

BOOK REVIEWS

Edited by NEIL CHRISTIE

Rural Settlement and Society in Anglo-Saxon England.

By Helena Hamerow. 18 × 25 cm. xii + 194 pp, 52 b&w pls and figs. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012. ISBN 978-0-19-920325-3. Price: £65.00 hb.

Helena Hamerow's follow-up volume to her work on continental settlement sites (*Early Medieval Settlements: The Archaeology of Rural Communities in Northwest Europe, AD 400–900*. Oxford, 2002) represents another valuable contribution to the field of early medieval settlement archaeology. This volume focuses on the British evidence, and adopts a wide spatial and chronological scope, surveying the 5th to 11th centuries AD. This is in fact the first major survey of this class of site since that of Rahtz in D Wilson (ed.), *The Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England* (London 1976), despite the explosion in developer-funded excavations. Hamerow is still a little limited by the relatively small number of sites that have reached full academic publication, but does incorporate evidence from a number only available as unpublished reports or interim statements. The volume starts with a short history of research, which also deals with the vexed question of settlement continuity between later Roman and early Anglo-Saxon settlements; this balanced discussion could have used more evidence from recent excavations of rural Romano-British settlements, where various types of timber buildings and settlement forms are now in evidence – indeed, there is a real need for an in-depth study of this new evidence. The next chapter deals with these timber buildings and their settings in more detail, but in the lack of such a study, is forced into reliance on comparative work published in the 1980s and early 1990s. Nevertheless, it usefully surveys building forms and features, encompassing earth-fast timber structures, grander and more formal 'halls', sunken-featured buildings, granaries and other, more rarely found structures such as possible latrines, kitchens and bakehouses.

Particularly valuable is the way that Hamerow then broadens the scope of enquiry beyond the characteristics of the settlement archaeology itself. Whereas much work in this area has focused on the technical and functional characteristics of the wooden architecture, Hamerow has included chapters on settlement forms and community structures, economic and environmental evidence, and on the little recognised role of ritual and religion in the settlement evidence. This enables her to explore issues concerning the bounding of settlements, when and why this emerges, the distinction between rural and urban settlements in the Middle and Late Saxon period, and the relative status of different types of settlement, including possible monastic sites. The interaction of these different settlements within an economic system is considered, as well as the role and development of different farming systems and the impact of these. She also presents a coherent statement of her recent work on 'special' or

'placed' deposits in settlement features (human, animal and artefactual), which, while not always convincing as ritual behaviour, deserve further attention.

This book will be useful for students, academics and those active in fieldwork as a summary of the current evidence, but also for clear pointers (as in the final pages) of where further research is now needed. We have, indeed, moved a long way from when T C Lethbridge could characterise the remains found in the bases of sunken-featured buildings as evidence for the early Anglo-Saxons living among their own detritus, and this book will further that progress.

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A Royal Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Street House, Loftus, North-East Yorkshire. (Tees Archaeology Monograph Series Volume 6). By Stephen Sherlock. 21 × 30 cm. xv + 147 pp, 107 colour and b&w pls and figs, 17 tables. Hartlepool: Tees Archaeology, 2012. ISBN 978-0-9532747-5-8. Price: £15.00 pb.

The Street House Anglo-Saxon cemetery, initially an unexpected distraction in a research excavation focussed on an Iron Age settlement, is now one of the England's most completely excavated, coherent and important Conversion-period cemeteries. It is distinguished particularly by the precise layout of its 109 inhumation graves in and within a hollow square. The square contained a group of five high status burials, one a bed burial, accompanied by rich grave goods and, near them, a mound, a Grubenhaus and a post-built building, apparently associated ritual structures. The results of the investigation are here presented in an exemplary, prompt and extremely well designed and produced report.

The Street House cemetery, a mere 200 m from the high coastal cliffs of NE Yorkshire south east of Saltburn, lay inside a rectangular Iron Age enclosure which must have still been visible in the 7th century AD. The graves are in pairs set E–W along the four sides of the square with two gaps in the series, one facing the entrance to the Iron Age enclosure, and the other in the NE corner near the high status graves. Both gaps are interpreted as entrances to the cemetery. The graves are cut into boulder clay, an aggressive medium which has resulted in the complete lack of skeletal remains except where preserved in the corrosion products of metal grave goods. Interpretation therefore rests strongly on the grave goods, these relatively sparse but sufficient to indicate, for example, preponderance of male graves in certain areas, occasional pairing of male and female graves, and the exceptional nature of the high status graves. They also point to a date for the cemetery between AD 650 and 670, a time when Christianity was locally being

established. The bed burial, the quality of the grave goods, including gold and filigree pendants, gold and 'gemstone' bullae (oddly we are not told what all these 'gemstones' are), a gold and garnet cloisonné shield-shaped pendant, an Iron-Age bead mounted as a pendant and, most unusually, pendants made from Iron-Age gold coins, argue the special nature of the community represented by the cemetery. The subject of the bed burial, it is suggested, may have been an Anglo-Saxon princess and the building a shrine in her memory (A chapter on the Anglo-Saxon bed places it in the context of other known beds and proffers a reconstruction).

The report is supported by specialist contributions including an important discussion by Penelope Walton Rogers of mineralised textile remains and skin products, these expertly examined and presented by Jennifer Jones. The occupants of the cemetery were clearly buried in their clothes. The report has little to say about the demography of the cemetery, the kind of community it represents, or where the associated settlement might be, and many other points are bound to provoke scholarly discussion. For the time being, however, Sherlock has done a magnificent job in quickly making available the essential facts of a most informative and very important discovery.

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The Ipswich Ware Project. Ceramics, Trade and Society in Middle-Saxon England. (Medieval Pottery Research Group Occasional Paper 7). By Paul Blinkhorn. 21 × 30 cm. x + 149 pp, 46 colour and b&w pls and figs, 41 tables. London: Medieval Pottery Research Group, 2012. ISBN 0-9506105-8-5. Price: £16.00 pb.

