

REVIEWS

A THOUSAND YEARS OF NORFOLK CARSTONE. By C. J. W. Messent. Privately printed Norwich, 1967. 96 pp. Illustrated. 30s.

Readers of Alec Clifton-Taylor's *The Pattern of English Building* know how fascinating a subject the materials for building can be. It adds a new dimension to "church-crawling", and indeed to any study of building, to be able to detect the various materials used in construction, and their place of origin. The idea, therefore, of a local guide to churches built of Norfolk carstone is an excellent one. A local enthusiast, in this case an architect-parson who has written much on his native Norfolk and Norwich, has written such a book.

Norfolk carstone is, apparently, of three kinds: (i) very thin shell carr from pits at Wolferton; (ii) lighter, butter-coloured carr from trenches which existed at Wolferton and Sandringham; (iii) Snettisham carr, still quarried and by far the most important, which is "a soft, coarse-grained ferruginous sandstone". It is a good building material, soft when quarried, and so easily dressed, but also durable. Its local nickname is "gingerbread stone".

Mr. Messent provides a useful list of churches built mainly or partly with carstone (chapter 5). There is an interesting survey of New Hunstanton, almost built entirely of local carstone in the last hundred years. Snettisham is less than ten miles away. Downham Market, by contrast, is a medieval town, but the church and most of the important secular buildings were built of carstone.

Mr. Messent is a little too discursive and unmethodical in his presentation. The reader would also gladly forego the author's own drawings, sometimes colour-washed, and always with three birds hovering above, for a few good photographs that would really give the reader the "feel" and texture of the carstone used. Even with its many faults the book is still a useful study of a local building material.

