

BOOK REVIEWS

Edited by NEIL CHRISTIE¹

The Material Culture of the Built Environment in the Anglo-Saxon World. Volume II of The Material Culture of Daily Living in the Anglo-Saxon World. (Exeter Studies in Medieval Europe). Edited by Maren Clegg Hyer & Gale R Owen-Crocker. 18 × 25 cm. xix + 295 pp, 64 b&w pls and figs, 2 tables. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015. ISBN 978-1-78138-65-3. Price: £75.00 hb.

This book is a welcome and interesting contribution to scholarship on the larger aspects of Anglo-Saxon material culture. Its collected essays deal with buildings domestic (Christopher Grocock; and Kevin Leahy & Micheal Lewis) and ecclesiastical (Michael Shapland); roads (Paul Hindle); meeting-places (Damian Tyler); standing stones (Elizabeth Coatsworth); burials (Sarah Semple & Howard Williams); boundaries (Margaret Worthington Hill & Erik Grigg); defensive works (Jeremey Haslam); and communication sites, methods and structures (John Baker & Stuart Brookes). It is generally well illustrated, though a couple of essays lacking illustrations would have benefitted from maps or diagrams.

The general reader will appreciate the approach, in which each essay attempts a summary of the evidence relating to its particular topic before dealing with examples in more detail. Some details have been painstakingly collected either by the writers or by others ('Of the 14,342 landmarks cited in Anglo-Saxon charters, 378 are hedges...' – p 169; 'some eighty whole body shrines are documented in late Anglo-Saxon England' – 159), and the book is peppered with such gems. There is some debate between contributors, for example between Haslam who believes the Anglo-Saxons *burhs* were planned, and Brookes and Baker who see them (in another publication) as piecemeal constructions. Some essays are more ground-breaking than others, and indeed some essays are better grounded in the various foundational disciplines than others.

Many contributors here are leaders in their respective fields, but perhaps some details might be questioned. Symptomatic of such details is the repeated idea that Anglo-Saxon poetry might have been written or read in the seventh century (p 36) and read in halls such as Heorot or Yeavinger (59): there is no evidence for vernacular textual culture at this date. And, generally, references to *Beowulf* and other vernacular written sources could have been used with greater discrimination.

Christopher Grocock's essay on the fragmentary poem known as *The Ruin* interestingly explores various ruined Roman stone building complexes as analogues for the baths focused on in the Old English elegy. But while the early date of the poem might be argued on

other grounds, it is not entirely plausible that the *enta geweorc* 'work of giants' formula or cliché (occurring in Old English poems of various postulated dates and referring to inhabited structures as well as ruins) can be pressed to so firm a conclusion as '[t]he fact that the poet of *The Ruin* regards masonry structures as "alien" to his own experience implies a pre-eighth-century origin for the work, that is, before stone churches were a feature of the Anglo-Saxon landscape' (p 33).

Paul Hindle's article on roads and tracks begins with a quote from Old English that omits a line from the text translated. His chapter outlines work relating to roadways of various kinds, but it is unreliable on place-names: Stratford is not 'fairly rare' (p 40; it occurs in that form at least 13 times in major names, and in variant forms a further five times) and it does not imply 'that a Roman road bridge had been replaced by a ford'; nor do the name-elements *wath*, *wade* 'often' apply to 'a tidal crossing' (47). The omission of Margaret Gelling & Ann Cole, *The Landscape of Place-Names* (new ed., Donington, 2014) from the bibliography here is unfortunate.

Michael Shapland's analysis of the building culture of the Anglo-Saxon Church is fascinating. He mentions the 'Irish method' of constructing timber churches in seventh-century Northumbria and gives a list of possible examples (p 97). A few pages later he asserts '[t]he timber churches which characterise seventh-century Northumbria appear to have been based on pagan halls' (106), and while this might not necessarily be a contradiction, it perhaps needs a little more explanation.

This is a fine book. There are some minor flaws, but as a companion to the built environment of Anglo-Saxon England, examining the patterns of thought and meaning that affected building and settlement, travel and defence, burial and boundaries, it is wide-ranging and, in many essays, definitive.

PAUL CAVILL
University of Nottingham

The Evidence of Material Culture. Studies in Honour of Professor Vera Evison. Le témoignage de la culture matérielle: Mélanges offerts au Professeur Vera Evison. (Europe Médiévale 10). Edited by Ian Riddler, Jean Soulat & Lynne Keys. 21 × 30 cm. iv + 288 pp, 120 colour and b&w pls and figs, 10 tables. Autun: Éditions Mergoïl, 2016. ISBN 978-2-35518-060-6. Price: €37.00 pb.

This excellent collection of essays in honour of Vera Evison also serves to present the smart new face of the *Europe Médiévale* series. It is a well-presented volume with high quality illustrations throughout. Professor

¹ University of Leicester

Evison is best known for her work on Anglo-Saxon glass and for excavating the Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Dover Buckland in the 1950s. The 20 contributions offered here are not limited to these themes, but Buckland, early Anglo-Saxon cemeteries, Anglo-Saxon and Merovingian artefacts, and glass vessels all feature prominently. This volume will therefore be of particular interest to archaeologists of the early Anglo-Saxon period. The publication was a collaborative effort which includes testimonials and contributions from friends and colleagues, past students of Vera, and early career archaeologists. Chapters are written in either French or English, with abstracts provided in both languages. The Preface and Introduction are in French, as are three other chapters. These latter are all well-illustrated, making them accessible despite potential language barriers. The focus is on England, but a few chapters on continental artefacts and history serve to broaden the geographic remit.

The first chapters focus on Evison's life and scholarly impact. A bibliography of her published works is collated at the end. Lynne Keys presents a set of revelatory 'Notes for a biography of Vera Evison', and we learn, among other insights, that she was the first English woman invited to present a paper at the *Sachsensymposium*, in 1956. Keith Parfitt's brief chapter on 'The return to Buckland' is full of lighthearted tales from the 1994 Buckland excavation, including the eventual naming of new estate roads at the Buckland development site: 'Evison Close' and 'Parfitt Way'!

A number of contributors took this opportunity to collate, revisit or reassess bodies of evidence. Thus valuable new compilations (e.g. Françoise Labaune-Jean on glass in early Merovingian Brittany) sit alongside re-appraisals of older material (e.g. Jean Soulat on the Merovingian grave-goods at Buckland; Sue Harrington on weaving swords). The paper by Bruce Eagles et al includes a catalogue of openwork girdle-hangers and related discs. Ian Riddler finds that Evison's typology of early Anglo-Saxon knives continues to apply to the growing corpus. Other chapters present less familiar finds: Märit Gaimster discusses the context of a gilded silver brooch, and Sonja Marzinzik analyses the strange 'kuttrolf' glass vessels. It is not all glass and metalwork though: David Constantine assesses a cross of antler/bone from Bamburgh, and Martin Foreman outlines the range of antler and bone combs from Castledyke and Flixborough. Kirsty Squires looks beyond artefact and site specifics to consider shared trends in cremation across England and north-west Europe. Also looking at Europe are Patrick Périn and Alain Dierkens on the fifth-century Frankish expansion into northern Gaul. Howard Williams and Alex Bayliss offer papers for a wider early medieval audience: Williams argues that early medieval archaeologists can seek interpretive inspiration in ethnographic analogy, while Bayliss provides an accessible overview of Bayesian chronological modelling with reference to early medieval sites.

