

Books

Cave Art, by Andrew J. Lawson. *Shire Archaeology*, 1991. 64 pp., illus. £3.95.

Prehistoric Flint Mines, by Robin Holgate. *Shire Archaeology*, 1991. 64 pp., illus. £3.95.

Hillforts of England and Wales, by James Dyer. *Shire Archaeology*, 1992 (revised edition). 64 pp., illus. £3.95.

THESE THREE recent books from Shire — two new, one revised — span aspects of European archaeology from the later Palaeolithic to the Roman Conquest. As with all the volumes in this series, one has nothing but praise for the scholarship and clarity of the text, the quality of the illustrations and of the production and lay-out. The choice of authors once again reflects well upon the editor's judgement.

In view of the very different subjects treated, each book will be discussed individually and in chronological order.

Cave Art

MUCH HAS been written on the subject of western European palaeolithic art, and this new addition is an up-to-date and eminently readable synthesis of a complex and fascinating subject. The author sensibly restricts his study to the richest areas, namely France and Spain, setting the scene interestingly with a description of "two sites, closely situated but contrasting in their content": Niaux and Fontanet, near Tarascon-sur-Ariege in central southern France. One is open to the public (Niaux) and the other is not. There follows a plea for the "finest protection for newly discovered sites" and the need to promote awareness in our society not only of the achievement of past artists but also of the vulnerability of their surviving legacy. The time span covered by the art is defined, not only for the parietal art but also the carved and decorated objects (*art mobilier*) which make up the bulk of palaeolithic art. Brief mention is made of the early rock art of hunter-gatherer societies in other continents which can now be reliably dated, some of it to the Upper Pleistocene, alerting the reader to the fact that, while European palaeolithic art may still be the earliest and most artistically developed, other peoples in other lands, at comparable cultural levels, were also decorating the rock walls of their habitat. The author also makes the important point that only in Europe was the decoration carried out deliberately in the deepest, darkest recesses of caves as well. (Aborigines such as the Bushmen of southern Africa tended to shun the dark depths of caves.)

The introductory chapter closes with a brief summary of the types of settlement and material evidence associated with the artists, and the geographical distribution of decorated caves and shelters in western Europe. In this connection it is worth reflecting that further systematic exploration in the mountainous regions of eastern Europe and Russia may well reveal more parietal art. As the author rightly points out, only the systematic searching of caves in regions such as the Ariege and the Pais Vasco in recent years has led to new discoveries.

The next chapter outlines the various events in the Franco-Cantabrian region since the discovery, and eventual acceptance, of Altamira in the late 19th century. From the time of its discovery the art needed to be recorded, analysed and classified; the first to do this systematically was the French archaeologist, Abbé Henri Breuil. Others built on his pioneer work, among them Andre Leroi-Gourhan who evolved a system which, for its clarity and simplicity, is the one most usually accepted today. A useful table correlates dates, industries, artistic styles and notable French and Spanish sites.

Chapter 3 discusses the content of cave art: mainly representations of animals. Short notes on the commonest species are given, with illustrations from the caves. Humans are rarely represented on cave walls, though they form an important component of the *art mobilier* right across the Upper Palaeolithic region, from the Atlantic to Siberia. The various enigmatic signs and symbols found associated with cave art are briefly discussed and illustrated. A table gives the occurrence of animal, human and abstract signs in the Ariege valley. The chapter ends with a comprehensive summary of the tools and techniques used in painting, engraving and sculpting the walls of caves and shelters, including the interesting recent research on mineral extenders and binders in the paint from Niaux.

In the final chapter the vexed question of interpreting cave art is addressed. Lack of composition has long been noted as a feature of the art, but Leroi-Gourhan and others believed that order could be discerned in the decorated caves by the way in which the animals were disposed on the walls (central, peripheral, etc.) and by the selection of certain animals only for portrayal. Selectivity is corroborated by the comparison of food refuse and depictions on cave walls. In the search for meaning in palaeolithic cave art, the author expertly summarises some of the many views ex-

pressed over the past century: sympathetic magic, totemism, dualism in the art interpreted as the male and female principles, and shamanism — the art recording trance experience. But, as the author wisely remarks, "We may never know its meaning; as with some ancient manuscripts we can see the words but we do not understand the language".

