

Books

Martin's Hundred by Ivor Noel Hume. London, Gollancz, 1982; 343pp, £11.95 hardback.

THREE YEARS AGO Ivor Noel Hume's team of archaeologists at Colonial Williamsburg, Virginia, completed the excavation of one of America's most important early colonial sites. *Martin's Hundred* is the story of the excavation, and gives the main results of the project to date. Briefly, it deserves to become a classic, and can be warmly recommended to amateur and professional archaeologists alike, and (since Noel Hume's style rarely fails him) to readers at large who enjoy the past.

It would be unfair to give away too much of the story (and worse still to reveal the research done by Mrs Chapman of Letchworth), but in the absence of a subtitle prospective readers will wish to know something about the 'Hundred.' Martin's Hundred was one of the earliest plantations along the coast of Virginia, planned complete with a fortified administrative centre, 'Wolstenholme Towne,' from the Virginia Company's headquarters in London. It was settled in 1619, but in 1622 the Indian uprising killed 78 of the inhabitants, destroyed the town, and drastically weakened a community which already had a fearfully high mortality rate. A settlement continued, but by the mid-18th century the land was concentrated into the hands of one Carter Burwell, who built an impos-

ing mansion near the forgotten site of the original township.

This is where we begin. The definitive site report (still in preparation) will no doubt begin in 1619 and move on to the 1750s. *Martin's Hundred*, however, succeeds so well as a book because it casts hindsight aside and tells the story of an excavation. The Williamsburg archaeologists began by looking for the relatively mundane outbuildings of the 18th century mansion. Instead, they found signs of 17th century occupation at all points of the compass, eventually identifying Wolstenholme Towne itself. Their excavation of the butchered and burnt remains of the 1622 rising, and their reconstruction of the life and death of the town are quite remarkable feats of archaeological and documentary detection.

Why dig on a site a mere 360 years old, already known from some surviving documentary records? *Martin's Hundred* supplies the answers. Not only was a wealth of information recovered concerning material details, but the whole appearance of an English 17th century 'plantation' was reconstructed—as the colour endpapers show—and its similarity to the Ulster plantations demonstrated. Previously the term 'plantation' was very much an abstraction used by historians who thought little about its physical reality; as a result of the Wolstenholme

(continued from p304)

Future work

For the future there is a need for a body of comparative data from other sites, both in the immediate London area and elsewhere in the country. London's status as an early Roman port and administrative centre may be reflected in the pottery assemblages of the first century A.D., perhaps by a larger proportion of imports or finewares. Another aspect of pottery studies, the analysis of the distribution patterns of known kiln sites would also be facilitated, particularly the analysis of the distributions of different products of the same site.

Comparison of large assemblages of dumped medieval pottery has failed to reveal large functional differences. If they are to be found in the medieval period it may be by comparing the contents of contemporary pits, which yield pottery used in the same household, rather than the broader site-to-site comparison which yields some results with Roman material. Even the absence of differences between

medieval pottery assemblages may be significant for the archaeology of the medieval City. It may be that the range of wealth and trading activities across the City was genuinely less clearly topographically differentiated in the medieval period than it was either earlier, in the Roman period, or later, in the post-medieval period.

It is clear from a single year's work that the system of computerised recording now in use in the pottery section of the Department of Urban Archaeology has benefits for the work of excavators not only within the department but also as far away as eastern Scotland. The use of pottery for quick, accurate dating of the layers within an excavation, so often held as an ideal, is now practical.

Of even greater importance, however, is the contribution which the pottery section can now make to the study of the past economy and sociology of the City. A wealth of potential information has been recovered from the ground since the foundation of the DUA in 1973 and by the use of computers this potential is being turned into a reality.

Towne excavation a vague concept now has flesh and a good deal of blood.

