

BOOK REVIEWS

Edited by Neil Christie

Medieval Rural Settlement in Marginal Landscapes. Ruralia VII. 8th–14th September 2007, Cardiff, Wales, U.K. Edited by Jan Klápště & Petr Sommer. 21 x 30 cm. vi + 446 pp, 270 b&w pls and figs, 16 tables. Turnhout: Brepols, 2009. ISBN 978-2-503-527746-8. Price: €75,00 pb.

This attractive, weighty and highly informative volume is the most recent in the now well established and regular *Ruralia* conference series, this comprising a full 32 papers from the 2007 Cardiff colloquium on the theme of marginality and medieval rural settlement and exploitation. A beautiful cover photo of the fields and pasture of the slopes of Glyn Tarell near Brecon (with reassuringly blue skies) immediately flags a perceived emphasis, namely uplands, sheep and pasture. But this volume does far more than explore human usage of hill- and mountain-tops and sides and moors, since it considers also coastal (sand, dune and estuarine) and forest contexts, human impacts on soils and the impacts of the land on the humans themselves. The geographical range is substantial and truly European – we run from images of village lanes with parked cars in Appleton-le-Moors (p.79) to bleak sand drifts in Dutch Veluwe (p.154) to Swiss Alpine dairy huts (p.309) and a frontier castle at Tirieza in Murcia, Spain (p.258). The chronological coverage is equally wide – from prehistoric to medieval archaeobotanical data for the Black Forest (Rösch, pp.335–343), Roman to early medieval in the Swiss Jura (Marti, pp.291–307), to post-medieval and early modern colonisers and travellers (Holm, pp.109–115 on the 17th-century Forest Finns; Lindholm, pp.125–131 on the 19th- and 20th-century travellers' village at Snarsmon, west Sweden; Svensson, pp.133–142 on lost Swedish 19th-centurycrofting populations) – these 'late' contributions in fact of much value for understanding the people of some of the other contributors' medieval settlement sites. A few other papers touch on the use of ethnoarchaeology (e.g. Gutscher, pp.309–313, on huts and herders in Alpine Canton Berne).

Interestingly, not all authors define 'marginality' in their papers, while others want to stress how unmarginal their study zones are – thus Rendu et al. (pp.235–251) in an excellent discussion of pastoral presences in the eastern Pyrenean slopes, stress how 'these margins played a major part in the social and territorial dynamics of the mountain communities' (cf. Buccio, pp.219–225, on 'busy' use of the zones of the French Alps). Others meanwhile identify marginality as far too broad a label: Dixon (p.27) calculates that, effectively, 75% of Scotland is marginal. But generally marginality is defined from political, social or, chiefly, economic criteria: border territory, forested space, non-urban and uncultivated, low in productivity, and distant. (Further, Herring neatly notes, there can be academic criteria, with, for example, transhumance 'dismissed as of marginal interest' – p.55). The short introductory essay by Svensson & Gardiner (pp.21–25) and the extended paper on moors in eastern

Netherlands by Groenewoudt (pp.149–180) are the best discussions on this meaty archaeological issue, each stressing the variable perceptions by scholars now and workers then. Papers in the volume duly consider examples of settlement in various guises in various marginal contexts. To flag just a few that impressed this reviewer: Eiroa Rodríguez (pp.253–261) examines (if a bit too concisely) the 13th- to 14th-century frontier zone between Christian Murcia and the Arab Nasrid kingdom in Granada, tracing forts and religious structures (including a synagogue and rural mosque); Herring (pp.47–56) seeks to piece together the fragmentary traces of early medieval transhumance in Cornwall (even if lacking any secure dating support); van Doesburg (pp.181–204) provides a rewarding survey of medieval sites in the Netherlands hit by or lost to cover-/driftsand (this in part a result of human exploitation of woodland, peat, pasture) and outlines the efforts made to preserve lands and habitats; and Kenzler (pp.379–392) offers a fascinating overview of the processes of early medieval and medieval colonisation in the Ore Mountains (at the German-Czech Republic border), observing villages, castles, mining towns and related field and water systems, charting progressive seigneurial interventions (but with little monastic involvement, it seems) and desertions from the 14th century (though more work is needed to clarify dates, site ownerships, scales of mining, site relationships and material contacts).

As noted above, this is a well produced volume, with clear illustrations throughout (though some colour would have been appreciated to go with the nice cover). Papers are chiefly in English, but with some French and German contributions too. There are inconsistencies in some papers providing end summaries: most German articles have English and French summaries, but only three papers in English provide French or German ones (well done Niall Brady for both French and German!). Given that the Foreword appears in all three languages, it is perhaps a shame that the Introduction was not similarly treated.

A final note: the volume is dedicated to the highly respected Johnny De Meulemeester, one of the founder members of *Ruralia* and latterly its President, who sadly died in early 2009. As the tribute by André Matthys highlights, his expertise and his wide contacts gathered through excavations and conferences were crucial in making *Ruralia* a truly international forum.