This small book is an excellent introduction to a vast and complex subject and is completed by a good index, select bibliography (which could perhaps be expanded) and a useful list of those sites in France and Spain which are open to the public.

Prehistoric flint mines

MUCH ATTENTION has been paid in recent years to the exploitation of igneous and metamorphic rocks for axes and related implements during the British Neolithic. Quarries and the sourcing of artefacts are the subjects of continuing research through the regional implement petrology surveys set up under the aegis of the Council for British Archaeology. However it was flint, with its wide availability and ease of working, which provided the commonest raw material for the manufacture of stone tools in the pre-metal-using societies of Europe, including Britain. So it is good to have a new, succinct account of this great prehistoric industry. Some of the neolithic flint mines described in this book, which deals only with Britain, have been known since the mid 19th century: at Grimes Graves in Norfolk and Cissbury in Sussex. Other sites have been discovered and examined since then. More sites remain to be found, as the author remarks in connection with the previously unsuspected flint quarries at Hambledon Hill, Dorset, "Clearly there is still much work to be done to determine the complete range and location of flint-mining sites in Britain".

The first chapters give the distribution of sites and deposits in which flint is found. The process of extraction is concisely described, with illustrations from excavations and delightful drawings by Christina Unwin. Chapter 4 outlines the history of research and Chapter 5 briefly describes the sites themselves. The last chapter sets neolithic flint extraction in Britain in context by making an interesting comparison with the quarrying and trading of stone axes by a 20th-century tribe in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea. The nature and scale of output from flint mines in Britain is discussed: the role of the mines, the trade in mined flint. Finally, the demise of prehistoric flint mining and the extraction and use of flint in Britain since the prehistoric period is briefly touched upon. A list of sites and museums to visit, a select

bibliography, including some site reports, and an index complete this excellent little book.

Hillforts of England and Wales

LITTLE NEEDS to be said about the new edition of this authoritative, clearly written and excellently illustrated book from the series editor. The fact that after a decade there is a call for an updated and reprinted second edition, speaks for itself. The book deals with all aspects of the hillforts of England and Wales: the defences, entrances and interiors, their function and situation. The more difficult problem of when hillforts were built, by whom and for what reason, is dealt with in Chapter 6, which has been updated in the light of excavations and new evidence since 1981. Fortified hilltops are now known from the Neolithic and again during the Bronze Age, towards the end of the second millennium BC, but the main period of fort building was between 750 and 400 BC, with some hillforts such as Maiden Castle, Dorset, remaining in use until the Roman period. As in the original edition, the final chapter describes two typical hillforts (still not fully published): the promontory and contour fort of Burrough, Leicestershire, and Conderton Camp in Worcestershire.

A welcome improvement to this new edition is the placing of the photographs and line drawings throughout the book, where they relate to the text, instead of at the end. The select bibliography has been expanded and brought up-to-date, but one regrets that reference to authors made in the text (Piggott, p. 15, Dixon, p. 21 and Avery, p. 25) are not included in the bibliography. A slightly amended list of places to visit, together with the index, complete this revised edition.

Patricia Christie

Fornaci e Officine sa Vasaio Tardo-Ellenistiche, by N. Cuomo di Caprio. Morgantina Studies III, Princeton University Press, 1992. xxiv + 192 pp., 69 pl., 18 figs £46.50.

THIS VOLUME is the third in the series describing the results of the excavations at Morgantina in central Sicily, conducted between 1955 and 1963. It describes the remains of ten late-Hellenistic potters' kilns discovered in six locations in and around the town. The work is written by the author of a substantial study of Italian Hellenistic and Roman kilns¹.

