

BOOK REVIEWS

Edited by Neil Christie

Rye Rebuilt. Regeneration and Decline within a Sussex Port Town, 1350–1660. By David & Barbara Martin, with Jane Clubb & Gillian Draper. 21 x 30 cm. viii + 306 pp, 378 colour and b&w pls, figs and tables. Burgess Hill: domtom publishing/The Romney Marsh Research Trust, 2009. ISBN 978-1-906070-11-3. Price: £26.00 pb.

The early houses the Cinque Port of Rye, a virtual island set in a tidal estuary, have been the subject of nearly 50 years' research under the aegis of the Rape of Hastings Architectural Survey, and the results are now brought together in a masterly book. It covers buildings of the high Middle Ages and early modern period, during which time the town underwent considerable changes to its prosperity as the coastline shifted and its rivers silted up, with its current role as a local market town established in the early 17th century after a boom time in the century before. The book is divided into two approximately equal-length sections, although only Part Two has a heading. The first part is historical: after a detailed survey (Chapter 1) of Rye's topography and the development of its street-plan within a changing coastline, ch 2 is an examination of the town's defences, including the Ypres Tower, for which a 14th-century date is argued. Both chapters are largely based on documentary and visual evidence as little archaeology has taken place. There is a brief review of the architecture of Rye's religious buildings, then a chapter on demographics, before we reach the two chapters that provide the context for Rye's houses between the 14th and 17th centuries. Although Part Two is called a summary it actually consists of a succinct but detailed description, street by street, of all the significant houses covered by the survey. Those seeking the full accounts are directed to the deposited records. Throughout, Rye's regional context is stressed, in particular its relationship to nearby and larger Winchelsea, whose fortunes were in anti-phase with Rye's although it is evident that Rye as a whole never experienced serious decay or desertion. In the 14th and 15th centuries, when Winchelsea flourished, Rye's situation was good enough to support the building of large, if unremarkable, houses set in good sized plots, and when Rye experienced a massive increase in households in its 16th-century boom there was no large-scale redevelopment programme. Instead, because the topography of the town did not allow for much expansion, existing newly-built houses were modified to provide more and smaller units. Similarly the small size of the town precluded the need to develop separate commercial and domestic districts and the two remained integrated. When trade fell off at the start of the 17th century and the houses reverted to single occupancy, again Rye was spared the tall 'high-rise' houses squeezed onto narrow plots seen in other towns in the south-east and so assumed the unique character it has today.

The text is fully illustrated with topographical drawings, including a series by the artist Van Dyck, photos, admirably clear diagrams, plans and section drawings to a constant scale, although some of these are quite small. There is an immense amount of work condensed into this book and it reveals the depth and maturity of thought that can only come from concerted work by authors deeply embedded in their local area.

JENNIFER ALEXANDER
University of Warwick

The Buildings of England, Berkshire. By Geoffrey Tyack, Simon Bradley & Nikolaus Pevsner. 13 x 22 cm. xx + 812 pp, 123 colour pls, numerous (unnumbered) b&w pls, figs and maps. New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2010. ISBN 978-0-300-12662-4. Price: £35.00 hb.

Much has happened to the built environment and ways of viewing it since Nikolaus Pevsner toured the country in the 1950s and 1960s to

research his *Buildings of England* series. This revised edition of the Berkshire volume (including in its geographical area that part of the county lost to Oxfordshire in 1974) reflects those changes. Three times bigger than the original book, it contains greatly expanded introductory sections and more detailed gazetteer. New colour photos have been added and new perspectives brought to bear.

The editors are to be congratulated for retaining the spirit of Pevsner, while at the same time updating and expanding his horizons. They have enlisted the eyes and expertise of numerous others to construct a more rounded and comprehensive volume. Like the original edition, it remains a book best utilised out in the field, especially by following the 'perambulations' which are so key to experiencing sense of place in some remarkable Berkshire towns. The book is written in a lively, entertaining style much like Pevsner's own. As before, its detailed treatment of timber-framed buildings and church architecture makes it a notable reference work for medievalists. But what I especially like about the revised edition is that it takes us beyond Pevsner's penchant for churches and cruck cottages into more recent architectures too. Didcot Power Station was still under construction when the original edition was being written. Would Pevsner have even mentioned it? I doubt it. Yet this too is architecture, and the editors are right to include an account of it. Now it configures a whole landscape – and skyline – for miles around. It is interesting to read that the vast cooling towers were spaced and aligned diagonally in order to offset their visual impact, on the advice of sculptor Henry Moore. The town of Didcot, too, is not ignored. Whereas Pevsner gave it barely half a page, the revised edition gives it three and a half, and graces it with a perambulation as well. The finer architectural treasures of castles and country houses are dealt with in abundant detail, as one would expect, but also present in the book are railway sheds, council houses, telephone boxes and shopping centres, giving it a more balanced and contemporary feel.

The obvious care that has gone into the background research makes this a book to be treasured. Far from being just a work of reference, however, it actively encourages readers to explore architecture for themselves. Like all good guides, it opens up worlds, enriching experience by drawing attention to significant features – leading to renewed appreciation of the built heritage of Berkshire.

MATT EDGEWORTH
University of Leicester

Patterning within the Historic Landscape and its Possible Causes: A Study of the Incidence and Origins of Regional Variation within the Historic Landscape of Southern England. (BAR British Series 509). By Alan Lambourne. 21 x 30 cm. x + 176 pp, 80 b&w figs, 16 tables. Oxford: Archaeopress, 2009. ISBN 978-1-4073-0639-1. Price: £37.00 pb.