For anyone interested in Anglo-Saxon settlement and economy this is a book to read. It has been an eagerly anticipated publication, bringing together for the first time evidence for the production and distribution of Ipswich Ware from the 8th to 9th centuries. As well as focusing on ceramic analysis and interpretation, the volume demonstrates how Ipswich Ware can contribute to current debates on Middle Saxon settlement and economy.

First and foremost, of course, this is now the key text for Ipswich Ware. The initial pilot study identified seven sites with large assemblages of Ipswich Ware: Barking Abbey, Brandon, Canterbury, Flixborough, Ipswich, Raunds and Terrington St Clement. Chapters 3–6 highlight the range and depth of information that can be obtained through application of an array of analytical techniques, notably petrography, Neutron Activation Analysis (NAA) and Inductively-Coupled Plasma Atomic Emission Spectrometry (ICP-AES). The combination of such techniques has enabled the identification of variations between different fabrics not apparent from basic microscopic identification.

Lipid analysis was also applied to the dataset to further understand vessel function and the results indicate that degraded animal fat and beeswax were the more common residues. However, differences were evident between the sites in the proportion of vessels which contained

lipid residues: sites with a high proportion of sherds with lipid residues are typically close to or in Ipswich, whereas those showing fewer traces were probably used for storage and for the transportation of dry goods rather than cooking. These results meanwhile also contribute to questions associated with Middle Saxon diet and cooking practices at the various sites.

Chapter 7 broadens out discussion by identifying national distribution patterns for Ipswich Ware, although its introduction flags the problems of finding and accessing relevant material within museum and HER archives. This issue is significant as a number of research projects focused on grey literature (such as 'Rural Settlement in Roman Britain' (at Reading University), and the Oxford University-based ERC EngLaId 'English Landscape and Identities' project) have recently received funding. The chapter also explores Ipswich Ware in relation to site context and distribution patterns, with three main themes framing the conclusions of the project, namely production, consumption and trade. Direct connections are made between the presence of Ipswich Ware on sites close to major roads and rivers – a pattern found with both coin-rich and productive sites of the same date. When placed into a Middle Saxon England context, this information further adds much to current interpretations of settlement economies and networks and certainly underscore this as an important publication.

ALICE FORWARD
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Environment, Society and Landscape in Early Medieval England. Time and Topography (Anglo-Saxon Studies 19). By Tom Williamson. 16 × 24 cm. viii + 270 pp, 41 b&w figs. Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2013. ISBN 978-1-84383-737-4 (ISSN 1475-2468). Price: £45.00 hb.

Tom Williamson is one of the leading landscape historians of his generation, with a well-deserved reputation for intellectual creativity, engagingly and lucidly presented. His latest volume is a *tour de force* which demonstrates both the seriousness and the importance of his scholarship.

Focused on the problem of regional distributions in settlement nucleation and open fields in the Anglo-Saxon landscape, Williamson argues for the centrality of variations in physical geography, geology, hydrology, soils and climate in determining the character of the man-made landscape. He is at the same time at pains to integrate such influences into a larger whole, suggesting that they contributed to and were moderated by local, regional and national differences in historical continuity, population change, social structure, and political and economic development. In taking the holistic view, Williamson has produced an impressive and credible conceptualisation of historical process.

Nine chapters separate the Introduction and Conclusion. Each offers a thoughtful overview and critical evaluation of the historiography relating to one or more tightly focused themes. This careful preparation provides Williamson with a springboard which allows him in each case cogently to argue that gaps and

flaws in the debates might satisfactorily be addressed by including regionally-varying environmental opportunities in the analytical mix. Two examples must suffice here. The division of England into three 'provinces' – a belt of nucleated settlement and regular medieval open fields running from south-west to north-east, separating regions of dispersed settlement and irregular open fields to west and east – has been a truism of landscape history for the past century and more. Williamson suggests an alternative view: that England might as easily be divided into three provinces based on the drainage of river systems respectively debouching into the North Sea, the Channel, and the Irish Sea. He goes on to point out that the distribution of early Anglo-Saxon cremation cemeteries and Anglian artefacts, and of 9th and 10th-century Scandinavian place-names (to take just two of his examples) coincides almost precisely with the basins of rivers draining into the North Sea. His conclusion that regional topography and drainage were integral to the formation of cultural identities is beautifully made.

A second example demonstrates the complexity (and controversy) of Williamson's argument. He suggests that variations in climate and topography underpinned differential rates of population growth across Anglo-Saxon England: in the west (he argues), harvests were less certain and often poorer, inhibiting population growth and providing an incentive for local cultivators to exchange their freedom in return for the economic security offered by manorial servitude. Here, centralised organisation of labour included settlement nucleation. In the east, reliably strong harvests and strong consequent population growth supported the division of landholdings by partible inheritance into numerous small-holdings which inhibited both manorial development and collectivity in labour organisation. These differences, he suggests, underpinned the distinction between nucleated and dispersed patterns of settlement.

This review has not sought to challenge or critique such conclusions. The volume is too rich to allow that to be undertaken satisfactorily here. Hopefully, however, it has illustrated what an intensely interesting and controversial book this is. Whether or not everyone will be convinced by it, it remains a model for the conceptualisation of historical process and provides an almost endless stimulus for new research. If you want to read a book which confirms everything you already know, this one is not for you. But if you enjoy the stimulus of new, solidly-argued ideas and how they might be tested or challenged, then this volume is likely to delight and annoy you in turns, but is one which you will never regret buying or be able to ignore.

SUSAN OOSTHUIZEN
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Sense of Place in Anglo-Saxon England. Edited by Richard Jones & Sarah Semple. 16 × 24 cm. xiv + 363 pp, 84 b&w pls and figs, 19 tables. Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2012. ISBN 978-1-907730-17-7. Price: £35.00 hb.

