

Reviews

Scientific Methods in Medieval Archaeology (Contributions of the University of California, Los Angeles, Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, iv). Edited by Rainer Berger. 22 × 17 cm. xii + 459 pp., 236 figs. Los Angeles: California University Press, 1970. Price £9.50.

The contributions to this volume, twenty-eight in all, are based on papers presented to a conference held in 1967 at the University of California under the auspices of the Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies and the Isotope Laboratory of the Institute of Geophysics and Planetary Physics.

The book is divided into two main sections, 'Dating' and 'Tracing'. The dating methods discussed are radiocarbon, dendrochronology, thermoluminescence, archaeomagnetic dating, and tephrochronology, the last of which, perhaps unfamiliar to many readers, is concerned with the chronological interpretation of deposited layers of volcanic ash. 'Tracing' embraces those methods concerned mainly in the analysis of glass and ceramics, although one contribution deals with the more general application of X-ray fluorescence spectrometry and another with 'tracing' in a different sense, that of magnetic prospecting. A final chapter, 'Corrosion in Archaeology', forms an addendum.

Some of the contributions cover familiar ground; others are novel for a book of this type. Thus F. W. B. Charles and J. T. Smith respectively contribute articles on the medieval timber-frame tradition and the reliability of typological dating of medieval English roofs. Timber buildings also figure largely in W. Horn's 'The potential and limitations of radiocarbon dating in the middle ages: the art-historian's view' and in J. M. Fletcher's article 'Radiocarbon dating of medieval timber-framed cruck cottages', discussing work on the dating of eight buildings in north Berkshire, three of which are at Harwell—an appropriate location for such a method.

These four chapters are accompanied by a fine series of photographs and architectural drawings of barns, other English timber-framed buildings and French market-halls to a total of seventy-one. It is also eloquent of the modern trend of archaeology, as an interdisciplinary study with the natural sciences, that a curve showing the secular variation of cosmic-ray-produced C_{14} should be immediately followed by photographs of barns, including Great Coxwell. This conjunction is to be expected, however, as upstanding medieval timber buildings provide a possibly unrivalled sampling source for material for C_{14} and dendrochronological dating in Britain. Inevitably, the book will provoke others to consider the application of the C_{14} method to material from excavated structures and the articles on the limitations of radiocarbon dating will help in this respect. For example, it is possibly still not generally appreciated that the C_{14} content of a wood sample will depend critically on its original position in the growing tree and that therefore a 'growth allowance' (the number of growth rings from the sample to the bark) has to be added to convert the C_{14} date to a felling date. If mature oaks are involved this correction could be as high as 120 years. This point, and those related to other sorts of correction, are developed in detail, although there is a tendency to minimize the importance of the statistical errors associated with the radioactive assay. Thus it is suggested by R. Berger that the U.C.L.A. counter will reproduce results 'to within ± 30 years upon repeated counts', that such results are conventionally quoted in *Radiocarbon* with statistical errors of ± 80 years or ± 60 years if counted twice, but that this error may be considered generous and can be narrowed. As a 1-sigma standard deviation is associated with a probability of one chance in three that the date lies outside the stipulated range, this matter is of some importance,

especially in relation to medieval sites. Readers may share Horn's 'lingering doubts' (p. 79) whether 'the former margins of ± 80 or ± 60 ' have been absorbed in the correction-factors for tree-ring allowance, C13 correction and fluctuations in the C14 intake, more especially since many C14 dates are quoted in the book without the standard deviation, and the radiocarbon date for Great Coxwell, for example, is given as '1250' and compared with a historical date of 'ca 1250'.

Thermoluminescent dating is seen by many to offer the solution to many medieval dating problems and two chapters are devoted to it. M. J. Aitken discusses the dating of pottery; M. C. Han and E. K. Ralph cover very similar ground. At the time of the conference Aitken was attaining a precision of $\pm 10\%$ and predicting the unlikelihood of obtaining a better precision than 5%. Aitken also contributes a shorter article on archaeomagnetic dating.

The first three chapters in the 'Tracing' section are on somewhat specialized topics. Thus G. C. Patterson *et al.* consider the possibility of estimating variations in the intensity of world-wide lead smelting by measuring the lead concentration at different levels in polar snow. R. H. Brill discusses the analysis of Islamic lustre-wares, and J. D. Freeman the physical and chemical properties of medieval near-eastern glazed pottery. Pottery analysis is also dealt with by I. Perlman and F. Asaro, who describe the use of neutron-activation techniques, but only quote examples of prehistoric date. Bowan, Giaque and Perlman ('Rapid X-ray fluorescence analysis of archaeological material') also describe a method of application to medieval archaeology, but again rely on pre-medieval material to show how it can be done.

Thus there is a range of important information in this book, but one must consider what is achieved by its publication in the present form. Primarily the volume is the record of the 1967 conference. It is not, therefore, as the title might suggest, a work of overall synthesis about the application of scientific methods to medieval archaeology, but rather a compilation of articles reporting the position on certain specialized studies as these stood nearly five years ago, some of which will inevitably have progressed farther since then. Overwhelmingly one is left with the impression that the main objective was the discussion of absolute dating methods as applied to upstanding medieval buildings and that some of the other contributions were introduced in an attempt to broaden the scope. Clearly the required breadth, as set by the title, has not been achieved and the main value of the book must remain with the chapters on medieval buildings and the associated discussion of radiocarbon dating and dendro-chronology, which account for approximately 50% of the contents.

It remains to be said that the book, as befits its somewhat high price, is printed on good quality paper, is well bound and has an adequate (although somewhat selective) index.

JOHN MUSTY

Die frühchristlichen Inschriften des Mittelrheingebietes. By Walburg Boppert. 27 × 21 cm. ix + 176 pp., one folding table. Mainz am Rhein: Verlag Philipp von Zabern for Römisch-germanisches Zentralmuseum zu Mainz, 1971. Price not stated.