The strengths of the report are the detailed and informative descriptions of the structures of the kilns and associated workshop features. There is a

1. N. Cuomo di Caprio 'Proposta di classificazione della fornaci per ceramica e laterizi nell'area italiana' *Sibrium* 11 (1971-2) 373-464.

particularly useful discussion of the probable coverings for the oven chambers of such kilns — a feature which (as here) rarely survives, but were, in all probability, temporary and constructed from tiles, clay and waste sherd material before each firing. The workshops reported here are in strongly urban contexts. Some were inserted into earlier public buildings in the area of the agora or market place, others into residential buildings elsewhere in the town. These changes in land-use are probably to be associated with the conquest of the region by Rome during the second Punic War, and the subsequent founding of a settlement for her Spanish allies on the site in 211 BC.

The products of the kilns are rather less satisfactorily covered. The final report on the ceramics from the workshops is apparently to be found in an unpublished doctoral thesis, which is to be published as a subsequent volume of *Morgantina Studies*. The present study does include detailed descriptions of the petrology of the pottery fabrics, a study of their chemical composition by X-ray diffraction, data on firing temperatures derived from a study of microfossil inclusions and a detailed classification of the wares produced — even a few photographs of wasters — leading to a valuable discussion of the interaction between the potters, their clay resources and kiln technology. However, in the absence of the final ceramic report it is a little difficult to assess the wider value of much of the above. We are faced with a performance of Hamlet, but without the Prince.

An important part of the production in these kilns seems to be the black-slipped table ware known as Campanian C. Campanian wares circulated widely in the Mediterranean up to the mid 1st century BC, and are the precursors of the red-slipped Arretine and samian wares. For the British reader, therefore, the Morgantina volume allows us to examine the kilns and workshops of the fine ware producers of the 2nd-1st centuries BC, the ancestors of the Gaulish *sigillata* industries, whose products are more familiar on these shores than Campanian C. Reports such as this, and Cuomo di Caprio's earlier works on Italian kilns, provide the background against which we must judge the kiln technologies imported into Gaul and Britain following their conquest by Rome.

Paul Tyers

Tudor London Visited, by Norman Lloyd Williams. *Cassell*, 1991. 211pp., 33 illus., bibliog., index. £15.95¹.

HISTORY IS usually, and not surprisingly, written in the past tense, so it is disconcerting at first to

encounter the mid sixteenth century eyeball to eyeball as it were in this survey of Tudor London, where events are still in progress, and 'history' is as much anticipated as reflected on. Williams pursues his course through the times of Edward VI, Lady Jane Grey and Queen Mary, and concentrates on the crisis occasioned by the accession of the catholic queen. Will the Protestant reformation be reversed? How will the English people react? What will become of the monastic property now in secular hands? And the reformed clergy — and their wives? The interrogative mood, a direct result of writing in the present tense, helps to emphasise "how ambiguous with possibilities" the time was.

Williams admits to the influence of Thomas Carlyle in placing his narrator's voice in the 'present' of the described events rather than at the safer distance maintained by most historians. What results is an idiosyncratic narrative with which it is difficult to feel comfortable. Sometimes we are in the company of a chatty Londoner who can express the common opinion and let slip a reference to the "whoreson French", sometimes of a more detached commentator who uses modern concepts to explain historical events — Sir Thomas Gresham is said to be thinking of starting "a sort of London college of business studies". Elsewhere, he is a cynical attacker of the "fogginess" of the English collective consciousness, or a journalist jotting down the briefest notes on what passes before him. The effect is to make the reader question the reliability of the information and judgements given. It destabilises our view of the past and prevents us from passively accepting what we are offered. In fact, the use of the present tense, at first merely irritating, becomes a more intellectually interesting ploy.

The writer's general thesis is much more explicit, although cloaked in heavy irony, in the final section of the book. He sees the reign of Mary as a point of no return. The religion which had so successfully bound together church and state and enforced the allegiance of the majority to both, had finally lost its power, its "monopoly", to new, secular, orthodoxies embodied in scientific thought, mathematics, architecture and music. This is where the 'modern' began, apparently as the result of sheer apathy on the part of the English.

