

BOOK REVIEWS

Edited by NEIL CHRISTIE

Detecting and Understanding Historic Landscapes. (Post-Classical Archaeologies, Studies, 2). Edited by Alexandra Chavarría Arnau & Andrew Reynolds. 17 × 24 cm. 423 pp, 300 colour and b&w pls and figs, 10 tables. Mantua: SAP Società Archaeologica srl, 2015. ISBN 978-8-887115-99-4 (ISSN 2039-7895). Price: €42.00 pb.

This is the second publication in a new series from the team behind the relatively recent European journal *Post-Classical Archaeologies* (first issue in 2011). The monograph editors' brief is to generate volumes reflecting 'the changing intellectual and methodological ambitions of post-classical archaeology' and to promote debate alongside 'disseminating quality research among university students and to a wider general audience'. The first monograph appeared already in 2011: G.P. Brogiolo, *Le origini della città medievale* – an excellent and wide-ranging review of late Roman to early medieval urbanism with examples primarily drawn from Italy, Spain and France. This new publication takes another broad theme, namely Historic Landscapes, and draws together experts (academic and field-based) from Italy, Spain, France, Belgium, England and Ireland (the latter pair contributing seven of the 16 contributions); many of the papers derive from a 2013 summer school event held in the Euganean Hills near Padua – an area used for a couple of the case studies discussed by Brogiolo (pp 376–81). Texts are all in English, but with the authorship and case studies generating a bibliography that spans many other languages. The English translations are pretty good, but with some awkward or crude phrasing evident; closer editing was needed to improve these and pick up on other slips (e.g. a missing 'n' in Carnuntum in the large title of Case Study 6.1 on p. 144). A few papers are quite heavy-going, such as Armando De Guio's text on crops and vegetation indices, with multiple abbreviations, formulae, technical data and tables and hardware references cited which will lose many a reader. Likewise Rosa Lasaponara & Nicola Masini's paper on SAR (Satellite Synthetic Aperture Radar) with its table of system parameters and text on satellite technologies. Case studies here, as for a few other contributions are not post-classical, but prehistoric, Greek and Roman – but that is no big issue since the authors are often flagging the applicability of such technologies to landscapes as a whole.

The introductory paper by Chavarría Arnau frames the volume and outlines the key approaches described and discussed by the other contributors. Her Figure 3 (p 16) tidily tabulates the categories of 'Historic landscapes', 'Tools', 'Historical questions' and 'Social archaeology' and attaches the themes, evidence sources and goals of these ('Historic landscapes', for example, comprises 'land use patterns', 'connective infrastructures' and 'physical structures'). After Reynolds' paper on new approaches to Anglo-Saxon landscapes (including

questions of tracing myth and genealogy), contributions are practical-oriented: from aerial reconnaissance, LiDAR and satellite mapping (David Cowley; Simon Crutchley; Lasaponara & Masini); to vegetation, soils and archaeobotany (De Guio; Robert Langohr *et al.*; Meriel McClatchie); landscape characterisation and plan analysis/archaeogeography (Stephen Rippon; Robin Brigand); plus animals (Naomi Sykes), place-names (Richard Jones) and hydraulic energy (Colin Rynne). Clever inclusions are papers on landscape and sustainability (Carlo Citter) and 'ethnoecology' and social involvement (i.e. community archaeology) in rural projects (Jose Maria Martín Civantos). The collection closes with Brogiolo reviewing the methods, approaches and strategies for understanding historic landscapes based on the efforts and results of University of Padua teams in diverse areas of north Italy and the Adriatic in the last decade and a half, touching on landscape stratification and land exploitation models.

Detecting and Understanding Historic Landscapes is also an attractive volume in terms of the range of its numerous and well-reproduced colour illustrations; however, sometimes multiple small images are used which lose legibility. We likewise benefit from a sizeable array of case studies which follow (most of) the mainly practical- or field-oriented papers (e.g. Rynne has case studies 10.1 High Island and its Atlantic mill landscape; 10.2 on Bordesley Abbey's mills and ponds; and 10.3 on Medieval drop tower mills and irrigation networks in the Balearic Islands; and Brigand has seven case studies, including ones on aerial photos and cadastral maps (8.1), centuriation (8.4 and 8.6), medieval 'foundation parcellings' (8.5) and Avignon's urban morphology (8.7)). Rather big headings introduce each case study, and papers end with compact 'Further Reading' boxes.

All papers are informative and pretty accessible, and they combine to good effect here; although a number of papers fail to focus on post-classical landscapes and related evidence, the highlighting of the methods and their potential is the underlying aim of this very useful volume.

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Agrarian Archaeology in Early Medieval Europe. (= *Quaternary International. The Journal of the International Union for Quaternary Research*, Volume 346, Sept 2014). Edited by Juan Antonio Quirós Castillo. 21 × 28 cm. 161 pp, 107 b&w pls and figs, 63 tables. Oxford: Elsevier, 2014. ISSN 1040-6182.

In recent decades, analyses of farming and husbandry activities in historic periods using diverse and multiple archaeological techniques have increased significantly.

For long, arguably, studies in prehistory have better employed approaches such as bioarchaeology or palaeoclimatology; whereas greater weight in historic contexts has gone to what (often scant) written sources – documents, deeds, charters, place- and field-names, etc. – do (or do not) tell us about these aspects of rural life. Historic landscape archaeology is now, for some regions, much more advanced, and above all for the context of the Early Middle Ages, with a growing interest in the palaeoenvironmental disciplines and their guide to formulating fuller reconstructions of landscapes.

In 2012, a conference held in the Basque Country (Spain) gathered together scholars linked to some of the main projects dedicated to exploring this key timespan, with a particular geographical emphasis on the southern regions of Europe – zones generally much less developed in this field than those of the Anglo-Saxon research community. From this academic meeting, overseen by J.A. Quirós, comes *Agrarian Archaeology in Early Medieval Europe* (published within a volume of *Quaternary Research*), featuring 12 papers and a solid, informative contextual Introduction by the editor.

Different archaeological regions and sites in Spain and northern Italy are analysed (for example papers by A. Vigil-Escalera *et al.*, J.A. Quirós *et al.*, M. Fernández Mier *et al.* and M. Rottolli). Many of these show comparable re-organisations of farming and husbandry strategies, based on diversification and non-specialised peasant communities. Such changes in agrarian production, as well as in settlement patterns, are also evident in papers by U. Iwaszczuk and M.S. Stanc and L. Bejenaru dedicated to Eastern European case studies (specifically in Poland and Romania – areas conventionally less known to western scholars). Three articles closer to home explore England in general (T. O'Connor), East Anglia (P.J. Crabtree) and Ireland (F. McCormick).

It is interesting to observe how the archaeobiological approaches predominantly used by prehistorians have gained prominence within early medieval studies. Traditionally, rural communities and their living standards were associated, on many levels, with 'primitivism', linked no doubt to crude images of the landscape and its exploitation after the collapse of Roman world. This collection of papers displays how this traditional idea is simplistic and reductionist, and ignores the complexity of these rural communities and their relationships with prevailing political powers; after all, these peasants paid taxes and rents, lived in a wider society, became part of an economy and trade model and, obviously, interacted with the landscapes around.

In sum, this is a compact but very useful publication, offering snapshots of trends in early medieval agricultural production and social dynamics which will interest many readers and bring to a British audience especially case studies that will perhaps be novel. As is evident from the many interesting contributions in *Agrarian Archaeology in Early Medieval Europe*, these European landscapes were intensively transformed after Rome and this volume offers important new approaches and data to interpreting these transformations.

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*The Significance of the Place-Name Element *funta in the Early Middle Ages.* (British Archaeological Reports British Series 614). By Jillian Hawkins. 21 × 30 cm. viii + 211 pp, 58 colour and b&w figures, 10 tables. Oxford: Archaeopress, 2015, ISBN 978-1-407313-75-7. Price: £53.00 pb.

In this well supported and researched volume, based on a PhD (2012) with the University of Winchester, the author makes a plausible, though not entirely watertight case for the significance of the name-type **funta*. In outline: a group of settlements incorporating the term **funta* indicate boundaries between early Anglo-Saxon and (what are referred to as) 'indigene' or 'native British' populations and polities. The term is to be seen as either a direct loan-word from the Latin *fontana* (spring) or a Brythonic term derived from Latin which acquired significance in Old English. As with any study of this period, Hawkins' thesis is hampered by lack of data: historical evidence is limited and biased, settlement archaeology can be ephemeral and toponymics are reliant on what passes into the landscape record or survives to the present.

The book presents a detailed assertion that these 21 attested **funta* places had specific status in the South-East of post-Roman Britain, with outliers in Cambridgeshire and Warwickshire. The question then asked is why, given the alternative toponyms which indicate similar characteristics, this one survives through the Anglo-Saxon period for these particular places? Was there something specific about them which affords special nomenclature? What was it, given the precise nature of Anglo-Saxon toponymy, that marked this British/ Latin term as being better suited to describe these places and if so, what was it?

Hawkins provides close analysis of each location, grouped by apparent geographical proximity. The local analyses incorporate data from the later Iron Age, Roman and early Anglo-Saxon periods, discussing place-name, historical and archaeological evidence for each period in the area and location. The case presented is that these places were deliberately located on ancient boundaries or became boundary markers in themselves, between (incoming) Anglo-Saxon and indigenous population groups.

The Gazetteer in the appendices is highly detailed and is, arguably, where the research comes to life. While the quality of the photographic images is overall excellent, much more attention should have been paid to the maps, whose reproduction is sometimes poor and often would have merited re-drawing.

There is definitely something in the kernel of Hawkins' arguments which requires detailed examination. In many cases, however, the absence of archaeological or toponymic evidence for early Anglo-Saxon settlement is rather incautiously cited as evidence that an area lay under the control of the 'indigenous' population. For example, in the area of the Sussex–Hampshire coast these absences are considered as proof that 'no incomers were allowed on the Gosport peninsula or on the river below Funtley' (p 35). This is one example of several where the accepted axiom that 'absence of evidence is not evidence of absence' has been overlooked. Hawkins' arguments may prove to be correct but only two or three

significant finds in any of these zones will undermine the hypothesis.

Overall this is a tidily produced volume which shows much detailed research; however, whether it makes its case conclusively remains to be decided.

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'Middle Saxon' Settlement and Society: The Changing Rural Communities of Central and Eastern England. (Archaeopress Archaeology). By Duncan W Wright. 21 × 30 cm. v + 205 pp, 95 &w figs, 6 tables. Oxford: Archaeopress, 2015. ISBN 978-1-784911-25-6. Price: £35.00 pb.

