Reviews

Medieval European Coinage, with a Catalogue of the Coins in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, Vol. 1, The Early Middle Ages (5th–10th Centuries). By Philip Grierson and Mark Blackburn. 19 × 24 cm. xxi + 674 pp., 34 maps and tables, 65 pp. of pls. Cambridge: C.U.P., 1986. Price: £85.00.

This is volume 1 of a projected thirteen-volume survey of medieval European coinage, tied in with the superb collection of coins now at the Fitzwilliam Museum, much of it consisting of the personal collection put together by Professor Grierson over a period of 40 years. It consists of 416 pages of survey, followed by a sylloge-type presentation of over 1,500 coins, all illustrated on outstandingly good plates with a concise catalogue on the facing pages. There has been nothing like this, no comprehensive illustrated guide to medieval coins, since the three-volume *Traité de numismatique du moyen âge* by Engel and Serrure, now more than 80 years old and hopelessly out of date. Grierson's vast, polymathic learning and his experienced judgement as a historian extend throughout the Middle Ages, but are nowhere greater than in the field of early medieval coinage, which this first volume covers. His scholarly authority is paramount, and it is a tremendous privilege to be offered the fruits of 40 years of intensive study, set out so clearly and systematically. There are very few numismatists, let alone archaeologists or historians, who could find their way with confidence through the jungle of secondary literature, and even fewer competent to pass judgement on it all, and to distil from it a lucid and critical account. Publications with the stature of this one are a rare event. Likewise, the number of systematic collections of medieval coins as distinguished as that at Cambridge, world-wide, can be counted on the fingers of one hand.

Grierson has shared the authorship of this first volume with his research assistant, Mark Blackburn, who has been responsible for the two substantial chapters on Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Viking coins. Blackburn's work is authoritative, judicious, detailed, and up-to-date, and is as distinguished as the chapters by Grierson. It provides much the best available survey of Anglo-Saxon coinage for the years up to 924. (Two more volumes are promised on the British Isles, covering the years 924–1279 and 1279–1509.)

Indeed, one may confidently turn to this volume expecting to find much the best available survey of pretty well anything within its scope — Vandals, Ostrogoths, Visigoths, Lombards, the Merovingian kingdoms, Frisians, Carolingians, and the Papacy. Each section begins with a brief historical introduction and critical guide to the historical literature, which could hardly be more useful. The Carolingian and sub-Carolingian sections may be singled out as being especially illuminating, sorting out as they do the interplay of economic and political forces, in an age when kingdoms were partitioned between sons and boundaries were incessantly redrawn as a result of their rivalry. The later Merovingian gold coinage is by contrast treated somewhat summarily. Germany hardly figures in this volume, except for the Carolingian coinages of the East Frankish kingdom, but the imperial German issues of the 10th/11th centuries, when minting was beginning to spread more towards the east, will be covered in volume 2.

Many of the coin series discussed have had a low survival-rate and are relatively scarce today. Their interpretation therefore relies on a thorough acquaintance with the history of the period, careful attention to the inscriptions and types of the coins, and expert use of hoard evidence, both positive and negative, for dating. The more intensive and more technical

methods of analysis based on a corpus of all known specimens, die-linkage, die-estimation, numerical comparisons of the composition of hoards, large-scale projects of metal analysis, and so on, will in most cases be for a future generation to deploy. Good use is, however, made, of metal analysis in this volume. And the fruits of the more intensive style of research can be seen in the chapters on Anglo-Saxon coinage. Few series have been as thoroughly researched. English numismatists are usually a generation or more ahead in the state of their knowledge of the coinage, and in the research methods they can apply. The reader should be aware how thin our knowledge is of much of the continental coinage, in comparison. Much of the classification proposed by Grierson is published here for the first time.

One does not often have occasion to write a review in terms as glowing as this, but it would be misleading to be any less enthusiastic. *MEC* (as it will no doubt be referred to) will crown a very distinguished academic career, and this first volume is likely to be an especially valuable part of it, because it covers the centuries for which numismatic evidence is in principle most likely to have an important part to play. It is an exceptionally informative work of reference, well-supplied with genealogical tables, maps of mint-places, etc., and with a 50-page bibliography, plus good indexes. The very high standard of book design and production contribute to making it a constant pleasure to use.

D. M. METCALF

Celtic Britain. By Charles Thomas. 16 × 24 cm. 200 pp., 133 figs. and pls. London: Thames & Hudson, 1986. Price: £12.50.

This book is for the general reader. It is a timely replacement for Nora Chadwick's of the same title published in 1963 and covers many of the same themes, though its range is not so broad. It aims to introduce us to what happened in the Celtic-speaking areas of northern and western Britain between the 5th and early 8th centuries A.D. It seeks not only to combine what can be gleaned from the meagre written sources with the fast growing archaeology, but also to include some discussion of linguistic and place-name evidence, literature and mythology, as well as trying to demonstrate the relevance of this period to the development of the Celtic countries up to the present day.

The book opens with an introduction to modern Celtic Britain before launching into the more knotty problems of the end of Roman Britain and what happened during the 5th and 6th centuries. It then changes back to consider the individual development of Cornwall (not included by Nora Chadwick), Scotland and Wales. Finally, it discusses the origin and evolution of Christianity and art with reference to Celtic Britain as a whole.

It is undoubtedly important to try and explain this fascinating though tantalizing period of our history to the general reader. But it is also a very difficult task and the author has succeeded in some areas better than in others. I particularly liked the extensive reference to modern Celtic Britain because we seem to live at a time when the past is considered to contribute little to our understanding of the present. For those already familiar with the Celtic countries today such comment may at times seem unnecessary; but for those who are not it is essential. The author has had more difficulty with the convoluted history of the end of Roman Britain and the succeeding centuries. Though the main themes, particularly the nature of the Roman impact, emerge reasonably clearly, necessary brevity has tended to cramp a naturally elegant style of writing into a rather breathless staccato. However the chapters on Cornwall and Scotland are strengths, though Wales gets rather short shrift, and Devon, Somerset and Cumbria are hardly mentioned at all. The chapter on the church emphasizes the historical origins of Christianity and monasticism and the archaeology of burial but says remarkably little about the monastic remains. This is also the chapter which demonstrates most clearly the problems raised by the author's brief to discuss Celtic Britain only and not Ireland where much of the finest evidence is, as the accompanying illustrations so clearly demonstrate. Similar difficulties are encountered in the final chapter on art, since

with portable metalwork and manuscripts the problem of country of origin remains a major stumbling-block to our understanding of the more general development and cross-fertilization which must have been going on during this formative period. This may also have contributed to the emphasis on Pictish art.

Overall the content reflects the author's own interests. The strength of this is that it communicates complex academic research directly to the general reader. The weakness is that at times the content appears idiosyncratic and certain subjects may be given undue emphasis. Why, for example, does Tintagel receive a whole section while Dinas Powys is barely mentioned? The personal touch also leads to difficulty when the views expressed are controversial, since there is sometimes insufficient space to state other opinions. Many, for example, would not accept that the superficial similarity of souterrain ware to grass-marked pottery indicates the presence of immigrants from NE. Ireland in Cornwall.