This is essentially a doctoral thesis produced under the supervision of Stephen Rippon and presented to the University of Exeter. Its BAR format has deprived it of the colour which evidently enlivened some of its numerous illustrations. And its title might have been better chosen, for the 'regional variation' mostly involves that fascinating and fashionable topic, the dichotomy between the Champion (or 'Planned') landscapes which occupy a great swathe of central England, and the Woodland (or 'Ancient') landscapes which lie east and west of them. John Leland was the first to write about it; in recent years Oliver Rackham, Tom Williamson, Stephen Rippon, Brian Roberts and Stuart Wrathmell have made the matter a central concern for landscape historians. Centre-stage, then, is the Central Zone, or Central Province, with its large open fields and nucleated villages. How homogeneous is the 'pattern' within

this zone, how clear-cut or fuzzy are its boundaries, and how far is there a consensus about them? How may the Central Province be characterised geographically, and how far do other recognised cultural provinces and boundaries coincide with those of this zone? And how is such a pattern to be explained or understood?

The thesis is in three parts. The first discusses the issues for England as a whole, presenting a welter of maps and tables summarising the distribution of regional patterning of anything from Iron Age settlement types to vernacular building styles. This provides an immensely useful overview, picking up on correlations and non-correlations over time, and summarising the causal factors discussed by previous authors, including the possibility that the patterned differences between the Central Zone and its neighbours may have been partly determined by 'antecedent landscapes' rooted in a deeper past. Those who have read Cyril Fox will recognise the familiar interplay of geographical factors and the varying degrees to which different regions responded to new cultural influences from Continental Europe. Lambourne then focuses on a more manageable study area, a rectangle with corners somewhere near Oswestry, Huntingdon, Chichester and Tavistock, and highlights the difficulties presented by the county of Somerset. The discussion keeps to the level of generalisation from distribution maps, never visiting any particular locality.

Finally, in the last – and arguably most interesting – 16 pages, the author presents his own conclusions. Essentially, the national pattern exists, but how it is understood depends on the scale at which it is considered. The integrity and salience of the overall pattern are not diminished by the fact that in some areas its peripheries (or 'boundaries') become complex, fuzzy and ambiguous when scholars try to pin them down, though such cussednesses do tend to break up any consensus about causality. Inevitably, the most tantalising part of the analysis is the author's discussion of identifiable patterns in the deeper past, which potentially form relevant 'antecedent landscapes' and delineate long-term cultural divisions of great potential interest; it is not Lambourne's fault that so few prehistorians/Romanists have followed up Fox's interest in these matters. Noting the limited explanatory power of individual factors which have been evoked to explain the nationwide pattern, Lambourne wisely avoids trying to 'explain' the Central Province as an entity; instead he discusses the social, economic, political and cultural influences on the myriad decisions which gave rise to it. He argues for 'a different dynamic', in which such decisions derive from the interplay between 'calculation' and 'circumstance'; local and external influences, on the one hand, and cultural and environmental factors, on the other, form the main vectors of the decision-making process, and account for the variable distributional scales and levels of correlation which we now observe. Now, didn't someone else make some quite famous remark about humanity making its own history, but not in circumstances of its choosing?

This is an immensely worthwhile piece of work. Much is a most useful compilation of maps and salient discussion points, and until quite near the end, the author seems to be picking his way meticulously through a forest of data, correlations and debating points, with the overall wood nowhere in sight. Perhaps the emergence of such a wood is impossible; but in the meantime, Lambourne has provided a convincing, nuanced view of how woodland may be understood. The way is now open for someone to develop a more social or anthropological view of medieval decision-making, which may expand this fascinating debate.

ANDREW FLEMING
Sheffield

Extinctions and Invasions. A Social History of British Fauna. Edited by Terry O'Connor & Naomi Sykes. 19 x 25 cm. ix + 245 pp, 4 b&w pls and figs, 15 tables. Oxford & Oakville: Oxbow Books/Windgather Press, 2010. ISBN 978-1-905119-31-8. Price: £28.00 pb.

This volume successfully details the histories of some British faunal species, both endemic and introduced. *Extinctions and Invasions* is generally accessible, engaging and of direct relevance to both

zooarchaeologists and non-specialists with an interest in British fauna and the various natural and social histories thereof; readers of this journal will find that most chapters do cover some aspect of the medieval period. Few chapters in the book rest explicitly upon zooarchaeological data alone; instead, most draw support from a diverse set of disciplines (history, palaeoecology, linguistics, etc.) for the interpretations presented. New perspectives on 'common' species, hints of new projects and contributions which scrutinise entrenched ideas lend this volume an aura of purposeful excitement and hope for future research.

Mammalian species certainly have primacy and are covered in 15 chapters, each of which is dedicated to one species, though occasionally this may be shared with inextricably intertwined species (nb. the donkey with mules and hinnies, the Scottish wildcat with the domestic cat, rabbits and hares with ferrets). In contrast, all bird, fish, mollusc and insect species are covered in just five chapters. This imbalance may ultimately derive from a paucity of materials, archaeological and otherwise which originate from non-mammals, but it is also surely a reflection of trends in research foci.

Many of the chapters in *Extinctions and Invasions* share certain themes. Most immediately striking is the recurrence of human action, namely persecution or habitat destruction, rather than (or in addition to) environmental change, as a major cause of species extirpation. It is possible that persecution has shaped the nature of British fauna in more ways than we may have realised or acknowledged in the past. A concurrent theme is the fact that the introduction of species stretches back into antiquity. The volume also logically flags the current trend for re-introduction of species to Britain, Ireland and indeed, elsewhere in Europe.