This handsome collection of 21 papers is drawn from an interdisciplinary seminar series of the same title held

in 2009. Principally funded by the AHRC Research Networks and Workshops Scheme, the series explored early medieval settlement history through the lens of place-names. The book is imbued with a palpable sense of scholarly excitement. It offers that rare pleasure of a consistently stimulating set of papers, each reporting new research. There is too little space to summarise all contributions here and so only a representative sample is discussed below.

The replacement of late British names by Old English place-names is conventionally explained by the replacement of Romano-British indigenes by Germanic migrants. Papers on stability in place-names by Alaric Hall and Jayne Carroll indicate that, instead, Late British and Old English names were used interchangeably in many places for several hundred years. It appears that early and middle Anglo-Saxon communities took value-free bilingualism for granted. Nonetheless, Hall's work suggests that the smaller a place, the more intrinsically unstable was the name attached to it – these places were most likely to have a succession of names, each attached to a new owner. High status and/or linguistic shift to the English form were most likely to establish a name's long-term stability.

Unexpected support for the co-existence of late British and Anglo-Saxon populations comes from reconsiderations by Matthew Blake and Della Hooke (the latter in a far more wide-ranging paper) of place-names in *w(e)alh*, usually interpreted as a derogatory name for isolated, low status British communities. Their research indicates that the name may have carried no contemporary negative connotations; instead, it appears to have been particularly associated with specific kinds of resource in the wider landscape of major ecclesiastical centres – but beyond that remains difficult to explain.

Simon Draper and John Baker (the latter's research focused more widely on defensive place-names) consider *burh* place-names in widely divergent papers. Baker suggests that most *burhs* were probably military or defensive; Draper demonstrates that – in Wiltshire at least – the name was associated with middle Anglo-Saxon royal and ecclesiastical aristocratic residences and their associated minster churches. Such *burhs* were delimited by a large ditch and bank, and, as monumental designed landscapes, these were intended to frame and display the wealth and status of the Anglo-Saxon elite.

Evidence for hunting as a deliberately-ordered, rather than accidental, aspect of high status Anglo-Saxon culture is found in Jones' discussion of Uptons. The place-name was commonly applied between the 8th and 10th centuries to uncultivated locations within one and three miles of major royal and ecclesiastical manors. They can be convincingly mapped against the royal forests of the 13th century, and inadvertently provide a link with Draper's work on *burhs*: the Anglo-Saxon deer park at Clarendon lay just three miles from the *burh* at Alderbury.

Divergent interpretations within each of the themes briefly highlighted here self-evidently generate debate and discussion. That is *the* characteristic of excellent research. This is a book to buy or to borrow, to read and return to; its stimulating papers will linger in the mind,

no doubt significantly furthering scholarship on the Anglo-Saxon landscape for years to come.

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Interpreting the English Village. Landscape and Community at Shapwick, Somerset. By Mick Aston & Chris Gerrard. 19 × 25 cm. xv + 456 pp, 267 colour and b&w pls and figs. Oxford & Oakville: Windgather Press/Oxbow Books, 2013. ISBN 978-1-905119-45-5. Price: £25.00 pb.

Many of the recent advances in the study of medieval settlement have come from large-scale, long-term, multi-period projects. The first, and probably the best of these, was Wharram Percy, but this has been followed by those at Raunds and Whittlewood among others, and now Shapwick. To have the results from another village, here located near the margins of the nucleated zone, is an additional step forward in the development of our subject especially when this village was part of an estate of Glastonbury Abbey, the records of which are unmatched.

However, what makes this report different are the aims of the authors. About half of the book is a detailed, very readable and wide-ranging account of the history of the landscape of the village and parish of Shapwick from Mesolithic times to the present day although the concentration on post-Roman centuries is inevitable given the interests of the authors. For those of us with similar interests the result is a cornucopia of ideas and information that can be applied elsewhere. But the book equally is a detailed account of the philosophy, organisation and methods behind a splendid piece of Community Archaeology. Here, the whole village was drawn in and engaged with the work, aided by some of the best professional archaeologists, historians and others.

The consequence is a somewhat idiosyncratic book that reflects the long-held beliefs of Mick Aston. His lifetime of Extra-Mural teaching, combined with the best of *Time Team*, here prove that the involvement of the general public in archaeological work of the highest standard is both possible and successful. Placed between the detailed academic interpretations are descriptions and photographs of the parishioners of Shapwick excavating, test-pitting, surveying, field-walking and carrying out building recording, together with other pictures showing the professionals at work. There are also a number of delightful reconstructions of life in the parish at various times by Victor Ambrus, as well as over a hundred other pictures of finds. The various maps and diagrams are all informative. Innovative are Mick Aston's short fictional accounts (set at the head of each chapter) of life in Shapwick at various times based on the archaeological and historical evidence recovered.

For readers of this journal it is the academic results of all the work on settlement, fields, woods and wastes that will be the principal interest. Thus the problem of aceramic Saxon settlement in this south-western county is tackled head-on, with some success. Within Shapwick itself, despite the rarity of dateable finds, the

dispersed pattern of early mid-Saxon settlement has been recovered, largely from place-names recorded in the detailed late-medieval Glastonbury surveys. On the other hand it is principally field-walking as well as over 80 test pits and a number of larger excavations that established the date of the arrival of the village in the late 10th to early 11th century. The consequent series of linked settlement blocks in a ladder pattern was subjected to detailed metrological analysis that revealed marked differences in plot size between the blocks. It is concluded that Shapwick was deliberately planned, perhaps by Abbot Dunstan of Glastonbury between AD 940 and 967. The difference in plot size is explained as being either the result of a chronological development of the blocks, or possibly organised differences in tenurial status. Other notable discoveries included the site of a pre-village, probably timber, church and other buildings within an enclosure of at least 8th-century date on an isolated site on the remains of a Roman villa. This was perhaps the administrative centre of a monastic estate. The church was rebuilt in stone and used until the 14th century when a new parish church and moated manorial centre were erected within the village.