Although Professor Evison specialised in cemeteries, she spent five seasons excavating West Stow. When Stanley West took over the excavations in 1965, he continued to look to Vera for counsel. In light of this, the only thing missing from this collection is a chapter on Anglo-Saxon settlement or the settlement-cemetery relationship. This is, overall, a rich collection of

evidence for the early Anglo-Saxon period. Early Anglo-Saxonists will undoubtedly find it a valuable resource, whether for interpretations that breathe fresh life into familiar finds, the artefact illustrations, the catalogues and surveys, or, indeed, for anecdotal insights into the life of a formidable scholar.

ALISON LEONARD
University of Cambridge

The Place-name Kingston and Royal Power in Middle Anglo-Saxon England. Patterns, Possibilities and Purpose. (British Archaeological Reports British Series 630). By Jill Bourne. 21 × 30 cm. xii + 167 pp, 89 colour and b&w figs, 4 tables. Oxford: BAR Publishing, 2017. ISBN 978-1-4073-1568-3. Price: £44.00 pb.

This excellent large format, six chapter study, with detailed appendices, further develops some of the ideas first proposed by Jill Bourne in *Sense of Place in Anglo-Saxon England* (eds R Jones and S Semple, Donington, 2012, pp 260–283). Adopting similar multidisciplinary techniques as those deployed by P Cullen, R Jones & D N Parsons in their *Thorps in a Changing Landscape* (Hatfield, 2011) and John Blair (*Building the Anglo-Saxon Landscape*, The James Ford Lectures in British History, Oxford, 2013), taking in onomastics, landscape archaeology, excavation and the historical record, the remarkable similarities of the landscape positioning of the places named *Kingston* in its various forms are discussed.

Although some localised studies have been undertaken, Bourne adopts a more global approach, covering the whole of Anglo-Saxon England. Unsurprisingly this confirms that town and country planning is far from a twentieth-century concept. A *Kingston* (*Cynningestūn* or King's enclosure) was specifically named and located for the execution of royal administration not royal residence, whose origins lay in the 'long eighth century.' The arguments for 'functional' places have been discussed frequently and there seems to be little doubt that naming of places in this period was somewhat more than simply identifying a location in the landscape; it is, though, a truism worth repeating that place-names are not really for the use of those who live in them but for those from the outside.

The argument is supported by discussions of specific places and their landscape contexts, the interpretations of which take in sites like Congerstone (Lei), *Kingestune* (Hnt), Cold Coniston (Yow), the lands of the *Magonsæte* and *Hwicce*, Kent and the south-coast roads of Wessex. Although covering all of Anglo-Saxon England, the distribution thins significantly moving northwards. It is noted that Kingston-on-Thames constitutes an *apparent* anomaly. Given many regal events are recorded as taking place there, Bourne argues the term simply defined the vicinity. The location for those events, she proposes lies in the lost *Fræricburna* – both places being perhaps part of the same royal estate. By resolving this anomaly, Kingston falls into the pattern about which she makes her case.

Given the vague and circumstantial nature of much of the evidence (in her own words, 'fragile and

slight'), Bourne acknowledges that conclusions remain speculative. This is a perennial issue, as there were clearly Anglo-Saxon terms which were 'understood' and therefore not considered worth documenting. ('Sleeping policeman' might confuse future historians.) The book's subtitle 'Patterns, Possibilities and Purpose' accepts this. However, the argument certainly holds water and circumstantial evidence is nonetheless still evidence.

If there is one criticism to make, albeit minor, it is the frequent reference to locations being 'nearby' without the precision of just how *nearby* they were. In a similar vein, the association of proximal Roman sites is mentioned but their significance to the argument is not explicitly voiced. It would have been interesting to develop this line of investigation further, since the inference is of a discernible relationship between the later Roman landscape and the administration of the early Anglo-Saxon kingdoms.

The conclusion is that a *Kingston*, far from being simply the 'King's enclosure' or mere landholding, was the place from or setting at which a range of legal and administrative functions were performed, perhaps the location from which the *shire-reeve* executed his responsibilities and in which miscreants were imprisoned awaiting justice. In fact, given their evident location at fixed distances along major route-ways, their relationship to the assertion of power and the administration of movement around the countryside was a significant part of their function.

The volume's appendices, giving summary descriptions of each of the present-day settlements, with map references and sources, are sufficiently detailed for anyone wishing to research the locations individually and is well-presented with maps in the earliest available Ordnance Survey versions.

This is a thoroughly researched piece of work and is presented in a succinct, clear and interesting style. It achieves its purpose of examining the possibilities and certainly leads to some conclusions, giving us better insights into the meaning – rather than the simple translation – of the term *Kingston*.

GRAHAM ALDRED
University of Leicester

The Anglo-Saxon Fenland. By Susan Oosthuizen. 19 × 25 cm. xx + 156 pp, 55 colour and b&w pls and figs. Oxford: Windgather Press, 2017. ISBN 978-1-911188-08-7. Price: £29.95 pb.

The vast fenland basin of eastern England, spreading into four counties from Lincoln in the north to Cambridge 80 miles to the south, has, unsurprisingly, a complex history. Roman settlement and industry were exposed in C.W. Phillips's landmark publication in 1970, while the medieval and post-medieval fens were explained from an historical geographer's perspective by H.C. Darby over the half century from 1940. With visible prehistoric activity restricted to the fen islands and fen-edge, only the post-Roman era specifically lacked a chronicler, notwithstanding the excellent 1994 synthesis in which David Hall and John Coles, reviewing the entire span of human activity as a result of new discoveries during the

English Heritage-inspired Fenland Survey of the 1980s, provide the current standard in archaeological thinking about the fens. In continuing the prominent Cambridge-based tradition of research into the historic fenlands, it is gratifying to see Susan Oosthuizen now filling this long-term lacuna in fenland studies with her examination of the Anglo-Saxon era.

Successive chapters examine the physical geography of the fens and their exploitation up to the end of the Roman era; the views espoused by Darby of an empty landscape in the early Anglo-Saxon period succeeded by a higher density of population at the time of Domesday; a review of the cultural identity of those who settled in the fens, whether Roman-British descendents or Anglo-Saxon incomers; the feasibility of stable polities emerging around and utilising the fens by the early eighth century; the presence of an early medieval province centred on the fen island of Ely; the likelihood that even in the early Anglo-Saxon era the complex ecology of the fenlands was carefully managed and farmed, with a further chapter exploring how this was achieved through water engineering; and an epilogue that summarises this 'new history of the Anglo-Saxon fenland [that] emerges in the preceding chapters' (p 135).

The picture that the author conjures up here is of a well-settled landscape, the farming population of the fenland basin growing, in a display of locational continuity, from the late Roman period through to the late eleventh century when its scale begins to acquire visibility within the documentary record. Two premises underpin this contention: that, contrary to the conventional view generated through archaeology, there was no significant interruption in fenland settlement late in the early Anglo-Saxon era as a result of environmental deterioration; and that, secondly, and seemingly depending on this continuity the highly evolved patterns of intercommoning visible throughout the fens in the later Middle Ages were already well established during the early medieval period, permitting developed and stable methods of farming throughout the Anglo-Saxon era. Both premises are attractive; neither though is entirely convincing. Little fresh archaeological material has emerged in recent years to alter our perceptions of early Anglo-Saxon usage of the fens, and revisiting the extremely sparse documentary record is unlikely to effect a fundamental change in thinking, while the origins and establishment of intercommoning rely on theoretical perceptions of governance, rather than hard evidence. And there is a further issue which Oosthuizen is too experienced an historian to ignore, yet can do little to meliorate, namely the fact that the fenland is not a single landscape that can be treated as an entity, but a complex holocene region where no single settlement hypothesis will suffice and where existing research is heavily skewed in favour of the southern fens.

