

## BOOK REVIEWS

Edited by NEIL CHRISTIE

**Hadrian's Wall. A Life.** By Richard Hingley. 16 × 24 cm. xx + 394 pp, 109 b&w pls and figs. Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2012. ISBN 978-0-19-964141-3. Price: £75.00 hb.

This book takes the reader on a journey from the fifth century onwards to unravel layers of ever evolving meaning attached to Hadrian's Wall as exemplified by prose, poetry, art myth and oral history. The book is aimed at a wide audience – visitors, academics and locals – and so reflects Hingley's call for inclusivity in the creation of interpretations of the Wall.

Hingley first sets out his theoretical premise, creating a chorographic narrative of the Wall that weaves through its Roman past with the multiplicity of later interpretations to present it as one living, multifaceted entity. The main chapters then examine evidence from three periods in the post-Roman lives of the Wall. Chapters 3–5 will especially appeal to *Medieval Settlement Research* readers as Hingley draws out intricate details of the earliest tenth- to seventeenth-century narratives of the Wall, its evolving role as the Pictish Wall in the formation of relations between England and Scotland, as well as Christian attempts to appropriate it. Manipulations in memory of places along the Wall reflect on how stories differed depending whether they were told north or south of the Wall. The case of Lanercost Priory will no doubt have you wanting to visit this site lying off the beaten track of normal 'fort tourism'. Chapters 6–11 tackle when antiquarian interest departed from prose and art to form scientific research: we hear of early efforts to map the Wall, the emergence of ideas of vandalism against the Wall and with more reflexive themes such as the impact of early recognition of the multi-ethnicity of Roman population of the Wall on nineteenth-century ideas of imperialism. The final chapters consider issues of heritage management, development of tourist infrastructure and inclusivity of interpretations. The chapter 'Romanization of Tyneside', for example, assesses the management of the post-industrial landscape of Newcastle and creation of often artificial links with the grandiose Roman past.

With the unique angle of an author known for his reflexive take on the history of archaeology, this contribution will be valuable to anybody interested in artefact biography, local history, Scottish–English relations and heritage interpretation. While at times overlooking some issues, such as violence, the key strengths of the book include the breadth of the evidence analysed, an innovative approach, richly illustrated material and an engaging narrative style.

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**The Place-Name Evidence for a Routeway Network in Early Medieval England.** (British Archaeological Reports British Series 589). By Ann Cole. 21 × 30 cm. viii + 344 pp, 134 b&w figs and tables, 1 fold-out map, plus CD. Oxford: Archaeopress, 2013. ISBN 978-1-4073-1209-5. Price: £48.00 pb.

This is an essential text and source for anyone interested in the development of the Anglo-Saxon English State, whether from a political, social or economic viewpoint and it details exactly what the title announces. It is difficult to read without being persuaded to refer to a map and wander along the distractions prompted by some of the ideas, but, if the subject interests, it is packed with diversionary concepts.

The first part begins with a general discussion of the factors affecting the core theme of study: the need for communications, both commercial and military. As the author recognises, long-distance travel was unnecessary for the majority of the population, whose journeys would be limited to neighbouring settlements or local markets. Similarly, the naming of settlements was a utilitarian activity, since one had little need to name one's own village but did need to be able to refer to other places, as did travellers. The long-distance traveller was probably either of Church or state, either missionary or military – unless one of the more disreputable types from whom the legitimate traveller sought refuge.

The author then discusses the number of names which might be applied to places of use to the traveller, either as waymarkers, sources of animal fodder, rest or safety. Because this list is quite comprehensive, it may be possible to make the criticism that, given enough place-names and enough roads, the evidence of links will appear, whether real or apparent. This issue is dealt with, however, by the justification of each example in some detail. Places are listed in the appendices by name-type, classified by the nature of the location. For example, roadways: *path*, *weg*; crossings: *gelād*, *gewæd*; services: *drag-tun*. As part of any network, water has to play a part and *hyth*, *port* and *stæth* are discussed in detail. And this is much, much more than simply joining the dots and seeing what emerges. The discussion in Chapter 8 on the meaning of *yfres*, *oras* and *ofers* is indicative of how slippery the understanding of real meaning rather than simple translation of words can be.

It is surprising to read the conclusion (pp. 102–105) that coinage was little used in the North based on the paucity of Anglo-Saxon coin finds north of the Fosse Way and east of the Great North Road. This may surely be indicative of any number of reasons, such as: an artefact of investigation and development – much archaeological evidence shows a demarcation along the Fosse; active field walking – it is noted that Leicestershire has a high rate of finds on the Fosse, perhaps the result of long-standing public involvement in the county; large areas of



the North, subjected to the Danelaw and Viking raiders, perhaps had precious metals expatriated or recycled. Absence of evidence is not evidence of absence.

There are some formatting irritations. For example: all the maps and tables in the appendices to each chapter are listed as figures, some sets of drawings given under a single figure reference; and there is no key in the Contents page to those tables and figures. The CD in the back cover (oddly named as 'December 10'), while useful as a synthesis and copyable for the student, has only one image, a copy of the fold-out map of the proposed network. The inclusion of the other illustrations from the appendices would have taken minimal disc space, since the main image of 147 mb leaves plenty of spare storage space in a normal CD/DVD.

This fascinating volume deserves detailed study, as a source-book, as an excellent practical exposition of method in the field and at the desk, and for the theoretical underpinnings of a subject incorporating the contribution of disciplines external to linguistics. Above all it proves that a road network existed. Whether this was a top-down process or simply the linking of existing Roman and prehistoric routeways, driven by local needs and exploited by the long-distance traveler is another discussion, as is the chronology of their development. Niggles apart (and that is all that they are), this is a seriously interesting and valuable volume for students of toponymy, language and the development of the Anglo-Saxon State, its landscape, commerce and civil defence. It will stay on or near my desk for a long time.