The post-medieval history of Shapwick is also unravelled. The long process of open-field enclosure and the development of the medieval moated manor into a still-surviving Elizabethan country house, with the earthwork remains of its gardens, are included. The final chapter contains a review of the evidence recovered which is then placed in its national and indeed international context.

All in all, the book is an excellent compilation of the history of Shapwick by authors who believe firmly in the continuity of landscape. Your reviewer has only one worry. This is the scatter-gun approach whereby almost too much information is presented. With so many different subjects and ideas the book could easily be ignored by both experts and the general public as not being entirely relevant to their interests. This would be a tragedy, for everyone will gain much from it.

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Shapwick & Winscombe: Contrasting Communities in the Somerset Landscape. Avon Local History and Archaeology. The Joseph Bettey Lecture 2011. (ALHA Books No 12). By Mick Aston. 15 × 21 cm. 43 pp, 29 b&w pls and figs. Bristol: Avon Local History & Archaeology, 2012. No ISBN. Price: £3.50 pb.

This booklet is based on a lecture by Mick Aston in honour of the renowned local historian, Joe Bettey. The printed version conveys the spirit of the original oral presentation, which means that the reader is carried along by great gusts of infectious enthusiasm. Shapwick and Winscombe were very different, but we can learn from the comparison. The two villages epitomise the contrasts between 'champion' and 'woodland': Shapwick had its nucleated village and open fields, while the people of Winscombe practised much pastoral husbandry and lived in dispersed hamlets. Shapwick had a single powerful lord, while Winscombe had a more heterogeneous society.

Aston tells us much about research methods: Shapwick's modern landscape was well-suited to field walking, and its project funding allowed for scientific soil analysis. Documentary research makes an important contribution for both villages, though the sources are more abundant for Shapwick. The emphasis at Winscombe has been on test-pitting (which is still in progress) and architectural analysis. Aston keeps his eye on the big picture and is concerned with the significance of environment, society and the agency in the formation of settlements. Two points that he might take into account when he comes to the final analysis should firstly be the thinking about Somerset landscapes which is coming from Exeter; and secondly, in portraying Shapwick people as compliant, even deferential towards their powerful lord, he should remember that another Glastonbury Abbey village with a similar settlement pattern and rural economy, at Badbury in Wiltshire, seethed with discontent and organised an effective uprising in 1348.

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A Prospering Society. Wiltshire in the Later Middle Ages. (Studies in Regional and Local History, Volume 10). By John Hare. 17 × 25 cm. xvi + 240 pp, 22 b&w pls and figs, 33 tables. Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2011. ISBN 978-1-902806-84-6. Price: £35.00, \$80.00 pb.

The University of Hertfordshire Press is establishing a reputation for publishing some of the sharpest works in English local history. In common with many other volumes in the growing 'Studies in Regional and Local History' series, a great strength of this absorbing new study by John Hare is its exploration of the changing dynamic between national trends and regional experiences, in this case in medieval Wiltshire.

Taking the period between the late 14th and early 16th centuries as its focus, the narrative is dominated by the effects and after-effects of the late medieval boom in the cloth-production industry, which left such a mark on the market towns of west Wiltshire in particular. Chapter 2 ('Regions and people') is probably the most relevant for settlement historians. Here Hare painstakingly charts the place of farming in the wider economy and its interrelationship with industrial growth, which opened up new international connections for merchants in towns but whose impact on the rural scene has never been charted in such fine detail. Subsequent fluctuations in the export market in the mid-15th century had a profound effect on the rural landscape; this study emphasises not only the outcomes of the downturn in terms of tension, conflict and settlement contraction but also the accompanying array of opportunities that this presented to rural people. The focus throughout is firmly on manorial records, with archaeology getting a more occasional look-in, as with the dramatic evidence of settlement shrinkage provided by chalkland earthworks (although how we might chart this physical process elsewhere in the county, where earthwork preservation is often poorer, remains moot).

The volume lays particular emphasis on the varied experiences of Wiltshire's different countrysides: the chalklands to the south and east, and the clay vales to the north. The later Middle Ages saw the respective economies of these regions diverge: on the chalklands, large-scale farming and direct management by lords continued longer than elsewhere and lay the foundations for gentry farming; on the claylands, the cloth industry saw 'family farms' predominate in a pastoral landscape where demesnes were broken up and social stratification was less pronounced.

Characterised by highest quality archival scholarship but accessibly written, this is a superb example of local history that always strives to look outwards as well as inwards.

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Wexford Castles. Landscape, Context and Settlement. (Irish Landscapes IV). By Billy Colfer. 24 × 30 cm. ix + 268 pp, 417 colour and b&w pls and figs. Cork: Cork University Press, 2013. ISBN 978-185918-493-6. Price: €49.00; £39.00 hb.

This book, one of three studies of the Wexford landscape in the same series by the same author, covers the development of fortified residences in the county from the Norman invasion of 1169–70 to the 17th century; the later fate of the buildings is addressed in a final section, titled 'legacy'. A gazetteer of tower houses with surviving fabric is also provided, as well as more summary listings of all known tower houses and fortified houses in the county.

The author adopts a narrative approach, in which archaeological and historical evidence is combined to trace the story of Wexford's castles, usefully identifying distinctive features as well as those of wider relevance. The story begins with the English colonial settlement of Wexford, probably the most politically effective of anywhere in the country. A number of mottes, ringworks and other earthwork defences were constructed in the earliest stage and their distribution indicates a clear defensive strategy for the region, protecting the south-east of the county from Gaelic invasion. The earliest stone castles were generally associated with borough foundations and with the lordship of William Marshal, responsible for the construction of that remarkable 13th-century survival, the fortified lighthouse tower of Hook. It is argued strongly that the manorial structure developed in the late 12th century served as the cement of the colony and determined the subsequent development of fortified sites.