Highlights include Bendrey's concise and very accessible contribution on the horse (Chapter 2); Mulville's chapter on red deer as part of the 'animalscape' of Scottish islands (Ch 6); and Albarella's engaging and personal discussion of the history of the wild boar (Ch 8). Serjeantson covers much ground in her chapter on extinct birds (Ch 17) which is both informative and insightful. Sykes' chapter on fallow deer (Ch 7) thoughtfully describes how the management and display of these animals could be considered an aspect of 'peaceful cultural exchange', while Pluskowski's contribution on the wolf (Ch 9) and Hammon's on brown bear (Ch 12) both emphasise the simultaneous existence of contrasting human attitudes toward a single species of animal. Finally, special note should be made of Kenward and Whitehouse's chapter on beetles (Ch 21), which not only gives details on species history, but also demonstrates the utility of insect studies in researching past changes in the landscape and the other species of fauna populating it.

Less successful in the book are the surprisingly short descriptions given for some major species. For example, once a powerful symbol and object of sacrifice, and now a ubiquitous animal of global dietary importance, the chicken is allotted less than a page and a half. Also, the rather slight concluding chapter by Yalden neglects the social and human aspects of animal histories that feature so prominently in other contributions.

Despite these quibbles, this book provides a timely synthesis of faunal social histories in Britain and Ireland. The volume is overall well edited and laid out, and is very good value for money.

BROOKLYNNE 'TYR' FOTHERGILL
University of Leicester

English Houses 1300–1800: Vernacular Architecture, Social Life. By Matthew Johnson. 17 x 24 cm. x 240 pp, 15 colour pls, 49 b&w pls and figs. London: Longman/Pearson, 2010. ISBN 978-0-77218-2. Price: £19.99 pb.

Matthew Johnson's latest publication, *English Houses 1300–1800*, returns to the subject first tackled in his study of the late medieval and early modern houses of Western Suffolk, *Housing Culture*. Here he extends this interest both geographically and chronologically, providing not only a critical synthesis of existing studies within the field but also, a strong argument about the need to theorise the 'story' of English vernacular houses. The volume

commences with a useful critique of vernacular architecture studies, exploring its intellectual foundations and deconstructing five historical 'myths' about vernacular buildings. The chapter also sets out an explicitly theoretical underpinning to the study which highlights broader post-processual concerns with the role of human agency, an interest in the 'performative' quality of social life, and the materiality of buildings and objects. This overtly theoretical approach to the subject will not appeal to all vernacular buildings scholars. Nevertheless, Johnson writes deftly and concisely, so that the theory underpins rather than overpowers the interpretation of the empirical evidence and the text flows easily, unencumbered by extensive footnotes or references.

Chapter 1 is followed by two overarching chapters which consider the construction of traditional buildings and their position within the landscape. These provide a useful, critical overview of the complex links between geology, soils and building materials and settlement forms, but also regional building traditions and the 'grammar of carpentry'. Johnson's theoretical interests means that other, less conventional kinds of 'landscape' are also considered here – the landscapes of communities united by the soundscapes of church bells, or the different kinds of 'domestic landscapes' which overlaid patterns of building and inhabitation.

The remaining chapters consider the development of English houses from the late medieval period (Chapter 4), through processes of rebuilding and reformation (Chapter 5), to the emergence of perceived dichotomies between polite and 'rustic' (Chapter 6), and a consideration of 'everyday life' in the 'traditional house' (Chapter 7). At one level this structure follows the 'story' of the English House first presented in *Housing Culture*: the move from the 'open' hall to transitional and, finally, 'closed' forms of architecture and the impact of processes such as the 'great rebuilding and finally, the emergence of the 'Georgian Order' – a 'fundamental social transformation, a shift in patterns of material life and culture'. Underpinning this narrative is Johnson's central argument that the origins of the 'Georgian order' can be traced back to kinds of social transformations manifested in buildings in the sixteenth century. However, *English Houses* presents this thesis in a deliberately subtle and nuanced way, seeking to problematise and complicate this narrative through a continual acknowledgement of the chronological and regional diversity of houses, and of methodological problems in attributing dates to houses or status to their inhabitants and particular moments in time.

One main strength here is the way in which Johnson's concern with 'social life' encourages him to move beyond a consideration of house forms and room functions, to the study of domestic cultures, particularly relations between household members, the increased consumption of objects and more ritualised aspects of household culture, such as apotropaic practices. This rich, almost 'thick description' evokes the shifting culture of English houses and is enhanced by a consideration of spaces beyond the house – dairies and kitchens, barns and stables, and even other buildings, such as churches. Perhaps inevitably, this broad scope comes at the expense of a consideration of some types of houses: *English Houses* is really about rural houses and Johnson acknowledges that urban buildings may have a distinctive and rather different story to tell.

His final chapter explores the significance of the 'Georgian order' as an idea which profoundly shaped British identities in the context of the wider Atlantic world. Although it is acknowledged that, for the time being, this aim remains 'imperfectly sketched out' rather than 'told in detail', it nevertheless makes an important contribution to ongoing debates within Historical Archaeology about the relationship between the 'local' and the 'global' by showing 'how the very smallest and most intimate detail of an English vernacular house could be related outwards to the historical processes and currents that embraced the Atlantic world as a whole'.

