Reviews


For better or worse, 'the goddess' is part of the millennial Zeitgeist. This may of course be due to a collective desire to return to the womb, but I doubt it; I prefer the idea that a cynical media is manipulating a gullible public into buying ever more trashy books and videos on New Age Mysticism and Celtic Spirituality. This should surely be a matter of concern for historians and archaeologists, as they have a role in exploring critically and analytically both the phenomenon and the supposed evidence from past cultures for matters pertaining to female deities. This should include as a matter of routine investigation a discussion of ontological concerns, such as how one can meaningfully categorize ancient images and constructions as 'goddesses' at all.

A worrying backdrop to all this is the current prevalence (and increasing acceptance) of populist para-ideologies by academics, given that students are now customers and postmodern relativism gives credence to the even the most idiotic of philosophies. Undergraduates of my acquaintance have announced in all seriousness that they are, actually, white witches: they fail to recognize their roles as banal living parodies of the New Age. While all this may seem harmless enough, I think that we possibly do need to worry that some elements of the poorer quality scholarship associated with the goddess industry are creeping into archaeological academia through the back door.

*Roles of the Northern Goddess* sits, sadly, perilously close to the fringes. Marketed by Routledge as an 'invaluable guide for all those studying religion, mythology and anthropology', and also categorized on the book jacket as belonging to 'Women's studies', the text is actually predicated to a large degree on a non-specialist's handling of complex archaeological data, both textual narrative and material culture. By removing the book from their archaeological and historical book lists, the publisher was presumably able to let this book evade scrutiny by archaeological and historical referees. The result is an account of 'the goddess' so breathtakingly naive that I wonder how and why the author was advised to attempt such a broad chronological sweep of archaeological material which she seems to know only through secondary sources. For example, the author's main source for Palaeolithic 'Venus' figurines appears to be Knight. Chris Knight may claim a lot of things, but that he is a pre-eminent authority on Palaeolithic portable art is not one of them. Perhaps all this is to some extent inevitable and excusable in a thematic book; but it really is insupportable that time and again sweeping general assertions about the past are unsupported by reference either to evidence or even to the fact that somebody, somewhere, once had a theory along those lines. So, for example, Ellis Davidson herself seems to be the sole authority for statements such as 'The concept of a goddess who was Mistress of Animals may go back to very early times, linked with a shamanic religion . . .' (p. 4) and

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'As the Indo-European peoples established themselves over much of Europe, the northern goddess also took to herself formidable authority, in spite of rivalry from the great sky god' (p. 8). Other aspects annoy: there is no discussion of how a distinction might be made between depictions of women and depictions of 'goddesses'; what is a 'role'; what is 'worship'? (all crucial debates with regard to the prehistoric material). This approach is so overwhelming that it detracts from the useful passages to be found in the book about the female deities portrayed in Celtic vernacular and medieval literary sources. Indeed, these confident and knowledgeable passages contrast so greatly with the rest that one is left with the inescapable conclusion that the author was not well served by being permitted to take on such a range of material.

_Celtic Goddesses_ by contrast is a much sturdier entity, and although it too could do with discussing the meanings of its core terms such as 'Celtic' and 'goddess', it does analyse and interpret the material as well as describe it. Miranda Green has an enviable familiarity with her subject material, and she always had some very interesting ideas about Celtic symbolism, particularly within the Roman world. This book is a good opportunity for students and general readers to follow through her ideas on a particular theme.

She is good at contextualizing female images, making clear that they can only be understood in the context of 'Celtic' religion as a whole and their relationships with male deities, animals and various social classes of mortals. I suppose that my one real reservation about _Celtic Goddesses_ is that Green works almost too hard to make 'Celtic' seem unique, when in fact many other cultural sequences some of which precede or are contemporary to the material under discussion here share some of the features in question, such as dualism and triplism.

I would be prepared to recommend Green's book to undergraduates studying the late prehistoric and classical world or gender archaeology, but I would only feel comfortable recommending _Roles of the Northern Goddess_ as an example of what can go wrong when the Zeitgeist is hijacked for a cynical publisher's profit.

ELEANOR SCOTT


_The Logboats of Scotland_ presents a comprehensive overview of a very specific field. The largest single element is a gazetteer of 154 recorded finds of logboats in Scotland. The entries vary considerably in length and detail, reflecting the varying precision with which the different boats were recorded when initially discovered. In some cases the early records and materials discovered were so fragmented, that the objects cannot be classified with any certainty as logboats, even if they were so described. In this respect, a further list of 71 examples of 'related artefact types', including _inter alia_ troughs, bowls, kegs and log-coffins, provides some indication of the range of object types which earlier antiquarians may perhaps have mistaken for boats. Mowat distinguishes logboats from other monoxylous dugouts on the basis of conformity to two or more of a set of six criteria, developed by S. McGrail in his work on English logboats. Where sufficient evidence of the measurements of boats survives, he also applies a variation of McGrail's system for recording the technical indices of each boat. These allow for some calculation of the relative speed, stability, cargo capacity, etc. of individual boats.

The logboat tradition in Scotland, as elsewhere, apparently spans an extremely long period, from prehistoric times to the 18th century. Mowat lists radiocarbon dates for seven logboats, four of which date between the 5th and 11th centuries. He also lists four boats which can be broadly dated by their incorporation into crannogs, and another which
seems to be associated with a crannog. This is not as useful as it might appear since, according to Mowat, ‘the chronology of the construction and use of Scottish crannogs itself remains unclear’, and he accordingly assigns these boats to the ‘later prehistoric or early historic periods’. However, he also cites a handful of references to logboats in early modern Scotland, and draws analogies with the use of logboats in Ireland to suggest that logboats may have remained relatively common in Scotland throughout the later Middle Ages.

In this context, a greater discussion of other vessel types would have been useful. The use of the skin-built currach in both Ireland and Scotland is briefly mentioned, but hardly discussed. Furthermore, although Mowat lists a number of diagnostic features of ‘modern’ (here taken to mean late prehistoric or later) logboats which apparently derive from the design of plank-built boats, there is no discussion of the plank-built boats concerned. This is a striking omission in any discussion of the likely use of logboats in the later Middle Ages, especially in south-western Scotland, since plank-built boats of varying sizes dominate both the documentary and iconographic record for boats in this area in the period.

The book is well illustrated, with a combination of photographs, detailed drawings, and reproductions of watercolours and sketches of some of the earlier boats to be discovered. In addition to these early illustrations, Mowat also presents a brief survey of the development of log-boat studies in Scotland, reflecting changing approaches to archaeology over the last two centuries. This should certainly be of interest for the history of archaeology and antiquarianism as well as for the study of logboats. The chapter on synthesis and analysis is also of broader interest, containing not merely the analysis of the logboats and related material presented in the book, but also inter alia a valuable overview of the whole issue of timber supply in Scotland. This is certainly of value for anyone studying other historical boats and ships in Scotland. In summary, Mowat has produced a substantial and scientific corpus of Scottish logboats and related material. While much of this will inevitably be of direct interest only in the study of logboats, the book also contains important elements of much broader archaeological interest and value.

GARETH WILLIAMS


This is the first volume devoted to urban archaeology (or rather archaeological finds plus excavations) in the context of Pavia in central north Italy: it offers a summary of the data from the larger excavations, from rescue work, watching briefs and surveys within the ancient core. The emphasis is on work undertaken and materials uncovered since the 1960s (but only up to 1991), ranging from stratigraphic sequences recognized beside and within church and monastic complexes such as S. Mafia Theodat/della Pusterla (pp. 87–110), S. Maria delle Cacce (pp. 162–91), S. Michele Maggiore (pp. 60–85) and S. Sisto (pp. 122–61), to work in public buildings such as the Torre Civica (pp. 192–219). The volume also provides a rather summary listing and mapping of all urban finds since the 18th century (pp. 7–59), stray coin finds (pp. 238–49), plus the S. Giovanni Domnarum hoard of 400 coins of c. 1150.

Whilst 194 sites are recorded, the picture for the town as a whole remains patchy, and to a degree, illegible. Roman street lines, house fronts, and burials are duly recognizable, but we cannot adequately recognize from the finds how far there is late Roman/antique shrinkage, which areas are open or abandoned in the early medieval period, or the nature of medieval housing. In part this image is due to the scattered nature
of many of the finds and the lack of major urban excavations similar to those undertaken in Milan and Brescia. In part it is also a problem of presentation within this volume. There was a need for a series of colour-coded maps to clarify patterns within the sites listed, in particular period-by-period images imposed over the known Roman and later plans, noting churches also such mapping does already exist (noted on p. 7), but surprisingly was not reproduced in this volume. Likewise a series of short period overviews at least were required (or perhaps these are to follow in volume 2). The catalogue itself is confusing with sites given first an entry number and then a map number, with the latter extending to no. 217, but with various small finds listed as o.

What is much appreciated is the publication (as extended texts, but supported with matrices and illustrations though not always with attached finds reports) of various overdue projects, plus some revised interpretations of older studies. Some other old excavations notably those of S. Maria Gualtieri (1965, 1976–77, 1987) and the Broletto (1977–79) remain to appear in the next Pavia volume. The published reports, meanwhile, combine to confirm and clarify elements of the Roman town plan, but more prominently help demonstrate the role of the Church in urban revival, notably from the 8th and 9th centuries, whilst simultaneously charting the evolution and transformation of such structures through the medieval and pre-modern centuries. Prominent in this regard is the report by Blake on investigations (1935–36, 1979) on the monastery of Santa Maria delle Cace traditionally founded during the reign of the Lombard king Ratchis (but instead attributable to king Ragimbert in c. 700–01) and suppressed only in 1799, but revived as a church in 1936. In the 8th century S. Maria lay outside the walls and adjoined another royal monastery, S. Martino, close to the eastern gate; the two were enclosed within the 12th-century circuit and this zone became a busy medieval suburb. The 1979 excavations revealed chiefly the northern part of the early medieval church’s substantial basilical plan of $33 \times 15$ m with integrated crypt. Interestingly, there was no coherent trace of preceding Roman activity, although the first church reused numerous Roman bricks in its foundations and elevations as well as some pre-8th-century architectural units.