The value of *The Anglo-Saxon Fenland* is that it offers a fresh perspective on a relatively poorly defined period, usefully questioning established views, long taken for granted, and generating a new set of carefully argued hypotheses that should focus attention for a new generation of researchers.

BOB SILVESTER
University of Chester

The Lost Dark Age Kingdom of Rheged. The Discovery of a Royal Stronghold at Trusty's Hill, Galloway. By Ronan Toolis & Christopher Bowles. 22 × 31 cm. vi + 169 pp, 86 colour and b&w pls and figs, 40 tables. Oxford & Philadelphia: Oxbow Books, 2016. ISBN 978-1-78570-311-9. Price: £30.00 hb.

Being much-versed in late Roman and early medieval fortified communities in Italy especially – from Roman urban enceintes to Alpine military *castra* and to incipient castles – it has been instructive for me to learn of the archaeology (and readings of that archaeology) of a defended complex in early medieval Scotland, where Roman connections are far less prominent albeit not, as will be seen, non-existent. The site under scrutiny is striking because it offers a potential window into the powerplay of the otherwise poorly-understood and archaeologically-elusive sixth-century kingdom of Rheged in northern Britain – famous for the poetry of Taliesin, the exploits of its king Urien and for its Christian beacon, the ‘Candida Casa’ church at Whithorn, founded by St Ninian in the early fifth century. Rheged appears to have been centred in the region of Galloway in south-west Scotland, a zone open to influences from Ireland to the west, Picts to the north, and the kingdoms of Bernicia and Northumbria to the east and south-east (see discussion on ‘Cultural identities and hybridisation’, pp 129–132). One striking feature of the Trusty’s Hill site – a ‘craggy knoll within the Boreland Hills’ – is the pair of Pictish-style carvings (double disc and Z-rod; and distinctive sea-monster/dragon and sword) on the angled bedrock near the entrance to the site – and with a possible votive hollow/pool opposite this. Dating for these is not easy (pp 8–10) but the authors convincingly connect these to the stronghold rather than coming after the site’s destruction (see Chapter 6). Recognised as a ‘vitrified fort’ already in the late eighteenth century, Trusty’s Hill saw some excavation in 1960 under Charles Thomas; but by misfortune he endured a very soggy fortnight, in contrast with the largely dry and sunny conditions of the new excavations (including re-opening of four of Thomas’ trenches) of 2012.

While the new work (detailed in Chapter 2) showed evidence missed in the rains of 1960, it confirmed Thomas’ core chronology first of a late Iron Age phase and a main later sixth-century AD revamping of the site, but enhanced the sequence and overall interpretation through an important gathering of small finds and environmental data, plus close assessment of the site’s end (Chapter 3). There is strong discussion of the finds (highlighted for their quality not quantity): the artefacts (Chapter 4) included an Anglo-Saxon/Anglian horse-mount, 89 slingstones, a glass bead, crucible fragments, plus two rim-sherds of Samian and E ware (there is a long, involved discussion of these on pp 125–130, giving these embedded, multiple meanings, beyond functional reuse of the Samian as a source for jeweller’s rouge, connecting the smith at least ‘to the wider Roman Christian world’). The environmental data (Chapter 5) are slight but useful and carefully assessed (animal bones: ‘An incomplete picture of the animal economy is available due to the nature of preservation at the site, but...’ – p 68; carbonised and waterlogged finds: ‘Many of the botanical remains from Trusty’s Hill are

strongly indicative of structural remains, but provide little evidence for domestic occupation on the site, either in terms of domestic hearth waste or remains of food plants’ – 82. However, Chapter 7, pp 115–119, offer a rather fuller, more confident reconstruction).

The excavations gave strong insights into the character of the defensive wall, c 2.3m wide, dry-stone built (using locally-obtained greywacke stone), but timber-laced, with spaced large timber uprights (perhaps to support a wall-walk) (see discussion pp 107–109, 111–115): the use of timbers is evident from the vitrification of the stone of the wall core especially, while the vitrification itself is viewed convincingly as the result of the deliberate, orchestrated destruction of the circuit and site in the earlier seventh century – a symbolic ‘fiery spectacle that lasted days if not weeks and was visible for miles around... a political statement with menace, marking an irreversible defeat and presumably aimed at a wide sphere of influence that centred upon the site’ – see pp 132–134). The excavators speculate on a capture and destruction of this site and others in the region by Bernicians/Anglians as they spread their power northwards in the first half of the seventh century.

Indeed, in the concluding chapters (7, 8), the authors propose as probable that ‘Trusty’s Hill was the chief seat of this kingdom [of Rheged], lying at the apex of a distribution pattern of fortified secular settlements and ecclesiastical sites across central Galloway’; indeed, only here ‘is there evidence of royal inauguration rites comparable with other contemporary royal sites elsewhere in Scotland’ (149). Perhaps, but this seems a bit overstated, since the archaeological data are, while certainly suggestive, not yet strong enough. The site’s innards especially remain under-investigated, and while the finds debris reveals metal-working, middens, and use of timber and livestock resources, we do not know what types of buildings lay there: as Toolis and Bowles state, ‘the constricted area of the summit suggests that the settlement... though hosting a workshop, was still in essence a single household, settlement, not a multiple household settlement; an estate centre rather than a village’ (107). We are not told of the potential size of the household or that of the likely herds of corralled cattle; and where might the ‘retainers’ and dependent workers and farmers (and soldiery) have been based – in the immediate environs, in scattered farmsteads? Nonetheless, this is a fascinating site and the authors work hard to draw out the history, role, setting and end of what was no doubt a prominent seat in the region’s early medieval landscape.

NEIL CHRISTIE
University of Leicester

Pilgrim Routes of the British Isles. By Emma J Wells. 16 × 24 cm. 256 pp, 97 colour pls and maps. Marlborough: Robert Hales Books, 2016. ISBN 978-0-7198-1707-6. Price: £19.99 hb.

The purpose of this nicely produced book is not very clear. Seven different ‘pilgrim routes’ are presented; while some contain elements of medieval pilgrimage routes, almost all are products of twentieth- or twenty-

first-century heritage tourism initiatives. St Andrew's Way, for example, linking Edinburgh with the former medieval shrine at St Andrews was launched in 2012; part-funded through the European Development Fund, the North Wales Pilgrim's Way from Holywell to Bardsey was created in 2011 by CADW's Heritage Tourism Project. These have been pasted onto routes linking places with medieval heritage, but include attractions of recent date, such as Jane Austen's house at Chawton, a stop on the Pilgrim's Way between Winchester and Canterbury. Without citations, it is clearly not intended for an academic audience, but its format is unsuitable for a pocket guidebook.

The quality of information about individual places is uneven: eg the parish church on Holy Island, Northumberland, does not contain identifiable seventh-century fabric and the earthwork at the east end of the Heugh is a post-medieval fort guarding the harbour, not a watchtower.

The Introduction offers a discussion of the relationship between medieval pilgrimage and modern heritage tourism, but this confuses rather than clarifies. Both involve journeys, destinations and cultural or spiritual experiences but heritage tourism is surely a highly commoditised creation of a global economy; medieval pilgrims, for all their other challenges and shortcomings, did not experience pilgrimage in this environment.

DEIRDRE O'SULLIVAN
University of Leicester

Roadworks. Medieval Britain, Medieval Roads. (Manchester Medieval Literature and Culture). Edited by Valerie Allen & Ruth Evans. 15 x 22 cm. xiii + 367 pp, 7 b&w pls and figs, 6 tables. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016. ISBN 978-0-7190-8506-2. Price: £70.00 hb.

