

## Reviews

Books for review should be sent to the Reviews Editor, Dr R. J. Silvester (see address opposite Contents page).

WYE. By Richard Hayman. 170 × 242 mm. ix + 260 pp. 204 illustrations. Logaston Press, Almeley, Herefordshire, 2016. ISBN 978 1 910839 09 6. Price £15.00.

It is a delightful thing to journey along a river from its source to its mouth, but one not given to many. Difficulties in accessing—or even locating—the source, invariably in remote boggy upland far from any road, and the sheer distances involved, some through private property, make such a journey impractical for anyone without time at their disposal. Richard Hayman has come to our rescue with the second of his books about the rivers of Wales. His *Severn* appeared in 2012 and now we have the *Wye*, together describing for us these two rivers with their blend of Welsh and English landscapes and cultures.

The *Wye*, or *Vaga* (Latin ‘wandering’) as it was sometimes known in medieval writing, is famous for the picturesque landscape through which it truly does wander. Indeed it played its part in inventing the very concept of the Picturesque; William Gilpin’s *Observations on the River Wye* of 1782 celebrated the *Wye Tour* as a means of ‘examining the face of a country by the rules of picturesque beauty’. Eighteenth-century tourists would start the journey at Ross on *Wye*, and follow the river by boat past Goodrich Castle and Symond’s Yat, to the tour’s spectacular highlight at Tintern, then through the landscaped Piercefield Park to Chepstow. Hence the *Wye* spawned a whole corpus of artistic and literary products such as the paintings of Loutherboung and Sandby, the travel writings of Colt Hoare and, most famous of all, the poetry of William Wordsworth.

As this book illustrates, however, the river is not all the sublime beauty of its lower reaches. Its landscape is diverse, from its source in the mountainous heights of Plynlimon, through the lower hills around Rhayader and the flatter lands at Builth and Hereford, below steep wooded valley sides overlooked by the spectacular rocks at Symond’s Yat, in lazy meanders through the steep-cliffed Lower *Wye* at Piercefield to its open mouth in the Severn Estuary. The river has been used by people from earliest times to provide water and fish to nourish settlement all along its course. Later it powered the waterwheels of the nineteenth-century lead mines in the Cambrian Mountains and it was a busy and essential routeway for water transport in its navigable lower parts where trows and barges hauled wood, bark, agricultural goods and cider downstream to Chepstow for transhipment elsewhere, and coal, wines and spirits upstream as far as Hereford. It is difficult to imagine how vital for rural supply and trade was the seventeenth-century lock at Symond’s Yat that made possible navigation around this dangerous stretch of water. More difficult still for the present-day visitor to Tintern to appreciate is the scale of industry that once used that stretch of the river to power waterwheels for the ironworks, corn mills, textile and paper mills that belched out ‘a black cloud of smoak’ and reverberated with the ‘sullen sound’ of forge hammers. The post-industrial recovery of this area, now designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, gives one hope, perhaps misguided, for the future of our planet.

The book is beautifully illustrated with pictures and photographs, historic and modern, which demonstrate all these different facets of the river through time. It inspires the reader to get out and walk the *Wye Valley Long Distance Path* that follows a course at least within sight of the river for its 136 miles, and is apparently often walked in seven days, however improbable that may sound. But even if

we only walk a small stretch, this book will help us appreciate what George Borrow, with fine ambition, called ‘the most lovely river, probably, which the world can boast of’.

Raglan

SIAN E. REES

ABOVE BRECKNOCK. AN HISTORIC COUNTY FROM THE AIR. By Chris Musson and Toby Driver. 216 × 233 mm. 128 pp. 179 illustrations. The Brecknock Society & Museum Friends and The Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust, Welshpool, 2015. 978 1 869900 02 1. Price £15.00.

At last the splendid archaeology of Brecknock has a splendid book to do it justice. Authored jointly by the two giants of Welsh aerial archaeology, Chris Musson and Toby Driver, *Above Brecknock* gives us a comprehensive and up-to-date overview not only of the aerial archaeology of the county but the area’s archaeology in general.

The volume provides a brief but thorough introduction to the techniques of aerial archaeology and the continued importance of having living, sentient archaeologists in the air rather than relying on the mechanistic eye of the by now ubiquitous drone. Having seen drones in action whilst excavating at Dorstone Hill for the past few years, I can only say that to this particular archaeologist (being a confirmed Luddite) the potential for abuse of these buzzing, malevolent creatures seems almost limitless! On a serious note, of course, this fine volume demonstrates clearly the absolute necessity of having a trained archaeological brain behind the eye of the camera.

The volume is organised area by area with virtual sorties across south-east Brecknock (the Black Mountains), the central lowlands (Brecon and the Vale of Usk), the north-west (Builth and the Epynt) and the south-west (the Beacons and the edge of the coalfield). As with the other volumes in the series, the images are stunning and the accompanying text is also hugely informative and represents in essence a snapshot of the current state of our knowledge of the archaeology of the county. Particularly valuable in this respect is the discussion of new techniques such as the use of lidar and its practical applications when interpreting sites such as the possible Roman marching camp and fort at Caerau, Tirabad. The discovery of the Coed Gibraltar promontory fort just north of Sennybridge is also a clear example of the huge potential of this developing technology.

Invaluable too is the discussion of the difficulties inherent in discovering and interpreting cropmarks in a county largely given over to pastoral farming. This is exemplified most fully by the recent discovery of the previously unrecorded Roman fort at Cefn Brynich near Llanhamlach. Here, several sorties under different vegetation conditions showed how fleeting cropmarks can be in this part of the world as well as demonstrating the consummate skill of both pilot and archaeologist. The digital enhancement and colour rebalancing of the aerial images in this case gave a much clearer idea of the extent and condition of the fort’s remains.

The quality and range of the images is truly breathtaking. Stark contrasts in landscape, land-use and terrain combine to give Brecknock its unique character and also of course influences its archaeology, both in terms of survival rates and the sheer range and number of sites to be found across the county. The images of the Black Mountains Neolithic tombs at Penywyrldod and Ffostyll set them firmly in their landscape context. Industrial archaeology is also well served and the photograph of the hugely complex area of levels and races at Clydach Terrace—now in Blaenau Gwent—is almost a work of art as well as an archaeological record!

I was particularly taken with the photos of the green man knot-garden at Penpont near Brecon, if only because this is probably the only chance the public will get to see it! The seventeenth-century garden

landscape at Old Gwernfyfed near Talgarth is also stunning. Another point that struck me was the fairly regular occurrence of circular ‘sheep-folds’ adjacent to medieval churches, as at St Cynog’s, Penderyn. Given the ample social history and folk tradition evidence available, surely we can accept the majority of these features as cock-pits? Having said that, the suggestion that the large circular earthwork at Lle’r Prior, Llanafan Fawr could be assigned to this class of site may be stretching a point too far!

This is an excellent, inspiring book and a fitting addition to the trilogy that now covers the whole of Powys. My only complaint would be the surprising omission of the publication date, which makes proper citation in a bibliography a little awkward! This volume was published as a partnership project between the Brecknock Society, the Friends of Brecknock Museum, the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust and the RCAHMW. We should thank them for their sterling effort and long may such joint working continue!

Abergavenny

FRANK OLDING

ARCHAEOLEG UCHELDIR GWENT / THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF UPLAND GWENT. By Frank Olding. 217 × 230 mm. 160 pp. 94 illustrations. Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales, Aberystwyth, 2016. ISBN 978 1 871184 57 0. Price £14.95.