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Where Rivers Meet. The Archaeology of Catholme and the Trent-Tame Confluence. (CBA Research Report 161). By Simon Buteux & Henry Chapman. 19 x 25 cm. xii + 180 pp, 84 colour and b&w pls and figs, 2 tables. York: Council for British Archaeology, 2009. ISBN 978-1-902771-78-6. Price: £15.00 pb.

This publication is the result of a project funded by the Aggregate Levy Sustainability Fund (ALSF) examining a 72 km² area in SE Staffordshire and NW Derbyshire centred on the Trent–Thame confluence. Confluences have long held a fascination for archaeologists, especially prehistorians, and it is no surprise that this book particularly highlights the evidence from the palaeolithic (including the Whitemoor Haye Woolly Rhinoceros) and the ceremonial Neolithic- to Bronze-Age Catholme complex. For this journal's readers perhaps only the final chapter, 'The Anglo-Saxon legacy', may be seen as relevant, and Catholme is of course well known for its Anglo-Saxon settlement excavated by Stuart Losco-Bradley in the 1970s. However, the approaches to landscape study in Chapters 1–3 are relevant to all periods and it is the multi-disciplinary approach that is the project's particular strength. Yet to have been truly multi-period, it would have been worth extending the study into the later medieval period. Confluences have been significant boundaries and often sources of dispute during the Middle Ages (eg see Courtney's paper in S Ripper & L Cooper, *The Hemington Bridges. The Excavation of Three Medieval Bridges at Hemington Quarry, Near Castle Donington, Leicestershire*. Leicester, 2009) and it is frustrating not to have seen more documentary research and fieldwork to explore this later context. Perhaps there is scope for a 'Where Rivers Meet Project Part 2'. Nonetheless, this is an attractive volume written in an accessible style which has contributed significantly to landscape studies. Medievalists will find many of the approaches used in this study useful and of interest, and will perhaps inspire new landscape projects.

Patrick Clay

Reflections: 50 Years of Medieval Archaeology, 1957–2007. (Society for Medieval Archaeology Monographs, Volume 30). Edited by Roberta Gilchrist & Andrew Reynolds. 18 x 25 cm. xix + 518 pp, 11 colour pls, 118 b&w pls, figs and tables. Leeds: Society for Medieval Archaeology and Maney Publishing, 2009. ISBN: 978-1-906540-71-5 (ISSN 0583-9106). Price: £69.00 hb.

This is an impressive, ambitious and rewarding book which celebrates a half-century of the Society for Medieval Archaeology by gathering together 24 essays about different aspects of the subject. The authors were given a brief to survey the development of their field (for example, medieval towns, animal bones, medieval identity), and to indicate future research and interpretation. Most of the authors followed the editorial guidance, so the book has a sense of common purpose. It covers a wide range of subjects, but could not be fully comprehensive. This means that chapters headed 'Regional traditions' deal with Ireland, Spain, south-eastern Europe and Italy (twice), but there are no chapters on northern Europe and France. The omission is to some extent covered by chapters on general themes (housing and the aristocracy) by Scandinavian scholars.

This review will naturally focus on the book's extensive treatment of settlements and landscapes. The first five chapters on the origins and development of medieval archaeology include some names which are

very familiar to members of MSRG: Mark Gardiner, Christopher Gerrard and Stephen Rippon. This prominence is continuing a tradition, as medieval archaeology was pioneered and nurtured by scholars who specialised in rural settlement. David Wilson's account places John Hurst firmly at the centre of the group who founded the Society in 1957, and Gerrard suggests that it was from the experience of the DMVRG, founded in 1952, that the merits of an organisational base became apparent to Hurst and his supporters. As the Society and the subject grew in the late 20th century, the 'tribe' of settlement archaeologists ('tribe' is Gerrard's term) had a strong influence, and he describes it as 'an especially cohesive multi-disciplinary research cluster'.

The study of rural settlements recurs regularly in the book – in the Regional section, Brady regrets the difficulty of finding peasant settlements in Gaelic Ireland where ring forts and castles are prominent; the review of Italian research by Augenti describes lost villages as 'the backbone of European medieval archaeology', and shows that these settlements are being studied using a broader landscape approach.

Essays in which rural settlement has a central role includes Rippon's chapter on landscape, in which he shifts the focus from the midlands to the south west, and moves the chronology of settlement formation from c.1000 to the long 8th century. He highlights historic landscape characterisation. The scope of landscape archaeology is extended by Reynolds to embrace politics and government, roads, and boundaries. In her chapter on housing culture, Roesdahl sheds new light on the internal divisions of houses, hearths, privacy and furnishings. Egan's sample of small finds tends to be urban, but he advocates the homogeneity of material culture, which means that metal objects (e.g. buckles) do not vary much in design throughout the country. Also dealing with metalwork, from a metallurgical perspective, Bayley and Watson make useful points about the composition of the metals which we tend to put together under the heading of copper alloy. They also remind us of the revolutionary impact of petrography on pottery studies, which has allowed us to investigate trade networks and peasant consumption patterns.

