

Books

Human Bones in Archaeology, by Ann Stirland. *Shire Archaeology*, 1999 (2nd edition). 64 pp, 19 pl, 19 figs, £4.99.

A WELCOME addition to the Shire range is this revised and updated version of the volume that appeared first in 1986. The first half of this edition is devoted to the dating, preservation, treatment and recording of human bone from archaeological excavations. As before, the section dealing with sexing human skeletons is presented so clearly that the lay person may use it immediately for the accurate sexing of adult human remains if sufficiently intact. The same may not be said for techniques for estimating the age at which an adult individual died. It is now custom and practice to assign the deceased to a particular age range, rather than homing in on a precise age at death, as the author cautiously admits.

The remainder of the book exemplifies the use of human bones in palaeopathology and in case studies. It is a privilege to encounter the author's own data on the dead from the wreck of the Tudor warship *Mary Rose*, wetting one's appetite for the imminent appearance of her definitive volume on this skeletal sample. In her section entitled 'Casebook' she turns her attention to various historical problems surrounding certain celebrated remains. The skeletons excavated at the Tower of London in 1674 and attributed to the 'Princes in the Tower' come under her scrutiny. She considers the report of the investigation of these meagre relics in 1933 and reaches a radically different conclusion to that reached earlier on these pages (*London Archaeology* no 10 1987, 258-262). This has to be the final word of the century by an anthropologist upon the ancient controversy and one that appears to exonerate Richard III of the murder of his nephews!

The theme of modernisation in the current revision is brought out by a section on the multitude of uses of DNA analysis of ancient bone. Similarly the Bibliography has doubled in length in order to take account of important advances made in the interim since the first edition appeared. The useful list of 'Museums to Visit' likewise has been expanded and includes the websites of the institutions to be visited. At this bargain price it seems folly not to buy it.

Bill White

Environmental Archaeology: principles and methods, by John Evans and Terry O'Connor. *Sutton Publishing*, 1999. 214 pp., £40 hardback, £14.99 paperback.

HISTORICALLY, environmental archaeology has divided into two schools: the first, older tradition with its roots in geography, concerned with the impact of humans on the landscape, and the second, coming into prominence in the 1960s, more interested in how human exploitation of the landscape has affected human societies. The first group is generally more concerned with off-site indicators for human impact, for example in pollen diagrams or soil profiles. The second has focused more on direct evidence for agricultural practices such as animal bones and plant remains collected from excavation. The book is oriented very much to the first approach and is not, despite the title, a comprehensive textbook on environmental archaeology. Recovery and interpretation of on-site biological remains receives very brief and incomplete coverage.

However, as a guide to how to look at a site in the landscape, this book is a rich and fascinating guide to current archaeological practice and some of the ecological concepts that underpin it. The book begins with three chapters that helpfully introduce basic ecological concepts, followed by three chapters investigating the formation of the archaeological record, on-site and off. The third part of the book deals with and, in keeping with the overall focus, has a strongly geoarchaeological approach. An attractive feature of this section -- and the book as a whole -- is the constant emphasis on the need to link techniques to research aims. The final four chapters concern interpretation, drawing (as elsewhere in the book) on a wide range of case studies in the British landscape.

Overall I found the coverage of techniques rather scanty, compared to Renfrew and Bahn's *Archaeology: Theories, Methods and Practice*. This is not a book to keep to hand during excavation or laboratory analysis. However, as a compact guide to ecological concepts, and to thinking about sites and planning research in a landscape context, it can be warmly recommended.

Mark Nesbitt