Much of the appeal to the general reader must lie in the way a book of this kind has been produced and Thames & Hudson have done a magnificent job. The photographs, black and white and a few colour, impart the wild beauty of much of Celtic Britain. The air photographs give a clear idea of the monuments and the photographs of objects, such as the Monymusk reliquary, are excellent. There are also some useful maps and line drawings, though I found the grey background to some of the latter detracted from their overall clarity.

Despite the reservations expressed above, this book should be welcomed. There are remarkably few basic up-to-date introductions to this period on the market at present which seek to express modern academic opinions in an attractive package. Too often the general reader is led unknowingly into a romantic realm where the line between myth and reality becomes increasingly obscured. Thankfully, this book stays firmly on the ground.

NANCY EDWARDS

Goltho: the development of an early medieval manor c. *850–1150*. By G. Beresford. 21 × 30 cm. x + 218 pp., 179 figs. and pls. London: H.B.M.C., 1987. Price: £20.00 pb.

This important publication, beautifully produced and illustrated, makes a major contribution to the archaeology of late Saxon and Norman England. The deserted Lincolnshire village of which the manor site forms a part was published in 1975 (Society for Medieval Archaeology, Monograph Series no. 6).

A Romano-British farmstead, whose full extent was not determined, contained circular huts and boundary ditches. After a period of abandonment the site was reoccupied *c.* 800 (related to the onset of improved climatic conditions, a theme familiar to readers of Mr Beresford's other publications). Later problems relating to the manor and the village are ignored. The former went out of use in the 12th century, but the latter survived until the 15th. The defended site of the mid 9th and 10th centuries was a courtyard of domestic buildings of either stave construction or clay with timber-lacing. The defences had been considerable, but survived in only fragmentary form. In the 11th century the courtyard was extended, new defences enclosing the larger area. The domestic buildings, including a single aisled hall, were again mainly stave-built. In the late 11th century, the site was transformed into a motte and bailey, more defensible than its predecessor, its motte revetted in timber, stone and turf. The small bailey contained two successive single aisled halls. The position of the motte tower was marked by the remains of its nine-foot-square basement. The new Norman owner required a more secure home, and was prepared to sacrifice some of the earlier living space to achieve it. The site returned *c.* 1150 to a character closer to that of the late Saxon period. The bailey was filled in, becoming a platform for a large timber hall with aisles on all four sides, perhaps a clerestoried building.

The major lesson of this excavation is that as a field monument Goltho gave no indication of its pre-Conquest history. How many other apparently Norman sites conceal earlier evidence? How many apparently Norman sites might be Saxon or Viking? The late

Saxon evidence at Goltho adds up to a defended residence of aristocratic status, in post-Conquest terms a castle. We do not know how common such sites were (cf. Sulgrave, Northants). Neither archaeology nor history offers a simple answer to the problem.

The excavation was carried out by a small team using earth-moving machinery. Large areas of the site were exposed in each of its major phases. The general photographs are most effective. But there were sacrifices. Occasionally structural evidence of one phase was accidentaly lost while exposing that of another (e.g. p. 102). Most obvious is the emphasis upon plans to the virtual exclusion of sections. Apart from occasional sections through ditches or ramparts, the reader has nothing to illustrate the vertical development of the site. All exponents of area excavation recognize the difficulty of combining horizontal exposure with vertical control. But most accept the value of the general section, either drawn *in situ* at points which can be left intact or compiled piecemeal with the removal of each layer. How impressive a composite section through this site would have been. We have to take the author's word for the phasing, though we are given a useful summary of the dating evidence (pp. 120–22). Though the plans and photographs reveal an impressive array of large post-holes, there is a curious lack of the minor features with which timber-built sites normally abound. Other interesting aspects of Goltho's structural history might have emerged had it been dug in a different way.

From the beginning to end the author has a tendency to mix the discussion of his evidence with that of general interpretation, comparable material from other sites, documentary and pictorial sources, standing buildings, background information about the whole subject and hypothetical reconstructions based on the evidence from Goltho and any number of other places. This approach creates problems. There are discussions which are simply too long (e.g. on mottes, pp. 94–100), others which are based on negligible evidence from Goltho itself (e.g. the gatehouse, pp. 92–94) and others where the archaeological evidence is unduly influenced by historical preconceptions (e.g. English motte origins, pp. 86, 122). More rigorous editorial control would have helped. On the whole, the report is well researched. Mirville, Normandy, an earth and timber site to which a motte was added in the late 11th century, is one gap in the discussion. There is very little reference to Hen Domen, Powys, where the bailey of the earth and timber castle has been extensively examined (and published in 1982).

The importance of this excavation must be fully acknowledged. It marks a step forward in our understanding to the evolution of medieval defended residences.

R. A. HIGHAM

Domesday Book: a reassessment. Edited by Peter Sawyer. 17 × 24 cm. 182 pp., 7 pls., 6 figs. London: Edward Arnold, 1985. Price: £25.00.

Reassessment is Peter Sawyer's natural forte, and this useful gathering of nine essays justifies its subtitle on a number of counts. Most of the contributions fall into one of two main groups, being concerned with Domesday's administrative and codicological context, and the interpretation of Domesday data, respectively.

Under the first head John Percival draws attention to the existence and character of Roman and Carolingian land registers. These sources are not claimed as close analogues for DB, but they contain enough parallel features 'to suggest that a comparison may be fruitful, and shed light, not only forwards from them to Domesday, but backwards from Domesday to them' (p. 5). Howard Clarke looks at the 'Domesday satellites': the contemporary *Liber Exoniensis*, the *Inquisitio Comitatus Cantabrigiensis* and *Inquisitio Eliensis*, together with a group of lesser texts which he coaxes forth from 'darker recesses of 11th-century administrative history' (p. 53) and helpfully tabulates (p. 52). Alexander Rumble writes on 'The Palaeography of the Domesday Manuscripts'. He provides a concise and fascinating account of the physical make-up of the three surviving Domesday manuscripts. In doing so he explains how

they attained their present form and sequence, summarizes their features of presentation, and assesses evidence for the contributions of different scribes.

A second trio of essays concentrates upon the historical interpretation of DB's contents. Sally Harvey probes the meaning of 'ploughland'. Her conclusion, that the Domesday ploughland was essentially a fiscal concept, will deserve the attention of landscape, settlement, and economic historians. John Blair's chapter on secular minster churches is a worthy and substantial successor to earlier studies in this field by such scholars as Hamilton Thompson and Lennard. In defining criteria for the recognition of superior churches in DB, Blair throws light on the rank-and-file 'one-priest' churches and the socio-religious context within which they proliferated in the 10th and 11th centuries. The metamorphoses of minsters are traced into the 12th century and beyond.

Peter Sawer's main essay '1066–1086: A Tenurial Revolution?' is devoted to the suitably challenging theory that 'Some of the pre-Conquest tenants named in DB can be shown to have been not owners but sub-tenants of lords who are not named', and to the investigation of signs that 'at least some of the un-named lords were the *antecessores* from whom William's tenants-in-chief derived their legal title'. It is further argued that 'DB conceals many other large pre-Conquest lordships and that, as a result, the scale of the tenurial revolution after the Conquest has been exaggerated and misinterpreted' (p. 72). The possibility that DB may be affording two perspectives of landholding, one (TRE) an underview, the other (TRW) a view from above, will no doubt be the subject of much debate. Archaeologists should acquaint themselves with the issues, not least for the implications that they may have in such a matter as the whereabouts and development of seigneurial sites.

