

Reviews and Notices

NEOLITHIC ENCLOSURES IN ATLANTIC NORTH-WEST EUROPE. Edited by Timothy Darvill and Julian Thomas. Pp. 203. Oxford: Oxbow Books (Neolithic Studies Group Seminar Papers 6), 2001. ISBN 1 84217 045 7.

The making of an enclosure was a significant act in the Neolithic period. It brought people together, at a single time or over a number of episodes, to places and in landscapes which were probably already meaningful, inscribed both into daily routines or movements and into a sense of special time. Enclosing set up many and often ambiguous relationships, including between what could be seen and not seen, what was inside and outside, who was involved and who or what was excluded. In enhancing a sense of place, enclosing may also have defined or helped to suggest more conscious senses of time past and future, and even, depending on the scale of construction, have served to make people conscious of their place in nature. Not all enclosures were in use for long, but those that did endure provided an arena for gatherings, depositions and commemorations, played out perhaps in smaller and larger groups and at irregular intervals. But generalisations such as these cannot capture the particular nature of individual enclosures, nor the diverse agencies and socialities at work in them.

These have been busy and fruitful times for the study of enclosures from the earlier part of the Neolithic in Britain and Ireland. The causewayed enclosures of southern Britain have been surveyed by RCHME, and their probable numbers and distribution extended. Windmill Hill and Etton have recently been published in detail, and the final reports on Hambledon Hill and Crickley Hill are well advanced; radiocarbon dating at Hambledon Hill alone will have a major impact on our understanding of Neolithic sequences and events.

In this exciting field the current volume sits very well. It gathers together accessible reports on enclosures largely from the west side of England and Wales, the Isle of Man, parts of Scotland, and northern Ireland (with welcome perspectives from western France and Denmark, notable for their ideas on sequence and on ephemerality), and largely from the earlier part of the Neolithic. Four papers on sites in Wales illustrate the scope and character of the volume as a whole. There are possible causewayed enclosures at Norton (probable ?) and Corntown (intriguing, but of later date ?) on the west side of the Vale of Glamorgan. The significance of Clegyr Boia is reasserted. More detail is given of the site at Bryn Celli Wen, Anglesey, whose full publication is now urgently needed. The great palisade at Hindwell in the Walton basin is presented (not for the first time). These and many of the papers are first and foremost descriptive, but there are powerful ideas scattered through the volume as well, especially in the introduction by the editors, in the interim report on Gardom's Edge in the Derbyshire Peak District by Mark Edmonds and others, and in the reflections by Nick Thorpe on Sarup and other Danish Middle Neolithic enclosures. Here we move from description to interpretation of the links between enclosures and landscape, of the play between local practice and wider traditions, and of the tension between the short-lived event and lasting monumentality. Sarup and other Danish sites suggest to Nick Thorpe a model of competitive consumption in the context of rivalry between local groups, intensive activity leading rapidly to cessation and abandonment. This may define one end of a spectrum of meanings. Others remain to be better defined.

Attractively produced by Oxbow, this volume is essential reading for the Neolithic period, with much that is directly relevant to the archaeology of Wales. Further work in Wales itself could contribute significantly to these debates.

THE WELSH CISTERCIANS. By David H. Williams. Pp. xii + 339, illus. 130 + 32 pls.
Leominster: Gracewing, 2001. £20. ISBN 0 85244 354 4.

Dr Williams has made the study of the Cistercians in Wales his own especial research topic throughout thirty-five years of scholarship. He has concentrated upon their history and economy, while benefiting from the archaeological and architectural surveys of other scholars. This book is to be welcomed as a product of that scholarship, being a revised and enlarged version of his two-volume 1984 study. The material is arranged under similar chapter headings, but omits the broader divisions of history (6 chapters), communities (4), economy (10) and a brief epilogue (2) that previously guided the reader. Most of the chapters take account of specialist studies published in the intervening fifteen years, many of them by the author. However, this scarcely amounts to a 'flowering of Welsh Cistercian studies' as claimed in the preface. The assertion that the material is recast applies less to the text and more to the supporting appendices and illustrations. The three comprehensive indexes are a notable improvement.

Arising from the author's work on the *Atlas of Cistercian Lands in Wales* (1990) there is a distillation of that information in 15 pages of appendix and 13 pages of maps. Throughout the remainder of the volume there is frequent and appropriate use of maps and diagrams to illustrate aspects of location, precinct plans, and economic resources. There is also ample illustration of monastic sites from air photographs and ground-level views, details of floor tiles and abbey seals, antiquarian views of granges and reproductions of monastic documents. Where these are on gloss paper the standard of reproduction is good, but when they are incorporated within the text the results may be less satisfactory. Some maps are over-reduced.