This handsome and reasonably priced volume is the third in an occasional series of regional overviews based on fieldwork undertaken as part of the pan-Wales Uplands Archaeology Initiative, a flagship fieldwork programme undertaken by the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales and its partners, to survey all the unimproved uplands of Wales. The volume covers upland Gwent, which is essentially the eastern quarter of the geographical area of the South Wales coalfield. Although not immediately thought of as an area rich in traditional archaeological sites, a significant number of sites nevertheless exist and the author has drawn on many notable examples as the backcloth to the unrivalled range of later archaeological monuments and structures that demonstrate the area’s role as one of the key centres for the development of the coal, iron and steel industries.

The first chapter provides an introduction to the area and its natural resources, followed by a substantial section drawing and quoting from many of the antiquarian references to the area and its rich legacy of folklore and legends ranging from the profane to the apocalyptic. ‘Box Feature 1’ at the end of the chapter highlights examples of historical and more recent research work in the area that have contributed in no small measure to the study and better understanding of Welsh archaeology overall.

Chapter two entitled ‘Prehistoric Upland Communities’ manages to condense nine millennia of prehistory from the time of the first Mesolithic hunter-gatherers to the coming of the Romans, which is no doubt a reflection of the relative paucity of prehistoric sites when the area is compared to other parts of Wales. However, such sites as are featured, as for example Twmbarlwm hillfort in ‘Box Feature 2’, are undeniably impressive.

Chapter three focuses on key examples of Roman-period sites, largely but not exclusively military remains belonging to the conquest and subsequent administration of the area. The richness of the Gelligaer area with its auxiliary fort, marching camps and Roman road is highlighted to good effect in ‘Box Feature 3’ on the auxiliary fort site itself and in the guided walk set out in ‘Gelligaer Common – An Archaeological Treasure House’ at the end of chapter six, which very much brings the wider archaeological landscape into life.

Archaeological remains in the area are more plentiful for the early medieval and medieval periods, which is reflected in the greater variety and range of sites that make up chapter four, although some like the Llangorse Lake crannog are well outside the area, but justifiably included to provide a wider context.

The archaeological wealth of Gelligaer Common is once again emphasised with its post-Roman inscribed stone, Capel Gwladys early chapel and the Tyla-glass cross-dyke.

Chapter five, not unexpectedly, given the range and diversity of the remains of the industrial period in the area, is the longest and most detailed and where it is clear that the author is most familiar and at ease with his subject matter. The social and historical background to the intensive and extensive landscape changes that occurred in the area during this period are rightly included, as are accounts of the human costs and suffering accompanying these changes ('Box Feature 8 Cefn Golau Cholera Cemetery').

Given the wealth of social and cultural history that the author has drawn on and despite its location being just outside the area of interest, it would have been appropriate to include a brief account of the Aberfan disaster of 1966, if only for its role and significance in triggering the subsequent wholesale clearance of much of what had up to then survived intact of the coal industry, which had not only dominated vast swathes of the Upland Gwent landscape but also the remainder and greater part of the South Wales coalfield to the west.

The final short chapter 'The Present and the Future' postscripts the study with a look to the future and the challenge of managing continuing change without undue detriment to the area's exceptional legacy of surviving remains, and what constitutes in the author's own words 'a landscape with huge potential and substantial threats' (page 141).

The volume is lavishly illustrated with some excellent photographs taken by some of the many contributors, and also some of the best that the Royal Commission's extensive collections of aerial and ground photographs have to offer. However, some sites and features would have benefited from the addition of ground plans, of which only a single example is used (Castell Meredydd, fig. 48, page 83). Period and schematic maps are provided in chapters one to four, but not in chapter five, on industrial archaeology, where such a map would have been useful if only for those wishing to visit some of the sites described. Where such maps are provided, it would also have been helpful if more of the sites mentioned in the text could have been named on them.

The absence of Ordnance Survey grid references might inconvenience the informed walker or amateur archaeologist at which this volume is principally aimed, although the guided walk offered for part of Gelligaer Common works exceptionally well in this context and should become a 'must have' feature in any future volumes in this series.

The volume is bi-lingual and Welsh translation is of a high standard throughout, but minor glitches draw the eye, for example 'Ffigur 14: Ffurf deilen pen saeth' on page 31, should read 'Ffigur 14: Pen saeth ffurf deilen' and in 'Ffigur 65 'yr injan drawst Cornish' on page 106, should be 'yr injan drawst Gernywaidd'

These minor glitches aside, this volume admirably succeeds in its prime objective of publicising some of the much varied and diverse results of the Upland Archaeology Initiative, and should be equally at home in the glove-box or on the coffee table, making it a worthy third volume in this occasional series.

Llansadwrn

RICHARD S. KELLY

PEMBROKESHIRE COUNTY HISTORY. VOLUME I: PREHISTORIC, ROMAN AND EARLY MEDIEVAL PEMBROKESHIRE. By Timothy Darvill, Heather James, Kenneth Murphy, Geoffrey Wainwright and Elizabeth A. Walker. 172 × 247 mm. xxiii + 552 pp. 154 illustrations. Pembrokeshire County History Trust: Haverfordwest. 2016. ISBN 978 0 903771 16 0. Price £35.00.

This attractive and well-produced volume is a remarkable achievement and remarkably good value for money. Although it is Volume I in the Pembrokeshire County History it is the last to be published—

Volume II on the medieval period having appeared in 2002, Volume III on the early modern period in 1987, and Volume IV on modern Pembrokeshire in 1993. This is a blessing, since many new facets of the county's early history have only come to light in the thirty years since the appearance of the first volume in the series. The volume contains numerous illustrations, many in colour, including maps and atmospheric aerial photographs taken by the Royal Commission. The text as a whole is probably aimed more at the committed student or specialist reader, though even some of these might stumble over the occasional phrase, such as that describing the 'recent applications of Bayesian modelling to phylogenetics'. Future volumes being considered by the Pembrokeshire County History Trust are said to include an historical atlas and possibly an account of the natural history, geology and environmental history of the county.

The volume goes a long way to redressing the inadequacies of the Pembrokeshire Inventory published in 1925, highlighted in the excoriating review in *Antiquity* (reputedly by Mortimer Wheeler) which was critical of how little original fieldwork had been undertaken in assembling it. This was all the more unfortunate given the long and distinguished history of antiquarian enquiry in the county: names such as George Owen, Richard Fenton, Sabine ('Onward Christian Soldiers!') Baring-Gould and Edward Laws resonate throughout the volume, as do those of later researchers such as Cyril Fox, W. F. ('Peter') Grimes, Hubert Savory, Frances Lynch and others.

The challenge of writing this narrative of the early history of the county has fallen to the able hands of a current generation of researchers who are all acknowledged authorities in their own field. The volume is divided into five chapters—'The Palaeolithic and Mesolithic hunter-gatherers' by Elizabeth Walker, 'Neolithic and Bronze Age Pembrokeshire' by Timothy Darvill and the late Geoffrey Wainwright, 'Later prehistoric Pembrokeshire' by Kenneth Murphy, and 'Roman Pembrokeshire' and 'Early Medieval Pembrokeshire' by Heather James. This conventional approach is generally satisfactory, though there are some subjects—such as the development of early field systems and land tenure and the continuity of habitation and ritual observance—which perhaps lose focus from being shoehorned into one chapter or another.