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***Wearmouth & Jarrow. Northumbrian Monasteries in an Historic Landscape.*** By Sam Turner, Sarah Semple & Alex Turner. 19 × 25 cm. xix + 244 pp, 124 colour and b&w pls and figs, 3 tables. Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2013. ISBN 978-1-909291-13-3. Price: £20.00 pb.

Recent years have seen a veritable boom of publications about the golden age of Northumbria. A series of major excavation reports have emerged from sites such as Hartlepool, Hoddum, Whithorn and Monkwearmouth and Jarrow, with the results of work at Auldham also in the pipeline. In terms of the sheer quantity of well excavated early medieval monastic sites, Northumbria stands head and shoulders above other parts of Anglo-Saxon England. However, all this work has focused on excavation of the sites themselves, and there has been little attempt to place them in their wider landscape context to get a sense of how they related to their economic and symbolic hinterlands. This volume attempts to rectify this. Emerging out of the need to better understand how the twin monasteries of Monkwearmouth and Jarrow related to their surroundings as part of a (sadly unsuccessful) bid for World Heritage Site status, the project team have taken a detailed and scaled landscape approach. They have exploited a combination of modern remote sensing techniques, archive work and more traditional documentary and historic mapping sources

to assess the immediate topography and planning of the monasteries and to attempt to appreciate the land and estates in this corner of County Durham that they once controlled. There is also a detailed analysis of the sources of the stones which were used to construct the two surviving churches, which are all that remain above ground of the wider fabric of the pre-Norman foundations. The volume concludes with an interesting discussion of audience perceptions of the two sites and a synthetic conclusion on project goals and results.

This is a brave attempt, but it is hampered by two major issues. First, in common with any attempt to look at the landscape of early medieval Northumbria, is the problem of the very limited documentary resource, particularly of pre-Conquest date: though Bede makes passing mention of the granting of estates to the monasteries, there are no contemporary cartularies; and while the Norman histories which emerged from the Community of St Cuthbert do seem to draw on now lost documentary records of estates and land holdings, Monkwearmouth and Jarrow are lacking in this material. Secondly, the immediate surroundings of both sites have been very heavily industrialised in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, leading to fundamental transformations of the earlier landscape. For example, much of the area around Wearmouth is shrouded in metres of nineteenth-century ballast, masking the original land surface. Even the small municipal park immediately north of the church at Jarrow has seen extensive later activity, particular during World War II. As a consequence, although the project team have squeezed the evidence as hard as possible, they cannot push the existing state of knowledge very much further. At a wider scale, much of the surrounding landscape has been transformed from open countryside in the mid-nineteenth century into part of the wider Tyne-Wear conurbation. Here, although the use of historic mapping and of Historic Landscape Characterisation helps to draw out the key contours and underlying structures of the medieval and early modern landscape, it still struggles to reveal anything really new about the early medieval landscape.

A very successful element of the project is the detailed work on the stone sourcing for the church fabric, where the team can actually get stuck into genuinely early medieval material (itself often re-used Roman building stone). A combination of detailed laser scanning of the structures, combined with a detailed programme of geological identification, enables them to recognise the pulses of arrival of stone from different sources over times. These are often relatable to known outcrops of rocks in the immediate area, and so provide insights into the exploitation by the monasteries of resources on their estates.

Despite this slightly downbeat assessment of the overall amount of new knowledge about the early medieval monastic sites derived from this work, I would certainly state that this volume is still of value. The problems are not in the approach, but in the intractable nature of the raw material. The volume does present a useful methodology for how other, more yielding, sites might be approached and reminds us also of the value and importance of not seeing these early monastic sites as isolated islands of belief, but as parts of much wider



landscapes that could be exploited and drawn on to provide the fuel for these religious powerhouses.

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***Tradition and Transformation in Anglo-Saxon England. Archaeology, Common Rights and Landscape.*** (Debates in Archaeology). By Susan Oosthuizen. 14 × 22 cm. xii + 251 pp, 12 b&w pls and figs. London & New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013. ISBN 978-1-4725-0727-3. Price: £55.00 hb.

We have come to expect interesting ideas, lucidly and energetically propounded, from Sue Oosthuizen and her new book does not disappoint. One of her main themes, the development and distribution of open-field farming, is anything but new, but she brings to it several fresh perspectives. One is conceptual: she treats fully-fledged common fields as an example of a 'Common Property Resource', managed by 'broad' management systems, that is to say all the stakeholders were committed to maintaining the value of the resource by pasturing all their stock on all the fallows. The principles of a shared investment in a shared resource managed by shared responsibility and decision-making, are what lay behind another Common Property Resource – the pasture commons. The archaeology of large landscape divisions like the Dartmoor reaves shows these to be ancient. Thomas Charles Edwards' linguistic perspective allows Oosthuizen a view of the essential continuity of a British population and its cultural traditions from before Roman occupation to well 'after Rome', and if one can take 'British' as equivalent to 'broadly Celtic', then the Irish and Welsh laws can tell us a good deal about Anglo-Saxon England. In this *longue durée*, from the pre-Roman to the medieval, the English countryside was organised to ensure for each community its rights and access to its common grazing.