The history of the transition from late Roman to Merovingian society in the Rhineland is obscure. We know too little of the relations between the romanized provincials and the Frankish invaders during the 5th century. The fifty-two early Christian inscriptions dating from the end of the 4th to the early 8th century found in an area embracing Worms, Mainz, Wiesbaden, Bingen and Boppard, which are now published in detail, fill in some important gaps in the story. Boppert's study is a development of a thesis presented at the University of Mainz and is essentially a collation of work already done by Gombert, Behrens and above all by Rudolf Egger, whose 'Rheinische Grabsteine der Merowingerzeit' in *Bonner Jahrbücher*, CLIV (1954), 146-61, remains the classic statement. Even so, this is the first time that all the early

Christian inscriptions found in this significant area have been studied together. The author's exhaustive commentaries make it possible to appreciate how far specifically Germanic elements were making their presence felt and provide a basis for comparing the usages among Christians in the Rhineland with those prevalent in other western barbarian kingdoms of the same period.

In many respects the inscriptions form a remarkably homogeneous collection. Germanic names increase and palaeographically the inscriptions from the Mainz district show a tendency towards a distinctive type of Frankish script characterized by steeply-pointed lettering, but the funerary formulae remain constant throughout the period, and the Latin, though containing mistakes in grammar, is not notably barbarian. 'In hoc tumulo requiescit . . .', 'Hic requiescit in pace . . .' and 'In hoc titulo requiescit . . .' are all common, as are also references to the deceased such as 'anima dulcis' or 'bonae memoriae'. All these are typical early Christian forms to be found anywhere in the western empire. Indeed, in other contexts some of these inscriptions with the Constantinian monogram and facing doves could be of the 4th rather than the 5th century. It would seem that in the Rhineland, as elsewhere in the Gallic provinces, Church tradition and organization were deeply enough rooted to absorb the barbarian influx. The conversion of Clovis to Catholicism becomes easier to understand.

One point is less easy to explain, namely, the survival of belief in fate and horoscopes that is strongly marked in some of the inscriptions. The claim that the deceased 'decretum genesis complevit' or that she 'erepta est a divina potestate', coupled with meticulous attention being paid to the exact span of life measured in years, months and days, would be common enough in a 3rd-century setting, particularly in north Africa or in the eastern Mediterranean, but is unexpected among a mixed Roman and Germanic Christian population in north-western Europe.

In his commentary the author has looked for parallels mainly from Gallic and Hispanic Christian sites, but he might also have extended his radius to north Africa. It is interesting to find how many features of a typical 5th-century Romano-Germanic inscription, such as that of Armentarius from Boppard (pp. 125-8), with its Christian monogram flanked by alpha and omega, the interlinear lettering and the doves, can be paralleled by the decoration of north African *mensae martyrum* of this period (for instance, from a chapel at Er-Rouis in central Algeria published in *Nouvelles archives des missions*, 1909, 123). The reasons for such parallels suggest an interesting line for further research.

Meantime, the author's careful, thorough and factual presentation of the evidence has thrown much light on the religion and also the social life of the middle Rhineland in post-Roman times. This is a considerable contribution to scholarship and is most warmly recommended to all students of the early middle ages in western Europe.

W. H. C. FREND

Die Alamannen in Südbaden: Katalog der Grabfunde. By Friedrich Garscha. 2 vols. 31 × 23 cm. Vol. I, x+308 pp., 20 figs., 2 maps; vol. II, 131 pls. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter for Römisch-germanische Kommission (Germanische Denkmäler der Völkerwanderungszeit, Ser. A, Bd. XI), 1970. Price 198 DM.

Die alamannischen Gräberfelder von Güttingen und Merdingen in Südbaden. By Gerhard Fingerlin. 2 vols. 31 × 23 cm. Vol. I, x+308 pp., 12 figs., 2 plans; vol. II, 126 pls., maps, and plans. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter for Römisch-germanische Kommission (Germanische Denkmäler der Völkerwanderungszeit, Ser. A, Bd. XII), 1971. Price 198 DM.

The area whose Alamannic antiquities are covered in these four volumes includes the country east of the Rhine from north of Baden-Baden to the river's great re-entrant between Lörrach and Rheinfelden, and thence east along its north bank to Lake Constance, embracing in this latter stretch most of the lands south of Württemberg

that lie between the upper reaches of the Rhine and the Danube. Although the period covered runs from the 3rd to the 8th centuries, there is comparatively little in the way of Germanic antiquities in these parts before the 6th century, when the political obstacle earlier presented by the Roman *Limes* had finally ceased to inhibit the massive settlement of Teutonic folk. Throughout the period the whole central area of the Schwarzwald seems to have remained virtually empty, and the main concentrations of population that produced the cemetery-material here recorded lay along the Rhine valley and its tributaries, especially south-west of Freiburg-im-Breisgau, within the great re-entrant itself, and between the Schwarzwald and Lake Constance.

The treatment here accorded to the Alamannic material from these regions differs considerably from that followed in the recent volumes of the *Denkmäler* series dealing with Mittelfranken, the Main-Tauber region and the upper Danube valley.¹ The two volumes by Garscha are essentially a catalogue, of which the first consists of a very detailed inventory arranged alphabetically by sites, while the second contains illustrations of their more important contents arranged in the main by types. The text of the inventory only discusses the typology and dating of the objects in a rather random selection from among the larger cemeteries, and then only as part of a summary appreciation of the site. There are no general sections dealing with the different categories of object illustrated in vol. II, no discussion of the relationships which they may indicate with neighbouring regions, and no historical appreciation of the light they may throw on the circumstances in which the Alamannic settlement began and developed. Nor is it easy to use the second volume containing the illustrations as an aid in answering the questions that arise. Very few of the grave-groups listed in vol. I are illustrated as such in vol. II. Any attempt to bring together the objects associated in what might be a significant grave-group thus requires vol. II to be open simultaneously at as many places as there are objects of different categories in the group. The illustrations, moreover, apart from the line-drawings used in the 'Typentafeln' to indicate the various forms taken by most categories of artifacts (of which only those devoted to beads are adequately described), are all half-tone reproductions of photographs, many of which are not of the highest quality, and too often do less than justice to the details of ornament.

These defects of arrangement and presentation are by no means wholly the fault of the author. The catalogue has been in preparation for more than forty years, during which Garscha seems never to have been in command of the resources or the equipment required to bring his work to a satisfactory conclusion. Moreover, during this long period many of the collections have suffered disastrously from the hazards of war and peace. Some of the smaller museums in the area have ceased to exist, and their contents have been destroyed, dispersed, or reorganized; records relating to whole collections as well as numerous individual objects have been confused or lost. In these circumstances the provision of adequate illustrations for objects which have been mislaid, or the checking of queries from records no longer kept with the objects to which they relate, may well defeat all efforts at proper presentation.

