

BOOK REVIEWS

Edited by NEIL CHRISTIE

Winds of Change. The Living Landscapes of Hirta, St Kilda. By Jill Harden & Olivia Lelong. 25 × 31cm. xix + 216pp, 167 colour and b&w pls and figs, 8 tables. Edinburgh: Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, 2011. ISBN 978-0-903903-20-5. Price: £25.00 hb.

This is a beautifully presented volume which, in many ways, can be regarded as a landmark in archaeological publication. It is notable for the quality of the finished product, with the copious colourful illustrations set within a coherent narrative structure which is not unduly encumbered by the weight of the data. It brings together the wide ranging results of fieldwork on the main island of the St Kilda group, Hirta, undertaken between 1991 and 2006 by both National Trust Work Party groups and archaeologists from both Durham and Glasgow Universities. The island group is unique in the UK for having a double UNESCO World Heritage designation, for both its natural and cultural significance. As such, the extant published record is extensive and there exists a well-read and highly knowledgeable readership for this remote island group and its distinctive cultural legacy.

However, this volume is more than simply another scientific report, since it is written with the wider audience in mind (yet it well satisfies the requirements of the scientific audience). Written in a most approachable style by Harden and Lelong, the narrative outlines the landscape history around Village Bay, combining the results of geophysical survey, excavation, material culture and vegetational history into a narrative which spans over two millennia. Structural sequences include Iron Age and later buildings nestling amongst the scree slopes, field systems located on An Lag and the improvement to soils around the bay; these all add to the complex structural sequences identified in the Village, complementing those already published by Emery covering the work to 1990 (*Excavations on Hirta, 1986–90*. Edinburgh, 1996) along the Village Street itself. These many strands provide a unique insight into the exploitation of this apparently unforgiving landscape, whose economy was largely focussed on the exploitation of the bird cliffs for feathers, meat and eggs.

As a final observation, the enthusiasm of head archaeologist at the NTS, Robin Turner (and his late predecessor Philip Schreiber), in connection with the archaeology of St Kilda cannot be understated: enthusiasm is not sufficient to make things happen in a remote place where logistical issues are paramount, and the project owes much to the many more people named in the book. The leading role of Alex Morrison between 1991 and 1997 was important, and his very recent passing is noted here with due sadness. Alex instilled a strong interest in the study of post-medieval

archaeological landscapes in many Glasgow students, including several who worked closely on this project.

COLLEEN E BATEY
University of Glasgow

Prehistoric Gloucestershire. Forests and Vales and High Blue Hills (2nd edition). By Timothy Darvill. 17 × 25 cm. 288 pp, 130 b&w pls and figs. Stroud: Amberley Publishing, 2011. ISBN 978-1-84868-420-1. Price: £16.99 pb.

This second edition (the first appeared in 1987) has been updated to incorporate the wealth of new archaeological evidence on prehistoric life and landscape usage that has been discovered in Gloucestershire over the past two decades thanks primarily to PPG16-prompted work. Although only dealing with the prehistory of the county and its surrounding regions (from the last Ice Age to AD 43), Darvill provides a very tidy introduction to the early development of what remains a distinctive and varied landscape. Aimed at a non-specialist audience it is mostly concerned with cataloguing and discussing specific sites rather than developing broader themes, but for this alone it will no doubt prove to be a valuable resource for anyone interested in or familiar with the county and its archaeologies.

ANNA BOOTH
University of Leicester

Historic Whithorn. Archaeology and Development (The Scottish Burgh Survey). By R.D. Oram, P.F. Martin, C.A. McKean & T. Neighbour. 19 × 25 cm. xi + 160 pp, 69 colour and b&w pls and figs, 5 tables, one pull-out ‘broadsheet’. York: Historic Scotland/Council for British Archaeology, 2010. ISBN 978-1-902771-82-3. Price: £9.50 pb.

Informative and well written, this nicely priced and generously illustrated volume forms part of the ongoing *Burgh Survey* series, exploring and assessing Scotland’s medieval and later towns, providing both guide and history, but, as importantly, a resources statement ‘against which research, regeneration and land use planning objectives may be set’ (p.1 – Chapter 4 relates ‘The Potential of Whithorn’). The focus here is Whithorn in lowest south-west Scotland, a town which formally emerges from the 14th century, but which has since largely remained a long, narrow urban unit intimately tied to its landscape and its nearby harbour at the Isle of Whithorn. Its present houses betray spoils of the Reformation’s impact on the Premonstratensian

Priory here, which grew up in the second half of the 12th century to develop and protect the adjoining earliest Christian shrine of St Ninian. Shrine and priory especially benefitted from busy pilgrimage and donations, including from royalty (notably James IV in the 1490s), and from Irish, Manx and English visitors too. Archaeology has helped trace early Christian and early medieval Whithorn, elevated to a Northumbrian minster in the 8th century; crafts including stone-carving reflect the economic output of the see, and some traces of the religious and lay community have been revealed in excavations going back to Raleigh Radford in the 1950s, but with the main investigations in the 1980s-90s. This volume neatly observes the site and landscape and particularly the Isle of Whithorn in terms of the pilgrim trade and traffic, best documented from the Middle Ages. Much more of course can be said of Whithorn's resident population and economy from the 18th century on and its sluggish, 'stagnant' status, as well as its very stop-start 20th-century tourism. Underlying the authors' conclusions (see pp. 94, 137) are concerns that Whithorn's quiet and 'remote' character might well be disrupted if modern pilgrimage to this important archaeological site accelerates and road and other links develop.

NEIL CHRISTIE
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Place-names, Language and the Anglo-Saxon Landscape. (Publications of the Manchester Centre for Anglo-Saxon Studies, Volume 10). Edited by Nicholas J Higham & Martin J Ryan. 16 x 24 cm. xii + 245 pp, 30 b&s pls and figs, 10 tables. Woodbridge & Rochester: The Boydell Press, 2011. ISBN 978-1-84383-603-2 (ISSN 1478-6710). Price: £60.00 hb.