This volume explores the implications of the growing body of archaeological evidence of pre-ninth-century date within currently occupied rural settlements. It begins with an introduction to 'Middle Saxon' (sic) settlement, reviewing and critiquing a wide range of previous research into settlement and landscape change between the fifth and eleventh centuries AD, followed by a short chapter on approaches and methods. A set of five chapters then review a range of excavated evidence dating to c. AD 650–850 in and around currently occupied rural settlements (CORS) within each of the counties encompassed by the volume (Northamptonshire, Oxfordshire, Wiltshire, Cambridgeshire and Norfolk). These chapters focus on excavated evidence, much from development-led projects, conducted between 1991 and 2009, including Wantage, Yarnton, Malmesbury, Market Lavington, Fordham, Ely, Launditch, Sedgford, Whissonsett and Shipham. Some chapters also include data from metal detecting or field-walking. A short discussion chapter is then followed by a half-page conclusion.

Covering such a wide area, especially in fewer than 200 pages, is inevitably an ambitious undertaking. The volume is useful in bringing together a diverse range of excavated evidence for human activity of seventh- to ninth-century date which, because it mostly derives from developer-funded work which remains within the realms of grey literature, can too often be overlooked and yet can be useful because excavation sites are frequently large enough to reveal features which may relate to settlement. Wright's analysis shows that, of the excavations conducted within CORS which encountered archaeological deposits, around a third revealed 'Middle Saxon' artefacts or features – a figure higher than might perhaps be anticipated. This evidence is then used to challenge the view that settlements of fifth- to ninth-century date were mostly small, short-lived and dispersed, by showing how several of the CORS excavations revealed buildings associated with ditches, some covering large areas and possibly involving a degree of planning. Wright suggests that the Middle Anglo-Saxon period was one of hitherto unsuspectedly high levels of investment in settlement and landscape driven by intimately interconnected secular and religious elites; but he rejects the idea that the resulting features might represent the origins of nucleated villages, offering instead the idea of a two-stage process in which

changes *after* the mid-ninth century 'were decisive in determining later medieval village form' (p. 182).

The author must be credited for a huge amount of painstaking work in scouring excavation reports for relevant evidence. However, I found this published account somewhat problematic. The volume contains many misspellings and typographic errors, while referencing, particularly of illustrations, is poor, and much unnecessary repetition comes within the county chapters. There are also inconsistencies in the range of material included in these chapters – some include PAS data, for example, while others do not. There are more substantive slips, such as not sourcing accurate locational data when mapping test pit sites onto nineteenth-century maps, leaving derived arguments premised on misapprehensions. The lack of a tabulated list of all excavations included in the study, and of any indication as to how many of the interventions included in the survey recorded no archaeological features at all, makes it difficult to assess the validity of the 30% figure. Dating is often slippery – Wright defines his research at the outset as 'dedicated to the archaeology of the fifth to seventh centuries' (p. 3) but his data relate mostly to the seventh to ninth centuries, while his justification of the (extensively used) term 'Middle Saxon' (also p. 3) is confused and this term certainly jars when referring to 'Middle Saxon' material as far east as Norfolk. The penultimate discussion chapter sees ideas proposed and then qualified, and so it is, for example, unclear if Wright considers the 'Middle Saxon' period to be one of extensive new permanent settlement foundation, or what he sees its significance to be for later settlement development. A key wider issue – whether or not common developmental trajectories might be expected at all in the seventh and eighth centuries across such a large and diverse region – is hardly discussed.

Overall, while the volume brings together much useful information and highlights the value of excavated evidence from CORS and the importance of the 'Middle Saxon' period, the resultant discussions about the significance of this material for medieval settlement studies are, to my mind, not clearly articulated or consistently effective.

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A Late Saxon Village and Medieval Manor: Excavations at Botolph Bridge, Orton Longueville, Peterborough. (East Anglian Archaeology 153). By Paul Spoerry & Rob Atkins. 21 × 30 cm. xii + 184 pp, 1 colour fig, 83 b&w pls and figs, 33 tables. Bar Hill: Oxford Archaeology East, 2014. ISBN 978-1-907588-05-1. Price: £20.00 pb.

Botolph Bridge was a medieval village just west of Peterborough, on a crossing of the River Nene. Probably with pre-Conquest origins, documents suggest that the village was reasonably prosperous before later medieval decline, with its church being demolished in 1695. Earthwork surveys show a village of three parts, with manor and church just off the floodplain, then a green-

like area at some stage under ridge and furrow cultivation, and then on the east a row of at least seven regular tofts. Gobbled up for modern housing as Peterborough expanded, only a limited area was excavated: in 1987 part of one toft, and in 2000 an area along the edge of the manorial site. Levels of preservation were generally poor and this, combined with some complex archaeology, has meant that matters are not always clear cut.

The gravel terrace was an attractive zone for human activity and settlement before what became Botolph Bridge grew up in the century or two after AD 700, the best preserved structure of this first phase being a post-built hall, perhaps long-lived. Change came around the early eleventh century with a major landscape reorganisation, with regular tofts being laid out in the angle of two routeways. There was again substantial change in the later twelfth century, with alterations to common boundaries and the construction of a two-bayed aisled hall with a detached kitchen to one side – presumably the manor. Within a century this may have been given up for a stone-built complex about 50 m to the north-west, alongside the settlement's church. About 100 m to the south a lesser, but still fairly substantial farm property was also rebuilt in stone around this time, although the few documentary sources imply that Botolph Bridge was by then in decline, and reckoned only a hamlet. That said, after the Black Death both areas saw investment in new stone buildings, although the fragmentary nature of the remains makes interpretation of form and function difficult. On both sites, occupation came to an end by c. 1600.

Bibliographic and other clues suggest that this report was drafted soon after excavations finished in 2000. For all its shortcomings – mostly due to the nature of the site and the circumstances of the excavation – it is good to see the report out. But it is not the easiest of texts to read: wordier than would be expected today, and with much speculation precipitated by the poorly preserved and the unknown. Nonetheless, the story of Botolph Bridge and its changing plan and character over almost a millennium is of interest, much of it fitting with what has emerged with greater clarity elsewhere.

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Offa's Dyke: Landscape and Hegemony in Eighth-Century Britain. By Keith Ray & Ian Bapty. 18 × 25 cm. xvi + 448 pp, 180 colour and b&w pls and figs. Oxford & Havertown: Windgather Press, 2016. ISBN 978-1-905119-35-6. Price: £29.95 pb.

Offa's Dyke, at 81 miles the greatest earthwork in the British Isles and the one that in local tradition commonly substitutes for the political border between Wales and England, has been the subject of several detailed studies over the last century: by Cyril Fox in the period between 1926 and 1934 based on extensive field survey and occasional excavation; Frank Noble in the third quarter of the century, whose approach was also field-based; and by David Hill and Margaret Worthington, whose excavation and survey work ran from the 1970s to the 1990s. To these can now be added this long-awaited

synthesis by Keith Ray and Ian Bapty, though it must be noted that almost the entire preparation of this substantial tome, if not the thinking behind it, is the work of the first-named author.

The volume is broken down into three parts. The first, the 'Background Reviewed', defines the dyke in terms of its physical character, its date and attribution, and its shared characteristics with other early medieval linear earthworks, followed by a detailed description of its course through the border counties. Next is an analysis of past references and research on the dyke from Asser's ninth-century mention through to the present, the section ending with an outline of the historic kingdom of Mercia. The second part, 'The Evidence Explored', examines at the micro-level the dyke's placement in the landscape and its changing structure, presenting lasting results from the authors' detailed field examinations, before theorising on how it was built and how it might have operated in practice.

The third part, 'The Context Re-appraised', looks at the contemporary frontier landscape through which the dyke passed, conceding how few useful data are available, before branching out into the political geography evinced by the Tribal Hidage, Domesday Book and the documentary underpinning of the kingdom of Powys. Next comes an entertaining – if speculative – search for Welsh centres of power that might have existed opposite particularly elaborate stretches of dyke, and then a lengthy consideration of the Mercian hegemony and its material remains, from the theory of overlordship to the Staffordshire hoard. Finally, the authors return to the question of function and meaning, presenting a 'revised' explanation of the dyke as a multi-purpose earthwork marking a frontier zone rather than a frontier line.

There is a growing sense that *Offa's Dyke* is really two books under one cover. While the earthwork is undeniably the focus of the first half of the book, the Mercian political scene under Offa and Coenwulf takes central stage in the later part, with the dyke little more than a peg for a broader assessment of Mercia. This aside, what is offered is a substantive text of over 400 pages that does justice to this great earthwork, but that is not a straightforward read and with concision not its strongest suit. It is accompanied by 45 pages of end-notes, which are rewarding for their provision of the explanatory detail and thinking behind many of the main arguments, rather than simply the perpetual references that are the staple fodder in some publications. Numerous illustrations add to the text, though there are places where a plan would have been more informative than the published photo of the earthwork. Such minor quibbles as there are can readily be put aside – this is an important contribution to the ongoing study on Offa's Dyke, a valuable successor to Cyril Fox's British Academy volume. The latter is not obsolete, however, for it still provides the baseline description of the dyke's course, and the authors of this new volume would not claim to have resolved the major issues of date and function that have taxed historians for many years; nonetheless, they have certainly provided us with considerably more to think about.

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Places of Worship in Britain and Ireland, 300–950. (Rewley House Studies in the Historic Environment, 4). Edited by P. S. Barnwell. 19 × 25 cm. xvi + 240 pp, 14 colour pls, 64 b&w pls and figs. Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2015. ISBN 978-1-907730-48-1. Price: £40.00 hb.

This well-illustrated volume focuses on the current scholarship of early Christian places, their relationship to diverse processes of religious conversion and practices, and how this is or has been archaeologically investigated in Britain and Ireland. It draws from a weekend session held at Rewley House, Oxford, in 2010, and is the first in a series examining British and Irish places of worship from the late Roman period through present day. The chapters concentrate on the importance of place to early Christian worship and provide useful overviews of the development of religious practice and Christian worship in Ireland, Wales, Scotland and England along with how this affected the archaeological signature of the built environment in each region.