A striking feature of the Wexford landscape at a slightly later stage is the abundance of moated sites. Firmly linked by Colfer to the lesser tenants of the Anglo-Norman colony, he maps their distribution to show the retreat of the colony to the area that became the 'Wexford Pale', where the tower houses of the 15th and 16th centuries that form the main focus of the book are concentrated.

These towers can appear isolated in the modern landscape, but were usually originally attached to a

hall and *bawn* or defensive enclosure; they became the standard form of residence for property owners with a perceived need to defend their lands and kin from the recurrent violence of the later Middle Ages. Although essentially private residences for the descendants and successors of the English colonisers, sometimes their construction was actively assisted by crown subventions; and churches were occasionally also fortified. The author presents an impressive typological and historical analysis of the buildings and their builders, and a discussion of tower-house economy, which sometimes preserved its medieval roots into the 18th century. The distinctively English character of this area is also discussed in terms of cultural practices and place-names.

The challenges of living in a constantly contested frontier zone, with both cross-cultural and sectarian pressures emerge clearly, the latter cast into even sharper relief by the crown seizure of monastic lands at the Reformation.

It is heartening to see an academic publisher go to so much trouble to produce such a well illustrated and carefully designed book at a reasonable price, which will make it much more likely to reach the wider readership for which it is clearly intended. At every stage images have been embedded in the text, and photographs are used particularly effectively to evoke the character of the present landscape. Lovers of castle studies and landscape history everywhere will find much that is of interest in this engrossing and detailed study.

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The Medieval Peasant House in Midland England. By Nat Alcock & Dan Miles. 22 x 29 cm. x + 326 pp, 170 colour and b&w pls and figs, 35 tables, plus CD-Rom. Oxford and Oakville: Oxbow Books, 2013. ISBN 978-1-84217-506-4. Price: £45.00 hb.

The vast majority of England's surviving medieval houses are concentrated in the southern half of the country and have attracted the attention of vernacularists, historians and archaeologists for over a century. There has been a growing realisation in recent years that these represent a broad spectrum of medieval rural – and in particular peasant – society. This book results from a study of almost 120 medieval houses in Buckinghamshire, Leicestershire, Oxfordshire and Warwickshire. It is divided into two parts: an analysis of the structural and documentary evidence, using the results of dendrochronology to date houses which survive from the early 13th century, and then detailed studies of a selection of houses. Alcock and Miles, both greatly respected figures in the study of vernacular architecture, are assisted by various contributors in both research and analysis. The selection of the houses for survey rests upon their identification as cruck-framed buildings, and the study area for potential to reveal new insights into the houses representative of the mass of village householders in this part of England. The authors have from the outset been guided by awareness of a contrast between the houses of this zone and those

areas further to the east (in East Anglia and the South-East) and west (in west Somerset, Devon and the Welsh Borders), which display a greater range of decorative treatment.

Consideration of the development and distribution of these houses is followed by detailed examination of the surveyed buildings, and consideration of how they evidence developments in planning, structure and carpentry from the 13th to 16th centuries. The survey revealed regional distinctions, for example in the survival of single-bay halls to the north, with cross-wings (often box-framed in contrast to the cruck framing employed for halls) frequently added after 1400. Box frames increasingly replaced crucks from the 15th century, and few crucks were built after about 1500. We see a peak of construction in the mid-15th century, but also a significant number coinciding with the increase in dereliction and decay of tenant holdings in the years after 1348. These reflected greater prosperity for those who benefitted from these changes through enlarged holdings and a shift to more mixed farming techniques, and the construction and subsequent adaptability of new houses within villages and also on roadsides and around common land in areas of dispersed settlement. The 15th century witnesses a marked increase in the differentiation in decoration and carpentry, although the documented houses (as at Stoneleigh in Warwickshire) relate to both yardland and much smaller holdings but also arise out of the process of amalgamation familiar to historians of rural and urban society in this period. One key finding, indeed, are the peasant origins of some base crucks and aisled halls, both forms of construction usually considered to mark high and even manorial status – a witness to aspiration at work in changing times.

The local studies have found that the adaptability of medieval houses to later subdivision, extension and the insertion of floors, and the continuity of farm holdings around them, have been critical factors in ensuring their survival. Nat Alcock and John Chevenix-Trench show how, in the Buckinghamshire village of Long Crendon, many medieval houses were conserved through subdivision into cottages as farms expanded and moved out of the village into enclosed fields. Similarly, the continuity of medieval holdings at Steventon was key in the retention of its medieval houses. Although they and the documents testify to an exceptionally busy land market, surviving houses can be associated with small as well as multiple holdings.

This book is a significant contribution to our understanding of the medieval peasant house. The distributions by date and type teasingly hint at significant distinctions between Roberts and Wrathmell's settlement provinces and raise questions about timber was harvested from both wood pasture and 'champion' landscapes. While, for example, detailed examination has shown that a single house in Mapledurham was built from the growth over 50 years of over an acre of woodland in a well-wooded Chilterns parish, it is less clear how trees and woodland would have been exploited in many of the village-based parishes in the Central Province. Further examination of their landscape context, and examination also of other surviving structures such as farm buildings, will surely reveal other insights into the use and perception of spaces within and around homes

and farmsteads, and open the way to exploring the ways that people lived, worked and thought.

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Glossary of Prehistoric and Historic Timber Buildings/ Glossar zum prähistorischen und historischen Holzbau. Introduction, Definitions and Drawings/ Einleitung, Definitionen und Zeichnungen. (Studien zur Landschafts- und Siedlungsgeschichte im südlichen Nordseegebiet 3). Edited by Lutz Volmer & W. Haio Zimmermann. 22 × 30 cm. 482 pp, 587 b&w figs. Rahden/ Westf: Verlag Marie Leidorf GmbH, 2012. ISBN 978-3-86757-333-7 (ISSN 1867-2744). Price: €59,80 hb.