Despite various gaps and faults this volume is to be welcomed as an important initiative to clear some of the excavation publication backlog and to provide detailed summaries of significant investigations into the fabric of Roman, early medieval and medieval Pavia. It is very much hoped that Archeologia Urbana a Pavia might inspire similar ‘town’ publications in Italy.

Neil Christie


Square-headed brooches were among the most elaborate forms of female dress-accessory in use during the 5th and 6th centuries in north-west Europe and as such have assumed importance for chronological and material-cultural studies of the period. The Anglo-Saxon series of great square-headed brooches, found in England outside east Kent and so-called to distinguish it from Scandinavian, Continental and Kentish forms, was derived from Scandinavian prototypes, and the great majority of known examples have been recovered from graves where they were deposited as part of female costume.
The author's re-classification of the Anglo-Saxon great square-headed brooches, which superseded that of E. T. Leeds, is familiar from his doctoral thesis, published in 1984. This volume develops and expands that earlier publication and now replaces Leeds's original Corpus. Seven chapters deal with the background to the study, methods and procedures (Chapter 1), classification (Chapter 2), relative chronology (Chapter 3), production (Chapter 4), overseas comparanda, associated finds and absolute chronology (Chapters 5 and 6), and function and social context (Chapter 7). Analysis and discussion is supported by an illustrated catalogue of the 209 brooches, summarizing the provenance and associations of each piece, and each brooch is illustrated at full-size either by a photograph or, in the few cases where a piece has been lost, by photographic reproduction of surviving illustrations. Continental and Scandinavian comparanda, and important associated artefacts, are also illustrated with photographs.

The largest single section of the book is Chapter 2, the detailed formal classification of the material into 23 groups, six sub-groups and five miscellaneous examples: this excludes brooches of Leeds's Class C2 as clearly belonging to the cruciform brooch tradition. The classification rests upon the degree of similarity between brooches based upon comparison of individual compositional elements common to all examples. The approach to classification is realistic and judicious, and its presentation is explicit: similarities and comparanda are discussed in detail for each group, and the argument is supported by illustrations of individual elements. This establishes a developmental typology, within which the transmission of motif and design can be traced, and a relative chronology of production which allows all brooches to be assigned to a broad three-phase scheme. Absolute chronology depends largely upon the extent to which the Anglo-Saxon great square-headed brooch series can be linked to Scandinavian and Continental chronologies. The evidence of associated grave finds is discussed at length but the archaeological dating of 5th- and 6th-century material culture types in England is for the most part so imprecise that it can do little more than broadly corroborate the suggested date-range of c. A.D. 500-70 for the production and use of great square-headed brooches in England; the estimated date ranges for each of the three phases remain heuristics.

There are useful discussions of the technology and social context of production which summarize the state of knowledge and define outstanding research questions. The consideration of practical and symbolic function establishes that great square-headed brooches occur in the more richly furnished female burials and that they may therefore be regarded as higher-status items, as their intrinsic qualities would suggest. Their role as social symbols and media for symbolism is discussed against an outline model of social and political developments of the 6th century. One of the most striking patterns to emerge is the circumscribed distribution of the latest (Phase 3) brooches, confined to the Anglian province of material culture. Within this, brooches of group XXIII, stylistically the latest and carrying triple-strand interlace and animal ornament which may be attributed to Style II rather than Style I, cluster in North Lincolnshire. These appear to represent a late northern production and may suggest the local adoption of a new symbolism but the retention of a particular form of display which had been abandoned in other parts of England.

The classification and chronology thus provide a relatively secure framework for the consideration of social dimensions of material culture, and the study illuminates inter-regional cultural contacts within England and overseas, provides important insights into cultural processes at a number of levels, and provokes questions which may be addressed through a combination of other strands of material-cultural evidence. The scope of

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discussion is impressive but the analysis of social and political context occasionally lacks depth, sometimes having more the character of a commentary which raises research issues rather than engaging directly with the questions raised by the material culture patterning. Discussion of the social identity of those buried with great square-headed brooches might have benefited from a larger comparative sample than the two cemeteries used, and from a wider and more systematic comparison with other material culture items which may have had a similar symbolic function; consideration of great square-headed brooches as one element of the material culture repertoire, and the choices which may have governed selection of this rather than other vehicles of symbolic display, might also inform patterns of chronological development and regional variation. It is also the case that the discussion sometimes seems to ignore relevant recent publications. However, it must be emphasized that the text was finished and submitted for publication in 1987, with only limited revision since. The ten years between submission and publication have seen important work on the chronology of Continental grave finds, the role of material culture in the construction and mediation of social identities, and the social, economic and political structures of the 6th century in England, which would reinforce the analysis presented here.

It would be wrong to be overly critical of so meticulous and valuable a study of a single material culture type on the grounds that it is insufficiently inclusive of other forms, and unfair to quibble with a text as a product of its time. None of these points detracts significantly from the quality and importance of this study, which will rapidly become indispensable as a primary point of reference. Leeds’s Corpus stood as the standard reference for the best part of half a century and one may feel that this impressive work of scholarship deserves a similar longevity. However, as the author himself emphasizes, this is not a permanent statement and both classificatory groups and elements of interpretation may change with new material and new perspectives. With the advent of the World Wide Web and increasing opportunities for the digital dissemination of data it is possible to believe that the days of static printed Corpora are limited, and that the future belongs to actively curated digital databases. With this in mind it is impossible not to express some reservations over the price of this volume and the reproduction of some figures as, for example, figures 12a, 21d–f and 33c where important detail is unclear or blacked out.

Christopher Scull


The phenomenon known as the ‘Final Phase’ of the Early Anglo-Saxon practice of furnished burial has newly become the focus of widespread and substantial research, work which will be greatly advanced by the welcome appearance of these two monographs. The Final Phase was first defined by E. T. Leeds, in the Rhind Lectures of 1935, largely under the inspiration of T. C. Lethbridge’s then recent discoveries and publication of Final-phase cemeteries and graves at Burwell, Holywell Row and Shudy Camps.3 Between then and

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now, the most substantial, and rightly much referred to, contribution to the discussion of the phenomenon has been Miranda Hyslop's study linked to the report of the excavation of a pair of cemeteries at Chamberlain's Barn, Leighton Buzzard.\(^4\) Meanwhile, the completion in the early 1980s of the publication of the 1939 discoveries at Sutton Hoo cleared the way for the new research and excavation programme at that site directed by Martin Carver from 1983 onwards. This, indeed, was the immediate background to Helen Geake's Ph.D. thesis from York, now published by BAR. It is not being malicious or scornful, but simply pertinent to note that, despite the laudable determination of the Sutton Hoo Research Project to have a research agenda of answerable questions,\(^5\) the excavations there have definitively settled few if any substantial historical questions and have rather inspired ever broader speculative discussion; the current momentum in Final Phase studies, meanwhile, has largely been motivated by uncoordinated, unpredicted, and in a significant sense uncontrolled events and discoveries, all of them in the field: work on early Anglo-Saxon urban sites in Ipswich, London and Southampton, and the analysis of recently excavated cemeteries, such as Castledyke, and Edix Hill, Cambridgeshire.\(^6\)

Helen Geake set out in her thesis not merely to review and establish the evidential basis for studies of the Final Phase, but also, since she boldly avers that 'much of the basic work of identification and description' has been done, to offer an historical interpretation of the material-cultural phenomena and changes of this period. The crucial question is self-evident: how well do we actually know the pattern of material-cultural change at this time? The thesis is in fact enmeshed in chronological problems of a magnitude that are not fully appreciated. The attempt to introduce the concept of a 'Conversion Period' in preference to the familiar Final Phase should, I think, be resisted. The period is defined 'as the time period covered by process of conversion to Christianity in England'. So far as we know, this began in earnest in the 590s. For some reason, it ends for Geake with the beginning of a Viking Period c. 850. In effect, therefore, she has defined her field of study from the outset by absolute dates derived from historical events whose relationship to the archaeological record is surprisingly obscure. Geake herself makes a very effective point about the lack of obvious correlation between religion and burial practice in her opening chapter.

Actually what Geake reviews is (with minor exceptions) the Final Phase as conventionally understood. A starting date of c. 600 for this phase is an old convention that has been a matter of controversy for many years now, and no new evidence is proffered in its support. One could be forgiven, indeed, for suggesting, in view of the critical and dismissive approach to most attempts to date material reviewed in Chapter 2 of this book, that it is the sheer absence of any assessable foundation for such a date that allows it to survive.\(^7\) Geake can be excused for not being aware, when the thesis was written, that high-precision radiocarbon dating is now a powerful technique for fine dating in the Final Phase,\(^8\) but to adduce that 'Style II docs not appear on classic Anglo-Saxon sixth-century metalwork such as cruciform, square-headed or saucer brooches' is a circular argument in absolute-chronological terms; here and elsewhere, the paucity of reference to

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\(^7\) See, however, the review of F. Siegmund, *Meroaingerzeit am Niederrhein*, this volume, pp. 314–16.

\(^8\) Scull and Bayliss, op. cit. in note 6.
overseas dating sequences is conspicuous. The necessary and familiar caveats concerned
with estimating dates by gold fineness are rehearsed, but the reliance on the rare coin-
dated burials seems not to recognize the degree to which typology and gold fineness
underpin the relevant numismatic datings. And despite awareness of methodological
criticisms, too much reliance is placed on the chronological significance of a set of limited
and unconvincing seriation diagrams (tabs. 2.1, 2.2 and 4.1); in the former, the regional
contrast between the two ends is not adequately considered; in the latter, six out of the
thirteen artefact-types are single occurrences and thus not seriable, while position in the
table for the eight grave groups is governed primarily by the presence or absence of the
very broad category ‘monochrome bead’.

