

Short Reviews

Archaeological Theory: An Introduction. By Matthew Johnson. 15 × 23 cm. xv + 240 pp., 30 figs. Oxford: Blackwell, 1999. ISBN 0-631-20296-X, pb. Price: £14.99 pb, £50.00 hb.

Many people, not just students, find archaeological theory either difficult or simply not relevant to their own work. In the past, historical archaeologists, in particular, ran away from voicing their views on their conceptual basis for studying the past. There were always exceptions, of course — remember Rahtz's 1983 article containing Burrow's 'structuralist approach to Bordesley Abbey'? Today, even if the 1997 Medieval Europe conference in Bruges did manage to contrive a separate session on theory, 'truffle-hunters' are on the decline (to use Hodges' phrase) and many recent publications, Gilchrist's recent book on gender for instance, embrace robust medieval contributions. The debate has moved on and has gradually become more inclusive, blurring the artificial divide between theory and practice.

This is not a volume aimed specifically at medievalists, it is an introductory guide to recent archaeological theory, written in a friendly and concise way, and aimed squarely at first- and second-year students. The freshness in Johnson's writing is achieved partly by abundant use of the first person singular, some clear figures and enjoyable cartoons, short chapters, and partly by the interventions of Roger Beefy, 'an undergraduate at Northern University'. Roger butts into the text from time to time with his doubts and comments, asking pertinent questions to which many readers will want to know the answer (me included). Without wishing to add to the north-south debate, Roger is sometimes won over too easily and seems to stay suspiciously docile for long sections of text, at least in comparison to his southern counterparts!

The volume runs ably through 'New Archaeology' and later postprocessual and interpretative archaeologies, with case studies drawn from a range of periods and regions of the world. The 'further reading' section sent me scurrying to the library. There are some excellent passages, on 'culture as a system' for example, and much else of direct relevance to medievalists in a separate chapter entitled 'Archaeology and History'. Some readers of this journal might be disappointed at the omission of Fox, Jope, Postan and Rahtz, such formative intellectual influences for the development of medieval archaeology, but this is not a conceptual history, it is a general survey of current archaeological applications intended to appeal to a much broader market. I very much hope that this clever book will be translated, so that non-Anglophone users can make use of it too.

CHRISTOPHER GERRARD

Unravelling the Landscape: An Inquisitive Approach to Archaeology. Edited by Mark Bowden. 17 × 24 cm. 223 pp., 88 figs., 22 pls. Stroud and Charleston: Tempus, 1999. ISBN 0-7524-1447-X. Price: £19.99 pb.

This is one of the excellent new Tempus paperbacks which seem to be having such an impact on the shelves of university libraries across the land. It is not difficult to see why. The cover is inviting, the font and page layout are clear and stylish, the paper feels satisfyingly expensive and glossy, there are oodles of wonderful Royal Commission

earthwork plans and black and white photographs faultlessly reproduced as well as some colour plates of Commission surveyors in chunky sweaters and outdoor gear puzzling at features and instruments (often in unrealistically good weather). Index and bibliography are present, complete and correct.

The packaging does not disappoint. Inside, most aspects of field survey are covered including earthwork survey (a highlight), photography, aerial survey, geophysics, fieldwalking and buildings as we are taken from the initial site visit right through to illustration and final publication. The difficulty in writing a book like this must be how to pitch it. Should it be a manual for field archaeologists to consult on site? How much detail on trigonometry and modern instrumentation like EDMs should be included? Should it be specific to period or area? In the end, details of surveying equipment have been left aside here in favour of a more general gloss which sets out the principles even if does not give you all the angles (if you will excuse the pun). This works well as an introduction and, with Coles (1972) and Taylor (1974) now either out of print or unobtainable (as well as being somewhat dated), this will be a top contender for reading lists for first-/second-year students. It will emphasise just how much information can be gained from non-destructive techniques and how much more there is to archaeology than just digging holes.

Amongst the earthwork plans and photos there is plenty for the medievalist. I enjoyed the case study of field systems at Little Siblyback (Cornwall), the plans of 'major' and 'minor' monuments from Stafford Castle and the moated palace at Stow (Lincs.) down to the windmill mound at Wimpole (Cambs.), the photographs of Bridgewater Bay and Minehead (Somerset), fish weirs, the carvings and graffiti in Royston Cave (Cambs.), and the resistivity plot of the Carthusian monastery at Witham (Somerset). The text is well written too, though I am still confused about who wrote what. Would it not have been fairer to see author's names responsible for each chapter?

Anyone who has ever taught surveying will know that the techniques are often grasped by novices quite quickly. It is much more challenging to instil an ability to observe and interpret and for many it is a skill they will never grasp. This volume shows how techniques can be applied and the extraordinary array of results it can generate. No other volume does that as stylishly or as concisely as this one.

CHRISTOPHER GERRARD

Atlas of Medieval Europe. Edited by Angus Mackay and David Ditchburn. 18.5 × 25 cm. x + 271 pp., 140 maps. London and New York: Routledge. ISBN 0-415-12231-7. Price: £15.99 pb.

Thirty-five British contributors, heavily weighted towards Scots, with one American have produced 140 maps which span the entire medieval period. The material is split between the early middle ages (to c. 1100); central middle ages (c. 1100–c. 1300) and late middle ages (c. 1300–1500), and these broad categories are then subdivided by themes: politics, religion; government; society and economy and culture.

The 140 maps are to a standard format and style which lacks variety and visual interest. There are very few charts, pie-diagrams or histograms. The whole period of more than a thousand years is told in maps. However, there is a dislocation between text and the accompanying map, the maps are often skeletal but surely they should contain all the place-names in the text.

