

# Books

**The Archaeology of the London Boroughs of Sutton and Merton**, two surveys by Mrs Lesley Adkins for the S.W. London Archaeological Unit (Surrey Archaeological Society, £1 each plus 25p postage).

**Lambeth Lost and Found**, a survey of archaeological and historical sites, by Donald Imber (Southwark and Lambeth Archaeological Excavation Committee, £3 plus 46p postage).

THE SURVEYS for Sutton and Merton are produced in a workmanlike, mimeographed form well suited to their ephemeral nature. At least, one hopes that they are ephemeral — if they are not, they will have failed miserably. Each consists of a gazetteer of archaeological sites (Sutton 175 entries; Merton 117), arranged by period (multiperiod sites receiving multiple entries), plus short summary texts, also arranged by periods, aimed at putting the material recorded into context. The *Surveys* are accompanied by ten rather sketchy maps.

Mrs Adkins almost disarms comment by stating in both cases that “the gazetteer is artefact oriented” but this constraint only has significance in the post-Roman periods. There is reason, in fact, to question a policy (presumably imposed on Mrs Adkins) which ignores place-name and documentary evidence and treats lost post-Medieval buildings and standing dovecotes as archaeological sites while ignoring a standing medieval house as important as Carew Place, Beddington. As the *Surveys* are aimed to “help those in planning departments”, would not these people be better served by being told where significant remains (including buildings) survive and where significant discoveries may be expected? Undigested lists containing trivia such as “18th century pottery sherds found” are not going to be very helpful to planners. Potential find spots for the post-Roman period are often better indicated by place-name or documentary evidence and the proximity of surviving buildings than by the erratic records of past archaeology.

This is not to say that the preparation of such gazetteers (at least in card index form with multiple cross referencing) is not an essential exercise for a professional unit. On the other hand, it is not unfair to ask whether such work is an appropriate use of distinctly qualified archaeologists unfamiliar with the district and to wonder what the exercise has actually cost.

*Lambeth Lost and Found* is a glossier publication in keeping with its title. It will cost the purchaser three times as much as one of the other *Surveys* and contains a gazetteer (129 pages) and three excellent

maps without the attempt to sketch in a context. It was produced by a “home grown” archaeologist who knows his Lambeth well. The lack of a geological background map or text (both are given in Mrs Adkins’ *Surveys*) is a distinct loss. The gazetteer takes on board documentary evidence and standing buildings down to c. 1760 but is arranged in an unhelpful random order. The absence of grid references is a drawback in one or two instances where two kinds of discovery on the same site are marked by two separate symbols on the maps introducing locational ambiguity.

The gazetteers have their inevitable errors and omissions but the Sutton and Merton lists seem to contain more faults than that for Lambeth. To list errors noted would be unctious but, as examples, surely the twenty-four tumuli “towards Addington” were a long way outside the London Borough of Sutton; the second D.B. church of Sutton manor was probably at Horley not at TQ2664; and why is there no mention of the lost DMV of Bandon? (I must come clean and admit to some — I hope small — share in the blame as parts of the lists for Sutton and Merton were shown to me once or twice during their preparation). There are also noticable cases of “publication lag” — the most important being the recent re-assessment of the Queen Mary’s Hospital site that was published while these *Surveys* were in the press. But don’t professional archaeologists have a grape vine?

That the booklets will be useful, I would not wish to deny. But I suspect that they will be of more use to archaeologists than to planners. Whether the number of archaeologists to whom they will be useful is large enough to justify publication, as opposed to keeping the information in an accessible card index and supplied to planners on marked maps, is perhaps questionable. In an ideal world such information could be kept in an updated computer store and print-outs made available on demand for a small fee.

