

## REVIEWS

HISTORY IN LEICESTER. By Colin Ellis. 55 B.C. - A.D. 1969. City of Leicester Publicity Department. 2nd Edition 1969. 146 pp. 50p.

It is sad that Colin Ellis, to whose work for Leicester history an elegant tribute is paid elsewhere in this volume, should not have lived to see the appearance of a second, revised and extended edition of the book he first produced in 1948. The *Preface to the Second Edition*, which he wrote in June 1969, must have been his last piece of written work.

In re-issuing his book he wisely revised it at the beginning and extended it at the end. So much archaeological work has been possible because of road works and demolition in the centre of Leicester in the past twenty years that our knowledge of Roman Leicester has been transformed. Mr. Max Hebditch, who took part in much of the excavations, has re-written the sections on "Roman Leicester" and "Roman Buildings and Remains", and supplied a useful plan of Roman Leicester. Professor Jack Simmons was called in to extend, as only he could, the history of the city up to the date of the publication of this book. With admirable conciseness he outlines the significant changes that new methods of transport have brought about, bringing much to the large, lively and prosperous town which became an episcopal see in 1926, a city in 1928, and an important centre for Higher Education especially after 1945.

Change and improvement there has been, there has also been a price to be paid for such progress and development. It is sad that the price, invariably and everywhere, seems to be in a continuing loss of old and lovely buildings. No city can live entirely on the past but it is difficult to believe that so much need be lost as has been lost in Leicester. For there was loss — and who would not mourn *The Theatre Royal?*; but there was also gain. We can admire some of those new buildings so happily and well illustrated at the end of this Second Edition.

Mr. Colin Ellis would not have been disappointed at the final appearance of this new edition of his book.

THE GROWTH OF LEICESTER. Edited by A. E. Brown. Leicester University Press. 92 pp. Maps. 50p.

Nowhere is the value of Local Radio better illustrated than in the planning of this series of talks on the history of Leicester, which was arranged by the Department of Adult Education of the University of Leicester, and broadcast by B.B.C. Radio Leicester in 1969. The series was admirable, and all the lectures have been edited with care by Mr. A. E. Brown of the Department of Adult Education, who is himself a contributor to the volume. All save two of the contributors are members of the staff of the University of Leicester, and most are well known to readers of these *Transactions*, as well as being members of this Society.

Dr. Levi Fox, a Vice-President of the Society, gives us a short summary of his more detailed work on the Castle at Leicester. The President, Professor Jack Simmons, completes the volume by looking at "Leicester Past and Present". He stresses, and the book itself bears witness to this, the continuous history of the city, a continuity which no other great Midland town can show. It has adapted itself continuously to satisfy fresh demands and new situations, but there has never been a violent breach with the past. Its motto is suitable and deserved — *Semper Eadem*, "always the same".

With so many riches contained in less than a hundred pages, it would be hard for a reviewer to single out anything without appearing to be invidious. It is clearly printed and well illustrated with maps to show how Leicester appeared at different dates. At a cost of 50p the reader can survey Roman Leicester, its Castle and medieval churches, its markets, as well as developments and improve-

ments from its Turnpike Roads of the eighteenth century to New Walk in the nineteenth, and to Garden Suburb and Council Estate in the twentieth centuries.

In 1876 the Corporation of Leicester assembled in the old Guildhall before proceeding to the fine new Town Hall. Hope was expressed that "the glory of the new hall may exceed that of the old". The history of Leicester justifies that expectation.

NOTES ON MEDIEVAL MELTON MOWBRAY 1077 - 1507. Compiled by Philip E. Hunt. Palmers Printing & Publishing Co. Ltd., 1965. 95 pp. 52½p.

Mr. Hunt has gathered together from public records all that he could in order to throw light upon the town to which he is so clearly attached. His notes illuminate the history of Melton Mowbray from the Norman Conquest until the end of the reign of Henry VII. Historians might wonder at the eccentricity of the date 1507 for the ending of the Middle Ages.

For those who wish to learn about Melton Mowbray during this period Mr. Hunt's book is a rich quarry into which to delve. It would be more valuable if there were an index, but to have provided one would have been a very complicated task, and considerably added to the size, and, no doubt, to the cost of a book so reasonably priced. It is the kind of book to open at random and to browse in rather than to read. The majority of documents reproduced deal in the main with land transactions and criminal court proceedings. There is much about the history of any town, at any period, that cannot be gleaned from such records, but there is much that is both lively and interesting.