There are three other essays, which stand slightly apart from the groups outlined above. Chapter 1, also by Sawyer, is an historiographical survey of Domesday studies during the last hundred years. Geoffrey Martin writes on Domesday Book and the boroughs. His credentials for doing so could hardly be bettered, although this chapter does more to tantalize than to satisfy. A review of past approaches is followed by discussion of the ways in which information about towns was structured in relation to the aims and administrative machinery of the inquest. The book ends in optimistic vein, as John Palmer writes enthusiastically about the computerization of DB. It is interesting that one of the larger themes to emerge from the book as a whole concerns the tension between generalizing studies which take the totality of DB data as their field, and local inquiries which achieve a high resolution of detail. Palmer explains how the computer will help to combine these two levels of approach, and possibly liberate Domesday studies in ways and directions which are as yet unforeseen. Archaeologists, many of whom are now computer-literate, will be interested in this discussion of what can ensue when DB is offered up to IBM, or ICC to ICL.

1986 brought a real risk of Domesday poisoning, but this is a compilation which is by turns informative, provocative, and stimulating. Whether the 'interested laymen' who are assured of its attractions by the blurb on the dust-jacket will find it an easy read is doubtful. Some archaeologists, too, may be reluctant to tackle the more technical portions. But they should try.

RICHARD MORRIS
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Knives and Scabbards (Medieval Finds from Excavations in London, 1). By J. Cowgill, M. de Neergaard and N. Griffiths. 19 × 25 cm. x + 169 pp., 107 figs., 25 pls. London: H.M.S.O., 1987. Price: £10.95.

This is the first of a series of monographs produced by the Museum of London and published by H.M.S.O. It augurs extremely well for the rest of the series, and both authors and publishers are to be warmly congratulated. The format and style of presentation are pleasing, and the book is easy to use, attractive both to specialists and to more general

readers. At £10.95, it is not beyond the reach of students, the general public, or impoverished provincial museums!

The material from London, a focal point for trade and manufacture, is tremendously important. Its quantity, quality and sheer range account for its significance in identifying and dating finds from elsewhere in the country, often fragmentary examples, or stray finds without context. The *Medieval Catalogue of the Museum of London* (1940) is still an invaluable source for anyone working in the medieval field, but the collections have increased dramatically in the intervening years through watching briefs, the use of metal detectors and, above all, excavations, as demonstrated by the need to devote whole volumes to single categories of the original catalogue.

It is not just the quantity, of course. The finds presented here are from a coherent group of six waterfront sites, thus permitting meticulous statistical and interpretative analysis. Even more valuable is the fact that they can be dated 'with unusual accuracy by the peculiar circumstances of their disposal', in rubbish tips thrown behind timber revetments at the time of their construction (p. viii). More than half the finds treated here are from *c.* 1350–1400.

The methodology adopted in the book is clearly explained in the introduction by F. Grew, and the dating and site details by A. Vince. The approach is thematic, a long established tradition at the Museum of London. It is particularly valuable to look at objects and their accessories together, regardless of the material they are made of, thus avoiding the artificial division into separate materials so often followed in archaeological reports, and which is clearly ludicrous in terms of the use of the object.

The chapter by Jane Cowgill on Manufacturing Techniques (in conjunction with the Appendix on Metallography by P. Wilthew) is admirably clear, explaining the technology of knife manufacture with the aid of diagrams, X-radiographs, makers' marks, and close-up photographs showing the construction of blades and handles, and decoration. The chapter also covers the manufacture of scabbards, with details of stitch-holes and different tools used. The documentary section is particularly useful, with references to guild organization, and the selling of knives and their accessories. The Appendix on Metallography is clear and succinct, with useful diagrams. The interpretation of the evidence as to the quality of the tested blades makes the scientific analysis a crucial part of the book, even though the sample is very small (cf. pp. viii, 62).

In the chapter on scabbard decoration, Margrethe de Neergaard traces the stylistic development of the various motifs, set in the wider context of medieval art in different media, with details of stamps and other decorative techniques. Specific details of heraldic decoration, and the degree to which the arms are significant or invented, are discussed by T. Wilmott.

One of the book's greatest strengths is de Neergaard's chapter on the use and function of knives, shears, scissors and scabbards. The 'social historical' approach is to be welcomed, as objects are presented in terms of their social context, examining how their use reflects changes in social organization (with an increase in specialization in the later medieval period). This chapter is accompanied by excellent outline drawings from manuscripts, and quotations from literary sources such as the *Boke of Nurture* on matters of etiquette. There is mention of knives as tools as well as domestic implements, and the difficulty of distinguishing them, given that many must have been multi-purpose. The same applies to shears, no doubt used for a wide range of domestic and craft activities. The chapter ends on a properly cautious note about implement uses, and the difficulties of making assumptions about the likely status of their owners.

The catalogue is clearly presented, laid out chronologically according to dates of deposition. The drawings by N. Griffiths here and in the text are of an exceptionally high standard throughout. The Catalogue is very easy to use, with continuous numbering, the non-illustrated material (for the most part) following the illustrated items in each chronological group, so there are few annoying gaps in the numbering sequence on the figures. There is a good bibliography.

There are one or two minor criticisms: the summary on the back cover is mystifying; there is a difference of opinion as to the spelling of artefact; the illustration from the Hours of Catherine of Cleves (fig. 35) is taken from a miniature of the Holy Family in their kitchen, and the woman sitting 'quietly by the hearth' (p. 60) is in fact the Virgin Mary. A more serious problem is related to the publication of finds from excavations in isolation from the site reports. This is partially solved here by the site summaries (pp. 2–7). However, there is some difficulty in linking the artefacts more closely with the sites and the various sub-groups within each site. Only a few catalogue numbers are given in the site summaries. We are also told that the site reports have not yet been completed, which questions the validity of publishing finds first, even when there is obvious justification for publishing them in separate volumes. After all the assertions about the closely dated contexts, it is slightly alarming to read the list of phasing corrections in the *Addenda*, and that there may well be further date refinements as post-excavation work is still underway. It is useful that unstratified contexts can now be assigned their proper place, but this means that a number of knives in the catalogue are out of chronological sequence. Vince's comments (p. 1) on the use of coins for dating the deposits surely need further clarification.

These comments in no way detract from the book's value. Judging by this volume, the series will become a standard reference work for years to come, a worthy successor to the *Medieval Catalogue*. We look forward to the forthcoming volumes on Shoes and Pattens, and Dress Accessories. Let us hope that the thematic discussion of finds so well illustrated by this volume, using manuscripts, documents, metallurgy and technology, will become more widespread in archaeological finds reports.

On a personal note, the volume is a fitting tribute to the scholarship and enthusiasm of Margrethe de Neergaard, whose sad and untimely death occurred in the summer of 1987.

SUE MARGESON

Greens, Commons, and Clayland Colonisation: The Origins and Development of Green-Side Settlement in East Suffolk (University of Leicester, Dept. English Local History, Occasional Paper, Fourth series no. 2). By Peter Warner. 15 × 23 cm. 66 pp., 12 figs. Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1987. Price: £5.95.