This glossary originates from a proposal to collect terms for describing timber buildings reconstructed from archaeological excavations, but the scope was enlarged to include standing buildings, and to range from the early Neolithic to the 19th century. It contains definitions of about 900 terms in nine languages, encompassing a wide range of subjects, including building types and room functions, structure, framing, roofs and jointing. A 32-page introduction in English and German is followed by almost 400 pages of glossary entries extensively illustrated by clear line drawings.

The compilers acknowledge the complexities encountered as they discovered ideas and local terms from different regional cultures which had no concepts in common; although they collected words from numerous glossaries and monographs they found themselves compelled to suggest definitions that sometimes differ from familiar explanations, and herein lie both the potential and the problems at the heart of the book. Users will have to constantly remind themselves that many of the English language entries do not refer to English practice: a typical example is the definition of a *shelter shed* as a 'farm building situated on a pasture'. Loan translations between languages caused problems for the compilers, as with the medieval English *hall house*, which is very different from the German *Hallenhaus*. However, the definition of a *Rauchhaus* as an *open-hearth house* suggests potential phraseology for English archaeologists for distinguishing an earth-fast-post sub-vernacular building, with a hearth and open to the roof, from a later medieval open hall.

The editors deserve our sympathy: the German *Stuhlbalken* is given on p 295 as *tie beam*, but in the illustrated truss type this member has been described in French publications as an *entrait retroussé*, which translates into English as a *raised collar*, whereas in English papers it has been called both a *tiebeam* and a *raised tiebeam*. There are no straightforward solutions to such dilemmas. Nevertheless, the appointment of an English editor prior to the final draft stage would have been advantageous. *Nebenhaus*, translated as *adjoining house*, would be more elegantly defined as *subsidiary dwelling*. Likewise, *Holzmassivbau* would have been better translated as *mass-walled timber building* than as *massive timber building*. More seriously, there are numerous pitfalls for the unwary: *Raumsstruktur mit seitlicher Feuerstelle* is translated as *lateral chimney*

stack plan, but one of my own illustrations reproduced here shows a chimney on the gable end. A sling brace (*Schubverteiler*) should never be categorised as a post. Although there are several illustrations of crown-posts they are not adequately explained. This glossary is stronger on continental wall framing than most others, and the section on woodworking tools and techniques is more straightforward.

Perhaps the attempted scope was too wide, but the glossary does offer a significant contribution to the international study of timber-framed buildings and, despite the problems, it deserves a place on the (strong) bookshelves of academics with a European perspective.

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Stanley Abbey and its Estates 1151–c1640. A Cistercian Monastery and its Impact on the Landscape. (British Archaeological Reports British Series 566). By Graham Brown. 21 × 30 cm. ix + 132 pp, 70 colour and b&w pls and figs, 13 tables. Oxford: Archaeopress, 2012. ISBN 978-1-4073-1040-4. Price: £40.00 pb.

This book, while not large, is workman-like. Based on a thesis, it capitalises on hachured surveys of Stanley Abbey and its granges, and, like the most recent work, Brown's assessment starts with a detailed study of the pre-monastic landscape, on the greensand between Wiltshire's 'chalk' and the 'cheese' country. Here he seeks the physical 'desert' so assertively demanded by contemporary Cistercian writing, but Chippenham Forest was no such place, being a long-settled landscape, very productive of valuable resources. The abbey's original site (at nearby Loxwell) was chosen, instead, not for its desert-like quality, but because of the long-standing ritual and symbolic importance of its strong spring, from which water was channelled to the later abbey site, despite more proximate sources being available.

Stanley's buildings were excavated by Brakspear in 1905, but new earthwork surveys of the precinct reveal a 'landscape of lordship and seclusion' – Brown adopting here an approach gathered from numerous landscape studies during the last generation. Also imitating recent studies, Stanley's granges are assessed as contributors of resources to the monastic economy, although their assessment is largely based on documentary sources. All the abbey's holdings (including its urban ones) are reviewed, including their churches, but both the review and its conclusions are – necessarily – superficial. Several old chestnuts are re-examined: was Stanley a depopulator; was it a great assart; and were its granges converted to manors by the 16th century? Answering the last question, however, Brown's conclusion that 'morphology and function of a grange should be compared to secular farmsteads' seems slightly underwhelming.

After the Dissolution, Stanley passed to the Baynton family, who were notable puritans. Here Brown finds evidence to support Paul Everson's characterisation of fishing as a 'quietist' activity and suggests that water-gardens are essentially 'puritan' in spirit. Regrettably this controversial insight is not pursued, and little is said

about Bayntun's house either, though Brown notes that Cistercian 'social separation' was maintained by its new park. Indeed architectural analysis is generally absent here. Brown's most extended architectural discussion is his interesting study of a 1612 document, comparing the quality of buildings occupied by differing classes of tenants, but his conclusion that Stanley's post-Dissolution changes encapsulate 'secularisation' left me behind, I'm afraid (what does that really mean?). Sellar and Yeatman would have thought it a 'good thing', however, because it led to housing and agricultural improvement.

For readers of this journal, *Stanley Abbey* is perhaps of greatest interest when it generalises about landscape impact: for example, Brown is the first to publish a map showing how many Cistercian houses were either founded within the Central Province of Settlement (as defined in B K Roberts and S Wrathmell's *An Atlas of Rural Settlement in England*, London 2000) or were close to it, although, again, he does not pursue his valuable observation. On the other hand, his definition of a landscape study as 'archaeology, architecture, documents and map evidence [brought together] in a holistic, 'landscape' manner' is undoubtedly problematic. It is surely important and worthwhile to pursue an interdisciplinary approach, but does that constitute a 'landscape study'? Holistic studies like Stanley are valuable in their own right, nevertheless, and a more complex 'landscape of perceptions' is occasionally glimpsed here also. Recent understandings of 'landscape' extend well beyond the proper study of all available sources of evidence of course and, in the end, Brown's message in *Stanley Abbey* is a familiar one: earthwork and air-photo survey can certainly add important substance to a documentary account.