Altogether, then, the more interpretative suggestions about 7th-century change come
across looking rather premature, and one is left wishing that the author had undertaken
more detailed basic research before trying to paint the big picture. Helen Geake’s
concluding claim, that Mediterranean material culture was somehow directly imitated in
7th-century (especially later 7th-century) England in a way that differs from the
contemporary Continent, is interesting, and evidently a supportable one, if perceptibly
exaggerated as proposed here; but the work on tracing this trend chronologically and
geo graphically, and indeed corroborating the point, remains to be done. The positive
aspect of this book, of course, is that the bulk of what it contains provides a very solid
platform for such research to be based upon. One can, inevitably, argue over individual
points in the detailed survey of artefact-types (Chapter 4) — and even note with
bewilderment the refusal to undertake any study of the most common artefact-type by far,
the knife — but this conspectus is an unparalleled reference work, with many useful
observations, particularly, in my view, on the necklaces and belt-associated items. The
gazetteer of sites similarly supersedes Audrey Meaney’s catalogue published in 1964 in
many ways, although presentationally there are a number of regrettable shortcomings here
that really ought to have been picked up on before publication. No bibliographical
references pre-Meaney are given, so the gazetteer is effectively unusable without a copy of
Meaney’s Gazetteer; no explanation is given of the completely digitized grid references,
lacking the usual National Grid 100,000-m square letters; the current location of the
material from cemeteries is not recorded; the term ‘doubtful’ is liberally used to cover all
sorts of uncertainties relating to sites. One does not gladly note flaw after flaw in a
publication one makes a great deal of use of, but it is precisely because this is such a useful
and important survey that one becomes acutely aware of how it could have been improved
by experienced editorial advice.

For detailed basic research on the Final Phase, the publication of the Castledyke
South cemetery makes accessible an invaluable set of data and much useful discussion.
The cemetery has still only partly been excavated, the proportion recorded being estimated
as roughly between a quarter and a half of its full extent. The excavated record (from 1939
to 1990) concerns 227 identified individuals and 196 recognized graves. The date range of
the cemetery appears to have covered most, if not all, of the 6th and 7th centuries, thus
starting before, and continuing into, the Final Phase. Although the cemetery is character­
ized by what the authors suggest is an unusually high degree of intercutting of graves,
interesting grave structures such as associated posts and burnt areas could be observed,
and plausible suggestions made about the organization and development of the cemetery.
The catalogue of the graves is straightforward, accurate and easily usable; the grave plans
and drawings of grave goods are somewhat simple in style, but perfectly adequate.

The major topics taken up for printed discussion are the generally well-preserved
skeletal evidence and the finds from the graves, while the whole report is prefaced and
concluded by a pair of very astute essays by Kevin Leahy, setting the material in its
regional context (the obscure Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Lindsey), and discussing the
research implications of the finds and analyses respectively. Analysis of the skeletons suggests that this was the burial site of a working community, elsewhere estimated at an average size of about 60, enjoying reasonably robust health, good nutrition, and freedom from violence. Although the discussion of the organization of the cemetery touches upon possible family groups, this is, disappointingly, not taken up here in the discussion of possibly heritable characteristics. Even more frustratingly there is no index of such features (e.g. metopism), either here or in the microfiche, and the information presumably has to be retrieved by trawling through the entire catalogue of human bone.

The discussion of the finds is consistently clear, reliable, and generally up-to-date. Especially important items included here are a rare sample in print of Seamus Ross’s work on Anglo-Saxon pins, a very effective study of textiles and clothing by Penelope Walton Rogers, and interesting discussions of a boar’s tusk (?) buckle, what appear to be ear rings — a disputed artefact category (cf. Geake) — and a possible drinking horn. The paucity of shields from the Castledyke burials is remarkable. The apparent re-use of men’s weapons as weaving battens deposited in female graves is usefully discussed (in fact there is more evidence in support of this from other sites), although it is then rather odd that only in passing is any connexion made with the curious ‘sword’ from the female grave II of 1939, whose closest parallels are otherwise suggested to be Iron-age. Within the extensive report on the pottery there is some discussion of the suggested Charnwood Forest, Leicestershire, origin of inclusions in one fabric-type, although it is unfortunate that one then has to go to the microfiche for the forms and distribution of this ware. Personally I am much in sympathy with, and greatly welcome, Kevin Leahy’s honest expression of frank incredulity that pottery of such simple forms was being traded over long distances from the Charnwood Forest area at this time, although as his and Alan Vince’s contributions make quite clear, there is a phenomenon here that urgently requires fuller research and explanation.

The least successful part of the report, in my view, is what is called an analysis of the social structure, using London’s Institute of Archaeology’s SOCISTAT programme, which in essence (we are told) scores the wealth of graves on the basis of the ‘status’ of objects included within them, calculated by a formula based upon the frequency and associations of the object-types defined. The results are simply not very convincing, particularly in relation to the women’s graves, and the reason appears to be that, on the one hand, the sample is too small, while at the same time the variety of artefact-types encountered is too great. Thus we have firesteels implausibly ranked higher than hanging bowls. All this is fully recognized by Jane Brenan, who wrote this section, although she ends up loyally defending the results as ‘meaningful and structured . . . clear and precise’. Foremost, however, amongst the ‘interesting points for discussion’ that she claims the exercise has thrown up must be just what sort of sample of Anglo-Saxon burials, if any, this programme, developed to analyse Iron-age graves, may best be suited to.

Adverse observations such as this must be expressed, not only because they are valid, but primarily because they are part of the critical review of the subject essential to its maintenance and development. Whatever shortcomings may be found in them, both of these books constitute substantial contributions to the advancement of the study of the Final Phase, and will be used and referred to, to their authors’ credit, for years to come. They are certainly essential items in any library of early Anglo-Saxon archaeology.

JOHN HINES

This volume of nineteen essays dealing with the Early Medieval Period in Munster, Ireland’s southernmost province, is the result of a May 1995 conference held at University College, Cork, in honour of the work of the late Professor M. J. O’Kelly.

The excellent and authoritative essays in this book cover a wide variety of topics. These range in type from traditional ones such as ogham stones, the introduction of Christianity to Munster, High Crosses, milling, Romanesque architecture and Viking-age silver hoards and towns to more daring ones dealing with the application of archaeological theory to the study of Early Medieval Munster and the effects of nationalism on Irish archaeology. It is extraordinary how suspicious many Irish archaeologists, all trained as empiricists, continue to be about the whole question of theoretical archaeology. Furthermore, it is even more interesting to note the vehement denial by the older generation of Irish archaeologists that nationalism had any effect on the development of Irish archaeology. Empiricism by its very definition regards itself as objective and really above influences emanating from contemporary society. It can be hurtful, therefore, to archaeologists of the empiricist tradition if someone suggests otherwise as it undermines the whole foundation of their work.

A continual theme throughout the book is the importance of interdisciplinary studies for the understanding of Early Medieval Munster. In this regard, there are some very interesting articles by palaeoecologists in the volume dealing with the nature of the landscape and economy of Munster during the period. Clearly, co-operation between various disciplines interested in the past is the way forward for our understanding of all periods in Ireland. Nancy Edwards, however, in the concluding chapter to the book, was right to remind historians especially that archaeological evidence can help them understand their specialist period or research subject. There is a perception amongst many archaeologists of different nationalities, aired recently during a session at the Kalamazoo medieval conference, that too often historians are dismissive of archaeological work that disagrees with their findings from documentary sources. Nevertheless, one clear shortcoming of the book was that no historian wrote a historical overview of the period under review in it.

It is curious that only one essay in the volume is given over to a detailed analysis of secular settlement in Early Medieval Munster. This is surprising given the large amount of surviving evidence for Early Medieval settlement in the Irish countryside today. Surely more could have been said about this whole subject in the book. Certain contributors to the volume clearly believe that somehow Munster is of more importance to the study of Early Medieval Ireland than the other three provinces. I do not really believe this to be the case and perhaps it could be argued that the book is somewhat regionally obsessed. For example, pristine Early Medieval landscapes, which include numerous wetland sites within them, seem to survive in certain parts of Connacht. A huge amount of important information about Early Medieval Ireland could be gained from an archaeological study in these areas as well.

There was some criticism of the Discovery Programme and its research agenda in the introductory chapter to the volume. It would seem to me, however, that the latter institution’s forthcoming multi-period lake settlement project will yield much important new information about the nature of settlement and landscape in Early Medieval Ireland. I also predict that my own project on Later Medieval rural settlement will also contribute to the understanding of Early Medieval Irish society, especially its later stages. Furthermore, the first tier of Discovery Programme projects, now coming to an end, has produced much that is of interest to Early Medieval scholars, despite their focus on later prehistory. It is
unfair to imply that somehow the work of the Discovery Programme has been and will be of no relevance to the archaeological study of Early Medieval Ireland. Nevertheless, I wholeheartedly applaud the editors of the book, Mick Monk and John Sheehan, for bravely stating in this first chapter what they perceive to be the problems associated with Early Medieval archaeology in particular and Irish archaeology in general. Honest, forthright articles such as this are sorely needed to steer Irish archaeology properly into the future. One overall impression gained from this opening chapter is that many Irish archaeologists, regardless of exact employment status, are not publishing their work in any meaningful intellectual way. Possibly one way around this dilemma in the Republic at least, for all periods in Irish archaeology and not mentioned in the book, is to create a situation at university level where full-time Ph.D.s are funded and where post-doctoral fellowships lasting a number of years are also made available. This type of sustained funded research for young scholars will eventually lead to the production of many more comprehensive articles, excavation reports and books offering overviews and new data on Early Medieval Ireland and other periods.

Despite certain small shortcomings, I believe this volume of essays to be a great contribution to the whole study of Early Medieval Ireland and not just Munster. It should be essential reading for all scholars of the period. The book also deals with issues that are of importance to Irish archaeology in general.