The most successful part of the book is probably the topographical recreation of the city and its environs. This is achieved by constant reference to street and house names, churches and taverns, and other landmarks, as we are directed where to go

1. Already remaindered at half-price in Oppenheim's, South Kensington.

and what to look at. A kind of 'running gag' points out every monastic building which has somehow fallen into the hands of Protector Somerset since the Dissolution. If you want the gossip, want to know how to hail a water-man, what happened to the charnel house of old St. Paul's, or who dug up Dick Whittington, our tour-guide/narrator will oblige, and he is just as likely to mention prices and wages, cess-pits and hangings, as the fair houses and churches of the usual tourist itinerary.

The book has been carefully researched, and the main sources for each section are noted. Most of the entries in the Bibliography are well before 1975, and include many nineteenth-century histories and a number of contemporary sources. The results of modern archaeological excavation had evidently not been encountered by the author at the time of writing. Despite its scholarly leanings, however, there are few notes, and it is virtually impossible to find the exact source of a particular statement. The index is tiny, and the illustrations are not keyed into the text. Its usefulness as a source-book is consequently somewhat limited, and it is difficult to decide what readership it was intended for. It is too full of fascinating historical detail and comment to be acceptable as a historical fiction, but perhaps too alienating in its provocative style to be a popular history.

As an experiment in presenting the past, however, it is of some interest. It could be a useful introduction to the period for students of the history of London, and it might even be possible to use it as a guide book for 'Edwardian' or 'Marian' city walks. This was the time when John Stow (a major source) prowled the streets of London, gazing into holes in the road, watching demolitions, and lamenting the loss of the city's history in the face of redevelopment: the sense of medieval London vanishing day by day is very strong.

Jo Udall

Christopher Columbus; I was there, by John D. Clare. *The Bodley Head*, 1992. 64pp., colour illus., index. £7.99.

READING THE fly sheet of this book I would be inclined to agree that both in language and style, it would be most useful for upper junior and lower secondary years. However, I have been using this book with my class of seven to nine year olds and have been pleasantly surprised by what they have been able to gain from its layout.

First and foremost, the detailed and well-researched pictures have generated a great deal of discussion. Using the book as a starting point, we have touched

on questions of reliability, fact and point of view, and primary and secondary evidence. It has provoked the question among some of the more able children of "How do we know?" The pictures for the younger children have proved a useful means of enriching their understanding of the period and the peoples, and have helped to generate enthusiasm for what, to the seven year old, is a remote period, however globally significant it may have been.

My only reservation was that some of the pictures may have been reinforcing some racial stereotypes. In addition, whilst recognising that the age of exploration was male dominated, it is a pity that opportunities in which women could have been feasibly included in the pictures were not always used.

The book is rich in content and should be highly commended for providing the reader with an extremely comprehensive understanding of the world of which Columbus was a part — its religious, political and cultural development are all given a lot of attention so that the actions and attitudes of Columbus can be explained within a context. He is not, as in so many children's history books, dealt with in isolation.

Providing evidence of a controversial nature about the personality of Columbus helps develops children's historical skills — they can begin to question different theories about the past and start to recognise bias. These are all skills which the National Curriculum for History recognises to be important, yet few publications are successful in helping to provoke the development of these. In this respect, my only criticism is that I feel that the use of primary source material could have been made more explicit (e.g. quotations from journals, etc.), so that children can have practice in using and gaining information from such evidence themselves.

Tamsyn Witchell

Everyday and Exotic Pottery from Europe, (eds.) David Gaimster and Mark Redknapp. *Oxbow Books*, 1992. 382pp., illus., bibliog. £45.

THIS FESTSCHRIFT in honour of John Hurst contains 33 articles, spanning the 7th to 19th centuries, and geographically from Spain to Ireland to Germany. Londoners will be especially interested in the Palissy dish from Blackfriars, and in the debunking of the claim of the 'Queen Elizabeth' dish to be England's earliest dated tin-glazed ware. A good read for anyone interested in medieval pottery.

Clive Orton