Arable husbandry had been moving in the direction of Common Property Resource management, but on a small scale and the question the book poses is how to explain why, when and where it reached its fully fledged form in the Central Province. Here another new perspective enters, this time a cultural one: the affinities of the Mercian elite, within whose province and at whose heyday in the 8th century common field farming it is argued began to reach its apogee, with their Frankish counterparts, both ecclesiastical and lay. The managers of Carolingian royal and monastic demesnes were innovators of new and more productive farming practice, the organisation of land and tenants, and the production of written estate records. Just as they wanted to marry into the Carolingian elite and emulate its coinage, Mercian kings and ecclesiastics wanted to buy into this new thinking, and organising their inlands was part of the package. The old question of whether lords or peasants initiated further change 'on the ground', and why open field farming developed so strongly (although not exclusively) in the Central Province (which was larger, after all, than the Mercian kingdom) is answered by recourse to yet another perspective, namely the nature

of lordship: this was where manor and vill most closely, and most often, coincided. Common field farming – or 'Broad CPR regimes' in the book's terminology – combined the interests of lords and their tenants.

Oosthuizen's book should start some new debates and reinvigorate some old ones. The danger is that the extreme concision imposed by the format in which it is published, as a contribution to Bloomsbury's 'Debates in Archaeology' series, may jeopardise the hearing her ideas deserve. This is that rarity: a short book within which a long book is struggling to get out.

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***Trees and Timber in the Anglo-Saxon World.*** (Medieval History and Archaeology). Edited by Michael D J Bintley & Michael G Shapland. 18 × 25 cm. x + 258 pp, 36 b&w pls and figs, 1 table. Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2013. ISBN 978-0-19-968079-5. Price: £65.00 hb.

This latest volume in OUP's excellent *Medieval History and Archaeology* series is a multi-disciplinary collection of papers focused upon the significance of trees and timber in Anglo-Saxon society, and on how people at that time thought about and used wood. The emphasis is upon the non-functional social significance, and in particular how this ubiquitous material could be imbued with a very high status. After an excellent Introduction, the first three papers consider the use of building timber. Michael Shapland assesses 'Meanings of timber and stone in Anglo-Saxon building practice' and he clearly demonstrates how the use of stone in domestic structures was confined to relatively few locations, in sharp contrast to its widespread use in ecclesiastical buildings. The traditional functionalist view that 'low status' timber was used in primitive domestic structures, while high status stone was reserved for churches, is questioned, with the latter preference being seen instead as representing an explicit reference to Romanitas. The implication of Shapland's paper is that there should be nothing 'inferior' about the use of timber in domestic structures, and this is explored further in Mark Gardiner's paper on 'The sophistication of late Anglo-Saxon timber buildings'. The challenge he faces is how to reconstruct the buildings that archaeologically are only represented by often incomplete plans of poorly aligned post-holes, but this excellent paper shows builders working to a high level of sophistication in plan and construction. John Baker then explores the place-name evidence for the use of timber building materials which are, not surprisingly, ubiquitous.

The second section explores 'Perceptions of wood and wood artefacts'. Martin Comey's fascinating consideration of the wood drinking vessels from Sutton Hoo shows how very different species of trees were used for particular vessels, most of which were concerned with drinking and feasting. That walnut was used for six small cups is noteworthy as, although not a native of Britain, having been introduced during the Roman period and as it does not naturalise easily, so it could



signify continuity in woodland management. Papers by Jennifer Neville, Michael Bintley and Pirkko Koppinen then consider the extremely complex evidence for the use of wood in early medieval material culture contained within an intriguing documentary source: the Exeter Book of Riddles. Neville's contribution is a cautionary tale of just how difficult it is to interpret these riddles, and what appears to be an inadvertent example of this is how translations of Riddle 21 that appears here and in Bintley's paper are different! The final set of papers considers 'Trees and woodland in Anglo-Saxon belief', and includes Clive Tolley on the concept of the 'world tree', John Blair on the meaning of the place-name element *bēam*, Bintley on the southern cross at Sandbach, in Cheshire, and Della Hooke on the significance of trees in pre-Christian and early Christian religion.

Overall, this is a fascinating collection, and the editors are to be congratulated on bringing together such an interdisciplinary group of scholars, and maintaining such a tight focus throughout.

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***Landscape and Change in Early Medieval Italy. Chestnuts, Economy, and Culture.*** By Paolo Squatriti. 15 x 23 cm. xiii + 236 pp, 4 b&w maps. Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013. ISBN 978-1-107-03448-8. Price: £60.00 hb.

Paolo Squatriti opens this excellent volume with the assertion that 'European chestnuts are a particularly useful lens through which to observe the early Middle Ages' (page x). Although one immediately suspects special pleading for the importance of a subject close to the author's heart, it soon becomes clear that this is not the case. Squatriti, drawing on an exemplary blend of textual analysis and archaeological science, demonstrates that 'chestnuts, and human willingness to tend to them, illuminate the economic reorientations whereby a Roman Italy of cities, agricultural surpluses, and markets turned into a medieval Italy of villages and subsistence farming' (xi). In fact, with a nod to one of the more interesting debates in current archaeological theory, he goes further to argue that chestnuts (tree and nut) were also *agents* in that process. For him, trees are simultaneously 'physical, botanical facts, and cultural artifacts' (4), and in both guises they formed a mutually beneficial alliance with humans to effect both their own dissemination and the reproduction of those who lived in the changed circumstances of Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages (168).

Trees have been central to the standard 'decline and fall' narrative, and (although it is not usually articulated) here too they form an alliance with humans to fill the gap left by the demise of civilisation (7–8). The shift from stone/marble to wood, manifest in the archaeological record of the Italian Early Middle Ages, is generally taken as confirming 'the spread of dark forests and the involution of civilisation' (12). Squatriti, however, prefers the exploration of *real* woods rather than the 'imaginary' ones that have hitherto driven the historical

process. For while we can be sure that the landscapes of late antique and early medieval Italy were more wooded than their Roman predecessors (but not everywhere – see p 13), these woods were not the antithesis of Culture. They were 'peopled' (15), 'anthropogenic' (137) and 'productive spaces' (17).