KIERAN O'CONOR


In the past few years scholarly attention has begun to focus once again on shrines and relics, a neglected field of study for much of this century. A general book to replace Wall’s comprehensive but out-dated *Shrines of British Saints* (1905) has long been overdue. St John Hope, who amassed copious notes for a major work on the topic early this century, never completed the project. Ben Nilson’s volume goes some way towards filling the gap, for its scope is broader than the title implies, as indicated by the otherwise curious choice of a cover photograph showing not a ‘cathedral shrine’ but that of Edward the Confessor.

The opening chapters provide a fairly comprehensive survey of English shrines: their origins and form, their architectural setting, and the way they were used by pilgrims and maintained by the clergy. All this serves to introduce an analysis of medieval accounts relating to shrine offerings, which have fortunately survived at certain cathedrals, and it is here, in particular, that the author breaks new ground.

One of the major challenges for writers in this field has been to discern underlying patterns in a wide variety of cults. Few major English cults followed the idealized course that Nilson outlines in his opening chapter on saint-making. Indeed, of the 30 or so cults comprising the main focus of his research, two-thirds are ‘traditional’ or ‘unofficial’ ones, established long before ‘official’ canonization procedures were established. Nevertheless, Nilson is able to demonstrate that later medieval saint-making and veneration followed recognizable similar patterns throughout England, though some mention as historical background of the Continental cults from which such practices derived would have been useful.

There is much of interest in these opening chapters, both for the general reader and by way of an introduction to the subject for those who wish to pursue a more profound study. Chapters 1–2, on the origins and forms of shrines, are particularly useful, as is the
The analysis of shrine offerings was evidently the major project in the doctoral thesis from which this book developed. This is material for the specialist rather than the general reader, but it is useful to have the data available both in numerical and graphical form. One of the most interesting features to emerge is the consistency of the pattern found at the various cult centres from which such data are available: notably, the rise in income in the post-Black Death years followed by a decline until the Reformation.

It is disappointing that (despite the acknowledged help of a research assistant and proof reader) a book of such potential should be spoiled by numerous mistakes. The main text is free of so-called ‘printer’s errors’, thanks, presumably, to automated spell-checking. But it is in the notes and apparatus that errors abound. English place names are inconsistent: ‘St Albans’ does not require an apostrophe (unlike St Alban’s Abbey); ‘Winchcombe’ and ‘Winchcombe’ are both known these days as Winchcombe. St Quitere must surely be St Quitterie, the martyr of Aire-sur-l’Adour, rather than St Quentin. There seems little point in retaining antiquarian spellings, especially if they are further misspelled: for example, ‘Kinewophus’ is Cenwulf, ‘Ethelwolphus’ is Æthelwulf. Some proper names are unnecessarily duplicated. It is not clear from the main text that Audoenus and Ouen are one and the same saint in Latin and French guise; the two are separately listed in the index.

Foreign languages fare badly. Errors abound in French passages, and there are major problems with Latin, with howlers such as a reference to a feretra, foramina (foramina is already a plural), memorium for memoriam, apostororum for apostolorum, texts called the gesta pontificium and the chronica pontijicium, and custodius for custos (custodi in the source text is of course a dative).

The index contains spellings such as ‘Litchfield’ and ‘jewellery’ among other errors. Bibliographical references fare no better: the 1093 translation of St Swithun’s relics of course occurs in the Winchester annals rather than in the Annales de Wigmoria. Well-known scholars’ names are misspelled including ‘Altam’ for Altham, ‘P. Browne’ for P. Brown, and ‘Cochester’ for Colchester. Some page numbers in the references are incorrect. It is surprising that such unscholarly mistakes were not detected when the work was at thesis stage. All these errors (and there are more) should be put right in any subsequent printings of an otherwise useful contribution to the literature of saints’ cults.

JOHN CROOK


The best of German archaeological research is of a quality and substance that we all should envy, and desire to emulate. Frank Siegmund’s magnum opus is of just such a standard. It is a study of material, primarily from cemeteries, of the 5th to 8th centuries in the area of Nordrhein-Westfalen approximately from Bonn north to the Dutch border
near Arnhem and Nijmegen, and westwards to Aachen. A few well-known sites within this area — above all Krefeld-Gellep — have already been, or are being published elsewhere; for anyone using this book it is important to grasp Siegmund’s distinction between his Arbeitgebiet (the whole area) and Aufnahmgebiet: essentially the material catalogued and illustrated here for the first time. From this area Siegmund works on a collection of at least 164 securely dated and localized sites, yielding more than 1,500 usable furnished graves. These are detailed in a massive, but perfectly clear catalogue.

Siegmund’s research undertakes the essential primary tasks of archaeology for this period: establishing a thorough and usable conspectus of the artefacts, organized in typological terms, and establishing a fine chronology of artefact-types and thus a range of other cultural practices — forms of costume; burial practices — on this basis. The interest and importance of the various topics consequently discussed in what are rather modestly called the Nachbetrachtungen should not be underestimated. The review of the 5th-century situation in this area, as a Roman province became Frankish, is especially informative, with a fascinating discussion of the apparently changing size of the burying community represented at Krefeld-Gellep. At the other end of the period, an earlier inception of Badort Ware than the conventional view is proposed, and certain implications within the find-material for trade, and the function of coins, are also discussed.

It is, however, the (from a British point of view) fantastically detailed and very robust-looking chronological scheme for this area for which this book will be a cornerstone of European archaeology for as far as one can foresee. The chronology consists of a sequence of eleven phases, each constituted by a particular cluster of artefact-types. Necessarily preceding the chronological analysis is a detailed presentation of the typology, in relation to which practically all examples of the artefacts found within the Aufnahmgebiet are illustrated in more than 200 plates. The discussion of the artefact-types is consistently clear, factual and comprehensive. The particular chronological significance of belt-fittings and pottery that Bohner found more than forty years ago is confirmed: while the full typological account of these and other categories can only really be treated as a reference source, to be consulted for specific research purposes, there are useful general introductions and discussions or summaries for more general reading. Particular attention should also be drawn to the discussion of brooch-sets that concludes the section on women’s dress accessories, and to an authoritative analysis of the typology of saxes, defining the long, broad, and narrow types Langsax, Breitsax and Schmalsax.

Within the section reviewing the find-material it is, however, the analysis of the beads that ought to be appreciated above all others. This uses innovative techniques of quantitative analysis (correspondence analysis) of a kind that have only really become practical with the widespread availability of personal computers: similar work either has recently been or is being done on bead-combinations elsewhere, in southern Germany, Scandinavia, and England. Siegmund is able to distinguish nine different ‘combination-groups’ amongst the bead-sets, which apparently form a chronological sequence. A complication in the bead history of this area is that at the earliest stage there is a sharp contrast between Roman types and Germanic (Frankish) types, which merge into a single series at a later stage (in the 6th century).

There is much in this bead chronology of direct interest to Anglo-Saxon archaeologists. To some degree, both the same types of glass bead and the same relative-chronological sequence as Siegmund displays are known in 6th- and 7th-century Anglo-Saxon archaeology. At the same time there are also substantial discrepancies: namely types which are common in one of the areas that do not occur significantly, if at all, in the other. One must therefore be cautious in carrying Siegmund’s dates over to England, pending an adequate explication of the relationship between the two areas in this respect (which will have to include a full understanding of the situation in northern France too). Nonetheless
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it should be noted that there are certain types of polychrome glass bead that we find associated with later Anglo-Saxon great square-headed brooches — i.e. in the latest phase of the ‘Migration Period’ — which would not be dated before the end of the 6th or early 7th century (c. 585–610) on the Continent. This is the most, perhaps the only, concrete basis yet for dating the Migration Period/Final Phase transition to c. A.D. 600 in at least part of England.

The typology is the basis of a chronology again constructed using correspondence analysis. The eleven phases are assigned approximate, successive, calendrical start and end dates, as far as possible by reference to coin-dates and dendrochronology. The result is thoroughly convincing. The whole sequence covers the years c. A.D. 400–740, and the phases thus cover an average of just over 30 years each. In fact the proposed length of distinguishable phases falls to as little as fifteen years in the intense period of change of the middle to later 6th century; the longest phases postulated are in the generally obscure and thinly represented 5th century. Within this section, the degree of attention paid to chronology (= ‘horizontal stratigraphy’) is the one aspect of the book where one feels that, more than anything else, a peculiarly German archaeological tradition is being respectfully observed. Nonetheless, a nice validation of the technique is produced by using it along with observation of precise artefactual detail in relation to the cemeteries of Pommershof and Iversheim to corroborate the seriation method in the face of the intense scepticism propounded by Haiko Steuer.

Altogether, this is an outstanding study of perhaps the most significant area of western Europe for immediately post-Roman archaeology. It is a publication that will be essential for serious archaeological research in this period from now on. It is important to appreciate that it represents the culmination of many decades of excavation, publication and research in the Rhineland, and that the entire material could not possibly be presented in a single volume: the book needs to be used in conjunction with the other literature. For the reviewer, it feels simply impertinent to offer any sort of evaluation of this magnificent achievement. If anything could be thought still to be wanted, it might just be guidance not only as to why but also how one should use the book. It is a work of international importance, and it is vital that it be as accessible as possible to readerships more at home in the other principal international languages of European scholarship, English and French. It is a privilege to have the opportunity to write a review that might be of some use in that way.