However, when studying the text and maps one is finally driven to ask for whom has this group effort been constructed, what is the target audience, why should they buy this work? There has been a fashion for the construction of coffee-table works, wonderful colour photographs with a minimal number of attractive maps going under the title of *Atlas of . . .*, and there were the classic historical atlases from France, Germany and England,

works of scholarship and reference. This atlas cannot be seen in either of these categories, particularly as the index does not refer to the relevant map or maps (confusingly the maps are provided with an apparatus for locating placenames by having letters and figures provided in the margins; these are without explanation and one must assume they belong to some abandoned stage in developing this *Atlas*). It is also inconsistent in the provision of scales. There have been some successful thematic atlases using simple black and white illustrations, which brings one to the content of the maps: they particularly lack a series of general maps showing the main stages of European history on a 10-, 20- or 30-year interval, and there are too few maps to cover any sort of development, but there are too many idiosyncratic maps — for example whilst Margery Kempe receives a full page and accompanying text the Vikings rate half a page with meaningless conventional signs.

This review does not mirror the fulsome praise lavished on this work on the cover of the *Atlas*.

DAVID HILL

Exodus to Arthur: Catastrophic Encounters with Comets. By Mike Baillie. 16 × 24 cm. 272 pp., 27 figs. London: Batsford, 1999. ISBN 0-7134-8352-0. Price: £14.99 pb.

How can we integrate the discoveries of natural science (specifically evidence of environmental history) with cultural history? That is the key and valid question explicitly posed by this book. Unfortunately Baillie does not go on to provide a satisfactory answer with his speculations on 'catastrophic encounters' between Earth and comets or asteroids, nor indeed is the discussion here of a character and quality to set out the right path for future researchers.

The foundations of the book lie in Baillie's area of undisputed authority, dendrochronology, and his identification of a series of extreme environmental downturns. The one of these that is of especial interest for medieval archaeology and history is that around A.D. 540. Others include one at 1628 B.C. which Baillie identifies with the famous eruption of Santorini in the Mediterranean and the whole Exodus story, from the plagues visited upon the Egyptians to the pillar of cloud by day and fire by night. Baillie carefully assesses the possibility that massive volcanic eruptions were the sole cause of these catastrophes, but, relying substantially on negative Greenlandic ice-core evidence, finds this unsatisfactory, and thus prefers even more dramatic explanations in the form of collisions or near-misses with extraterrestrial bodies such as comets that resulted in extraordinary visual phenomena, and a lethal cocktail of earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and extreme marine outgassing. New evidence from Greenland suggests that there was a major volcanic eruption c. A.D. 540 after all.¹ But one could not dispute on that basis that collisions between the Earth and massive bodies from space can occur, and indeed are likely to happen every so often.

The crucial issue for the medieval historian embraces what are really two aspects of the same coin. What are the historical consequences of such catastrophes, and does the cultural-historical record (e.g. myth, legend, chronicle) provide reliable descriptive evidence to fill out our understanding of these catastrophes? The second question is the one to take first, for Baillie relies massively on such material, in, sad to say, an utterly unprofessional and inadequate way. Take, for instance, the alleged 'reinforcement' of the case for a cometary disaster in A.D. 540 at the beginning of chapter 14, citing Norma Goodrich as authority that:

(a) Merlin predicted his own death one year in advance

¹ *Catastrophe. 1: The Day the Sun Went Out.* G. Johnston dir. (3BM Television, 1999).

- (b) he died in A.D. 536 and
 (c) he died during an eclipse of the sun.

Sic, verbatim. Only later on do we discover that Norma Goodrich's knowledge derives from a background in French and comparative literature (for what use that is). And this sort of thing is repeated time and again in this book. Turning to the perhaps more serious first question, no one should dispute that dramatic cultural-historical changes took place in Europe in the 6th century. But when one looks at the whole period from the late 4th to the 8th centuries A.D., the middle of the 6th century does not stand out as an extreme watershed. Baillie has the same problem persuading Bronze-age Aegean specialists that his 1628 B.C. event can be equated with cultural watersheds they would associate (rightly or wrongly) with Santorini. There are occasions, indeed, when an abnormal crisis (like a World War) seems actually to retard cultural development.

Not least amongst the amazing things one reads in this book are the endorsements on the back cover: 'No biblical scholar, prehistorian or art historian will ever feel the same' (Philip Rahtz); 'After this book, archaeology will not be the same' (Barry Cunliffe). For me, the book is epitomised by a quotation from its author: 'After all, anything is possible in the past, given how little we know'. In these circumstances, it is the duty of responsible historical science, as of responsible natural science, to be sober and critical.

JOHN HINES

Scotland's Hidden History. By Ian Armit. 17 × 25 cm. 160 pp., 87 figs., 25 pls. Stroud: Tempus, 1998. ISBN 07524-1400-3. £18.99 hb.

According to its preface, this book 'tells the story of Scotland's early inhabitants through 100 of the country's best and most accessible ancient monuments'. It is not a straightforward guidebook, because although it has directions, the 100 sites are divided into eight chronological chapters and have no regional order. These chapters run from the 'Early settlers' to 'Broch towers and the Atlantic zone' and conclude with the 'Vikings'. Each site has an entry of a page or two and most are illustrated with a photograph or line drawing. There are few surprises here, perhaps because the book was published with sponsorship from Historic Scotland. Armit generally sticks to the well-known sites, like Maes Howe and Dunadd, many of which are in public guardianship and can hardly be described as 'hidden'. However, among the Iron-age sites there are some less familiar ones, which reflect Armit's particular area of interest.

One might argue about the choice of sites, but that is really neither here nor there. Anyone who chooses to play the game of naming their top 100 sites of all time will come up with a unique list, with its own validity. The question is whether this game is a good way to tell the story of Scotland. The problem of relying upon 100 sites is that it fixes the frame of reference to historical subjects which can be revealed through houses or tombs. There is very little here about portable material culture, despite the potential of artefacts to provide information about the practical, economic and symbolic world of the past. This is particularly unfortunate since there is no place to consider the important analytical studies of artefacts, like those relating to the trade in neolithic axes or which indicate that Pictish silver objects were made from Roman coinage. Technological innovation and exchange networks must be at the heart of any prehistory of Scotland and yet cannot be adequately discussed through monuments alone. Moreover, the monuments themselves are never placed in a regional context, with the exception of the Atlantic Iron Age. This is crippling given that Scotland consists of a patchwork of environments, which have quite independent prehistoric and protohistoric trajectories.