The heart of Squatriti's argument is that woodlands – and especially chestnuts – were one means through which people adapted to the new social, economic and environmental conditions of the late and post-classical world. In this world of demographic decline, re-aligned social relations and a shift away from 'the market', the chestnut, with its low labour requirements, its reliability (compared to grain) and its versatility, was almost 'predestined to flourish' (70–72). Flocks could graze between the trees, the trees themselves produced timber, as well as 'nutritious and tasty nuts' (179). The wood was used for boat-building, carpentry, construction and for making charcoal. No other tree, Squatriti concludes, 'was so generous in so many ways' (179). But Squatriti goes beyond these 'functional' connections to inform us about the supernatural protection afforded to some groves (165), about how some saw the chestnut as symbolic of 'deep reading' (116), and about how (in a world which did not have a word for 'brown') the nut became a colour and then the name of a Carolingian clerical garment (126). He also makes his study of considerable contemporary relevance by highlighting it as an example both of the way in which significant ecosystemic change can take place in societies with limited technologies and underdeveloped markets, and of a relationship between Man and Nature which is productive and sustainable – 'the Standard Environmental Narrative of plunder and desecration is not the only story environmental historians can tell' (202).

If microhistory is the study of a 'seemingly small and particular subject that opens unexpected vistas onto supposedly familiar historical terrain' (x), this volume is an exemplar of that historical form.

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***South Wales. From the Romans to the Normans. Christianity, Literacy & Lordship.*** By Jeremy Knight. 17 x 25 cm. 191 pp, 29 colour pls and figs, 66 b&w pls and figs. Stroud: Amberley Publishing, 2013. ISBN 978-1-4456-0447-3. Price: £19.99 pb.

Turn to the bibliography at the end of this volume and its genesis becomes immediately apparent. Since the early 1970s Jeremy Knight, formerly an ancient monuments inspector with Cadw, has turned out a steady stream of papers on the later Roman and early medieval history of his home region of Monmouthshire and Glamorgan, the two counties that make up the extreme south-east corner of Wales. *South Wales from the Romans to the Normans* thus has the appearance of a work that has matured gradually over many years and is the culmination of a long-standing interest, while Knight himself sees it as in some ways a sequel to his earlier Tempus volume, *The Age of Antiquity*, published in 1999.



Purists may carp perhaps at the title which promises more than is delivered geographically, since this is primarily the story of those two south-eastern counties, with only occasional forays into the other counties that make up south Wales – Pembrokeshire and Carmarthenshire out to the west and Brecknock inland. A second issue is wholly beyond the control of the author: we are still a long way from developing a seamless narrative for the early medieval era, even though this region is unarguably the most advanced in Wales in terms of available data, and so the volume occasionally reads like a series of broadly linked cameo accounts of different aspects of life and work, with the emphasis very heavily on the religious rather than the secular.

Opening with the sparse evidence of late Roman activity at the legionary centre of Caerleon, Knight describes the better evidence from the nearby town of Caerwent which gave its name to the early medieval kingdom of Gwent and this leads to a discussion of the links between towns and kingdoms in the Welsh borderlands. Next the recurrent link between villas and early and important churches is examined and then, with a prologue on imported pottery and Ogam stones, the few early high-status secular sites are examined. A chapter on the churches of Gwent up to the Norman Conquest is followed by a more specific piece on one of the early Welsh holy men, St Cadog, and his association with the monastery of Llancarfan (and here the reviewer should declare that he commented on this chapter in an early draft). The importance of the sea is emphasised in ‘Coast: saints, sandhills and seaways’, which is followed by further consideration of the pre-Conquest Church, an eclectic round-up of topics that includes grave chapels and other burials, dedications and the administration of the Church. Then comes a consideration of the major early medieval saints of the region, and a final chapter examines the impact of the Anglo-Norman invasion. There are extensive end notes and an impressive range of illustrations, marred only by the fact that they are grouped into three sets spread throughout the volume, but are rarely cross-referenced within the text.

Informative and authoritative, Knight’s text reveals how modern thinking has significantly progressed our understanding of the early medieval era in south-east Wales. Yet there is clearly a long way to go – the virtual absence of anything to do with settlement, farming and the economy over a period in excess of six centuries makes this very clear.

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***The Church in Devon, 400–1560.*** By Nicholas Orme. 17 × 24 cm. ix + 241 pp, 42 colour and b&w pls and figs, 2 tables. Exeter: Impress Books, 2013. ISBN 978-1-9076054-1-3. Price: £14.99 pb.

This is a nicely presented and well ordered publication which reflects the author’s interest in the history of the Church in the south-west of England, combining his post at Exeter University as Professor of History with his involvement as an honorary canon at Truro Cathedral.

*The Church in Devon, 400–1560* is in fact a sequel to Professor Orme’s earlier publication *Cornwall and the Cross* (Phillimore, 2007). As the title suggests, his latest publication concentrates on the Church in Devon but is not restricted in its outlook. In a very accessible chronological layout, the author considers the development of the Church in relation to all of the major events that have taken place from the ending of the Roman period up to the Reformation in terms of the development of the Church and churches in Devon; however, he also places these events into a broader, national context: thus, for example, there is a review of the coming of the Anglo-Saxons and the impact of the Norman Conquest and the Reformation – major events which are often solely regarded as having implications on a national scale – which also had more localised consequences.