In her account of animal bones Sykes surveys current thinking about the economic and cultural significance of species, age, body parts and butchery techniques, which interests those working on rural settlements even if the bones were recovered from urban sites or castles. Hinton raises the issue of identity, and mulls over the problem of defining regional differences.

What are the common themes running through these contributions? Firstly, much attention is given to increasingly sophisticated technologies. Scientific methods are represented here by Muldner's chapter on stable isotope analysis, and various applications of GIS are scattered through the book. The application of petrography has already been mentioned. One regrets the omission of dendrochronology, which has revolutionised building studies. As a number of contributors safely predict, more technology will come. The second conclusion is the remarkable achievements of medieval archaeology as a whole, which began with a few practitioners, who lacked formal training, and after 50 years has become an industry with many branches.

Medieval settlement studies had a key role in that growth, and still have a place at the centre of the subject.

The third theme is the uncertainty felt by some of the contributors over the issue of theory. Gilchrist makes the point that those who engage with churches and castles – fields of study once deeply unfashionable – are more likely to adopt modish theories, ‘in contrast with research in medieval landscape and rural settlement’. Other contributors echo the same generalisation. Settlement researchers should not be anxious or apologetic on this point. Often those who advocate the use of theory in general really mean that *their* theory should be applied. Those who study settlements debate their subject endlessly, offering a range of ideas to explain the phenomena that they observe, and changing their interpretation in the light of evidence and the quality of arguments deployed. The quality of the work that they do cannot be so lacking in intellectual vigour, or it would not have served as the locomotive which has helped to power medieval archaeology for the last 50 years! Those who work on settlements, unlike the theoreticians, enjoy a wide appeal among the general public, partly because of the inherent interest of the subject, and partly because they express themselves in accessible language. They also find that they can collaborate with other academic disciplines. Those who snipe at settlement studies (who have not contributed directly to this book) perform a useful task if their hostile comments lead to a constructive questioning of assumptions, but they would be much more impressive if they applied their theories by doing some useful research of their own.

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Deserted Villages Revisited (Explorations in Local and Regional History Volume 3). Edited by Christopher Dyer & Richard Jones. 17 x 25cm. xxi + 207 pp, 40 b&w pls and figs, 6 tables. Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2010. ISBN 978-1-905313-79-2. Price: £14.99 pb.

Here is a book to provoke nostalgia if, like me, you spent time from the mid-1970s explaining ‘the DMV’ to farmers. An uphill task: there are many possible explanations (as this book reminds us) and every farmer I ever met knew at least one of them to be undisputed fact; but most of all it was the wrong question.

This book (ten essays plus Preface and Conclusions) testifies to the progress made since the 1948 field trip involving Hoskins and Beresford which provoked the 60th anniversary conference that it marks. Desertion studies now include farms and hamlets (chapters by Silvester, Jones) and the post-medieval period gets a look in (Broad and Williamson); wider social processes (Dyer, Wrathmell) and individual human agency (Smith, Hinton) are covered; Everson and Brown highlight the primary evidence, the ‘DMV’ earthworks themselves, even if some are disused post-medieval gardens; and a much greater sophistication of thought is evident from all the chapters. This book succeeds wonderfully as an overview of current thinking with plenty of historiography (Taylor succinctly documents the pre-1948 prehistory of the field) and acute self-reflection in

healthy abundance. But at the end, its question remains: Is ‘village desertion’ worthy of further separate study? Although ‘DMV’ research has matured into settlement studies and expanded to cover origins and development, much of this book still seems concerned with endings, and there is still a sense (with exceptions, such as Silvester’s chapter on upland dispersed settlement) that medieval settlement can be separated from what came before and what followed. The word ‘medieval’ does not appear in the title and as the editors say (xviii) “The ‘D’, the ‘M’ and the ‘V’ were all misconceptions”, but the ghost of the Middle Ages nevertheless haunts the book.

This reviewer was surprised at the book’s relative blindness to territory, notably the township. Analysis at township level would free research from artificial distinctions between ‘village’, ‘hamlet’ and ‘farmstead’. More seriously, ‘desertion’ is not a useful concept at territorial level, meaningful though it might be in the context of places. Farmsteads, hamlets or villages, often in combination, are parts of wider systems. If the life of one village ended, settlement at system level (the whole process of inhabitation and use of land, as opposed merely to house sites) usually continued, even if with a different mixture of settlement component – in other words, not desertion but evolution. In the longer duration, from earliest prehistory to the 21st century, settlement has always changed and shifted. Perhaps the villages that survived are the odd ones. Jones reminds us (p.11) that we do not speak of ‘deserted’ hill-forts, but is that because hill-forts ‘failed’ and play no serious part in any national narrative, whereas the specialness of deserted or ‘lost’ medieval villages implies that the norm was continuity, as befits a nation whose national narrative was stability? Goldsmith has a lot to answer for.

In studying places as deserted villages, it was ‘economic historians – rather than archaeologists – who took the lead’ (Everson & Brown, p. 46). With hindsight, archaeologists might have followed other leads, seeing these places not as desertions but as evidence for shifts (as in Sweden) or demonstrations that medieval settlement *locations* were as transient as prehistoric ones; they might have asked what happened next, where did people go (not all ‘beyond the western main’? – Goldsmith, here p.163).

