

## X

## BOOK REVIEWS, 2006

*Reviews in Archaeologia Aeliana are published as the views of the persons who write them and are accepted by the Journal in all good faith as accurate and honest expressions of opinion.*

Paul Frodsham and Colm O'Brien (eds), *Yeaving: People, Power and Place* (Stroud: Tempus, 2005), pp. 254. 19 col. pls. 77 other ill. ISBN 0-7524-3344-X. Softback £19.99

This is a timely and important publication. Brian Hope-Taylor's monograph *Yeaving: an Anglo-British Centre of Early Northumbria* finally emerged in 1979 and was reviewed in this journal in 1980 as "a survival of a rare species – an archaeological report which is readable and exciting from beginning to end". Hope-Taylor's innovative excavation techniques, his sensitivity with pencil and camera, and his fluent pen had combined to produce a report which was a landmark in British archaeology. Inevitably however, two decades or more later, it is time to re-assess that work in the light of more recent fieldwork and informed by different theoretical standpoints. Yet what is striking about these re-assessments is how frequently they acknowledge Hope-Taylor's anticipation of the very conclusions they can now more firmly assert.

Paul Frodsham opens the volume with an extended essay on Yeaving as a 'special place' within an extraordinary archaeological landscape. Here the issue of continuity, which was central to Hope-Taylor's interpretation, is given a more sophisticated interpretation than was possible in the 1960s and 1970s. The story extends back to the Stone Age; the impact of the peoples of the Bronze Age is given much more emphasis; the hillfort's social significance is explored and the afterlife and later exploitation of monuments is intriguingly analysed. Tim Gates' following chapter on the history and contribution of air photography provides fascinating detail of the personalities involved

in the original discovery and pays deserved tribute to the role of Sir Walter Aitchison in Northumbrian archaeology in the years immediately after the second world war. Crucially, he demonstrates that the 'Celtic fields' which were vital to Hope-Taylor's chronological sequence are a geological feature; this discovery resonates through the rest of the volume. Clive Waddington then provides an overview of the prehistory of Yeaving and the Milfield basin, stressing how each age had to re-define itself in relation to this 'special place' to ensure its legitimacy. The hillfort on Yeaving Bell is the subject of a thoughtful reassessment by Alastair Oswald and Trevor Pearson as part of a research and interpretation programme on hillforts initiated by the Northumberland National Park Authority. What is beginning to emerge here is a picture of a more complex history of monumental construction than has previously been recognised, and a history punctuated by long episodes of disuse.

With Sam Lucy's very important paper on early medieval burial at Yeaving we reach the late- and post-Roman period of the site for which it is best known. Her review develops the ideas of the cultural syncretism of burial practice – a concept for which Hope-Taylor argued forcefully against the scholarly opinion of his day. Colm O'Brien follows this with an analysis of the Great Enclosure which brilliantly demonstrates the possibilities of re-interpretation of archaeological data which has been meticulously recorded; stressing the chronological uncertainties he suggests that the Enclosure fits most comfortably into a northern British context. Caroline Ware's contribution is concerned with the manner in which the use of social space at Yeaving changed over time, with a social elite increasingly exercising control. Stephen Driscoll sets Yeaving against our understanding of contemporary sites in Scotland, underlining the

problems which have emerged from a too-slavish adoption of Bedan narrative and Hope-Taylor's models. P. S. Barnwell then looks at Yeavinger, and particularly the amphitheatre, from a continental perspective. The theatre may have affinities to Mediterranean Rome but the small platform and post behind it speak rather of the Frankish Rhineland and a non-Roman kingship and administration. Ian Wood closes this section with reflections on Hope-Taylor's use of documentary evidence and his early emphasis on the themes of Britishness and Romanness which now appear so commonplace in discussions of early Northumbria.

In the final part of the book Colm O'Brien and Roger Miket deal with the later history of the site and the establishment of a Trust to ensure its proper management. Forbes Taylor writes about Brian Hope-Taylor as an early television presenter of archaeological programmes whilst Philip Rahtz, Rosemary Cramp and Diana Murray provide personal memoirs of an engaging, inspirational and complex personality. Laura Sole closes the volume with an account of the exhibition at Bede's World which complemented the conference on which these papers are based.