Once again Johnson has produced a highly readable and engaging text which will undoubtedly provoke lively debate amongst vernacular buildings specialists but which should also engage scholars from other periods and disciplines and inspire students and the general public to look more closely and think more critically about the stories and the significance of vernacular

buildings. The accessibility of the text is enhanced by its affordable price, paperback production and both line drawings and colour images tidily set within the text.

KATE GILES
University of York

A Medieval Cemetery at Mill Lane, Ormesby St Margaret, Norfolk. (East Anglian Archaeology Report No 130). By Heather Wallis with Sue Anderson. 21 x 30 cm. vii + 40 pp, 17 b&w pls and figs, 22 tables. Dereham: Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service, 2009. ISBN 978-0-0905594-49-1. Price: £9.00 pb.

This is another nicely produced, if very compact volume from the East Anglian Archaeology series detailing results of the excavation that took place in advance of the new A149 Ormesby bypass in eastern Norfolk. The report covers the unexpected discovery of a burial ground in which 62 individuals were identified. The main content examines the human skeletal remains, although some new suggestions about the location of the lost church of Ormesby St Andrew are also included. The skeletal remains revealed that the burial ground was in use between the 11th and 13th centuries and so was broadly comparable with similar rural medieval sites in the zone. One unusual discovery was a higher proportion of older males to younger males. Stable isotope analysis illustrated some reliance on fish in the diet, so loss of life at sea has been one of the suggestions put forward for this difference.

Although the full extent of the burial ground was not established, the findings from this excavation are important as they may shed new light on the position of the lost church of St Andrew, one of four medieval churches that once existed at the town. St Margaret and St Michael are still in use and the remains of St Peter are attested by aerial photography, but the location of St Andrew's has always been uncertain. The findings here allow a new location to be suggested and also offer a revised earlier date of abandonment. This volume is a useful addition to the broader framework of East Anglian studies.

MATTHEW GODFREY
Heckington, Lincolnshire

An Historical Atlas of Oxfordshire. (ORS volume 67). Edited by Kate Tiller & Giles Darkes. 21 x 28 cm. xii + 193 pp, 89 pls, figs, maps. Chipping Norton: Oxfordshire Record Society, 2010. ISBN 978-0-902509-63-4. Price: £20.00 pb.

Following a well-established format, a picture of the county of Oxfordshire as it evolved over time is built up by a series of 'spreads' (74 here), comprising 1000- to 1500-word essays on the verso with an illustrative map or maps on the facing recto. Two base maps precede the main collection, showing the Ecclesiastical Parishes c. 1850 (based on new research by Keith Parry) and the Civil Parishes 1933. As befits an atlas, the geographic and topographic (by cartographic editor Giles Darkes) are of primary importance, properly located in the geological setting (Powell – 'spread' 2) and then grounded in prehistory running from the Palaeolithic to the Roman period (Lock, Lang and Booth, 3–5). The gravels of the river terraces on both sides of the Thames are amongst the most excavated and best understood of any in the country and have revealed a prehistoric landscape of national importance. Throughout the work, the importance of the River Thames, forming a third of the county boundary on the south and west, is dominant, as is the town of Oxford, where even today the bulk of the county's population lives; this dominance begins in the later Anglo-Saxon period (Dodd, Cole and Blair, 6–11). A relief map, part of the first spread, on Topography, shows the county with its pre-1974 boundaries in its regional setting. A major strength of this Atlas is that it remains fully aware that a 'no county is an island' (Tiller, Intro). Oxfordshire has always been a predominantly rural county as this map helps to explain. It shows the Vale of the White Horse which is part of Oxfordshire post-1974, as are the river terrace settlements now forming part of the

central Oxfordshire plain, nestling between the Lambourn Downs of the Berkshire side of the river and the Chilterns on the other. The area includes two towns formerly in Berkshire but frequently mentioned in the text – Abingdon and Wallingford. Although using the pre-1974 boundaries was the right decision overall, the new boundaries better reflect certain historical realities. A good chunk of the wasp-waist of pre-1974 Oxfordshire, notably between Watlington and the River Thames was part of the territory controlled by the Saxon *burh* and subsequent Berkshire county town of Wallingford from the late 9th to 13th centuries. The Poor Law Unions created in 1836–37 (Gilliam, Tiller, 63) saw a number of Oxfordshire parishes attached to what were then Berkshire PLUs at Faringdon, Abingdon and Wallingford, all now in Oxfordshire. The artificiality of the county format is exposed in this way, but the limitations of the genre are admirably dealt with overall.

Instead of a thematic division (used, for example, in the Hertfordshire Atlas), the contents follow a broadly chronological format, with discrete thematic groupings. This generally works well, resulting in a book that can be read from start to finish as a coherent and richly textured narrative which offers much to both general and specialist readers. Not all can be mentioned individually here, but the importance of the groundwork laid down by the first 30, taking us to *c.* 1500 deserve notice. 1–12 provide a clear overview of the beginnings and growth of settlement in the county, the origins of a communications system focusing on the river and its crossings, making Oxford the hub of a network of roads, that justified Geoffrey of Monmouth's view of Oxford as the centre of the country. Mark Page's text on 'Domesday Landholdings and Settlements' points out the overwhelmingly rural character of the county in 1086 with Oxford the only town of note. The only market mentioned was in the minster town of Bampton (Blair, 11). Henley-on-Thames, a later town and entrepôt of considerable importance, does not figure at all. Perhaps the map here is too busy to be really informative, whilst the following valiant attempt to map information from Domesday Book is a graphic illustration of problems inherent in interpreting a source wherein the information was not nearly as complete as contemporary critics claimed.