This book charts a rewarding journey of exploration since 1948, but shows the journey is unfinished. The balance between history and archaeology is still changing; we have started looking at people as well as places, and better questions are being asked, many of them by this book. The biggest question about this journey, however, seems to be whether the planned destination is still the right one. Much time has been spent in explaining desertions when we might have been studying dynamism.

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Sandwich. The ‘completest medieval town in England’. *A Study of the Town and Port from its Origins to 1600.* By Helen Clarke, Sarah Pearson, Mavis Mate & Keith Parfit. 22 x 30 cm. xviii + 326 pp, 226 colour & b&w pls and figs, 14 tables. Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2010. ISBN 978-1-84217-400-5. Price: £35.00 hb.

This volume is one of several similar volumes – each with a different emphasis – which present the results of a programme of multi-disciplined (and multi-authored) research into the origins and development of a single town. Its emphasis is inevitably different from, for instance, that of Oxford (*Oxford before the University*, ed. A. Dodd, Oxford, 2003), which analyses and synthesises primarily archaeological evidence. The meticulous discussion of the evidence at Sandwich of the extraordinary number of late medieval buildings, and the evidence these bring to an overall interpretation of the townscapes at different periods, naturally dominates both the structure and content of this volume. On these subjects, though, the writer lays no claim to the degree of familiarity which would make any comment useful.

For those interested in early medieval urban topography, however, it is the first three, perhaps four, chapters which will prove the most informative. The medieval town is clearly set in its geological, topographical and historical context, with reference to early routes and settlements – not to mention the developments of the Wantsum channel as a whole – to make sense of its location and growth. The treatment of the micro-topography, through the use of close contour surveys, is a model which all future urban (and rural) studies should strive to emulate. The inclusion of the basic street plan with street names and parish and property boundaries as end papers is but one example of the thoughtful and user-friendly use of maps and plans to illustrate and support the text which is shown throughout the volume. This extends to the intelligent use of drawings and photographs to illustrate medieval house types. The text is clear and well-written, but, unlike Anne Dodd's volume on Oxford, the authors' contributions are unfortunately neither distinguished nor credited; this has the effect of creating a somewhat bland and monolithic presentation, without the cut-and-thrust of analysis, interpretation and synthesis, rather like the report of a committee.

All this, the clear result of a well-funded research project, has generated various hypotheses about the early (and indeed later) development of the town. The volume includes a section on the location and significance of the middle Saxon *wic*, or possible trading site, which appears to have developed on a different site in relation to the royal site of Eastry further inland. The authors (one would like to know which one) also postulate that the settlement moved in c. AD 1000 to the area around St Clement's church on the eastern edge of the later town, though without acknowledging the likely gap of nearly 150 years between this event and the probable date of the *wic*'s demise in the mid-9th century. This particular hypothesis (presented as established truth later in the book), however, ignores the fact that most if not all instances of churches dedicated to St Clement are sited on the periphery of earlier towns rather than at their centres. It would better fit the topography of the later town to suggest that the earliest church was St Peter's, associated as it is with the central market area. St Clement's parish, occupying an area of royal land to the east of the town, would, with St Mary's to the west, therefore have been carved out of St Peter's as a secondary development. This carries the implication that the origin of the town on its present site is considerably

earlier than c.1000 – the suggested date of the foundation of St Clement's church – and that by this time the town had already had a history of sufficient duration to have developed as a fully urban settlement, of which trading at its waterfront would have been the mainstay. Readers of this volume should note, however, that some of these hypotheses relating to the town's early development have been alluded to by Tim Tatton-Brown (1984 and 1988).

The foundation of St Clement's church can therefore best be seen as a new initiative in the context of the military emergencies of the years around AD 1000, rather than the focus of a new town; its siting at the highest point of the town suggests a function as a look-out tower, similar to the more dramatic example of St Mary-in-Castro at Dover.

The plan-form of the town appears 'organic', 'developing' in relation to the natural topographical and geological constraints. But a church integrally associated with a market place in close proximity to a strand on a much-frequented shipping route adjacent to an important anchorage must have had an origin at some point in time. Potentially it 'developed' at the optimum position from the point of view of the geological and surface land-form constraints because someone was well aware of the importance of these factors, and made decisions based on them. My guess is that this is a royal planned town (but without the defences or the tenurial complexities of a *burh*) which was created anew in the second or possibly the third quarter of the 10th century (though the existence of a late 9th- or early 10th-century urban *burh* with defences centred on St Peter's church and Market Street would come as no surprise). A metrological analysis of house plots, from evidence of the medieval houses themselves as well as the single sheet of the OS 1:500 survey – unfortunately (and inexplicably) not included in the brief of this particular research project – might well have helped to shed light on these questions concerning planning and, ultimately, origins.