In many respects this is a book which uses Devon as a case study, rather than a book solely concerned with the Church in Devon. On a geographical level, Orme looks at factors contributing to the formation of parishes and the development of their churches while addressing issues of variations in parish size and wealth. He does not, however, confine his study only to the parish and its church, looking also at the wider range of religious activities and institutions including worship, pilgrimage, education, monastic communities, hospitals and minsters. Orme gives consideration to all levels of church administrative activity from papal and episcopal roles, down to parish clergy and laity, while also assessing the development of Canon Law and the growth and impact of administrative control and taxation records across Europe in the twelfth to fourteenth centuries. A further area that is addressed in terms of consequences in Devon is that of the rise and spread of religious intolerance and persecution of the Jewish communities in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries as well as the growth of religious dissent, in the form of the Lollards and John Wycliffe, as a natural response to the perceived increase in religious rule-making.

This is a most accessible, informative and usefully-illustrated volume spanning what is an extensive area of subject matter. Professor Orme has managed to produce a book which should appeal not only to those with an interest in the county of Devon but also to those who are interested in the complex topic of the history of the development of the Church in England.

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***The Archaeology of the Dykes. From the Romans to Offa’s Dyke.*** By Mark Bell. 17 × 25 cm. 157 pp, 57 b&w pls and figs. Stroud: Amberley Publishing, 2012. ISBN 978-1-4456-0133-5. Price: £18.99 pb.

The linear earthworks known as dykes are amongst the most enigmatic of monument types. Even Offa’s Dyke, the greatest of them all, is named and dated solely from passing mentions in later chronicles. Difficulties in determining both the function and date of these ostensibly simple earthworks may go some of the way



to explaining why this study by Mark Bell emerges as the first book-length assessment of linear earthworks in the British Isles – for this reason it is to be welcomed.

The author's approach is nothing if not novel, but at times idiosyncratic. A traditional introduction focusing on the historical development of dyke studies is followed by a regional survey that begins inexplicably with those earthworks that feature on the old Dark Age maps of the Ordnance Survey, and then zig-zags from the south-east, westwards and northwards as far as the Scottish border before coming back to Wales and the Marches; it demonstrates probably incidentally that it has largely been in the southern counties of England where excavation has turned up material that allows the dating of dykes. Next comes a chapter on the origins of dykes which ranges widely over prehistoric linear earthworks, dykes in Ireland, in Denmark and the Germanic world, and on dating methods with a diversion into the names of dykes. A final, short and poorly focused chapter looks at functions, but rather glosses over the possibility that some at least were designed to block thoroughfares, a theory that had surfaced regularly in the regional survey. Three curiously mismatched appendices – on 'strange' interpretations of dykes that circulated in the past, on the Chiltern Grim's Ditch and on the Belgic Invasion – precede a gazetteer.

While the regional survey is discursive, the gazetteer, ordered by county but entirely devoid of grid references, provides brief statements on both authentic post-Roman dykes, and those now recognised as prehistoric which were once thought to be of later origin. The text is supported by a traditional bibliography but no index, and citations in the text utilise an anomalous quasi-Harvard system that consists of the author's name only.

This is perhaps not the comprehensive assessment that might be expected. As the author's sub-title to his volume makes clear, it is a study of Roman and post-Roman earthworks. Fine, perhaps, but for the fact that by far the greater number of linear earthworks remain undated, and for a significant number their chronology is dependent on the circumstantial evidence proffered by perceived relationships with other archaeological features such as Roman roads. By choosing to focus on those dykes that are known or thought to be of first millennium AD date, the author has deprived the reader of the opportunity to draw their own conclusions about the chronological validity of the evidence. For some distinctive monument types this might not matter, but for obscure linear earthworks it is rather more critical. A second concern is that the coverage is not complete. Two maps in the Introduction purport to show the distribution of prehistoric and post-Roman dykes across England and Wales, setting the tone for the volume as a whole: missing from the latter map is the string of short dykes in east Wales which my own organisation has successfully radiocarbon-dated in recent years, and which are referenced elsewhere in the text; completely absent, though, is any mention of the other set of Welsh short dykes, in the uplands of Glamorgan, which have been universally accredited to the post-Roman era since their discovery by Cyril and Aileen Fox in the 1930s, supplemented through work by the Welsh Royal Commission in the 1970s. In contrast to their east Walian counterparts, the dykes in the hills of Shropshire,

not so many miles away, have generally been attributed a prehistoric date and were published in 1975: these are completely absent from the other introductory map. One can only hope that the coverage for other parts of mainland Britain is more thorough.

On the positive side, the author pulls together from diverse sources a considerable amount of information on recent research on dykes. The concept of the volume is creditable, so let us hope for a second edition that is comprehensive in its coverage, and improved in its layout. And precise locational information, even if only in the gazetteer, would have been welcome.

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*A History of the County of Stafford. Volume XI. Audley, Keele and Trentham. (The Victoria History of the Counties of England).* Edited by Nigel J Tringham. 21 × 31 cm. xxi + 297 pp, 80 b&w pls, figs and maps, 13 tables. Woodbridge: Institute of Historical Research, University of London/Boydell & Brewer, 2013. ISBN 978-1-904356-41-7. Price: £95.00 hb.

Your reviewer approached this volume with particular pleasure for two reasons. Firstly, it is another magnificent addition to the history of the county of his birth where, in the 1940s, he began to learn about the English landscape. And, secondly, because it contains a grand account of the University of Keele where, in the 1950s, the most important event of his life took place – he was taught how to think!

More relevant to our discipline, perhaps, the volume is one of the new, expanded and detailed works of the VCH now appearing. While the layout is still under the old general subject headings, it incorporates both recent national scholarship and the staggering amount of local history research completed in the last few years. Even landscape history is well covered, particularly in the development of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century extractive industries of the area and the excellent account of Trentham house, park and village. All the other familiar topics are now greatly enhanced, with a plethora of maps, plans, photographs and tables. The result is a first-class piece of work.