But these are rare and only relative failures. Other entries explore the growth of a modest urbanism during the 11th to 13th centuries, founded largely on an agrarian economy focused on corn, and, despite the relative lack of permanent pasture, a burgeoning wool and cloth-making trade, encouraged by better management of water-based resources, such as fulling mills, and, eventually, improved navigability of the Thames. The later medieval economic and demographic slump, with associated urban decline and deserted rural settlements are well explored, as are the upheavals of the Reformation period, during which Oxford, a victim of the earlier decline, and specifically its university, emerged as the winner in hoovering up much of the estates formerly owned by churches.

Spreads 30–73 contain busy snapshots of change into the modern period: architectural, educational and social themes are rehearsed alongside a continuing narrative of religio-political, urban, agricultural and industrial change – themes which are exceptionally well handled throughout. In the final sections there are some striking studies of population change from 1801–1901 (Nash, 59–61), the arrival of the motor industry (Graham, 65) and a round-up of religion and education in the 20th century (Whyte, 71–72). Tellingly, the final section (Breakell, 74) is titled 'Tourism'.

With a galaxy of local talent to call upon, this book was predestined to succeed – and it does. Its exceptional editorial standards should ensure it becomes the model for future Atlases. Kate Tiller's involvement will hopefully ensure that the imminent second edition of the Historical Atlas for Berkshire will be the essential complement to this Atlas that both counties deserve.

K. S. B. KEATS-ROHAN
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Discovering the Smallest Churches in Scotland. By John Kinross. 16 x 23 cm. 124 pp, 28 colour pls, 58 b&w pls and figs. Stroud: The History Press, 2010. ISBN 978-0-7524-5880-9. Price: £12.99 pb.

Discovering the Smallest Churches in Scotland is the third title by John Kinross investigating smaller houses of worship within the British Isles. The Scottish edition investigates 58 churches across the mainland of Scotland and the Isles and does not focus directly on one specific timeframe or design of religious house, and so not all here are medieval; in origin. This multi-regional study is set out as a numerical inventory of churches and is supported by general location maps for each site discussed. Additionally a good selection of photographs support the text and a glossary of terms relating to architectural features specific to churches is supplied. Kinross approaches each of the sites with an informal writing style which works well for this type of publication. Issues surrounding access to some of the sites are detailed and the book contains several useful personal anecdotal accounts of the author's visits to select sites. Additionally, certain churches have short historiographical accounts of their construction which add to the significance of these buildings within their social contexts. One minor drawback with the publication is that the general postcode area for all of the churches is not given within the text, and so additional research may be required to plan visits to some of the sites.

MARK MITCHELL
University of Glasgow

The Origins of Hertfordshire. By Tom Williamson. 16 x 23 cm. xii + 271 pp, 66 b&w pls and figs. Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2010. ISBN 978-1-0-5313-95-2. Price: £16.99 pb.

This extensively updated re-publication of Tom Williamson's *Origins of Hertfordshire* (Manchester University Press, 2000) is very much to be welcomed. Although the introductory and concluding chapters are essentially unchanged, new material reporting research undertaken or published since the original came out has been added to the four central chapters on 'Before the Saxons', 'Politics and Territory, 400–1000', 'Early Territorial Organisation', and 'The Saxon Landscape'; much in those chapters has been also been edited or rewritten. The result is even more stimulating and enjoyable than the original: the style is authoritative, scholarly and readable (adjectives that do not always find themselves in the same company!), the interpretations and conclusions sufficiently generalised to offer stimulus to research elsewhere, and the evidence adduced both sufficient to support the conclusions and to allow comparison with other regions. As an added inducement, the attractive style of the publication, together with an increased number of (better reproduced) photographs, makes for a highly pleasurable book.

For those interested in settlement, there are plenty of themes to explore, some explicitly addressed, others implied. One of the most thought-provoking of the latter is the increasingly solid evidence for the continuity of occupation of territorial centres like Welwyn, Baldock and Braughing (and, of course, Verulamium) from the Iron Age into the Romano-British and then into the Anglo-Saxon periods – and, hence, of groups on which they were based. That is, there appears to have been sustained cultural continuity in Hertfordshire for at least a millennium before the 8th or 9th centuries AD. A further intriguing characteristic of such places in Hertfordshire is their location in the central portions of river systems, rather than on watersheds or in the lower valleys, perhaps nearer the interface between arable and wold rather than firmly located in one or the other.

Debates about the impact of Rome and of the Anglo-Saxon migrations on indigenous cultures are as alive now as they were over a century ago. Long-term continuity is strongly implied by the juxtaposition of a considerable body of evidence throughout the central chapters of the book, yet the issue is not explicitly addressed. This is a missed opportunity to extend an argument for the importance of the physical environment – soils, topography, river systems, wolds – into a wider analysis of the dynamic

inter-relationships of the latter with administrative structures and regional cultures. The case of Hertfordshire is particularly pertinent to such questions since the county's boundaries do not reflect physical geography in the same way as those of, for example, Cambridgeshire (based on a river system) or Norfolk (limited by sea, fen and major rivers).

Yet it should be admitted that this suggestion is simply to gild a lily. This is an excellent book and, in this reader's opinion at least, ought to become a classic, standing on bookshelves alongside Hoskins, Finberg and Taylor for many years to come.