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Mining in a Medieval Landscape. The Royal Silver Mines of the Tamar Valley. By Stephen Rippon, Peter Cloughton & Chris Smart. 17 x 25 cm. xiii + 207 pp, 58 b&w pls and figs, 4 tables. Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2009. ISBN 978-0-82989-827-0 (hb); 978-0-85989-828-7 (pb). Price: £60.00 hb; £20.00 pb.

Underpinning this long-awaited publication on the medieval exploitation of rich silver-lead deposits on the Bere Ferrers Peninsula between Cornwall and Devon is an approach based on placing the study of these early mines within their landscape context through the integration of archaeological and historical approaches. The authors provide full background to the study of the mines, describing the considerable differences between the intensive, Crown-controlled operations carried out at Bere Ferrers during the medieval period and the customary ways in which gold, iron and tin were mined in Devon and elsewhere in Britain at the time. An elucidation of the crucial importance to the Crown of the

Devon silver is followed by a description of the rapid development of the Bere Ferrers mines and their associated smelting sites between 1292 until their suspension as a result of the impacts of the Black Death in 1349; an outline of their subsequent operation until the mid-16th century is also given. The five-stage process involved in lead mining operations from development work, mining and ore dressing to smelting and refining is described in detail.

Importantly, the study seeks to quantify the impacts on the wider landscape, examining the considerable demands placed by smelting activities on local woodlands, and the need to cut often extensive leats to power waterwheels working pumps and bellows. Using documentary sources, map regression and evidence from historic landscape classification mapping, the authors attempt to re-create the contemporary landscape of the Bere Alston peninsula, concluding by positing that the settlement of Bere Alston was likely a planned town established in 1295 to accommodate the mining population – the first of its type in Britain.

However, the authors admit significant difficulties arising from the relatively poor documentation for most stages of the mining, dressing and smelting processes, as well as the paucity of archaeological evidence for any of the sites associated with this industry in West Devon. In this respect, the absence of any suggested programme of fieldwork which might help to redress the evident imbalance between historical research and archaeological evidence is noteworthy. In addition, some figures are oddly placed within the text, many (in particular the Historic Landscape Classification mapping and plates) simply do not work well in greyscale; and the discussion can be, at times, unfocussed.

Despite these flaws, the publication offers many useful insights into the early development of the hard rock mining industry in Britain, has highlighted a series of opportunities for future fieldwork within and surrounding the Bere Alston peninsula, and provides a template for the integrated landscape approach which should certainly underpin future studies of this type.

Adam Sharpe

Caldecote. The Development and Desertion of a Hertfordshire Village. (The Society for Medieval Archaeology Monograph 28). By Guy Beresford. 21 x 30 cm. xi + 267 pp, 154 b&w pls, figs and tables. Leeds: Maney Publishing/The Society for Medieval Archaeology, 2009. ISBN 978-1-906540-29-6 (ISSN 0583-9106). Price: £38.00 pb.

Work over five seasons (1973–77) on 6½ acres (2.63 ha) made Caldecote one of the largest excavations ever undertaken on a medieval settlement site; the appearance of this substantial and important report owes a great deal to the vision and persistence of its excavator, Guy Beresford, and more than a little to Chris Gerrard, the SMA monograph series editor, and midwife to this and other backlog reports including Launceston Castle and South Witham.

An opening chapter by Gerrard usefully rehearses the historiography of medieval village excavation before going on to set out the background to Caldecote's

excavation, precipitated by the threat of deep ploughing to the earthwork site as the Common Agricultural Policy introduced higher corn prices. An account of how he organised and undertook the excavation is provided in Beresford's own words (and picked up later in the report, pp.48–50), and a number of atmospheric photos capture his individual and heroic approach to excavation, personally driving a mechanical excavator and 'setting the pace' for a small gang of sun-blackened labourers and Beresford stalwarts to keep up with as they onion-hoed and shovel-scraped the site clean. Especially for all of us who dug in shorts and sandals in the hot summers of the mid-70s (I always hankered to dig for Beresford, but sadly never did), these photos conjure up happy memories. Gerrard states that this is one of the few published accounts of how rescue archaeology was done; as they run up to retirement other directors working at that time ought to write their digging autobiographies too, as should some of us who were doing the shovelling and barrowing. The chapter concludes with an assessment of Caldecote and the key debates: when manor house and church came together (here only in the 13th century when a capital messuage was first built), and how the peasant house developed from Saxon times to the 16th century. As a whole, the chapter would provide an excellent student primer on medieval settlement.

Caldecote was one of 59 DMVs then recorded in Hertfordshire, most of them in fact hamlets. Documentary sources suggest it had perhaps 17 households in the early 14th century, which accords well with the earthworks: part of the broadly linear village had been ploughed out before excavation began, but a dozen or so crofts (A–F, and 1–8) remained in 1973, together with a church, manor house, and moated site. Upcast from the last sealed the postholes of four houses of Saxo-Norman date which Beresford suggests had two-foot thick cob walls. The moated manor house itself was established when Caldecote was subinfeudated about 1225, the enclosure about 100 x 60m, the moat itself 6m wide and 2.75m deep. The timber manor house was (I think) aisled, of three bays, with one end subdivided by a screen; to one side was a detached two-bay kitchen. About 1275 the house was replaced by a larger one, again aisled, with a cross passage and a double solar with wardrobe and garderobe. This is a valuable and detailed example of a manor house's development during the 13th century, although the intermixture of description and interpretation means the reader has to work hard at several points to bring clarity to the proceedings. Excavation and interpretation were complemented (and the latter facilitated) by standing building recording; the surviving manor house proved to be a Wealden-type house with 15th-century origins – and thus a survivor of the medieval village.