Although the gimmick of selecting 100 monuments does not work here, it is not a ridiculous basis for organising a book. The guide books in the RCAHMS series *Exploring*

Scotland's Heritage use the device to great effect in telling the story of a particular region from the earliest times to the present. The significant difference is that there are eight of these regionally based books. Each book has a clear environmental context and they all have stronger narrative sections, which provide an effective historical context for the monuments. All in all, any one of the *Exploring Scotland's Heritage* series would be more satisfying than this book.

STEPHEN T. DRISCOLL

The Archaeology of Medieval Greece (Oxbow Monograph 59). Edited by Peter Lock and G. D. R. Sanders. 21 × 30 cm. 192 pp., 82 figs., pls. and tbs. Oxford: Oxbow Books, 1996. ISBN 1-900188-03-1. Price: £28.00 pb.

The preface of *The Archaeology of Medieval Greece* highlights the current weaknesses in Aegean post-classical studies, saying the archaeology 'still has far to go'. It claims that this volume's papers represent therefore work 'very much at the stage of discovery and record' and with work 'undertaken by individuals or small groups of individuals'. Unfortunately much here does indeed read like research still in its infancy: in some instances coverage is superficial and the archaeology tentative at best. The volume is one that was 'a long time in gestation' — reflected indeed in the way that few papers present references later than 1990; potentially the papers provide only a random scatter of recent work — but writing as a reviewer with principal interests in Italy where early medieval and medieval archaeology is now advanced methodologically and theoretically, the selection on offer makes for a worrying image of the current status of medieval archaeology in Greece.

The preface does not clarify the reasoning behind the papers selected, suggesting that the contributors simply represent contacts of the two editors. Whilst the contents do cover a range of themes — field survey, fortifications, churches, burials and pottery — there are imbalances, with studies on forts very much dominant, and with many of the papers centring on island archaeologies/sites rather than mainland Greece. Certainly there are useful studies here: Bintliff's Boeotia Survey summary tidily shows that field surveys do not always ignore the medieval epoch and that collaboration with historians is often valuable, in this case with regard to Ottoman period villages, populations and their ethnicities. Lock's Towers of Euboea contribution reveals the landholding elite's use of status symbols in the landscape and shows the good level of survival of these structures (the paper is an extension of his 1986 work on towers in Central Greece). Elsewhere the contributors are rooting around for archaeology and chronologies, undertaking studies of extant or poorly known forts (e.g. Sanders on Melos), upland sites (Burrige in the Taygetos, Gregory on Sophiko), churches (with two separate papers on the same church at Andravida, sharing some images and text!), and ceramics (MacKay's paper on Renaissance pottery from Heraklion sadly barely ranks as academic). Rosser's Isles of Refuge paper is interesting, drawing upon a fascinating 18th-century text (reputedly using much older sources); but it adds nothing archaeologically. And Stedman's pre-modern houses contribution fails to indicate its possible value for medieval studies.

The texts are let down further by relatively numerous spelling and other slips, plus by bad photographic reproduction (mainly due to bad photographs which do little anyway to inform the reader) and by some poor plans and maps — mostly hand drawn, further highlighting the 'individual' nature of much of this fieldwork.

This was a good chance missed. Certain papers, with wider focus, would have been extremely useful reviews of data and problems. The editors overall needed to determine a series of key themes, especially if, as the preface states, an aim was to remove periodisation and to show the potential for study. There were, as a result, major gaps here: nothing on urbanism; nothing on food production, trade and industry; nothing on monastic

landscapes; and, lastly, there were no Greek contributors. If the volume truly reflects the level and nature of current work in medieval Greece, then far more effort is required to bring this part of the Mediterranean anywhere near the quality of work evident in mainland Italy; nonetheless, at least the papers do show that work is underway and the potential is starting to be tapped.

NEIL CHRISTIE

Medieval Cyprus: Studies in Art, Architecture, and History in Memory of Doula Mouriki. Edited by Nancy Patterson Ševčenko and Christopher Moss. 22 × 28 cm. xxviii + 306 pp. Princeton: Department of Art and Archaeology Program in Hellenic Studies, Princeton University in association with Princeton University Press, 1999. ISBN 0-691-00735-7. Price: £31.00 hb.

Doula Mouriki, who died aged 57 in 1991, was among the foremost specialists on Byzantine art and iconography of her generation. This memorial volume comprises an appreciation and thirteen essays on the art and archaeology of Cyprus between the end of Antiquity and the 16th century. It is handsomely produced, and together the contributors demonstrate the variety and vitality of their subject.

Not surprisingly in view of Professor Mouriki's own interests, the majority of the papers deal specifically with the Byzantine traditions of church art on the island. Vera von Falkenhausen considers a feature of Cypriot hagiography already noted by Mouriki: that in striking contrast to the trend elsewhere in the Orthodox world, on Cyprus local bishops were venerated but not local monastic figures. Henry Maguire reflects on the significance of the iconography of the Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple in the light of the rigorous exclusion of women from the church sanctuary in Orthodox canon law. Irmgard Hutter argues that the drawings in the Magdalen College Oxford MS gr. 3 were executed on Cyprus in the late 12th or early 13th century, and were copied from existing icons or murals to serve as models for later painters. Athanasios Papageorghiou discusses the hitherto unpublished paintings in the dome of the Panagia Chryseleousa at Strovolos. Panayotis Vocotopoulos and Mary Aspra-Vardavakis both examine icons painted on Cyprus or derived from Cypriot models. Carolyn Connor analyses the appearance of female saints in church decoration in the Troodos Mountains while Melita Emmanuel and Eftalia Constantinides examine monumental painting on Cyprus in the later Lusignan and Venetian periods respectively.