It is the evident intention of Fingerlin in his careful publication to remedy these deficiencies in the case of two substantial cemeteries, Güttingen and Merdingen, whose remains and records are sufficiently well-preserved to make detailed treatment possible. The choice of these two sites for the purpose was dictated in part by the quantity and availability of their material and in part by their locations, which make it reasonable to treat each as a type-site for one of the main eastern and western centres of population in Südbaden. Güttingen lies in the east of the region in the Landkreis of Konstanz, while Merdingen is in the Breisgau not far from Freiburg. Merdingen is the larger of the two with some 280 well-recorded graves: Güttingen has only 114, and its archaeological value has also suffered from the wartime loss of the original records made by the excavator, F. Garscha.

¹ Reviewed in *Med. Archaeol.*, xv (1971), 184-6.

In spite of the distance between them the two cemeteries reveal a culture substantially similar, and it is evident that the Alamanni throughout south Baden possessed in the 6th and 7th centuries a fairly uniform, and not very distinguished, equipment of weapons, jewellery, pottery and other durables. Some of these groups show minor regional differences from those used by the neighbouring branches of the Alamannic confederation in Württemberg. Frankish influence is throughout strong, as one would expect in cemeteries in this region that do not begin much, if at all, before the mid 6th century. Most of the pottery, for example, is wheel-made and of obviously Frankish inspiration, if not importation, though there are a few hand-made pieces with stamped ornament showing the taste for patterns, such as pendent triangles without lines (e.g. Güttingen Gr. 38, Taf. 21) or purely random scatters, which seem to have been popular everywhere among the west Germans late in the 6th and early in the 7th centuries. There is only one example of this sort with bosses (Merdingen Gr. 222, Taf. 95), and this could very well have come from an English grave of that date.

The presentation of all this material by Fingerlin is excellent. In addition to the inventories, which list the contents of each grave with clarity, there are useful sections on all the main categories of objects, which supply the evidence on which the chronology of the cemeteries is based. Most of the grave-goods fall within the century 550-650, after which furnished graves become rarer, and in particular the provision of food and drink in pottery or glass vessels entirely stops. The contents of each grave are illustrated together by excellent line-drawings, which makes it very easy to use text and illustrations simultaneously. It is greatly to be hoped that similar treatment may be given one day to the contents of some of the other cemeteries listed by Garscha that still admit of such detailed study.

J. N. L. MYRES

Britain and Ireland in Early Christian Times A.D. 400-800. By Charles Thomas. 21 × 15 cm. 144 pp., 110 illustrations (19 in colour). London: Thames and Hudson, 1971. Price £1.75; paperback 90p.

Professor Thomas and I would agree that the centuries after A.D. 400 comprise the most formative period in insular history and archaeology. In view of this, eighty-odd small text-pages seem little space to devote to such a subject. Perhaps the best way to treat this book is to read it through at a sitting, suspending criticism and disbelief in order to concentrate on its more valid perceptions.

A sample of the points at which critical faculties must be suspended would include: Is the massed distribution of souterrains of all periods in Scotland really relevant to that of the artefacts of the historic Picts (figs. 24, 25, 28)? Can Tintagel monastery be described as sited within an abandoned coastal promontory-fort in face of the plain statement of its excavator (p. 92)? Could not the leading student of post-Roman imported pottery give us up-to-date distribution-maps, with the symbols correctly sited (figs. 60, 61)? Could Cunedda, who hailed from a border province around the head of the Forth, have had a family seat at Traprain Law (p. 115)? Is it helpful to the kind of reader for whom, presumably, the book was written, to describe the man-and-bears scene on the Sutton Hoo purse-lid as 'Daniel in the Lion's Den' (p. 134)?

But these are minor blemishes, which limit the value of the work as a sound textbook, but which in no way detract from its importance as a personal statement from one who has read and thought as deeply as any of the middle generation of dark-age scholars. And the impact of that statement on the general reader is considerably increased by the illustrations. The scholar will find nothing new here; but intelligent collaboration between Professor Thomas and Messrs. Thames and Hudson has ensured that the pictures really do tie in with the text, instead of floating in limbo as they so often do in works of this kind.

The best part of the book is that on early Christianity in northern and south-

western Britain and in Ireland, the field which Professor Thomas has made so much his own. Indeed, in this essay he surpasses anything that he has written elsewhere on the subject, perhaps because there are no details here to impede the flow of ideas. He is particularly judicious on the continuity of Christian organization and belief from the Roman period; on the special character of the Celtic church; and on the spread of monasticism. His account of the evolution of enclosed cemeteries into developed cemeteries is a helpful introduction to the important new hypotheses which he has spelt out elsewhere.

In the secular field he is especially good on folk-movements, or at least on those within the Celtic-speaking areas: Irishmen to Scotland, Wales and Cornwall; Britons to Armorica; and even a shadowy expansion of the Picts to the Northern and Western Isles. His account of the post-Roman use of hill-forts is a balanced summary of the state of knowledge in 1970, which provides the background to accelerating discovery and research. And in the military field he has interesting suggestions about mercenary soldiers as agents of cultural exchange—in this case, Frankish mercenaries in Ireland.

All this is excellent; but there are three matters on which even the most deliberately credulous of reviewers cannot suspend criticism. The first concerns the end of Roman Britain. Professor Thomas thinks that this 'was marked, not with a bang, but a whimper'. This can scarcely have been the view of Zosimus, for he describes the action of the Britons in terms which elsewhere are used for the revolt of the angels. In support of his interpretation Professor Thomas invents some new myths about the 5th-century use of towns, and he also revives some hoary old ones: some form of effective Roman military presence after A.D. 410; coinage circulating throughout the 5th century; hoard II at Lydney attributed to that century, with echoes of 'King Arthur's small change'.