Richard N. Bailey

Éamonn Ó Carragáin, *Ritual and the Rood: Liturgical Images and the Old English Poems of the Dream of the Rood Tradition* (London and Toronto, The British Library and University of Toronto Press, 2005), pp.427. 16 pls. 60 figs. ISBN 0-7123-4875-1. Hardback £50

*Ritual and the Rood* has been long anticipated by scholars of Old English literature, early medieval liturgy and Anglo-Saxon sculpture alike, all eager to view the fruits of over forty years' research published in its entirety – and the results do not disappoint. Indeed, it is probably not overstating the case to claim that this book will be central to all future studies of Anglo-Saxon art, literature, history and ecclesiastical culture, exploring as it does in a deeply learned manner topics as apparently diverse as early Christian liturgy and exegesis,

gift-exchange, papal and Anglo-Saxon ecclesiastical art, and vernacular, Anglo-Latin and Hiberno-Latin literary, linguistic and textual traditions. As such the work, which has at its centre the various liturgical contexts of the disparate Old English verses most commonly identified with the 'Dream of the Rood', stands as a genuinely interdisciplinary study; it constitutes a single integrated synthesis of the different disciplinary approaches to the subject and so bears witness to Ó Carragáin's profound knowledge of early liturgy, Latin and Old English language and literature, the art and patronage of early Christian Rome, and the sculptural art of the insular world. In itself, therefore, this book also offers a paradigm against which to measure the 'inter-disciplinary' studies that have proliferated in the last three decades. For, while claiming inter-disciplinarity, most of these have tended rather to 'multi-disciplinarity', the diverse expertise of numerous individual scholars being set side-by-side in largely unsynthesised collections of essays through which the reader is intended, cumulatively, to intuit syncretic knowledge of a given topic, but usually receives a fragmented and methodologically uncritical understanding of it. This is not the case with Ó Carragáin's study.

Indeed, the 48 pages of prefatory material give a clear indication of the breadth and depth of the various topics covered in the book, which is impeccably presented and lavishly illustrated throughout, while its scholarly apparatus and almost exhaustive multi-lingual bibliography will be invaluable to all future scholars of early medieval studies. As a result, each of the ten chapters, while together building up an overall understanding of the various complex intellectual and cultural milieux within which the different 'poems' were produced across the Anglo-Saxon period, also, separately, provides a wealth of information for those wishing to pursue any given topic: the historiography of scholarship on the Ruthwell and Bewcastle monuments (which Ó Carragáin identifies unequivocally and credibly as crosses); the diverse liturgies of seventh- and eighth-century Rome and their impact on

subsequent liturgical developments in western Europe; the theological perceptions informing these liturgies and their rituals; the idea of 'the cross' in the art and literature of the early medieval world; the nature of cross-cultural connections in that world; and the ways in which notions of 'centre' and 'periphery' could be exploited intellectually, textually and visually in the early middle ages – to identify but a few.

Given this, any criticism that might be made about *Ritual and the Rood*, will undoubtedly arise from its very complexity and interdisciplinarity. For instance, while there is a sense of progression in the exploration of the 'liturgical images' informing the literary tradition at the centre of this study, it has to be said that this is largely implicit and not always immediately apparent. Indeed, most readers can perhaps be forgiven for thinking that this is a book about the Ruthwell cross rather than an Old English poetic tradition. But this focus results from Ó Carragáin's (compelling) identification of the runic verses displayed on the monument as the earliest extant articulation of the literary tradition. From this arises the need to engage with the scholarship surrounding Ruthwell and related monuments (at Hoddom, Dumfries, and Bewcastle, Cumbria), and the need to establish the nature of the early medieval liturgies circulating throughout Europe at a time of intense theological and political debate which had at their centre ecclesiastical and imperial relations between Rome and Constantinople. It is a salutary indication of the intellectual standard of this book that the main criticism of it arises from its depth of learning and vastness of scope.

