dants of the younger son, Simon Yorke, became through marriage North Welsh squires who lived for many generations at Erddig in Denbighshire, dying out only a couple of years ago.

Erddig (the "dd" is pronounced "th"), a fine mansion built in 1682 which has undergone many ups and downs, possessed the special characteristic that from inheritance of the house to their own extinction its Yorke owners had portraits done of their servants. In the first instance oil paintings; at later times photographs. On or under these pictures the Yorkes also wrote at considerable length execrable doggerel verses celebrating each servant's particular qualities.

To arrange for domestic servants, gamekeepers, above all jockeys, to be painted was by no means unknown in the 18th century. There is, for instance, the fine portrait at Knole of a footman and maid (who were eventually married), and, nearer Erddig, though blackened from neglect, a few servants' portraits at Chirk Castle.

One also thinks of Hogarth's splendid oil study in the National Gallery of his own servants' heads, though there a painter's desire for models may have played a part. What makes the Erddig servants' portraits so striking a memorial is the fact that the practice was kept up from generation to generation, together with the verses, the latter apparently unique to that household.

One of these Erddig squires, Philip Yorke (1743-1804), was an antiquary of considerable ability, and, although not a Welshman, wrote a classic in its genre, "The Royal Tribes of Wales." His later successors, however, became increasingly eccentric, ending with a pair of unmarried brothers who were very cranky indeed.

Apart from the delapidations into which the house and its superlative furniture were allowed to fall, the greatest danger came from the nationalisation of coal in 1947. There was coal round about Erddig, and the Coal Board politely explained that there was no exemption from undermining for houses of historic interest. (Naturally Westminster Abbey, say, or the Backs at Cambridge would have to go if coal were to be found under them. Writing the history of a house is an extremely difficult undertaking — R. W. Ketton-Cremer's "Felbrigg: the Story of a House" (1962) is a model of its kind—and Merlin Waterson on Erddig is sometimes a little chronologically confusing. Mr Waterson who was himself much concerned with the house's rehabilitation, is rather too inclined to dodge about among different dates, but is clearer in the latter part of the book (excellently illustrated) when plenty of amusing incidents are described.

Mr Waterson also puts on record how Erddig was finally rescued from disaster—by no means an easy business owing to the cantankerousness of the last two owners—by the National Trust, and set into the working order which now reigns there, to be seen by the public. In this the late Ralph Edwards, a distant cousin of the owners and furniture expert at the Victoria and Albert, played a notable role.

The pictures of the Erddig treasures from destruction, and shows the two of them lunching with the penultimate Yorke owner. It is vivid, sad, and very funny. This was a stage when a sheep could get into the house and, butting its reflection, break a valuable mirror in the Chinese Room.

astonishing models of such things as a Chinese Pagoda or the Ruins of Palmyra.

The Yorkes, in spite of a preoccupation with their servants, seem to have paid them somewhat less than the contemporary average, but as against that they certainly looked after them well on retirement. They did not always guess right about character. One (decidedly pretty) cook in the early 1900s was thought to have embezzled several hundred pounds (chiefly on drink, the Yorkes being all but teetotal). Nevertheless, in spite of the Judge's direction to convict, she was acquitted by the North Welsh jury.

A footnote to all this seems worth adding. Henry Yorke—the real name of the novelist Henry Green—belonged to the Hardwicke branch of the family, and was perhaps 6th or 7th cousin to the Erddig Yorkes. I never heard him mention them, and, if he knew of Erddig, he would have been altogether uninterested. Nevertheless Henry Yorke himself always possessed a quite exceptional interest in the doings of servants. His novel "Loving" (1945) is written from the point of view of servants in a country house, and the butler's love affair with a housemaid. That is at very least a strange coincidence.

Gerald Randall, whose evening classes on church furniture led him to see the need for **"Church Furnishing and Decoration in England and Wales"** *(Batsford, £15), has visited over 1,000 churches himself. There is an understandable cri de coeur in his dedication "to those incumbents who lock their churches." But what are priest and parishioners to do in an age of all too common vandalism?*

Mr Randall's method is sound. After an historical introduction, he treats his subject under headings — porches, fonts, pews, pulpits and lecterns, screens, eucharistic furniture, murals and stained glass, memorials and a miscellany ranging from armour and clocks to musical instruments and wigstands. There is plenty to fascinate in the way of unusual features. Do you know what a gotch is? Or a hudd?

The pictures, some old, some new, are well chosen. Some show the changes which Chantrey monument at Haford, near Aberystwyth. The 1447 misericord at Ludlow (above) illustrates the month of January.