Another hoary myth appears in his treatment of the Arthurian documents: that our 'earliest references take us firmly to North Britain'. Detailed source-analysis makes it quite impossible to sustain his view of the *Annales Cambriae* as 'a North British chronicle'. His suggestion that it was only 'when the *Annales Cambriae* was finally redacted after 1100' that 'Arthur . . . and Mount Badon . . . were placed together' is palpably false. A relevant side issue is his treatment of tales about Tristan as 'originally North British' but subsequently 'relocated in the neighbourhood of Castle Dore'. The only Drustan-Tristan whom we can locate on the basis of contemporary evidence is the one who lies buried, as his own memorial tells us, in the close vicinity of Castle Dore.

Finally, there is Professor Thomas's treatment of the Anglo-Saxon settlement. He confesses a bias towards the north and west of Britain, and excuses it on the grounds that the early English world is well covered by existing studies. This is true enough; but no balanced picture of Britain in this period would pay so little attention to the effects of Anglo-Saxon folk-movement. Even from a narrowly Celtic point of view, the loss of their richest territory, and the suppression of their language and culture, cannot have seemed insignificant to the Britons. And viewing this formative period in wider perspective, surely the most important events were those connected with the transformation of much of Britain into England. Of these events, Professor Thomas gives his readers scarcely an inkling.

LESLIE ALCOCK

The Quest for Arthur's Britain. By Geoffrey Ashe. 25 × 22 cm. 282 pp., 166 pls., 34 figs. London: The Pall Mall Press Ltd., 1968. Price £3.50.

Nyns yu marow Myghtern Arthur cry the bards of the Cornish Gorsedd. 'King Arthur is not dead'. It comes as no surprise that at this revived expression of Cornish cultural identity the heroic figure from Celtic mythology should still have a revered place as the personification of Celtic independence. The legend has been sustained throughout the centuries and deserves examination.

Geoffrey Ashe, whose publications also include *King Arthur's Avalon* and *From*

Caesar to Arthur, has produced a glossy, profusely illustrated coffee-table-style book which follows the course of the legend in literature and folk-lore and attempts to interpret the 'dark ages' in relation to Arthur. He is indeed dedicated to establishing 'Arthurian Fact'. He even goes so far as to see the Arthurian theme inspiring 'a new and acceptable patriotism, a new sense of national vocation'. Literary, historical and archaeological sources are drawn on haphazardly to bolster up a preconceived case. Mr. Ashe's own contributions are full of assumptions which, with repetition, may influence the uncritical reader. Thus 'Arthurian Britain' is put forward as a 'meaningful historical term if not a wholly accepted one'. 'Arthurian Age' is not the answer to the problem of how to label the two-and-a-half centuries between A.D. 400 and 650. It is perhaps time for a more satisfactory alternative to the 'dark ages' to be established which will cover both the Celtic and Anglo-Saxon regions. 'Migration period' would be apposite and would conform to continental practice.

The first chapter, from Mr. Ashe, is an entertaining summary of the Arthurian legend in literature from William of Malmesbury to Tennyson and Hardy. A later chapter, covering the period of T. H. White, Arthur Duggan and the composer Rutland Boughton, provides more recent manifestations of the Romance. These chapters are followed by wide ranging sweeps of historical facts intermixed with opinion. Were the Roman towns deserted as a result of the large-scale movement of Angles and Saxons into the country? Recent archaeological evidence throws doubt on this assumption. There are many other statements which can be similarly questioned or qualified.

Sandwiched between these chapters are those by Mr. Ashe's archaeological contributors. They form less than half the book and are summaries of excavation-reports (sometimes previously published) for popular consumption. Thus C. A. Raleigh Radford covers the Tintagel Celtic monastery, the reoccupation of the iron-age enclosure of Castle Dore (Cornwall) and the early churches and site of Arthur's tomb at Glastonbury Abbey. Philip Rahtz describes his investigations on Glastonbury Tor. It is unfortunate that the chapter on Leslie Alcock's excavation on South Cadbury (written by Mr. Ashe) could only deal with the results of the 1966 reconnaissance and the first main season of excavation. Alcock's own chapter puts together recent work in migration-period Wales at such sites as Dinas Emrys, Dinas Powys, Degannwy, Dinorben, Pant-y-saer, Castle Odo and other sites in the Lleyn peninsula. This is an admirable summary and shows how valuable it would be if we had a work of synthesis on this period for the scholar as well as in popular form. Mr. Ashe's *Quest* does not answer this need, but he has surely found a place for himself in the Arthurian tradition.

A. D. SAUNDERS

Arthur's Britain. By Leslie Alcock. 24 × 15 cm. xvii + 415 pp., 32 pls., 33 figs., 11 maps. London: Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, 1971. Price £3.95.

Arthur's Britain is written by a practising archaeologist trained as a historian, and incorporates an immense amount of his own (and other's) researches and thinking. The scope of the work—the British Isles, A.D. 367–634—is considerable; there are, indeed, few scholars alive today who could succeed in what Alcock has attempted. The author sets out in his preface to establish Arthur as a genuine historical figure and to describe a background for him based on historical and archaeological evidence. By these terms of reference the book is an unqualified success: Arthur emerges from the mists of myth and romance and the picture of his Britain is credible, even if the purist may quibble at the book's title. Applying the name of a man who 'lived' in the middle of a period of three centuries to the whole of that time may be good salesmanship, but is hardly accurate (or is the author a reader of Tolkien?—*The Lord of the Rings*, III, 412).

Alcock divides his subject into two. He first considers the nature of the written and inscribed evidence for the period 367–634, examines three key texts in detail, discusses the 'Arthurian' documents and the Glastonbury associations, and then surveys the

historical background in two chapters divided at 490, the assumed date of the battle of Mons Badonicus. In parallel then follows a survey of the archaeological material, beginning with an account, absorbing and idiosyncratic like much of the book, of the nature of archaeological evidence. We look at the culture of Roman and sub-Roman Britain, and then the culture of the Britons from 450–650. Two chapters on the enemies of the Britons, the Picts and Scotti, and the English draw together basic material from many diverse sources. An unusual and valuable account of the economy, society and warfare forms ch. 11, and the final chapter leaves the reader in no doubt where Alcock stands in the endless debate ‘Did Arthur exist?’ As a recent and self-confessed convert to ‘Arthurianism’, he writes persuasively and with an almost missionary fervour that others may share his conviction.