Charalambros Bakirtzis describes the rock-cut tombs with Christian symbols at Cape Drepanon, although his claim that on Cyprus in the 4th century Christians showed an unwonted tolerance of pagans is perhaps overstated. Susan Boyd surveys the current state of our knowledge of champlévé carving from Cyprus: they are extant from nine sites, and this type of decoration was evidently a significant element in design of the Christian basilicas in the early Byzantine period. Slobodan Curcic argues that the evolution of a local Cypriot style of church architecture came about as a response to the threat from earthquakes rather than as result of destructive Arab raids. I have no doubt he is right, but money and the availability of materials and skilled craftsmen must surely have been important too. Cyprus is not the only part of the Byzantine world troubled by seismic activity; to prove his point more work needs to be done on how the threat was countered elsewhere. In her essay, Demetra Papanikola-Bakirtzis returns to the subject of Cypriot glazed pottery, though without adding much to her earlier discussions.

All-in-all a useful volume. I have some minor quibbles: for example, Lagoudera and the Enkleistra of St Neophytos are far less than a hundred miles apart (p. xxvi), and the

idea that the royal chapel at Pyrga was probably 'the funeral chapel of the royal family' (p. 243) is unlikely.

PETER EDBURY

Fair Isle: The Archaeology of an Island Community. By J. R. Hunter. 19 × 24.5 cm. 280 pp., 68 figs. Edinburgh: HMSO and the National Trust for Scotland, 1996. ISBN 0-11-495750-9. Price: £19.95 pb.

The study of the archaeology of island communities has the potential to offer a fuller understanding of human reactions to landscape within contemporary territorial constraints, than might otherwise be available from topographically or territorially defined studies based within a larger land-mass. The research potential of islands like Fair Isle is heightened further by the nature of land-use and settlement over an extended time-frame; in this case from the neolithic to present. Without widespread destructive agriculture to erase the remains of settlements and field systems, but with a dense enough population to leave field monuments for most periods, John Hunter's study of Fair Isle provides a detailed account of the history of human settlement on the island. Introductory chapters give an environmental background and consider the island's intimate relationship with the sea. Both these factors figure (justifiably) significantly in Hunter's approach to his material.

Medieval Fair Isle is presented in detail in chapters 7, 8 and 9, which deal with the landscape between the Iron Age and the Viking period, Viking and Norse Settlement and 'Later Settlement' (from the 16th century). As with any such study, however, the development of the medieval landscape can only be understood with reference to pre-existing land divisions, territorial and settlement patterns. The dating of certain major territorial boundaries, including the so-called Feelic Dyke that crosses the island roughly E.-W. at its narrowest point, is contentious. Hunter argues for an ancient origin for these boundaries, but wisely emphasises the likelihood of different periods of origin and varying function through time from simple field divisions to major territorial markers. The inland pattern of prehistoric settlement, although to a certain degree overemphasised by the lack identified coastal settlements, appears to have moved during the later prehistoric period toward the coast. Surviving place-names either of Scandinavian origin, or which contain Scandinavian elements, first identifies the medieval pattern of settlement.

The existence of possible early Christian sites at the south end of the Island and at Burrista on the west, raises questions of archaeological characterisation and the distinct possibility exists that these sites are secular centres. The use of Ward Hill (ON *varða*: 'beacon' or 'cairn') at the north end of the island as a signalling station at least by the 12th century is of particular interest. A beacon on Fair Isle is first mentioned in the very late 12th-century *Orkneyinga Saga* and this is convincingly argued by Hunter as a reference to the Ward Hill site within the context of military communications in Northern Isles. Strong Norse influence continued until the 16th century when the wider economic pattern of the region changed under the influence of the Hanseatic League. More basic issues of settlement hierarchy and distribution are largely approached by working back from documentary sources of the 17th century and later, and the modern place-name record.

Following a consideration of the development of the post-medieval landscape, including a detailed chapter on water milling, the book is appended with an impressive inventory of 750 archaeological sites, with bibliographic and other references. The cover notes describe the volume as 'invaluable to students, fieldworkers and researchers, and also to visitors'. Whilst it succeeds in all of these categories, colour plates would have been a useful addition. In summary, a valuable contribution to 'island archaeology' set within a broader theoretical and historical framework.

ANDREW REYNOLDS

L'Estuaire de la Charente de la Protohistoire au Moyen Âge. (Documents d'Archéologie Française No. 72). By Luc Laporte *et al.* 21 × 30 cm. 228 pp., 133 figs., pls. and tbs. Paris: Éditions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 1998. ISBN 2-7351-0625-X. ISSN 1225-2127. Price: FF 250 pb.

This report describes a series of archaeological and palaeoenvironmental investigations carried out in the Saintonge Marshes and Charente Estuary on the west coast of France, in advance of the construction of the A837 motorway between Saintes and Rochefort.

Chapter 1 briefly outlines the region's landscape history based largely on lithostratigraphic and palaeoenvironmental evidence from sondages through the c. 20 m of sediment. Three major phases are identified: flooding of the valley during the rapid post-glacial rise in sea level, followed by alluviation, initially in the context of an intertidal marsh, and from the sub-Atlantic by a range of freshwater environments. A key theme that emerges from the report is the relationship between human communities and this ecological mosaic, and in particular how the two main excavated sites lay in prime settlement locations either side of the interface between brackish saltmarshes to the west, and freshwater backfen environments further inland, to the east.

The second chapter focuses on a salt production site of the 4th to 3rd century B.C. at Challonnière in Tonnay-Charente. Though around a hundred saltern sites are known around the fringes of the marsh, this is the first to see large-scale excavation. The site lay on the fen-edge and though traces of hearths and a possible oven were also recorded, the method of salt production was reconstructed mainly from artefactual evidence. The area was drained during the medieval period (pre-11th/12th century) through a complex arrangement of ditches dividing the marshland into long narrow fields of a type found throughout the coastal wetlands of North-West Europe.