Jane Hawkes

Christian D. Liddy and Richard H. Britnell (eds.), *North-East England in the Later Middle Ages: Regions and Regionalism in History*, 3 (Woodbridge, Boydell, 2005), pp. xiv + 250. 12 maps. 1 pl. 13 figs. 7 tables. ISBN 1-84383-127-9. Hardback £50.00.

The fourteen essays in this volume originated in papers given at a conference under the

auspices of the AHRB Research Centre for North-East England History in June 2002 and are published here together with an introductory essay by A. J. Pollard. The contributors represent a nice balance between established scholars, often presenting the harvest of many years' labour, and the first fruits of the work of younger researchers. A number of contributions function as hors d'oeuvre to yet richer feasts; it is, nevertheless, valuable to have these more accessible synopses with the added bonus in several cases that publication here anticipates the appearance of a corresponding *opus magnum*.

All contributions are well written and generally well edited (though not always as fully cross-referenced as they might have been) and have a full apparatus of notes and references. Like its companions in this newly emerging series the volume is satisfyingly solidly produced and it is a pleasure to report at the outset that the quality of scholarship amply merits publication in such a durable form. Only the maps in the last papers (by Roberts, Dunsford and Harris on the settlement framework of County Durham) suffer adversely from the constraints of the series format, which was evidently designed with historians very much in mind; it is to be hoped that they will be re-published elsewhere at a more appropriate scale.

This latter paper deserves special mention because it could easily be missed by scholars working in other periods and on ostensibly unrelated aspects of the Middle Ages. That would be a great pity. It sets out to define the likely maximum extent of medieval settlement negatively, as the interstices of areas of commons and wastes at the earliest date (*c.* 1600) that these can be plotted with reasonable accuracy, and to consider its relationship to the contrasting physical terrains of the county. The implications of its findings extend far beyond the chronological scope of the present volume – they are no less profound for our understanding of *early* medieval settlement in the county and its relationship (or lack of one) to the eleventh- and twelfth-century watershed in which the settlement morphology still

familiar to us today originates. What is more, its methodology raises a number of general issues which deserve to be more widely pondered by all (archaeologists and place-name scholars not least) who deal in the interpretation of relict distributions of data, and for whom the question 'how much have we lost, when and why?' is, in consequence, continually posed but all too seldom answerable. This paper shows a context within which that question might be approached and the fundamental importance of addressing it.

Roberts, Dunsford and Harris apart, the principal chronological focus of the volume is the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The geographical spread is uneven, with a pronounced bias towards County Durham, though there are occasional forays north of the Tweed (Lomas) and south of the Tees (Newman). In so far as Northumberland is covered, the focus is emphatically on the Border area; the bulk of the county figures hardly at all. To a considerable extent this reflects not just the lack of current research on medieval Northumberland but (as Pollard notes in the Introduction) the extent of the survival of the sources on which it could be based, the richness of the Durham archival resources (both priory and bishopric) finding no match north of the Tyne. As any user of these records will know only too well, their sheer quantity is not always an unalloyed blessing, and several contributions (notably Dodds's and Harris's) are at their most impressive when devising strategies for interpreting voluminous sources effectively while avoiding being swamped by them.

As to the kinds of history proffered, economic and legal studies (each amounting to some one-third of the volume) predominate. The remainder is more miscellaneous; the 'road less traveled by' often provides a rewarding journey, however. For example King and Liddy offer absorbing studies of the upwardly mobile trajectory of two local families and the estates which underpinned their advance; in the latter case (the Pollards) fascinating evidence is adduced of the means by which the family set about achieving social advancement and perpetuating the status to which it aspired.

Several studies are at their most revealing when testing beliefs and perceptions (whether of groups or individuals) against appropriate factual matrices. Neville, for instance, tellingly contrasts the actual history of a distinct system of border customary law with the borderers' own beliefs about it; while Piper examines the (surprisingly diverse) approaches to the recruitment of monks adopted by successive priors of Durham faced with the common goal of preserving the stability of the monastic community in the light of their perceptions of the consequences of economic upheaval and demographic change.