This excellence, however, has its drawbacks. Despite the 220-odd pages, only five ancient and subsequently much altered parishes are covered. And these are in two quite separate and different blocks to the south and west of the Stoke-on-Trent conurbation, the existence of which, at least in recent times, was the major influence on their history. Irritatingly, although inevitably, the greatly extended subject sections lead also to a good deal of repetition, especially in regard to land and landowners. Yet most of it is so good that such criticism is unfair.

More serious, at least for the readers of this journal, is the lack of any real analysis of early medieval settlement in the area and of its links with prehistoric and Roman occupation. Beyond an examination of early place-names and the noting of occasional habitative names in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, there is virtually no mention of medieval rural settlement or fields. One cannot blame the distinguished editor for this. The



written evidence does not survive. Yet the resulting explanation of empty, almost totally forested, landscapes existing until the fourteenth century does not convince this reviewer. While probably historically honest, he regards this as philosophically unsound, the last refuge of a documentary historian. A close examination of large-scale nineteenth-century OS maps, and even of Map 21 here, reveals examples of reversed-S shape strips suggestive of former divided fields, perhaps associated with numerous farmsteads that are not documented until post-medieval times.

Ah well, we can't have everything, even in Staffordshire.

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**Hertfordshire. A Landscape History.** By Anne Rowe & Tom Williamson. 17 × 25 cm. xii + 355 pp, 108 colour and b&w pls and figs, 1 table. Hatfield: Hertfordshire Publications, 2013. ISBN 978-1-909291-00-3. Price: £18.99 pb.

More than once the authors pay tribute to Lionel Munby's *The Hertfordshire Landscape* of 1977, almost the last to appear of that marvellous but sadly never completed set of county studies published by Hodder & Stoughton. This new overview shares three things with it: a deep first-hand familiarity with Hertfordshire; sound scholarship; and instant accessibility. It also adopts something of the same clear thematic structure of the earlier series, its second half being devoted to chapters on woods, parks and pastures; traditional buildings; great houses and designed landscapes; urban and industrial landscapes; and suburbs and new towns 1870–1970. It's nicely produced, with excellent colour figures, end notes, a lengthy bibliography with primary and secondary sources, and a really good index (hurrah!).

Where it stands apart from Munby's earlier volume, and indicative of just how much the study of the English landscape (in the broadest sense) has grown since the 1970s, is the length and depth of coverage given in the first half of the book to the county's rural landscapes. As the authors note, their diversity requires four separate chapters, each treating a separate region: the champion countryside in the north; the Chiltern dip-slope to the west; the fertile boulder clays of the east; and the heavy London Clay in the south. While the narrative extends from the earliest times to the present day, the focus is very much upon the Middle Ages: of when and how its landscapes developed, especially in response to soils and topography; of the influence of earlier fields and settlements; and the persistence of much of the medieval countryside to the present day, or at least the recent past.

Those familiar with Tom Williamson's recent work (for instance 2013's *Champion: The Making and Unmaking of the English Midland Village*) will find many of his favoured interpretations rehearsed here, especially the primacy of climate, geology, soils and topography in determining the form of settlements and field systems; and that settlement development,

whether rural or urban, was generally slow and organic rather than being a consequence of deliberate planning, whether by lords or peasants. Those themes are certainly to the fore in the chapter on Hertfordshire's champion countryside, where the idea of the 'village moment' (whether organic or through lordly decree) is set aside in favour of the suggestion (though, as is acknowledged, the data are currently so sparse that it's hard to test these hypothetical models) that after the middle Saxon period settlement mobility slowed, some places grew, and villages were the end product. Planned villages, or planned enlargements, are similarly argued against, with their 'strippy' plan being seen rather as the result of piecemeal expansion out across open-field selions.

But in many ways it is the other three regional chapters which are the most rewarding, especially in their discussions of how, primarily in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (Postan isn't indexed, but presumably would nod approvingly), land-hunger saw settlement expand massively onto clay uplands and commons, essentially to create today's countryside of winding lanes, irregular greens, commons and scattered – yet overall quite dense – settlement. In East Herefordshire, valleys were densely settled by the late Saxon period and cultivated using open fields, whereas the boulder clay plateau remained largely untitled. After the Conquest settlement and cultivation crept into the latter zone, creating (if we simplify) a landscape of greens, commons and winding lanes, all set with the scattered holdings of the peasant frontiersmen. In West Hertfordshire, on the Chiltern dip-slope, earlier Saxon settlement again seems to have lain on the better, drier ground, leaving the drift-covered uplands devoid of settlement, with some at least serving as great open commons. Again, in the post-Conquest period settlement encroached in the form of 'End' and 'Row' places, or as farms and cottages scattered around greens and much-reduced commons. In South Hertfordshire, the twelfth and thirteenth centuries saw farms pushed outwards and upwards onto the high, infertile, clay country along the county edge. Settlement spread along the old drove roads to the commons, moats were dug, and in some places, especially around the margins of the great upland commons, quite sizeable habitations developed.

Given the book's title, there is a danger that it will be seen as of primarily local interest. That would be a mistake for, like so many of the Hodder & Stoughton series, it has a resonance and relevance for *all* who study British landscapes – indeed, landscapes anywhere.

PAUL STAMPER  
English Heritage

**Champion: The Making and Unmaking of the English Midland Landscape.** By Tom Williamson, Robert Liddiard & Tracey Partida. 18 × 25 cm. xii + 252 pp, 64 colour pls and figs, 18 b&w figs. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013. ISBN 978-085989-868-3. Price: £70.00 hb.