Landscape Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England. (Publications of the Manchester Centre for Anglo-Saxon Studies, Volume 9). Edited by Nicholas J Higham & Martin J Ryan. 16 x 24 cm. xii + 231 pp, 43 b&w pls and figs, 4 tables. Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2010. ISBN 978-1-84383-582-0 (ISSN 1478-6710). Price: £60.00 hb.

These two volumes contain the papers given at a conference held at Manchester in 2007, which was clearly a very stimulating occasion. Although they cover a very wide range of themes, some common elements can be identified which show the directions in which thinking about pre-Conquest landscapes and settlements are moving. A review cannot cover every paper in two volumes, which means that some very worthy papers by less experienced researchers on specific places and documents have to be left on one side in order to concentrate on those arriving at more general conclusions. An obvious point is to note the growth in compatibility between archaeology and place-name studies, which provides much of the material for the second of these volumes. Place-name evidence rarely stands on its own, and the observations that once seemed relatively straightforward, such as the distribution of Scandinavian names, now require

ever more elaborate interpretation, as demonstrated here in papers by Fellows Jensen and Corrigan. Our attention is drawn to patterns and connections which help us to see settlements and landscapes in a new light, such as Cole's discovery that the places called Caldecote (and variant forms), contrary to the view that they epitomise remoteness, are often located near major Roman roads. Draper draws attention to the appearance of the name Kingsbury in or near to town sites, and to the general significance of the -bury name which is associated with small enclosures embedded in the modern street and boundary plans of modern villages and towns.

One wishes that the essays could serve overall as a model of interdisciplinary cooperation, but this is not always the case. In the place-names volume an essay on towns mainly in the 9th and 10th centuries manages to discuss such matters as 'partitioning of space' without any reference to archaeology, and an essay on woodland is based almost entirely on documents, leaving aside the abundant palaeobotanical evidence which is criticised for its incompleteness!

The idea which is shared by a number of the contributors and which clearly challenges us with an agenda for the future, is the prominence accorded to the 'long 8th century', or the middle Saxon period. This period stirred interest many years ago when the phrase 'middle Saxon shuffle' was devised, but has now gained more attention partly because of the energetic pursuit of research focussed on emporia and 'productive sites', and also because of Moreland's article of 2000 which has had a long term influence. In the essays reviewed here, on the documentary side Ryan sees this as the period when the hide became widely adopted as a measure of the extraction of surplus from the land. The main theme of Rippon's paper – since expanded into a book – is that the 7th and 8th centuries saw a reorganisation of settlement, a new definition of boundaries, the emergence of elites and estate centres, and a growth of agricultural production. Since the Manchester conference a new orthodoxy seems to have developed that the nucleation of settlements should be redated to the period before AD 850.

There are problems in accepting the new chronology, however, because, as Lewis shows, pottery of the period does not figure prominently in test-pitting in village cores, and even Oosthuizen, who has sought to give the period an enhanced significance in landscape studies, prefers to think that nucleation was a protracted process. If the middle Saxon period is being given more attention as an episode in the formation of landscapes, then place-names will indeed become more intensively studied, as many originated in that period, but those who study documents will have less to contribute, as written evidence is relatively scarce. The debates about agency will have to be reformulated, as local small units of land-holding are only sketchily recorded in the 8th century. There was a widespread consensus that the local organisation of the church in small parochial units developed after about 900, but Hoggett claims that the East Anglian landscape was under strong Christian influence in the 7th century. But before these implications are explored, there ought to be more discussion of the divergent understandings of the meaning of the word 'nucleation'.

The other theme which connects a number of the published papers is a new interest in fields and practical farming. Oosthuizen believes that open fields could predate nucleated settlements, and Williamson and Brooks bring the environmental and ecological dimension to bear. Karkov, Hill and Banham write about implements and ploughing, and other authors (Grocock, Hooke and Murphy) deal with various aspects of woodland management and fishing, to show that the Anglo-Saxon population did not live from bread alone.

CHRISTOPHER DYER
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Anglo-Saxon Somerset. By Michael Costen. 19 × 25 cm. vii + 264 pp, 16 colour pls, 80 b&w pls and figs, 4 tables. Oxford & Oakville: Oxbow Books, 2011. ISBN 978-1-84217-988-8. Price: £35.00 pb.

During his flight from the Viking army of Guthrum, Alfred, King of Wessex, chose as his place of refuge the marshes of the Somerset Levels. Later mythologised as the scene of a royal culinary accident, this incident, perhaps more than any other, connects the historic county of Somerset to the Anglo-Saxon past in modern imagination. Yet the shire that formed Alfred's hiding place in the winter of AD 878 had, according to the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, only been under West Saxon control for 200 years. Given this, Michael Costen has wisely chosen to contextualise *Anglo-Saxon Somerset* in a *longue durée* stretching from the late Roman period until the Norman Conquest. Individual chapters examine post-imperial politics, settlements and soldiers, settlements and estates, social structure, agriculture, trade, urbanism and religion. The result is an impressive study that marshals a considerable body of evidence – archaeological, historical, cartographic as well as toponymic – in order to thematically explore the transition from the classical to medieval worlds. It is strongest when dealing with the documentary evidence, landscape history and place names. The period before the 7th century, where the archaeological evidence is pretty much all that is available, is dealt with in a less convincing fashion. This, of course, is always the difficulty of the *longue durée*; a single author is rarely able to treat it satisfactorily.