The contributors concentrate on the differences between centres of worship in the diverse study areas and particularly consider their impact on the landscape and the varying construction techniques and materials. As Barbara Yorke notes in her excellent introduction, the diversity of archaeological remains in timber or stone churches or of burial practices should directly relate to when a region ‘Christianised’ and if a region was influenced by a nativist Christian belief (primarily in Scotland, Ireland, and Wales) or by the Roman Church (southern Anglo-Saxon England). Martin Henig summarises the importance of Romano-British Christianity and its legacy in early medieval places of worship. Nancy Edwards discusses the relatively understudied places of worship in early Christian Wales and notes the importance of incorporating place-name evidence and stone sculpture in archaeological studies. Tomás Ó Carragáin’s reviews early Ireland, highlighting the need to examine later medieval church construction for clues to earlier sequences given the long traditions of construction in Ireland. Similarly, Sally Foster argues for using stone sculpture and place-names in her excellent summary of the localised patterns of Christian conversion across the Scottish landscape. For Anglo-Saxon England a set of papers consider regional trends and characters: Meg Boulton and Jane Hawkes discuss the adoption of Christianity in Kent; Richard Morris offers a landscape approach to a cluster of seventh- and eighth-century monastic communities in Ryedale; and Rosemary Cramp reassessed the relationship between Northumbrian churches and monastic communities in relation to the adoption of stone structures. David Parsons and Michael Hare & Maggie Kneen meanwhile provide in-depth examinations of the structural histories of specific notable examples, namely All Saints’ at Brixworth, Northamptonshire, and St Mary’s, Deerhurst, Gloucestershire, respectively. Barnwell’s end synopsis shows that the variations in Christian places of worship are a product of differing structures of power, regional adaptations to Christianisation, and even diverse environmental conditions.

The comparative approach adopted by this volume is its strong feature, helping to demonstrate differences as well as similarities in take-up, design, placement and

impact of places of worship across Britain and Ireland. This is primarily a work of synthesis, but it draws on experts in the field who use current and past research to good effect; a tidy number of good illustrations further enhance this book, which should appeal to newcomers to the field, students and academics alike.

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An Introduction to Anglo-Saxon Church Architecture & Anglo-Saxon & Anglo-Scandinavian Stone Sculpture. By Guy Points. 17 × 24 cm. 150 pp, 148 colour pls, 16 b&w figs. Oxford: Oxbow Books/Rihtspell Publishing, 2015. ISBN 978-0-9930339-0-2. Price: £13.95 pb.

The Anglo-Saxon Age. The Birth of England. By Martin Wall. 16 × 24 cm. 256 pp, 39 colour pls, 3 maps. Stroud: Amberley Publishing, 2015. ISBN 978-1-445647-72-2. Price: £20.00 hb.

In Search of Alfred the Great. The King, the Grave, the Legend. By Edoardo Albert & Katie Tucker. 13 × 20 cm. 256 pp, 27 colour and b&w pls and figs. Stroud: Amberley Publishing, 2015. ISBN 978-1-445649-64-1. Price: £9.99 pb.

The books under review here have very different aims and focus, but nevertheless share one or two features. They all seem to be intended for a popular audience, and the curiosity is that the most obviously popular in style, *In Search of Alfred* has the most extensive bibliography of them all: by contrast, Points has a small ‘Suggested reading’ section (pp 32–3), Wall has 23 items including *A Shropshire Lad*. The books are all illustrated, Points to best effect, since his illustrations make explicit what his descriptions cannot (‘Scroll Design is where a pattern of ribbon-like strands resembles a circuitous design’, 95), but the other two have photographs of landscapes, manuscripts and artefacts.

Points’ book is slightly difficult to navigate, but sets out in fairly abrupt style to identify and analyse the main features of Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Scandinavian stonework. Starting with a glossary, followed by an introduction, it then lists features found in churches and more generally in stonework. A gazetteer enumerates items of interest at 127 sites, mainly churches. An enormous amount of detail and specialised vocabulary is offered, and it will take time for the uninitiated to assimilate it all. The style does not make for easy reading, and there are some errors: e.g. Geoffrey [Gregory] of Tours (p. 23); and Wistan, King Wiglaf’s grandson, apparently died before his grandfather was born (59). Nevertheless, the material is of great interest and the analysis is delivered without flourish. I found it useful in planning a ‘stonework’ trip for my students.

Wall’s book is a narrative of the Anglo-Saxon age with two distinct perspectives: it wishes to attribute the origin of Anglo-Saxon success to Mercia; and it decries Anglo-centric bias and uses particularly Welsh sources

to channel its interpretation of history. This is an interesting and worthwhile corrective, since Mercia's role has perhaps been underestimated given how early narrative sources relate mostly to Northumbria and later ones to Wessex (the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*). Generally, Wall offers an acceptable picture, but how he does it, and the details he gives, raise serious misgivings. For example, Bede gets short shrift, yet the Welsh hero of legend, Cynddylan (unknown from early historical sources), is given a significant part in historical events (71), without acknowledgement that the Welsh sources are found in manuscripts six centuries or more later than the events they rather indirectly purport to tell. There are no references, so the untutored reader will find it difficult to untangle history from legend or fiction: we are told, among other things, that St Edmund was sacrificed to Odin with the 'blood eagle' (114); that the invaders at *Brunanburh* in 937 had an 'immense army' of 'perhaps 15,000', while Byrhtnoth at Maldon in 991 had only a small one (pp 151, 169); and that Alcuin and Dicuil 'administer[ed Charlemagne's] vast empire' (103).

A particular weakness is the uncritical repetition of linguistic and onomastic fallacies: Elmet (54) and Senlac (215) are folk-etymologised; Old English *wif* 'woman' is not etymologically related to *weave* (162); and, perhaps oddest of all, we are told that there is 'no evidence of any metal working or occupation in the area' where the Staffordshire hoard was found (87)—near Hammerwich, which Wall seems unaware means 'building with a smithy'.

In Search of Alfred the Great makes no pretension to exact scholarship, except in the appendix discussing the excavation of the unmarked grave in Winchester. It is Alfred's life as an historical (and historically accurate) novel, and it works rather well. It is a gripping story, well told, with very few errors, though with artistic licence; I enjoyed it enormously.

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Evolution of a Community: The Colonisation of a Clay Inland Landscape. Neolithic to Post-Medieval Remains Excavated over Sixteen Years at Longstanton in Cambridgeshire. (Archaeopress Archaeology). By Samantha Paul & John Hunt. 21 × 30 cm. xi + 245 pp, 77 colour and b&w pls and figs, 39 tables. Oxford: Archaeopress, 2015. ISBN 978-1-784910-86-0. Price: £45.00 pb.

This monograph describes extensive multi-period excavations carried out between 1995 and 2011 by Birmingham Archaeology (formerly BUFAU) at Longstanton West, 9 km north-west of Cambridge. It is an example of the large-scale developer-funded projects which have changed our perceptions of settlement and land-use patterns on clayland sites (a particular interest of this reviewer – e.g. Clay, P. 2002: *The Prehistory of the East Midlands Claylands. Aspects of Settlement and Land-use from the Mesolithic to the Iron Age in Central England*. Leicester; 2008: Claylands revisited.

The prehistory of W.G. Hoskins's Midlands plain. In A. Fleming and R. Hingley (eds), *Landscape History after Hoskins. Volume 1: Prehistoric and Roman Landscapes*, Macclesfield, 70–82). The volume is divided into three parts, the first covering prehistoric and Roman activities, Part 2 Anglo-Saxon, medieval and post-medieval and Part 3 a relatively brief and succinct conclusion. Within the period divisions the volume follows traditional lines with site narratives followed by specialist contributions and ten appendices. The volume is well produced and clearly written with very high quality illustrations.

Part 2 will be of most interest to this journal's readers. As is the case for many areas, Early to Middle Anglo-Saxon evidence is elusive with no structures, but with the presence of some Ipswich Ware suggesting some earlier activity. Seventh-century burials provided significant information on infectious disease and trauma. More evidence was found from the eleventh century onwards with continuation from the pre-Conquest period into the thirteenth century when the Anglo-Saxon systems were replaced. Very large quantities of later Anglo-Saxon to medieval artefacts and environmental information provide evidence for the relative prosperity and growth of Longstanton based on a strong local economy.

The specialist contributions here include an extensive analysis of the Saxon and medieval pottery by Sue Anderson, Late Anglo-Saxon and medieval finds by various contributors including Quita Mould on Portable finds, Ruth Shaffrey on Worked stone and Gerry McDonald on Slags. Unusually – but usefully – the animal bone analysis (by Matilda Holmes) is included in this chapter. A separate chapter on the Charred plant remains by Rosalind McKenna and Wendy Smith follows. The opportunity to examine such remains from spatially extensive excavations enabled comparisons with other Cambridgeshire results. Unusually, spelt has been found in medieval contexts; this is inconsistent with the general trend for barley, oats, free threshing wheats and rye during this period. Unfortunately in the absence of C14 dates to ascertain whether they are residual or not, firm conclusions on why it is present cannot be made.

This is an important volume in the study of the Cambridgeshire claylands, offering a wealth of important data. It is a credit to the authors and highlights the quality of work which Birmingham Archaeology, now sadly no longer in existence, produced. It does, however, raise the question of the role and future of detailed monographs such as these. At £45.00 who is still buying them? Even university libraries are cutting back on such purchases and accessibility of such volumes to researchers and the profession is becoming more limited. On-line access to volumes and the supporting data will increase in the future and the days of monographs covering extensive excavations with this level of detail may be numbered.

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The Ely Coucher Book, 1249–50. The Bishop of Ely's Manors in the Cambridgeshire Fenland. (Cambridgeshire Records Society Volume 22). Translated by Edward Miller, and edited by Frances Willmoth & Susan Oosthuizen. 19 × 25 cm. x + 252 pp, 26 colour and b&w pls and figs. Cambridge, Cambridgeshire Records Society, 2015. ISBN 978-0-904323-24-5. Price: £37.50 pb.

Such medieval texts as the collection of manorial surveys contained in the Ely Coucher Book are normally edited by historians with a central interest in manorial administration and tenures. This edition adopts a completely different approach, as the Coucher Book is represented as a source for landscape history, and the short introduction focusses on information about fisheries, grazing, common pastures, settlement (nucleated and dispersed) and communications. The landscape dimension is reinforced by the numerous illustrations with photographs of watery scenes, buildings and early estate maps. Edward Miller, the distinguished historian, left at his death 15 years ago the manuscript translation on which this book is based. He wrote *The Abbey and Bishopric of Ely* with strong social and economic themes, and while he was by no means ignorant of the landscape, he would have been mildly surprised at the presentation of his translation.