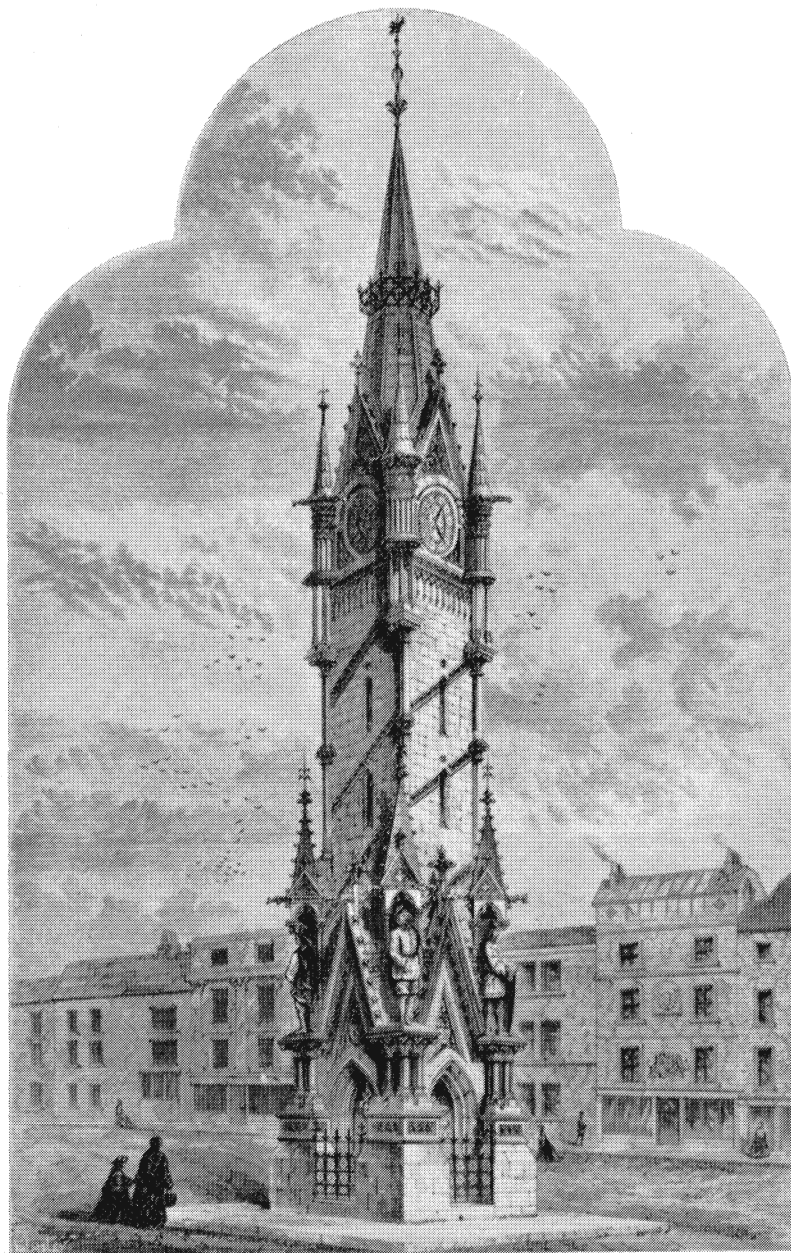
JAMES CROMPTON

LEICESTER CLOCK TOWER 1868-1968. By J. E. O. Wilshere, 1968. 14 pp. Illustrated. 4s.

The centenary of Leicester's Clock Tower is fittingly commemorated by a booklet, written by a keen member of the Society, Mr. J. E. O. Wilshere, which admirably tells the story of the struggle for its erection. It cost £1,200, including the clock, and 472 subscribers, all but six from Leicester itself, paid £872 2s. 9d. The balance came from the economy-minded Corporation. The successful design, for which he earned £10 in architect's fees, was by Goddard & Son. The old architect, Henry Goddard, died on the 22 July 1868 before it was completed; his son Joseph was responsible for the design. Drinking fountains ("sloppy wet things") had been happily, and with remarkable foresight, excluded by the Subscribers' Committee. Samuel Barfield of Welford Road received the building contract and also did the sculptures. After a rapid start the work languished through the hottest summer for twenty-two years, and the clock was not installed until early in 1869. It had been intended that the Clock Tower should have been completed in time for the visit of the Royal Agricultural Society's Show in July 1869, and was part of the "improvement" of East Gates, for which John Burton must have the greatest share of credit.

For a century the "four benefactors", depicted on the Tower, have surveyed a greatly-changing scene. Two, Simon de Montfort and Sir Thomas White, founder of St. John's College, Oxford, have only tenuous links with the city, but the claims of William Wigston and Gabriel Newton are incontrovertible. Together from their Tower, they have dominated an area which by the death of Queen Victoria had, as Mrs. F. E. Skillington nicely put it (*The Plain Man's History of Leicester*) "established itself in not a few hearts as the hub of the universe".

PLATE IV



This engraving of the Clock Tower shows it as the architect, Joseph Goddard conceived it, in a form slightly more elaborate than that in which it was actually constructed: see for instance the iron collar round the spire and the treatment of the four pinnacles at the corners. The Tower stands in a broad open space.

PLATE V



This photograph shows the Clock Tower in the 1920s, encircled by the trams and their wires.

The city planning officer, Mr. W. K. Smigielski provides a final paragraph to the booklet on the future of this area. It is good to know that in its eventual transformation the Clock Tower is to remain as a centrepiece, a vivid reminder of the ebullience of mid-Victorian Leicester, "a piece of ripe mid-Victorian Gothic, dignified, well-proportioned and as richly encrusted with ornaments as a child's birthday cake" (J. Simmons, *The City of Leicester*. Professor Simmons has provided the captions for Plates IV and V of the Clock Tower).

J.C.

LEICESTERSHIRE ARCHITECTS 1700-1850. By J. D. Bennett, 1968. 68 pp. Illustrated. 5s.

Leicester Museums are to be highly congratulated for their latest publication. Excellently illustrated, this dictionary of local architects is a mine of information. To qualify for inclusion an architect must have lived and worked in Leicestershire during the dates covered in the title. So successful is this venture that it is much to be hoped that Mr. J. D. Bennett will be encouraged to produce another dictionary covering the last hundred years.

Drawing widely on local sources, both unprinted and printed, and upon surviving plans, an interesting picture has been built up of the wide galaxy of amateur architects, professional architects and builder-architects who much beautified the county during an age of elegance and beyond. There is much sad reading, much that is now, alas, an architectural necrology.