JOHN HINES


Alexander Koch’s heavy two-volume corpus of Merovingian-period bow brooches from the western Frankish realm is another important and very German contribution to European archaeology. The area surveyed is northern France and the Low Countries, in fact with very few relevant find-spots south and west of the Somme. From this region, Koch analyses a total of 716 brooch-finds, 261 of them from closed contexts (all graves). Practically all of the first volume is devoted to a typological presentation of the brooches, while Part Two contains, in addition to copious and excellent illustrations, more interpretative studies of the material. These include chronological and economic/technical discussions, but the greatest effort goes into considering the ethnic significance of the material and its historical implications.
The guidance given the reader on how to use the typology is sparse. The 89 pages devoted to more than 80 different sub-types of radiate-head brooch, for instance, have just eight lines of general introduction. Anyone wishing to locate further brooches in relation to this classification will therefore have to have recourse to the tried and convenient method of working through the illustrations to find the closest fit and then going back to the relevant text. Something that soon becomes very clear, in fact, is the degree to which this work is intended to provide a complement (and indeed compliment) to Herbert Kühn’s essentially pre-War study of the bow brooches of the Rhine province. In practice, of course, Koch’s work must now supersede Kühn’s, by reviewing and updating the material so thoroughly.

Such deep respect for long-established traditions and authorities within German archaeology permeates Koch’s approach. The discussion of social structure, for instance, simply applies Rainer Christlein’s ‘quality groupings’ from his study of Marktoberdorf (published 1966) — here, indeed, informatively combined with consideration of the materials and craftsmanship of the brooches concerned. The chronological scheme adopted is based on Hermann Ament’s sketches of the 1970s, not Frank Siegmund’s from his doctoral dissertation of 1989. Koch’s work is immensely thorough, but in a conservative, really old-fashioned way, and at the expense of width of reference. From the British point of view, for instance, it is interesting how Koch recognizes that Günther Haseloff (whom he otherwise follows closely) underestimated the Anglo-Saxon role in mediating Scandinavian brooch-forms to the Continent, but his knowledge of Anglo-Saxon brooches is based mostly on Nils Aberg and E. T. Leeds’s publications rather than more up-to-date studies that have been widely known and accessible since the early 1980s.

For an author writing in depth on a rich and previously largely unknown collection of material from France, the fact that he also, conversely, radically takes issue with the views of Michel Kazanski and Patrick Perin on particular questions cannot go unnoticed. A mature and properly conducted debate is of course always to be welcomed, but Koch would carry votes more easily if his approach were both broader and more flexible. These differences arise particularly in connection with the ethnic marking implicit in the wearing of certain brooch-types, on which Koch takes an extraordinarily stark line: Wenn sich eine fränkische Germanin Bügelfibeln leisten konnte, so trug sie fränkische Fibeln! (author’s emphasis: ‘If a Germanic Frankish woman could afford bow brooches, she wore Frankish brooches!’). This point is insisted upon, directly or indirectly, throughout the chapters on costume, social significance, the ethnic meaning of the brooches, and the Frankish settlement. But there are simply no new arguments offered in its support — only the force of conviction.

Nonetheless, the position Koch champions is neither outré nor irrational, and is only paradoxically radical in the sense that such articulate conservatism is rarely encountered in the archaeological discussion of ethnic symbolism and migration. The lasting achievement of the tremendous amount of work that underlies Koch’s corpus is that he has made the material accessible, within a familiar and practical chronological and classification framework. This is an invaluable conspectus of a rich range of archaeological evidence, and for that the publication is to be welcomed with gratitude and enthusiasm.

JOHN HINES


*Vikings in Scotland* offers rather more than the subtitle *An Archaeological Survey* suggests. While the focus of the book is heavily archaeological, the authors have adopted an
interdisciplinary approach, combining archaeological material with documentary and place-name evidence. In this they follow the general trend of Viking studies in Scotland in recent years, and particularly the example of Barbara Crawford's *Scandinavian Scotland* (Leicester 1987). *Vikings in Scotland* is clearly intended to complement Crawford's book rather than replace it. Readers are referred to Crawford for detailed discussion of the documentary evidence, while sections of the bibliography are explicitly largely confined to works published since *Scandinavian Scotland*, on the clear assumption that readers will have the earlier book to hand. This approach is sensible, and the two books together provide a solid foundation for the study of Norse settlement in Scotland.

If the scope of the book goes beyond archaeology, the archaeology also goes beyond a mere survey. Several chapters do present surveys of material, some arranged geographically (three chapters of regional surveys), others by type (graves, settlements, etc.). However, there are also more discursive chapters, including one on the interpretation of pagan Norse graves, and another on the Norse economy. This last is particularly valuable, since it makes accessible a significant body of recent research on environmental archaeology. This research has added considerably to our understanding of the nature of the Norse settlements and the lifestyles of their inhabitants. The bulk of this material has been published elsewhere, but often in a very technical format, whereas here it is presented in a manner both informative and comprehensible to the general reader.

This combination of information and readability is characteristic of the book as a whole, and contributes greatly to the book’s success. The survey format means that the authors have to present a large body of evidence, with little space for detail, but information on individual finds is generally clear and concise, often including useful discussion of the circumstances under which the finds were made. This interest in past antiquarianism is typical of Graham-Campbell’s work, and has the value of disentangling individual finds, the origins of which are sometimes confused in earlier works. The survey also often contextualizes the material surveyed by presenting parallels with other material both in Scotland and elsewhere, thus giving some indication of the significance of the individual finds. Discussion is necessarily mostly rather brief, but probably sufficient to satisfy readers with only a very general interest, while equally there is enough to stimulate many readers to wish to find out more. Here the reader will benefit from a thorough bibliography, arranged on a chapter by chapter basis rather than through individual references although, as mentioned, parts of the bibliography merely supplement the extensive bibliography of Crawford's *Scandinavian Scotland*.

Inevitably in a work of this sort, coverage is sometimes uneven, reflecting to some extent the authors’ personal areas of interest, which will not necessarily coincide precisely with those of the individual reader. Thus it was disappointing to the reviewer to see the Eigg boat-stems dismissed in three sentences, despite their rarity. While rightly pointing to the uncertainty of their dating, the authors give no indication of why these stems have been ascribed to the Viking Age, in marked contrast with the detailed parallels given for a variety of items of jewellery and other artefacts.

A number of other criticisms, equally minor, can also be made. The distinction which the authors draw between ‘Viking’ and ‘Norse’ (although not in the title), with ‘Viking’ limited to those Norsemen directly involved in piratical activities, is a valid one, but not always very clear, especially as the authors sometimes use ‘Viking’ as an abbreviation for ‘Viking-age’, and thus to convey the date rather than the nature of activities or settlement. The citation in illustration references of one publication only by publisher, not by author or title, is hardly helpful, and a handful of typographical errors (all in Scandinavian words or names) escaped correction. Slightly more heinous is the attribution of an account of the sack of Lindisfarne in 793 to Alcuin, rather than to a somewhat freely edited version of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, an error all the more noticeable since the authors correctly
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describe this quotation as 'one of the most commonly cited for the period'. One may also criticize the complete omission of the admittedly complex ounceland/pennyland assessment system as an index of Norse settlement, since its distribution is roughly co-extensive with both archaeological and toponymic evidence of settlement.

These criticisms do not seriously detract, however, from the value of an important new publication. Vikings in Scotland makes a wealth of material available to the general public, and certainly deserves to become a standard text for students with an interest in Norse Scotland.

GARETH WILLIAMS


The excavations in Dublin which began in the 1960s and continued into the 1980s were of crucial importance in altering our perspectives of the development of urban life in Ireland. They were also critical in the development of field archaeology within the Republic, and in the consideration of processing large collections of material from excavations. In learning the lessons of organization and financing it is inevitable that, as in Britain and many other European countries there have been problems and delays in the publication of the results of these endeavours. It is heartening to see a steady stream of volumes now issuing forth from the National Museum of Ireland and the Royal Irish Academy. Only one previous volume of environmental evidence has been published, but this contribution on the botanical evidence is of much more than specialist interest. It is with these wider implications in mind that this reviewer can make comment.

The whole volume concentrates on the samples from plot 11 in Fishamble Street, where over a period of 60 years there was a significant accumulation of material before it was abandoned in the early 11th century. The houses on this plot were of Wallace's Type I, the most common form found in Dublin and so the most appropriate for this first detailed study. The houses are briefly described, though fuller details can be found in the published account of the buildings. There then follows a listing of the samples taken, with phase plans showing from whence they came. This is particularly important, since the Type I houses, rectangular wattle structures with rounded corners placed end-on to the street, have distinct internal subdivisions. The sampling therefore allowed investigation of conditions and possible activities within the front entrance lobby and corner compartments either side, the living area around a hearth with bedding or benches either side of this, and the rear lobby with corner compartments. A total of 94 different plants was identified.

The results of the analyses are reported first of all with regard to the construction of features such as roof and benches within the buildings. The floors were kept relatively clean, with a layer of wood chips, and sometimes sand, used to provide a soft layer. The benches were held in place by wattling, and had a base layer of sods on which a thick brushwood layer acted as a mattress. This was finished off with a layer of straw. When houses were demolished, the sod roofing as sometimes used to make up the ground on which the next building was constructed.

A discussion of the plant species, with the implications of their presence in the samples, is offered in a separate chapter. Particular attention is given to hazel and flax. Other environmental material is also briefly described and commented upon. The number of each species recovered from the selected contexts is set out in large tables at the end of the volume, covering a total of 38 pages.
The discussion chapter of the volume is of very great interest to all those interested in urban living conditions, provisioning of towns and the relationship of town and country. There is a useful review of previous European studies of botanical material, before concentrating on Dublin itself. There is some discussion of the population of Dublin based on the density of structures from the excavations, and the environment of the city. The main thrust of the chapter, however, is consideration of the supply of the city. This is reviewed with regard to topography, resources and potential land use so that potential resources can be compared with the demand stimulated by the known craft activities and diet of the Dublin’s inhabitants. The use of the mountains 10 km south of the town can be illustrated through the use of heather, bilberries and pine, though this area may not have been under direct Viking control. Grassland and managed woodland must have lain to the west and north of the town, though at what distance and under whose management cannot at present be ascertained. One example of the scale of provision is that 2,700 ha of managed woodland would have been required for domestic fuel alone. It is from such an area that another fundamental requirement of the town was collected — that of moss; perhaps the figures which will linger longest in this reviewer’s mind are the computed use of 10 g of moss for wiping by each of the 5,000 latrine users each day, requiring an annual demand by Dublin of 15-20 tons.