Moving away from generalities there are some specific issues that ought to be mentioned. Firstly, *Anglo-Saxon Somerset* contains a number of distribution maps based on the Portable Antiquities Scheme. I am a great believer in the PAS but its content needs to be handled with caution. Figs 7.1 and 7.2, distribution maps of Byzantine coins in Somerset and Dorset, provide a useful starting point. These are accepted by Costen as evidence of 5th- and 6th-century trade. Yet such coins are all too often modern imports and losses. Then there is Fig 7.4, showing eight objects dated AD 400–700, clustering around the mouth of the Parrett. Is this a hint of some Dark Age entrepôt or simply the result of a particularly helpful detectorist living nearby? A final point concerns the association of historically attested estates with their modern counterparts and the identification of early estate boundaries in the landscape.

Fig 6.11 illustrates the parish of Lufton as depicted on the Tithe award and equates its almost 300 acres with the one hide unit mentioned in the Domesday Book. However, there is good evidence (including field names) that the northern part of the parish once belonged to the adjacent parish of Thorne. Interestingly, an article that discusses this and related issues was not cited by Costen (Barker, K. 1986: 'Pen, Ilchester and Yeovil: A study in landscape history and the archaeology of south-east Somerset', *Proceedings of the Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society* 130, 11–45).

Early estate boundaries and divisions between outfield and infield are also adduced in significant curvilinear boundaries at Somerton and Chewton Mendip. These look convincing on a map but often leave me feeling sceptical. These putative estate boundaries beg a number of questions about how (and why) an existing landscape was divided in such a particular fashion. Furthermore, they have rarely been subjected to archaeological excavation to confirm their date and origins. Finally, at Chewton Mendip the boundary is apparently preserved in modern roads and tracks – a feature shared by the so-called Ilchester *territorium*. I can understand how a road becomes a boundary but how a boundary becomes a road escapes me. With the exception of modern bypasses, roads are intended to link places together, not to avoid important estate centres.

These criticisms aside, *Anglo-Saxon Somerset* is a significant contribution to our knowledge of the early medieval West Country. However, it should be treated with caution as it contains, amongst the thought-provoking discussion and analysis, a number of traps for the unwary.

JAMES GERRARD
Newcastle University

The Archaeology of Mendip. 500,000 Years of Continuity and Change. Edited by Jodie Lewis. 22 × 27cm. xvi + 424pp, 235 colour and b&w pls and figs, 22 tables. Oxford & Oakville: Oxbow Books, 2011. ISBN 978-1-905223-28-2. Price: £35.00 hb.

In recent years Somerset has been blessed with some excellent synthetic overviews – Exmoor and the Quantocks leap to mind – and these have now been joined by the current volume which offers a detailed critical overview of the archaeology of the Mendips, from earliest prehistory to the present day. Unlike the former volumes, *The Archaeology of Mendip* is an edited volume arising directly from a conference held at the University of Worcester in 2006. Comprising 18 self-contained chapters, the text follows a broadly chronological structure, the period pieces accompanied by general discussions of broader topics such as the mapping of Mendip, aerial survey and work afforded by the aggregates levy. The chapters are written by acknowledged experts in the respective fields, with a strong (and refreshing) representation from recent doctoral research in evidence.

Perhaps inevitably with conference proceedings, overall tone and balance can be difficult to sustain and it is to the editor's credit that for much of the volume

(particularly with regard to the excellent chapters on the region's prehistoric archaeology) the contributions are balanced in terms of length and depth of coverage. As a result there is a strong sense of overall narrative flow and it is easy to forget you are reading an edited volume. This is less effective in the case of the medieval section, which is bookended by two *very* long chapters (which between them absorb just under 100 pages – a quarter of the volume). The first is an exhaustive discussion of the 5th- to 10th-century landscape of Priddy. Whilst undoubtedly painstaking in its research, the quite literal 'lump-by-lump' discussion of the surviving archaeology of a single settlement seems rather a luxury for what is in essence a synthetic regional volume. Much of the primary data presented (particularly the annotated geophysical survey results and aerial photographs) could have been excised without compromising the integrity of the account. Closing the section is Bond's overview of the chronology, character and surviving evidence of monastic landholding in the region. From granges, dovecotes and distributions of arable farming, to livestock numbers and bee-keeping no evidential stone is left unturned and the concomitant desire to ensure the full range of evidence is considered without sacrificing too much depth and detail makes for a highly informative, but ultimately rather intimidating read. In each case a firmer editorial hand might have been beneficial. Sandwiched between these, and in comparison offering models of concise and effective summary, are Costen's discussion of place names and early settlement and Corcos' detailed examination of the pre-Conquest estates of Chew and Chewton. In each case the discussions are confidently argued, authoritative and thought-provoking, whether exploring the organisation of the large estates of the 7th century and their ultimate break-up in the 10th as a result of monastic reforms, or broader territorial arrangements prior to the Norman Conquest. The story is brought up to date by Stoke's review of the post-medieval archaeology of Mendip and Brown's engaging account of the unique and remarkable WWII defensive structures ('Mendip Starfish') used to fool the Luftwaffe. If some of the medieval chapters were a tad too indulgent in terms of length, the opposite is true for the post-medieval, where the sheer breadth of topics covered in a single short chapter results in the sacrifice of depth; indeed in places the discussion reads like a series of summary bullet-points (see, for example, the 'Other rural industries' section). This is a shame given the critical transformations that mark the period.

Overall this is a beautifully produced and immensely valuable piece of work that shines a much needed light upon the fascinating archaeology of the Mendip hills. The contributing authors and editor are to be congratulated on producing a book that is critical in approach, detailed in coverage yet eminently readable. I learned an enormous amount from reading this book and lost count of the times I thought to myself 'it would be really interesting to dig a hole in that'. As endorsements go, I cannot think of any better.

MARK GILLINGS
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The New Antiquarians: 50 Years of Archaeological Innovation in Wessex. (Council for British Archaeology Research Report 166). Edited by Rowan Whimster. 19 x 25 cm. xxii + 234 pp, 121 colour and b&w pls and figs, 3 tables. York: Council for British Archaeology, 2011. ISBN 978-1-902771-85-4. Price: £20.00 pb.