If this text had been edited in a conventional way, it would have included the whole of the Coucher Book, which covers manors in six counties. But this book is concerned with a selection of surveys. Perhaps the editors intend to publish the rest of the surveys in another volume; they do not mention such a plan but should be encouraged to do so. If the whole source was available, users would be able to make comparisons between the Fenland and dry-land environments, in Norfolk and Suffolk for example. If the editors had followed the conventional approach, they would have explained to readers why and how the surveys were compiled. What specific value did the surveys have for the estate? Why was this ambitious project done in 1249–50, so late in Bishop Hugh's time as bishop? Was the driving force the estate steward? The information was gathered from local juries, whose names appear at the beginning of each survey. Birrell has recently suggested on the basis of similar documents from other estates that these peasant jurors wielded some influence. In the case of the Coucher Book one sees apparently pedantic details, such as definitions of the length of sick leave for a peasant owing labour services, which are likely to have resulted from negotiations between the peasant jurors and the estate officials. If the normal custom of editing such a text had been followed, comparison would have been made with the other surveys or valuations of major church estates which were compiled in the thirteenth century, of which a dozen are available in print. A conventional edition would have paid more attention to the long lists of tenants, land holdings, rents and services which make up the bulk of these documents. Terms relating to these matters varied from one estate and manor to another, and the introduction or glossary could have helped with such terms as 'a full land'. Other editors also provide an index which includes

people (this text contains many hundreds of names) and subjects, not just places.

Edward Miller and his two editors have contributed much to the history of the medieval countryside by making the text of these manorial surveys available to researchers. Historians of all kinds, with an interest in settlement, landscape, estate management, social structure, peasant status, welfare and many other themes, will all make good use of these accessible and clearly produced texts.

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Medieval Leicestershire. Recent Research on the Medieval Archaeology of Leicestershire. (Leicestershire Fieldwalkers Monograph No 3). Edited by Kathleen Elkin. 21 × 30 cm. xi + 271 pp, 152 b&w pls and figs, 7 tables. Leicester: Leicestershire Fieldwalkers, 2015. ISBN 978-0-954820-02-2. Price: £20.00 pb.

Leicestershire's place in English local history and landscape studies is arguably unmatched, certainly for the study of the Middle Ages. To take but one example, it was to Leicestershire, to Hamilton, Ingarsby and Knaptoft that W. G. Hoskins brought a group of academics including M. W. Beresford, M. M. Postan and Graham Clark in 1948 to essentially validate an entirely new class of archaeological site – the deserted medieval village – and set in train the study of medieval settlement and landscapes using the evidence on and in the ground as a primary source alongside documents. This volume, assembled and published by Leicestershire Fieldworkers ('an active county archaeological society that helps individuals and small groups investigate the remains of past human activity by practical investigation, research and small-scale excavation' – p. v), continues that proud tradition. At first sight it looks like something from the 1980s – a densely-packed A4 softback in black and white – but that notwithstanding, this compendium of 15 individually-authored papers is solid and extremely useful, with recent research underpinning what are generally subject overviews. It will no doubt be much referred to over the next 20 years or so.

With such collections, all a reviewer can really do is flag some of the highlights. Nick Hill looks at secular buildings in the south-east of the county, where, on high-status sites such as manors, aisled halls fell out of favour in the thirteenth century in favour of ones with cruck or short principal roofs, which allowed a floor space free of thumping great posts. Houses of the ordinary type do not survive in any numbers until around 1450, when, for a century or more, large numbers of substantial, cruck-framed (shall we say) yeoman's houses went up – a phenomenon noted in other parts of lowland England and indicative of late medieval prosperity for families of push and go. Castles and moats are catalogued by Richard Knox, with Leicester Castle being among the sites discussed in Richard Buckley's treatment of medieval Leicester. Several contributions assess the county's religious heritage: Graham Jones looks at territories and ecclesiastical origins, Peter Liddle at

religious houses, Matthew Godfrey and Mike Hawkes at church archaeology, and Bob Trubshaw at 'Project Gorgoyle'.

Some of the richest chapters treat the rural landscape. Anthony Squires gives an overview of the complex geography of Leicester Forest's woods and parks, while Robert F. Hartley briskly summarises the evidence for the nationally significant coal mining remains in the north-west Leicestershire coalfield, with five scheduled areas of mine remains at Coleorton. In one of the volume's meatier papers, Tony Brown analyses a number of open field systems in parishes north-west of Market Harborough; this essay will serve as useful primer for anyone new to the complexities of medieval land allotment and management, as well as offering interesting contributions to ongoing debates about when, how and why open fields came about (something also touched on by Graham Jones who notes ecclesiastical boundaries 'zig-zagging' through open-field furlongs).

But among much that is of value and of interest and relevance beyond Leicestershire, it is Chris Dyer's introductory paper 'New thinking about medieval settlement, and its relevance for Leicestershire' (pp. 1–11) which stands out. Actually there is not much that is 'new' *per se*, but what this does provide is a concise and easily absorbed overview (the best available) of recent thinking about the chronologies, causes and effects of settlement change over almost a thousand years. Much, of course, of this new thinking has been by Dyer himself, and as well as looking back over the past 30 years or so he foregrounds (as they say in seminar rooms!) some more recent areas of study: peasant material culture; local identity; and the gendering of space. All very exciting, but let's not think for one moment (and in no way does Dyer suggest this), that we have solved all the old questions about village origins, planned villages, the peasant house, or settlement decay and desertion. Here too there still remain more questions than answers.

PAUL STAMPER
Historic England

Wallingford: The Castle and the Town in Context. (British Archaeological Reports, British Series 621). Edited by K.S.B. Keats-Rohan, Neil Christie & David Roffe. 21 × 30 cm. xiii + 288 pp, 182 colour and b&w pls, figs and tables. Oxford: Archaeopress/ Hadrian Books, 2015. ISBN 978-1-407314-18-1. Price: £44.00 pb.

The Thames-side town of Wallingford (in Oxfordshire today, but in Berkshire until 1974) is well-known as a classic example of a late Anglo-Saxon *burh*, with (partial) street grid and impressive earthen defences. It has, however, until recently, been rather less well-known for its major royal castle. Little of the once formidable masonry structures survives above ground and Wallingford Castle, now a public park on the edge of the town centre, is certainly not a dominating presence in today's townscape in the way that the castles of (say) Lincoln, Norwich or Oxford are. But this volume – a product of the successful recent *Wallingford Burh to Borough Project* – restores our awareness of the

importance of Wallingford Castle. The main project monograph has been published (N. Christie and O. Creighton, with M. Edgeworth and H. Hamerow. *Transforming Townscapes. From burh to Borough: The Archaeology of Wallingford, AD 800–1400*. The Society for Medieval Archaeology Monograph 35, London, 2013); this follow-up work, drawing from annual conferences in the town, considers the archaeology and, especially, the documentary evidence for the castle in much greater detail.

The focus is firmly on the castle, from its origins shortly after AD 1066 down to the English Civil War and beyond. Chapters deal with the archaeology (Creighton and Christie), the history of the castle as illuminated by rich and previously unstudied documentary evidence (Keats-Rohan), the evidence from Tudor surveys of the castle (Lloyd), the post-Civil War usage of the site (Dewey) and the archaeological evidence for the Civil War (Christie).

Other chapters deal with urban castles in medieval England (Fradley), the late Saxon roots of the later honour of Wallingford (Roffe), a comparison of Nottingham and Oxford (Roffe), recent work at Oxford Castle (Norton; Keats-Rohan), Wallingford Priory (Keats-Rohan; Pedgley), patterns of property in the medieval town (Pedgley), and the impact of the Civil War on town as well as castle (Dewey).

The authors come, variously, from the academic, professional and voluntary sectors (inclusion of a list of contributors and their affiliations would have drawn this point out). The volume is well-produced, and the text is complemented by a wide range of informative maps, plans, photographs and drawings (a good number in colour). This is a very wide-ranging and impressive work. It integrates archaeological, documentary and other forms of evidence in a particularly helpful way. It uses the detail of Wallingford to illuminate the bigger picture of urban and royal castles in medieval England, and deploys a strong awareness of the wider context to help us understand Wallingford itself more fully. The contribution to our knowledge of Wallingford and to our understanding of urban castles and their context is very considerable. This volume, along with its companions from the Wallingford project, shows the huge value of sustained, long-term and integrated programmes of multi-disciplinary research.

A couple of minor points may be made. First, notwithstanding its title, the volume is mostly about the castle rather than the town. Second, the chapters on Oxford Castle are useful in their own right, but they stick out slightly in a volume otherwise focussed on Wallingford; more on how the work on Oxford Castle is relevant to our understanding of Wallingford would have been welcome. These are, though, minor points, and are certainly not intended to detract from the wealth of information, analysis and insights offered here.

In its day, this was one of the most important castles in England. Later, Wallingford declined, the castle was demolished after the Civil War, and the town today is of no more than local importance. It is interesting to consider how this later history may have resulted in scholarly neglect of Wallingford Castle's earlier pre-eminence – until now, that is, for the editors and contributors of this volume have brought it back to our

consciousness in a very skilful and rewarding way, and congratulations are due for that. This is a volume well worth delving into.

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The Historic Landscape of the Mendip Hills. By Elaine Jamieson. 23 × 28 cm. x + 294 pp, 284 colour and b&w pls and figs. Swindon: Historic England, 2015. ISBN 978-1-848020-42-9. Price: £35.00 hb.

The Mendips rise south of Bristol along the northern edge of the Somerset Levels and Moors, a gently undulating Carboniferous Limestone plateau renowned for its caves, swallets and gorges – including Cheddar Gorge. Here, in what is the latest in a now well-established series, Historic England (formerly English Heritage) records, analyses and presents an attractive overview of an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty from the Stone Age to the present day, partly to help protect and manage its historic environment and partly to promote public enjoyment. It's a rather gorgeous and richly illustrated volume – most pages have at least one colour illustration – and on those grounds alone remarkably good value. The Royal Commission ancestry is clear, especially in the highly detailed hachure plans of complex earthwork sites like the Romano-British industrial settlement at Charterhouse-on-Mendip, the shrunken medieval village of Christon, and Richmond Castle. As always, the more complicated and layered the remains, the more one is in thrall to the surveyors – and reliant on their interpretation of what to the uninitiated is confusing topographical noise. More schematic, coloured, interpretative plans like that offered for Richmond would have been welcome.

