with enlarged coins giving the earliest representation of living people. Kim Taylor-Moore's account of Medieval Buckinghamshire goes up to the dissolution of the monasteries, and connects with the present by showing extant earthworks of deserted villages and surviving cruck cottages. The book concludes with a 14-page bibliography, a selection of sites that can be visited, a list of contacts and an index.

In his Foreword, Sir Henry Aubrey-Fletcher, Lord Lieutenant of the County, comments that the rate of discovery through fieldwork and research will require a "completely revised publication" in the foreseeable future. This emphasizes the importance of standing back and taking a general view, raising one's horizons above the flood of so-called 'grey' literature from development related work and individual items reported under the Portable Antiquities Scheme. Getting the balance right over width and depth of treatment for each period is an increasing challenge, as is ensuring some measure of consistency between them. Notably, the longest chapter is the later prehistoric and the shortest the medieval; one wonders whether this reflects different quantities of new discoveries or different levels of selection from available material.

The strength of these collected papers is the discipline that derives from the methodical framework of formulated regional archaeological research aims. This type of framework document is developing, and the most recent, for Greater London, due to be finalized in early 2012, is explicitly about the 'historic environment' rather than its sub-set of 'archaeology'. Calling this volume an "Illustrated History" moves it usefully in that direction. The 'historic environment' can be seen as a set of nested elements, artefacts within sites and buildings, sites and buildings within settlements and settlement within inhabited landscapes. It would be interesting to apply this framework to an historic county, especially one with the diverse lowland geology of Buckinghamshire. Such an approach ought to help clarify how evidence and the understanding based upon it changes through time. It could also help maintain a

good balance between the wider contextual narrative needed by the non-specialist reader, and site- or place- specific discoveries, so that the sweep of the former and the fascination of the latter reinforce rather than overwhelm each other – difficulties faced (but largely surmounted) by this Illustrated History.

Most important, at a time of top-down pressures on conservation and archaeological services, this volume is an apposite reminder that rescuing sites from development and contributing material to the

local Historic Environment Record is not enough. It all has to be converted into something meaningful to a wider interested public, answering their immediate questions and opening their horizons to others they may not have considered. This book and the related major new exhibition at the County Museum have provided all those with an interest in Buckinghamshire with a fascinating opportunity to engage with its early history.

*David Baker*