One aspect prompted considerable criticism of the 1984 volumes: the idiosyncratic form of referencing. This has, thankfully, been remedied to a user-friendly Harvard system, particularly necessary when the author's style is the remorseless accumulation of data. Only in two epilogue chapters does a warmer personality shine through and a sense of evaluation based on individual experience permeate the narrative. Dr Williams has been careful to include nuns as well as monks in his survey of the Cistercians, both medieval and modern. This gives a completeness to an attractive volume which should stand as a reliable work of reference for many years.

Cambridge

LAWRENCE BUTLER

CYNON COAL: HISTORY OF A MINING VALLEY, Pp. x + 282, c. 150 illus. Llandysul:
Gomer Press for Cynon Valley History Society, 2001. ISBN 095 3107604.

As the authors of this remarkable volume rightly state, 'when the popular mind thinks of iron it thinks of Merthyr, and when it thinks of coal, it thinks of the Rhondda, Aberdare being generally ignored'. And yet the Cynon Valley, with Aberdare at its heart, produced both iron and a prodigious amount of coal. Over a period of over two hundred years coal was mined in pits and drifts large and small — three hundred and nine of them are carefully listed and described here in a painstakingly detailed appendix — and the last remaining coal mine in Wales, Tower Colliery, continues that record. It is particularly appropriate that this volume was sponsored by Tower Colliery and that it has been produced by what has long been recognised as

one of the most productive and committed local history societies in Wales.

The volume starts, as it should, with an expert discussion of the geology of the area and it succeeds in doing so with a clarity which will allow the layman to understand the complexity of the seams and materials that lay underground in such profusion. The importance of the presence of ironstone in the development of the iron industry and in spawning coal mines to feed that industry is demonstrated. In a world where everyday knowledge of coal mining is rapidly disappearing from popular consciousness in Wales, it is also useful to have the basic pattern of seams, the methods of accessing and exploiting them, the different kinds of coal, clearly explained.

The following two chapters deal with the establishment and growth of the industry. The early developments linked to the iron industry are traced from the firing of the first coke-fired blast furnace in Wales in Hirwaun in 1757. Then, following the discovery of the four-foot seam in 1837, coal comes to dominate. Demand for steam coal, especially to power ships, was initially hesitant but then it became insatiable especially as the superior quality of Welsh steam coal, and of Aberdare steam coal in particular, became acknowledged. The emphasis here is firmly on the coal industry but the consequent impact on rail and canal and other developments are not ignored. The coal owners, pre-eminent amongst whom was Thomas Powell (1780-1863) are also discussed and an useful appendix supplies further interesting biographical detail. The point is made that whereas 'the pioneers of the iron industry ... were all Englishmen ... the coal industry was dominated by Welshmen'.

Chapter Four contains a lengthy and detailed discussion of the methods of coalmining from 'pillar and stall' to 'long-wall' to mechanisation and also discusses underground transportation (including horses), safety, ventilation and other crucially important technical subjects. The importance of safety and the ever-present threat of explosion is well-made on the very first page of the book which reproduces the first page of a copy of a song, in Welsh, dedicated to the memory of sixty-three men killed in Pwll y Dyffryn in 1852. The list of the names of the dead, and their ages, are the first chilling words one confronts in this book.

Chapters Five and Six deal with the multi-faceted social history of the area — local government, housing, health, education etc. — in a society which was notable for the fact that its 'middle-class was very small'. The population grew at an astonishing rate in the mid-nineteenth century from 3,532 in 1841 to 37,704 thirty years later. Thereafter it stabilised. Much of the housing stock was therefore of mid nineteenth-century provenance and one of the more fascinating facts revealed here is that on two occasions, in 1957 and again in 1972, there was deep popular objection to schemes of demolition. Chapter Six concentrates on culture, particularly religion, but also emphasises the strong dramatic tradition in the valley. Chapter Seven considers the dangers and the brutal working conditions of miners. An eloquent and disturbing statistic which is quoted here is the calculation that between 1851 and 1861 sixty-two boys under thirteen years of age, some as young as eight or nine, were killed at work in the coal mines of the Cynon Valley.