One of the outcomes of syntheses of this kind is that almost by default they reveal gaps in our knowledge and understanding and thus help to set out agendas for future research. There is, for example, an increasing sense that the close association of people and place was forged more firmly during the Mesolithic period than has previously been supposed, resulting in the emergence of 'persistent places' in the landscape during the Neolithic period and beyond. This poses a whole host of questions about the nature of the relationships between late hunter-gatherer and the earliest farming communities, and the significance and purpose of different types of megalithic tomb (were they all tombs in a conventional sense?), and when the first permanent settlements came into being. The volume summarizes much of the recent and exciting work taking place in and around the Preselis on the subject of the intriguing Stonehenge bluestones mystery, but as yet there is no commonly accepted theory of where, when and why these sources were exploited. We know from isotope analysis that both people (such as the 'Boscombe Bowman') and cattle probably arrived on Salisbury Plain in some numbers from west Wales in the middle of the third millennium. But where were they raised, and why did they move? Relatively little work has been undertaken on settlements, land use, burial or ritual in the second half of the third millennium and first half of the second millennium BC to explain the pollen evidence indicating a dramatic anthropogenic impact on the environment. Does the dearth of evidence for human activity in the early first millennium BC signify a collapse in population figures or is it simply an unexplained 'absence of evidence'. Following the pioneering work on the proliferating small enclosures of the later first millennium and the more recent discovery of open settlement, there is now a need to discover whether hillforts first emerged during the later Bronze Age, and how they fit into the hierarchy of Iron Age settlements in the territory of the Demetae – 'the supreme cutters-down'.

The discovery of the road leading into the west from Carmarthen has provided a real fillip to Roman studies in the county. But this raises questions about the location of the harbour it surely led to, and the vital role the Roman navy must have played in the conquest of west Wales. Despite a small number of high status and industrial sites, settlement in the Roman period was dominated by a decentralized tribal society occupying a pattern of farmsteads. What impact did the Roman conquest have upon these settlements and did this lead to long-term changes in the local farming economy? In the late Roman period were these farmsteads the seat of the politico-cultural inheritance bequeathed to the post-Roman kingdom of Dyfed? But where are the royal courts, the seats of power, demanded by the Welsh Laws? And, apart from place-name evidence, what was the impact of Viking settlement in Pembrokeshire?

Despite many unanswered questions, the archaeological work undertaken in the county in recent decades has been transformative and brings home the point that archaeology does not write itself. It is interesting, therefore, to peep behind the curtains and glimpse how it is done today, noting the vital role played by individual researchers, developer-funded archaeology, institutions such as Cadw, the Royal Commission and the Welsh Archaeological Trusts, collaborative programmes such as SPACES and Stones of Stonehenge Project, and the Portable Antiquities Scheme. An armoury of new techniques also come into play—aerial, geophysical and lidar survey, radiocarbon dating, palaeoenvironmental and petrological work, DNA and isotope analysis—that would have been undreamed of by the authors of the Pembrokeshire Inventory and their predecessors.

Above all, what emerges from the volume is the rich and distinctive archaeological heritage of Pembrokeshire and the emerging human story it portrays, set in landscape of cliffs and harbours open to the western seaways, hospitable and fertile lowlands, and the Delphic Preselis, with distant contacts by land and sea with Armorica, Iberia, Ireland and Wessex.

Shrewsbury

WILLIAM BRITNELL

THE HILLFORTS OF CARDIGAN BAY. By Toby Driver 172 × 241 mm. xiv + 178 pp. 165 illustrations. Logaston Press, Almeley, Herefordshire, 2016. ISBN 978 1 901839 03 4. Price £12.95.

There is both a little more and a little less in this book than one is led to understand from the title. On the more side the author briefly explores what came before hillforts, going as far back in time as the Mesolithic, and what came after, with a brief excursion into life in the Roman period. On the less side the geographical scope rarely strays outside Ceredigion into Pembrokeshire to the south and Gwynedd to the north, two counties which have long coastlines on Cardigan Bay, although to be fair the subtitle strapline on the title page is: ‘Discovering the Iron Age Communities of Ceredigion’, and is clarified in the ‘Editorial Notes’. These are minor quibbles.

The book is aimed at the general reader, and achieves this aim in being well written in an easily accessible style and avoiding technical terms where possible. It is refreshingly jargon-free. The text is complemented by Logaston Press’s simple, clean design, which includes a wealth of colour images. These include aerial photographs taken by the author as an aerial archaeologist with the RCAHMW, supplemented by his own ground photographs and his own artwork. We are so used to seeing stunning aerial photographs of hillforts that it is easy to overlook the impact a well-composed ground photograph can have in conveying how hillforts sit within their landscapes and on the monumentality of their defences. I know from personal experience taking a good ground photograph of a hillfort can be a time-consuming and sometimes fruitless task—the result is often disappointing—but it is clear the author has not only taken the effort to get in the right place, but has also had the patience to wait for the best light to obtain the required shot.

The first chapter comprises a rapid and informative romp through the history of hillfort studies in Ceredigion, the evidence for hillforts, and when and what were hillforts, followed by a chapter titled 'Before the Hillforts'. Not surprisingly, given that 10,000 years are squeezed into just 10 pages of text and illustrations, a broad-brush approach is taken in this chapter. Throughout the book the author has usefully collated and provided illustrations on artefacts from the region. Usefully, as it is all too easy to overlook the fact that some stunning prehistoric artefacts such as the Castell Nadolig spoons, the Rhos Rydd shield and the Tal-y-llyn shields have been found in the region. However, less impressive artefacts are not numerous, and just a few examples of beads and spindle-whorls have come to light during excavations, and only one pottery vessel, a 'duck-stamped' jar from Herefordshire found during excavations in 1934 at Pen Dinas hillfort on the outskirts of Aberystwyth, although this may be Roman in date, rather than prehistoric. This paucity of artefacts is a real problem for Iron Age studies in west Wales.

Although Iron Age material culture is poorly represented in the archaeological record, hillforts and smaller defended sites are numerous, and it is these sites that are the focus of this book, as its title indicates. The text dealing with the meat of the book benefits greatly from the author's research for his PhD thesis, and introduces the reader to some of the current topics in hillfort studies. The chapter 'Hillforts: Construction, Conflict and Command' is by far the most interesting and thought-provoking in the book. Here topics including hillfort siting and landscape control, territories, design and architecture, and defence and display are discussed using examples and case studies from the region.

Evidence for ritual, death and sacred places in the Iron Age is much thinner than that for hillforts and other settlements; nevertheless the author competently introduces regional examples whilst dealing with the wider issues around these topics. The discussion around the spoons found in Castell Nadolig hillfort is particularly interesting and serves to bring to the fore the potential importance of this site, something that has not been previously recognised.

A chapter on the Roman conquest and the Romans in the region is followed by descriptions of the top ten hillforts in Ceredigion to visit. I would have liked to have seen hillforts to the south, in northern Pembrokeshire, and to the north, in southern Gwynedd, included in this top ten. The book concludes with a gazetteer of a few pages on hillforts to visit, which includes these areas to the north and south. Overall the book provides a very readable introduction to the prehistory of the region whilst introducing the reader to the current thoughts and theories about the Iron Age.

Dyfed Archaeological Trust, Llandeilo

KEN MURPHY

NEW VISIONS OF THE COUNTRYSIDE OF ROMAN BRITAIN VOLUME 1: THE RURAL SETTLEMENT OF ROMAN BRITAIN. By Alexander Smith, Martyn Allen, Tom Brindle and Michael Fulford. 210 × 297 mm. xxv + 469 pp. 400 illustrations. 35 tables. Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies, London, 2016. ISBN 978 0 907764 43 4. Price £40.00.

The authors of this substantial new volume on Roman rural settlement in England and Wales must be congratulated for synthesising and making public the results of a major, wide-ranging research project so promptly. This huge volume represents a detailed and expansive source of new information on the varied settlements of the Roman countryside, the archaeology of which would otherwise have remained largely inaccessible or unpublished in disparate developer-funded reports.