The text is complemented by a fine series of plates, though I would cavil at some of the captions. The text-figures are somewhat uneven in quality, although some appear to be based on published illustrations. The absence of N. points on some of the site-plans is especially irritating (e.g. figs. 9 and 23). The dust-jacket, incidentally, is striking, but the mysteriousness it apparently aims at invoking is hardly fair to the clarity of the contents.

The fact that the book is intended for the paperback market after this edition is on the library shelf has had an obvious effect on its composition. Alcock’s claim that the book is a ‘preliminary sketch for a vast canvas’ does himself less than justice, but nevertheless there has been inevitable compression and selection and this has led in places to inaccuracies and omissions. Where this reviewer is familiar with the material, it is clear that all the available evidence has either not been considered or has been suppressed. When discussing the great hill-fort of Traprain Law, for example (p. 181), Alcock fails to make the vital point that, as at Maiden Castle, only a tiny fraction of the interior at the western end has been excavated and that knowledge of the site is therefore very limited. When publishing the catalogue of the material (*Proc. Soc. Antiq. Scot.*, LXXXIX (1955–6), 118–226), I was overconfident in fixing the date for the end of the occupation and it should now be re-examined. Again (p. 254), ‘It is wholly unthinkable that the Traprain Treasure is loot’ is not only characteristic of the author’s assertive style but also fails to take into account the excavator’s statement that the treasure was concealed in a ruinous ‘hut’ and contained, beside the mutilated late Roman silverware, a number of ‘Germanic-type’ personal ornaments which would be difficult to explain as coming from the imperial treasury. Similarly, while it is useful to have Buston crannog, Ayrshire, re-evaluated (pp. 227–8), it is arguable that some of the iron and bonework are earlier than the 6th century; moreover the presence of a forged Anglo-Saxon coin should surely have been mentioned. The badly-excavated site of Dunadd (pp. 267–8) has a remarkable amount of material, some of which appears to be closest to that from the later occupation at Traprain Law and not necessarily ‘Scottic’. I am not at all sure that we know what ‘Scottic’ material is like even in Ulster and therefore require convincing that we can recognize it in Scotland. The crannog material from Lagore and Ballinderry is not ‘Scottic’ as far as we know and should not, therefore, be used as parallels.

Perhaps the need for compression would account for these and other omissions, but there is an unfortunate tendency for hypotheses to be erected into facts, and for opposing arguments to be ignored, despite Alcock’s own remarks (p. 365). Is this due to the need to keep the length of the book within bounds or to partiality? The summary dismissal of the grass-marked pottery from Cornwall (p. 269) is not logical in view of the Iona evidence, which, however, is relegated to a foot-note (p. 380). No supporting reference is given for the statement that the Sutton Hoo ship carried sail, and on the same page (301) an interesting theory as to the mode and length of journeys across the North Sea is not even discussed. The confident note in many of Alcock’s statements, as for instance on the stability of English village settlements (p. 302), is not shared by all his colleagues.

A more fundamental criticism must be directed at the publisher as much as at the author. For whom is the book intended? As it stands it seems too complex and elaborate for the interested layman, as compared with a recent paperback covering much the same period. If it is to be a textbook, it has inadequate references and contains insufficient discussion of many controversial topics. One needs to have a good knowledge of the sources and authorities before embarking on this book. Perhaps it is not the fairest way of presenting complex material to a first-year student. In this respect it is not helpful to have a well-established document, familiar under a shorthand description, renamed the *British Historical Miscellany*. I was momentarily startled into believing that a totally new document had been unearthed. Indeed since so much reliance is placed on certain documents, one is entitled to ask what would happen to the Arthurian theory if the 'irreducible minimum of historical fact' about Arthur—the entry for year 93 in the Welsh Easter Annals, more commonly known as the *Annales Cambriae*—was shown by modern textual criticism to be a later interpolated entry!

Leslie Alcock has confronted us with a wealth of marshalled information, textual criticism, and interpretation of archaeological evidence covering a period of some three hundred years, probably one of the most debated and misunderstood in our history. He presents a coherent and fascinating account which may well be accepted as fact by those who forget his own dictum (p. 2), 'that . . . many of our current interpretations will be revolutionised' (with particular reference to textual criticism). And again (p. 2), 'each major new discovery is like a shake of the kaleidoscope, disrupting the existing patterns and forcing scholars to create new ones'. But is history like a kaleidoscope? The implication is that the historian-archaeologist sees the past differently at different times, and in a sense this is true. In these circumstances *Arthur's Britain* is one scholar's view of a vital period of our history, but it is by no means the definitive one. It is stimulating and, because so confident and wide-ranging, will provoke much argument and re-examination which can only be for the good. If we are ever to read an objective account of the history of the British Isles from the 4th to the 8th century (and I am pessimistic enough to feel this to be impossible) this book will undoubtedly have made a signal contribution to that achievement.

ELIZABETH FOWLER

Le Village mérovingien de Brebières (vi^e–vii^e siècles), avec une étude de la faune (Mémoires de la Commission Départementale des Monuments Historiques du Pas-de-Calais, xiv^e). By Pierre Demolon, with a contribution from Th. Poulain-Josien and a foreword by Ernest Will. 26 × 18 cm. 340 pp., 59 pls., 67 figs. Arras: Imprimerie Centrale de l'Artois. 1972. Price 50 F.

This is a welcome and important book. France has not always in this century been as prominent in the field of migration-period studies as in other branches of archaeology. Though there have been notable individual exceptions, very little field-work has been published in any depth until fairly recently and this has inevitably concentrated on cemeteries rather than settlements, since, as in England, habitation-sites of this period have remained till recently elusive and largely unnoticed. Happily in recent years there has been a revival of serious interest and activity in the early medieval period, the fruits of which are to be seen in the appearance of a new journal, *Archéologie Médiévale*, and in an important growth in the number of published excavations, of which this book is a notable example.

This book is important, then, not because of any unusual aspects of the site it describes, but because it records 'le premier et encore le seul village mérovingien connu dans le détail en France'. Indeed, a volume on the same large scale or in the same depth has yet to be attempted for an Anglo-Saxon settlement: and we must further pay tribute to the admirable speed and efficiency with which M. Demolon has contrived to produce his publication just over three years after the end of excavation.