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Savernake Forest: Continuity and Change in a Wooded Landscape. (British Archaeological Reports Series 555. By Ben Lennon. 21 × 30 cm. viii + 179 pp, 168 b&w pls and figs, 4 tables. Oxford: Archaeopress, 2012. ISBN 978-1-4073-0946-0. Price: £32.00 pb.

I came to this review knowing nothing of Savernake Forest but with a keen professional interest in both landscape archaeology and of the historic environment in woodland / the woodland historic environment. I found the book to be an authoritative and stimulating study.

Savernake Forest is set within the rolling North Wessex Downs. It was established as a Royal Forest in the 12th century and is renowned for its assarts and veteran oaks. The author states that the objective was "to seek to better understand the processes involved in landscape change that have resulted in the highly distinctive character types found in the British Isles", using the landscape history of the royal forest as a multi-disciplinary exemplar case study to argue that "the processes involved in landscape dynamics are universally applicable, but that the various factors interact in subtly different ways in order to create distinctive landscape signatures". An ambitious

objective: to inform national landscape processes and chronologies by investigating the dynamics of a very complex individual landscape. Is it successful?

A fine historical overview of Savernake Forest sets the scene. This is then followed by a theoretical discussion of landscape interpretation (which veers from the simplistic to the abstract) and a description of various 'factors of continuity and change'. These are described as *limiting factors* (the physical environment; pre-existing landscapes; and technology) and *driving forces* (social organisation; economic activity; political influences; and cultural expression).

This reviewer believes that any attempt to categorise and define such factors in relation to all landscapes is akin to clutching at straws. I do not doubt that such factors exist – but that they are many in number and influence. While it may be admirable to try to catalogue and define them, any attempt to seek uniform 'rules' is doomed to failure. However, the Savernake Forest case study provides several detailed investigations that demonstrate the role of the factors described above. The methods and technologies employed in the case study are impressive and extensive, ranging from archaeological survey through historical investigation to veteran tree surveys and LiDAR survey; and the objective framework provided by the 'factors of continuity and change' proves to be very useful, the factors guiding the presentation of individual evidence-based processes in the context of the complex Savernake Forest landscape.

Ultimately, the study is a very interesting discussion of landscape history and interpretation, at times inspiring and at times flawed, but almost always arresting. To provide just one example, the traditional (and, let's face it, comfortable) idea of a landscape 'palimpsest' is discarded to be replaced with the fantastic concept of landscape 'signature' (a dynamic pattern unique to a landscape). As an individual landscape history, *Savernake Forest* is well written and comprehensive; and as an exemplar landscape history it is well presented and considered. The success of the study lies within its multi-disciplinary framework (any student of landscape history would do well to consider Lennon's 'factors of continuity and change') and in recognising that this useful framework is far from processual.

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Manure Matters. Historical, Archaeological and Ethnographic Perspectives. Edited by Richard Jones. 16 × 24 cm. xi + 249 pp, 17 b&w pls and figs, 8 tables. Farnham: Ashgate, 2012. ISBN 978-0-7546-6988-3. Price: £65.00 hb.

At 35 pence per page of text, this library-priced book definitely falls into the 'pick me up when I'm remaindered' category. *Manure Matters* is offered in a missionary spirit; the second word of its clever title is intended mostly as a verb, although the necessary discursiveness and diversity of the book make it also interpretable as a noun. Among the 12 contributions are two 'prehistoric' papers (one about the extraordinary

late Bronze Age ‘middens’ of southern England), three concerned with the palaeo-environmental methods and interpretation, two about the theory and practice of manuring outside Europe (in India and in the Arab world), one about manure and middens in English place-names, and one dealing with the relevance of ethnography to the interpretation of field-walking results (in Greece). Essentially this book is a pioneering work of reference, although such is the scope of the topic that, as its editor acknowledges, ‘everyone will have spotted major gaps’. This subject is a good deal more complex and nuanced than one might at first imagine. The range extends from soil chemistry to pre-Enlightenment understandings of the composition and action of manure, from the interpretation of soil micromorphology to the reading of early agricultural treatises. Inevitably, several papers address concepts of purity and pollution. Manure has been fundamental to human existence for a long time, of course, but mindsets are crucial.

This reviewer could not help making a link between the south Indian family which, before marrying off its daughter, makes a point of inspecting the size of the compost heap of her prospective new family, and British prehistorians’ suggestions that in the later Bronze Age ‘major social distinctions and belief systems drew upon the symbolism of agricultural production and fertility’ so that the big middens (up to 5m high at Potterne in Wiltshire) may have been ‘hoards of fertility, or conspicuous mounds of excess’. Once upon a time, perhaps, more portentous beings than cockerels crowed on their own dunghills! Spread across several papers is the persistent reminder that the field-walker’s time-hallowed interpretation of a ‘thin background scatter of pottery’ as a general indicator of manuring may well be simplistic. In early 20th-century Greece, for instance, sharp potsherds deposited in the soil would have cut the ploughman’s often bare feet. In medieval England, manure on demesne land was different from that spread on the peasants’ own holdings. In more difficult environments like Fair Isle, hard choices had to be made about where to spread the manure, and soils were often man-made (or more likely woman-made, as on St Kilda).

Manure Matters is hard to read from cover to cover. However, like a good midden, it is well worth sifting through for the information and insights which it contains (not to mention a very useful bibliography). Many readers will probably regard its subject matter as ultimately destined to contribute to other, more ‘mainstream’ narratives. However, in producing this book Richard Jones is to be congratulated on making a compelling case for the fertility of this field.

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The Archaeology of Medieval Europe. Volume 2. Twelfth to Sixteenth Centuries. (Acta Jutlandica/Humanities Series 2011/9). Edited by Martin Carver & Jan Klápště. 17 × 24 cm. 605 pp, 291 colour and b&w pls, figs and tables. Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2011. ISBN 978-87-7934-291-0 (ISSN 0065-1354, 0901-0556). Price: KR850, £50.00 pb.