The present volume is the first of three in a series entitled 'New Visions of the Countryside of Roman Britain', with the second and third volumes set to tackle aspects of the rural economy and rural population. This publication originates in a project begun in 2006 to assess and synthesise the research potential of

‘grey literature’ reports of developer-funded excavations on Roman sites arising from the post-PPG16 explosion in archaeological interventions; an early, rapid national overview suggested some 9000 separate interventions in England alone in the period 1990–2010. As Fulford and Holbrook state in their Preface (page xviii) the impetus for such a study arose in the 1990s due to concerns about ‘fragmentation of the archaeological discipline and, in particular, the realisation that the enormous quantity of new data being generated on an almost daily basis by archaeological contracting organisations was having very little impact on how British archaeology was being taught and researched in Universities’. Crucially the present study is based on a ‘selective sample’ of sites, being only those with excavated evidence (page 4), and in this respect Wales has proportionately fewer sites with modern excavated evidence than in other parts of Britain which have seen more intensive development. Indeed, although Wales was envisaged early on as a key component of the survey, expansion of the English project into the Principality was only achieved as late as 2015 with a second grant from the Leverhulme Trust.

The book is more than a simple gazetteer of sites. The early chapters seek to explain the ways in which data have been gathered, and how modern developer-funded archaeology works. The history of research into the Romano-British countryside is also summarised, including the nature of the dataset and the decision-making processes behind its quantification into a national synthesis. Facts emerge; the preponderance for Roman sites to be dated on the basis of ceramics or coin evidence alone means that radiocarbon dates were available for just 278 (7 per cent of sites) of the sites on the project database, a surprisingly low figure (page 13) highlighting an area for future improvement. The project had to decide what constituted a ‘rural site’; military sites and major walled urban centres were omitted, although undefended nucleated sites—including ‘small towns’—were included. *Canabae* associated with Caerleon, Chester and York were excluded, but *vici* attached to military sites were included, and so on. One can imagine the very many long discussions required to finalise an agreed and acceptable working methodology, with inevitable compromises along the way.

Following the Introduction, Chapter 2 attempts a morphological classification of rural settlement types giving us a standardised national system and a context for future Welsh studies, while Chapter 3 synthesises the abundant structural dataset to examine the forms, types and functions of buildings in the Roman countryside. The illustrations in these early chapters set a standard for ‘crunching’ the Big Data which characterised the project, presenting numerous colour distribution maps, kernel density distributions, pie-charts, graphs, data tables and—crucially—plans of comparable national sites (air photo maps, geophysical surveys, earthwork surveys, excavated site plans and plans of individual buildings and features) redrawn to a consistent scale.

Chapters 4 to 11 comprise more detailed summaries of the regions of Britain. Early on in the development of the methodology, data were collected by modern county (Historic Environment Record) boundaries to facilitate systematic data entry. However, considering these boundaries ‘meaningless’ (page 15) in terms of the ancient landscape, the authors instead present their final data via eight new regions derived from an amalgam of previous models which have sought to classify England and Wales along the lines of distinctive natural and anthropogenic characteristics in the landscape and its archaeology; these incorporate Natural England’s ‘Natural Areas’.

Wales (authored by Tom Brindle), under the title of ‘Upland Wales and the Marches’ (there is not much ‘upland’ in Anglesey, south Ceredigion, coastal Pembrokeshire or south Carmarthenshire), fares less well in this exercise of regional classification. It is true that the present border between England and Wales is an arbitrary division, prompting Burnham and Davies in *Roman Frontiers in Wales and the Marches* (2010) to expand their study of the Roman Frontiers of Wales to include the Marches; Brindle’s region extends into the Shropshire and Herefordshire Hills, as well as including the entire Black Mountains upland block which otherwise spills into Herefordshire. However, the removal of the Vale of Glamorgan



(former south Glamorgan) and much of Gwent to the 'Central Belt' region (fig. 5.1), which includes the East Anglian Fens, Cambridgeshire and Lincolnshire is novel, but unhelpful, in terms of an overview of the Welsh dataset. Although many previous regional studies spanning the Neolithic to the Iron Age have drawn together south-west England with south Wales across the Severn, the Roman rural landscape of the Vale of Glamorgan and Gwent is in many ways integral to the neighbouring Romanised uplands of the south Wales valleys and Black Mountains, and the Swansea and Gower regions. It is a shame to see an ostensibly coherent South Wales landscape cut across by this regional division; a positive is that the high quality Roman rural settlement archaeology of the Vale is considered along with some of the best Roman archaeology of central England, thus placing it in a wider British context.

The Welsh component of this study was presented prior to publication at a well-attended seminar in Cardiff in November 2015 allowing a degree of peer-review of the project methodology and results. Tackling such a varied dataset, with the help of Welsh HERs, and synthesising it into a fresh, new study of (most of) Wales must have been a difficult task for Brindle but he succeeds. Chapter 11 reads well and includes discussion on recently discovered rural sites including Tai Cochion, Broad Heath and Abermagwr as well as longer-standing discoveries. A variety of economic and infrastructure factors are considered and conclusions are drawn about the region. Perhaps the greatest value is in the inclusion of Wales within a significant national overview of hundreds of complex, varied and previously unpublished examples of Roman rural settlements.

There are problems; Gateholm Island in Pembrokeshire stands out on regional maps as a Romano-British 'village' which is a problematic classification of an unusual and long-lived site. A critical problem too for the distribution pattern of rural Wales is the inclusion only of excavated sites, meaning that unexcavated sites identified as Roman villas (or other readily identifiable Romano-British site types) from aerial photography or other 'remote' means (including fieldwalking), and which may even be scheduled as such, do not feature in the new study. In such an ambitious and wide-ranging national study any regional specialist will find gaps and problems. If all these had been addressed, the published results might never have appeared.

In summary, this new volume presents a wealth of new information for the reader, with archaeological plans crisply and clearly reproduced and cross-compared, and national and regional maps and statistical analyses showcasing rural Roman Britain in all its infinite variety. The timely appearance of this publication represents a significant achievement on the part of the authors and a landmark publication for Roman Britain.

Aberystwyth

TOBY DRIVER

PLACES OF WORSHIP IN BRITAIN AND IRELAND, 300–950. Edited by P. S. Barnwell. 195 × 252 mm. xvi + 240 pp. 79 illustrations. Shaun Tyas, Donington, Lincs, 2015. ISBN 978 1 907730 48 1. Price £40.00.

This volume of essays originates from a weekend conference organised by the Oxford University Department for Continuing Education at Rewley House in 2010, and is the first in a projected chronological series looking at places of worship in Britain and Ireland up to the present day. Eleven chapters start with two overall studies, the first summarising the evidence for the introduction of Christianity into Britain by Barbara Yorke, and the second, by Martin Henig confining itself to the Roman period. There then follows a series of six regional studies which examine the evidence from Wales, Ireland and Scotland, Kent, North Yorkshire (Deiria) and Northumbria. Two further studies focus on individual churches, namely Brixworth and Deerhurst. A final chapter by Paul Barnwell offers concluding remarks.

A set of attractive colour plates has been placed between the foreword and the start of the volume, presumably gathered together there to help reduce the cost of publication, though their location means they are forgotten by the reader, and they contribute little to the text. Line drawings and monochrome images interspersed within the text are more helpful, and produced to a high standard.

The sequence running from full geographic coverage of Britain and Ireland, through a series of regional studies, to individual churches, is helpful. The editor states in the foreword that there is no attempt to be comprehensive in coverage, the purpose instead being to bring together in one place a series of papers that give insights into the current state of the subject and to enable comparisons between different parts of Britain and Ireland. Whilst it is useful to have the three Celtic nations represented, fulfilment of the stated aims would have been better achieved with fuller coverage of English regions, in particular the south-west and midlands. There are a number of typographical errors which should have been corrected at the editing stage (e.g. Rding on page 119).