That the excavation took place at all was indeed no small achievement. The site, identified through the chance discovery of flints and pottery by boys, lies just south-west of Douai in the grounds of two sugar factories, close to the boundaries of the parishes of Corbehem and Brebières, on the banks of the Scarpe. The emergency excavation which ensued took place at intervals between November 1965 and November 1968, during the course of construction-work on filtration-plants for use in the processing of sugar beet. Amidst extremely difficult conditions, and with a work-force of only four, it is a tribute to the excavator's constant vigilance that of the thirty sunken huts identified, only two were completely unexcavated and that for reasons beyond his control. More no doubt perished before his arrival: but even in this uncertain and mutilated state, it seems possible to arrive at a fair assessment of the settlement.

The only structures found were sunken huts, built of wattle and daub and ascribed by M. Demolon to the 6th and 7th centuries. Seventeen of these were totally excavated, and a further eleven, which were damaged in various ways, partly so. No wooden or other buildings were found. The huts fall into the three basic types well known from other sites elsewhere in Europe—six-post-hole, two-post-hole and the rare and less stable four-post-hole. No floor planking was observed in the huts, as has been, for example, at West Stow and Wijster. Two of them, however, yielded possible indications of internal furniture or fixings. One produced a series of parallel grooves in the floor, which M. Demolon would like to see as the marks left by the runners of a cradle or some such piece of furniture (though in the absence of an adequate photograph, it is not easy to know how to judge the evidence here), whilst he interprets a foundation-slot in the floor of the other as a slot for a room divider, though the two areas so produced are a mere 60 and 80 cm. wide. It seems more likely that this slot was the setting for a loom, particularly since the hut yielded two of the three loom-weights found on the site. Apart from the huts, there were a number of rubbish- and storage-pits, and a complex arrangement of ditches, some of which seem to run towards the marshy land by the river, and are probably for drainage.

Finds were numerous and typical. Pottery inevitably formed the overwhelming bulk of the artefacts, and of this approximately 90 per cent was undecorated, while one-fifth of this undecorated pottery was hand-made. Hand-made Frankish pottery of the 6th and 7th centuries is, of course, nothing new, being known, though rare, from cemeteries: but its appearance in some quantity here at Brebières is a useful reminder that the competent wheel-turned pots of the cemeteries are not the whole story, not even, it would appear, in a relatively prosperous settlement such as Brebières. As well as pottery, the thirty huts and ditches produced a small amount of metalwork, including an inscribed ring and four brooches, one of which had been decorated with cloisonné inlay; a fifth object described as a brooch is in fact a belt-fitting. Worked bone was also plentiful, including a good series of decorated combs and, more unusually, ornamental plates from a small box. But above all, two notable things emerge from a study of the finds. First, there was a surprising amount of glass, which was in total more plentiful than iron, and, in the *Grubenhäuser*, equal to it in quantity; and secondly, there was little industrial rubbish. There is nothing, for instance, to suggest that glass-working might have taken place near by (so as to explain the local abundance of glass): a wood-drill, and a pair of shears are the only identified iron tools, and there were eight bone thread-pickers. Most surprising of all, the site produced only three loom-weights and no more than ten spindle-whorls. The relative unimportance of wool and textile manufacture at Brebières which this suggests is reinforced by Mme. Poulain Josien's study of the 3,693 animal bones, which shows sheep bones taking third place, well behind cow and pig. Her admirable study is, in fact, one of the most absorbing sections of the report, offering important evidence on the dietary habits and economic subsistence of the villagers in a clear and well-presented way. Game was present, but, as a mere 3.90 per cent. of the total bones, played an insignificant role, while fish and shellfish, surprisingly, found even less favour amongst these riparian folk. The presence

of chicken and geese as well as the other domestic animals shows clearly the importance of husbandry in the village's economy.

All this seems to indicate a fairly prosperous level of existence. Luxury items such as glass and jewellery (by no means all of it from the three most prolific huts) are not normally associated with sunken huts in such quantities—at least not with Anglo-Saxon ones. M. Demolon convincingly argues that the fortunes of the Brebières village must have been intimately connected with the Merovingian royal vill of Vitry-en-Artois, only 4 km. distant, where Sigebert was killed in 575. Lambres, where he was first buried, is only 3 km. away. And, since the village yielded no trace of any more elaborate type of dwelling than the *Grubenhaus*, it seems we must accept that, for at least part of Brebières' existence, its wealthiest inhabitants still occupied such sunken huts.

M. Demolon has deliberately concentrated on describing the excavation fully rather than on interpreting it and provides a very detailed account of excavated features and finds. He also makes bold use of statistical techniques, most notably in an enterprising, though not entirely convincing, attempt at establishing a relative chronology for three of the huts by plotting the frequency and depth of objects found in an adjacent ditch. Since M. Demolon's book will surely, and in many respects rightly, serve as a model for future French publications of this sort, it is a pity that many of his drawings, plans and photographs, are too small to be of much value: and in addition, his cross-references from text to illustration are irritatingly sporadic and sometimes erroneous. Some objects which are drawn are not described. It would also have been helpful to mention that the finds from this excavation have been placed in the Musée Municipal at Douai. This is not seriously to detract, however, from a publication which deserves all praise for the speed and competence with which it has been produced, and for the long-awaited encouragement it will surely give to the study of Merovingian habitation-sites in France.

LESLIE WEBSTER

England Before the Conquest: Studies in Primary Sources Presented to Dorothy Whitelock. Edited by Peter Clemons and Kathleen Hughes. 23 × 15 cm. xvi + 418 pp., 9 pls., 24 figs. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971. Price £8.00.

This *Festschrift* brings together a notable array of scholars who have combined to do honour to Professor Whitelock. The book, the generous scope and careful scholarship of which reflects her own wide interests and scrupulous respect for sources, contains twenty-two essays on aspects of Anglo-Saxon England from the 8th to the 11th centuries, ranging over literature, ecclesiastical and political history, urban studies, archaeology, numismatics, and art history. The general emphasis, as the title suggests, is on the interpretation and use of the wealth of primary source-material for this period: and aptly so, for as Professor Whitelock's list of publications printed at the beginning of this volume so succinctly demonstrates, no scholar has more clearly shown us the value of meticulous study of the primary records. In reviewing a volume of so many papers, it is scarcely possible to do justice to all, when all have something (and in some cases much) of interest to offer: so comment will necessarily be restricted to some of the essays most relevant to this journal.