With so much attention being paid by archaeologists and historians to the landscapes of 'Midland' England — to the origins of 'regular' open-field systems and nucleated villages — it is refreshing to read a scholarly and provocative account of one of the many areas of England in which early medieval settlement developed along very different lines. Peter Warner's text is lucid, and its clear, concise style, staunchly multi-disciplinary approach, and competent organization make compelling reading.

In the first chapter we are introduced to the topography and location of East Anglian clayland commons, and to the loose agglomerations of farmsteads strung around their curving peripheries which form so important a feature of the region's landscape. Next, the natural topography and soils of the area which Warner has so intensively studied, the Blything hundred of East Suffolk, are described. The intensity of prehistoric and Romano-British settlement is noted, although not unfortunately described in any detail or mapped. Also noted is the evidence for post-Roman abandonment of the plateau clays, as shown by the failure of field-walking surveys to recover early or mid Saxon pottery scatters. 'The clay landscape of "High" Suffolk is manifestly one of discontinuity': but in spite of this retreat of cultivation to the lighter soils of the major valleys cutting through the clay plateau, a number of features were left behind which were to influence the development of settlement as cultivation re-expanded during the later Saxon period. 'In one or two cases' small Roman settlements were discovered at the epicentres of the curving, concave common boundaries, well away from the boundary ditches themselves. 'There seems therefore to be a strong case for suggesting that the general pattern of curvilinear green boundaries on the claylands has a very early origin, a few at least . . . being relics, the outer limits perhaps, of estate boundaries

of an otherwise vanished early Roman landscape'. The 'extra-estate' areas continued to be treated as common land, and grazed, where the surrounding land remained in several occupation, and reverted in part to woodland.

Warner describes how, from the late Saxon period, population pressure led to the return of settlement to the clayland interfluves, this time in the form of squatter settlements on the edges of the ancient commons. This was a result of 'individuals and kinship groups moving up onto the clay commons and clearing small acreages'. Such settlement was already well under way by 1086 and was associated with the development of free tenures, the variety and complexity of which are admirably dealt with in chapter 2. By a process of 'leap-frogging', tertiary settlements developed at the peripheries of the agricultural territories of these sites. Subsequently, the late medieval period saw another down-turn in population, and some abandonment of green-side plots.

Warner's account is lively and original, but its well-written nature allows one or two of the more problematic aspects of the argument to be glossed over. Thus the suggestion that green-edge settlement was already well under way by the time of Domesday, while plausible, is made in the face of an almost total absence of archaeological evidence. That would perhaps be more acceptable if the same criterion had not been used a few pages before to argue for a total absense of clayland settlement in the early and mid Saxon period, and if a more explicit account of the author's field-walking methodology had been presented. Moreover, it would have been useful to have had a more detailed exposition of the argument that the ancient woodland of the East Anglian claylands tends to be found on the more amenable soils, and the commons in the more poorly draining areas: this may be true of the Blything hundred, but it would be unwise to extend this observation to the East Anglian claylands as a whole. But perhaps the most serious problem with Warner's account is a more basic one. Can the early medieval occupation of common edges in East Anglia really be the result of 'assarting' when many common-edge settlements are, in fact, to be found around areas of river-valley meadow, marsh, and fen, or beside long-cleared heathland? And is it really 'colonisation' when — as the research of Peter Wade-Martins and others has demonstrated — in many vills settlements moved *en masse* away from older, mid and late Saxon sites, leaving behind and isolated the parish church? Is it not possible that areas of common grazing of all kinds acted as magnets for settlement, and to see here a different response to the early medieval shortage of grazing which, as many have suggested, was one factor in the regularization of field systems in the Midlands? Indeed, nowhere in this book do we get any explicit statement about *why* the development of the landscape of the East Anglian clays diverged so markedly from that of the Midlands.

Yet it always easy to quibble over particular details. Peter Warner's model is an interesting and challenging one, more detailed and better documented than the usual glib and poorly formulated statements about 'late assarting'. But perhaps the author's most important achievement is to put on the agenda the whole neglected issue of 'dispersed settlement' — a phenomenon which clearly took many forms, and had a multiplicity of causes. His book should be essential reading for all those interested in the development of the English medieval landscape.

TOM WILLIAMSON

Rivenhall: Investigations of a Villa, Church, and Village, 1950–1977 (C.B.A. Research Report, 55). By W. J. and K. A. Rodwell. 21 × 29 cm. 246 pp., 139 figs., 35 pls. London: Council for British Archaeology for Chelmsford Archaeological Trust. Price: £22.50.

This is an impressive and well-produced volume that has been finally published after a lengthy delay. On reading through the text it becomes apparent, however, that this is but the first of two volumes; the second awaits completion but should contain the finds, and additional information relating to the landscape study. Full appreciation of Volume 1 is

greatly handicapped by the lack of its companion. Assuming that a delay in Volume 2 was foreseen, a closer indication of its proposed contents would have been helpful.

The Rodwells' original concern at Rivenhall was rescue excavations within the known area of the Roman villa; that work was later expanded to include a detailed structural survey of the church and excavation of part of the graveyard. An assessment of earlier archaeological work on the villa site was also undertaken. Later the project expanded into a wider study of the surrounding landscape. The bulk of this volume, however, is concerned with the excavations and the church.

The Rodwells argue that Rivenhall is a site which demonstrates a clear continuity of use from the pre-Roman period to the present day. This aspect of the report, particularly the Roman/Saxon continuity, has attracted some criticism, as have the authors' attempts to reconstruct the villa plan and discuss its design and layout (M. Millett, *Archaeol. J.*, 144 (1987), 38). However, the authors endeavour to make a clear distinction between data and interpretation, and it seems unfortunate that occasional minor inconsistencies of interpretation have left the report vulnerable to those who find its overall conclusions disagreeable.

The principle focus of this review is the landscape study. The summary states that 'This report traces the development of settlement in the rural parish of Rivenhall, Essex, from the prehistoric era to the present day, and attempts to relate this to the general settlement history of the surrounding area'. Such an integrated landscape study is to be welcomed for any major excavation project. However, it forms only a small part of the present volume and it seems that a substantial part of Volume 2 will be devoted to other aspects of the landscape survey. Moreover, the placing of the landscape study within the text arguably reduces its impact, for discussion of the ancient landscape is slotted in around the major set-piece excavation reports on the villa and churchyard, while discussion of the historic landscape lies within a separate fifteen-page section entitled 'The archaeology of Rivenhall village and parish' at the back of the volume.

Boundaries are usually the most enduring of landscape features, and it would have been helpful to have had a detailed consideration of parish and estate boundaries and their likely antiquity earlier in the volume. That might also have reduced any confusion arising from the use of the civil parish on some maps, the ecclesiastical parish with its triangular detached northern portion (a feature which cries out for further discussion) on others, and the omission of any parish boundary on Figure 49 showing Roman landscape features. Related to this, it would have helped if there had been a closer definition of the area of the landscape study; maps at different scales covering different areas make comparison between periods difficult. The various categories of topographical information were apparently mapped on a series of overlays; publication of these would have been a great help, and it is to be hoped they will appear in Volume 2.