Of particular interest to the readers of this journal will be the paper by Professor Nancy Edwards entitled 'Christianising the Landscape: The Archaeology of the Early Medieval Church in Wales'. The title of the essay provides a clue as to the difficulties faced in trying to provide information which pertains to the main thrust of this volume. Whilst there are numerous strands of evidence which identify the practice of Christian worship, there are no stone churches evident before the twelfth century, and very limited evidence of the timber churches that preceded them. This leads Professor Edwards to admit that 'we are only at the beginning of trying to answer such questions' when querying the nature of the archaeology of 'places of worship' and early churches. The essay provides an excellent and very useful summary of the evidence to date, taking into account cemeteries and their development, inscribed stones, and excavated evidence. Greater discussion as to why we have yet to find evidence for early churches prior to the Romanesque era would have been welcomed. The use of mortuary enclosures is mentioned, but could perhaps have been considered further, with a more detailed discussion of the possible relationship between cemeteries and other sites associated with Christian worship, though some of this is partly addressed in a number of case studies towards the end of the paper, looking at the development of Bangor, Llandanwg, St Davids and Penmon. At the last the adjoining site on Ynys Seiriol is described as a 'hermitage'; however, the presence of *Celi Du*, and the potential opportunities for Irish influences are not discussed, and neither is there any discussion of the impact of the Viking invasion and their political dominance in the latter part of this period. Two very minor points might stand correction: the surviving 'circular mounds' at Tywyn y Capel would be more accurately described as rectangular mounds, and the Gerontius-inscribed stone at Llandanwg was found on the north side of the church, not the west.

Though the majority of the essays are summaries of material published elsewhere, the real strength of the volume lies in the high professional standard of each of the papers, which combined with very full referencing, does allow both an excellent entry point for those wishing to gain an up-to-date overview of the subject, and an excellent reference point for those actively carrying out research in this area.

Gwynedd Archaeological Trust, Bangor

ANDREW DAVIDSON

OFFA'S DYKE. LANDSCAPE AND HEGEMONY IN EIGHTH-CENTURY BRITAIN. By Keith Ray and Ian Bapty. 184 × 245 mm. xvi + 448 pp. 190 illustrations. Windgather Press, Oxford, 2016. ISBN 978 1 905119 35 6. Price £29.95.

Offa's Dyke and Wat's Dyke remain among Britain's most enigmatic earthworks: neglected, side-lined or mischaracterized by many (even recent) early medieval scholars. Meanwhile, their banks and ditches—

sometimes slight, in other places remaining monumental in proportions—as well as their immediate environs and visual envelope, are regularly threatened from damage and development. Unsurprisingly, both dykes remain poorly presented (if at all) to tourists and local communities.

This richly illustrated book on Offa's Dyke is therefore extremely welcome, although it is important to set out its relationship with previous work. It builds on a disparate set of antiquarian and early archaeological investigations, as well as Cyril Fox's extensive survey (1955) which established the tradition of investigation and interpretation and Frank Noble's (1983) revision of Fox's interpretations of the dyke's form and function. The new book also draws upon, and often takes issue with, a long series of academic articles and a well-cited popular book (2003) by David Hill and Margaret Worthington, informed by decades of survey and excavation on both Offa's and Wat's Dyke. Hill and Worthington had refined a new consensus regarding how the two parallel linear earthworks were built and used as Mercian reaction to a late eighth-century resurgent Powys. More recent still, a series of developer-led excavations, dating and survey work by Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) on shorter dykes in the region, and by Tim Malim and Laurence Hayes on Wat's Dyke near Gobowen (2008), have helped to put Offa's Dyke in context. For instance, these investigations have suggested that the Whitford Dyke(s) is likely prehistoric in origin and that Wat's Dyke was a later (not earlier), early ninth-century Mercian monument which adapted and extended the frontier north to the Dee estuary. CPAT extracted a series of radiocarbon dates from a damaged section of Offa's Dyke in 2013, broadly confirming the monument's early medieval date. Despite these developments, Ray and Bapty still face the challenge of reporting on a seemingly familiar, and yet still poorly understood monument in regards its date form, function and broader significance for understanding Mercia as an early medieval kingdom, and Offa as its king.

The study tackles a rich series of research questions, both old and new, about the dyke, showing a detailed knowledge of the monument along its course. They present many original field observations in doing so. The authors promote Offa's Dyke as a significant and unique unitary project, discrete from other early medieval linear earthworks. Ray and Bapty also suggest that it may well have gone from 'sea to sea' in some fashion, if not as a monumental bank and ditch all the way, as Asser claimed in his ninth-century biography of Alfred. The authors argue that Offa's Dyke is central to appreciating the distinctive character of the late eighth-century Mercian frontier, kingship and kingdom within a British and European context.

The book's first part presents a new vision of the dyke (Chapter 1), a detailed and critical exploration of past work (Chapter 2), and a conventional review of Mercia's western frontiers between the seventh and ninth centuries drawing on historical sources (Chapter 3). The last two chapters (Chapter 8 and 9) build the evidence up into a new conception of the dyke as a hegemonic project in the creation of a Mercian March, inspired by an imperial ideology rivalling the Carolingian Franks. It is the core of the book that I will focus on in this review (Chapters 4–7), where we find the key material evidence marshalled in support of their vision.

The study identifies a series of principal 'stances' along the dyke's course, and how the monument operated to block and dominate varied topography. The authors propose four different scales of dyke-building. They also identify further key design features beyond the ditch and bank, including the regular use of a counterscarp bank, and quarries to the rear, as well as areas where they suggest the dyke was deliberately faced with stone to give the impression of a wall. In further situations, the natural scarp was enhanced to make it appear to be a giant human-made bank. Gates and look-out points are tentatively proposed and it is even suggested that the dyke was built to a greater scale to 'oppose' key Welsh political centres to the west. The dyke's 'adjusted-segmented' construction in many places along its course is perhaps the most fundamental new discovery of this book, suggested by the authors as a further way by which the monument was designed to block movement, observe the landscape, but also to impress those approaching it. These distinctive features allow them to counter Hill and Worthington's view that the dyke

did not extend south of Rushock Hill: Ray and Bapty argue that the Gloucestershire sections *were* part of the original monument and share in its design features.

One frustration of the book is its limited use of detailed maps to support and extend the field investigation. Indeed, detailed mapping of the dyke in relation to other archaeological monuments and find-spots is absent. Therefore, despite the claim that this study puts the dyke in its landscape context, the dyke still floats free of a fine-grained archaeological context. Still, the photographs are rich, varied and some are effective in supporting the authors' argument, including their detailed captions. Some photographs really needed annotations (as Cyril Fox did to great effect with his photographs of the dyke) to allow them to work the interpretations they were intended for. Furthermore, many key arguments and evidence are hidden away in the rich and detailed endnotes, making the book a challenge to navigate.

Finally, I would like to focus on the book's restricted comparative analysis with other linear earthworks which is also a problem. In particular, for this reader Wat's Dyke is repeatedly discussed but not fully incorporated into the narrative of the Mercian frontier. The suggestion that Wat's Dyke *was* a continuation of Offa's Dyke is less than satisfactory and many questions remain unanswered for future work in this regard. Hence, as well as the debates between the authors and Hill and Worthington regarding the southern extent of Offa's Dyke, it remains unclear to the reader why Offa's Dyke ends near Treuddyn and why precisely might Wat's Dyke, further south, overlap with it from Maesbury to Hope. Still, the book's value lies not only in the synthesis of past work it offers, the new field observations it identifies, and the ideological context it explores, but in providing a foundation for a new generation of scholars to test and critique the interpretations that the book contains.