One thing the volume doesn't do is challenge established narratives. Essentially the approach is to present the orthodox frameworks – Saxons arriving in Somerset in the late seventh century, a growing population in the thirteenth century leading to an expansion of land under cultivation, moats as status symbols – and then to provide local examples of sites and landscape which are taken to reflect these higher level social, economic, political and ecclesiastical trends and traits. I hasten to add that there's nothing wrong with this at all (I've done it myself), and in a book intended to be accessible it would be unforgivable to offer local narratives without this over-arching framework. Just don't expect surprises, or revisionism.

For the post-(Norman) Conquest period it's the high-status rural buildings that first catch the eye, notably on the many estate centres of the Bishop of Bath and Wells. For instance, at Court Farm, Wookey, a carved stone doorway of the 1230s clearly shows that Bishop Jocelyn's country manors could match his palace at Wells. Several notable church houses are also described. The dwellings of ordinary villagers – medieval farmhouses – proved trickier to identify as – for whatever reason, and probably the nature of the local building materials –

complete and datable survivals proved elusive, although thick walls and structural stratigraphy often suggest early origins. The one certain example, a cruck-framed farmhouse dendro-dated to 1278–79, may not be typical as it was probably a grange farm of the Dean and Chapter of Wells.

The towns, villages and hamlets of the Mendips have few surprises. Along the spring line of the escarpment it was nucleated villages with parish churches and manorial centres which predominated, the villages sometimes linear, sometimes set around a central space or green, occasionally polyfocal. Elsewhere hamlets dominated, again typically linear and extending along a road; a few lay in cleared woodland or on common edges, with 'green' or 'end' place-name suffixes. Both villages and hamlets occasionally exhibit what may be evidence for episodes of planned expansion, although as former field-strips sometimes provided the templates for the new property boundaries what we may be seeing instead (as Tom Williamson has argued for in eastern counties) is slow, piecemeal encroachment by housing onto the open fields. Again, without a pair of 'eye of faith' spectacles the earthwork plots offered as evidence are in some cases hard to reconcile with the certainty of the captions: 'Upper Milton: earthwork plan of settlement showing evidence of expansion over arable fields.' Hmm, maybe. With towns like Axbridge and the failed port of Rackley the evidence of planning is more compelling.

This, though, is academic nit-picking, primarily for readers of this journal. Taken overall the volume is a triumph, and Somerset is lucky to have it. Clearly a huge amount of work has gone into it, with support and contributions from a larger than normal range of bodies and individuals. Historic England and especially Elaine Jamieson deserve our thanks and congratulations.

PAUL STAMPER
Historic England

The Stonehenge Landscape. Analysing the Stonehenge World Heritage Site. By Mark Bowden, Sharon Soutar, David Field & Martyn Barber. 22 × 28 cm. xii + 156 pp, 120 colour and b&w pls and figs, 4 tables. Swindon: Historic England, 2015. ISBN 978-1-848021-16-7. Price: £30.00 pb.

Stonehenge and its landscape have attracted visitors and antiquarians since the seventeenth century – and probably long before. In the last century – and this – there have been substantial campaigns of fieldwork: aerial, topographical and geophysical survey, excavation, geological investigation, and analysis of analysis of finds and the environment. On the one hand one thinks that surely the last drop of understanding has been squeezed; but then, particularly over the last decade, discoveries have just kept coming and with them new dating and radical theorising about what it all means. A great deal of that work, however, has been presented via technical reports, and the laudable aim of this volume – successfully realised in a notably well illustrated and accessibly written text – is to present an up-to-date overview of current understanding. The compass is the

World Heritage Site, a roughly square block of Salisbury Plain's chalkland centred on Stonehenge, some 6 km N-S by the same E-W.

The text is fairly even-handed in its allocation of space to the different periods discussed – early and later prehistory, Iron Age to medieval, the age of 'Improvement', and the 20th century – while a final 'Review and Prospect' suggests just how much remains to be done, and discovered. That said, what there is to say about land-use and especially settlement in the long Middle Ages (the fifth–sixteenth centuries AD) is pretty thin compared with what has come before, as by then – by the Iron Age it would seem – Salisbury Plain had become sparsely inhabited, settlement having retreated (at some stage) from the downs. The evidence is sparse, but it is suggested that it was used by valley-bottom settlements as intercommoned pasture, before being divided in the 13th or 14th centuries territorially (as so often at this time), sometimes using prehistoric features as indelible markers.

As was already well known, the lands of the main medieval territorial units – manors, tithings and parishes – ran in strips from the flood plains up to the high downs to give equal shares of land-type resources. Settlements' ploughland generally lay on the lower slopes, although from time to time areas of the higher downland were brought into cultivation. It would be interesting to know when this was, although the suspicion must be that it was as the population level was peaking: certainly the Iron Age hillfort known as Vespasian's Camp was under plough by the fourteenth century. As the open fields extended, prehistoric monuments were levelled: a Late Bronze Age linear ditch in the Manor of Lake, while more spectacularly in Durrington, cultivation distorted the massive earthworks of Durrington Walls, all but flattened Woodhenge and caused other features to be ploughed down.

But few medieval settlements lay within the study area. Of those that did, the villages were largely linear in plan, with houses on one or both sides of the street. Shrinkage from the fourteenth century has often distorted layouts, and at West Amesbury, for instance, only fragmentary earthworks remain among its scatter of buildings. At Lake, however, a settlement which now lies along the Avon Valley but which in the Middle Ages occupied a narrow combe, at least three phases of development are proposed from the extensive earthworks, fossilised by imparkment in the seventeenth century. As interpreted (and one relies on the eyes and experience of the Historic England surveyors to disentangle and read the highly complex hachure plan) the first village, established by the thirteenth century, comprised a double row of plots either side of a street which, for part of the year at least, was a flowing stream – apparently a not uncommon arrangement in Wiltshire's medieval downland villages. At one end was the manorial curia with chapel and mill. Whether this place and others like it were of planned or organic origins, remains debatable. At some stage – when is unclear, but from what is seen elsewhere one would think after (possibly well after) the Black Death – three or more enclosed farmsteads were laid out over some of the earlier properties.

In conclusion, while there is undeniably relatively little of direct interest to MSRG members in *The*

Stonehenge Landscape, it is nevertheless valuable (notwithstanding its very considerable wider interest) as a salutary reminder that medieval settlements generally occupied a relatively brief interlude in a much longer and varied history of landscape exploitation. To a greater or lesser degree they were influenced and framed by what came before, just as they provided the stage for what followed. They cannot be meaningfully studied in temporal isolation. We all know this – but it never hurts to be reminded of it.

PAUL STAMPER
Historic England

No Stone Unturned. A History of Farming, Landscape and Environment in the Scottish Highlands and Islands. By Robert A Dodgshon. 16 × 24 cm. xi + 299 pp, 59 b&w pls and figs. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015. ISBN 978-1-474400-74-9. Price: £80.00 hb.

Professor Robert Dodgshon's impressive new volume on agricultural history in the Scottish Highlands and islands offers a detailed case study of themes set out in his seminal *The Origin of British Field Systems* (1980, Academic Press). Its aims are still wider, namely to 'draw out the institutional basis of the farming landscape', that is, 'the cultural, social and economic forms around which it was organised' (p. 5). The volume will be of deep interest for all researchers concerned with: the origins and development of British agricultural landscapes across the *longue durée*; medieval nucleated settlement and open fields; and/or changes in post-medieval landscapes and the settlements from which they were exploited.

The book is divided into nine chapters: the first three deal with prehistory, the early medieval, and the late medieval and early modern periods. Chapters 5 and 6 offer, respectively, a portrait of eighteenth-century landscapes recorded in surveyors' accounts and a synoptic survey of the origins and later development of the Highland *toun*. The last three chapters cover the period from 1750 onwards. The whole judiciously integrates a wide range of sources and evidence from archaeology and field monuments to place-names, documentary and cartographic evidence, and all are carefully located within the wider scholarly debates.

There is far more in this well produced volume than can reasonably be covered within the constraints of a short review and so here I concentrate on just one question: the emergence of medieval open fields and nucleated settlement. Dodgshon suggests that both followed from the imposition by Norse settlers, between AD 900 and 1200, of tax assessments based on measured units of arable land that replaced a system of renders previously owed from households. Land assessments consolidated disaggregated local systems of landholding, each bringing a number of households into a single landholding unit, the *toun*, 'whose liabilities, as well as whose rights, were shared proportionately between all its occupiers and which, because of that, had formed a unit of farming co-operation' (p. 181). The origins, separate or intertwined, of nucleated settlement and medieval open fields in England, and the period(s) in which they

emerged, continue to be hotly debated. That heat points up the principal *lacuna* in this book: namely that the same phenomena, attributed to the same period within the same islands, are explained quite differently for one region (here, by the author) than for the south (by others) and yet that contrast is not addressed in this volume. That is, Dodgshon sees the emergence of the *toun* and of open fields as integrated aspects of the same process, just as many English landscape historians do too. He attributes those changes to the same period – between 900 and 1200 – that is conventionally adduced for their introduction in England. Yet he ascribes their emergence in Scotland to changes in land assessment introduced by Norse incomers, while later Anglo-Saxon nucleations and open fields in England are conventionally explained in terms of the fission of large estates, the centralisation of political control, and the greater integration of regional and international economies.

Such unexplained disparities will, it is hoped, be the focus of future research, bringing early medieval agricultural landscapes in the Highlands into the context of contemporary agricultural change across Britain as a whole. Both in its own right, and in its contribution to those wider questions, this book will reverberate in scholarship on the development of Scottish and British agriculture and settlement for decades to come.

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Agriculture and Settlement in Ireland. Edited by Margaret Murphy & Matthew Stout. 16 × 24 cm. xxx + 226 pp, 52 b&w pls and figs, 16 tables. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2015. ISBN 978-1-846825-07-1. Price: €50.00; £45.00 hb.

This collection of papers derives from a conference held in March 2009 jointly between the Group for the Study of Irish Historic Settlement and the Agricultural History Society of Ireland. Its focus was Irish rural settlement, farming and land-use, centred (but not exclusively so) on the Middle Ages, and exploiting a number of approaches – notably archaeological and text-based – and themes.

The opening paper by Patrick Cunningham sets the scene by looking at cattle-farming and the evolution of Irish cattle, en route discussing the genetics of cattle and specialisation in Irish agriculture. From there the volume progresses to look at settlement forms, beginning with Matthew Stout examining early medieval raths and how they were related to farming practices; the various classes of farmer are considered along with the areas of land they controlled.