Roman roads have frequently attracted single-minded enthusiasts, while those of the early modern era have also seen a considerable level of research. For the twelve centuries between, however, the view is very much more opaque, so the publication of this volume appeared to offer considerable promise of fresh research on a challenging subject. Sadly, optimism in this reviewer dissipated mid-way through the first paragraph of the Introduction, with citations by Foucault, Levi-Strauss and Derreida.

The origins of *Roadworks* are unclear: it is not based on a specific project or conference, but rather appears to have emerged from the shared research interests of a group of academics in English departments in America, amongst them the editors responsible for the Introduction. To these are added contributions from a small number of British historians on roads and their use, and one chapter on London, which, focussing on the Thames and medieval river transport, looks to have absconded from another publication. *Roadworks* appears under the banner of the Manchester Medieval Literature and Culture series, whose previous ten titles generally provide clear enough guides to their literary content. In this volume the editors state that '[o]ur title, indeed the founding concept of the book – the medieval

British road – is a misnomer' (p 3). Very true, though not for the reason that they then elaborate.

If the road as metaphor, allegory or chronotope is your thing, then the transatlantic contributions can be recommended. Space syntax, heterotopia, ideational journeys and a linguistically restricted perceptual register put in an appearance: the impression is of a set of papers written by academics primarily for other academics. Yet to assert that these contributions unfailingly ignore the materiality and use of medieval roads in Britain would be unreasonable. In her paper on hermits, Sauer, for instance, examines known cases of medieval hermits who repaired roads and bridges, though on a first reading all the examples are culled from earlier syntheses. Indeed, reworking and repackaging emerge as an emphatic feature of many of these papers and Evans in her chapter on wayfinding openly admits that 'I do not provide new archival evidence but draw on existing scholarship' (p 148). Her discourse on medieval sanctuary, as offered by ecclesiastical centres (138), cites as its primary information source a volume published more than a century ago by an American academic through the University of Missouri Press; that British historians might have examined the subject of sanctuary in more recent times has apparently escaped her. Nor, regrettably, can the accuracy of the scholarship always be relied on. Legassie, citing unnamed economic historians, opens with 'strictly speaking, there is no such thing as a pilgrimage road' (198). Evidently he has never examined John Ogilby's *Britannia* and the cross-country road linking Holywell and St Davids, the two most important medieval shrines in Wales.

Turning to the remaining, 'home-grown' papers, as they are ordered in the book, Paul Hindle examines the sources for the English medieval road system. But there is little that is new here, and as our leading expert on medieval roads he comments that it is 'curious that so little has been written about these roads that were so fundamental to England's economic growth' (33). In a thoughtful paper, Michael Prestwich examines roads as seen through Edward I's travels around the country and what this implies about their location and nature in the later thirteenth century. Dylan Foster Evans looks at roads in medieval Wales and their military use in a synthesis that is up to date, citing Andrew Fleming's recent analysis of the Monk's Trod, a route between two Cistercian houses in mid-Wales. It is defective, though, in his understanding of the earlier Roman road system, with the uncritical acceptance of a road, Sarn Helen, that supposedly ran around three sides of the country; this owes everything to a fantasy publication of 1939, nothing to reality. *Roadworks* closes with Richard Oram's discussion of roads functioning in the Scottish lowlands between 1100 and 1300. A map or two would have helped, but these presumably might accompany a fuller treatment elsewhere. This is the best chapter in the book, introducing new thinking on the roads as lines of division and boundaries between different political, social and economic units. It's a source of regret that the editors couldn't have identified more of comparable quality.

BOB SILVESTER
University of Chester

Struggling with the Environment: Land Use and Productivity. (Rural Economy and Society in North-Western Europe, 500–2000). Edited by Erik Thoen & Tim Soens. 19 × 26 cm. xx + 499 pp, 105 b&w pls, figs and tables. Turnhout: Brepols, 2016. ISBN 978-2-503-53047-5. Price: €129.00 hb

This book is one of four devoted to ‘Rural Economy and Society in North-Western Europe, 500–2000’. The other three, on social, institutional and commercial themes, were published between 2010 and 2013, and together are intended to update and replace the single volume book entitled *The Agrarian History of Western Europe* by Slicher van Bath, first published in English in 1963. This major publishing project came out of the remarkably productive CORN project, based at Ghent and led by Professor Erik Thoen, and devoted to the study of the rural history of countries around the North Sea, from Norway to northern France, and including Britain.

This book begins with a chapter on the whole area in the Early Middle Ages, using a wide range of evidence, with particular emphasis on archaeology and environmental analysis; like all of the contributions, it features a lengthy and comprehensive bibliography. Then follow chapters on Britain, northern France, the Low Countries, north-west Germany and Scandinavia, in each case divided between sections on the period 1000–1750 and 1750–2000. After these very concentrated and fact-laden surveys, a lengthy and thoughtful conclusion selects important connecting themes to pull book together. This review will focus on those parts of the book dealing with the period before 1750.

The subjects covered overlap with the preoccupations of members of the MSRG. Although archaeology figures prominently in the chapter dealing with the period 500–1000, it is used only occasionally elsewhere (for example, there is an aerial photograph of Wharram Percy, which is cited as a village swept away by its lord). The form of settlements is considered, both hamlets and villages, and the creation of new settlements (based mainly on documents) provides one indication of the expansion of the agrarian landscape in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Through the centuries the ups and downs of settlement are traced, from late medieval depopulation and various phases of subsequent expansion. Field systems and agricultural technology are discussed at length, and much attention is given to fluctuations in populations, changes in land use, the size of holdings and levels of productivity.

The ‘Struggle’ of the title might give the impression that the book is about crises and disasters, particularly in relation to episodes of inundation along the North Sea coasts, but in general it takes a rather relaxed view of the perils of the climate. Rather, the emphasis is on the ways in which cultivators adapted their fields and farming methods to the varied soils and topography of the region. The Malthusian theory of the dangers of overpopulation are likewise not given much prominence, as production was usually capable of keeping pace with the consumption needs of the population. The conclusion begins with a striking claim that the North Sea region has in recent times developed the most productive agriculture in the world. This is partly because of

geographical factors, such as the quality of the soil, but also reflects a social and institutional structure which favours growth in the rural economy. Parts of the North Sea littoral achieved high levels of production in the Middle Ages, especially in northern France and Flanders, but the editors of this book, although aware of long-term continuities connecting the Middle Ages and the more recent centuries, highlight the mediocre performance of many regions in the medieval centuries, including much of England. The main producers were peasants, and they are depicted as preoccupied with a strategy for survival rather than the pursuit of profit.

CHRISTOPHER DYER
University of Leicester

Agrarian Technology in the Medieval Landscape. Ruralia X. 9th–15th September 2013, Smolenice, Slovakia. Edited by Jan Klápště. 21 × 30 cm. xviii + 448 pp, 212 b&w pls and figs, 20 tables. Turnhout: Brepols, 2016. ISBN 978-2-503-55137-1. Price: €90.00 pb.

This volume features a collection of papers deriving from the 10th Ruralia conference held in Slovakia. This was a very interesting event, with a wide range of topics discussed around the theme of agrarian technology in the medieval landscape. Svensson and Gardiner bring out some of this discussion in their Introduction, in particular noting two themes to the studies – those interdisciplinary in their approach, and those focusing on regional specialities. There is also a Foreword by the president, Claudia Theune, and an introduction to the history of Ruralia over the past 20 years, written by honorary president Alan Aberg. A total of 27 papers are presented, organised loosely by geography, moving across Europe from west to east, and grouping together papers by theme, whether focused on landscape or material culture. As ever, geographical coverage is strong, ranging from Ireland and Greenland to Hungary and the Carpathian Basin.