The early peasant houses were generally poorly preserved, although it was established that those of the earliest Saxo-Norman phase were laid out on fields where ridge and furrow cultivation was practised – quite where the cultivators lived is unclear. Only from the 1360s (but there's a bit of circularity in the basis for the dating (p.119): they are more substantial so must be from the generation after the Black Death) were the house remains more archaeologically legible: single-course dwarf stone walls which had presumably supported timber-framed

structures. Importantly, the extensive stripping also revealed their cobbled yards and the barns (mostly notably long and narrow, but some aisled), sheep houses (one impressively defined by stake-holes, neatly tying with what Chris Dyer has shown us about this slight but important building type), water pits, wells and outhouses (including a granary or dovecote) set around them. Whatever the precise date of these structures, and notwithstanding concerns about dating-circularity, the conclusion that we are here seeing the farmsteads of newly-prosperous late medieval farmers is inescapable. The quantity of finds recovered was very limited (and ironwork rotted before it could be properly studied), revealing little of material culture in the village, but if this was in part due to the heroic digging style which revealed so much of the village plan then I say it was a worthwhile pay-off.

I suspect that there is more yet to be said about Caldecote, and teased from this report and Beresford's plans and impeccable photos – just as Stuart Wrathmell used the detailed site plans from the 1950s and 60s at Wharram to completely overturn the old orthodoxies about the character of its peasant houses. Publication makes such a challenge possible with Caldecote, and it will be a tribute rather than a slight to its excavators, especially Guy Beresford, if alternative hypotheses are now advanced, whether about individual buildings or about the wider site. And wouldn't it be grand to see again heroic big strips like this?

Paul Stamper

The Hemington Bridges. The Excavation of Three Medieval Bridges at Hemington Quarry near Castle Donington, Leicestershire. (Leicester Archaeology Monographs No 16). By Susan Ripper & Lynden P Cooper. 22 x 30 cm. xx + 257 pp, 14 colour pls, 102 b&w pls and figs, 30 tables, 21 graphs. Leicester: University of Leicester Archaeological Services, 2009. ISBN 978-0-9560179-1-8. Price: £25.00 hb.

In the mid-1990s, monitoring work in the Hemington Quarry, one of the hunting grounds of the late Chris Salisbury – elected Archaeologist of the Year in 1994 for his work in finding and recording all manner of fish weirs, mills and river-related structures in the paleochannels of the River Trent on the Leicestershire-Nottinghamshire border – turned up massive timbers and stone foundations, soon revealed to be the bases of successive early medieval bridges. These had carried the king's highway from Leicester and the south across the Trent to northern England, and photographs of them published in *Current Archaeology* and elsewhere made clear that this was one of the most physically substantial, and visually arresting, archaeological discoveries of the late 20th century.

While the basic details of the structures were published at the time, this final and very thorough publication is to be warmly welcomed, providing as it does both a detailed record and evaluation of the bridge structures themselves and a useful discussion of several related matters including other crossing points across the Trent, and what the bridges revealed of early medieval wood management and carpentry. The earliest of the three bridges was of the late

11th century. Its footings comprised two lozenge-shaped caisson bases – wooden boxes filled with sandstone rubble – supporting a trestle superstructure which calculation showed supported a 2.8m wide carriageway carried 5.5m above the river. This is said to be the most complete Saxo-Norman timber structure found in Britain. Sometime after 1111, after major flood damage, this bridge was replaced with one whose foundation bases were underpinned by oak piles – just as much as with cathedrals raised with scaffolding and wooden hoists, there is much to ponder here in terms of medieval engineering; primitive perhaps, but effective. Bridge III was constructed in the mid-13th century, and four of its regularly-spaced piers were found crossing a 50-metre wide former course of the Trent: the two outer ones of masonry, those nearer the centre of the flow with stone piers supported on deeply-driven piles. Good quality colour plates leave one in no doubt of the scale of these structures, or of their structural composition, and great credit should be given to the excavation team for exemplary work in rather difficult conditions.

Evidence such as this helps explain how it was that brisk, long-distance, travel was possible – indeed, perhaps the norm – in medieval England, and allow us to understand how heavy and bulky goods could be carried overland with ease. Construction of bridges such as this, of course, required a patron of substance and commitment, and in this case, in a considered and important chapter by Paul Courtney on the local and regional context of the bridges, two likely candidates are advanced, the earl of Chester and the abbot of Chester, possibly in collusion. Other sections consider the matter of where the raw materials for the bridges came from, and what their remains, especially the massive timbers, reveal about the state of the local woods – apparently still plentifully supplied with great oaks at this date – and the attitude and approach of successive generations of carpenters, who apparently on the whole took a fairly functional approach to bridge-building, although greater care was taken in preparing the timberwork for Bridge III. Again, these are studies which have a national relevance, standing alongside those from a few other places – notably the London riverfront – as evidence of medieval civil engineering in some of the most environmentally challenging locations. All with an interest in the Middle Ages will find this an interesting and informative publication, sure to be much cited in the future.