DENNIS TURNER

**Anglo-Saxon England**, by Lloyd and Jennifer Laing, RKP 1979, £6.95 hardback.

THIS shortish summary of the Saxon period in England will be a useful introduction for those daunted by the complexities of that gloomy twilight we still correctly call the Dark Ages. But be warned: the authors adopt the debatable stance that the flourishing of Saxon culture is almost totally the history of metalwork. “It is the jewellery that excites the imagination”, they say of Sutton Hoo; and a

count of the subject-matter of the illustrations produces the following list:

Metalwork, especially brooches	45
Art objects in wood and bone	14
Coins	10
Pots	9
Illustrated manuscripts	8
Archaeological sites	7
Churches (photographs)	6
Monuments and aerial photos	6
Site plans	1
Reconstruction of hut	1
Plan of Saxon hut, hall, village or town	0
Plan of church, minster or cemetery	0

This passion for metalwork runs through the book, constantly ejecting other subjects; we hear the because of a "variety of charming objects in 6th century Kent" the Franks lost their domination of the markets in the middle of the 6th century — but what markets? The whole problem of Dark-Age trading is side-stepped. Buildings and towns are constantly under-represented: there might for instance have been more on Pagan Saxon huts in the late Roman towns, there is nothing on the dark earth, late Saxon urban churches are dismissed in three lines, and you really cannot get away with making one fairly complicated plan from Wroxeter do for the whole of Saxon settlement, e.g. Chalton, West Stow, and Mucking.

Given this bias, the book is very readable. The Laing dry wit is often in evidence, as when the destruction of Reculver church in 1802 is seen to be perpetuated ultimately by the vicar's mother. The Saxon avoidance of Roman buildings is explained as their aversion to "doing-up" Roman houses; but one's teeth get slightly on edge when we hear that the palace at Cheddar must have looked like a Wild West cavalry fort, or the Saxon's sword was the equivalent in price of a television set today. My favourite is the assertion that the 10th century St Dunstan was "an Anglo-Saxon in the mould of Leonardo da Vinci".

This assurance brings with it an unfortunate confidence about dates which tends to omit the "possibly" and "probablys". Did Vortigern really invite Hengist and Horsa into Britain in about 428, as paid soldiers to help safeguard the province? Is Brixworth late 7th century, with no ifs and buts?

The book is complementary to Wilson's great *Anglo-Saxon England* (1976), which played down the metalwork; but by itself it is only part of the story.

JOHN SCHOFIELD

**Analytical Archaeologist; Collected Papers of David L. Clarke.**

*Academic Press*, 1979. 539 pp., index. £13.60.

WHAT did David Clarke actually say? And what is it that leads five archaeologists to devote their time to re-publishing his work? If your idea of David Clarke is based on what he said in *Analytical Archaeology* (or worse, what some critics thought he said), then this book will be both a surprise and an answer.

The first two sections are what one might expect—philosophical and theoretical argument, centring on "Models and Paradigms in Contemporary Archaeology", and the *Analytical Archaeology* debate. I still find his defence of jargon (p. 182) unconvincing, because the sort he defends is not the sort he uses, and the feeling remains that "he only does it to annoy, because he knows it teases".

This feeling is reinforced by a marked increase in lucidity in the next section — Problems in European Prehistory. Here are four major papers: "Mesolithic Europe: The Economic Basis", "The Economic Context of Trade and Industry in Barbarian Europe till Roman Times", "The Beaker Network — Social and Economic Models" and "A Provisional Model of an Iron Age Society and its Settlement System" (a re-examination of the Glastonbury Lake Village). They show a tremendous width and depth of knowledge, combined with a considerable ability to "put it all together". Any doubts about Clarke as a practising archaeologist (as opposed to a thinker about archaeology) must be dispelled by this section.

The final section, Technical Studies in Archaeological Method, is a disappointment. It will not be possible to judge the true value of "Spatial Information in Archaeology" for some years, until the many ideas it generates have been tried and found either useful or wanting, but three of the other four papers, "Remanent Magnetism and Beaker Chronology", "Matrix Analysis and Archaeology with Particular Reference to British Beaker Pottery" and "Notes on the Possible Misuse and Errors of Cumulative Percentage Frequency Graphs for the Comparison of Prehistoric Artefact Assemblages" already look dated and are not of the same standard as the rest of his work. That the last needed to be written at all is a sorry reflection on the state of archaeological numeracy at the time (1967).

Here at last, then we have a fascinating picture of David Clarke the whole man, and a major figure on the European scene. An intuitive archaeologist trying to tap into his subconscious to find out what (and why, and how) he was really doing. To me at least, the archaeology as done appears better than the archaeology as written about. At this price, this is a book for the corporate rather than the private library, but do try to read it.

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