As the reader explores more and more he will realise how each period has added its own religious insights through the arts. There are the numinous medieval and Gothic Revival chancels, as at Durham Cathedral and Highnam, Gloucestershire, the atmosphere of congregational edification at Whitby, the modern starkness in the Metropolitan Cathedral, Liverpool, or the new parish church at Ravenshead.

The 17th-19th centuries, formerly maligned for what they did to old churches, are in part vindicated by the many good things they accomplished, a host of craftsmen and artists, too numerous to name, now receive credit along with architects. Mention is also made of recent designers; but their work needs time for surer assessment.

Canon D. W. Gundry

Down to sea in a basket

By David Holloway

The Tigris Expedition: In Search of Our Beginnings. By Thor Heyerdahl. (Allen & Unwin. £7·95.)

SEVERAL times during his account of his latest adventure with an unlikely vessel, Thor Heyerdahl asks his readers to keep an open mind about his theories. This is, I feel, the least we can do as a repayment for the enjoyment that we have had over the years from his, possibly pig-headed, daring.

Certainly it is difficult to be convinced by many of his assertions—the "wrong way" migration across the Pacific or the Egyptians building pyramids in Mexico—but of them all, those underwritten by his voyage in the Tigris seem the most likely.

How, Dr Heyerdahl set out to answer, did the Sumerians stock up Ur and the other cities with the precious metals, even the stones that they used. Archaeologists have tended to think that they came by land. Would it not be more likely, asks Dr Heyerdahl, ever ready to leap aboard an unlikely craft, that they came by sea on a reed boat like a basket up the Persian Gulf and then by river up the Tigris.

Well, reed boats get waterlogged, replied the less open-minded, and sink. This is the sort of challenge Dr Heyerdahl is unlikely to refuse. After all, at the second attempt he had got right across the Atlantic on a papyrus boat. He would start again among the Marsh Arabs and float down the Persian Gulf.

It is a pity that we see the television versions of the later Heyerdahl expeditions so long before we read the books. None the less **"The Tigris Expedition,"** though it may lack surprise, has all the virtues and the vices of the explorer's other books. The descriptive writing is as always good—the storms at sea; the pirates who demand exorbitant sums to haul them off the mud flats; and the excitement of playing with the sea creatures.

On the other hand, the jokes are still pretty terrible. This is partly because most of the author's lighter moments come from the recounting of practical jokes which may have been hilarious at the time but lack sparkle when retold in cold blood. I could not get worked up about a spaghetti pudding (a revolting thought at the best of times) being inflated by blowing up a balloon inside it.

There is also a terrible worthiness about the good doctor when he is nagging away at the sceptics. In this last book I found even a certain smugness creeping in. Matters fell too pat: great truths are revealed to the author at just the right moment.

The recent discoveries at Bahrein, for instance, Dr Heyerdahl must have known all about before he started, so he need not have been as surprised as he appeared to be that this island was a logical staging post for his early travellers. Equally the "copper mountain" in Muscat must have been of significance to him before he started.

A new feature of this voyage was the presence of an independent (in the sense of not being Dr Heyerdahl's choice and under his direction) film cameraman on board. The National Geographical Society of America had insisted, as part of its sponsorship, that their man should be on board with a sound camera and should have the right to record whatever he wanted. He had, apparently, had a great success with a film about squabbling on a canoe expedition. The thought of having to watch one's language and hot-headed reactions to difficult situations must have added to the strains of the voyage. It was, surely, considerable relief when the camera was on the blink.

As is well known this expedition ended in flames. After *coming down the Persian Gulf, coasting along the Pakistan* coast to Karachi and then floating across the Arabian Sea to Somalia, they found themselves in March 1978, despite their United Nations flag, deep in politically troubled waters.

There was no possibility of landing in Ethiopia, and both Yemens were unable to make up their minds if they would welcome a visit. Tigris, after being afloat for 143 days, was in fine condition to go on. The old ship which had battled over the seas but now had nowhere to go deserved a Viking funeral and received one, burning at sea off Djibouti. Dr Heyerdahl writes movingly of this.

As always, Dr Heyerdahl and his publishers give wonderful value—a big book, with lots of coloured photographs at a price few others could match.

Baker St. irregulars

By Harold Atkins

Undercover: the Men and Women of the Special Operations Executive. By Patrick Howarth. (Routledge. £7·95.)

THE Special Operations Executive, formed to develop clandestine resistance in enemy-occupied countries of the last war, used carefully picked volunteers who were, to say the least, individualists.

Of multifarious talents, these resourceful men and women usually preferred their own initiative to taking orders in the orthodox Services. Landing secretly by plane, parachute, boat or on foot in hostile territory, SOE agents required great nerve.

Some succeeded in their operations; some were tortured to death by Hitler's barbarians, or perished in the unspeakable concentration camps; many were shot, some never heard of again.