SUSAN OOSTHUIZEN
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The Later Anglo-Saxon Settlement at Bishopstone: A Downland Manor in the Making. (Council for British Archaeology Research Report 163). By Gabor Thomas. 21 x 30 cm. xviii + 270 pp, 10 colour pls and figs, 145 b&w pls and figs, 35 tables. York: Council for British Archaeology, 2010. ISBN 978-1-902771-83-0. Price: £40.00 pb.

Bishopstone, on the East Sussex coast, has played an important part in the history of early medieval settlement studies, being a classic example of an Early Anglo-Saxon settlement that was apparently abandoned as part of a 'Middle Saxon Shift'. The evidence for this was a site excavated in the early 1970s on the downland of Rookery Hill that was abandoned sometime in the sixth to eighth centuries. The excavations reported in this volume add an important new dimension to that story by exploring the origins of the modern-day village down in the valley bottom. A total of 1,800m² was excavated immediately north of the parish church, revealing a complex of timber buildings arranged around a courtyard dating from the eighth to the eleventh centuries. One of these buildings appears to have been a timber tower constructed above a 1.8 m deep cellar. This settlement partly overlay 43 late seventh-/ eighth- to ninth-century burials.

Chapter 1 provides an extremely useful discussion of the research context, while Ch 2 places the site in its wider landscape setting, showing how in the early medieval period it lay on a low promontory of chalk surrounded by intertidal saltmarshes on three sides. Chapter 3 discusses the important historic sources which suggest that Bishopstone was one of a series of small minster churches in the coastal plain of Sussex, and the present-day church includes a substantial amount of probable tenth- or eleventh-century fabric. The excavated settlement-related features are described in Ch 4; these included two buildings of post-hole construction which is similar to that on nearby Rookery Hall. A minimum of 18 buildings of post-in-trench construction are typologically later, while it is suggested that the diminutive scale and irregular alignment of the walls of Structure X can be paralleled in post-Conquest settlements. The burials, described in Ch 5, included formal graves with a mixture of adults and non-adults, and males and females, along with a number of still-born babies disposed of in domestic pits. The artefactual evidence described in Ch 6 includes the largest later Anglo-Saxon pottery assemblage from East Sussex, the presence of wasters indicating that this was a production site. Another find of very great importance is a hoard of 25 complete iron objects. Key features of the palaeoenvironmental/economic evidence described in Ch 7 are a large assemblage of animal bones (28,135 fragments) dominated by sheep, and large assemblages of charred cereal remains and marine mollusca.

There is much we have learned from this site. It is still relatively uncommon to have large-scale excavations within currently occupied settlements and this project certainly shows how valuable such work can be. Crucial dating evidence was provided by 24 radiocarbon dates, and the site director is to be commended for providing adequate funding for what is an under-used technique on early medieval sites. Gabor Thomas is also to be congratulated on a fascinating discussion at the end. The presentation of the report is up to the CBA's usual high standards, and the frustrating use of CDs (that all too often go missing in Library copies, and will no doubt soon go the way of microfiche and become unusable) was

thankfully avoided. Overall, this is a report of great importance for medieval settlement studies and provides a model for how excavations should be published.

STEPHEN RIPPON
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Caldecote, Hertfordshire. A History of the Village to 1600. By Christopher Dyer. 15 x 21 cm. 22 pp, 5 b&w pls and figs. Caldecote: Caldecote Church Friends, 2010. ISBN 978-0-9566771-0-5. Price: £3.50 pb. (Available via Caldecote Church Friends, c/o 4 Meadow Cottages, Caldecote, Baldock, Herts SG5 5LE).

Guy Beresford's extensive 1970s excavations of this small clayland village – 13 working households in 1086, 16 in the early 14th century, six in the early 16th century, and just one working farm in 1698 – were published as a monograph by the Society for Medieval Archaeology in 2009 (see my review in this journal last year). While inevitably it left many questions unanswered, publication has nevertheless firmly established it among specialists as an exemplar of a particular type of site with evidence of origins, expansion, and contraction over 500 years or so. Here, as a fundraiser for the church (built, around 1100, by an absentee lord for the small peasant community), Chris Dyer has ably boiled down the story of medieval Caldecote into 10,000 words or so, creating an integrated and contextualised narrative which here and there carries the story onward from the monograph; the (two-) field system is explored here more than I recall, and there is certainly more from documentary sources on the late medieval villagers, who seem to have been predictably bad-neighbourly or, if one is charitable, protective of their agricultural rights and customs.

Anyone approaching the main monograph would do well to read this as a primer; certainly I'd have found it useful. But for a much wider audience, and one hopes all with an association with Caldecote or who visit its church, this will be more than enough to satisfy their curiosity, and to give a vivid and rounded picture of life in one particular small place long ago. It's a very good model to follow for anyone doing academic research, and a thoroughly decent way to say thank you to the locals who have tolerated and perhaps even facilitated our backward looking curiosity. Perhaps, dare we say it, we should even see it as our duty to produce such a narrative?

PAUL STAMPER
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West Cotton, Raunds. A Study of Medieval Settlement Dynamics, AD 450–1450. Excavation of a Deserted Medieval Hamlet in Northamptonshire, 1985–89. By Andy Chapman. 22 x 30 cm. xxii + 254 pp (plus CD-Rom), 30 colour pls, 268 b&w pls and figs, 75 tables. Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2010. ISBN 978-1-84217-389-3. Price: £48.00 hb.