University of Chester

HOWARD WILLIAMS

THE STORY OF HEREFORD. Edited by Andy Johnson and Ron Shoesmith. 171 x 243 mm. × + 326 pp. 226 illustrations. Logaston Press, Almeley, Herefordshire, 2016. ISBN 978 1 906663 98 8. Price £15.00.

'This book tells the story of Hereford in breadth and depth' says the back cover—and indeed it does, and in a very readable and pleasing fashion. The fifteen chapters have between them fifteen authors, though not in complete correlation, some chapters having several authors and some authors responsible for two chapters or more. The result might have been a curate's egg, but thanks no doubt to the hard work and close concerns of the editors it is of a high standard of scholarship and interest throughout. All chapters but the last have extensive end notes including good bibliographies, and the editors have provided an index of personal names as well as a general index.

The history is presented chronologically, with the first two chapters by Keith Ray taking us on a high-speed tour of the local geology and archaeology from the Ice Age landscape of 300,000 years ago to the early eleventh century AD. Here, as throughout the volume, more detailed information about specific aspects of the story is provided in part- or full-page tinted panels, and both colour and black and white illustrations are plentiful and of high quality.

Chapters 3 to 9 cover the medieval period—archaeologist P. J. Pikes beginning the story with a short account of the first years of the Norman Conquest, drawing on archaeology, documentary sources and academic studies. He and Ron Shoesmith then tackle the early castle, city walls and gates in chapter 4—a detailed and fascinating story from their Saxon origins through to their post-medieval partial destruction. It is informed and embellished with early maps and prospects—in particular the lovely eighteenth-century watercolours of George Samuel and James Wathen.

Local historian David Whitehead gives us a close study of the castle next, from the later twelfth to the mid-seventeenth century. The text draws, directly and indirectly, for the most part on original documentary sources, pipe rolls, charters and chronicles, along with sketches and itineraries in the later period. The panels in this chapter deal colourfully with Hereford's associations with Simon de Montfort, Roger Mortimer and Owain Glyn Dŵr. In chapter 6 Shoesmith and Pikes give us a summary of the history of the Norman cathedral, its bishops and the town's early churches. The authors acknowledge the many publications on the Cathedral on which the chapter draws, but the information is presented seamlessly and the images are again superb.

Chapter 7—Hereford as a centre of medieval learning and art—is a tour de force of concisely and elegantly presented in-depth information from four learned authors. The story of the bishop-led scientific scholarship of the late eleventh and twelfth centuries by Christopher Pullin leads into Sarah Arrowsmith's detailed description of Hereford's Mappa Mundi. The acquisitions and collections of Hereford's medieval libraries and of the post-medieval chained library are then detailed by Rosemary Firman. The chapter ends with a guided tour of the cathedral's Romanesque and early gothic sculpture by Malcolm Thurlby—enriched by the quality of his own photographs that illustrate this section, and a consideration of the Herefordshire School of Sculpture.

Whitehead returns as author of chapter 8, again making extensive use of contemporary documentation in a lively discussion of trade and commerce in the Middle Ages. Hereford's position on a navigable river, set within a wide hinterland with growing access into Wales, and becoming from the fourteenth century a place of pilgrimage, encouraged growing trade and prosperity.

Pat Hughes's wide knowledge of the buildings of Hereford and Shoesmith's local historical and archaeological knowledge combine to produce chapter 9—the second-longest in the book—on the medieval buildings. A general introduction to the types of building found within the city is followed by detailed consideration of some examples of buildings from both around the Cathedral Close and in the High Town commercial centre. For the latter, wills, inventories and court records give us glimpses of their furnishings, and of the lives of their later owners and tenants. Moving forward in time, Shoesmith's extensive research into the Civil War in Herefordshire gives us a vivid and at times almost blow-by-blow account of the conflict locally and of the citizens' sufferings, brought to life by extracts from pamphlets and from letters, diaries, and account books of those involved.

Ken Hylson-Smith with Andy Johnson contributes an overview of the spiritual life of the city from the eleventh to the early nineteenth centuries. Given the scope of the subject this chapter has necessarily to be in the nature of a summary but is none the less coherent and informative and, as elsewhere in the story, adds to our knowledge while avoiding repetition of facts from earlier chapters.

Chapter 12 by Whitehead and Heather Hurley launches us into the modern era with the Georgians. The additional sources available to the writers—newspapers, more extensive contemporary mapping, topographical painting and drawing, and ultimately photography allows this chapter along with John Eisel's next two on Victorian Hereford, and Literature and the Arts to give us a close feel for political, social and cultural life in the city and county.

*The Story of Hereford* comes up to date in Chapter 15 by Derek Foxton and the late Graham Roberts. There are no end notes for this chapter since it is very much a summary based on Roberts's 2001 volume *The Shaping of Modern Hereford*, giving a perhaps more mundane and familiar story of urban expansion—both by housing and industry, of refurbishment of the centre, of cars and of congestion.

The editors preface the work with the warning that they wanted the book to have colour throughout at a reasonable price: some aspects of the city's history have been covered only briefly therefore—local churches, education and sport being barely touched on. The lack is hardly to be regretted however, since the result is a book of absorbingly imparted knowledge, deeply researched and well referenced, but one that is also a stunning picture book.

A couple of errors in figure numbering in chapters 3 and 14 do not remotely detract from the use of this well-produced book. The smooth flow and clarity of the text throughout, and the general uniformity and accuracy of referencing, is a credit to the editors.

Shrewsbury

JENNY BRITNELL

THE FIRST PRINCE OF WALES? By Sean Davies. 138 × 215 mm. xvii + 147 pp. 11 illustrations. University of Wales Press, Cardiff, 2016. ISBN 978 1 783169 36 8. Price £14.99.

With this biographical study of the eleventh-century ruler Bleddyn ap Cynfyn, Sean Davies follows up his earlier book on Bleddyn's half-brother and predecessor Gruffudd ap Llywelyn (d. 1063/64). Bleddyn's kingdom was based largely on northern Wales—Gwynedd and Powys—with a more or less vague ascendancy, increasingly disturbed by Norman raids, in Ceredigion and parts of central Wales. In much of the south, Bleddyn may have nurtured ambition but could probably claim little more than a vague eminence. The resultant polity over which he exercised effective control was fairly certainly not as extensive as Gruffudd's, as Dr Davies makes clear, and yet Bleddyn was the most prominent Welsh ruler of his day, and was eulogised in the Welsh chronicle *Brut y Tywysogion* as 'the man who, after Gruffudd his brother, eminently held the whole kingdom of the Britons.'

The task which Dr Davies has set himself is not an easy one: apart from a few lines in Welsh chronicles—none of which is without its problems—and some scattered and very brief references to Bleddyn's achievement as a legislator in much later Welsh law-texts the source-material for a study of Bleddyn ap Cynfyn is notable for its scarcity. There is no court poetry for this period, in marked contrast to the situation in much of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Little notice is taken of him in contemporary or near-contemporary English chronicles, which had much more immediate matters on which to concentrate. There is very little charter evidence relating to the eleventh century from Wales outside the south-east, and Bleddyn makes no appearance in the problematic and scarce documents from that region. The historian can have no recourse to English governmental records such as the Pipe Rolls until they begin some three decades into the twelfth century. The result is that in this book 'context' looms very large. There is a section dealing with the nature of Bleddyn's kingship, touching on his possible court-centres (*llysoedd* and *maerdrefi*), his apparent lack of a navy comparable to that which his brother Gruffudd had developed, his administration, relations with the church, and his place in the development of Welsh law. But all of these matters occupy only some ten pages. At times the book is, perhaps inevitably, more a study of the later eleventh century in Wales than a biographical study of Bleddyn. The density of 'context' is paralleled by the frequency of conjecture: this can be disconcerting, but in a period so ill-served by hard evidence it is inevitable.