The following extract from the Patent Rolls shows the dangers to merchants who came to Melton Mowbray to sell their wares in 1396, during the reign of Richard II. The economic historian will be interested here in the Norfolk kerchiefs and the Brabant cloth. The political historian will be interested in the Duchess of Ireland, presumably the widow of Robert de Vere, and her connection with Melton Mowbray.

"Pardon, at supplication at a County Court held in Leicester, supplication by Duchess of Ireland to Thomas and Robert Murdoc of Loughborough, for lying in wait for Roger Basse and John Davy on the highway called "Le Strete" between Melton Mowbray and Leycester, on the Tuesday before Christmas Day 18 Richard II (1395) and robbing them of a great amount of money (listed), Jewellry, silk, satin, cloths, etc., and a pair of balances or scales, and for robbing in the town market of Melton Mowbray, John Braytoft of two wicker hampers full of cloth, including 24 dozen Norfolk kerchiefs, and three great pieces of Brabant cloth, etc."

Upon records of the kind quoted by Mr. Hunt the history of medieval Melton Mowbray must be written. It is to be hoped that Mr. Hunt will use his extensive knowledge to make further contributions to this worthy task.

A GUIDE TO LEICESTERSHIRE ARCHÆOLOGY. By Elizabeth Blank. Leicester Museums (1970). 40 pp., illustrated. 25p.

Miss Blank has provided the general visitor to the Jewry Wall Museum with a nicely-produced, well-illustrated survey of the archæological relics of man's occupation of Leicester and its surrounding area from prehistoric times to 1485. Her last entries relate to the battle of Bosworth Field and include a fragment of red silk which may have been part of Richard III's banner. It is doubtful whether this date is any more meaningful archæologically than it is now regarded to be by historians. But the relics remind us that local archæology helps to throw light upon national history, and the survey has to stop somewhere.

Helpful to the student browsing around the Museum, the general reader will enjoy it on its own, and would certainly be stimulated to visit the Museum. There he would find riches over and above those read about in this Guide, wherein Miss Blank has made a wise and judicious selection. The reviewer has to make an even smaller selection.

The Welby Hoard with its socketed axes of British manufacture also includes bronzes from Central Europe. Many centuries later the presence of military bronzes, discovered on the site of the public baths alongside the Jewry Wall, suggest that there were German soldiers in Leicester in the fourth century. Roman Leicester has left behind over forty mosaic floors and several wall-paintings from the town houses of wealthy citizens. Leicester was a civilised centre with a Roman way of life whilst it was a *civitas* capital. By the fifteenth century it was very provincial, a market town of small pretensions, but supporting a wide variety of trades. There is still much to be discovered. We are fortunate to have such a lively and well-organised Museums staff.

WILLIAM GARDINER OF LEICESTER (1770-1853). By Jonathan Wilshere, with introduction by Jack Simmons. Leicester Research Services (1970). 35 pp. 25p.

It was a splendid idea to commemorate the bi-century of the birth of William Gardiner. He was not only a local worthy, he was a shining example of the importance of the provinces in the cultural life of England under the Georges. A moderately-successful hosiery manufacturer, his lasting passion was for music; he was the pioneer in England who first introduced Beethoven to a musical audience — and in Leicester too. He offered Beethoven a hundred guineas to write an overture for his own composition "The Oratorio of Judah" which he said he would like to have "in the key of D minor". To flatter the great man he offered him the first volume of *Sacred Memories* "which contain your divine adagios, appropriated to the British Church".

A member of the Great Meeting, a bachelor, a man of great industry and wide interests, W.G. was also a founding member of the Leicester Literary and Philosophical Society in 1835, to which he read many papers, mostly with musical illustrations. They included "The Influence of Music on the Temper and Passions"; "The Music of the Egyptians, Hebrews and Greeks". He died in 1853 and is buried in the Welford Road Cemetery which so many of his Nonconformist friends had fought to inaugurate. His written works contain a rich harvest for those who seek them out.

KIRBY MUXLOE CHURCH GUIDE. By J. E. O. Wilshere. Leicester (1970). 16 pp. 10 p (postage extra — from author) or from the church.

THE SIEGE OF LEICESTER. By Jonathan Wilshere and Susan Green. Leicester Research Services (1970). 28 pp. 22½p.

LEICESTER TOWNE WAYTES. By J. E. O. Wilshere. Leicester Research Services (1970). 19 pp. n.p.