Aspects of the Scandinavian settlement are discussed by Professor Cameron, who contributes a useful reassessment of the 'Grimston hybrid' place-names, concluding that they represent Anglo-Saxon villages at least partly annexed by Danes; and by Dr. Page, whose post-Ekwall survey of the epigraphic evidence for the survival of the Scandinavian language in England is a characteristically sober study. Of the eleven possibly Scandinavian runic inscriptions only the Pennington inscription (in a mixture of English and Scandinavian), and perhaps Skelton, can reasonably be seen as a reflection of local usage of the Scandinavian language, while the non-runic inscriptions give equally slight results. (To this one might add that the circumstantial evidence

for the discovery of the Settle stone now appears to be suspicious enough to make it an unreliable document.) What makes this melancholy dearth of evidence curious is that Middle English sources, as Dr. Page makes clear, indicate a much deeper linguistic penetration by Scandinavian languages than this feeble body of inscriptions would suggest. As the use of Latin even now for some funerary and dedicatory inscriptions so clearly shows, epigraphic legends have at times been subject to special rules differing from those governing normal speech. This and other problems raised by Dr. Page—not least the puzzle of the surprising number of Manx runic inscriptions—would well repay further investigation.

Two contributions deal with subjects reflecting the growth and sophistication of royal power in the late Saxon period. Mr. Brooks traces the development of military obligations in the 8th and 9th centuries through the tangled documentary evidence. Professor Loyn's contribution reviews the rich and varied sources for the study of late Saxon urban development and indicates some of the critical areas to which historians and archaeologists might direct renewed or intensified attention.

The late Saxon fortified manor at Sulgrave, recently excavated by Mr. Davison, has produced the subject of Mr. Dolley's paper, a nummular brooch bearing the *Agnus Dei*. Mr. Dolley convincingly shows that this brooch, dated stratigraphically in the 1st third of the 11th century, must belong to the 2nd decade of the century, and probably early in that decade because it is closely related to the abortive *Agnus Dei* coinage of Ethelred. In a discussion of the iconography of the *Agnus Dei* Mr. Dolley assembles and divides into three main chronological groups an interesting body of material, mostly sculptural; but the subject, as he recognizes, clearly demands a wider and deeper treatment than he has been able to give it here. The field of contemporary manuscripts and ivories, some very closely related to the coinage, offers interesting parallels which deserve further investigation. Mr. Dolley also includes a useful list of coin-brooches. His general observations on the overwhelming preponderance of base-metal for secular ornamental metalwork in the very late 10th and in the 11th century, consequent no doubt upon the conversion of all the available silver to coinage, are just, but a word of caution might also be added. There simply are fewer metal decorative objects of all sorts in the 11th century. The British Museum *Catalogue of Late Saxon Metalwork* lists only twenty objects of this period (including dubious cases), against a total of 155 for the full four centuries. This falling off in itself is worthy of comment.

A paper by Professor Clemons also deals with matters of art and archaeology, in this case in relation to Cynewulf's poem on the Ascension. His attempt to draw close parallels between this poem and the iconography of the Rothbury 'ascension' cross and the Wirksworth slab (which, following Kendrick, he ascribes to the 8th century, though not many would agree with this now) is not, at least in this reviewer's opinion, completely convincing. This is partly because of the difficulties involved in transferring critical terms, like 'brilliant artificial surface' and 'psychological realism', from one medium to another. The general point, however, that Cynewulf's poem shows the influence of some visual stimuli, whether liturgical or iconographical, is a useful one.

It is sad indeed that Professor Wormald's essay, on the Winchester style before St. Ethelwold, appears posthumously. This succinct survey of manuscript illumination in the 1st half of the 10th century follows on from his recent discussion in *The Antiquaries Journal* (XLVII, 1961, 162–5) of the new Winchester wall-painting, and is a masterly demonstration of that perceptiveness and clarity we shall miss so much.

Dr. H. M. Taylor's contribution is a patient and detailed structural analysis of the surviving Anglo-Saxon fabric of St. Wystan's, Repton. He makes it clear that we should not expect notable surprises here, for the important results of this 'stratigraphical' approach will be seen when the process has been applied to a sufficiently large number of structures for chronological patterns to emerge. Nevertheless, it is extremely useful to have the historical evidence and building sequence so carefully and systematically deployed. The need for more detailed investigation of churches is also a major theme

in Mr. Biddle's essay, which closes the volume. As suggested by the title of his paper, 'Archæology and the beginnings of English society' with its allusion to Professor Whitelock's book of similar name, he has taken a broader theme. He surveys, chiefly from an archaeologist's viewpoint, three major aspects of the current state of affairs in Anglo-Saxon studies. If not every one, perhaps, will agree with his analyses or his nostrums, and if some of his remarks on the current state of Anglo-Saxon studies in the universities seem curiously ill-informed, we must nevertheless applaud much that is valuable and timely in what he says, particularly in his call for urgent and organized investigation of redundant churches. The essay provides an essential stocktaking which every discipline should periodically undergo.

With the exception of two of the plates, the volume has been handsomely produced to the usual high standards of the Cambridge University Press. All in all this is a valuable and enduring book, well worthy of its inspirer.

LESLIE WEBSTER

The Art of Buda and Pest in the Middle Ages. By László Gerevich. 28×20 cm. 146 pp., 140 pls., 59 figs. Budapest: Académiai Kiadó, 1971. Price not stated.

Budapest is not a city that the visitor normally associates with the architecture and art of the middle ages. The Turkish victory at Móhacs in 1526 was followed by an occupation lasting a century and a half. The Christian reconquest at the end of the 17th century made the city one of the Hapsburg capitals and opened a period of extensive expansion and rebuilding, which transformed most of the medieval remains that the Turks had spared. Yet medieval Budapest was an important capital in touch with the centres of western Europe; it enjoyed three periods of splendour, linked with the names of Louis the Great, an Angevin of the Neapolitan line, the Emperor Sigismund and King Matthias Corvinus. The object of the present work is to give a picture of the arts which flourished in the city under these rulers of the 14th and 15th centuries and also of the more modest beginnings that preceded this flowering. Much of the architecture has to be recovered from excavation and restoration; many of the portable objects are dispersed abroad. When the full picture is available medieval Budapest can be seen as a great city worthy to stand beside Vienna and Prague, to name the two nearest capitals.