Despite Rivenhall's situation amidst the boulder clay region of Essex a considerable number of Iron-Age and Roman cropmarks have been mapped. Perhaps if detailed field-walking of the area been possible it might have proved easier to phase those cropmarks and also, one suspects, the artefact evidence for prehistoric and Roman occupation in the area would have been substantially increased. As it is, the Rodwells suggest that in this area of Essex widespread settlement existed in an ordered agricultural landscape before the Roman conquest. This part of Essex escaped the massive landscape changes seen elsewhere in the country as a result of the imposition of open fields and their subsequent inclosure. The authors are able to show substantial survivals of pre-medieval field elements and road patterns in the southern part of the parish, although it would have been helpful to have had more evidence as to how these survivals were recognized. Hedgerow species are used to propose the antiquity of the modern field system, although the problems of the nature and extent of the medieval field system seem hastily dismissed. Perhaps more awaits in Volume 2?

For the medieval period, the Rodwells suggest that the multiplicity of Domesday manors within the ancient parish of Rivenhall resulted from the fragmentation of a Saxon estate whose boundary, they argue, may have been coterminous with that of the Rivenhall villa estate. Their attempts to define those boundaries are not always fully convincing and the

differences between it and the ecclesiastical parish are not adequately explained. The discussion of this Saxon estate is written around Figure 125, and it is annoying that a number of place-names and other details in that discussion do not appear on the figure. The authors seek to re-enforce the argument for estate continuity by suggesting that many of the minor Domesday manors in Rivenhall parish had Roman origins.

An ingenious and interesting argument suggests that a square field in the south of the parish was Edward the Elder's burh at Witton.

The whole tenor of the final section on the archaeology of Rivenhall parish is, like the excavations, one of continuity, and the Rodwells argue that in this respect the Rivenhall landscape is probably typical for this part of Essex. This report makes an important contribution to rural landscape studies, and the criticisms above should not detract from the high quality of what is anyhow primarily an excavation and structural report. Perhaps all current and future long-term excavation projects should be encouraged (and financed) to build-in a similar landscape study of the surrounding area as an integral part of their research design?

COLIN HAYFIELD

Reading the Past. Current approaches to interpretation in archaeology. By Ian Hodder. 14 × 21 cm. xi + 194 pp. Cambridge: C.U.P., 1986. Price £20.00 hb., £6.95 pb.

Ian Hodder's numerous publications have been seldom noted let alone discussed in this journal, so it may come as a surprise that in 'his controversial new book' (to quote the cover blurb) he pays respectful homage to historical (actually medieval) archaeology and asserts that 'there would be benefits in transposing many of [its] methods and assumptions . . . . into prehistory' (p. 101). The sentiment is a sound one, but the book has an infuriating tendency to support one standpoint on one page and contradict it the next. Hence, so that readers of *Medieval Archaeology* do not get a false impression, Hodder in an uncharacteristically long passage bemoans the fact that archaeologists (doesn't he mean historical archaeologists?) have ignored Max Weber's highly influential *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* and have thus failed to contribute to a central theme in 'long-term' history (pp. 81–84). In the course of 20 pages, in other words, he makes contrary statements about the same group of archaeologists (essentially readers of this journal). This said, let me make one point crystal clear: this book deserves to be widely read and digested as part and parcel of the genesis of modern archaeology. Its clear polemical style, though repetitive in its latter parts, makes it an easy book to read. At the same time it offers a simple (sometimes oversimplified) synopsis of the paradigmatic pluralism which has evolved now that archaeology, in David Clarke's immortal phrase, has lost its innocence.

The book takes the following form: chapter 1 surveys the present state of archaeology. This is followed by the systems approach (chapter 2), structuralist archaeology (chapter 3), Marxist archaeology (chapter 4), archaeology and history (chapter 5), ethnoarchaeology (chapter 6), before Hodder sums up his own views on contextual archaeology (chapter 7) and post-processual archaeology (chapter 8). Essentially there are three themes. First, the so-called 'New Archaeology' or processual archaeology espoused by Lewis Binford and other American anthropologists is not a 'great awakening' as Colin Renfrew termed it. According to Hodder, that approach fails 'to account for the great richness, variability and specificity of cultural production, and individuals and their shared thoughts are passive by-products of "the system". . . .' (p. 32). Second, with reference to R. G. Collingwood's *The Idea of History*, he argues that (1) 'the moment-by-moment context of situationally expedient action . . . needs to be incorporated' in any study of the archaeological past (p. 145), and (2) objects 'are only mute when they are out of their "texts"; but in fact most archaeological objects are, almost by definition, situated in place and time and in relation to other archaeological objects. This network of relationships can be 'read . . . . in order to reach an interpretation of

meaning content' (p. 146). Third, post-processual archaeology 'involves the breaking down of established, taken-for-granted, dichotomies, and opens up study of the relationships between norm and individual, process and structure, material and ideal, object and subject. Unlike processual archaeology it does not espouse an approach or argue that archaeology should develop an agreed methodology . . . It develops from a criticism of that which went before, building on yet diverging from that path. It involves diversity and lack of consensus. It is characterized by debate and uncertainty about fundamental issues that may have been rarely questioned before in archaeology' (p. 170). In this respect post-processualism includes evaluating alternatives to the 'established' Western, upper middle-class, largely Anglo-Saxon, male perspective of the past (p. 157), by promoting 'indigenous archaeologies' (pp. 157–59), 'feminist archaeologies' (pp. 159–61), and 'alternative Western archaeologies' serving public needs (pp. 161–64).

The book almost certainly follows a lecture course (pp. x–xi) which may explain many of the glib illustrations Hodder uses to substantiate his thesis. This is a pity because he has a wealth of ideas to impart, many of which have been outlined more fully (if less stimulatingly) by his associates Michael Shanks and Christopher Tilley in *Re-constructing Archaeology: Theory and Practice* (1987). In defence of Hodder, however, he praises the great contribution of processualists to revealing how objects function in relation to economic and social structures (p. 121); he is undoubtedly correct to lay emphasis upon human actors and their behaviour which is 'context dependent, strategic and practical' (p. 72); likewise he offers sound summaries of structuralist and Marxist archaeology and with reference to Mark Leone's important studies of post-medieval America offers medieval archaeologists some sound references for making full use of their data (pp. 63–64), though he tellingly challenges Leone (and Marxists) for failing to 'allow that individuals have some ability to penetrate ideologies and to have independent opinions of their own existence' (p. 65). Unfortunately, his use of history is rudimentary, especially when he begins to consider the 'long-term', as he calls it. Is his failure to cite Fernand Braudel and the *Annales* school by design or accident? Whichever, George Duby and Jacques Le Goff in their studies of medieval society, and their awareness of medieval archaeology, offer more convincing illustrations than those offered here. This said, his appreciation of history helps him to conclude that ethnoarchaeology is a tool, like anthropology and ethnohistory, to be used with due caution rather than a logical intermediate step (Middle Range Theory) towards interpreting the past (pp. 116–17).

In sum, therefore, readers of this journal will approve of Hodder's assertion that archaeology should recapture its traditional links with history. They will also approve, no doubt, of the return of actors to the archaeological past. But Hodder does not tell us how these actors are to be found, and his history has a distinctly particularist style to it (though he argues the contrary). In many ways, Hodder has rehearsed some academic arguments which urgently need to be formulated in a fashion appropriate to archaeology not to an abstract set of debates. Finally, in common with several archaeologists, he has appreciated that the scope of History is enormous and it offers great opportunities for archaeological contributions. Medieval archaeologists often shy away from such challenges, yet in his markedly contrary views about this discipline, cited at the start of this review, Hodder has pinpointed precisely, if unwittingly, some of the issues which should be regularly discussed in this journal and are not!