What Dr Davies has succeeded in doing is to paint a credible picture of Bleddyn and to set him in an equally credible environment. In the course of doing this he has developed some thought-provoking reconstructions, such as his depiction of the role of Bleddyn and his brother Rhiwallon in the downfall and death of Gruffudd ap Llywelyn. On one important point Dr Davies's approach is less than convincing. This is his belief that we should regard Bleddyn ap Cynfyn as 'the first prince of Wales.' It is this notion of course which gives the book its title, though there the theory is softened somewhat by the addition of a question-mark. But in the text it appears in a more definite form, so that the final sentence of the final chapter explains that 'the ultimate irony for the man who would have been king is that he can be described as the country's first prince'. The purist will respond by noting that Bleddyn was described in *Brut y Tywysogion* as holding the whole kingdom of the Britons, that the title 'prince of Wales' (*Waliarum*

*princeps*) is not used by Welsh rulers until the reign of Owain Gwynedd in the mid-twelfth century, and that when it was employed it seems to have represented an attempt to elevate the user above the run of petty ‘regional’ kings who characterized much of Wales. Indeed, Dr Davies’s own contention that Gruffudd ap Llywelyn was an extraordinary figure, ‘the only native Welsh king to reign over all the lands that comprise modern Wales’ suggests that earlier aspirants to a Welsh hegemony fell short of attaining it and are therefore comparable to Bleddyn. Some, such as the tenth-century ruler Hywel Dda, may have held a position of acknowledged pre-eminence within Wales, even if that involved acceptance of an English overlordship. This surely was precisely the sort of role which the author of the chronicle that lies behind *Brut y Tywysogion* was attributing to Bleddyn. So there must be reservations—but Dr Davies’s argument deserves respect and may well stimulate productive thought.

The book is well produced; the maps are helpful, and typographic errors are very rare. It would have been helpful to indicate the pages of the text on which the illustrations appear. The Bibliography is marked by some odd features: some items would seem to have virtually nothing to do with the subject of the book, while some work which would be useful is not included. Thus K. L. Maund’s *Handlist of the Acts of Native Welsh Rulers 1132–1283* published in 1996, is included, while Huw Pryce’s vastly more comprehensive, important and useful *Acts of Welsh Rulers 1120–1283*, published in 2005 is omitted. Similarly Max Lieberman’s 2008 book on *The March of Wales 1067–1300* is included, though Bleddyn does not appear in the Index, but his rather more pertinent *The Medieval March of Wales* (2010), in which Bleddyn is discussed, is absent. But these are relatively minor matters which do not detract from a stimulating attempt to give form and meaning to a difficult period of Welsh medieval history, and to bring the resulting story to a wider readership.

Bangor

DAVID STEPHENSON

WILLIAM MARSHAL AND IRELAND. Edited by John Bradley, Cólín Ó Drisceoil and Michael Potterton. 160 × 240 mm. 352 pp. 153 illustrations. 3 tables. Four Courts Press, Dublin, 2016. ISBN 978 1 846822 18 6. Price €50.00.

To our late President, David Cathcart King, William Marshal was always ‘The Great Man’. The story of Marshal’s career, from younger son of a minor Berkshire landowner to Earl of Pembroke, one of the greatest soldiers, landed magnates and castle builders of his age, is a remarkable one, whilst his role in national affairs, through four turbulent reigns, was considerable. His castles at Chepstow, Usk, Caerleon and Pembroke have left a lasting mark in Wales. They were at the cusp of the change from the twelfth-century castle, with its looser outline and square box-like keep to the developed medieval castle, with a ‘geometric’ outline, a curtain wall divided into segments by projecting mural towers equipped with arrow loops, twin-towered gatehouses and circular great towers like that at Pembroke. Marshal’s Welsh castles were only one aspect of a multinational career and his impact on Ireland was even greater, as this important book, product of a conference held in Marshal’s castle at Kilkenny in 2008 reminds us.

Marshal’s biographer David Crouch opens with ‘William Marshal in exile’. Crouch’s account of his exile in Ireland from 1207 until 1212, in disfavour with King John, sets the scene for much of what follows. Adrian Empey looks at the organization of the demesne of Marshal’s lordship of Leinster, culminating in the shiring of Wexford, Kilkenny, Carlow and Kildare; and Miriam Clyne describes the foundation of the town and priory of Kells (Co. Kilkenny) by one of Marshal’s knights, Geoffrey fitz Robert. Like similar Welsh towns, it comprised castle, burgages, a marketplace and a religious house—in this case a fortified Augustinian Priory, whose excavation by the late Tom Fanning produced much archaeological material,

here published. Daniel Tietzch Tyler contributes a study and reconstruction drawing of the monastic defences in *c.* 1500.

Ben Murtagh, who has done much to uncover Marshal's Kilkenny castle from under the later Ormonde structures, then offers what will be for many Welsh readers the most significant part of the volume, 'William Marshal's great tower at Pembroke, Wales: a view from Ireland'. The origins of circular great towers like Pembroke lie in late twelfth-century France. Murtagh considers examples from both Capetian and Angevin France before looking at the work of Marshal and his contemporaries at Château Gaillard, the Tower of London, Chepstow and Usk. The distinctive plunging arrow loops of Marshal's Welsh castles are replaced at Kilkenny by a type with parallels in Plantagenet France, though Murtagh's 'French' label for the former type may need refinement. His description of the Pembroke great tower includes the suggestion that the central turret on its crown may have served as a lighthouse, like that at Hook (Co Wexford), now attributed to the younger Marshals. These would have served to link Marshal's Welsh and Irish domains via a sea crossing of which he had unhappy memories. Marshal did not acquire possession of Pembroke until 1200, a decade after the start of work at Chepstow. Dating of this undocumented tower depends on Marshal's fluctuating relations with King John. Horizontal changes in the masonry remind us that construction would take a number of seasons and Murtagh suggests that whilst the tower may have been begun in *c.* 1204, it may not have been completed until as late as 1213–19, after his return from Ireland, and contemporary with his work at Usk and Caerleon. The discussion is then widened to include King John's Irish castle building at Dublin, Limerick and Waterford (Reginald's Tower) including circular keeps comparable to Pembroke or parallel to such Welsh examples as Bronllys, Tretower and Skenfrith.

Murtagh and one of the editors, the late John Bradley, then consider Marshal's charter to Kilkenny, which they date to 1207 and Daniel Tietzsch-Tyler provides new reconstruction drawings of Kilkenny Castle at the time of Richard II's visit in 1395, using comparative material from Marshal's Welsh castles. A group of papers dealing with Marshal's new foundations follow. The late Billy Colfer studies Marshal's settlement strategies in Wexford. These included the Cistercian Abbey of Tintern Minor founded, with an estate of 15,000 acres, after a vow during a rough sea crossing and the building of several distinctive stone castles (Marshal's second Cistercian foundation was at Graiguenamangh, Co. Kilkenny).

Cóilín Ó Drisceoil then describes Marshal's port of New Ross, a rival to King John's Waterford downstream. Founded on the site of a small Irish monastic foundation, New Ross provided a maritime link to Chepstow and Pembroke independent of Waterford. The *caput* of the manor was at the nearby motte and bailey at Old Ross, later a small stone castle. Ó Drisceoil provides a detailed landscape survey of the manor as well as an urban analysis of New Ross. St Mary's church there contains the late thirteenth-century tomb slab of Alis (Alice) La Kerdif (note the Cardiff accent). Finally, Gillian Kenny writes about Isabel, the Clare heiress, whose marriage brought Marshal his estates in Ireland, Wales and elsewhere and made his career possible.