Various of the expert contributors explore aspects of field systems and cultivation, such as Dixon on Scottish fields, Brady on ploughing in Ireland, and Henriksen on cultivation in Greenland. The latter exploits plant macrofossils to investigate whether the Vikings imported their foodstuffs or actively cultivated their own crops. Such an approach valuably emphasises the archaeology of what was actually grown. Myrdal and Sappoznik’s contribution on spade cultivation is particularly interesting, as it considers the agriculture of the poorest peasants rather than seigniorial farming; it also makes use of iconographic and written evidence alongside the archaeology and contains a detailed appendix of the images of Adam and Eve at work.

There are considerations of the tools used in agriculture and their impact on the landscape: e.g. Karlsson on iron production; Larsen on mouldboard ploughs; and Bajkai on quernstones. Very thought-provoking was Karlsson’s study of iron usage in ploughs and other tools. Through experimentation, she has shown that ploughs required regular repair and replacement of the iron ploughshare. She reveals that cultivation of harder lands was possible with the development of harder metal; however, this

depended on the exploitation of iron resources and mining. Měchurová more broadly examines the tools used for agriculture and organises them in order of when they were used during the agricultural year; this paper is well illustrated with images of artefacts and medieval depictions of the tools in use.

Many authors discuss open fields and the wider landscape. Among these, Nießen looks at landscape and settlement from a place-name perspective in Southern Germany, using toponyms to study the uses of the land around settlements; interesting is the term *Wolfsgarbe/Wolfsgarten/Wolfsgaben* to identify sites where wolves were trapped, since a number of these have been excavated to seek to reveal the structures.

Overall, *Agrarian Technology in the Medieval Landscape* makes an important contribution to medieval rural studies. Moorhouse and Bond's paper quotes Hilton: 'It is almost impossible to study medieval agriculture without studying the whole of medieval life'. But it is also true that we cannot study medieval life, and particularly settlement, without considering medieval agriculture. Therefore, this collection of papers provides many insights into how the landscape was farmed during the Middle Ages, some of the hardware involved and the use and maintenance of these tools. The *Ruralia* volumes and their conferences continue to reveal the wide range of research being carried out into medieval rural society across Europe; this particular volume greatly advances our understanding of how tools were used in medieval agriculture, and the impact they had on the medieval landscape.

DUNCAN BERRYMAN
Queen's University Belfast

The Ancient Yew. A History of Taxus Baccata. (Third Edition). By Robert Bevan-Jones. 19 × 25 cm. xvi + 190 pp, 12 colour pls, 49 b&w pls and figs. Oxford & Havertown PA: Windgather Press, 2017. ISBN 978-1-78570-078-1. Price: £29.95 pb.

Bevan-Jones' book was deservedly described by the late Oliver Rackham as 'the best of many books on yew' when it was first published in 2002 and this remains true today. Carefully avoiding more contentious and possibly over-imaginative comments on this often symbolic tree, it searches the existing science-based evidence for the age of many famous trees and explores the theories that exist about their association with saints (best documented in Wales), ancient churchyards and springs, etc; it still concludes 'that the supposed evidence for churchyard yews being older than this [the early Celtic saints coming to Britain], is really not of any scientific merit at all' (xv). However, archaeological evidence of the yew being part of ritual practices can now be carried back to the Mesolithic period in Poland and for its use for special musical instruments in Ireland to a date some 4,000 years ago (the yew, becoming hollow with age, defies normal radiocarbon dating). The discovery of yew artefacts in Britain going back to the Palaeolithic was already thoroughly covered in the book's first edition, including the evidence for its use in bows (not regularly in use for this purpose after 1000 BC, with

Spanish yew preferred by medieval times). Yet much still remains to be understood about the yew. Even its incidence in Anglo-Saxon charter-bounds is bedevilled by uncertainty about some Old English names.

However, readers should note that barely any additions have been made to the book's original text. Attention is drawn in a new Introduction to the yew website since started and maintained by Tim Hills (<http://www.ancient-yew.org/>), but sadly the Bibliography itself does not refer to anything published since 2002. Nevertheless, this book remains probably the most authoritative account of the yew written so far. It presents chapters upon the botanical features of the yew – its slow rate of growth, the character of its dense, poisonous wood, rendering it immune to most insect parasites, and even most fungi; the toxicity of its leaves, roots and bark, even the seeds of its berries; and its distribution and role in place-names. Particular yews are looked at in closer detail, with some striking photographs. Even the yew in folklore traditions and its links to ancient deities is not neglected. This book accordingly continues to occupy a pride of place upon this reader's bookshelf.

DELLA HOOKE
University of Birmingham

Cod and Herring. The Archaeology and History of Medieval Sea Fishing. Edited by James H Barrett & David C Orton. 22 × 28 cm. ix + 272 pp, 87 colour and b&w pls and figs, 39 tables. Oxford & Philadelphia: Oxbow Books, 2016. ISBN 978-1-78570-239-6. Price: £48.00 pb.

This book is a model for producing a coherent and valuable book from a conference. The original conference was focussed on a big idea, namely the 'Fish event horizon'. Contributors were given an agenda covering the central hypothesis and associated questions, and their responses in 19 papers have enabled Barrett to write a conclusion which answers the questions and makes an original contribution to knowledge.

The 'Fish event horizon' sums up an hypothesis that around AD 1000 sections of the north European fishing industry expanded their catches, developed processes to preserve fish, carried their products over long distances and helped to feed the growing urban populations. The contributors to this book derive from many countries and represent a number of disciplines; they use a wide range of sources and techniques, including documents, analysis of fish bone samples, excavations of fishing settlements and stable isotope analysis of human bone. Much space is devoted to methodology and readers are made to appreciate that the whole inquiry depends on the relatively recent adoption of policies of collecting comprehensive samples of bones. To make decisions about the methods of curing, much depends on the absence or presence on consumption sites of particular bones that would be removed when herring were butchered and cod prepared for drying as stockfish. The overall conclusion supports the idea of a Fish event horizon, though scholarly caution leaves the 'event' spread over a longer period, from 850–1050. In some parts of eastern Europe decisive evidence is lacking and

a number of researchers are anxious to emphasise the importance of growth in the industry in the thirteenth century. Iceland did not become fully involved in the stockfish trade until the Later Middle Ages. The main scepticism seems to come from Belgium, which should have been one of the urbanising regions generating high levels of demand c AD 1000.

The subject must seem to some readers a narrow one, but this is far from the case. Commerce in fish was not a small corner of medieval trade since, in volume and value, it can be compared with cloth and wine. It provided employment for thousands and was connected to a range of other manufactures and trades: fish-curing needed large quantities of salt and salt-making in turn required prodigious quantities of fuel, helping to explain the extent of peat diggings in East Anglia and the Netherlands. Ship-building and barrel-making were stimulated by the needs of the fishermen and they used timber in quantity. These industries all had environmental impacts, and fishing itself raises problems of sustainability. Was it necessary to turn increasingly to sea fishing because rivers were over-fished and polluted? Was it possible to catch millions of herring, cod and other species without depleting stocks? How was sea fishing affected by climate change as the northern seas warmed around AD 1000 and cooled around 1500?

The book raises problems of explaining regional differences and change over time. Taste, custom and tradition must explain why in different parts of Europe in the Early Middle Ages people ate limited quantities of fish or only freshwater species. It has been suggested that the Church's doctrine on fasting was a factor in promoting fish consumption, but this seems unlikely as pagans in Norway enjoyed a strong fish element in their diet.