Martin's Hundred, perhaps surprisingly, has every claim to be the best introduction to real archaeology available today—as readable as Wheeler, but rather more up to date. Does the professional have anything to learn from it? Perhaps not in terms of survey and excavation technique: can Noel Hume really have spent \$500,000 and failed to use a magnetometer to look for the pottery kiln? But in other respects the book should be compulsory reading. There is no doubt that he has a great flair for asking the right questions, and above all for seeing all his information as part of a whole. His 'small finds,' for instance, are not mothballed and dealt with as an afterthought once the 'site report' has been written up. Their immediate study helps instead to structure the progress of the excavation and lead it on to greater glories. Noel Hume is not a trendy archaeologist, and many will see this aspect of his work as a species of unstructured diletantism. He is certainly not your man if you believe that things are only true when they are quantified. But trendy archaeologists should (if possible) note that Noel Hume has made *Martin's Hundred* what it is by the force of his archaeological and historical imagination. It is easy to forget that, in some other hands, the site would have had considerable boredom potential, despite its historical documentation: it could so easily be reduced to groups of post holes, a collection of corroded iron objects and lists of pottery types and skeletal measurements. We are fortunate that someone still remembers that archaeology is supposed to have something to do with the reconstruction of past societies.

CHRIS GREEN

Victoria County History of Middlesex, Vol. VII, Ed. T. F. T. Baker, *Oxford University Press*, 1982. 279 pp., 43 pl., Maps, Index, Bibliography. £60.

THIS VOLUME, the last in the Middlesex series of the V.C.H., covers the Parishes of Acton, Chiswick, Ealing with Brentford, West Twyford, and Willesden. As with all the more recent volumes in the series (ie Vol III onwards) a regular format is adhered to, so providing a fixed minimum of information covering all aspects of the social, economic and administrative history of each Parish, researched in considerable detail from both primary local and central records (*General Introduction to V.C.H.*, 1970).

V.C.H. VII is amply supplied with illustrations and clear, unfussy maps, well integrated with the text. This is clear and readable, with detailed footnotes, although — unlike earlier Middlesex volumes — descriptive passages in some sections (notably

Education/Religion) have been compressed into note form for brevity.

Inevitably, the constraints of the format have placed some restrictions on the cohesion of the material dealt with in the text: thus, for instance, Brentford is unrealistically split between Ealing and Hanwell Parishes, with insufficient cross-reference. The factual content of the text, on the other hand, is of a high standard, bearing no serious and very few minor errors or omissions, (the Chiswick entry, owing to a last-minute transfer of authorship, affords a slightly less full coverage than its counterparts, but remains nonetheless precise and informative).

In respect of the sheer quantity of basic local information in each entry, presented in easily accessible form, this Volume, and indeed *V.C.H.* as a whole, has no rival; and as a starting-point for all forms of local or regional research, is seriously to be recommended.

JOHN MILLS

Verulamium Excavations: Volume II, Sheppard Frere: with a section by M. G. Wilson, *Society of Antiquaries Research Report* No. XLI, 1983, pp. xvi + 346, 47 plates 156 figs. £30.

THIS IS THE SECOND of three volumes presenting the results of Professor Frere's excavations in Verulamium between 1955 and 1961. Volume I reported on a sequence of shops in Insula XIV, and Volume III will contain specialist reports and complete the publication of the pottery. Volume II covers all of the excavations not treated in Volume I, ordered according to Insula of discovery, with separate sections on the Belgic mint, the defences, the forum, the theatre, and the northern monumental arch. As in Volume I, each section is accompanied by tables giving the evidence for dating, and the report is concluded by a catalogue of the relevant pottery. A 25-page introduction examines the overall development of the settlement.

Since many of Frere's findings have been published in interim statements and more general accounts, most of the important discoveries for which this is the definitive report will already be familiar. Here at last is the full and considered account, bringing together the great quantity of evidence from diverse excavations to make a coherent account of Verulamium's development. As the excavations were completed over twenty years ago, and consisted mostly of a series of small trenches, the detailed evidence is presented by a large number of section drawings, but most of the plans lack detail and are highly simplified. Building plans are in many cases poorly understood and their reconstructions rely on a considerable (sometimes perhaps excessive) amount of conjecture. Frequent cross-referencing between

text, plans and sections is required if the detailed arguments are to be followed. Generally the structure works well, though it might have been better to locate all the information on the defences in one place. Reference between plans is hindered by variations in their orientations, and there is a general absence of detailed location maps. Cross-referencing might also have been made easier by the provision of a list of the investigations made.