Cistercian granges form the basis of Geraldine Stout's article. Granges were a major feature of and investment in the Irish landscape and a significant influence on agricultural change. These agricultural centres are set in an Irish context and a number of Irish examples, including Bective Abbey (Co. Meath) and Boyle Abbey (Co. Roscommon) are highlighted. The granges also had an impact on the form of later medieval and post-medieval farmsteads, such as in the development of the courtyard with the farmhouse positioned on one side.

The final medieval contribution is by Murphy, who looks at manorial centres and how they functioned as farms. These are known as *curiae*, which were groups of agricultural buildings and were vital for the running of any manor. Manorial accounts, such as those of the 13th and 14th century for the manors of Inch (Co. Tipperary) and Dunfert (Co. Kilkenny), are exploited to examine the diverse buildings in the *curia* and their functions, thereby providing an interesting study of their structure and contents.

Other chapters track the post-medieval landscape and the evolution of towns like Belfast in the trade of agricultural produce; the final paper takes as a case study the demesne of Collon, Co Louth, as a significant Improvement-period farm.

This book provides an excellent overview of the development of Irish agriculture and its impact on and relationships to settlement. This is a concept that has been explored in the past, such as *The Atlas of the Irish Rural Landscape*, but authors here help to take this further by discussing relationships in depth. Inevitably there is no fully coherent discussion of the relationship between settlement and agriculture, but the volume does offer a point of departure for detailed conversations between archaeologists and agricultural historians.

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Space and Settlement in Medieval Ireland. Edited by Vicky McAlister & Terry Barry. 16 × 24 cm. xv + 237 pp, 40 b&w pls and figs, 2 tables. Dublin: Four Courts Press 2015. ISBN 978-1-846825-00-2. Price: €55.00; £50.00 hb.

Lough Ree: Historic Lakeland Settlement. Edited by Bernadette Cunningham & Harman Murtagh. 16 × 24 cm. 264 pp, 10 colour pls, 41 b&w pls and figs. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2015. ISBN 978-1-846825-76-7. Price: €55.00; £50.00 hb.

In recent years the Four Courts Press in Dublin has published several books in the fields of archaeology, architecture and landscape history which are of particular interest to medievalists in Ireland and elsewhere. Scholarly, on good quality paper and well-illustrated, they are a pleasure to handle and, in the case of the two titles above, to review.

Space and Settlement brings together under one cover 11 selected papers from those presented at the first three 'Space and Settlement in Medieval Ireland' conferences held annually since 2010 in Trinity College Dublin. The content is wide-ranging within the overall timeframe of Ireland from the Viking period (Benjamin Hudson's chapter on the term 'Lothlind') to the eighteenth century (Damian Shiels on reconstructing battlefield landscapes). At the core of this volume lie four papers by Linda Shine, Rory Sherlock, Gillian Eadie and co-editor Vicky McAlister on tower houses. Taken together they demonstrate real advances in the study of this important component of the Irish medieval landscape. Tower houses, poorly documented, their builders

seldom known, fortunately survive in great numbers and facilitate detailed study of their structures and internal arrangements, as Sherlock's study of their halls and Eadie's analysis of examples in Co. Down admirably demonstrate. The question of when and why they were ultimately abandoned is the subject of McAlister's chapter.

Contributions on other topics include Rebecca Wall Forrester's discussion of the ongoing debate about early urbanisation in Ireland; this is a valuable study of the current state-of-play and points to ways in which advances might be made. Another contribution on urbanisation is James Galloway's detailed survey of the hinterland and trade of Drogheda, second only to Dublin as Ireland's main east coast port in the medieval period. His survey takes account of overseas connections as, for an earlier period, does Patrick Walden on the Normans and the Irish sea world in the eleventh century. Fiona Beglane, in a very valuable contribution, in her chapter on deer parks draws parallels with English examples. (More recently the Four Courts Press has published her *Anglo-Norman Parks in Medieval Ireland*). In a summary conclusion to the book, co-editor Terry Barry asserts that 'settlement studies are alive and well in Ireland'; this is certainly borne out by the content of this volume which, it is hoped, will be the first in a series. Copiously footnoted and with a comprehensive bibliography this book makes an excellent start.

Whereas the above book embraces the whole of Ireland, *Lough Ree* concentrates upon a local area in the Irish midlands centred on the largest lake (at c. 1000 ha) in the Shannon river system where the counties of Longford, Westmeath and Roscommon meet. In a short introduction Harman Murtagh sets out the overall shape of the book; chapters are arranged broadly chronologically from medieval to modern. Aengus Finnegan kicks off with an analysis of the place-names of the 90 or so islands, most of them very small, within the lough; place-names reveal many layers of settlement and naming from early Christian to modern times. A detailed appendix of the island names, many of them Anglicised from Irish roots, is included. Place-name evidence is extended more widely by Charles Doherty in a study of the Shannon, beginning with the still conjectural identification of Ptolemy's *Reba* with Lough Ree. He then draws on evidence from the *Dindsenchas* (a collection of writings dating from probably the eleventh century) to learn more of what he terms the 'mythic landscapes' of the region derived from this and other early Irish sources.

For readers of this journal the most relevant chapter in *Lough Ree* will surely be that by Matthew Stout on early medieval settlement in and around the lough. His detailed record of surviving ringforts (numbering 194), various enclosures (36), ecclesiastical sites (27), souterrains (9) and crannogs (4 – though as water levels fluctuate surely more await discovery?) is presented in tables and a distribution map (Fig. 3.3). Their distributions relative to distance from the lough shore are discussed; while there are few ringforts along the low-lying shore they dominate settlement on the slightly higher ground at a distance of between 500 and 3000 metres of the lough. Thought to have been mainly occupied in the period c. AD 550–800, their distribution

is indicative of the likely extent of pastoral farming at this period. Stout's contribution points the way to similar studies elsewhere. In contrast to ringforts the ecclesiastical sites, reflecting the eremitical tradition, are located around the shore or on the islands. Several of their churches were depicted in their ruinous condition by Daniel Grose in the early nineteenth century; this is the subject of Harman Murtagh's brief chapter 5, featuring four nicely reproduced colour plates. Three contributors (Kieran O'Connor, Paul Naessens and Rory Sherlock) combine their expertise in a case study of one of the most fascinating sites in the area, Rindoon Castle and the deserted Anglo-Norman settlement adjacent to it. There is detailed discussion of the remains of this isolated castle dating from the early thirteenth century and their conclusions are illustrated in a phased plan (Fig. 4.3). This is the most detailed study of the castle to date; the extensive adjacent settlement site (see the colour aerial photograph Plate I) awaits future ground survey and archaeology.

The book's other five chapters by different authors deal with aspects of the area's history since the seventeenth century – the Poor Clares, demesnes, writers' impressions, boating and island life. All are of great interest. The concluding select Bibliography (of 17 pages) is wide-ranging and there is a good index.

Contributors, editors and publishers are to be congratulated upon these two books which, in their different ways, advance our understanding of the landscape history of Ireland.

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Medieval Irish Buildings, 1100–1600. (Maynooth Research Guides for Irish Local History, 18). By Tadhg O'Keeffe. 16 × 24 cm. 320 pp, 14 colour pls and 151 b&w pls and figs. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2015. ISBN 978-1-846822-48-3. Price: €24.95, £22.50 pb.

This book is designed to bring buildings archaeology to the non-specialist. It is not a textbook for students nor a comprehensive study of the subject, rather it is a handbook for those interested in medieval buildings. O'Keeffe has based much of this work on previous research, but throughout there are new insights and observations. The chronology runs from the years before the arrival of the Anglo-Normans to post-dissolution, as these were two events that had a major impact on building styles and techniques.

The opening two chapters are theoretical in leaning and explain to readers about medieval buildings and how to study them. The first discusses the basics of architectural forms in medieval Ireland and reviews past literature on the subject; the second is devoted to discussing buildings archaeology and the various approaches to the study of buildings. The majority of the book explores the sometimes diverse architectural evolutions of both ecclesiastical buildings and castles across the time period. These detailed descriptions of sites and building types are augmented with excellent plans and photographs.

Chapter 3 focuses on churches and other ecclesiastical buildings, discussing forms and factors influencing these. Coverage is from parish churches to cathedrals and monasteries. A particularly significant example here is Cashel which developed from an early medieval church and round tower to a major thirteenth-century Gothic cathedral. Cashel has some of the earliest Romanesque architecture in Ireland in Cormac's Chapel (Note that round towers are not examined by O'Keeffe, as they were constructed prior to 1100). Discussion of monasteries includes some of the most recent findings at Blackfriary, Trim, which is an ongoing research project.

Chapters 4 and 5 consider castles and other fortified residences, such as tower houses. O'Keeffe follows current thought in castle studies by emphasising the domestic nature of castles over their defensive features. Detailed discussion is given of structures within the castle, including halls, chambers, and gatehouses, and the varied organisation of castle enclosures. The later medieval castles were dominated by the development of hall houses and tower houses, sometimes forming part of the same complex. The last chapter of the book discusses these buildings, with examples such as Adare castle, Athenry castle, Trim castle and Aughnanure Tower House. A notable omission is O'Keeffe's re-evaluation of the excavation data from Trim's great tower. However, this book is not designed to be a detailed study of individual buildings, but instead generates overviews of such.

Medieval Irish Buildings, 1100–1600 offers a very useful introduction to a rich heritage of sites. Throughout, the text is well illustrated with good quality photographs, and is supported by an intelligent and clear text. It will be much appreciated by both general readers new to Irish medieval architecture and even experts, as it contains many new observations on buildings that were thought to be well understood.

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Abbeys and Priors of Medieval Wales. By Janet Burton & Karen Stöber. 16 × 23 cm. xvii + 260 pp, 20 colour pls, 65 b&w pls and figs. Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2015. ISBN 978-1-783161-80-5. Price: £24.99 pb.

This tidy volume is composed of two parts: an introduction offering an overview of post-Conquest monasticism in medieval Wales and a comprehensive gazetteer providing an historical narrative, a brief account of buildings and monuments and a short bibliography of individual sites. Covering all 60 of the Welsh foundations of the various medieval monastic orders, including sites like Neath and Strata Florida, the book serves as a useful and reasonably priced guide to what a visitor might need to know. It forms a hard-copy output of the 'Monastic Wales' Project, otherwise currently accessible online at <http://www.monasticwales.org/>.