Chapter 3 describes the excavation of two settlements just above the fen-edge at Mortantambe in Cabariot. The earliest comprised a series of enclosures dating to the 2nd/1st centuries B.C. The second settlement, and an associated cemetery, which was only partly excavated, dates to the 8th–10th centuries. This appears to have been typical of the scattered, isolated agricultural farmsteads of this region during the early medieval period, and the site's abandonment is assumed to have been part of a general process of settlement nucleation and landscape reorganisation seen throughout the region around the 11th century. The adjacent marshes were only drained during the 17th century.

Though most of this report is concerned with the later prehistoric material, it contains a valuable example of medieval settlement evolution at the turn of the first millennium A.D. The excavations were of a relatively small scale, but a large amount of palaeoenvironmental material was collected and great care is taken to place the individual sites within their landscape context. The report is well-presented with good quality illustrations, and a brief English summary.

STEPHEN RIPPON

Vestigia longobarde in Italia (568–774): Lessico e antroponomia. By Nicoletta Francovich Onesti. 21 × 15 cm. 284 pp. Rome: Artemide Edizioni, 1999. ISBN 88-86291-34-5. Price: Lire 50,000 pb.

This manual catalogues Lombard name and word survival in early medieval Italy. The volume is divided into two parts: Part I, *La Lingua dei Longobardi*, is subdivided into (1) Introduction, dealing with sources, language longevity and borrowings, (2) Corpus of Terms, (3) Phonetics, and (4) Words Roots and Formations; Part II, *Antroponomia*, covers (1) Personal Names, (2) Component Elements (including names with Latin or Greek

components), (3) Flexions, (4) Names of Uncertain Origin and a Chronology of Names, and (5) Hypocoristic Names. The volume's main element is the corpus of words, chiefly nouns and adjectives (plus some place-names), providing translations and variations, sources and modern references. The corpus extends only to 774 and thus excludes the later, Beneventan/ Langobardia Minor evidence: the exclusion was made so as to avoid material influenced by Frankish input within the peninsula, thus making the data 'più sicuri per la descrizione della situazione della lingua e dell'antroponimia propriamente longobarda' (p. 37 — although Francovich Onesti largely ignores pre-774 Franco-Lombard contacts (hostile and allied) and potential word borrowings).

In this selection the author provides a significant revision of Bruckner's *Sprache der Langobarden* (1895), notably through inclusion of names identified at the Gargano sanctuary and those found through excavations (e.g. the 7th-century seal ring at Trezzo sull'Adda); the time bracket does mean, however, the exclusion of names discovered on floor tiles at the 9th-century Beneventan monastery of San Vincenzo al Volturno. While the corpus is thorough, there is disappointment at the brevity of the Introduction (pp. 37–50). Much more could have been said of the 'popular' nature of name and loan-word survival (p. 42); of the likely Latinization of some terms before the Lombard entry into Italy (p. 47); of the virtual extinction of the Lombard tongue by the mid-7th century (p. 48); and of patterns of 'regional' place-name survivals (p. 49). For the latter, for example, no distribution maps are offered, nor any comment that rarely do Lombard archaeological finds correspond with Lombard place-names. Nonetheless, these aspects are at least touched upon and do provide a mental backdrop when examining the extended corpus.

NEIL CHRISTIE

The Convert Kings: Power and Religious Affiliation in Early Anglo-Saxon England. By N. J. Higham. 14 × 21 cm. x + 293 pp., 8 figs. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997. ISBN 0-7190-4827. Price: £14.99 pb.

In recent years, a school of thought in Anglo-Saxon studies has moved towards an acknowledgement of the political issues that led the 6th- and 7th-century rulers of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms to accept or to embrace Christianity. Nicholas Higham, in the third part of his sometimes controversial trilogy on the early history of Britain, puts forward this interpretation at its most radical. In an unashamedly political and secular exposition, Higham uses an approach that is 'pragmatic, empirical and source-led, rather than self-consciously theoretical' (p. 43). *The Convert Kings* is essentially a study of early political hegemony and 'overkingship'. That of King Æthelberht of Kent, King Edwin of Northumbria (or Deira, as Higham emphasises), and the struggle for hegemony in the middle and later 7th century between Oswald and Oswiu of Bernicia and Penda of Mercia are considered in long chapters. However, beginning from a different tack, the first chapter addresses anthropological parallels for conversion in an accessible manner. The experiences of European Christian missionaries in Africa in the 19th and early 20th centuries are usefully paralleled with those of the Roman missionaries in the 6th and 7th centuries and contrasted against the motivating factors for ruling élites in both societies.

Higham credits Anglo-Saxon kings with a great deal of political shrewdness. The theme of Christian *imperium* is one which runs through the book: Christianity was not embraced because of its victory-giving properties in battle, but because it was another form of the extension of politics by other means. As an interesting, persuasively written and even sometimes enjoyable historical discourse based largely upon an interpretation of the written evidence of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, this book is worthy of consideration, and Higham is assured of a place in the historiography of this period for the foreseeable future, if only because he takes the political interpretations to their extreme. However, a caveat

must be added for readers of this journal, as *The Convert Kings* is certainly not an interdisciplinary study. The anthropological approach to conversion presented in chapter one is interesting, but it almost stands alone as an introductory chapter. Archaeological evidence is mentioned on occasions, but specific references are rare: even Sutton Hoo, arguably the current gold standard for high-status burial, receives little attention. Detailed analyses of grave assemblages may well have been beyond the agenda of this book (as Higham states on p. 9), but perhaps the use of a broader evidential corpus could have added to the debate presented here.

RYAN LAVELLE

Runes and Runic Inscriptions: Collected Essays on Anglo-Saxon and Viking Runes. By R. I. Page, edited by David Parsons. 16 × 24 cm. 346 pp., 21 figs., maps and pls. Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1995. ISBN 0-85115-387-9. Price: £49.50 hb.

As the foreword to this volume makes clear, this collection of 23 articles written between 1958 and 1994, serves to take the place of a Festschrift to celebrate Professor Page's seventieth birthday. There can be few better ways of so celebrating an anniversary. Focusing mainly on Anglo-Saxon material (with consideration, in two articles, of Scandinavian runes on the Isle of Man) this collection provides an invaluable insight into the study of runes during the last forty years.