How far these papers establish and illuminate the regional distinctiveness of late medieval 'North East England', however that entity is defined – and Pollard's introduction demonstrates the difficulties in pursuing the notion, whether as modern construct or contemporaneously perceived identity – is, perhaps, a question imposed more by the terms of reference of the series than by the evidence of the papers themselves. Taken on their own terms, however, this thoroughly researched, varied and thought-provoking group of essays makes a significant contribution to historical knowledge, much of it of far more than regional significance; no less importantly, it alerts potential future scholars to a wide spectrum of questions which might still profitably be posed, and reveals the richness of the evidence in the region's archives available in trying to answer some of them.

Eric Cambridge

A. King (ed. and trans.), *Sir Thomas Gray, Scalacronica 1272–1363* (Woodbridge, Surtees Society, vol. 209, 2005), pp. 288. ISSN 0307-5362. Hardback £50.00

Dr Andy King has studied for many years the fortunes of the Gray family of Heton in Northhamshire. It is only right that he should undertake a new edition of *Scalacronica* for the Surtees Society. He reckons that their ancestry includes a Sir John who was mayor of Berwick on Tweed in 1253, when all was peace between the kings of Scotland and England.

When war broke out in 1296 another John Gray adhered to the Scots with a consequent loss of land. There is no record of John's subsequent career, but there may have been Gray kinsfolk still active in Scotland in subsequent years, which might explain the interest that Sir Thomas, author of *Scalacronica*, had in Scottish affairs. In his introduction Dr King reckons that *Scalacronica* is 'one of the most important surviving sources for political events in Scotland in the mid-fourteenth century'(p.li).

The history was started by Gray during his captivity in Edinburgh between 1355 and 1356, and the various available written sources are discussed. It is very much a soldier's tale, with appraisal of fighting on horseback and foot, loss or capture of horses, and comments on the strategies of various captains. Dr King suggests that Gray was deliberately collecting reminiscences of knights returning from the wars in France, and his tales of the Free Companies and Jacquerie certainly supports this hypothesis. It is also gossipy, with comments about local Northumbrian knights. It is understandable that the heroic exploits of Sir Thomas Gray, the author's father, are noted. But we have Roger de Horsley losing an eye at the siege of Berwick in 1318. There is incidental information about the family of Felton of Edlingham, including a William who participated in the capture of Gilbert de Middleton in 1318 and subsequently married the daughter of the earl of Fife. A son was seneschal of Gascony. Dr King believes that the report from the north of the sortie of the earl of Sutherland into England in 1340 and the battle between the Scottish raiders and the garrison of Roxburgh (with other Border matters) was written by William de Felton when constable of Roxburgh. This letter is printed as an Appendix to the chronicle. The writer pointedly gave credit for the English victory to the garrison and men of Wark on Tweed. The only Marcher gentry to help were

Sir Thomas de Gray and Sir Robert de Manners and *they* only arrived after the battle was virtually decided. The letter has long been familiar to me and interpreted as a gentle put-down of Gray's tendency to attribute every English victory to his presence!

The text presented here covers only the fourth book of the original work, and that only from the accession of Edward I to an arbitrary conclusion in 1363. This span covers events within the lifetime of the author himself and his immediate forebears. There is apparently only one surviving text, with several folios missing. This manuscript (Corpus Christi, Cambridge, MS 133) was given chapter numbers in the sixteenth century, and the footnotes at the end of the edited text are grouped under the relevant chapter. The whole text, however, had been summarised by the antiquarian John Leland, and Dr King uses Leland to supply the deficiency.

The text is written in medieval French and printed on the left page of the volume, with a bravura translation on the right. No attempt has been made to systematise *i/j/y* and *u/v*, and the original spelling is retained. When it comes to names there is a degree of inconsistency. 'Cardoile' is transliterated to Carlisle and 'Galuschelle' to Galashiels, but 'Crichton' is not altered to Crichton, and 'Couelens' is rendered on p. 127 as Coblenz, but elsewhere is transliterated as Cologne (p. 139). Gray's chronicle is a good read, but his grasp of chronology was weak and he frequently went back on himself to include some titbit of information overlooked the first time round. Dr King's footnotes try to make good this fault.

There is a degree of carelessness in final proof-reading, with spelling mistakes and failure to insert final pagination in cross-references.

Constance M. Fraser