This review must begin with a declaration of interest. West Cotton was recorded by the RCHME in 1969 for its first volume of *Northamptonshire* (1972). As the available resources consisted of a single person, the survey was undertaken in one visit by extra-mural students being taught by the Commission's Investigator moonlighting at £25 per day. The result was a less than perfect plan and a far from adequate interpretation. The conclusion, that the earthworks were the remains of a small hamlet and part of a settlement pattern 'of unusual form', was in retrospect merely shorthand for total bewilderment. Now we have a magnificent account of an excavation that uncovered almost half of the site, employed over 300 people for four years and cost, at current value, over £2 million in labour alone. How far we have come since the 1960s!

One thus must ask was it worthwhile? For this reviewer the answer is a resounding yes. The report is a superbly organised description and analysis, well up to the standard of previous publications of the Raunds Project and, by comparison with most excavation reports, intelligible. Not everything in the volume is new and some of the specific details are in print already. Further, a full

appreciation of the local and regional setting requires knowledge of the earlier accounts of the project. Nevertheless the book is a mine of information on almost every aspect of life in a medieval settlement. Most notable are the analysis of the watermills found and the discussion of the complex palaeogeography of the site that determined much of the human activities there. No review could do justice to every subject treated. This can cover only the dynamics of West Cotton that the sub-title suggests are the most significant. The combination of the small site and the large proportion excavated enabled the archaeologists to produce a coherent history of development. And although the author bemoans the lack of documentary evidence and the biased nature of what survives, it is still better than that for most similar small medieval settlements and adds greatly to its understanding.

Although some mid-Saxon and earlier habitation was found, continuous occupation began in the middle of the 10th century with the deliberate creation of a small settlement inside an almost square ditched six-acre enclosure, originally laid out on a system of square one-acre plots, divided between two presumed equal-sized tenurial holdings. The northern plot contained a timber hall and outbuildings associated with a group of quarter-acre tenements, and traces of a similar arrangement were found to the south. In the 11th century the northern 'manorial' area was redeveloped, enlarged and given a watermill. The whole settlement was transformed in the early 12th century, an event that is cautiously assigned to the documented creation of two small sub-infeudated manors. The northern holding acquired a stone hall, or manor house, with outer buildings encroaching on the former tenement plots, while a similar process perhaps took place on the southern holding. Catastrophic flooding soon afterwards was relieved by the construction of a 500-metre long protection bank that seems to have been effective.

In the 13th century the settlement changed again. The northern holding was rebuilt as a small hamlet with tenements, some around a green, while the manor house was relocated. The southern holding also gained new tenements and, possibly, a new manor house. The hamlet had a short life: desertion began before 1350 and was complete by 1450. Despite this, the division between the two holdings survived as both a physical and a tenurial boundary until at least 1798. This remarkable story is related in detail, supported by excellent plans and photographs.

For this reader three points arise from this. First, surely lordly intervention is the most likely explanation for the deliberate planning of the original settlement and perhaps also for the 12th- and 13th-century changes. Second is the possibility that it was the creation or formalization of the sub-infeudated holdings in the 12th century that was the mechanism behind the development then. Certainly circumstantial evidence for this has been found in Cambridgeshire. The third point is a disagreement. Despite the attraction of the now fashionable view that 10th-century settlement change should be seen in the context of the political reorganisation after the reconquest of the Danelaw, this reviewer remains unconvinced. But this may say more about his opinion of politicians than anything else.

In the end, however, the value of this report lies in the unequivocal evidence for almost continuous settlement change. We have always known it occurred but have, perhaps, tended to play it down because of the mental gymnastics that it requires. West Cotton reminds us of the true situation with all settlements that continues to excite – and bewilder – this reviewer.

CHRIS TAYLOR
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The Post-Medieval Farm and Vicarage Sites. Wharram. A Study of Settlement on the Yorkshire Wolds, XII. (York University Archaeological Publications 14). By C Harding, E Marlow-Mann & S Wrathmell. 22 x 30 cm. xiv + 456 pp, 178 b&w pls and figs, 92 tables. Exeter: University of York/Wharram Research Project, 2010. ISBN 978-0-946722-21-1. Price: £27.50 hb.

This is the penultimate volume of the Wharram Percy Project Series, covering the 'post-desertion' history of the settlement.

But it would be a mistake to believe that, as such, it is the least important of the twelve books. The period covered is the best documented but, for various reasons, archaeologically the most fragmentary and thus the interpretation of much of the material for continuous occupation is fascinating but occasionally frustrating. Despite this the contributors have assembled the various forms of evidence and produced many fresh and valuable insights into the previously misunderstood centuries.

Seemingly every detail of the occupation and use of the site from 1527 to 1990 has been examined. These range from the layout of the farmsteads and the vicarage that existed from the 17th century onwards, via the complex 'infield-outfield' system of agriculture practised in the 17th and 18th centuries, to the evidence of literacy amongst the inhabitants. The result is a comprehensive picture of life on an apparently deserted village in the four and a half centuries after its documented abandonment and is thus a valuable reminder to all who study rural settlement of aspects we have tended to ignore.

For this reviewer the most important section is Stuart Wrathmell's final discussion. This is a splendid piece of work, full of perceptive ideas but especially containing lessons in the interpretation of the evidence both written and archaeological. The book is worth having for this alone. This is a grand end to a project that has been with many of us for all of our professional lives and that has taught us, and continues to teach us, so much. Arguably Wharram remains the most important archaeological research project of any period ever carried out in Britain.

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Medieval Parks of Hertfordshire. By Anne Rowe. 24 x 31 cm. xiv +255 pp, 55 b&w pls and figs. Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2009. ISBN 978-1-905313-48-8. Price: £18.99 pb.