The lesson for MSRG is clear: we must pay more attention to coastal settlements and landscapes.

CHRISTOPHER DYER
University of Leicester

Medieval Dispersed Settlement on the Mid Suffolk Clay at Cedars Park, Stowmarket. (East Anglian Archaeology 161). By Tom Woolhouse. 21 × 30 cm. x + 148 pp, 8 colour pls, 47 b&w pls and figs, 39 tables. Bury St Edmunds: Archaeological Solutions Ltd, 2016. ISBN 978-0-9932477-2-9. Price: £15.00 pb

This very useful report deals with an extensive evaluation and a number of area excavations made necessary by a modern housing development to the east of Stowmarket in Suffolk. The main discoveries were a series of ditched enclosures, in one case containing the dwelling and outbuildings of a farmstead, in others 'tofts' on roadsides, mostly dated between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries. The excavations throw light on major issues in settlement and landscape history. After sampling 68 ha of land threatened by development, a total of 3 ha were selected for more systematic excavation, giving us a picture of dispersed settlements in a wider agrarian landscape. The roads and lanes recorded on modern maps were found to have had medieval origins, with medieval settlement ranged along their sides, and

one of the houses was sited next to an early green. The pattern of enclosed fields along the River Gipping might reflect that river's role as a landscape frontier. The nearby medieval town of Stowmarket, and the market established for a time at Thorney Hall, provided a context for the settlement in terms of commercial growth, and some of the roadside tofts perhaps hoped to benefit from passing trade.

The settlements did not seem to have prospered greatly. Two of them could be connected through contemporary documents to peasant families called Green and Newman. The buildings were based on earthfast timbers, even in the fourteenth century, and the pottery and small finds did not suggest affluence among the inhabitants – copper alloy dress accessories and iron implements were rather scarce, and the pottery was mostly unglazed and made within 40 km. A number of oyster shells suggested longer distance contacts. The agriculture practised by the inhabitants was indicated by the field boundaries of enclosed fields, animal bones, preserved cereal grains, peas, beans and vetches, and weed seeds. The farmstead which could be excavated most fully featured a long narrow building best interpreted as a sheepcote; cobbled surfaces likely served as yards for cattle; and a pond was dug for watering livestock.

The author sets the settlements in context by comparing them with ten parallel sites in Essex, Norfolk and Suffolk, a number of which are illustrated, demonstrating similarities in layout and building construction. All of the sites seem to share a common chronology, being founded in the twelfth century (or a little earlier), growing in the thirteenth, and experiencing abandonment around 1350–1400. The growth can be connected with the general expansion of the rural population and the market economy, but in considering the late medieval shrinkage of settlements Woolhouse wisely avoids choosing decisively between climatic change, the Black Death and the other problems of the period.

CHRISTOPHER DYER
University of Leicester

Iron Age, Roman and Anglo-Saxon Settlement along the Empingham to Hannington Pipeline in Northamptonshire and Rutland. By Simon Carlyle, Jason Clarke & Andy Chapman. 21 × 29 cm. xii + 131 pp, 70 colour and b&w pls and figs, 62 tables. Oxford: Archaeopress, 2017. ISBN 978-1-78491-534-6. Price: £26.00 pb.

This monograph presents the results of a series of archaeological excavations along the route of a new water pipeline as part of a major project to increase supply to new homes and businesses in the south-east Midlands region. These investigations were undertaken in 2008 and 2009 by Northamptonshire Archaeology (who have since become part of Museum of London Archaeology). Nineteen sites were investigated and, as the title suggests, these date mainly to the Iron Age, Roman and Anglo-Saxon periods. The earliest remains were a late Bronze Age/early Iron Age pit alignment near Seaton, Rutland. The Iron Age and Roman sites were

small rural settlements comprising ditched enclosures, and remains of roundhouses and pits. Settlements were located near Seaton and Caldecott in Rutland and in Northamptonshire at Swinawe Barn near Corby, Thorpe Malsor, White Hill Lodge, Great Cransley and Willows Nursery. A Roman site near Rushton, Northamptonshire may be associated with a villa estate. Other sites included part of a Roman field system at Violet Lane, near Corby, and Roman cremation burials near Gretton, Northamptonshire. An Anglo-Saxon cremation cemetery dated to the late fifth to mid-seventh century AD at Glaston, Rutland, contained 16 cremation burials deposited in decorated and plain urns with small assemblages of grave goods (including a brooch, glass beads, and fragments of a bone comb and mount). This report on this site includes detailed discussion of each burial, along with clear photos and illustrations of the finds and pottery vessels.

This monograph is an edited version of a grey literature report completed in 2011 and available (for free) online on ADS. As there is little difference between the grey-lit report and this publication, it would have been beneficial to have had here a longer discussion drawing on wider comparisons rather than merely duplicating what is already publicly available elsewhere. Alternatively this could have served as a targeted article in *Northamptonshire Archaeology* journal. Interpretation of archaeological deposits viewed in narrow pipeline trenches is often limited, but this report does offer a variety of evidence that should prove useful for researchers interested in the archaeology of this region at least.

GAVIN SPEED
University of Leicester

The Great Barn of 1425–27 at Harmondsworth, Middlesex. By Edward Impey, with Daniel Miles & Richard Lea. 19 × 25 cm. vi + 89 pp, 31 colour and b&w pls and figs, 6 tables. Swindon: Historic England, 2017. ISBN 978-1-84802-371-0. Price: £20.00 pb.

If a third runway is built at Heathrow airport, the medieval building that is the subject of this publication will be within 150 metres of the planes, and either get shaken to bits or be dismantled and re-erected somewhere more tranquil. Already it has no agricultural function, and although a little open space remains around it, perhaps its removal from housing estates, a motorway and warehouse complexes would not matter as only the proximity of a church remains of its original settlement context. It was acquired by English Heritage as recently as 2011, and this excellent book results from their custodianship.

The book's title is able to give such a confident construction date because dendrochronology of timbers – primarily the work of Ian Tyers to judge from the footnotes – shows that it must be the great barn built by Winchester College, whose unpublished archives reveal payments for various stages of the work. The relevant entries are transcribed and translated by Stephen Priestley, and a discussion of farming methods shows that the College continued demesne farming for longer

than did most late medieval landlords, and therefore needed to invest in its estates' infrastructure for reasons other than to attract tenants. Also discussed at length are the building methods and the sequence in which the barn was erected: although its straight timbers and aisle-post construction did not clear the interior space in the way that crucks or hammer-beams would have done, in some details it was innovative, in ways not always appropriate, and with some inexplicable errors. All this is described in detail and correlated as far as possible with the archival records, which are extremely detailed in some matters, yet frustratingly silent on others.

Relegated to a footnote is radiocarbon dating undertaken for Walter Horn, which 'pointed to the turn of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries' (1970, 46 – see 'The potential and limitations of radiocarbon dating in the Middle Ages: the art historian's view', in R. Berger (ed), *Scientific Methods in Medieval Archaeology*, Berkeley, 11–87). It would have been interesting to test whether modern radiocarbon methods can offer different and more probable results for the later medieval period than the 1960s work, which was too early by 20/30 years.

In other respects, however, this book gives as full an account as could be wished, with well-chosen illustrations and well-executed graphics, although the choice of a shade of grey for the font colour places modishness above readability.