Resulting directly from CBA Wessex group's 50 year anniversary conference held in 2008, this volume has three principal aims: to review the history of archaeological investigation taking place in Wessex since 1958; to summarise current archaeological understandings; and to speculate as to where students of Wessex need to go next. The scale of ambition becomes clear when you realise that 'Wessex' is taken here to comprise Berkshire, Wiltshire, Hampshire, Dorset, the Isle of Wight and Channel Islands, and its chronological remit spans earliest prehistory to yesterday. The core structure is unabashedly chronological – a series of period-reviews each prefaced by short historical scene-setters by key players in the field. These summaries are punctuated by short accounts of some of the notable sites (from La Cotte de St. Brelade and Stonehenge to Silchester and the Mary Rose); anecdotal, personal recollections from some key players in the drama that unfolds; and finally sporadic panel discussions. Thus, something for everybody.

Tidily presented and generously illustrated, the result is (perhaps inevitably) a bit of a curate's egg, the individual contributions varying in style and approach from the whimsical to the dryly academic; from informed to anecdotal; and from opinionated to impartial. It is also profoundly of its time; compare the carefully chosen anecdotes from those taking a rosy-tinted glance back at glories past, to the more polemical agendas of those who have recently traversed the quicksand of institutional inertia and heritage management-rhetoric to complete major projects. There is also the problem inherent to all such volumes that in professing the aim of simultaneously celebrating, reflecting and predicting, they end up looking back more effectively than forward. This is as much to do with the character of predictions – which in my experience have the shortest shelf-life of any archaeological writings – failing as they invariably do to reflect anything but the pressing issues of the (particular) day. This is a situation that many of the contributors are alive to, yet powerless to do anything about. This is not to say that the result isn't an enjoyable read (since it is), more an uneven one.

Looking in more detail, the period reviews that make up the bulk of the volume (and within this Prehistory takes up around half of the book) offer useful, albeit selective summaries of the key chronological trends and developments within each period. Here credit should be given to the contributors for not only focusing upon the familiar, dramatic discoveries, but also on lesser known sites and particularly results that have emerged from PPG16 and PAS. In this vein David Hinton offers a capsule review of 50 years of archaeological research into the early medieval period, enlivened by summaries and reminiscences of investigations old and new in Southampton. In a chapter entitled 'Medieval and Recent' Martin Biddle introduces a second review chapter by Hinton that does essentially the same job for

the later medieval period, once again weaving history of investigation since 1958 with a selective overview of some of the main developments and a set of personal suggestions as to where we might want to go next – all this in a breathless 13 pages. This is followed by a chapter on the industrial past (Peter Stanier) that comprises a short, site-focused list of Wessex highlights. Richard Osgood's discussion of the post-medieval period (here limited to 20th-century military remains) is fascinating but functions as little more than a postscript.

And so to the title. 'New' – well, some of them. 'Antiquarians' – not really. It is the subtitle that really catches the essence of the volume (if not the imagination). Ultimately, to students of Wessex much of this will be as comfortable and soothing as a well-worn pair of slippers and a dozing cat. It is a well-written, nicely presented, highly-selective summary that can be dipped into and sampled at one's leisure. What it reminded me of most was a Research Framework Document, albeit one shorn of the dry reporting style, bullet-points, endless numbered sections and management report structure that makes such documents (incredibly useful though they are) difficult to love. Perhaps once again, where Wessex leads other regions may follow?

MARK GILLINGS
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An Historical Atlas of Kent. Edited by Terence Lawson & David Killingray. 29 × 22 cm. x + 214 pp, numerous (unnumbered) colour and b&w pls, figs and maps. Andover: Phillimore & Co., 2010. ISBN 978-1-86077-255-9. Price: £30.00 hb.

An Historical Atlas of Sussex. Edited by Kim Leslie & Brian Short. 27 × 22 cm. x + 166 pp, numerous (unnumbered) colour and b&w pls, figs and maps. Andover: Phillimore & Co., 2010. ISBN 978-1-86077-112-5. Price: £25.00 hb.

An Historical Atlas of Hertfordshire. Edited by David Short. 24 × 30 cm. xx + 204 pp, numerous (unnumbered) colour and b&w pls and figs. Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2011. ISBN 978-1-9542189-6-6. Price: £25.00 pb.

Every county Historical Atlas is an astonishing compendium, in which the distributions of a wide range of primary data are mapped and interpreted. Their editors are unsung heroes, the extent of whose feat in bringing together the work of a large number of (frequently dilatory, often disputatious) authors across widely diverse topics is something only they (and their families) are likely to appreciate. They are rightly valued and often reprinted, like those of *Sussex* and *Kent* (first published in 1999 and 2004 respectively).

Each of these volumes successfully deals with the broad history of a county from prehistory to the modern period. Their commonalities reflect generic topics of interest in overlapping disciplines: physical geography; prehistory, the Roman period and the early medieval; industrialisation; population growth; and so on. They offer the possibility of (not entirely easy) comparisons

of *distributions* of data between them, although the *evidence* being mapped usually differs. For example, Mesolithic core axes and maceheads are mapped in *Kent*, Mesolithic pits, rock shelters and flint scatters in *Sussex*, and Mesolithic finds of all kinds in *Hertfordshire*. Together they provide a broad visual representation of the kinds of places in which Mesolithic activity has been discovered. Similarly, demographic change is mapped in *Sussex* and in some *Hertfordshire* maps, while snapshots of population density at particular dates can be found in *Kent*, and again in *Hertfordshire*, but all the same 19th-century (say) population change across southern England is vividly demonstrated.