This study shows the enormous potential of palaeobotanical study in the reconstruction of past environments and resource utilization. Its potential to link the site with its region is most exciting. This has particular significance in Dublin where there is considerable debate regarding the extent and nature of Viking control beyond the town itself. It is a pity that only one plot has been investigated.

This well-presented volume is a worthy addition to this prestigious series, but even more than most of its fellows should be the trigger for future large scale studies, rather than the definitive statement for a generation. Questions can now be asked about the degree of uniformity in activities and nature of supply along the properties of Fishamble Street, and indeed with other parts of the town. Can more distinct changes over time be identified? These and other questions can only be answered with further research on the samples collected within the campaign being reported on in this series of volumes, and more intensive work such as use of high magnification on the vegetative material. The presence of extensive collections of insect remains is noted in the book, and should promote research on such material, as has been the case in York, for example. Research agendas should also be formulated for new data collected during current and future excavations in the city, as clearly this is a rich source of insight into Viking Dublin.

HAROLD MYTUM


This volume originated in a doctoral thesis, a genesis which the author freely admits is quite self-evident in its style and content (p. 7). The author has taken an area, in this case the medieval honor of Dudley, and conducted an analytical review of the evidence for the period between 1066 and 1322 which ranges widely across a variety of historical and archaeological evidence.

The volume follows a predictable format. The Introduction sets out the main ideas behind the volume, and includes a short review of the intellectual debate surrounding the
nature of the relationship between lordship and the landscape, and a brief review of the nature of the evidence, both archaeological and historical. The next three chapters, which make up nearly half of the volume, are almost exclusively historical in approach and content. Chapter 1 considers the origins of the honor, focusing almost exclusively on the evidence from Domesday Book and, refreshingly for a heavily historical narrative, is comprehensively complemented by maps. In particular, those showing the distribution of royal and church lands (fig. 1.4) and other lordships (fig. 1.5) in the West Midlands show clearly the coherent way in which the holdings of different lords clustered together, a pattern which seemed to this reviewer to hint at some potential for further research into the pre-Conquest estate pattern, a subject beyond the scope of this volume. Chapter 2 presents an extensive review of the post-Domesday tenurial history of the honor up to 1323 (this may be a mistake, as 1322 is the terminal date throughout the rest of the volume). This chapter is also well-illustrated, although some of the maps could have been reproduced at a smaller scale and placed two to a page, which would allow for easier comparison of the changing distribution of honorial holdings. It is followed by a chapter examining the feudal structure of the period in the honor, showing that even within an honor, which might be expected to be the epitome of the feudal system, vertical relationships within the social structure were rarely simple, predictable or unchangeable.

Chapters 4 to 10 cover subjects which by their nature lend themselves much more easily to a multidisciplinary approach using historical, archaeological and geographical evidence. Chapter 4 considers estate structure and exploitation establishing the essentially poor nature of much of the honorial land, which comprised significant tracts of moorland and woodland, and presents evidence showing stock-rearing, industrial activity and, increasingly, assarting to be particularly important to the honorial economy. Chapter 5 elegantly combines archaeological and historical evidence for castles in the honor and lays the foundations for a consideration of the role played by lordship in creating new residential foci in the landscape. This theme is taken up in Chapter 6, a short but thought-provoking review of the evidence for moated sites and their siting within the landscape. The evidence for the date of assarting is presented alongside that for the distribution of moats and although the possibility of a correlation is not strongly developed by the author, examples such as moat-free Wombourne where assarting occurred before the late 12th century, in comparison with Wolverhampton where late 13th-century assarting is associated with a high density of moated sites, seem to raise intriguing possibilities: it would be interesting to know the extent to which this correlation is sustained in other parishes of the honor. In Chapter 7 the role of lords in shaping the landscape is emphasized in the creation of parks, chases, warrens and fishponds where lordship is, unsurprisingly, seen to be central, although the role of the emerging gentry is also given some consideration. A similar conclusion is reached regarding markets and boroughs in the next chapter. Chapter 9 looks at the evidence for rural settlement, which is hampered somewhat by the apparent lack of earthwork sites. However, use of cartographic and documentary evidence allows the author some success in reconstructing the likely pattern of settlement in this region where dispersal is deduced to have been an historic constant. In considering whether lord or peasant determined the settlement pattern, the author finds previously advanced suggestions of planned settlements unconvincing (p. 139) and the influence of lords mostly indirect. In such a region as the honor of Dudley, he concludes, it is the natural environment which generally proves the over-riding factor. Chapter 10 considers the monastic church, interweaving archaeological evidence for the phasing of building at various sites with historical evidence. The author finds the monastic institutions within the honor to be of great concern to their lordly patrons (although the gentry were perhaps more outward-looking) but there is little discussion of this subject within a landscape context. The eleventh chapter, on the secular church, is likewise firmly focused on lordship,
rather than the landscape. A short final conclusion confirms the author’s view that in the honor, lordship was a subtle influence rather than a determining factor in the development of a landscape whose trajectory was to a large extent predestined by its natural environment. But most of this chapter in fact focuses on the nature and role of lordship in the honor, and in this it reflects the subtext throughout in much of the main body of the volume, where the study of the landscape is used essentially to help illuminate the nature of lordship, rather than vice versa.

Overall, the volume contains a wealth of useful detail, mostly rendered easily comprehensible to anyone unfamiliar with the region and/or the subject, although this helpful pitch is not entirely consistent. The introduction, for example, would surely have benefited from a simple definition of an honor, and West Midland counties could helpfully have been named on some maps (e.g. figs. 1.4 and 1.5), while on p. 102 a potentially very interesting table relating the incidence of moated sites to different soil types is rendered almost useless by omission of any clue as to the nature of the soils represented only by the soil association numbers. The illustrations, although mostly very pertinent and informative, are of variable quality, and the hachuring on fig. 5.3 is particularly poor. Notwithstanding niggles such as these, this is an extremely useful publication which includes a lot of well-digested and accessibly presented primary material and intelligent analysis which anyone interested in medieval lordship or the landscape should find fascinating and thought-provoking, both now and well into the future.

CARENZA LEWIS


Michael Thompson, well-known from a recent, stimulating study of medieval halls, has now published a synthesis of medieval bishops’ houses in England and Wales. Though a short account of written sources is given at the beginning, the book mainly deals with architectural remains and gives us a very useful conspectus of knowledge from 1133 to 1536. The writer takes great care to tell us that his purpose is not to compile a catalogue, or an exhaustive study but ‘to reach a coherent account of a fairly chaotic subject’ (p. xiii). The project is an ambitious and difficult exercise.

Having opportunely recalled that, at the time, about half of the cathedrals were monasteries and after having examined the bishops’ functions and way of life, the writer sketches out a typology which leads him to approach the subject chronologically and thematically. For the 12th and 13th centuries the author successively investigates the royal castles which the prelates recovered in the towns, then the episcopal palaces that they built near their cathedrals and the fortresses that a few of them erected in the country. The houses (‘inns’) that they erected in London were still used during the 14th and 15th centuries, but one characteristic of the later Middle Ages is the coming into bloom of the manorial way of life. This marked predilection of bishops toward the country and the tragic events that occurred then account for lengthy explanations about rural manor houses and licences to crenellate. A list of bishops’ houses by dioceses, complete with a summary and lengthy bibliography, and a catalogue of the episcopal licences to crenellate, are given in appendices and usefully add to the information. The approach is consistent and clearly organized. My only regret is that the perspective which prioritizes architectural remains leaves other aspects of 12th- and 13th-century manor houses too much in the dark.

The original topography of these sites usually escapes analysis. But, for the writer, it seems that only a few courtyards existed before the later Middle Ages, a time when that
Traces of the Templars
by George F. Tull

The Knights Templar were one of the most significant institutions of Medieval England. A powerful band of warrior-knights who owned vast tracts of land and were instrumental in the Crusades, their rise to power and wealth was followed by ruthless suppression, amidst allegations of heresy and black magic. Their lands were sequestered and their buildings were demolished, leaving only traces of their former presence in the English Landscape today.

Author George Tull has produced the first full examination of all the actual remains today of the various properties established by the Knights Templar in England. Armed with this guide to their whereabouts, the general researcher can see exactly what remains on the ground and relate it to its place in the history of the order.

It may be said of the Knights Templar that they were founded at a critical time for the history of Western civilisation - truly an idea whose time had come. Few historians today would argue with the premise that had there not been the Crusades, there might never have been an Order of the Temple.

Although it contains a great deal of information and speculation about the Order of the Temple in general (because where certainty is not possible, a reasonable theory is always better than leaving a blank) the main object of the book is simply to present, in readable form, as much information as can be found about the Templars in England, and what remains today, from Templecombe in Somerset to Temple Newsam in Yorkshire, even if only in the "Temple" element of English place names.
In practice, there are two main factors which prevent a building standing in an unaltered state for, say, six hundred years: one is the natural tendency of things to fall down, and the other is the remorseless march of fashion. It is part of the very nature of human existence, that what one man builds is no sooner completed, than another declares it out of fashion, a third redundant, and a fourth seeks to tear it down. Even such a landmark figure as Sir Christopher Wren, were he to return today, would only find eleven of his fifty-one churches intact. People built churches out of local materials, or whatever was to hand, and sometimes with limited knowledge, experimenting along the way. Sometimes the walls stayed up, sometimes, not. Add to this the fact that the taxation system favoured redevelopment, and that laws exist to prevent the repair of old buildings (see under “planning” and “listed buildings”), and it becomes a matter of amazement that not just a few samples, but a whole family of structures with a history commencing in the dark ages, has survived into a new millennium.