DAVID A. HINTON
University of Southampton

The Production and Distribution of Medieval Pottery in Cambridgeshire. (East Anglian Archaeology Report No 159). By Paul Spoerry. 21 × 30 cm. xxi + 339 pp, 250 colour and b&w pls and figs, 105 tables. Bar Hill: Oxford Archaeology East, 2016. ISBN 978-1-907588-08-2. Price: £30.00 pb.

The upsurge of commercial fieldwork has created both challenges and opportunities for pottery researchers. Our dataset has grown substantially, but progress has been hampered by a lack of consistency in recording methodologies. This volume addresses these challenges and exploits these opportunities for Cambridgeshire, and is successful in meeting its twin aims of creating a type series to allow consistent recording and synthesising our current knowledge of pottery in the region.

The volume is divided into two parts. The second is an extensive type-series of wares found in Cambridgeshire, with detailed fabric descriptions, summaries of the principal forms, affinities and, in many cases, petrological descriptions. This section is liberally illustrated with colour photographs and line drawings and will be a valuable resource for decades to come. It is supplemented by scientific analyses (thin section and chemical analysis), which have been targeted towards specific research questions. The integration of methods has proved particularly successful in characterising and further defining wares. No doubt more could have been achieved if it had not been for the untimely death of Alan Vince, who had undertaken much of this research.

For the general reader, it is the first part which will prove the most interesting. This begins with a summary of the research framework which guided the production of the volume. Specific questions for each period are posed and answered, chiefly though the results of the scientific analysis. This is an important section which progresses knowledge substantially. This targeted and specific use of scientific work allows particularly problematic wares such as Anglo-Saxon grano-diritic wares, Thetford-type Wares and later medieval Colne-type wares to be better understood. The synthesis is divided by period, with a summary and interpretation of the wares present in each sub-region. There is a good attempt to relate pottery distributions to the commercial and physical geography of the county to develop our understanding of the factors influencing pottery marketing.

There are, inevitably, some niggles; it would be helpful for the sub-regions to be marked on all maps and for each period to have a brief summary, but these do not detract from what is a valuable summary of our current knowledge of Cambridgeshire pottery.

The synthesis ends with a consideration of future directions. This includes a call for consistency (unfortunately the volume was published before the publication of the new *Standard for Pottery Studies in Archaeology*: <https://medievalceramics.wordpress.com/a-standard-for-pottery-studies-in-archaeology/>) and the identification of areas for future research. This should be of interest to excavators as well as pottery specialists, as several of these questions can only be addressed if built into excavation project designs. Regional studies such as this were identified as a key aim of the Medieval Pottery Research Group's research framework. If other regions can produce such detailed and substantial volumes, then we will be well on our way to consolidating and reflecting upon our understanding of the significance of medieval pottery for studying regional economies and society.

BEN JERVIS
Cardiff University

Medieval Wexford. Essays in Memory of Billy Colfer.
Edited by Ian W Doyle & Bernard Brown. 16 × 24 cm.
544 pp, 16 colour pls, 185 b&w pls and figs, 6 tables.
Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2016. ISBN 978-1-84682-520-5. Price: £45.00 hb.

This collection of essays in memory of a celebrated local historian has a clear focus, so there is much on offer for the medieval archaeologist, although several papers extend their remit into the seventeenth or eighteenth century. The 22 academic contributions range from specific studies of buildings and sites to wider considerations of settlement and landscape.

Wexford is particularly connected, in Irish history, with the Anglo-Norman settlement, beginning in 1169/70, which brought the island of Ireland into direct contact with the world of the Angevins, becoming part of a suite of lordships, often contested, across Britain and much of France. This episode was also the focus of much of Dr Colfer's own work, who realised that landscapes need to be understood before they can be

explained. The imposition of lordship on the Wexford landscape was a crucial focus, and is reflected in many of the papers in this book.

Indeed, those studies that identify the development of this landscape will be of particular relevance to MSRG readers. These include a group of really interesting papers about the deserted medieval town of Bannow (Corlett and Kirwan, Murphy and Magahy). These explore the early development of the Anglo-Norman parish, the relationship between parishes and manors created in the Anglo-Norman settlement, its manifestation in the form of tangible parochial baptism, the arrival of rabbits and their careful nurture, and the ongoing topographic recording of a gradually disappearing place in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Other contributions present important and often very detailed case studies. These include the identification of a late medieval 'school-house' of the O'Doran family of traditional lawyers (brehons) at Ballyorley, thriving into the sixteenth century in a landscape in which Gaelic lordship and traditions were still strong (FitzPatrick and Ó'Driscóil); an assessment of the archaeology and history of coastal trade, legal and illicit, along the Wexford coast (Kelleher); an overview of the medieval moated sites of Wexford, where the introduction of LiDAR is welcomed as an important investigative tool (Barry); and a review of new insights into rural settlement offered by linear construction projects, that endorse a dispersed pattern of settlement for much of the medieval landscape, and a surprising – or perhaps unsurprising – poverty of material culture (Eogan and Kelly). The medieval inheritance of the 'New English' colonists emerges as a potentially significant factor in their strategies for controlling their new assets (Lyttleton).

A thread running through a number of papers is the extent to which an Anglo-Norman – later a Gaelic/English – boundary can be perceived in the material evidence and historical record. The identification of identity in the landscape has been a dominant theme in recent archaeological discourse and the paradoxes and tensions evident in the Wexford countryside offer a rich field, usefully informed by discrepant historical points of view. This is an exciting ongoing debate, for which these studies can serve as a useful resource, but the jury currently is still out on many points.

The rear-view mirror of a narrow political nationalism which dominated much Irish history-writing and teaching in the twentieth century was reluctant to engage with local studies, which served little purpose in its unitary project. Nervousness about the value of local history and archaeology in the big scheme of things is apparent in some of the papers presented here, but this is surely something from which everyone can now confidently move on.

DEIRDRE O'SULLIVAN
University of Leicester

Medieval Archaeology in Scandinavia and Beyond. History, Trends and Tomorrow. Proceedings of a Conference to Celebrate 40 Years of Medieval Archaeology at Aarhus University, 26–27 October 2011. Edited by Mette Svart Kristiansen, Else Roesdahl & James Graham-Campbell. 18 × 25 cm. 406 pp, 117 colour and b&w pls, figs and tables. Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2015. ISBN 978-8707124-378-9. Price: Kr 399,95 hb.

This volume derives from a conference held at the University of Aarhus in 2011 to celebrate four decades of dedication to Medieval Archaeology. Aarhus was a pioneer for Medieval Archaeology in Scandinavia, and the focus of the volume, which the Danish chapters underline, is the emergence and development of a discipline. Thus, for scholars interested in the disciplinary history of Medieval Archaeology, the volume is useful; however, despite the bold main title, it fails to review the state of Medieval Archaeology as a research field today. In her introductory chapter (1) Else Roesdahl equates early Medieval Archaeology to a club (p. 24), and indeed, the first parts of this volume might hold more interest for members of that club rather than a wider international audience.

Part Two focuses on Scandinavia and the North Atlantic Islands within the Scandinavian sphere. The chapters on Sweden (9), Norway (10) and Finland (11) give good reviews of the emergence of the discipline in each country. It is clear that excavations in medieval townscapes has been the main driving force behind the development of Medieval Archaeology as an independent field of study, sometimes, as the case with Finland, against a very dominant prehistoric tradition. From these opening parts of the publication, it is clear that Scandinavian Medieval Archaeology has come of age. From towns, churches and monasteries, focus has widened to include the countryside and everyday life. The future of the discipline lies in an even longer perspective – stretching beyond the restrictions of the Middle Ages, to include more recent periods... Medieval Archaeology is becoming Historic Archaeology.