Leicester could boast of some near first-class architects: William Flint, whose Phoenix Building and Peck's (formerly Whitmore's) Factory are still standing; Henry Goddard, whose architectural practise still flourishes; John Johnson, of national importance, whose County Rooms (1792-1800) are still delightful, though we mourn the loss of his *Consanguinitarium*, a crenellated rococo-gothic piece (1792); William Parsons, whose *County Lunatic Asylum* now serves to improve the minds of the present generation of University students, but whose graceful, elegant *Theatre Royal* was removed in 1957, and the Reverend Sir John Thoroton, whose memorial is the greater part of Belvoir Castle.

It would be nice to be able to identify a building by Joseph Scott of Market Harborough who, from service with James Wyatt, undertook in the *Leicester Journal* "to design and execute in a masterly and workmanlike manner, modern, Gothic and Grottesque architecture on the most reasonable terms".

J.C.

PARISH GUIDE: THE PARISH CHURCH OF ST. LUKE, GADDESBY. By E. D. Smith. 1968. 23 pp. Illustrated. 3s.

To a guide to his own church: *The Story of Evington Parish Church* (1967) Mr. E. D. Smith, a local architect, has added a comparable study of *The Parish Church of St. Luke, Gaddesby*. Both are admirable purchases, and vastly superior to the run-of-the-mill hand-outs, often rather home-made, in those churches, still, alas, a minority, where the visitor or parishioner is offered anything by way of useful information or guidance about the church visited or worshipped in.

Mr. Smith tells us about the growth of the parish and the development of the building of a church whose architectural history is as tantalizingly complex as it is fascinating. The plate, the bells and the monuments are described and, best of all, there is a set of plans and good illustrations. Everyone knows Gaddesby as the church with the finely and elaborately-carved south aisle of early-fourteenth-century date. It should also be known for its medieval benches, its incised slabs and its altar tomb. Recent excavations (June 1968) have revealed much more of interest.

About three years ago a course of lectures was given at Vaughan College on how to compile church guides. Whether or not Mr. Smith attended any, he has written a guide which conforms in all regards to the high standards there laid down. May others be stimulated to follow Mr. Smith's example.

J.C.

LEICESTER TRUSTEE SAVINGS BANK, 1817-1967. By G. P. Cave and Janet Martin, Leicester, 1968. 30 pp. Illustrated. n.p.

To celebrate the first hundred and fifty years of the Leicester Trustee Savings Bank the Committee of Management have sponsored the production of this admirable, useful and well-produced small book which records the rise and growth of the Bank. In common with more than 150 other Savings Banks it owed its origin to the Savings Bank Act of 1817 and the foresight of a group of influential local men. The town at the time was politically Tory, and the sponsors of the Bank included the local Tory M.P., Charles Loraine Smith of Enderby, John Mansfield, Mayor in 1816 and M.P. from 1818-26, as well as five prominent local Whigs like John Pares. The object was to receive deposits of such small savings as "mechanics, labourers, servants and others" had been able to collect.

It began in the Old Exchange in the Market Place where, on the first day twelve persons made deposits to the sum of £141 2s. 6d. By the end of the first year almost £8,000 had been received from 419 depositors, and £7,500 of that was deposited with the Bank of England, as was required by the Act of 1817. The progress chart (pp. 28-29) shows a continuous and uninterrupted rise in the Funds and Accounts of the Bank. It took 100 years to get to £1 million; progress in the next fifty years was spectacular. By 1967 the number of bank offices increased from three to twenty-six; from a staff of ten it was 154; the balance due was more than £38 million from 326,096 depositors.

For almost the whole of its history the Ellis family have been connected with the management of the bank, beginning in 1826 with John Ellis, a coal merchant who made large investments in canals and railways. Mr. Norman Ellis is the present President, and the *President-Emeritus* of our Society, Mr. C. D. B. Ellis, is an Honorary Manager.

The overall management of the bank has always been in the hands of honorary trustees and managers who have presided over many changes. From a simple deposit and withdrawal bank the organisation has become highly complex and diversified, showing a remarkable versatility and a capacity to respond to the needs of successive generations and to "watch over and protect the interests of Savings Bank depositors".

J.C.