Unlike most authors on the subject, Owen Jordan, eschews the chronological approach and the battle of the styles. He is much more concerned with why the tower fell down than what period it belonged to. To read this book is to delve into deconstruction: to have the fabric of the English Church taken apart by an expert and re-assembled before your eyes. This book is intended to be a working handbook of English church architecture; a guide not only to what you can see, but what it is you are actually looking at, and in some cases where it can be found. For a long while, the world of ecclesiology and architectural history has been waiting for someone to take churches apart rather than simply catalogue their features in chronological order: what sets this guide apart is that, perhaps, having read it, you could - given the time, means, materials, and opportunity, go out and build a church, and even avoid the mistakes made by the medieval masons, and learn something along the way. But beware - the next person to come along will want to alter it!
sort of plan became widespread following practices used by lay lords. Then the only well-known disparity with the lay world are two-storeyed chapels. With regard to the main buildings, which are usually the best preserved and which have been extensively dug, the similarities with Continental layouts are striking. The oldest halls are classical two-storeyed hall blocks, with a sala and a chamber formed by a partition wall on the first floor. From the end of the 12th century and chiefly during the 13th century, the Insular tradition came first. These first-floor halls were often replaced by wider aisled halls. The smaller first-floor halls were preserved and became private quarters for the bishops. This alteration of a hall into a camera is sometimes plainly authenticated in written sources. This development did not affect Wales where first-floor halls were always preferred.

Thompson's study is systematic, based on broad sample, and his perspective is appealing. It opportunely reopens a discussion, taking the opposite view to the recent hypothesis of, among others, John Blair who lays the stress on courtyards from the 12th and 13th centuries and thinks that 'first-floor halls' are in fact private and residential camerae associated with open aisled-halls. Thompson's book stimulates reflection and invites us to go further. Good archaeological monographs are thin on the ground and historical studies, notably on palatial vocabulary, need more attention.

Another regret is that comparisons with northern France have not been investigated and included, for example, significant recent works on the archbishoprics of Rheims and Rouen. In the same way, recapitulative information (technical and graphical) about preserved and excavated halls and chapels would have been a good idea.

These are minor criticisms and do not detract from the interest of a work which has reached its objective. To sum up, this is a fine and very useful book, copiously illustrated, which collects sparse information in a synthetic manner and stimulates reflection, which is no mean achievement. This is a good initiative which will satisfy a large public by showing some of the archaeological treasures of England and Wales.

ANNE RENOUX


In 1941 Harold Leask published a slim volume entitled *Irish Castles and Castellated Houses*. Since that time Leask's work has remained the primary text for student, professional and lay person alike, its popularity reflected in the fact that it continues to be republished at frequent intervals. With the publication of Tom McNeill's *Castles in Ireland*, however, we now have a book which is a worthy successor to Leask's pioneering effort and one which will become indispensable for those wishing to gain an understanding of the origins, nature and development of castellated architecture in medieval Ireland.

The book is divided chronologically into three sections. The first section commences with an evaluation of the evidence for castles in Ireland prior to the arrival of the Anglo-Normans. The section then proceeds to review the period between 1167 and c. 1225, when the newcomers made their mark in the landscape with a range of new fortified power centres; the great stone keeps and enclosure castles which acted as the baronial capita for the new lordships, the royal castles, and those lesser fortifications, the timber castles. In the second section McNeill explores the castles belonging to the early 13th century to mid-14th century, when royal dominance had asserted itself on the island but a lack of resources had curtailed the pace and scale of castle building. There were, however, notable exceptions and a number of new castles continued to display the authority and style which
had been visible during the earlier period. Part Three focuses on the 14th century to the 16th century, a time when economic and political changes had radically altered Irish society. With royal government in Dublin falling into a decline, a number of major regional Anglo-Norman and Gaelic lordships came to control much of the land. These changes were reflected in a new architectural style, most notably expressed through tower houses but also present at major complexes.

What separates McNeill’s book from most other previously published texts is that it moves away from the purely descriptive. While the book does review the architecture and plans from numerous castles this is never viewed as an end in itself, McNeill ‘reads’ this physical evidence to provide explanation, placing the buildings into their contemporary socioeconomic and political contexts. A number of themes runs throughout the text, of which the following are but three examples. First, in an age when raiding constituted warfare, defences were not necessarily the primary concern of the castle builders. What the castles of all periods do show, however, was the wealth, power and resources of their occupants. They were status symbols, administration centres and secure (and comfortable) homes. In addition, they underline the commitment and determination of their owners to maintain possession of their estates. Second, while regional variations do exist, McNeill’s work shows that the Irish castle builders were not impervious to what was happening elsewhere and in many instances direct parallels can be drawn between the architecture and design of Irish castles and those found in contemporary Britain and France. This is an important point, for it reminds us that Ireland did not exist in isolation during this period but was an integral part of the wider medieval world, sharing in its knowledge and experience. Third, castles tended not to form part of the equipment of lordship in Gaelic areas until the late medieval period. Those kingdoms which did build castles before that time (for example, the kingdom of Uí Túirtre in 13th-century Ulster) tended to do so because they were under direct threat from outside forces. The castle offered them a means of holding on to their land, just as it did for their Anglo-Norman neighbours. It was not until the mid-14th century that political and economic changes in Irish society directed the Gaelic lords towards both castle building and the re-occupation of Anglo-Norman castles.

This is a very well produced book and, from dust-jacket to page layout, it has an air of quality surrounding it. The 132 accompanying plans, maps and photographs help to illustrate the story being told, although a selection of plans might have assisted in the discussion of the structural types found among the country’s tower houses (pp. 211, 217). A gazetteer provides the reader with introductory information on a range of 75 castles while there is also a glossary, a bibliography and an index. The author states in his preface that this book had a long gestation. It has been well worth the wait. To conclude, this volume should be found on the bookshelf of anyone who considers themselves to be a serious ‘castles’ person.

COLM J. DONELLY


One of the most daunting tasks confronting the archaeologist has to be taking over another person’s site archives from an era when standards of recording were different to
those of the present day, and being asked turn it into something presentable. The untimely
death of the director of the two sites published in the first of these volumes placed the
editors in just that situation and it is to their credit that they have been able to present such
a meaningful work, while highlighting where necessary, the shortcomings. This is not,
however, intended to demean the work of the late Dermot Twohig who clearly left
sufficient record behind to make this current volume possible. I know of several sites of
similar vintage, and with living directors, which will never be published due to insufficient
recording at the time of excavation.

Following a brief introduction, there are basically four chapters. First Elizabeth Shee
Twohig presents the site report for Skiddy’s Castle which lies at the northern end of the
main street through the town. The main feature of this site was the foundation of the late-
medieval castle, an urban tower house, sitting on a wood raft, but some traces of earlier
occupation and post-medieval features are also described. Christ Church towards the other
end of town is the second site, presented by Rose Cleary. This is a much meatier report,
with remains of both post-and-wattle and sill-beam houses dating from the late 12th to
early 14th century. The chapter concludes with post-medieval features and a summary.
The third chapter, by Maurice Hurley, presents a discussion of settlement and architecture.
This is a very useful overview in which both the structural development of the town and
the building remains are discussed with reference to sites in both Dublin and Waterford.
The final section, by various authors, encompasses the finds and specialist reports. At well
over twice the length of all the other chapters combined, this is a comprehensive section
with a full range of materials including organics. The section is amply illustrated, making
it an important addition to the finds specialist’s bookshelf.

One useful feature of this first volume is the map of the town showing all the sites
excavated in the town between 1974 and 1997, with an accompanying list showing the full
report status of each site. It would be easier to use the list, however, had it been placed next
to the map rather than being relegated to an appendix at the other end of the book.

It is hard to believe that the second volume was produced in the same year and by the
same team which produced the first, because it is so different in style. The first thing one
notices are the English, French and German abstracts, which were absent in the Skiddy’s
Castle report. These were added, it is assumed, as a nod in the direction of the EU which
helped fund the excavations. It is, however, this reviewer’s opinion that for consistency’s
sake both reports should have them or neither. The second difference is the omission of the
overview map of the town with all the excavated sites marked, which shows that the North
Gate site is only approximately 15 m from the Skiddy’s Castle site. The location plan in the
second volume shows the area of Skiddy’s Castle but does not mark it as an excavated site.
The third difference is, however, the most puzzling and that is the lack of a discussion/
conclusion section which leaves the reader without a context for the site and a feeling of ‘so
what?’.

That said, the volume is laid out in a pleasing, easy-to-follow style. There are in fact
two sites, opposite each other at either side of the very north end of the main street through
the medieval town. The medieval town wall was uncovered on both while on the east side
an earlier wall, interpreted as a quay wall, demonstrates that the northern perimeter of the
town moved over time. Seven burgage plots are identified, three on the east side and four
on the west side of the street together with the remains of several houses with stone
foundations. Probably the most intriguing feature is a complex of beams associated with a
stone structure and paving, which the director interprets as a water-powered forge, with
the beams forming the basal frame of the wheel race. A wooden anvil was found c. 1.5 m
to the south set on stone paving. Other features of note are a corn-drying kiln and two
baking ovens. All the features are of mid-/late 13th- to 14th-century date. There is then a
jump in the stratigraphic sequence to a series of post-medieval features. The finds and
specialist reports section, like that of its companion volume is comprehensive, and well illustrated, but the range of material is narrower.

One minor irritant with the volume is the use of footnotes, only sixteen in total and so few that it is a little difficult to find the explanations tagged on to the end of the bibliography as they are. There are one or two small proof-reading errors noted, e.g. on p. 46 there is a reference to a fulcrum post in pit 2242, but on fig. 17 this appears as 2292. But these do not detract from the work.

In conclusion, the Cork team are to be congratulated for getting two substantial and valuable reports out in the one year. It is also encouraging to see the local authority playing its part in the production process, following in the footsteps of the mammoth Waterford report. It is to be hoped that other local authorities where reports are still forthcoming will follow their example.