This is an important book for all those interested in the development of the English landscape. Clearly written and beautifully illustrated, *Champion* presents a strong central argument and a raft of stimulating secondary



ideas. The main thesis is that the environment rather than lordship or other factors primarily determined settlement forms and landscape character. Geology, soils and small climatic variations created a 'grammar' of landscape which accounted for local and regional landscape variation, including that between the so-called 'champion' and 'woodland' countryside. Changes in population and in forms of landownership could lead to the same landscape being used in very different ways in different periods, but at any one time environmental factors gave inhabitants limited choice about how to organise the way they lived and farmed.

To those familiar with Williamson's work, the stress on the role of physical geography in shaping landscape evolution will come as no surprise, and some will be predisposed to reject it as environmental determinism. Certainly a few of the starker pronouncements may require modification, and not everyone will be persuaded about the dominance of environmental factors over economic, social and tenurial ones. After all, even the authors admit to phases of dramatic landscape reorganisation, such as a probable twelfth-century replanning of field systems (p 122), and the role of lords in reorganising at least some settlements, both of which seem to highlight the importance of human agency and (possibly) ideology. Methodologically, the reliance on late maps as a proxy for the layout of medieval settlements may prove to be more than a minor weakness.

Nevertheless, this is a study based on very substantial new research, including the analysis of thousands of maps, aerial photographs and surveys of the physical remains of open-fields across the whole of Northamptonshire. It also represents a careful rethinking of previous interpretations, including some advanced by the authors themselves. Aspects of the argument are persuasive and deserve considered response from all students of medieval society. The definition of 'nucleation' has been usefully questioned, and proponents of the gathering of people to single sites in the late Anglo-Saxon period will have to pay closer attention to the development and dating of earlier settlements. A good case is made for the character of the soils over which a village grew playing a strong role in its emerging form. Ideas of lordly planning are undermined by the irregularity of most village plans and the possibility that apparently 'planned' rows of plots in some settlements may have developed by uncoordinated expansion over arable strips. Nor can dispersed elements such as 'ends' be assumed to be the result of changes to manorial structure, such as the subdivision of manors, since they were found in all sorts of tenurial environments and their origins are often undated. The idea that the break-up of big land units led to a pasture shortage in the champion countryside and prompted open-field formation is weakened by the revelation that a good deal of untilled land survived in many arable areas.

This book enriches our understanding of landscape development and problematises crude and static distinctions between landscape types. It shows the importance of combining imagination with detailed local testing of hypotheses using a range of sources. It highlights areas where more information is required, some of which may be obtained in the future by new methods of scientific dating. This will not be the last

word on landscape development, but it will certainly stimulate future debate.

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***Designs upon the Land: Elite Landscapes of the Middle Ages.*** By Oliver H. Creighton. 23 × 16 cm. viii + 256 pp, 12 colour pls and figs, 67 b&w pls and figs. Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2013. ISBN 978-1-84383-825-8. Price: £17.99 pb; \$29.95 pb.

Re-assessing the elite medieval environment as a series of designed landscapes is not a new endeavour. From the early 1990s onwards, the traditional orthodoxy of the medieval castle and fortified manor and its setting as an unambiguously military construction has been challenged in a number of instances. The innovation in this study is that it considers elite landscapes across Great Britain and Ireland as a whole between c.1050–c.1550, frequently focusing on less well known examples, rather than being heavily reliant on the more prominent case studies, such as Bodiam. Creighton outlines four key objectives for the volume, one of which is this wide geographical context. Secondly, he contends that designed elite landscapes were more commonplace than has previously been considered, and that 'polite' design traditionally associated with the early modern period is actually apparent in late medieval designed landscapes. Thirdly, he rightly argues that such designed landscapes should be studied within their wider environmental context, rather than considering one single element – such as a garden – in isolation. Finally, he argues for the importance of moving beyond a purely functionalist approach to elite landscapes and suggests that it is possible to say something of their symbolism and how they were perceived by those moving through, around and beyond them. While this is first and foremost a study grounded in archaeological theory and practice, one of the most satisfying aspects of this book is that it is unashamedly interdisciplinary. Creighton takes a wide range of evidence into account, including documentary sources, literature and art. He notes the importance of onomastic evidence – an important, rich, albeit rarely considered seam of material including field-names, other minor names bestowed upon the landscape, and personal names.

The medieval dwelling and its appurtenant gardens and setting are widely considered in Chapter Three, offering a number of examples drawn from diverse topographical and social contexts, accompanied by numerous plans, illustrations and photographs. The role of animals in designed elite landscapes is analysed in Chapter Four, with useful sections on discrete fauna and their presence in the landscape, assessed from both practical and symbolic aspects. Chapter Five, on parks and local communities, contemplates the rationale for parks, and their social and economic importance alongside their key characteristics and how they were used. There is an attempt to consider the impact of parks on the local resident population, using a range of judicial records. This is a difficult undertaking, and



Creighton tends to focus on evidence that is typically used in this context: court rolls that outline access rights, park-breaking and poaching. The author notes the greater advantage that freemen had in attempting to ensure that their common rights were not infringed, and that they were provided with alternative access to common land, but he does not really explore the impact that lords' decisions had on the servile population, who were not protected in law. Rather than considering poaching and park-breaking anecdotally, it might have been interesting to analyse patterns of subversive behaviour associated with elite landscapes more widely – for example, were there greater instances of trespass in parks for which the peasantry were displaced? This of course would be a major piece of research, and it is accepted that it can be notoriously difficult to find suitable source material for analysis of this nature, particularly for a geographically-wide study such as this, and so this is less a criticism and more an appeal for future scholars to consider some of these more hidden aspects of the lower orders' relationships with elite landscape more generally.