In addition to the mint debris, pre-Roman activity was attested by scattered occupation debris, burials, and a rectilinear building. Sadly, the identification of a ditched enclosure which might, according to Frere, have marked the limits of a Belgic palace area or sacred site, heavily depends on a feature which, although possibly the corner of a Belgic ditch, could in this reviewer's opinion, have been part of a large Claudian quarry.

Roman Verulamium is presented as a planned settlement, perhaps a *Municipium* from the outset, founded c. 50 A.D. The scarcity of Claudian coins and early samian leads Frere to suppose that any Conquest period fort must have been short-lived and of minimal influence, but he has little doubt that a fort existed; this he argues from the discovery of a small number of pieces of military equipment and the organisation of the street system. This evidence is little different to that from London, but the most important evidence from Verulamium is that of a first century turf revetted rampart and associated gateway. These were discovered beneath the later defensive circuit against the river Ver and are identified as part of an annexe to the fort; the irregularity of the rampart's line and the absence of associated internal buildings precluding its identification as the rampart of the fort itself. It is possible from the evidence presented and through a reinterpretation of one of the sections across the east defences (fig. 19), to suggest that the turf revetted rampart continued along much of the riverside, and was associated with the early city defences. The case for the existence of an early fort is still unproven.

Although consideration of the city defences could have been improved by more information on the geology and physical topography, which are surprisingly neglected, Frere has provided a logical and well argued sequence. Three circuits are identified; the earliest dated to the first century, the Fosse Earthwork most likely to be of mid second century, and the town wall suggested to belong to the period A.D. 260-70.

The many houses investigated present a picture similar to that of the development of other Romano-British towns of the south-east. The early town expanded rapidly, and consisted largely of houses of clay and timber set close together. From the mid second century the town changed radically to emerge

in the third century with far fewer houses, but these larger, of more complex form, and involving masonry construction.

These buildings provide a wealth of structural detail. The wall plasters and mosaics displayed in Verulamium Museum are here published (but more detailed treatment is reserved for Volume III), as is the underground corridor and shrine, part of which can be seen by visitors approaching the theatre.

Frere demonstrates the 'vitality of Verulamium in its last decades and its long survival.' The clearest illustration, the late fourth century building (XXVII: 2) replaced by a masonry barn-type structure, itself cut through by a water-pipe trench, illustrating the survival of an organised water supply well into the later half of the fifth century, is published in full.

This book will be an essential work of reference for Romano-British archaeologists and especially fascinating to those working in London. Professor Frere deserves congratulation for this impressive and well written volume. It is regrettable that such important results have taken so long to reach print, and that the price will put them beyond the reach of many people.

DOMINIC PERRING

Also Received

Recovering Sarepta, a Phoenician City by James B. Pritchard. *Princeton University Press*. 162pp, 140 pl & fig. £6.65 paperback.

BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY of Pennsylvania Museum excavated at Sarepta, modern Sarafand, the history and culture of the Phoenicians were known from the accounts of ancient authors and from digs in some of their colonial settlements, but hardly at all from work on the original cities of the Lebanese littoral. Professor Pritchard's short, non-specialist account of the excavations is a model of its kind. It is comprehensive, but selective of material, authoritative without being condescending, and well-written. Would there were more like it.

PETER DORRELL

Roman London, by Peter Marsden. *Thames and Hudson*, 1983. 224 pages, many pl. and figs., bibliog., index. £4.95 paperback.

THIS IS A PAPERBACK edition of a book originally published in 1980, and reviewed by Harvey Sheldon in Volume 4, No. 3, 67-8. There appear to be no additions or amendments. A very attractive purchase at this price.

CLIVE ORTON