Mr. Wilshere is fast establishing himself as a local historian. He has produced a little guide to Kirby Muxloe Church to celebrate its Ruby Year as a separate parish. There has been a chapelry there, in the old parish of Glenfield, since the twelfth century. The present building is a heavily-rebuilt version of a late-thirteenth or early-fourteenth-century church. The restoration was the work of the local architect, Henry Goddard. The church contains a royal coat-of-arms, which has a small shield superimposed containing the arms of the Kingdom of Hanover.

To commemorate the 325th anniversary of the Siege of Leicester during the Civil War, he has written, in conjunction with Susan Green, a useful pamphlet, with a plan of the siege, reproductions of letters from Prince Rupert and Charles I to the mayor of Leicester, and other illustrations. An inadequately fortified town, thanks to its equivocal support of the Parliamentary cause, Leicester was forced to submit to the king. But it was his last success, and was very soon followed by Naseby and the re-occupation of the town. For a brief moment the town had been the centre of national history.

Anyone whose surname is Waite (Wayte), and there are 36 in the *Leicester* Area telephone directory, should be fascinated to learn about the origin of the family name, in the perambulating watchmen. The history of Waites in Leicester goes back at least four and a half centuries. In course of time the watchman

duties were less important than their musical function. Often with special liveries and ribbons they would tour the town, on special occasions, with musical instruments singing seasonal songs. They came finally to be associated with Christmas, and the last group of waits was disbanded in the early 1950s.

NEW AVENUES IN ENGLISH LOCAL HISTORY. By Alan Everitt. Leicester University Press (1970). 33 pp. 25p.

SMALL HOUSES IN ENGLAND. By Peter Eden. Historical Association Pamphlet H.75 (1969). 37 pp. 30p (post free), illustrated.

There is no need to introduce the authors of these two studies to members of the Leicestershire Archæological and Historical Society. Both are active members of its Committee, have lectured to the Society, conducted Excursions and made reports on ancient buildings. They are both members of the Department of English Local History in the University of Leicester. Dr. Eden's study of *Small Houses in England 1520-1820* is a very good example of the sort of work Professor Everitt had in mind in his Inaugural Lecture. In *New Avenues in English Local History*, he wrote, "The comparative study of communities in different areas may be said, then, to be one of the basic tasks of English Local History as we study it in Leicester. Much of the work of all of us in the Department necessitates classification of this kind: whether of local building types..."

Dr. Eden has attempted to make sense of local types of small houses, the total number of which he thinks runs into six figures. His aim is to establish regional and local patterns of distribution. His task has not been an easy one, handicapped as it is by rebuilding and alterations to what in origin may often have been the result of individual inventiveness or caprice. He suggests skeleton classifications, and he divides his results into five sections, which provide an admirable basis for further work. The illustrations are excellent.

Professor Everitt shows us the wide range of interests that the local historian must pursue if he is not to be a mere antiquary, "enamoured of old age" who "loves all things the better for being mouldy and worm-eaten". It is a hard occupation, which demands as much of the feet as of the head. No one will doubt having read his lecture, that English Local History in Leicester is fortunate in having so worthy a successor to Professors Hoskins and Finberg. He may be forgiven his pride in his Kentish roots and his liking for decayed market towns, for he always writes with charm and urbanity. These qualities he combines with that most important pre-requisite of any historian, humaneness.

A GUIDE TO ST. PETER'S CHURCH, MARKET BOSWORTH. By Kate E. Thorpe. British Publishing Co. Gloucester (1970). 24 pp. n.p. illustrated

Miss Thorpe has produced a useful little guide to an interesting church with its many monuments to the Dixie family, who have been associated with Market Bosworth since the sixteenth century. The parish has six charities for the poor: from bequests of 1698, 1710, 1784, 1847, 1909 and 1945; a noble record.

LOUGHBOROUGH IN 1770. By Thomas Pochin, ed. by J. D. Bennett. 12 pp. The Book House Loughborough (1970). n.p.

Thomas Pochin, a kinsman of the Pochins of Barkby and Edmondthorpe, wrote a short account of Loughborough in 1770. It was printed after his death by John Nichols, when Loughborough was still a rural town of about 4,000 inhabitants, but there were no less than 43 licensed inns and ale-houses, "A number", Pochin wrote, "far more than sufficient to answer any good purpose". In addition to the parish church, there were three dissenting meeting houses: one for Presbyterians; another "for a certain sect who call themselves General Baptists, besides a third made use of by others who are followers of Wesley".

It is interesting to read this re-printed account of a decaying town, 8 years before the Soar Navigation, 16 from the Leicester Navigation, which paved the way for the industrial development of the town as a centre of the hosiery and lace-making trades.

JAMES CROMPTON