Each Atlas also records idiosyncratic research interests within a county at the time of its compilation, some undertaken within university departments, others, as scholarly, by individuals driven by a particular passion. Thus in *Sussex*, 'Journeys to work' (64) or 'Countryside conservation' (70); in *Kent* 'Accommodation for travellers, 1686' (47) or 'Country banking' (63); and 'Convicts to Australia, 1784–1867' (66) or 'City of London coal tax markers' (10) in *Hertfordshire*. The role of these papers in stimulating new areas of research is another aspect of county Atlases.

I hope that the editors of *Kent* and *Sussex* – already well-received and sufficiently successful to demand a reprint within a relatively short period – will understand that *Hertfordshire*, a new entrant of the corpus, demands a little more detailed attention here in this review. To deal with the editorial aspects first: this is a particularly beautiful volume. It is printed in full colour, rather than in two colours (green/black for *Kent* and red/black for *Sussex*) which allows for rich mapping. Most of the maps are suitably large (at around 20 × 16 cm about twice the size of many in the older volumes), allowing the reader to delve properly down into their contents. And, perhaps most creative of all, the contents are arranged within eleven themes rather than in the usual chronological format. This apparently minor innovation makes an enormous difference. Within a few consecutive pages, the strange disconnection of county, diocesan, poor law and local government boundaries is laid bare; shifting settlement patterns from Paleolithic to Anglo-Saxon can be compared over another seven pages; while the histories of the garden cities and the new towns – first introduced in *Hertfordshire* – are beautifully illustrated.

The democracy of scholarship is also to be commended, as it is in all the volumes reviewed here. Mark Bailey's paper on medieval population (25) or Anne Rowe's on rabbit warrens (52) are representative of analytical and interpretative excellence elsewhere in the book. Such articles sit comfortably alongside those in which data are simply noted and described. Some might complain about the disparity, but I think this is to miss the point – which is, surely, publicly to present a range of reliable, peer-reviewed data in order to stimulate further research. The same argument holds, too, for distributions that might seem self-evident – watermills (on rivers!), or film and television studios (near London!). The principal criteria for inclusion are all amply met here: care taken in the identification of primary sources, rigour in their evaluation and analysis, and the submission of sources, methodology and argument to peer-review.

There will be criticisms of a county-based approach to historical analysis, especially where there is little relationship between county boundary and physical geography; and there are also bound to be critical comments on particular contributions in any of these volumes. Nonetheless it seems to me that these publications are warmly to be welcomed: each Atlas summarises the state of knowledge within its county across a wide range of themes and periods; the contributions have been subjected to critical peer-review; and new research will be stimulated both by specialist analyses and by plain data distributions – and there is a real satisfaction to be found in dipping into each. Every one makes a sound contribution to scholarship; the invidious task of choosing between them is left to you.

SUSAN OOSTHUIZEN
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Tintern Abbey, Co. Wexford: Cistercians and Colcloughs. Excavations 1982–2007 (Archaeological Monograph Series: 5). By Ann Lynch. 21 × 30 cm. xvi + 245 pp, 97 colour and b&w pls, 107 colour & b&w figs, 25 tables. Dublin: Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government/The Stationery Office, 2010. ISBN 978-1-4064-2532-1. Price: £30.00 pb.

This well-produced report sets out the results of a series of excavations at the Cistercian site of Tintern Abbey in Wexford, a daughter house of the larger abbey near Chepstow in Monmouthshire. Founded by William Marshall about 1207 and dissolved with the lesser monastic houses in 1536, it had an interesting post-monastic history as a fortified residence and small country house, staying in the same family, the Colcloughs, until 1959. As Ann Lynch points out, the subsequent conversion of the site into a public monument raises interesting questions of conservation and restoration ethics: on its transfer to the Office of Public Works in the 1960s the decision was made to demolish most of the post-monastic features of the abbey; while at the time this provoked little concern (and it is true that the mansion was dilapidated), such a choice would seem incomprehensible in 2010, when our understanding of the richness and complexity of Irish post-medieval archaeology has advanced so much.

This published report is based on a series of surveys and excavations spanning three decades, which range from investigations intended to record the footprints of the structures to be removed, to contracted monitoring of site improvements. There are a number of specialist contributions on human, faunal and archaeobotanical remains, pottery, grave slabs and clay pipes. However, the principal author is responsible for a high percentage of the written text, which lends considerable fluency to the narrative flow.

The chronological framework of the architectural sequence is not clear cut, and this is debated at some length; the interpretations of the main text are further engaged in a paper by John Montague, inserted into the discussion and conclusions section. It would have been helpful if the points of agreement and the differences between present and earlier interpretations could have

been a bit more explicit – and perhaps more concisely drawn. Nonetheless, the report is full of interesting insights.

The most striking of these is certainly the changing use of the abbey church. At some stage in the 14th century this was remodelled and reduced in size, losing its north aisle. The dormitory was also reduced in length and the reredorter, served by a large monastic drain, was abandoned. From the 15th century most parts of the interior including the nave, crossing and quire were used to bury a mixed community of men, women and children. These transformations must represent a major change in the ‘Cistercian’ character of the site. The progressive secularisation of the community is touched on but it is clear that the church could no longer serve some of the most basic requirements of the rule, since the quire stalls must have been completely removed to allow for the burials.

The report is most attractively illustrated and easy to follow or quarry for information. The site reconstructions by Dan Tietzsch-Tyler are of a high standard and their careful process of creation for both public and academic audiences is usefully discussed in a closing chapter.

DEIRDRE O’SULLIVAN
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St Peter’s, Barton-upon-Humber, Lincolnshire: a Parish Church and its Community. Volume I, History. Archaeology and Architecture, Parts 1 and 2. By Warwick Rodwell with Caroline Atkins. 22 × 30 cm. xxviii + 922 pp, 631 pls and figs, 14 tables. Oxford & Oakville: Oxbow Books, 2011. ISBN 978-1-84217-325-1. Price: £75.00.