Medieval Life and Leisure in the Devonshire Hunting Tapestries. By Linda Woolley. 25 x 30 cm. 125 pp, numerous (unnumbered) colour pls, 4 fold-outs. London: V&A Publishing, 2002. ISBN 978-1-85177-376-2. Price: £19.95 pb.

These are two quite diverse volumes but with scope to see more than a few connections. In *Medieval Parks of Hertfordshire*, by combining documentary, physical, place-name and cartographic evidence, Anne Rowe successfully identifies about 70 medieval parks in Hertfordshire. This volume presents the results of her study in two parts. The first section provides a detailed explanation of the chronology, longevity, and spatial context of the parks. The inhabitants and economic viability of the parks are also explored in depth and reveal that, for the most part, park-revenue rarely exceeded expenditure: the social benefits doubtless outweighing any financial loss. The second section provides a gazetteer of identified sites. Each site is accompanied with metadata (grid reference, date range, size, and underlying geology) and by prose that summarises the history of the park and extant physical evidence. The text is richly supplemented by maps showing the known or conjectured area covered by the park, images of the present landscape that provide clues regarding the presence or extent of the park, and the occasional aerial photograph. All told, this is an incredibly useful resource for anyone with interests in the history and development of medieval parks within their wider landscape context.

The second publication in many ways brings to life the action and society of the hunting that might have occurred in such parks. In 1957 the Victoria and Albert Museum acquired four unique 15th-century large tapestries, each illustrating a different genre of hunting: the Boar and the Bear Hunt; Falconry; the Otter and Swan Hunt; and the Deer Hunt. Woolley's volume illustrates these four tapestries in sumptuous detail: pull-out sections enable the scenes within each tapestry to be appreciated in their entirety, while close-up views provide key details of the absorbing visual narrative. These rich images are set against a lucidly-written text that documents the significance of tapestries, the history of these pieces, and explores and contextualises the portrayals.

The tapestries teem with dynamic detail: set against a verdant landscape, the characters are lavishly attired, providing important insight into the accoutrements of hunting and the relationship between costume and social status in the 15th century; the relaxed posed of the courtiers is juxtaposed against the exertions of the huntsmen and the violent scenes of hunting, epitomising the conceived social order. Interspersed throughout the main scenes, however, are captivating vignettes: an elegantly dressed but rather austere noblewoman nonchalantly scratches a lapdog behind the ears; two boys climb a tree to raid a heron's nest; and the miller looks away as his wife is reluctantly embraced by a nobleman. This volume is essential for anyone with interests in later medieval hunting, fashion, and tapestry.

RICHARD THOMAS
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Agriculture and Rural Society after the Black Death. Common Themes and Regional Variations. (Studies in Regional and Local History, Volume 6). Edited by Ben Dodds & Richard Britnell. 17 x 25 cm. xv + 265 pp, 21 b&w figs, 29 tables. Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2008. ISBN 978-1-902806-79-2. Price: £18.99 pb.

This is an important and wide-ranging book. It sets out to explore the consequences of the latemedieval demographic trauma by studying regional variations at a variety of scales. While its focus is on economic – and, to a lesser extent, social – history, its subject matter is, of course, highly relevant to those interested in medieval settlement. The book has a strong thematic structure, each of the three sections – on markets and prices, agricultural output, and socio-economic impact at the level of individual rural communities – being prefaced by overviews by the editors. These contextual chapters are masterly surveys of the book's themes, placing the British material into a European context and providing extremely valuable assessments of the current state of understanding.

Part 1 consists of two surveys of markets and prices by Richard Britnell, followed by two case studies: Phillip Schofield on north-east England and Elizabeth Gemmill on the Aberdeen corn market. In Chapter 2 Britnell provides an important chronological and regional survey of price data from England, drawing together a substantial body of literature to offer a synthesis of economic

trends: resilience 1349–1376; depression 1376–c.1410; recovery c. 1410–35; and the mid-fifteenth-century slump, c. 1435–65.

Part 2 focuses on the potential of hitherto under-exploited data from tithe accounts to recapture trends in the peasant economy. Unlike the demesne farming accounts which have dominated the literature, data on tithes provides information on tenant production. Moreover, tithes represented what Robert Swanson terms 'a considerable and constant extractive force' exerted on the rural economy by the church. Swanson's essay on the role of tithes in the medieval economy is another of the book's outstanding elements and its themes are explored further by John Hare using tithe data from Wessex.

The book's final section, on 'Land, Lordship and Peasant Communities' returns to familiar themes: the consequences of depopulation – or, at least, of the relaxation of population pressure – on land use, landholding and social relations. Britnell's introductory essay, again ranging wide, concentrates on the evolution of tenures in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and stresses the idiosyncracies of the English experience. It is followed by three case studies. Two are from Co. Durham: Simon Harris on the abandonment of comparatively recently reclaimed on the moorland of Spennymoor; and Peter Larson on the social tensions within local communities in the face of economic adjustment. The third, by John Mullan, is a painstaking reconstruction of the accumulation of land and polarisation of society on the bishop of Winchester's estates in Taunton and East Meon.

The book is another title in the increasingly impressive series of 'Studies in Regional and Local History' from the University of Hertfordshire Press. In the concluding chapter the editors discuss the perennial challenge of defining historical regions and ponder the relationship between the experience of regions and wider common economic trends. They stress the continuing value of regional studies (noting the obvious but crucial point that the most detailed surviving data on the medieval economy relate to particular places) but also the need to read regional evidence in the context of more general trends. By offering both innovative local and regional case studies and syntheses at the national and, indeed, international level, this book will be of lasting value.

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