This is not merely an exercise in compilation, or a historical survey of one individual's work. The articles have been up-dated, where necessary, by 'Postscripts' showing consideration of new evidence that has come to light since the original date of publication and taking into consideration debates within the subject area during recent years. The collection begins with a consideration of the state of runic studies in 1994, '*Quondam et futurus*' which gives an indication that the subject is in a healthy condition, not least because of the 'high frequency' with which archaeologists discover new inscriptions.

During this article Professor Page reflects on '... how much [he has] ... forgotten in thirty years' (p. 1). The range of material that follows certainly reflects a great deal of scholarship. The accompanying bibliography to the volume indicates, however, that this is very much only a cross-section of Page's work, which spans a wide range of subject matter over the forty years covered by this volume. The articles reproduced here give a valuable survey of runic studies and provide both the specialist and non-specialist reader with an insight into the subject. Much of the work is based upon the study of material which has become less legible since the time in which they were first written about. The value of such evidence is unquestionable.

Professor Page suggests that this volume '... helps by giving something of the background to English runic research' (p. 16). Whilst it certainly achieves this goal it, in some respects, goes far further by assembling a corpus of material that is otherwise disparate and, in some cases, not easily obtainable into a single source which will prove to be of growing value over the years to come.

PHIL CARDEW

Kings, Currency and Alliances: History and Coinage of Southern England in the Ninth Century. (Studies in Anglo-Saxon History 1x). Edited by M. A. S. Blackburn and D. N. Dumville. 16 × 24 cm. x + 259 pp., 11 pls., various figs., tbs., and maps. Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1998. ISSN 0950-3412. Price: £55.00 hb.

Based on a symposium held at Cambridge in April 1988, this book brings together a pleasing variety of papers, some treating matters of general interpretation, others

concentrating on technical detail. This is as should be. As Mark Blackburn says in his preface, an interdisciplinary approach informs the volume, and such an approach in the field of Anglo-Saxon numismatics and social history demands both judgement based on evidence and also, as in D. M. Metcalf's essay, deployment of evidence and explanation of method. Of the nine contributions readers of this journal will probably turn first to Simon Keynes's paper on 'King Alfred and the Mercians' and Mark Blackburn's on 'The London Mint in the Reign of Alfred'. Keynes uses a fine combination of charter and numismatic evidence to suggest a careful working together, prompted by Viking threats, of Alfred and the Mercian ealdorman, Aethelred, after Ceolwulf's death in 879. London remained in English hands and Mercian fears were allayed by marriage alliance and Alfred's recognition of the special position of his new son-in-law. One notes Keynes's use of Asser, bringing out again the primary nature of some of Asser's evidence. Blackburn's thorough analysis of the coins of the London mint leads him to the conclusion that on numismatic grounds one would wish the London monogram coins to be dated nearer 880 than 886, a view that fits in well with Keynes's analysis. Both scholars join together in a compact paper on the coins of the middle phase of Alfred's coinage, which forms one of the bases for the revised date for the London monogram. There is much of interest also in the other six papers. Thomas Charles-Edwards makes good sense of the Alfred/Guthrum arrangement in the light of Continental evidence and deepens our awareness of the importance of the relationship between godparents and godchildren. James Booth takes us back, to the 840s for a period of collaboration that had political overtones between the mints of Rochester and London. Lord Stewartby identifies a number of moneyers who also witnessed charters, a pointer again to the perennial problem of status. Finally Michael Metcalf and Michael Bonser submit papers that are complementary, Metcalf interpretative, Bonser essentially and usefully factual, with a listing of single finds of 9th-century coins. Metcalf provides a proper lesson in statistical mapping and technique to state his case that the use of coinage was widespread through society. He concludes his paper with the sensible view that in the early Middle Ages it was normal to accept the coexistence of a monetised and non-monetary economy. With so much recent understandable concentration on the numismatic evidence for the last century of Anglo-Saxon England it is good to have a book that takes us back to the 9th and underlines again, in line with our legal historians the singular contribution of King Alfred to the making of England.

H. R. LOYN

Anglo-Saxon Lincolnshire (A History of Lincolnshire, Volume III.) By Peter Sawyer. 25 × 23 cm. 289 pp., 78 pls., figs., maps and tabs. Lincoln: The History of Lincolnshire Committee, 1998. ISBN 0-902668-11-0. Price: £12.95 pb.

The Origins of Suffolk (Origins of the Shire.) By Peter Warner. 14 × 22 cm. 241 pp., 41 figs., 15 pls. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996. ISBN 0-7190-3817-0. Price: not stated, pb.

One of the welcome developments in early medieval studies in recent years has been the increase in localised studies that should eventually allow a fuller appreciation of regional differences in Anglo-Saxon England. Both of these shire studies have a valuable contribution to make to our understanding of the eastern districts of England, though the differences between them are due to variations not only in the history and organisation of the areas they study, but also in the expertise and approaches of the authors. Peter Sawyer has written a very readable and authoritative account in which the main events and developments of the Anglo-Saxon period are discussed through the Lincolnshire evidence. This is very much history from the top down, happiest dealing with kings and churchmen,

and the instruments through which they controlled the country and developed the economy. There is a particularly useful explanation of the nature and history of the complex local administrative units — the ridings, hundreds, wapentakes and sokes — that characterised late Anglo-Saxon Lincolnshire. Archaeology is by no means ignored in this survey which synthesizes a wide range of evidence. Some particularly knotty problems are dissected in appendices, including the identity of the timber church of St Paul-in-the-Bail in Lincoln. Contrary to some recent assessments, Sawyer argues for it being of 7th-century date and the church built for Paulinus in the city, a twin to the one Edwin founded for him in York. Although Bede says the Lincoln church was of stone, Sawyer suspects he was misinformed. Lavish illustrations, including many plates, have been provided by Alan Vince, and are a welcome feature of the book, but often seem to be providing an alternative commentary for there are few cross-references and little discussion of their contents in the text. For instance, a section on the early Anglo-Saxon church is illustrated with fragments of an 8th-century shrine from South Kyme, but there is no reference to the site in the accompanying text, or discussion of the relevance of the sculpture to the cult of saints in mid-Saxon Lincolnshire.