RICHARD HODGES

Property and Landscape: A Social History of Land Ownership and the English Countryside. By T. Williamson and L. Bellamy. 20 × 25 cm. 240 pp., numerous pls. and figs. London: George Philip, 1987. Price: £17.95.

With their first book *Ley Lines in Question* (1983) the authors performed a valuable service, stating the archaeological establishment's case against leyliners and their ilk. Unfortunately this is a much poorer book, flawed in execution and, arguably, conception.

The publishers (who also produced, and in the same format, Taylor's *Village and Farmstead*) describe the book as provocative; I found it irritating, not quite the same thing. Essentially what we have here is landscape history as polemic. The authors' contention is that in the Middle Ages the English landscape was fashioned by the agricultural communities which worked it, and that, for instance, peasants and not lords were responsible for laying out villages and field systems. Indeed the authors go so far as to say that 'only in the deer park did medieval lords make a distinct contribution to the overall framework of the landscape'. That communal power, they argue, was lost in the early modern and modern periods with the rise of private estates, and that since the Dissolution a small landed élite has increasingly moulded the countryside and manipulated rural communities to its own ends. The recurrent theme is that communality is a force for good, private enterprise for bad.

Less than half the book concerns the Middle Ages, and the more overtly polemical chapters appear in the latter part of the book where the evolution of the post-Dissolution rural landscape is outlined. Throughout, however, the authors apply evidence selectively to advance their case, and another reviewer has already noticed how 'they have cut some of the more difficult corners' in arguing their thesis (*Agricultural Hist. Rev.*, 36 (1988), 114–15). There is little on the pre-medieval landscape, which is a great pity, for much of the book's most interesting and original material occurs in a brief prefatory chapter entitled 'An Old Country'. Here is introduced one of the book's recurrent themes, the importance and antiquity of the division between woodland and champion regions. It is also in this chapter that Williamson presents the results of some of his own important research, which clearly demonstrates the prehistoric origin of whole blocks of the East Anglian landscape. In fact East Anglia features a great deal in this book, to the extent that towards its latter part one begins to suspect that the authors' *ultima Thule* begins half a day's travel from Cambridge.

The book contains a number of factual errors and dubious assertions. The assertion that the Black Death arrived in 1349 'decimating' the population is sloppy: it was 1348, and a third, not a tenth, of the population is thought to have died in a little over a year. Deer parks could be, and frequently were, created without royal licence (*contra* p. 70), while forest assart fines, by and large, were not 'substantial' but at the level of an economic rent. That was particularly so after 1179, for by then the Exchequer was imposing fixed annual fines or rents on those who made assarts, of 1*s.* an acre for land under wheat and 6*d.* for that under oats, no entry fine usually being levied. To call medieval peasant houses 'flimsy hovels', while following the author to the *Magna Vita Sancti Hugonis*, who noted that the late 12th-century peasant houses at Witham (Lincs.) comprised 'old hovels, decayed beams and half-destroyed walls', is at variance with the conclusions of much recent research. Workers such as Barley and Wrathmell, for instance, are beginning to put up a strong case for the durability of the medieval peasant house, and are rejecting the idea that one generation was the likely lifespan of such buildings. While the authors should have picked up that piece of revisionism, Fox's demolition (in *Economic Hist. Rev.*, 2nd ser. 39 (1986), 526–48) of another orthodoxy rehearsed by them, that two-field systems were reordered as three-field ones in a bid for greater productivity, came too late to take note of.

This is an attractively produced book, and the many splendid photographs will ensure good sales whatever reviewers' strictures. For the most part it is well written, aside that is from the occasional lapse into ugly slang such as 'blow-out' (for 'feast', p. 61), and 'bad news' (p. 87, an unpleasant and flippant comment on the Black Death). It is refreshing in works such as this to see writers escape from the academic strait-jacket which requires every statement to be qualified with words such as 'possibly', 'perhaps', and 'most', and be bold in their assertions, although at times I did cavil at the generalizations offered. One such instance was the characterization (p. 60) of all late medieval monks as lax and hedonistic, which even setting aside the extraordinary exaggeration of the use of 'hedonistic' denies the deep calling that many still felt in the century before the Dissolution for the religious life. The footnoting is occasional, the index amateurish.

As anyone who has tried it will confirm, writing popular history well is a difficult art. The authors of this book are clearly capable of it, albeit with a little more attention to detail.

They also have much of interest to say about conservation matters and the future of the English landscape. But henceforward it would be better if they kept the two separate.

PAUL STAMPER

Dress in Anglo-Saxon England. By Gale R. Owen-Crocker. 16 × 24 cm. xi + 240 pp., 185 figs. Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1986. Price: £39.95.

All those professionally involved in Anglo-Saxon archaeology must read this book, and anyone who now excavates an Anglo-Saxon cemetery without having done so is guilty of gross negligence. The book is divided into three chronological parts, and each treats women's and men's clothing separately, making six chapters with one further on early Germanic tradition and another on textile production. Each chapter is introduced by a discussion of the evidence — archaeological, artistic, linguistic, and literary — and each has numerous subheadings such as 'headgear', 'undergarment', or 'the tunic'.

Technical details are explained clearly for the non-specialist and the wealth and variety of evidence is impressive. Thus anatomical investigations suggest Anglo-Saxon shins were commonly bound tightly — they wore leggings. One must, however, question some conclusions. Thus we read that 'the incidence of leg fractures among the early Anglo-Saxons has led Dr. Calvin Wells to suggest that the people habitually wore clumsy footwear' (p. 53). More oddly, after we have discovered that women went to the grave in the 5th–6th centuries in undergarments, gown, cloak, shoes and headgear, and even then may have been wrapped in a shroud, we are treated to the possibility that their husbands were buried naked, except for a substantial leather belt. Without organic material, the possible permutations for clothing arrangements are considerable and Crocker wants to give them all a hearing. This attention to detail and care of clothes for their own sake leads to many interesting insights. Cloaks were probably worn by men even more often than Crocker implies, but the general absence of brooches on the right shoulders of excavated male corpses is striking. Notker tells us that Charlemagne used his cloak as a blanket and perhaps in death too, suggests Crocker, the cloak was so used.

It is precisely this attention to minute detail concerning clothing fashions and their effects on the archaeological record that makes this book so indispensable. Archaeologists have long tried to write social history, asking questions of social hierarchies, the ethnic composition of the population, religion, and even the political history of pagan Anglo-Saxon England by reference to archaeology which is primarily funerary in nature. Obsessed with artefact types, few analyses have taken into consideration dress as a whole and the effects of changing fashions. Crocker's book will allow many ideas to be challenged, although she herself seldom considers the social meanings of the costumes, or the ideological content of the textual evidence. For instance Crocker makes Aldhelm object to nuns wearing a *subucula* because it was linen. Her support is Bede's record of St Etheldreda choosing wool over linen, although, as Crocker notes, it was a deliberate mortification of the flesh (p. 102). Such behaviour made Etheldreda a saint, whereas Aldhelm was worried about the sin of pride, and thus that nuns wore elegant shirts. He was *not* encouraging them to torment themselves with scratchy woollens.