This volume is no simple generalised overview of medieval Europe in terms of its history supported by case studies of familiar castles, cathedrals, town walls, pottery types and gold coins. Nor is it one that looks wholly to territories well studied to provide a simplistic or contrasting North-West Europe and central Mediterranean image of the Middle Ages. Rather, this is a work that brings together an extremely wide range of archaeological practitioners from across the whole of Europe to give a properly rich and varied exploration of the multiple strands of the built and lived medieval world. Even the best-read scholar will, I am sure, be informed and intrigued by contributions as varied as ‘Pagan-Christian co-existence in medieval Estonia’ (by Heiki Valk), ‘How cathedrals collapse: the case of Beauvais’ (Jacques Heyman), ‘Travel on snow and ice’ (J.-P. Taavitsainen) and ‘Stories from seeds: the late thirteenth century granary at Durfort (Tarn)’ (Marie-Pierre Ruas). These are not, I should note, core chapters in themselves, but some of the many ‘box’ pieces used to illustrate the twelve chapters that populate this 600 page publication. In brief, there are three to four chapters that make up the three main embracing ‘Parts’ – Habitat, Power and Spirituality (these each introduced by Martin Carver). The latter Part spans the archaeology and materiality of belief (including private religion); religious buildings (including Jewish and Spanish Islamic structures); and hospitals, burials and memory. The ‘Power’ chapters consider castle and communal fortifications (one of the few sections in the volume to largely ignore the Mediterranean regions); crafts and industries (including mining and textiles); trade and travel (from the Hanseatic League to coins and trans-Saharan activities); and towns (perhaps surprisingly, one of the shortest of the book’s chapters). To this reviewer, the strongest Part is ‘Habitat’, with chapters on the environment (with very useful case studies from France, Holland and Greenland, exploring themes such as reclamation and river management, as well as taming the wild in terms of exploitation animal life); rural settlement and farming (highlighting four villages as case studies, plus interesting discussion by Estelle Herscher on diet from diverse sites and contexts in the French Alps – from infants to miners); housing (here limited to both English and Spanish discussions, the latter including a consideration by Julio Navarro Palazón and Pedro Jiménez Castillo of gardens in Al-Andalus); and on material culture. This final chapter (by Else Roesdahl and Frans Verhaeghe) is offered as a ‘user-guide’ but is a very clear, tidy review of wide data, talking through (often daily) aspects of dining, display, dress, relaxing, as well as furniture.

The breadth of coverage is a direct reflection of the roots and aims of the volume which go back to the 4th European Symposium for Teachers of Medieval Archaeology (ESTMA) held in Seville in 1999, when the prompt came to produce a sizeable yet manageable and authoritative textbook resource on medieval Europe’s growing and increasingly important archaeology. Clearly this was no overnight task, but the long gestation has been worthwhile. Readers of this journal might well know of or possess the first volume (2007) covering the 8th to 12th centuries AD (edited by James Graham-Campbell with Magdalena Valor), which was an equally wide-ranging synthesis and did much to show the

interconnectedness of Europe. It certainly whetted the appetite for volume 2 and I for one feel that I will gain plenty of sustenance from this; and as publications in English (though I very much hope that there will be moves to have translations in other languages) the two volumes will enable my students to engage more fully with the wide medieval European world.

NEIL CHRISTIE

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A History of the County of Stafford. Volume XI. Audley, Keele and Trentham. (The Victoria History of the Counties of England). Edited by Nigel J Tringham. 21 × 31 cm. xxi + 297 pp, 80 b&w pls, figs and maps, 13 tables. Woodbridge: Institute of Historical Research, University of London/Boydell & Brewer, 2013. ISBN 978-1-904356-41-7. Price: £95.00 hb.

Your reviewer approached this volume with particular pleasure for two reasons. Firstly, it is another magnificent addition to the history of the county of his birth where, in the 1940s, he began to learn about the English landscape. And, secondly, because it contains a grand account of the University of Keele where, in the 1950s, the most important event of his life took place – he was taught how to think!

More relevant to our discipline, perhaps, the volume is one of the new, expanded and detailed works of the VCH now appearing. While the layout is still under the old general subject headings, it incorporates both recent national scholarship and the staggering amount of local history research completed in the last few years. Even landscape history is well covered, particularly in the development of the 18th- and 19th-century extractive industries of the area and the excellent account of

Trentham house, park and village. All the other familiar topics are now greatly enhanced, with a plethora of maps, plans, photographs and tables. The result is a first-class piece of work.

This excellence, however, has its drawbacks. Despite the 220-odd pages, only five ancient and subsequently much altered parishes are covered. And these are in two quite separate and different blocks to the south and west of the Stoke-on-Trent conurbation, the existence of which, at least in recent times, was the major influence on their history. Irritatingly, although inevitably, the greatly extended subject sections lead also to a good deal of repetition, especially in regard to land and landowners. Yet most of it is so good that such criticism is unfair.

More serious, at least for the readers of this journal, is the lack of any real analysis of early medieval settlement in the area and of its links with prehistoric and Roman occupation. Beyond an examination of early place-names and the noting of occasional habitative names in the 12th and 13th centuries, there is virtually no mention of medieval rural settlement or fields. One cannot blame the distinguished editor for this. The written evidence does not survive. Yet the resulting explanation of empty, almost totally forested, landscapes existing until the 14th century does not convince this reviewer. While probably historically honest, he regards this as philosophically unsound, the last refuge of a documentary historian. A close examination of large-scale 19th-century OS maps, and even of Map 21 here, reveals examples of reversed-S shape strips suggestive of former divided fields, perhaps associated with numerous farmsteads that are not documented until post-medieval times.

Ah well, we can't have everything, even in Staffordshire.

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