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***La Grava: The Archaeology and History of a Royal Manor and Alien Priory of Fontevault.*** (CBA Research Report 167). By Evelyn Baker. 21 × 30 cm. xxiv + 400 pp, 260 colour and b&w pls and figs. York: Council for British Archaeology, 2013. ISBN 978-1-902771-87-8. Price: £50.00 hb.

*La Grava* is not just the record of one excavation (albeit a large one), it also represents a generation's experience in British archaeology. As the heroic 'Rescue' age recedes, projects from the 1970s and 1980s are finally seeing publication, and *La Grava* is one such. It began in 1972 with community concern about an archaeological site near Leighton Buzzard lying in the path of gravel extractors – nothing new there – but in that prelapsarian age, before EI statements, Planning Policy Guidance and European-inspired environmental legislation, officialdom's response was markedly different. Inspired by the novelty of medieval settlement archaeology, the (recently appointed) County Archaeologist organised excavations, literally in front the extraction machinery. As always, money was tight, but in addition to MPBW it came from bodies we no longer think of as sponsors of excavation – local museums, various local archaeological societies, the Area Museum Service, local colleges and schools – and, of course, the Manpower Services Commission, which was then commissioning more archaeological work than any other body. At *La Grava*, from 1976 until 1984, MSC schemes undertook excavations, guided by a roster of visiting salaried 'experts' to keep the work on track.

When it came to post-excavation, the new age of 'Professional' archaeology was underway, with artefacts dished out to their respective experts, and with the excavator struggling to make their reports interconnect once returned. Then English Heritage money followed

MSC funding and introduced requirements for archive assessment, quantification of publication value and professional project management. As elsewhere, meanwhile, the original *La Grava* team had become an archaeological 'Unit', and one fortunate enough to be supported by a County Council with strong heritage leadership. But, also like others, the Unit fell victim to local government restructuring and the shifting balance between Public and Private sectors, and along with the professionalisation of archaeology came its commercialisation. The publicly-funded Unit (with *La Grava* as its flagship) finally disappeared in 1999, and the project's final decade was completed using the same personnel, acting now as paid consultants (though still largely with central government money). Now, 50 years after the earthworks were first threatened with destruction, we finally have this massive and comprehensive report.

Just as the professional archaeologist's career path since those Rescue days can be read in the project's governance, so this publication reveals an intellectual stratigraphy of academic concerns in the same period. Thus, early on, the project was conceived as an opportunity to 'collect' (p 11) a rare monastic type-site (an alien priory of Fontevault, founded in 1164 on a Royal manor), and this intellectual driver was never quite abandoned. As 'New Archaeology' struck in the 1970s, *La Grava* hosted a debate about the objectivity of excavation records, and the report still grapples (somewhat painfully) with the respective evidential 'value' of documents and material culture. Similarly, metrological ideas popular in the 1980s were influential among the *La Grava* team and are applied wholesale to the site. More recently, as both medieval settlement studies and monastic studies have placed increasing emphasis on the contribution of 'landscape context' to understanding, *La Grava* responded by superimposing hypotheses about the layout of settlement within a 20km<sup>2</sup> grid. Post-PPG16 concerns about Research Agendas are also represented, in the form of a two-page document proposing further questions that could be addressed using the site and archive (371–2). Recent trends towards integrating all categories of evidence within a single narrative are also attempted under topic headings such as 'Domestic economy' and 'Agricultural produce and equipment'. But the original premise, which has attracted investment throughout the project, remains the most important contribution of *La Grava*: as combination of Alien Priory and major manor, this was indeed a 'rare' and fascinating monument.

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***York. The Making of a City, 1068–1350.*** By Sarah Rees Jones. 16 × 24 cm. xxii + 373 pp, 21 b&w figs, 10 tables. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013. ISBN 978-0-19-820194-6. Price: £75.00 hb.

The author of this book has been a long-term collaborator with the York Archaeological Trust, and in consequence this history of York in the three post-Conquest centuries



puts great emphasis on urban topography. The work belongs in a long and honourable tradition, and is a worthy successor to Salter, Pantin, Urry and Keene. Rees Jones is herself so well grounded in the streets and buildings of York that readers may find the detail challenging, but it is worth persevering because there is a rewarding overall framework which locates York in relation to other towns. This is not a book about urban origins and development, but is more concerned with different landowners and their organisation of urban space. Although buildings make an appearance, the main focus is on urban land, and the ways in which its ownership changed and was manipulated through processes of inheritance, mortgaging, and sale.

The book begins with the city already formed and functioning at the time of the Norman Conquest (which in the north came in 1068). Much of its land was divided between the church, the earl of Northumbria, and the king. Smaller estates belonged to local lords, such as the Percy family, and the city can be described as polyfocal, resembling a federation of semi-autonomous settlements. After 1068 successive kings developed their share of the

city in a bid to form a capital for the north of England. The cathedral clergy expanded their holdings, and were joined by new church institutions, such as St Mary's abbey and the hospital of St Leonard. In the thirteenth century the county gentry, who held offices under the crown, moved into the city. This is all very top-down, but in the last chapters more attention is given to the townspeople, as the merchants established their large town houses, and developed the civic infrastructure. We learn about the city's population (perhaps 23,000 in c.1300), town-country relations, and the organisation of domestic space among artisans as well as merchants. Land was divided on a small scale between subtenants, with multi-occupied houses, and it was used as a source of income and credit.

Anyone with an interest in York will have to read this book, but all those concerned with urban topography will learn from its approach and analysis.

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