The tumultuous history of industrial relations in the coal industry and the wider context of unemployment and contraction are described vividly in Chapters Eight, Nine and Ten. The establishment of the South Wales Miners' Federation in 1898, the great lock-outs of 1921 and 1926, the devastating depression, the second world war and nationalisation. The story is nothing if not dramatic, a historical roller-coaster. It culminates with the great set-piece struggle of 1984-85 and the remarkable survival and triumph of the coal miners of Tower Colliery. The focus throughout is firmly on the Cynon Valley but the wider context is never forgotten.

This then is a major contribution to our knowledge and understanding of the history of the coal industry in Wales. Such a volume is certain to have its weaknesses, and at times it is clear that this is a product of many hands (although the editor has been remarkably successful in maintaining overall coherence). There are times when the reader is sure to plead for footnotes and the reason why this review considers the chapter contents is because, rather irritatingly, there are no chapter headings. But these are minor considerations. Compared with many more 'academic' histories this volume has great strengths not least the attempt to view the history of coal mining in its real contexts, be they geological, technical, political or cultural. Another virtue is its remarkable collection of photographs of mines, mineworkings and mineworkers, including one of female workers. An enormous amount of hard work has gone into this volume and one can only express ones gratitude to the co-ordinator and his team for producing this history of, and for, the Cynon Valley.

University of Wales, Bangor

MERFYN JONES

THE PREHISTORIC SITES OF BRECONSHIRE: IDEOLOGY, POWER AND MONUMENT SYMBOLISM, Monuments in the Landscape, vol. IX. By George Children and George Nash. Logaston Press, 2001. Pp. 182, figures (unnumbered) c. 100, mainly photographs, with some maps, plans and finds drawings; lists of scheduled monuments and bibliography. Price £7.95.

This small, very reasonably priced book combines the role of selective guidebook with impassioned primer on monument symbolism and social prehistory. In both roles it has flaws, but the attempt to inject historical and sociological reconstruction into commentary on sites for visitors is to be applauded in general terms, although I must confess that I did not find this particular version either convincing or well argued.

The book starts with a fairly conventional summary of Palaeolithic and Mesolithic life with reference to the few sites of this date in Breconshire, and then discusses the economic changes of the Neolithic. The main interest of the period, however, is that monuments, and specifically burial monuments, are now built, and it is the theories relating to the meaning and symbolism of these tombs that chiefly interest the authors. As a preliminary to a discussion of the important series of Cotswold-Severn tombs in the Talgarth area there is a section on burial practices around the world and a social analysis of the Highgate cemetery which would surely surprise the occupants. In explaining the significance of architectural variance between tombs it might have been better to contrast Catholic churches with Non-Conformist chapels rather than Anglican churches, where I doubt that any archaeologist of the future would pick up the differences.

One of the authors, Nash, has written about these tombs on a previous occasion and may be presumed to have studied them in some depth. It is surprising, therefore, to see that he has never read the original excavation report of Pipton which he believes (following a regrettable mistake by the Royal Commission in their Breconshire Inventory) was published in *Arch. Camb.* for 1949 rather than 1956; that he does not understand Corcoran's use of the word 'hybrid' (which Corcoran uses in the normal way to mean an amalgam of two different ideas and which Nash seems to use to mean 'complex') and that he cannot distinguish between 'multi-phase building' and 'a long period of use'. This sort of thing undermines confidence in his 'analysis' of the tomb structures as a mirror of the surrounding landscape, symbolising the

taming of the land by the new farmers, or his belief that the design of the tomb symbolises the human skeleton. I am not sure whether this is a double metaphor or whether readers can choose which they prefer. In all these discussions of meaning in tombs the arguments are so loose that you can take it or leave it, but it is sad to see the few facts that there are in this field so often inaccurately quoted.

As a guide book it is often a bit too vague to ensure that sites will be easily found. For instance those looking at the plan of Gwernvale may be puzzled, since it shows the cairn in relation to the old, rather than the new road. The ghost of Hubert Savory may not recognise himself as 'Herbert' and may be surprised to see that he is credited as joint excavator of Gwernvale. This sort of carelessness is evident throughout — not mortal sins perhaps, but indicative of a low level of scholarship, especially in a topic being covered for the second time.

With the Bronze Age we enter a world of upland monuments, stone circles, standing stones and burial cairns which the authors link in a funereal scenario of processions leading from circles, via single stones to the final resting place beneath the cairns. Breconshire contains some important stone circles and ceremonial complexes, and about half of these are described with individual entries. These are fairly straightforward and do not attempt any over-fancy interpretation beyond the idea of processions and the interplay of individual monuments on a single ritual stage. They urge readers to visit perhaps an undue number of single standing stones and only highlight one burial monument — Twyn y Beddau — although there are over a thousand cairns or barrows in the county.