Not unnaturally it is the architectural achievement that is most difficult to recover. The few buildings that survive are not of the first importance and have, in any case, been modified by later rebuildings. The parish church of the Virgin in Pest, the most important surviving ecclesiastical building, is heavily restored, and the same is true of the medieval dwellings in Országház Street and elsewhere. The great hall in the palace of Buda is frankly rebuilt; nevertheless it recaptures the picture of lost medieval splendours.

It is the dearth of standing structures that gives the excavations their importance. The exploration of the royal palace of Buda, energetically pursued in the quarter of a century since the end of the war, would be a memorable achievement by any standards. The reports cited, which reveal the wealth of documentation and the richness of the finds, are almost all in Hungarian; the full summary included in the present book is therefore most welcome. There was a royal castle at Óbuda as early as the 12th century and a large part of the plan of the earlier, pre-Mongol-invasion period has been recovered. The centralized building, set within a double rectangular wall, is a valuable addition to our knowledge of the palaces of the age. It contains elements that are admittedly later than the 12th century and some—including the polygonal apse—that can hardly be as early as the mid 13th. But the stratigraphical position, the architectural fragments recovered and the general layout leave little doubt that this was the royal palace mentioned in records of the 12th century. It was probably sacked during the Mongol invasion, but the modifications suggest a reconstruction before the great re-

building of the 14th century. The more spectacular discoveries relate to the rebuilding and extension of the palace carried out by the three rulers, Louis, Sigismund and Matthias. The palace, as it had developed at the end of the period, was an extensive complex covering the ridge of Óbuda. It has an open outer court and a series of inner courts enclosed by ranges of buildings, the whole set within a fortified enceinte. The schematic drawing here published and the restored drawings based on the walls and architectural fragments discovered during the excavations give an excellent impression of this important building and its original appearance. It may be noted that the 14th-century work is purely Gothic, drawing on more than one source of inspiration, that the early 15th-century hall of Sigismund bears only a trace of Renaissance detail, but that most of the work carried out by Matthias in the last generation of the 15th century is in a contemporary Italian style, from which all trace of the Gothic has vanished.

The excavations of the churches and monasteries are less satisfactory. Many took place in the 19th century and the structural sequence is not always clear in the complicated plans, which are published without hatching and which certainly cover more than one building-period. The Dominican nunnery on Margaret Island in the Danube is an exception. A period-plan is provided, shewing not only the church and claustral ranges, but the outer court with a separate chapel and a detached building, thought to have been the residence of the young queen. The development of the main church, shewn in a series of plans, is an interesting example of liturgical changes in what was certainly an exceptional establishment under direct royal patronage. Two plans of village churches shew the modest scale of these buildings in the early period. The simple chamber with an eastern apse found both at Nyék and Gercse is ascribed at both places to the 13th century, though this type of plan would in most parts of the west be dated before 1200. Many of the churches, especially those patronized by the court, were of great magnificence with costly treasures, now dispersed. In particular, attention may be drawn to the church of the Clarisses, in which the Angevin Queen Elizabeth was buried, a custom recalling the role of the church of the same Order in Naples, which contains the tombs of the 14th-century Angevin rulers.

The volume also includes interesting plans of houses within the city limits. At Csút a village street occupied between the 13th and 15th centuries was recovered. A number of individual town houses are also planned and some restored drawings published. These illustrate the essentially rural character of the earliest urban architecture of Budapest.

Emphasis has been laid on the architectural evidence presented, as it forms the least known and in many ways the most important contribution of this volume. But objects of many kinds are also discussed and illustrated. They include both those made in Hungary, and largely in Budapest, during the middle ages and those imported, which formed an essential part of the life of the upper social classes. Many of the more important, such as the triptych of Queen Elizabeth, now in the Metropolitan Museum, and the books from the Library of Matthias Corvinus, have long been known to scholars. Others have been available in museums. But the more fragmentary remains from the excavations afford a better context for the more exceptional exhibits and provide the background necessary to incorporate these into the picture of life in medieval Hungary. Attention may be drawn in particular to the long series of stove-tiles, a class of antiquity seldom occurring in western Europe.

The book is well produced with a lavish series of good illustrations. The English translation, though not faultless, is lucid and the reader will seldom be left in doubt as to the author's meaning. Technical terms are at times used in an unaccustomed manner and the text should be checked against the illustrations. The triptych referred to above is called a house altar. It was a portable reredos or retable, which there is good reason to think was connected with the private chapel of the queen.

The following publications have also been received:

The Development of the Boat, a Select Bibliography. Compiled by Michael Sanderson. 29×20 cm. 120 pp. Greenwich: National Maritime Museum, 1971. Price 80p.

A 'reasonably comprehensive bibliography' (p. iv) in two parts. I, Contemporary, and II, Ancient boats, arranged by authors but with a subject index.

Brasses and Brass Rubbing in England. By Jerome Bertram. 15×21 cm. 206 pp., 8 pls., 90 figs. Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1971. Price £2.75.

Anglo-Saxon England. By F. M. Stenton. 3rd edition. 22×15 cm. xlv+765 pp. London: Clarendon Press, 1971. Price £3.50.

Spanish Leather, a History of its Use from 800 to 1800. By John Waterer. 28×22 cm. 130 pp., 80 pls. (some in colour), 7 figs. London: Faber and Faber, 1971. Price £12.00.

A Medieval Site (14th Century) at Lampernisse (West Flanders, Belgium). By I. Scollar, F. Verhaeghe and A. Gautier. *Dissertationes Archaeologicae Gandenses*, XIII. 28×23 cm. 71 pp., illustrated. Bruges: De Tempel, 1970. Price 250 B.Fr.

Medieval Hull, Excavations in High Street, 1971. By John Bartlett. Kingston upon Hull Museums Bulletin No. 7. 26×20 cm. 32 pp., illustrated. Kingston upon Hull: Museums Committee, 1971. Price 10p.