Paul Stamper

Rockingham Forest. An Atlas of the Medieval and Early-Modern Landscape. By Glenn Foard, David Hall & Tracey Partida. 22 x 30 cm. 312 pp, 170 colour and b&w pls, figs and plans, plus 'Atlas' sheets. Northampton: Northamptonshire Record Society, 2009. ISBN 0-901275-67-0. Price: £26.00 hb.

Students of settlement in Northamptonshire have been well served. The last 35 years have seen the Raunds and Whittlewood projects and six Royal Commission volumes published, the start of a county journal, and a host of important papers elsewhere. All are crammed with data and ideas on the origins and development of settlement in the county.

Now here is the latest publication dealing with that part of Northamptonshire covered by the medieval Rockingham Forest, an area of almost a fifth of the county. The volume comprises an introduction to the landscape history of Rockingham and an atlas of three sections at 1:25000, two in full colour, showing the forest in about 1350, c 1750 and c 1880. It also has a gazetteer containing a description, analysis, interpretation and plan of each of the 70 odd villages within the forest. This is all beautifully produced, on gloss paper, and, being subsidised by the Heritage Lottery Fund, the whole is a real bargain.

There is no space here for a review of every subject covered. Place-names, forest administration, medieval and early modern land use, parishes, parks, fields, enclosure and much more are dealt with and well illustrated. One may not agree with everything, but the book is a feast to look at, to read and to use. For the readers of this journal it is the sections on villages that will be of most interest. 'The Origins and Character of Medieval Settlement' are comprehensively dealt with in the introduction. All the familiar problems and arguments such as beginnings, planning, founders and relationships to field systems are aired. The most exciting part, at least for this reviewer, is the gazetteer. Not just for the basic historical and topographical information therein, but for the maps of the villages and the interpretation of their layout. Many readers will doubtless disagree with some of the latter, as does your reviewer, but because they form a geographically coherent group it is possible to see overall patterns and to draw conclusions, right or wrong, that can be compared with information from elsewhere.

The very large number of villages with either entire or partial regular plans is notable. The authors have collated the evidence, from maps or on the ground, for both the layouts of settlements and the pattern of associated fields. They confirm that regular plans could be as often the result of encroachment upon existing rectangular furlongs as of deliberate creation contemporary with the first appearance of the fields themselves – not a new idea, but given extra force here by the sheer bulk of data. Other factors involved in village formation discussed include polyfocal origins, funnel-shaped droeways and communications; there is also much on change and movement.

Visually, the three atlas sections are the most impressive. However, care must be taken not to be distracted by the superb presentation. There are problems. Thus the map of c 1350 allegedly shows the detailed arrangements of all the open fields at that time, as well as roads, meadows, woodland extent and settlement. But while of considerable interest, whether it really shows an early 14th-century landscape, based as it is on a number of doubtful assumptions, is questionable. Yet, whatever the quibbles, the book remains a valuable contribution to the landscape history of Northamptonshire, the Midlands and of England.

Christopher Taylor

The Anglo-Saxon Settlement and Cemetery at Bloodmoor Hill, Carlton Colville, Suffolk. (East Anglian Archaeology Report No 131). By Sam Lucy, Jess Tipper

& Alison Dickens. 21 x 30 cm. xiii + 462 pp, 11 colour pls, 273 b&w pls and figs, 160 tables. Cambridge: Cambridge Archaeological Unit, 2009. ISBN 978-0-9544824-6-6. Price: £40.00 pb.

It is not difficult to appreciate why the publication of excavations at Bloodmoor Hill, Suffolk, undertaken by the Cambridgeshire Archaeological Unit between 1998 and 2001, represents a landmark in Anglo-Saxon settlement studies. It is one of only a handful of early Anglo-Saxon settlements – Mucking, West Stow, Catholme included – excavated on a scale sufficient to gain an informed picture of overall layout. The statistics speak for themselves: a 30,000m² window, populated by 38 SFBs, nine post-built halls, four extensive surface middens, 170 pits, five hearths/oven bases, together with an associated cemetery. The excavation methodology harnessed an innovative sampling strategy (a gridded arrangement of 1m² spit-excavated boxes) designed to maximise the potential of extensive surface deposits for reconstructing site formation processes and tracking patterns of artefact dispersal through space and time. And the post-excavation programme funded by English Heritage employed cutting-edge scientific analyses including soil micromorphology to reconstruct the depositional biography of SFBs and pits, radiocarbon dating of residues adhering to pottery (contributing to an enviably refined settlement chronology), and isotopic analysis of human remains to understand the diet of the contemporary population.