Two substantial tomes constitute this ‘volume’. They are well produced, within the hard covers that are almost essential to the stability of books containing many large fold-out illustrations, and they maintain the high standard of production that has marked Oxbow’s output in recent years. The text concentrates on the ‘architecture’ element of the sub-title with a detailed study of St Peter’s and a fairly extensive commentary on St Mary’s, the second church in the small town of Barton. The topographical background to these and their relationship to the settlement of the area amount to slightly less than nine per cent of the text.

The scene is set by the description of the physical environment: Barton and the neighbouring Barrow occupy the ground between the north Lincolnshire wolds and the marshland of the south bank of the Humber estuary. It is crossed by roads and tracks running north towards the river and the various ferries that traditionally carried passengers and goods between Lincolnshire and east Yorkshire. These have been used since the prehistoric period, as boat finds attest, though no settlement foci are known at this date. Roman occupation is demonstrated by Ermine Street and the minor roads, one of which forms the western boundary of Barton parish, but there is only scattered settlement evidence from the shore of the Humber. In Barton itself, however, there appears to have been a settlement on the site of the later Tyrwhitt Hall, to the east of St

Peter's church. Excavation in the church and churchyard revealed a ditch enclosing this site, evidently of middle Anglo-Saxon date, and earlier than the church, which subsequently encroached upon it in the post-Conquest period. There is substantial evidence for Anglo-Saxon occupation in the enclosure, which is regarded as a potential secular administration site.

Farther to the south-west Castledykes South was the site of an inhumation cemetery with furnished burials containing rare and high-status material with Kentish and/or Frankish parallels. It continued in use into the late 7th and the early 8th centuries, certainly after the date of St Chad's monastery; it is slightly surprising that the author needs to argue that traditional burial customs could continue into the Christian period and that furnished burial need not be regarded as 'pagan'. The cemetery was eventually superseded during the 10th century by a new burial ground around the church which is the subject of this publication.

Meanwhile the settlement area was surrounded by a large D-shaped earthwork, typical of Viking sites elsewhere in Eastern England and reminiscent of the well-known defensive circuit incorporating the church at Repton (Derbyshire). Within this enclosure the small town of Barton developed, with a partly rectilinear street pattern. From then on its history is one of piecemeal expansion in the later Middle Ages, with a market and chapel (subsequently St Mary's) and a short-lived earthwork castle, the location of which is unclear. Stagnation and decline followed, as the south littoral of the Humber became eclipsed by Kingston-upon-Hull and the ferry became less important, until new industries and improved communications were introduced in the 19th century and Barton turned to non-agricultural occupations.

An important sub-text for the Anglo-Saxon period is the discussion of the location of the early monastery. Barton is rejected in favour of a site at the northern end of the neighbouring parish of Barrow. It is suggested, however, that the monastic territory included both parishes and was coterminous with the estate whose bounds are defined by the *aet Bearuwe* charter of 971, which are clearly mapped in Fig. 157.

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The Oxford Handbook of Anglo-Saxon Archaeology. (Oxford Handbooks in Archaeology). Edited by Helena Hamerow, David A. Hinton & Sally Crawford. 18 x 25 cm. xxix + 1,078 pp, 146 b&w pls and figs, 12 tables. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. ISBN 978-0-19-921214-9. Price: £95.00 hb.

The last major overview of Anglo-Saxon archaeology was *The Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England*, edited by David Wilson (London, 1976); another has been long overdue. At the outset the editors here signal the contrast in approach: whereas the first provided synthetic accounts of the evidence, they present overviews of the key themes and discussions of current approaches and debates. The result is an invaluable resource for students and

scholars of Anglo-Saxon England. Ten themes provide an organising structure – identity, rural settlement, mortuary ritual, food production, craft production, trade/exchange/urbanization, the body/life course, religion, power, and the relationship of archaeology to other disciplines. Interpretative frameworks shape the inclusion of information about particular sites and finds, so that information on settlements is scattered throughout the volume. It is, self-consciously, not a handbook on archaeological research, resources or procedures.

Overviews opening each section review the shifts in interpretation, but the dominant intellectual frameworks are post-processual. Identity and ethnicity are assumed to be situational, cognitive, multilayered, dynamic and performative, and therefore difficult to pin down through material remains – hence the sophisticated discussions of exchange between 'Britons' and 'Anglo-Saxons' by Chris Loveluck and Lloyd Laing, or the impact of Scandinavian conquest and migration on settlement by Julian Richards. Social structure is investigated with a careful eye for the way changes might produce varying material reflexes, as in the discussions of the relationship between lordship, tenure, social status and changes in settlement form and hierarchy by Helena Hamerow and Katharina Ulmschneider; or the way in which gender distinctions and age cycles, in Sam Lucy's and Nick Stodley's chapters, might be constituted through symbolic actions with material traces, including individual exceptions and regional variations. Social memory is recognised as conditioning ritual action and the ambiguity of ritual actions with multivalent symbols is explored both by Howard Williams on mortuary rituals and Sarah Semple on the landscape of religious ritual. Due attention is paid to landscapes of economic resources and exploitation, but also landscapes of cultural perception: Richard Morris is alive to the way perception of landscape features affected church foundation and Helen Gittos discusses sacred place and space.

For the scholar of medieval settlement, this is packed with material. The overall picture may be familiar. With the end of the Roman state there was a decline in Roman military and urban centres; during the 5th and 6th centuries new rural building types and settlement forms developed (halls and SFBs); from the later 6th century these rural settlements reveal evidence for greater planning and enclosure, and a settlement hierarchy emerges with some larger, more elaborate settlements. With conversion to Christianity in the 7th century, religious communities were introduced, with distinctive buildings, forms and material culture, though they may sometimes be difficult to distinguish from 'secular' sites. By the early 8th century the development of new kinds of planned economic settlements (*wics/emporia*) and a network of 'productive sites' is observable. Mercian charters and archaeological remains from the 8th century onwards show the development of defended sites, though the West Saxons may be responsible for a systematic network of defended settlements with organised street layouts and mints in response to Scandinavian raiding; these West Saxon settlements and similar Scandinavian ones in northern, midland and eastern England may generate urban growth. At the same time, perhaps earlier, but certainly in the 10th and 11th

century, socio-economic change is revealed amongst rural settlements in the development of ‘nucleated’ settlements and ‘thegnly’ residences.