Although the churches and towns of Anglo-Saxon Lincolnshire receive close attention, rural settlement is a surprisingly neglected topic. However, it is a major strength of Peter Warner's *The Origins of Suffolk*. Here we feel the enthusiasm and share the expertise of a man who thoroughly knows his countryside and its different patterns of settlement. Careful topographical studies allow the reconstruction of possible ancient *regiones* in the Blyth and Deben valleys and of their rather different social and economic histories. Suffolk has its administrative complexities as well, being divided into hundreds, ferdings and letes — the latter seem broadly comparable to what were known as hundreds in Lincolnshire, and both appear to have been established very late in the Saxon period in connection with the collection of *geld*. There are many valuable insights in this study, but Warner, like Sawyer, has found it hard to include everything, and what is missing in particular is one of the strengths of the Lincolnshire volume, the Scandinavian involvement in the shire — Guthrum and his Danish kingdom of East Anglia are not even mentioned. Although it is unlikely that Suffolk came under such heavy Scandinavian influence as Lincolnshire, where the majority of leading landowners on the eve of the Norman Conquest had Scandinavian names, recent finds from Norfolk suggest that the Scandinavian presence is unlikely to have been as negligible as it once appeared; two Suffolk place-names cited in the book, *Thinghog* and *Thingstead*, point in the same direction (though in fairness one should note that new material produced by metal detectorists would not have been available at the time the book was written).

Finally, although the shire appears in many ways a logical unit for studies such as these, particularly when in the case of Lincolnshire the volume is supported by a county society, does it make sense in terms of Anglo-Saxon history? In both these cases the shires were established late in the Anglo-Saxon period and disrupted earlier arrangements. The border between Norfolk and Suffolk cuts across older parish boundaries, while Lincolnshire was a shotgun marriage of the former kingdom of Lindsey with what had once been part of Middle Anglia and then one of the Five Boroughs administered from Stamford. In such case shire studies can provide only part of a broader regional history, but their contribution is nevertheless very welcome.

The Biggings, Papa Stour, Shetland: The History and Archaeology of a Royal Norwegian Farm (Society of Antiquaries of Scotland Monograph Series 15). By Barbara E. Crawford and Beverley Ballin Smith. 21 x 30 cm. xxiv + 269 pp., 167 figs., and pls., 21 in colour, 18 tbs. Edinburgh: Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, 1999. ISBN 0-903903-15-6. Price: £38.00 hb.

It is a pleasure to welcome publication of *The Biggings, Papa Stour*, an unusual excavation project inspired by Shetland's oldest known document and directed by the medieval historian, Dr Barbara Crawford.

The remarkable document of 1299 records an occasion when Ragnhild Simunsdatter accused Lord Thorvald Thoresson of improper financial conduct. This tantalising glimpse into late 13th-century society prompted Crawford's search for the wooden building (or *stofa*) on the ducal farm where this meeting took place. The surprising thing is that she may have found it — beneath an area of uncultivated ground on the main farm on the island, the Biggings. In a series of trenches excavated over some twenty years, Crawford and her team uncovered traces of a sequence of wooden buildings, apparently of west-Scandinavian type. The earliest was a building interpreted as a sunken-floored wooden *dyngja* (bath-house or weaving house of the 11th century); then a possible *eldhús* and a timber hall or *skáli* (of about 1100 to 1250); and finally, the remains of perhaps a classic Norwegian *stofa*, with wooden floor, wood-covered benches, corner hearth and well-built stone sill foundation for the west gable wall (of about 1200 to 1400). This latter building was later adapted and re-used, from about 1400 to the early 1600s, when it was replaced by a stone dwelling house.

It has to be said that the remains of the *stofa* are not impressive — except that they include a substantial wooden floor, a rare survival in the treeless Northern Isles — and a plan of the whole structure was not recovered. We can never know for certain that these were necessarily the remains of the ducal *stofa*. Crawford makes a very reasonable case, but the pedants (realists?) amongst us may continue to resist the equation of the only excavated site of the right period on the island with the extraordinary scene played out in Shetland's oldest surviving document.

At the Biggings though, archaeology is no footnote to history. Whether or not the timber floor was that of a ducal *stofa*, its discovery is extremely important. Indeed, these excavations recovered a wide range of materials which do not normally survive on sites in the Northern Isles. The evidence for late Norse and medieval wood and woodworking, including birch-bark rolls and fragments, and textiles, yarn and fibre, is pretty well unique; while the survival of an insect fauna, animal bone assemblage and a wide range of plant remains is hardly less important. There is also a rich assemblage of other common and not-so-common Norse artefacts, such as steatite vessels and bakestones, ceramics, horn artefacts etc. The specialist analyses are of a uniformly high standard and sit well against the thorough and very readable historical and contextual framework for medieval Shetland and late Norse architecture.

Fenton, in a Foreword to the volume, describes Crawford's excavations as a 'piece of supreme detective work', and this they certainly are. More than that, though, this volume is testament to one person's vision and dedication over more than twenty years. Crawford's fascination with Papa Stour began in the late 1960s, with her research into the Norse earls of Orkney and their relationship with the kings of Norway and Scotland from 1150–1470. Subsequently, she succeeded in raising funds for an entirely research-driven excavation on an unthreatened site (somewhat against the odds in those pre-lottery days), led the excavations over some twenty years, and has now brought the work to a seamless publication whole. This handsome and well illustrated volume may not end the debate about the precise meaning of the 1299 document or the interpretation of the wooden structures at the Biggings, but there can be no doubt about the scale of Crawford's achievement.