The extremely well written introduction forms a concise and balanced point of departure for the general reader. Issues of debate are presented simply, but never

simplistically; and the voices of Orderic Vitalis and Gerald of Wales offer a Welsh perspective. The authors emphasise the connection between spiritual and political authority, monastic orders arriving in tandem with powerful baronial patrons in the aftermath of the Norman colonial invasion of the principality; but they also give weight to the spiritual and pastoral side of monasticism – something often overlooked in materialist approaches.

The inclusion of evidence in the gazetteer is necessarily selective. Each site entry consists of a brief site history followed by consideration of any surviving remains and a bibliography of major publications. These are useful, but it would have been good to see at least a short general bibliography, directing the reader towards important and recent studies.

The quality of illustration is rather uneven; maps are provided of the different orders collected into groups, but the provision of plans and photographs, presumably dictated by the perceived needs of site visitors, is a bit erratic. Indeed, plans occur only where there are upstanding ruins and this results in some odd asymmetries in information: for the Carmarthen friary, for example, well published and probably the best-excavated Mendicant site in Britain, no plan is offered, presumably because it now lies under a shopping mall. While there is a set of good quality colour images bound into the centre of the book, these would have had more impact if dispersed in the text. But these are niggles: the book is clearly intended for a public audience and can be warmly welcomed as a sound and engaging guidebook.

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Archaeology in Hertfordshire. Recent Research. A Festschrift for Tony Rook. Edited by Kris Lockyear. 16 × 24 cm. xviii + 356 pp, 21 colour pls and figs, 83 b&w pls and figs. Hatfield: Hertfordshire Publications/ University of Hertfordshire Press, 2015. ISBN 978-1-909291-42-3. Price £20.00 pb.

This collection of 15 papers on aspects of the archaeology of Hertfordshire derive from a conference celebrating the 80th birthday of Tony Rook, founder of the Welwyn Archaeological Society. The papers are arranged broadly chronologically, starting with introductory chapters, summarising the history of archaeological research in the county (Kris Lockyear) and presenting a personal history of the Welwyn Archaeology Society (Merle Rook & Lockyear). Then come contributions by Stuart Bryant and Keith Fitzpatrick-Matthews exploring aspects of the prehistoric landscape archaeology of the county, plus six papers focussing essentially on the Roman period. Gil Burleigh considers the possibility that the boundaries of Baldock's Roman hinterland may be defined by a halo of religious and elite sites; Isobel Thompson and Simon West explore the attenuated nature of the Iron Age to Roman transition; Lockyear presents the results of research excavations of Iron Age and Roman features found during geophysical survey near Whatton-on-Stone; and Sam Moorhead & David Whyte review coin finds from the county. Whatton-on-Stone is revisited in

Chapter 11 in which seven authors from two different excavation units discuss evidence from excavations in advance of development which revealed Neolithic pits as well as Anglo-Saxon features of funerary and possibly domestic function. Next John Baker considers the difficulties of identifying hundredal meeting places in Hertfordshire; Tom Williamson gives an account of field systems in the county, challenging the view that coaxial field systems are necessarily all pre-medieval in origin; and Ann Rowe reviews the historic and botanical evidence for pollarding in the county. The final chapter summarises the aims and outcomes two community archaeology projects in north London which utilised finds from Welwyn Archaeological Society excavations.

This is an excellent volume, produced to very high standards and consistently well-written, wearing its undoubted learning lightly. It is pitched at interested members of the public, and many of the contributors propose and develop really interesting ideas, while also providing excellent methodological sections which constitute very good introductions to topics such as geophysical survey, ridge and furrow, and Optically Stimulated Luminescence (OSL) dating for pottery. The text is complemented by a large number of good quality images (enlivened by one of a digger who appears to be naked!). Perhaps it is inevitable in a county such as Hertfordshire, small in area and host to Verulamium, that the Roman period dominates the volume, and readers of *Medieval Settlement Research* will note far fewer chapters focussed on the post-Roman period than they might have hoped for. Of those chapters which do encompass the medieval period, only one is exclusively archaeological and none focus on settlement. While this may limit its appeal to readers exclusively interested in medieval settlement, this is not a criticism of a volume which I really enjoyed reading, whose case studies I found interesting and whose ideas deserve a wide readership.

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Everyday Products in the Middle Ages: Crafts, Consumption and the Individual in Northern Europe c. AD 800–1600. Edited by Gitte Hansen, Steven P Ashby & Irene Baug. 18 × 25 cm. vii + 374 pp, 128 colour and b&w pls, figs and tables. Oxford & Philadelphia: Oxbow Books, 2015. ISBN 978-1-782978-05-3. Price: £37.00 hb.

Occasionally in the case of edited books one feels a bit short-changed, with the title implying wide coverage of an important theme, yet the contents end up being far slimmer both in terms of numbers of actual contributions and in engagement with the volume's stated brief. Here, however, at a pretty affordable price, a full 21 papers are offered, nearly all linked closely to the 'Individual' of the volume's title, and all adding often fascinating and informative insights into production and consumption. A majority of contributors are from Norway (nine papers), with others from England, Finland, Estonia, Sweden and Austria; the spread is tied to the workshop

(on 'Actors and Affordable Crafts') from which many papers derive which was held at Bergen in Norway in 2011. Authors are labelled in the Preface as 'material-culture researchers' and are a mix of university, museum, field and conservation specialists; while some papers focus on material or craft types, many draw tidily on data from specific sites (including Bergen itself). While there are no 'sections' to divide the book's contents, an order is evident, since the first two papers following the editors' contextualising introduction are on itinerant artisans or craftspeople, following which are articles on comb- and boneworkers; then amber- and jetworking; shoes, leather, dress and silk; soapstone, quernstones, quarrying; and contributions on blacksmithing, glass, and ceramics. Case studies vary within these and this mixing of chronology and space to my mind works well.

It is worth recognising how many authors are keen to refer broadly to 'craftspeople' or 'craftworkers': for example, both Ashby in his wider survey on what we mean by 'itinerant' and Hansen in her study of twelfth-century Bergen and its evidence for visiting and resident workers stress how while text and iconography point to males as the skilled artisans, the archaeology points to women and children also being much involved in craftwork – whether directly in this or in supporting it, such as in bringing in fuel, preparing crucibles, etc. The latter is nicely discussed by Pedersen in her analysis of Viking-Age Kaupang, who stresses also the logistics and materials for non-ferrous metalworkers and the importance in a growing urban context of good connections to ensure ready supply of materials to undertake the work. Various authors recognise that some craftworkers might be 'Jacks of many/several trades', switching from metal to bone/antler, for instance (see Pedersen), although cloth- and leatherworkers may have been more (internally) specialised (Harjula, for fourteenth- to sixteenth-century Turku, Finland; Mould & Cameron for Anglo-Norman England); perhaps the question of when specialisation overall needed closer attention, asking whether it was a feature only of more developed town environments.

Archaeology is of course the principal guide across the majority of papers and excellent detail comes in discussion of raw materials (e.g. Baug for quernstones and bakesstones in western Norway), products (e.g. Luik for bone finds in Viljandi, Estonia), preservation (e.g. Rammo on textiles in Tartu, Livonia), waste (e.g. Harjula on leather). Actors, agents and consumers are regular themes explored, questioning who were the workers, owners and traders of these products: these players are lucidly tackled in, for example, two papers centred on areas of southern Norway, on iron production in the wooded and agricultural lands of Hedmark (Rundberget), and the soapstone 'industry' of the Agder region (Schou); similarly the role of the abbey at Laach in the exploitation of stone quarries of the eastern Eifel of south-west Germany is neatly analysed by Pohl.

Most suitably, the final paper of this enjoyable collection seeks to highlight the fleeting evidence for some of the key, but too often overlooked, figures in early medieval trade – the sailors, shipyard workers, ropemakers, small-boatmen, ballastmen – those handling, transshipping and shifting goods and braving

the waters and passing pirates; Mehler does a fine job giving these many people some archaeological tangibility. Indeed, the whole volume will, I am sure, bring alive to all readers many of these 'everyday' craftspeople, products and processes of the early to late medieval North European world.

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Environment, Society and the Black Death. An Interdisciplinary Approach to the Late-Medieval Crisis in Sweden. Edited by Per Lagerås. 17 × 24 cm. v + 193 pp, 59 colour and b&w pls and figs, 6 tables. Oxford, Oxbow Books, 2015. ISBN 978-1-785700-54-5. Price: £36.00 pb.

While the devastating effects of the Black Death on Europe's population during the mid-14th century are well documented in regions such as Britain, Sweden, by contrast, lacks many contemporary written sources; accordingly, this innovative study seeks to explore the impacts of that crisis on the landscape, using a range of archaeological and scientific evidence. The book begins with an extremely useful overview of the current state of knowledge and a discussion of the relationship between societal and environmental change. A summary of 28 sites with pollen sequences that cover the medieval period provides a fascinating picture with a very marked decrease in cereal pollen and an increase in woodland in the uplands, against increased cultivation in the lowlands (although there are sadly very few sites from the latter). This lends some support to a hypothesis that settlement desertion in the uplands relates in part to population migration to more favourable lowlands. This change in land-use appears to have been immediate, and relatively long-lasting (for at least a century) – quite probably a reflection of how recurrent outbreaks of plague kept the population low throughout the Late Middle Ages.

Dendrochronological data point to a notable drop in construction of new buildings after 1350. Evidence from various excavated settlements shows both the expected contraction – seen in the numbers of occupied plots on both urban and rural sites – and a shift at some sites away from agricultural production towards alternative ways of making a living such as fish processing. Meanwhile, study of skeletal remains from excavated cemeteries suggests an increase in stature during the late medieval period which supports the view that the surviving population became better nourished, although stable isotope analysis did not detect a corresponding change in diet. There is no evidence for plague pits; instead, existing churchyards seemingly accommodated the plague deaths, albeit occasionally in double or triple graves.

Environment, Society and the Black Death is extremely well illustrated, and care is taken to introduce readers to scientific techniques (e.g. stable isotope analysis). While the overall conclusions are ones that we might have expected, within the context of a poorly documented region such as Sweden they provide

important confirmation that human responses to the late medieval crisis closely resemble those seen elsewhere in north-west Europe.

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West Country Households, 1500–1700. (Society for Post-Medieval Archaeology Monograph 9). Edited by John Allan, Nat Alcock & David Dawson. 18 × 25 cm. xxiv + 439 pp, 31 colour pls, 203 b&w pls and figs, 19 tables. Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2015. ISBN 978-1-843839-94-1. Price: \$50.00, £30.00 hb.