BRIAN HODKINSON


This book edited by József Laszlovszky on Medieval Visegrád aims primarily to analyse archaeological and historical work on this outstanding site since the 19th century and to share some of the chief results of the recent research and publication programme including new excavations.

Situated in the country's centre, by the Danube, Visegrád was one of the most important places in medieval Hungary. The Roman and Early Medieval Periods are covered quickly. Three sections are more developed. First, Gergely Buzás describes remains of the Angevin royal palace of the 14th century. From as early as 1323, Charles-Robert, the first Angevin king, was a frequent visitor to this site, which became the official centre of his curia. The village grew to be a town and the king built a residence in the lower town. Only a few buildings can be excavated (e.g. a royal mint), because the palace was altered by Louis I (1342-82) and rebuilt after the Angevin period by King Sigismund (1387-1437).

A second article, written by Gergely Buzás and József Laszlovszky, focuses on life at the palace during the reign of Matthias (1458–90). The palace was then in decline but the artistic and cultural interests of the sovereign and his wife led to repairs and works between c. 1476–84. Some buildings were reconstructed but the improvements and modernization works in order to improve comforts and to enhance the ceremonial aspects of the site were the most important. The palace, with its two courts, is an exceptional complex (aula, capella). A third article, multi-authored, is concerned with excavation of the Franciscan friary of the beginning of the 14th century.

The book has many illustrations (227) and a large bibliography where book titles are often given in English or German. The work is very useful for its unique information. My regret is that some fundamental information is not summarized. For example, an understanding of the palace erected by Sigismond is essential for anyone to grasp the modifications by King Matthias. On the other hand, the account is in places either too allusive or overly detailed and it is difficult to appraise the value of the past digs undertaken between 1934 and 1944. But, nevertheless, we must give due credit to this book both for the information it contains, and also its insights into the ongoing impressive study
programme, especially the exceptionally interesting analysis of the architectural remains. Laszlovszky brings to our notice a site of great quality and importance.

ANNE RENOUX


This volume presents seventeen papers originally given at a conference at Cressing Temple, Essex in 1994, now accompanied by a short but informative overview by D. F. Stenning. The main papers spread widely, with their emphasis on the south-east where almost every county is covered. Further afield, Devon, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Yorkshire and Wales are included, though the heavy carpentry of Lancashire and Cheshire is not examined. Falling outside the main sequence is a paper examining the use of cross-bracing in which almost all the examples are Continental, with few English parallels, although they are used in the Cressing Barley Barn; the paper does describe a remarkable timber structure, the Peace Church in Schudnica, Poland, of 1648, which uses 15 m high aisle posts, dwarfing any of the English halls.

A recurrent theme is that aisled halls are the earliest survivals, mostly using passing braces and notched-lap joints. Among these, Westwick Cottage, Hertfordshire has been tree-ring dated to c. 1199, while Newbury Farm, Tonge, Kent, here cautiously dated to around 1300, is now known to be of 1187–1207. Thereafter, the south-eastern counties show a bewildering differentiation in their details within a basic uniformity of box-frame construction with common-rafter crown-post roofs. The raised aisle roof was adopted very early in northern Suffolk and southern Norfolk, suggesting that the appearance of an aisled hall was popular and desirable, and was thus perpetuated through reset above floor level; the medieval queen-post roofs found in this area alone surely developed from raised aisle trusses. The side-purlin roof seems to have moved slowly south-east, reaching Bedfordshire in the mid-15th century but Sussex and Essex only after 1500. It was used in London considerably earlier than elsewhere in the south-east, but in western England is found in some of the earliest surviving structures (particularly but not only in cruck buildings).

The occurrence of the Wealden house is a matter for general comment; it is the most numerous form of medieval house in Kent, with more than 150 examples recorded in 60 parishes. Remarkably, even the adjoining counties of Sussex and Essex have only a handful in comparison. In the south-east, walls are predominantly close-studded but bracing patterns are very variable. Only from Staffordshire is significant evidence reported for an alternative wall-framing tradition, using large panels often without any bracing, but this is only one of an eclectic mix of carpentry traditions there; walling styles also include close-studding with or without a mid-rail, while roofs employ crucks, principal rafters with side purlins, and common rafters with crown posts.

The one county that escapes these shared developments is Devon, where the only known aisled hall is the Bishop’s Palace, Exeter. Cruck construction was universal outside the towns, with true crucks (surviving from just after 1300) being superseded in the 14th century by the locally developed jointed cruck. However, even in Devon common-rafter roofs are found in a couple of domestic buildings, and they are also used in the distinctive wagon roofs in churches. Elsewhere in western Britain, the region dominated by cruck construction, it is notable how much of the south-eastern tradition also found a place.

Pers. comm., S. Pearson.
Insights beyond the purely descriptive come particularly from Philip Aitkens and Jane Grenville. The former has identified variations in Suffolk buildings defining local carpentry 'dialects'. These seem to have dominated regions 10-20 miles across, each of which he suggests represents the regular working zone of a particular groups of carpenters, whose hand can sometimes be recognized in commissions undertaken further afield. Jane Grenville's paper on York and its region addresses the problem of bringing order to the variety of timber-framing styles. J. T. Smith's 1965 proposal of southern, western and northern carpentry schools still offers a valuable framework for the interpretation of the hybrid structures of the York area. For a more general understanding, she suggests 'style' as a key to the choice between functionally equivalent structures — that conformity to the norm in a region (or the wish not to conform) governed the use of one design or another. She points to patronage as one possible influence on these choices and supports the suggestion of Richard Bond, in his discussion of London carpentry, that guild regulation might impose regional uniformity.

Stenning in his summary sees the development of the living space of the hall as driving carpentry innovations. In particular, the adoption of the raised aisle truss in Suffolk improved the functionality of this space; elsewhere in the south-east, the base-cruck was an alternative (used for relatively narrow halls); the much wider base-crucks of the Midlands are barely touched on in these papers. Carpenters were also capable of evolving individual solutions to problems, such as the stub tiebeams and long collar braces of Hurst Farm, Chilham, Kent. Stenning suggests that the influence of this type of structure has spread as far as Cheshire and Yorkshire.

A clear obstacle to identifying the components of regional carpentry dialects is that the evidence comes from surveys of varying coverage, standard and objectives; although uniform recording systems are suggested in one or two papers as a solution to the problem, they might prove even less satisfactory by limiting the information obtained to that initially envisaged, rather than identifying what is actually present. Despite such difficulties and the delay in the appearance of these papers, the volume remains an important contribution to our understanding of medieval carpentry traditions in Britain. It is in little need of updating, although additional tree-ring dating is giving greater precision to the sequences of development.

N. W. ALCOCK


Canterbury Archaeological Trust have long since established an enviable reputation for their series of excavation reports thus it should not surprise that this volume, in what we may hope is the first of an extended series, is a further valuable contribution to the printed archaeological record for Canterbury's past.

This report provides details of the excavation of a single-flue pottery kiln (defined as a Type 1b by John Musty) which is dated to c. 1145-75 thus making this the earliest post-Roman kiln known from Kent and also the first medieval kiln to be located in Canterbury itself. The bulk of the report is concerned with the kiln products as exemplified by the 15,000 or so pottery sherds recovered from the kiln-associated deposits and with the discussion placing this material in a wider context. The eight pages describing the kiln excavation are by far the least satisfactory of this report. We are provided with the
stratigraphic evidence and layer numbers but as there is no figure showing the inter­relationship of these layers this information is, frankly, of little value. This peculiarity reappears later in the report when the dating of the kiln is discussed. Figure 54 offers a (sic) 'Matrix showing main stratigraphic relationships of kiln with dates of associated local coarsewares'. Quite apart from the bizarre figure title, as we have no idea as to how these layers actually occurred on the site, because there is no section drawing or plan showing the layer numbers, there seems to be no point whatsoever in offering the reader this information. The main conclusion to emerge from the actual excavation of the kiln was that the period of operation seems to have been short and that the kiln was deliberately demolished and backfilled using, in great part, kiln structural material and pottery from nearby waster heaps as filling.

The discussion of the kiln structure itself, provided by John Musty, provides a useful overview of our current understanding of kilns of this period. A technical reconstruction drawing of the kiln would have made this discussion more valuable.

The main interest in this report lies with the next section which describes in great detail the range of pottery recovered from this excavation. It is clear from the first that this is an unusual assemblage, the product of a very competent potter but, more than this, a potter (or potters?) who produced a series of pots which, in the modern idiom, would be defined as studio pottery as opposed to commercial wares which, in 12th-century Canterbury, were adequately if unimaginatively supplied by the potters working a mile or so outside the city at Tyler Hill. As might be expected, the pottery descriptions are supported by a large number of line drawings done by Sue Barnett — all executed to a very high standard and with more than a hint of Nigel MacPherson-Grant's influence — of the pots and, especially, the rim sherds which will prove to be a boon to those of us who follow in Canterbury's footsteps. Most impressive are the many oblique-light photographs which further illuminate the line drawings of individual pots; the problem of adequately defining texture and form is at a stroke solved. One can only hope that others will sit up, take note and emulate this worthy practice.

Cotter makes a bold attempt at suggesting a likely patron for this, probably, immigrant potter: the great ecclesiastical corporations located in Canterbury, the Archbishop, Prior and major landholders are all examined in turn with reference to the enviable documentary record that illuminates later 12th-century Canterbury. None of these can with confidence be positively identified as a potential patron, indeed Cotter shows that thus far Pound Lane pottery is largely absent from sites associated with these figures. William of Ypres, the leader of King Stephen’s Flemish mercenaries, is also suggested though it seems very unlikely that William would have been resident in Canterbury long enough find any need to patronize a craftsman potter. One potential market for this potter's wares — and given that they were crafted to a high standard surely they would have commanded a better price than the product of the local, native potters — is very likely to have been the local, wealthy, merchant classes living in and around the city.

None of these comments should detract from what is a very useful volume and one which is sensibly priced.