The study of dress is a pre-requisite for an investigation of the cultural aspects of ethnic identity, something seldom recognized by archaeologists. Thus, interestingly, 'Frankish' jewellery in Kent is used as part of female costume in quite a different manner from that in Francia: earrings were uncommon in England and head-dresses may have covered the ears, unlike across the Channel, and Merovingian ladies had fancy garter straps, apparently revealing their legs by way of a robe which opened at the front, while in pagan England a *peplos* type gown was worn fastened at the shoulders, covering the legs so that no fancy garters are to be found. Thus 'Frankish' jewellery in Kent can scarcely have been worn by 'Franks'.

More could be made of continental material where one likewise finds that the method of wearing brooches and the implied different dress is more important than individual object typology.

St Radegund supposedly appears in Thuringian dress (p. 90). Fortunatus, however, only calls her costume 'barbaric' and both he and Gregory of Tours use the term to distinguish Franks and other Germans from 'Romans'. The *Life of St Radegund* further contains a wealth of unused information germane to social history. She had 'queenly' garments and costumes especially for ritual ceremonies. Sewn to her garments were gems — something Crocker mentions of St Bathilda as possible imitation of the Byzantine court (p. 94). Radegund gave garments to poor and church alike — Crocker notes that Beowulf received garments from the queen of Denmark and remarks that 'as textile production was woman's work in the Dark Ages, the author perhaps considered a garment to be a particularly appropriate present from a lady' (p. 23). Crocker, thus, does touch some social questions fleetingly, but more, such as gender relations, would have been welcome. Dr Ellen Pader has noted artefacts closely associated with females occurring in the graves of young males. Does this have implications of female parental control of children? The possibility of transvestism is side-stepped by the recurring warning that graves may have been mis-sexed. Medieval Icelandic laws and sagas have things to say about such behaviour but archaeologists nothing.

Those who have tried to create categories of wealth dependent on the number and variety of artefacts in grave assemblages should feel foolish on reading this book, for changing fashions, particularly the widespread changes around A.D. 600, radically reduced the amount of clothes fasteners needed in female costumes. The change in gowns necessitated fewer brooches and the replacement of leather belts by fabric girdles meant that belt buckles disappeared and belt attachments must have gone elsewhere, as into a bag. This change simultaneously dashes interpretations of the general decline of the free class and that fewer goods somehow marked a Christianizing influence. Curiously Crocker attempts to maintain this traditional explanation — the new converts are reluctant to abandon their customs completely (pp. 85–86) — even as she shows that a change in dress is responsible for the change in the archaeological record. Continental archaeology has long struggled to come to terms with the fact that Merovingians were good Christians and buried in their clothes. Crocker has more evidence for undermining the old pagan afterlife theory, but she fails to recognize it.

The archaeological evidence of pagan Anglo-Saxon England is primarily the clothes of the dead. Crocker has attempted a history of those clothes. Another historical interpretation based on this evidence, offered without an understanding of this background, will be inexcusable.

ROSS SAMSON

Ireland and Insular Art A.D. 500–1200. Edited by Michael Ryan. 21 × 30 cm. 187 pp., 32 pls., 96 figs. Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 1987. Price not stated.

This volume publishes the proceedings of the conference held at University College, Cork, in 1985, organized by the National Committee for Archaeology as its contribution to the bicentennial celebrations of the Royal Irish Academy. It contains the 26 papers which were delivered on that lively occasion, ranging in data from the Irish early Iron Age down to the 12th century and in subject from Merovingian politics to Armenian architecture. At the core however remain the old problems — Durrow, Kells, Ardagh and the whole dating and origin sequence of the 7th to 9th centuries.

What light can be shed on such well-discussed topics by the calling of a conference and the publication of the papers given? The presentation of new research should be a main aim, but the inclusion here of all 26 papers, some of which contain material all too familiar or

recently published elsewhere meant that there was not enough space for the more innovative contributions, since some of these were merely brief summaries of forthcoming publications. Invidious though it would have been, the volume would have been more useful had it contained half the papers at twice the length.

Nordenfalk's discourse, which introduced the conference, summarizes the varying views on the early gospel books and includes the happy description of Francoise Henry as the 'Jeanne d'Arc of Irish art'. The influence of Henry's studies remains immense; almost every paper contains some reference to her work and a number confirm and expand her views, on iconography, regional schools and metalworking techniques. Bruce-Mitford's review of the corpus of 92 hanging-bowls now known confirms her 1936 rim classification but proposes a non-Irish origin for the type and suggests a surprisingly early, 5th-century, date for the Craig Phadrig escutcheon mould; the primacy and inventiveness of Pictish art recurs in other papers. Another startlingly early date to be proposed is that of shortly after A.D. 600 for the Book of Durrow, on the basis of not very clear comparisons with Style II metalwork, in Roth's simplistic account of the early manuscripts. There are no reservations about Irish supremacy here and we are informed that 'the Irish monks with their more advanced culture and their superior learning provided the stimulus for writing and illuminating manuscripts in Northumbria'. Haseloff also looks at Style II but suggests Mediterranean models for the Durrow beasts. Foreign sources for Insular manuscripts are also proposed by Ó Croinin, in the form of Frankish influence on Ireland in the 7th century.

It is in the population and discussion of new material that the volume is most useful. Ryan's paper reviews 8th- and 9th-century metalwork to take account of the Derrynaflan finds, resulting in some interesting shifts of relative dating: Tara is seen as later than Lindisfarne, the paten and Ardagh chalice are more developed still, with sources in the inhabited scrolls of Anglo-Saxon art, while the Derrynaflan chalice is tentatively ascribed to the early 9th century. Rynne however, on the date of Ardagh, proposes a rather earlier and alarmingly precise absolute chronology for the main items of metalwork including the Derrynaflan paten but not the chalice. Rather than playing with dates and making stylistic comparisons, it is the still relatively neglected study of the craftsman's techniques, particularly in regard to metalwork, which is capable of producing significant new results and it is the papers stressing this which are of particular interest. Raftery surveys the techniques of La Tène bronzework to define regional workshops and Warner extends this approach to the early Christian period. Whitfield presents the preliminary account of her analysis of filigree and demonstrates that while Celtic filigree was broadly influenced by that from the Germanic world, there were also distinctive innovations arising from the inventive skills of the Celtic goldsmiths. Ó Floin studies later metalworking techniques to define the regional schools of the 11th and 12th centuries.

Apparently familiar iconography can also be used to draw new conclusions. Henderson links Kells, Iona and Pictish carvings through a study of the undoubtedly symbolic snake ornament as a part of the complex and as yet barely understood imagery used by the Insular artists, themes also explored by Ó Carragain for Ruthwell and O'Reilly for the rough-hewn Anglo-Saxon manuscript cross.

For the later part of the period, Lang presents the recently excavated 11th-century wood carvings from Dublin, showing that popular domestic taste is quite different from the conservatism of ecclesiastical art; he traces connections with southern England, but demonstrates how the ornament is made Irish through the formal organization of motifs. This is a conclusion also reached by Haseloff writing of some four centuries earlier: 'Celtic animal ornament decomposes or disintegrates the animal'.