Within this familiar picture, however, contributors raise knotty problems and new possibilities. Changes in settlement forms are more easily observed than explained: Hamerow offers various explanations but rightly acknowledges the difficulties in choosing one over another. The forces behind the developing settlement hierarchies are similarly difficult to pin down: for Ulmschneider, the settlement hierarchy seems more clearly to reflect the social hierarchy revealed from other evidence from AD 500–700 and 900–1066 than in the long 8th century, while Mark Gardiner is concerned about an apparently sharper divide in the later Anglo-Saxon settlement hierarchy than can be observed from evidence for the social hierarchy. As Susan Oosthuizen, Julian Richards and David Griffiths show, the precise chronological relationship between changes in agricultural method, Scandinavian settlement, urbanisation and the changes in rural settlement forms requires further work. Consideration of settlement economies may offer important new insights here: contributions by Naomi Sykes, Lisa Moffett and Terry O’Connor demonstrate how archaeobotanical approaches provide ways to categorise settlements according to economy and diet, while Tim Pestell highlights the shift towards separating out the settlements categorised as *wics/emporia* according to types of economic activity. A key strand in all of this, as Morris makes clear, is obtaining a more precise picture of chronological and regional variations in the development of local churches and the transition from construction in wood to stone.

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Trees in Anglo-Saxon England. Literature, Lore and Landscape. (Anglo-Saxon Studies 13). By Della Hooke. 18 x 25 cm. x + 310 pp, 27 b&w pls and figs, 3 tables. Woodbridge & Rochester NY: The Boydell Press, 2010. ISBN978-1-84383-565-3 (ISSN 1475-2468). Price: £50.00 hb.

Della Hooke’s highly-regarded work on Anglo-Saxon landscapes and charters has often touched on hedges, trees and woodland, and here she extends and brings this work together in a full-blown scholarly monograph. It falls into three roughly equal parts, treating tree symbolism, trees and woodland in the landscape, and a study of what is known of individual tree species in Anglo-Saxon England. This is not an easy book – it is dense with examples, and makes no effort to entice the general reader via attractive photos of trees – but will have long-term value as a guide and quarry for those who seek to investigate their own local woodland history, or to integrate the subjects dealt with here into a wider study of how woodland was used a thousand to fifteen hundred years ago.

The chapter ‘Trees and groves in pre-Christian belief’ looks, primarily via literary sources, at trees in ancient religions, whether as individual specimens or in sacred groves, ranging across Europe and Africa –

this is a slightly old-fashioned book in its willingness to dive here and there geographically for material, and perhaps the editorial hand should have been firmer – and from the earliest times, via what classical writers had to say about the Celts, to the archaeological evidence of wooden figures, timber circles and ritual pillars. Whatever its relevance to England of a thousand years ago, this is fascinating stuff, distant echoes from a very different world of long ago.

The next chapter considers the adoption and adaptation of religious beliefs based on trees by the Christian church, and gradually the book becomes more firm-rooted as sources such as successive law codes and Saints’ lives are drawn on. Some of these sources will be familiar to the non-specialist, others not. In the early eleventh century Bishop Wulfstan sought to have a nut-tree cut down which stood next to the church at Longney-on-Severn in Gloucestershire because it had been used for ‘wantonness’ – presumably some form of tree-worship. Ailsi, a servant of King Edward, was charged with carrying out the order but refused, as he had been wont to ‘sit under that tree, especially in summer, dicing and drinking, and amusing himself with other games’. Those of us who work in rural communities know the type. This, of course, was centuries after Christian prohibitions of pagan customs were introduced, and Hooke argues that the increased evidence of attacks by churchmen on the veneration of wells, trees and stones in the years around AD 1000 may have been occasioned by a resurgence in such practices under Danish or Norse influence. Also largely unfamiliar to me, and again apparently distantly echoing times and places closely inter-twined with the natural world, is the evidence assembled from literature, including runes, riddles and leechdoms.

The chapters where readers will find themselves most at home are the ones treating the nature and distribution of different types of Anglo-Saxon woodland, and those which look similarly at specific species. Here is where a lifetime’s expertise and personal familiarity with the landscape itself shines through, in considering what is meant by *wudu, holt, hangra* and especially that common yet clearly tricky term *leah*: Hooke notes that it is one of the most useful place-names for the identification of areas that were well wooded in the early medieval period, at the same time flagging areas like the marshy Kennet-Lodden Vales of southern Berkshire known to have been well wooded but where the name occurs but rarely. Clearly much careful dissection of localities remains to be done before we can fully explain the vocabulary of local landscapes.

Many archaeologists – at least the earth-bound purists – will probably ignore Hooke’s study as it leaves to one side the archaeological evidence of wood and timber in use, derived from excavated finds of waterlogged wooden structures, from boats and ships, and from post-holes and slots on dry-land sites (not to mention Greensted church in Essex). That will be a great pity, for reading this will give a glimpse of the world the tree-wrights inhabited, one which seems to have been rich in intimate and meaning-laden engagements with the woodlands and trees which supplied the raw materials for so much of their material world. That said, a book which brings together the archaeological material, the evidence assembled here, and what we know of Anglo-

Saxon woodland management (it is, after all, 35 years since Rackham's *Trees and Woodland in the British Landscape* initiated such studies) is probably now overdue, and I, for one, would welcome it.

