

Ale was the great lubricant of all parish business (see the *Kings Sutton Churchwardens' Accounts 1636-1700*, ed, P. Hayter, BHS 27, 2001, *passim*), but it is clear that the ratepayers of Steeple Aston thought that their parish officers were making a good deal too merry with their money, and that the amounts spent in the pub when 'treating about church repairs' or when 'settling the accounts at Easter' had to be strictly limited in the future. It is likely that the money for the bell-ringers on the occasion of the King's Accession, and on Bonfire Night, was paid in ale rather than money, and we might note that these sessions were extra to their usual duties every Sunday for church services.

Note. Steeple Aston Parish Book. is at ORO, MSS DD Par Steeple Aston e.1

Book Reviews

A View from the Hill; a history of Sibford School 1842-2010 – an 'experiment' in Quaker education, by Michael Finch, Sessions Books (ISBN 978-1-85072-4007-0) 184pp, numerous photographs. 2010. £10.00 + £2.50 p&p. Available from Ali Bromhall (abromhall@sibfordschool.co.uk).

This is the lovingly told story of Sibford School from around the late 1830s to the present day. Sibford was established as one of a group of Quaker schools in the early nineteenth century which reflected the concern of Friends to develop the individual talents of children, 'for the service of God and their fellow human beings'. Michael Finch, the author and long-term member of the teaching staff, has compiled a history of Sibford with particular emphasis on those who have worked tirelessly to ensure that the school offers opportunities to children from many different backgrounds. The warmth of feeling at the school comes across very clearly, albeit that some of the staff are recognised as less easy-going than others. Many staff members are remembered and lauded for their long-standing service and efforts to ensure that the school operated as an extended family. For some children it may well have been a surrogate family, particularly in the early years, and the tradition whereby many children of staff attended the school speaks volumes for the value all those involved placed on providing an education with an emphasis on community values. It was, and still is, a close knit and caring institution. Its emphasis on providing opportunities for children with special needs was recognised early on, though more recent head-teachers have tried to draw back from too much specialism in that area, preferring to widen the opportunities for the children of Friends and others; the latter now make up the major part of the annual intake.

National educational strategy had a limited impact on the school given its independent – if rather impecunious – status. However, after the traumas of the two world-wars and the inevitable disturbances to the ordinary life of school,