This richly illustrated book brings together the results of more than 40 years of research – mostly by independent researchers – on the material culture of urban and rural households in the counties of Cornwall, Devon, Somerset and Dorset. The emphasis is very much on Devon, on account of the quantity and excellence of the research undertaken to date, and on post-medieval change when houses displayed an increasing diversity of subdivision and extension (upwards in congested Exeter). Clear from studies of urban and rural houses is the extreme rarity of any houses relating to the poorer sort of people, and – with the tantalising exception of the early 16th-century painted decoration preserved beneath later alterations in a typical three-unit cross-passage house – any form of decoration below the higher strata in society. Indeed, the surveys of sgraffito (much inspired by Delftware) and lead-glazed tilework from potteries in north Devon (by then an archaic technique) shows an overwhelming association with high-status houses using ornamental plasterwork – which one fascinating study shows could mirror the consumption of the sweetmeats and fish below them. The use of Portuguese faience, imitating Chinese porcelain, displays a similar concentration in seventeenth-century households of merchants and wealthy households close to ports.

Articles here illuminate the manufacturers and range of vessels (bronze and, from the 18th century, cast-iron) and culinary artefacts associated with open-hearth cooking, which changed little from the late medieval period but provide valuable insights into the vessels required for such regional traditions as clotted cream and home-made ales: Peter Brears convincingly shows that malting rather than smoking meats was the function of the chambers commonly found off the sides of fireplaces, and commonly termed as smoking chambers. Oliver Kent similarly questions assumptions about the naming and functions of culinary artefacts, arguing for a much fuller interpretation in their archaeological context rather than consignment to the appendices of reports. John Schofield, uniquely in this volume, explores the benefits of using the historic landscape as a tool in understanding how buildings – in this case at Godolphin in west Cornwall – were intended to be used and perceived through different phases of development.

Although it is mostly up to the reader to explore relationships between these articles, this book is an admirable attempt to bring such a diversity of disciplines together, correcting some long-held assumptions

and suggesting how we can approach a far richer interdisciplinary understanding of material culture.

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Stepney Green: Moated Manor House to City Farm. (MOLA Monograph). By David Sankey. 19 × 25 cm. xi + 100 pp, 96 colour and b&w pls and figs. London: Museum of London Archaeology & Crossrail Limited, 2015. ISBN 978-1-907586-31-6. Price: £10.00 pb.

The Crossrail development interposing a new East to West rail-line across London and its hinterland to west has had a significant if localised impact on the archaeology of the capital. The results from various investigations are being published in a series of paperback reports, small monographs attractively packaged, illustrated in colour and reasonably priced, presumably designed to attract a wider audience than the archaeological community who constitute the standard consumers of excavation reports.

Stepney Green, now traversed by the Mile End Road, lay less than 1 km north of the Thames, which at times created a powerful influence on the area's development. What stands out here is the remarkable sequence of changes to the built landscape beside the Green over the last 500 years.

Aside from a few scraps of pottery from earlier centuries, the excavations' earliest and most significant contribution was in uncovering parts of a fifteenth- and sixteenth-century moated mansion which may have been owned by a prosperous merchant, John Fenne. Documents record how around 1600 the property was acquired by the Somerset family, later to become the marquises of Worcester. Worcester House passed to a supporter of Cromwell during the Interregnum, then to a religious organisation, the Stepney Meeting later in the seventeenth century. Terraced housing and a baptist college were built over parts of Worcester House in the early nineteenth century, the late medieval gatehouse being incorporated into the college. This was demolished in 1858, further terraced housing was constructed and elsewhere in the block a new school and a meeting house were Victorian additions. And after the Blitz part of the area was turned into a City Farm.

David Sankey's skill has been to turn this complex set of developments, exposed in an irregular patchwork of area excavations and service trenches, into an intelligible and informative archaeological narrative. The standard approach to excavation reporting has been eschewed, and with the moated mansion which takes up around one third of the volume, the various elements – the estate walls, the outer moat, the main moat and the mansion – are treated individually, as are finds relating to them. Excavated data concerning physical dimensions and the stratigraphy are offered where they help an understanding of what was uncovered, but unnecessary details are left in the site archive which can be accessed by the diligent researcher. Each phase of this block of land's development is treated in a separate chapter which marries the archaeological evidence with old prints and maps, documentary material such as wills and even

comparative illustrations of standing buildings elsewhere in the country, to the point where a small fragment of glazed stove tile is contextualised through a photo of an entire stove in Wartburg Castle in Germany. Always engaging, this is an impressive piece of reporting.

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Assembling Enclosure. Transformations in the Rural Landscape of Post-Medieval North East England. (Explorations in Local and Regional History, Volume 7). By Ronan O'Donnell. 17 × 24 cm. xi + 152 pp, 31 b&w pls and figs. Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2015. ISBN 978-1-909291-43-0. Price: £12.99 pb.

Ronan O'Donnell here presents a nuanced case study of post-medieval rural landscape changes in Northumberland, providing a counterpoint to previous studies, normally focused on the Midlands. An added aspect is O'Donnell's use of Actor-Network Theory (ANT) to guide and frame his research. The theory has not been used previously to examine major factors for landscape change in the post-medieval period, such as enclosure and the ethic of Improvement, and his use of the theory is both refreshing and slightly frustrating in parts as he expands upon his chosen Northumbrian landscapes.

ANT, as described in the opening chapter, is a type of non-representational theory which posits that actions, such as landscape change, are caused by actors (both human and non-human) brought into play by an endless variety of mediating forces, such as changing grain prices or familial relationships. All actions are seen as localised and complex, meaning that actions traditionally connected to regional or national influences, such as the process of enclosure being linked to changes in Parliamentary law, are always studied within a localised context. When applied to landscape change, ANT provides O'Donnell with a framework to present an intricate discussion of the huge range of factors influencing and driving this change. O'Donnell addresses the major criticisms of ANT, mainly that it is a framework for description, rather than explanation. Indeed, one of the main issues with this book is that it offers no broader-scale explanations: all focus is kept on localised actors and actions, with national or global influences being mediated through these localised forces.

O'Donnell's research is of immense value to readers interested in exploring the multiple variables which could influence landscape change in the post-medieval period. In eschewing broader explanations, he can follow the organic paths of these influences, leading to valuable discourse on the roles of often forgotten players, such as the tenants inhabiting and farming the land. The book is sectioned into several major aspects of Northumbrian landscape change, from the abolition of common rights and the consolidation of farms, through to dispersal of settlements and the adoption of new agricultural technologies. Each aspect is considered closely and the book engages with a wide range of local actors (human and non-human) which drove large-scale landscape changes in the region.

The detailed case study here will interest not only local historians, but also researchers looking for contrasts to Midlands-oriented studies. O'Donnell argues that we should be applying this deeply contextual approach to a wide range of post-medieval landscape studies, in order to understand the true nature of the changes as well as the effects of these changes on individuals who were involved, from the great estate landlord through to the small-holding tenant farmer and his family. There is value to this approach despite its lack of explanation and hopefully we will see similar contextual studies produced for other regions in the future.

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Conserving Cultural Landscapes. Challenges and New Directions. (Routledge Studies in Heritage, 7). Edited by Ken Taylor, Archer St Clair & Nora J Mitchell. 16 × 24 cm. xviii + 393 pp, 46 b&w pls and figs, 6 tables. London & New York: Routledge, 2015. ISBN 978-0-415744-05-8. Price: £90.00 hb.

Big challenges can face editors of books like this, not least that of forging discrete papers into a coherent whole. There are many tensions to be reconciled, notably those between achieving a desirable diversity, creating a clear narrative thread and bringing together different 'voices'.

Diversity is amply provided in this substantial book by its 22 chapters written from a wide range of disciplines, practice and cultural perspectives. Their coverage is global; indeed they span so many parts of the world that (refreshingly, perhaps) the European standpoint may appear under-represented. So much so, that readers of *Medieval Settlement Research* will not see the word 'medieval' on many pages ('settlement', in any of its meanings, is another rare sighting, and research is not too common), and while normally I would see this as a recognition of landscape's escape from the tyranny of artificial periodisation, in many chapters it merely reflects a weak sense of long-term history. The words 'over the years' (or similar words like 'traditional') often replace serious recognition of time-depth, which is slightly worrying in a book that devotes much space to indigenous perspectives. And yet there are certainly chapters of interest to MSRG readers, especially in Part II: *Community Stewardship and Diverse Values* and Part IV: *Confronting the Everyday Challenge of Cultural Landscape Management*, such as those by Jane Lennon including colonial settlement in

Australia, and by Elizabeth Brabec & Cari Goetchius on the post-emancipation landscapes of Gullee/Guchee communities in Georgia (USA) and the Carolinas.

As to a narrative thread, there are several, almost an embarrassment of riches. From Part I: *Reflections on Past and Future Directions* (the evolution of UNESCO World Heritage (WH) orthodoxy), through Part II about community in cultural landscape, to the Cultural/Natural 'divide' that has grown up within WH practice and the seductive idea of 'sacred landscapes' with its links to indigenous voices and reconstructed wisdoms. Programmatically, the book's final section (Part V: *Climate Change and Global Transformation*), discussing future-world issues of climate and environmental change, hazards and disasters, may be its most important. Part V contains relatively little, oddly enough, about cultural and social problems – demographic change, population growth, peace or war, democracy, food security or migration and so on – but such issues are fully implicit at the centre of the book, in Part III: *New Approaches and Policy Frameworks: The Recommendation on Historic Urban Landscape (HUL)*. Here three chapters explain 'HUL', UNESCO's slightly belated embrace of the new socially-embedded, non-protectionist paradigm for comprehensive (urban) 'conservation', an approach whose radical, not to say subversive, character is not yet fully appreciated by many (but is here, by Julian Smith).

Many distinctive voices can be heard from the book's nearly 30 contributors; not all are in harmony, and some are not easy to agree with, but the overall impact is powerful. Fortunately for the editors, the chapters have a common origin in a conference held in October 2012 at Rutgers University that marked 40 years of the WH Convention, the 20th anniversary of the invention of the WH cultural landscape definitions, and the first birthday of the new kid, HUL. This gives the book its coherence because its various messages all come from inside the UNESCO bubble. This has some drawbacks; in places readers might feel that the subject of the book is the UNESCO WH community rather than landscape or heritage. But drawbacks aside (and even if you think, like this reviewer, that the WH concept is too conservative, and that the term 'cultural landscape' is a counter-productive tautology) this is a most welcome book, especially for the attention it gives to HUL and for its many thoughtful chapters, not all of which have been singled out in this review.

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