The contributions from the North Atlantic do not keep to the narrow frames set by the Scandinavian examples, but explore the Medieval as a contemporary research arena. Orri Vésteinsson's discussion (Chapter 12) on what constitutes 'medieval' in Icelandic archaeology is thought-provoking and resonates well with wider discussions on classification and disciplinary restrictions. Problems of periodisation and categorisation continue to affect archaeological thinking, and Vésteinsson shows how stepping away from it creates new synergies in the archaeological material. The chapter on the Faroe Islands (13) visualises the need for a medieval focus, a time period that until recently has been overseen to the benefit of Viking-Age settlement history. Jette Arnborg's chapter on Greenland (14) discusses the enigma of an archaeology of abandonment, clearly showing how entrenched archaeological interpretations are on contemporary research perspectives.

Neil Price's review of Viking archaeology in the twenty-first century further highlights the point made by Vésteinsson on artificial boundaries. While the Scandinavian tradition places Medieval Archaeology

in the post-Viking Age, the British periodisation allows Price to address the Vikings within this book's frame. Thus different scholarly traditions come to put the very definition of Medieval Archaeology into question.

Christof Krauskopf's research of daily life in medieval castles, Mark Gardiner's discussion on domestic space in the English medieval hall and Manfred Gläser's review of research into the development of medieval Lübeck can all be seen as examples of studies set within the traditionally defined borders of Medieval Archaeology, but with more recent research focus. Research into medieval English medieval also obscures the definition of abandonment, and has been overseen

idle. The book's last chapter (19) takes us from the medieval cellars in Berlin on an adventurous journey into the Third Reich and the search for modern art confiscated and condemned as degenerate by Nazi Germany. This chapter emphasises the points made across the volume, namely that an archaeological focus on medieval times alone is not enough, and that the archaeological gaze needs to be expanded all the way into recent times.

CHARLOTTA HILLERDAL
University of Aberdeen

The German Ocean. Medieval Europe around the North Sea. (Studies in the Archaeology of Medieval Europe). By Brian Ayers. 21 × 26 cm. xxi + 268 pp, 98 colour and b&w pls and figs. Sheffield & Bristol CT: Equinox Publishing, 2016. ISBN 978-1-904768-49-4. Price: £75.00 hb.

Brian Ayers' book has been a much anticipated publication for many years – I personally remember from time to time checking the publisher's website as well as asking the author every once in a while when we happened to meet. The last such chat was in November 2014 in Lübeck, at the final conference on Urban Archaeology of Hanse Region, the very series of meetings that sparked the idea for this monograph (see Acknowledgements, p xiii). Now, after almost a decade in progress, the book has finally reached the grateful reader.

The book's title shows great ambition: to present an archaeological perspective on the late medieval littoral of the North Sea, once known due to the leading actors within the Hanseatic trade network as 'German Ocean'. In fact, the author does even more than that, as he is using the notion 'German Ocean' more broadly, incorporating on and off also information from the Baltic Sea region. This kind of approach is well substantiated, as the archaeological evidence presented here shows in very strong fashion how intertwined both areas were between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries – much more so than is possible to grasp solely through the surviving written evidence.

The book is divided up diachronically, and every chapter is built loosely on one particular century (except Chapter 5, highlighting the influence and impact of long-distance merchants) which allows the author to move swiftly between the different topics and microregions and bring out broader general trends. For example, Chapter 3, 'The 14th Century: Increasing

Wealth and Increasing Pressures', explores aspects such as coinage and trade, textile manufacture, diet, the Black Death, trans-North Sea influences, and the Church. While the archaeological evidence of the rural landscape (land use, markets, long-distance distribution of resources, housing) is considered, this book leans more to urban contexts and the input of merchants and artisans especially. Ayers' use of sources is remarkably wide, stretching from archaeobiological evidence to data collected from building investigations and studies of wreck sites. This is a deliberate choice, namely to show the potential of different kinds of archaeological resources for unlocking past human activities; certainly this depth and approach are key strengths of this book. Another one, giving greater attention to the western side of the North Sea, especially to the area of Norfolk and territory further upwards along the English coast, is perhaps debatable. As a former archaeology officer acting in and around Norwich it is clear why Ayers draws on numerous examples from a familiar neighbourhood; however, readers might be more interested in different kinds of focal points, as this is, after all, a book on medieval Europe *around* the North Sea. This tendency is occasionally balanced with frequently cited case studies from Lübeck, which, as head of the Hanse and archaeologically well-published site can be regarded as another focal point in this publication.

On the whole, the Equinox series on European medieval archaeology has here been expanded with another good sourcebook for archaeology students and other interested readers. *The German Ocean* is in fact a superb stepping-stone to the topic, both thanks to the first such kind of transregional synthesis in medieval archaeology as well to the long list of references, which help to delve much deeper into the places, materials and people of medieval Europe around the North Sea and to observe better the many connections between them. The wait of readers has been long but has certainly been worthwhile.

ERKI RUSSOW
Tallinn University (Estonia)

Archeologia dell'Italia Medievale. (Grandi opera). By Andrea Augenti. 17 × 24 cm. 344 pp, 185 b&w pls and figs. Rome & Bari: Editori Laterza, 2016. ISBN 978-88-581-2230-3. Price: €35.00 pb.

For those who would like to learn more about the state of play in terms of medieval archaeology in a key part of the Mediterranean, then this nicely produced publication on Italy (in the 'Big Works' series of Laterza) will offer

much. Designed to summarise the roots of the discipline, its practices and achievements, its diverse contributions in a range of contexts, but also its future goals, this ticks all the right boxes. It is important to highlight that the author is a highly experienced scholar (with the University of Bologna) and archaeologist, with interests especially in late antique to medieval urbanism, notably with prominent project work and exhibitions in Ravenna and its port site of Classe.

The book comprises nine chapters, with three more substantial than others in size and scope: Chapter III on urban archaeologies (54 pp), IV on the medieval landscape (over 100 pp), and VII, archaeologies of production and trade (51 pp). More compact, but no less useful are Chapter II on the discipline's roots and current status (with the 'future directions' of play, collaboration and communication recommended in IX); V on buildings archaeology – a field that has seen much excellent recent work, notably in Padua – though this chapter is a bit too succinct (14 pp) on 'how to read' structures; VI on cemeteries and burial, pointing tidily to new approaches; and VIII on Medieval Archaeology's still fuzzy relationship with Art History (just 9 pp). There are plenty of illustrations to support the noted core chapters, including reconstruction drawings of townscapes, town houses, hilltop villages, church complexes and (especially) defensive installations, which relate to a strong array of examples or case studies to draw out the (best-published) archaeology. For example, the landscapes chapter uses, for the late Roman to early medieval period, villa sites like San Giovanni di Ruoti, the church estate of Monte Gelato, the elevated village-to-manor complex of Montarrenti, and San Vincenzo al Volturno as a major monastic installation with its multiple rural holdings; for the full medieval epoch Augenti explores the process of *incastellamento* (the creation of fortified sites) via examples like Rocca San Silvestro, while open sites include roadside *burghi* like Borgo San Genesio and parish churches like Argenta. Various of these medieval sites failed in the Late Middle Ages and have been explored in detail archaeologically, such as the Geridu village on Sardinia, but Augenti stresses the partial knowledge still for many of these site-types.

The latter example shows that Augenti works hard to make his coverage pan-Italian, including some of the islands. It is a tricky task, dependent on where the good archaeology is, and while the south of the peninsula perhaps loses out somewhat, that does not detract from this informative synthesis.

NEIL CHRISTIE
University of Leicester