Their preliminary summary of Bronze Age chronology and economic life is rather hurried and abbreviated which leads to some confusions. In commenting on burnt mounds they opt for the 'sauna' interpretation without much consideration of other explanations or discussion of what these enigmatic remains may imply about the elusive Bronze Age settlements. Rather strangely, they do not encourage visitors to examine the huts and wandering walls of the Brecon uplands which have been usefully published by the Royal Commission, though the dating of these settlements, admittedly, is still uncertain.

As far as visitable monuments are concerned, the Iron Age is a period of hill-forts, and several are described and illustrated with good air photos and plans. I assume these are copied from those of the Royal Commission, though they are not acknowledged as such. The discussions in this chapter centre around questions of tribal territory and the status-enhancing role of the hill-fort within a hierarchy of settlement. In the absence of extensive evidence from excavation there is not much new that the hill-forts of Breconshire can add to these national discussions, as the authors admit. The reference to 'abundant Iron Age pottery' is a little surprising in the context of Wales, as is the implication that Caratacus was a chief of the Silures.

This is an attempt to go beyond the normal guidebook format and engage the general reader in fashionable current debates within academic archaeology. It has been done with enthusiasm but not enough care and, dare I say it, not enough knowledge.

Bangor

Frances Lynch

- COFRESTR O DIRWEDDAU O DDIDDORDEB HANESYDDOL EITHRIADOL YNG
 NGHYMURU / REGISTER OF LANDSCAPES OF OUTSTANDING HISTORIC
 INTEREST IN WALES. Pp. xxxvi + 139, incl. numerous illus. and figs., many in colour.
 Cardiff: Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments, in conjunction with Cyngor Cefn Gwlad Cymru /
 Countryside Council for Wales and ICOMOS UK. 1998. No price stated. ISBN 1 85760 007 X.
- COFRESTR O DIRWEDDAU O DDIDDORDEB HANESYDDOL ARBENNIG YNG
 NGHYMURU / REGISTER OF LANDSCAPES OF SPECIAL HISTORIC INTEREST IN
 WALES. Pp. xl + 96, incl. numerous illus. and figs., many in colour. Cardiff: Cadw: Welsh
 Historic Monuments, in conjunction with Cyngor Cefn Gwlad Cymru / Countryside Council
 for Wales and ICOMOS UK, 2001. No price stated. ISBN 1 85760 187 4.

The last decade of the twentieth century was marked in Wales by a surge of interest in *landscape*, both natural and designed. Official agencies, amateur enthusiasts and academics vied with each other in bringing to light new facets of the theme and in seeking ways of integrating relevant disciplines which had hitherto pursued separate paths. In Britain and beyond archaeologists of all periods turned increasingly to the physical environment and the landscape setting as keys to understanding artefacts and monuments. The new outlook also went beyond conventional notions of time and history, enhancing awareness of the past in the present landscape, not merely its physical aspect, but also its significance as *perceived* by its denizens. In short, this was a renewed attempt to view the works of man and nature as an integrated whole, an aim which had inspired the great naturalist and traveller Thomas Pennant two centuries ago.

Cadw continues to play a pre-eminent role in preserving and recording man-made monuments in the Welsh landscape. Its work is supplemented and supported by the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments in Wales, by the four Welsh Archaeological Trusts and by a host of voluntary societies and organisations. In the present landscape venture the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) has become a partner in order that due weight may be given to wildlife, countryside and maritime conservation, while the worldwide significance of the subject is emphasised by the backing and advice of the International Council on Museums and Sites (ICOMOS).

The first volume cited above dealt with landscapes of *outstanding* historic interest. It is somewhat confusingly subtitled Part 2.1 of the Register of Landscapes, Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in Wales; this was because it was published before Part 1, on Parks and Gardens, had been completed. Part 2.2, published three years later dealt with Landscapes of *special* historic interest in Wales. Now a third study is proposed, to address the cultural associations of landscapes. Scholarly works of such scope and depth can not be written unaided by one hand. In the first volume no less than 104 names of contributing specialists are listed in an appendix. One name, however, is singled out for mention as the key preparator, that of Richard Kelly, who was seconded from the Gwynedd Archaeological Trust to work wholly on the project under the Countryside Council for Wales.