"Undercover" is in the main a personal panorama of these heroic "loners." It describes what sort of people they were, their characters, origins, aptitudes and out-of-the-way learning. It is full of narratives of prodigious daring in operations over European terrains and as far afield as Malaya and Borneo.

These operations included training and co-ordinating underground groups and guerrilla networks, often hardly formed till SOE came, sabotage, delivering arms and organising escapes.

Agents sent out from Norgeby House, Baker Street, were a remarkable mixture. Among them were actors, mountaineers, dons, journalists, film men, an architect, a nurse, a famous dress-designer and an expert on elephants. Some of the best were engineers of various sorts.

Patrick Howarth, himself in the SOE, details singular adventures and unorthodox war methods, from Christine Granville's ski-ing journeys over the Tatra Mountains into Poland to a blow-pipe brigade formed in Burma.

Conclusions on failure or success were often tentative. Of the famous sabotaging of the heavy-water plant at Rjukan in Norway, for instance, he says: "Ironically it was learnt later that the methods the Germans proposed for producing atom bombs would probably not have succeeded." Whether SOE's mission to Tito encouraged his subsequent political go-it-alone is even now not clearly known, but likely.

Cliveden pace-setter

By Margot Lawrence

Nancy Astor: Portrait of a Pioneer. By John Grigg. (Sidgwick & Jackson. £8·95.)

"NOT a lady as you would understand a lady" was the Cliveden butler's description of his master's wife, to a new servant.

No, indeed. Born Nannie Witcher Langhorne in Virginia, Lady Astor's odd Christian names prophetically foreshadowed quite other characteristics: the autocratic nanny who knows what is best for children, the "witcher" who charms people into compliance but puts a dark blight on some. Moreover, having known poverty in childhood, she never lost the common touch.

Nancy (as she later became) made a disastrous and short-lived early marriage, then entered the English huntin' scene. She had already turned Lord Revelstoke down when the even more eligible Waldorf Astor appeared.

That their marriage was happy was due to Waldorf rather than Nancy. This kindly, serious, methodical man adored and indulged his brilliant, unpredictable wife. The first woman to sit in Parliament — her one claim to a niche in history — she had been an outstanding "constituency wife" during Waldorf's years as a Plymouth MP, and simply stepped in when he inherited the Astor title.

She was the perfect pioneer, for years the only woman at Westminster. Few others could have endured it; she enjoyed it. Her courage and energy were such that no subsequent woman MP ever felt inferiority and she became a mother-hen to later stalwarts like Ellen Wilkinson.

A moral, indeed puritanical, woman with her teetotal, Christian Science stance, Nancy had a lifelong platonic relationship with Philip Kerr (Lord Lothian) who provided her inspiration, while Waldorf gave her unselfish backup to the detriment of his own career. Nancy was no respecter of persons. "Lift your feet up, you great hulk," she, a back-bencher, told a senior Minister who tripped when a guest in her house. She informed Gandhi he was no holy man but a crafty politician, and asked Stalin why he murdered Russians.

"It's all very well to cry, Winston, but you've got to do something" when surveying air-raid damage, hardly conciliated an antagonist of whom she earlier wrote that Clemmie was "v. stupid" to marry him.

The Astors' "Cliveden Set" was not the appeasement-hatchery malicious gossip made it, says John Grigg. The myth was promoted by the political

Roses all the way

By David Hoppit

The Book of the Rose. By Michael Gibson. Illustrated by Donald Myall. (Macdonald & Jane's. £10·95.)
Onward and Upward in the Garden. By Katharine S. White. (Faber with Farrar, Straus, Giroux. £6·50.)

ROSES are often described as the queen of the English garden (and of the gardens of many other nations also), and our appetite for books about this particular monarch remains as voracious as our desire to cover the globe with Damasks, Bourbons, Hybrid Perpetuals, and all the other "Regina Florum."

As if to justify yet another book about roses Michael Gibson reminds us in **"The Book of the Rose"** that Confucius wrote in about 500 BC that the tion. The pages include also a catalogue of 1,000 varieties grown today, a list of many of the specialists growing them, and a "walk" through some of the world's finest gardens where the plants can be seen.

Myths and legends become as entwined as bindweed when they relate to roses. Did Charlemagne really plant the 32ft giant climber which dominates the cloisters of Hildesheim Cathedral?

Experts claim it must be at least 500 years old, and it refused to die even when cut down to a mere six feet in the air raid which destroyed the building in 1945. It has says

THIS WEEK

The white Gandhi

Patrick Leigh Fermor on Athens

Michael Carver on Julius Caesar

Philip Larkin on D. H. Lawrence

Gurdjieff and Ouspensky

Mondriaan, Moravia

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