Ultimately, Bloodmoor Hill will be remembered for shattering some of the received wisdoms inherited from type-sites excavated back in the 1970s. Unlike its near neighbours West Stow and Mucking, this settlement was not a loose agglomeration of farmsteads subject to uncontrolled wandering. On the contrary, it was rooted to a fixed locale, one inscribed with the enduring vestiges of a Romano-British settlement abandoned in the 4th century. The latter, defined by a rectilinear arrangement of boundaries set off an E–W trackway, provided a spatial framework for its Anglo-Saxon successor, imparting it with a planned regularity further expressed in the zoning of craft and economic activities. Bloodmoor Hill also breaks the rules in respect of its high density of pits, many forming intercutting groups clustered around structures, a feature more familiar in late Anglo-Saxon (especially urban) contexts. Sites like Mucking and Bishopstone establish that settlements and cemeteries of the Early Anglo-Saxon period might occupy adjacent sites, but in this case contemporary burials were found not adjacent to but *within* the core of the settlement, influencing the topography of its 7th-century phase. No less of a revelation is the fact that Bloodmoor Hill is the first settlement of the period to produce metalworking evidence, covering smithing and the manufacture of cast jewellery (including 138 crucibles and metalworker's tool-kits), on a scale and intensity comparable to excavated magnate residences in the Celtic West and North – Dunadd, the Mote of Mark, Dinas Powys.

Of course, what gives Bloodmoor Hill real fascination as a case-study is that its story spans a defining moment in the evolution of the landscape when settlement and burial patterns were arguably at their most fluid. On the one hand, the date of the settlement's inception indicates

the existence of an as yet unidentified 5th–6th-century focus, perhaps to be sought in the vicinity of a nearby flat-grave cemetery. On the other, its abandonment c. AD 700, provides a context for the establishment of what would emerge as the medieval manor and church of Carlton Colville located c. 1km due west of the excavation, thereby situating the process of settlement nucleation (at least its initial phase) firmly within the 8th century.

Whilst fixed in locale, the settlement was far from static. The three-stage phasing scheme demonstrates dynamic changes to layout, the shifting configuration of halls and SFBs experiencing progressive contraction to reach the compact plan of the mid-7th century with a cemetery at its core flanked by an inner tier of SFBs (two serving as metalworking installations), and an outer tier of post-built halls. This change was played out against the backdrop of repeated cycles of dumping responsible for several discrete surface deposits. The authors hesitate to define these deposits as ‘middens’, yet they were unmistakably rich in organic matter and contain varying amounts of domestic refuse; further, these deposits imply a regulated approach to waste management practiced over the long-term. If, as entertained in the report, this regime was indeed geared towards manuring surrounding fields, then the interesting implication is that the stability of some Anglo-Saxon settlements was directly related to an ability to sustain the vitality of the soil.

The cemetery excavated at Bloodmoor Hill, comprising a main focus of 28 graves arranged in orderly rows with a pair of outliers, allowed questions on the social identity of the settlement to be examined in a way simply not possible on settlements lacking a burial component. Whilst demographically mixed, the main cemetery was conspicuous for its concentration of high-status female graves furnished with recognised expressions of 7th-century elite identity: silver cross pendants and linked-pin suites, chatelaines, a stunning maplewood box with copper-alloy fittings, to mention some of the highlights. Interestingly, parallel expressions of wealth were lacking in the (by comparison) spartan male graves and here it should be noted that there was nothing overtly high-status in the structural repertoire

characterised by averagely-sized timber halls. One of the many questions begged by this disparity is whether the high-status women buried at Bloodmoor Hill lived elsewhere.

What picture do the authors conjure out of these varied and complementary strands of information? An estate-centre role is emphasised in relation to evidence for economic specialisation (smithing and fine metalworking), extraction and control over agricultural surplus (zooarchaeological evidence for some external provisioning combined with the commoditisation of animal resources), and the lavish consumption of wealth (expressed in high-status furnished burial, including a nearby barrow burial subjected to antiquarian investigation). By extension, Bloodmoor Hill is viewed as an early version of East Anglian settlements such as Brandon which document an intensification of similar processes in an 8th–9th-century setting, by when the emporium of Ipswich was placing new demands on the resources of the East Anglian kingdom. But this quite plausible reading still leaves considerable room for speculation. Was Bloodmoor Hill the residence of an aristocratic family and its dependent estate workers? Or, taking on board the gender connotations expressed in the excavated burials, was it a female religious community founded – like Ely and other East Anglian double monasteries – under strong Kentish and ultimately Frankish influence?

Turning attention to format, the report adopts the traditional approach of reproducing specialist reports in full. The editors are to be congratulated for integrating an immense amount of detail and analysis so successfully and this reviewer was glad of the opportunity to devour it all in hard-copy without recourse to a CD or the internet. At a little under 500 pages, this approach is by no means kind on trees, and in years to come it may be looked upon as antiquated extravagance. As an example of a report which combines the best of the old with the best of the new, go out and buy this book and enjoy the extravagance whilst it lasts.

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