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Aerial Archaeology in Essex: The Role of the National Mapping Programme in Interpreting the Landscape (East Anglian Archaeology 136). By Caroline Ingle & Helen Saunders. 21 × 30 cm. xii + 196 pp, 9 colour pls, 97 b&w pls and figs, 5 tables. Chelmsford: Essex County Council, 2011. ISBN 978-1-841940-73-1. Price: £20.00 pb.

The National Mapping Programme (NMP) was started by English Heritage in 1992 and adopts a multi-period landscape approach, recording archaeological features visible on historic aerial photography dating from the Neolithic period through to the Cold War. Medieval settlement research has long benefited from air photo interpretation and this latest project of the NMP to reach publication has much to offer. Undertaken as a county-wide survey, the project is in fact one of the first, started in 1993 and completed a decade later. Current projects adopt a sample approach: smaller units are targeted to address specific Historic Environment questions as demonstrated in Rapid Coastal Zone Surveys and Aggregate Assessments.

It has taken the Essex NMP a considerable number of years to come to publication and this is reflected in the bibliography, since, with the exception of works by the authors and editions of the East Anglian Archaeology series, references take account of scholarship only up until c.2004 and several volumes listed as 'forthcoming' (including Alison Deegan's work on the Northants NMP) have in fact long since been published. There are also factual errors in the references: the English Heritage *Monuments of War* volume was published in 1998 and not 1995 as specified (p.182). On the subject of error, a little more careful copyediting would have picked up the lost preposition on page 2 and the inconsistency of subtitle format on page 4. But these are minor quibbles. Not all NMP projects progress beyond the end-of-project grey literature report to full publication. There is an extensive list of acknowledgments (as to be expected for a 10-year project) and all those involved are to be commended for the completion and publication of the Essex NMP.

Chapter 1 (pp.1–14) provides an introduction to the project and is particularly useful in detailing the aims and method adopted by the NMP; this includes good summary discussion of the source material and limitations of the methodology. The book is laid out by period, allowing the reader to dip in by field of interest with the addition of a valuable multi-period thematic chapter on the coastal economy (pp.115–146). Chapter 4 will be of most interest to *MSR* readers, addressing 'Saxon, Medieval and Post-Medieval Landscapes' (pp.91–114). Some 2800 medieval 'sites' were mapped, including SFBs, abbeys, moated sites, drainage and water management features, enclosures, field boundaries, and

other field system elements. Accompanying figures provide useful morphological comparison of settlement enclosures (p.96, fig 4.2) and moated sites (p.100, fig 4.5). In addition, two landscape case studies are provided – the Upper Roding Valley (pp.107–111) and the Blackwater Estuary (pp.111–113). However, as the authors note, the settlement pattern is skewed: the NMP tends to record 'failed' or altered sites (p.91).

As ever, the aerial photographs are a joy to see and nine of these are in colour. The distribution maps, sadly, can only be described as crude: so many (large) points crowd the figures such that any detail is hard to discern and, where densest, the distributions become little more than schematic. It is also regrettable that not all figures are provided with an adequate key (e.g. fig 1.5).

So, does the volume succeed in addressing, as subtitled, 'the role of the NMP in interpreting the landscape'? Yes, to a degree. Throughout there is analysis of the visibility and distribution of features in light of geology and landuse (p.93 for the medieval landscape) and a very brief concluding chapter is offered (pp.177–9) with some response to the Regional Research Agenda. However, as for the potential of the project to inform future conservation and management regrettably little is explored and it is arguably therein that the NMP has the greatest impact to make!

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Romano-British and Saxon Occupation at Billingford, Central Norfolk (East Anglian Archaeology 135). By Heather Wallis. 21 × 30 cm. ix + 110 pp, 3 colour pls and figs, 45 b&w pls and figs, 11 tables. Dereham: Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service, 2011. ISBN 978-0-905594-52-1. Price: £12.00 pb.

This tidy report describes excavations on the periphery of the Roman 'small town' at Billingford, in the Wensum valley, carried out in connection with gravel extraction in the 1990s. The fieldwork revealed a Roman field system, a metalled road, and part of the largest Romano-British burial ground yet excavated in Norfolk, comprising 86 inhumations (though these only survived as 'sand bodies'). For medievalists, the principal interest of the site is the evidence for settlement in the early Anglo-Saxon period, comprising a *Grubenhaus* and three post-hole structures, probably representing only part of a larger settlement, and a small cluster of middle Saxon iron-smelting furnaces. Noticeably, Billingford lies just a few kilometres from the early Anglo-Saxon cremation cemetery at Spong Hill.

Pottery and coin finds from the excavations and from extensive metal-detecting before and during stripping indicate that Roman Billingford prospered into the late 4th century, with hints of continuity into the early 5th. Given the 5th- to 6th-century date of the 'Saxon' buildings, this raises the possibility of unbroken continuity of occupation into the post-Roman period. However, at other sites in East Anglia (e.g. Hacheston) the latest Roman phases are frequently represented by finds-rich surface deposits of 'dark earth'; any evidence of this sort at Billingford would certainly have been

lost to the site's extensive plough damage, possibly obscuring this transitional period.

The middle Saxon period iron-smelting remains included an ore extraction pit and four furnaces of 'north German' type; the nearly 120kg of associated metalworking residues, mainly smelting slag, are dealt with in a short but informative specialist report. Considering the regional significance of these remains, it would perhaps have been useful to include more section drawings of the furnaces, though most only survived as truncated slag run-off pits. Together with the ore extraction remains from Laurel Farm, Great and Little Plumstead (Pre-Construct Archaeology, forthcoming) and the iron smithing remains from Brandon Road,

Thetford (see *East Anglian Archaeology* 134), there is now a growing body of evidence for the organisation, character and scale of iron production in Norfolk during this period.

This is a detailed, interesting and well-organised volume. While the excavation area was unfortunately somewhat peripheral to the focus of the Roman and probably also the post-Roman settlement, nevertheless, it provides a tantalising glimpse into what might yet be discovered in the unexcavated core of the small town.

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