The overall impression of the volume is rather uneven. The continental influences are treated sporadically. Wamers's survey of egg-and-dart motifs presents some interesting and exact parallels, but Richardson's Georgian and Armenian comparisons simply show that the cross was an integral part of all Christian art and worship. Harbison accounts for the figural sculpture of the 9th century by hypothesizing itinerant Carolingian stucco workers, and places virtually all the major monuments within this period. The dating of crosses,

metalwork and manuscripts varies from author to author, and the Moylough reliquary and the Kells crozier in particular are treated like yo-yos.

As most papers refer to the same books and articles, there should have been one composite bibliography instead of twenty-six. For example, there are thirteen separate entries for Henry's 1965 *Irish Art in the Early Christian Period* and almost as many for her various other titles, while the four separate references to Volume 1 of the Corpus of Anglo-Saxon stone sculpture are each slightly different. Some well-known names appear in a less familiar form, such as Giraldus of Cambrai.

There are undoubtedly some new contributions being made to the study of Insular art; these proceedings show that it is mainly through technology, methodology and a new approach to iconography that the old problems of dating, sequence and origins can begin to be solved.

CAROLA HICKS

The Castle in England and Wales: an interpretative history. By D. J. Cathcart King. 15 × 24 cm. xii + 210 pp., 9 pls., 25 figs. London and Sydney: Croom Helm. 1988. Price: £25.00.

Caveat emptor. This book is not a comprehensive survey nor is it a picture book with erudite commentary. It is an excursus upon specific points arising from King's magnum opus *Castellarium Anglicanum.* The fourteen chapters are uneven in length and detail because they represent discussion of those aspects left unresolved when the great work had been completed. In a sense they are the author's replies to the real or anticipated criticism of that volume.

So long as this context for the new book is recognized, then readers will not be disappointed. Indeed they will be enlightened as King has many pertinent and incisive points to make; opponents are not suffered gladly but are dispatched in a withering footnote. The author does not limit himself to England and Wales as the title suggests, but where necessary places castle development in a British or continental context. Those who see castles as a European phenomenon will find intriguing the parallels drawn with medieval Japan.

This book is partly an exposition, partly a distillation, of wisdom. Some will feel that it is hampered by its pre-1982 preparation which results in few later references and no account being taken of recent full publications of Hen Domen, Sandal and Castle Acre. It is a military work written by a military man; there are no concessions to techniques of spatial analysis or the use of room circulation diagrams. There are some suprises. The view that castle mottes were still being built in Wales after 1282 needs stronger arguments in support. To dismiss some castle basements as 'just so much unused space' places their construction as the medieval equivalent of whitewashing the coal heap. King seems too dogmatic in his treatment of Queenborough castle and of its place in castle development. On the other hand he draws a telling contrast in the 14th century between the southern tradition of castles with salient towers and the northern tradition of compact quadrangular towers and courtyards.

The final chapter on Henry VIII's forts is well illustrated, well developed and thought provoking. These forts are entirely the creation of a strong king facing a self-precipitated crisis. They do not develop, in King's view, from any comparable works in England or the Continent (though Shelby's work on Guines might have been considered). They lie outside the main course of castle creation and yet are a necessary extension of medieval defence systems.

The illustrations are the weakest part of the book, apart from the spine which creaked ominously whenever the book was opened. The line drawings are inelegant but adequate for their purpose. The figures are of good quality but of spasmodic and unpredictable occurrence: none are keyed into the text. The plates appear to be an afterthought, being absent from the list of contents and the index; they are not referred to in the text and some illustrate castles not mentioned in the text at all. The index is sound and at times unconsciously entertaining. This verdict on the index may indeed be applied to the book as a whole.

LAWRENCE BUTLER

Urban Archaeology in Britain. Edited by John Schofield and Roger Leech. 21 × 29 cm. x + 234 pp., inc. 103 figs. London, Council for British Archaeology Research Report, 61, 1987. Price £20.00.

The C.B.A.'s various Research Committees have a good record of publication on both general and particular themes, this volume being on the former: it attempts an overview of current thinking about archaeologists' approaches to towns, the methodologies employed and the nature of the data recovered. This is briefly summarized by John Schofield in a thoughtful introductory chapter. Martin Carver is mainly concerned about how archaeological deposits have survived and the problems of recovering the evidence about them: his drawings are a delight — and seem to have reproduced more satisfactorily here than in the copy of his new book *Underneath English Towns* that I have seen. Less satisfactory are some of his recommendations: for instance, a 'sampling programme to define a [late Saxon] urban system' using Somerset as a test-bed would lead to a large number of negative results, if the work done in Lyng is anything to go by.

This is a multi-period volume, so in both the 'Period Surveys' and 'Topic Surveys' sections there are contributions on the Roman period, though the post-medieval only gets its own entry in the former — and a specific contribution, rather than a couple of paragraphs, on the pre-Roman period would have helped the medievalist in need of an up-date (do prehistorians still talk about *oppida*?). The Roman urban system is seen as being state-imposed and fortress-linked: a Roman town was more obviously a provider of services through the *fora*, *basilicae*, bath-buildings and theatres than was a medieval town, emphasizing differences in function and operation. But so long as it remains difficult to estimate the scale of commerce (p. 36), so the role of towns in Romano-British and English society will remain difficult to compare: even so, the problems of the 4th century — does investment in walls and other structures mask economic decline? — seem very similar to those of the 15th.

David Hill stresses the diversity of the evidence and the complexity and rapidity of change: although he shares with Carver a wish for problem-orientation rather than 'digging blindly' (p. 52), he also celebrates the achievements of the last quarter of a century in obtaining results that have pushed urban archaeology into a proper place in Anglo-Saxon studies, despite the often random and unstructured way in which those results have been obtained. David Palliser is at pains to emphasize that recent results from post-Conquest excavations have been no less important, particularly in helping to understand how urban communities operated: origins and topography are not the only goal. It is P. J. Davey's complaint that the post-medieval period stands to-day where the Anglo-Saxon and later medieval stood twenty-five years ago, with few archaeologists, let alone historians, concerned about its contribution. Nevertheless, he is able to point to some instructive recent work, and to suggest that problems of post-medieval origins and development can be studied by archaeological means as effectively as in earlier periods.

The 'Topic Surveys' review some of the subjects regarded as of particular interest in urban studies: defences are given much space, although what is said about them is not especially novel. It is interesting to see urban castles considered as a separate entity, by C. Drage, whose useful summaries of Stamford and Colchester serve to draw attention to the *villa regalis* as a possible cause of location, just as royal interest in towns after the Conquest can be measured by castle building — a contrast to the 13th century and later (p. 126: in a rare mistake, Lydford's motte is ascribed to the mid 14th, not 13th, century), although something on aristocratic use of castles such as Warwick in the late Middle Ages would have been interesting: to what extent did magnates use and enhance them to create power-bases associated with towns? Other topics are domestic buildings, religious houses, parish churches, waterfronts and pottery — all useful contributions, though the last should really have been the first of a new section, to include other artefacts and enviromental evidence. But from a volume which gives much, perhaps it would be unfair to seek more.

DAVID A. HINTON