Basing House, Hampshire: Excavations 1978-1991 (Hampshire Field Club Monograph 10). By David Allen and Sue Anderson. 21 × 30 cm. 121 pp., 87 figs. and pls., 4 tbs. Winchester: Hampshire Field Club and Archaeological Society and Hampshire County Council, 1999. ISBN 0-907473-11-9 Price: £15 + p&p, pb.

Hampshire County Council has long had an enviable reputation for conserving, interpreting and displaying their ancient monuments. Basing House must rank high among the sites of southern England with its intoxicating complex of medieval ringwork, Great Barn, Tudor mansion, 17th-century siegeworks and post-medieval house and garden. It was already a much-excavated (and under-reported) site before the recent work, since Lord Bolton stripped most of the interior of the citadel in the early 20th century. Stephen Moorhouse in two seminal articles 'Finds from Basing House, Hampshire c. 1540-1645', parts 1 and 2 (*Post-Medieval Archaeol.*, 4 (1970), 31-91, and 5 (1971), 35-76) published the more important finds from these excavations. The present volume describes the archaeological work carried out by the County Museums Service on behalf of the County Council between 1978 and 1991. Six areas are covered; the gatehouse, the kitchen area, south bank, postern gate, walled garden and the north west range of the new house. After a brief history including an account of the spectacular siege in 1645, chapter 2 goes on to analyse the features of the site helped by a useful series of miniature maps indicating the areas under discussion. Two *desideranda* emerge. There is no detailed description of the barn and its roof despite the claim that it is 'one of the finest later medieval barns in the country', nor, more surprisingly, is there any survey of the 17th-century defences which 'are in design unlike any other of the period in England' (p. 23). Chapter 3 is an account of the recent excavations. Difficulties arise from the fact that the recording methods were changed. These are frankly discussed (p. 31) but the lack of matrices makes the phasing uncertain and the inaccurate stratigraphical relationships compound this. A further weakness is the lack of integration between the description of the excavated structures and the finds. On page 64 for instance 'one context represents the footing of the gatehouse walls and suggests a construction date in the late 14th/15th century'. This is not borne out in the description of the excavation. An undesirable number of residual sherds are recorded in detail. Nevertheless what emerges is that Basing's Tudor gatehouse, the successor of a number of medieval ones, must have been among the greatest in the land, built as much for a display of status as for defence.

JOHN STEANE

Death and Burial in Medieval England, 1066-1550. By Christopher Daniell. 14 × 21.5 cm. ix + 242 pp. 13 pls. London: Routledge, 1998. ISBN 0-415-18550-5. Price: £14.99 pb.

This is a welcome book which sets out to be a general work 'about death and burial in England within the Middle Ages'. This is very ambitious in the span of the work. But it is a genuine attempt to present historical and archaeological data (in that order) within a single book. The opening date, of the Norman Conquest, raises hopes of a discussion of Conquest evidence in the archaeological record. However, the Normans in the archaeological record of cemeteries are not apparently visible — beyond their destruction of graves of their predecessors. What price cemetery evidence of waves of invaders in the first millennium? The book strives to provide a theoretical framework, and to connect beliefs with rituals of death and burial. It argues that archaeology (charcoal burials and pillow stones) decreases in importance from the 13th century, and that documentary evidence comes to the fore.

A mass of data is presented, which is at times difficult to unravel. The author, already attempting a broad-brush approach involves himself in debates about Roman burials, pagan orientation and much else from the pre-Conquest period (e.g. p. 150) at the expense

of evidence from his chosen period. This is, perhaps, not surprising in a chapter on cemeteries and grave goods, where there is little of the latter to be found in post-Conquest Christian graves. The reader has to be expert to keep up with the cracking pace: on page 120, for example references to Lindow man and frozen bodies in Greenland are rapidly followed by references to medieval brains excavated in Hull and at Sandwell Priory. The breathless reader asks, 'What date were the brains?' and 'What was their significance?' The writer, on the same page, refers to 38 Romano-British skeletons.

The study is a worthwhile effort. It lays bare some of the problems of using cemetery data from 1066 to 1550. The cemeteries rarely contain easily datable material, and few grave goods. This problem is compounded by a lack of dates provided from archaeological reports (or, in fact from historical material) by the author, who falls back understandably on high status written evidence from the period before the 15th century, and written evidence from the lower ranks of society from c. 1500 with much undated material. In such a grand survey there are inevitably occasional errors and slips. There are virtually no dated statistical data. The thirteen rather poorly reproduced plates are all from Yorkshire (including five from West Tanfield church and four of St Helen-on-the-Walls cemetery, York) which flies in the face of the author's text which is pleasingly widely geographical. The conclusion does not integrate the evidence of different disciplines, but discusses particular historical debates (for example about the effects of the Black Death) at some length. This is a worthwhile first edition, but, despite the claims of including the 'very latest research', this reviewer looks forward to a reworked second edition in which the publisher's editor and readers have assisted the author to stick to the half-millennium he set out to elucidate. A useful book, nonetheless.

TOM BEAUMONT JAMES

Corrigendum

We have been asked to point out that *A Study of the Impact of Imparkment on the Social Landscape of Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire from c. 1090 to 1760* (review *Medieval Archaeol.*, 42 (1998), 222–3) was published by John and Erica Hedges, not Archaeopress as stated.

The following publications were also received:

Human Bones in Archaeology (Shire Archaeology 46). By Ann Stirland. 15 × 21 cm. 64 pp., 19 figs., 1 tb. Princes Risborough: Shire Publications, 1999. ISBN 0-7478-0412-5. Price: £4.99 pb.

The second edition of this 1986 introduction to the study of human skeletal remains for the non-specialist interested in all aspects of archaeology.

The Reign of Edward III. By W. M. Ormrod. 18 × 25 cm. 256 pp., 32 pls., 8 in colour. Stroud: Tempus Publishing, 2000. ISBN 0-7524-1773-8. Price: £19.99, \$34.99 hb.

An updated and redesigned second edition of this 1990 work, following a 'fruitful decade' for studies of the reign, with many new illustrations.