The concept of a selective register depends on two assumptions: first, that while all landscape is significant and interesting, some areas deserve more attention than others — for their specific content, for social reasons, or for being at risk from development; secondly, that it is possible to devise a system of evaluation and measurement which will enable landscapes to be placed in rank order. The latter is a formidable task, which even the most knowledgeable individual might be reluctant to undertake, not only for academic reasons but also for the controversy likely to be generated by any published results.

For the first volume, thirty-six areas were chosen from all over Wales, ranging from the rural Vale of Clwyd to industrial and urban Merthyr Tydfil. It is stressed more than once that this register is advisory, and has no statutory authority (this did not prevent it from being regarded with suspicion by the Country Landowners Association as yet another insidious means of asserting government control). At the same time it was hoped in official circles and among conservationists that the information provided and the values implicit in the analysis would guide the decisions of both planning authorities and individual developers.

It is not the purpose of this review to comment on any particular sites or to question the choices made, but rather to stress the originality and value of the whole operation. These two volumes are to be commended for their excellence in layout, typography and presentation, and for the superb quality of their illustrations, which include many aerial views in colour. The commentary goes beyond mere description and offers insights into the natural and human agencies which have created our landscape.

The subject of *designed landscapes*, together with parks and gardens, is another story, deserving of separate consideration in a future review. The founding of the Welsh Historic Gardens Trust (WHGT) in 1989 was a momentous step forward in raising public awareness of the garden heritage of Wales and in mobilising action by knowledgeable individuals for discovery, research and recording. Then followed the formation of site-specific trusts for the conservation and preservation of individual gardens, such as Hafod, Middleton and Aberglasney. In this field also, a lead role in recording, evaluating and publishing has fallen to Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments, under whose aegis work has proceeded steadily to cover the whole of Wales, culminating in 2002 with the publication of the sixth and final volume of the series, on Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire.

Aberystwyth

DONALD MOORE

THE LAMBTONS OF BROWNSLADE. By Denis Alderman. Pp. 147, numerous illustrations, map, and family tree. Pembroke: Dimond Press, 2002. £9.95. ISBN 0 9544337-0-X.

In south-west Pembrokeshire lies the parish of Castlemartin, and in the furthest corner of this remote area stands the Chapel of Flimston (mentioned in *Arch. Camb.*, 1957, p.14, and in *RCAM Pembrokeshire*, No. 148), which now celebrates the centenary of its earlier restoration on 13 November 2003.

Despite its remoteness, the area occupies a position of strategic importance, commanding the seaways at the junction of the Irish Sea and the Bristol Channel and affording landing places for vessels plying these difficult waters. In consequence it bears traces of human activities covering many years, including prehistoric encampments, Norman and Plantagenet castles and churches, Tudor lookouts, medieval estates, fine Georgian and Regency houses, Victorian fortifications, twentieth-century military installations and various industrial complexes.

The outside world could well remain unaware of happenings in this secluded spot, and it is fitting that local records should be preserved while events are fresh in the mind. Denis Alderman has performed such a service by writing up the history of the Lambtons of Brownslade, a local family responsible for the restoration of Flimston Chapel in 1903. This publication thus complements an article 'A Lost Church' in *Arch. Camb.*, 1882, p.51, referring to another ecclesiastical site in the vicinity.

Lieutenant-Colonel Francis Williams Lambton married Lady Victoria Campbell, eldest daughter of the 2nd Earl Cawdor, in 1866, and they or their family lived at Brownslade on Earl Cawdor's estate from 1873 to 1932. During that time they exercised a major influence on the area, and this book records their triumphs and tragedies.

Sadly, two of their sons were killed in the Boer War and one died in Chile at the same time. So the family decided to commemorate their loss by restoring Flimston Chapel (not the 'lost' church mentioned above). The reopening of the Chapel was one of the highlights of their tenure, another being a royal visit by King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra in 1902, all of which is faithfully recorded by Denis Alderman. The book is profusely illustrated, and the colour photographs of stained-glass windows, memorial tablets and other furniture within the church are of particularly high quality.

A small point of detail — on page 28 with reference to the Church of England within Wales in the 1890s — 'dissolution' should read 'proposed disestablishment', a point which highlights the intensity of feeling prevalent at the time on an issue eventually settled by the Welsh Church Act of 1914

In 1939 the area was included within an Army training range and Brownslade House had to be blown up because it was too close to the line of fire. Flimston Chapel was damaged and again became derelict. It has since been beautifully restored by the British Army, and Sunday evening services are held there in the summer months and on or near Remembrance Sunday in November.

Newton, Pembrokeshire

HUGH MORGAN