The book presents an integrated view of its subject of a kind not always found in multi-author volumes and the illustrations, including a series of colour plates, are of high quality. Sadly, it is dedicated to the memory of three contributors—John Bradley, Billy Colfer and Emma Devine who did not live to see it in print. Though its focus is on Ireland, this book contains a great deal which anyone interested in medieval Wales and particularly its Anglo-Norman towns will find highly relevant, and students of Welsh castles will find it indispensable.



MEDIEVAL POWYS. KINGDOM, PRINCIPALITY AND LORDSHIPS 1132–1293. By David Stephenson. 162 × 241 mm. xxii + 339 pp. 4 illustrations. 5 tables. Boydell Press, Woodbridge, Suffolk, 2016. ISBN 978 1 783271 40 5. Price £60.00.

The three Welsh kingdoms—Deheubarth, Gwynedd and Powys—at the time of the penetration of Wales by the Anglo-Normans are of enduring interest. Eminent scholars have followed Sir John Lloyd in advancing our understanding of the forces unleashed by the ambitions of these kingdoms’ rulers and the conquerors’ determination. At the same time, to write their individual histories in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries has proved immensely difficult because the historical sources, while notably varied, are patchy in their survival and often difficult to interpret. Important studies of Rhys ap Gruffudd of Deheubarth, and Llywelyn ab Iorwerth and Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, princes of Gwynedd, have been published in recent decades, yet the contemporary rulers of Powys remained shadowy figures—until now. The writings of G. T. O. Bridgeman in the 1860s (on ‘upper Powys’) and J. Y. W. Lloyd in the 1880s (on Powys Fadog, or northern Powys) are a basis for the study of parts of Powys, but not until David Stephenson embarked on his researches did the kingdom receive the attention it deserves. Literary, genealogical, archaeological and archival discoveries and analyses over the past half-century have been exploited by Dr Stephenson to record the political structures of Powys, from the kingdom of the early twelfth century, to the principalities into which it fragmented, and the lordships that were absorbed into the landscape of the marcher lordships in Edward I’s day. Although aided by the publication of Huw Pryce’s magisterial edition of *inter alia* the charters of Powys’s rulers in *The Acts of the Welsh Rulers, 1120–1283* (2005), it is Dr Stephenson’s resolute fascination with Powys in the central Middle Ages that has enabled him to complete this ground-breaking study.

The book has two parts: the first and larger part (of eight chapters) is a political and military narrative from the end of the eleventh century to the end of the thirteenth; the second (of four chapters) analyses the political, religious and cultural framework in which the territories of Powys changed during these two centuries. Fresh from his study of *The Governance of Gwynedd*, published in 1984 (reprinted in 2014 as *Political Power in Medieval Gwynedd: Governance and the Welsh Princes*), Dr Stephenson embarked on a programme of publication which gradually focused on Powys and, thirty years later, culminated in the present book. Its detail and depth—and, it must be confessed, its density at times—reflect their origin in the thirty or so specialised essays and commentaries; there is no doubt that *Medieval Powys* will be a work of reference and a stimulus to interpretation for many years to come. Dr Stephenson makes a virtue of the gaps in the sources (described in the Introduction) by offering a series of intelligent—and sometimes alternative—interpretations for future scholars to ponder; this leads to a rash of such phrases as ‘it is possible’, ‘it is probable’, ‘it is likely’, ‘it is tempting’, often building plausible conjecture upon conjecture, all worthwhile if not equally convincing.

He asserts from the outset that ‘Powys was quite literally at the very centre of Welsh and Anglo-Welsh politics in the high middle ages’ (page 3), and he keeps it there throughout the book, rather than treating it (as in the past) as an adjunct to the rise of Gwynedd and the Anglo-Norman advance—in short, to rescue it ‘from the historiographical limbo to which it has for too long been consigned’ (page 19). His account of the re-emergence of Powys from Gwynedd’s shadow begins with Bleddyn ap Cynfyn (d. 1075) and his sons as the dynasty consolidated its territory. His judgements on their descendants tend to the heroic, echoing the later *Brut y Tywysogyon* which (for example) commemorates Maredudd ap Bleddyn (d. 1132) as ‘the splendour and defence of the men of Powys’ (page 39). Dr Stephenson offers sober substance to this verdict, concluding that Maredudd ‘established a formidable reputation and demonstrated to his successors the skills necessary to consolidate the family’s hold’ on their territory (page 37). Powys reached its ‘age of eminence’ under Maredudd’s son, Madog (d. 1160), not least by extending the borders of his

kingdom: 'A close rapport with very powerful forces within the English political establishment was one of the methods by which . . . Madog maintained his position' (page 46). Dr Stephenson interestingly sees Madog's burial at Meifod church, which he rebuilt, as 'in part a reaffirmation of the vitality of a Powysian identity' (page 55).

A central theme of the book is the way in which rulers of Powys managed the relentless military and political pressures from Gwynedd and from English kings, even on occasion from Deheubarth. These pressures were evident in the 'Crisis and renewal' (chapter 3) that followed Madog's death; reliance on English support against Gwynedd's aggression at the same time reflected Powys's weakness. Madog's nephew, Owain Cyfeiliog (d. 1197), restored the family's position in southern Powys in the 1160s, symbolised by his foundation of the Cistercian abbey of Strata Marcella: Dr Stephenson uses contemporary poetry to good effect here (as elsewhere) to characterise Owain's achievements. But by the end of the century Powys had crystallised into two kingdoms, northern and southern. With perceptible reluctance, Dr Stephenson adopts a nuanced judgement on Owain Cyfeiliog's son, Gwenwynwyn: while seeking to resurrect his reputation as a ruler, he admits that Gwenwynwyn's efforts to beguile both Gwynedd and the English resulted in his being driven from his lands by the time he died in 1216.

None of the thirteenth-century rulers achieved the eminence of their forebears. Gwynedd eclipsed their power and reputation and promoted the fragmentation of Powysian territories; while the relationship with the English crown was far from easy (chapters 5 and 6). Even so, Dr Stephenson gives Gruffudd of Bromfield (d. 1289), the builder of Dinas Brân castle, a favourable notice: 'in so far as Gruffudd had retained, and expanded, the territories of his [northern] lordship he could be counted a successful ruler' (page 131). A similarly guarded verdict is accorded Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn, the builder of Powis castle and founder of the borough of Welshpool: 'He had survived amidst great political turbulence, and had done so by being prepared to accept and work within the realities of his situation' (page 157). This part of the book concludes with a brief account of Powys after Edward I's Welsh wars: the reduced circumstances of minor lords in the north, and the passing of the south from Madog ap Maredudd's descendants into English hands as the late-medieval 'lordship of Powys'.

The book's shorter second part explores themes which either are embedded in the political narrative or help to explain its course (and might profitably be read prior to the earlier chapters). Among the latter are passages which explain the geo-political foundations of Powys, the importance of the eastward-flowing rivers Dee and Severn and their tributaries towards the English plains, the lines of communication within and without Powys, and the western massif; not until pages 218–19 does the significance of the Berwyn mountains receive a mention. At the same time, Dr Stephenson analyses aspects of governance by essentially military rulers: their officials, entourage and *teulu*, though Sean Davies's *Welsh Military Institutions, 633–1283* (2004) might have provided a comparative context. The place of marriage as an instrument of territorial politics, the likelihood that the numerous earthwork and timber castles (if one could but date their construction and identify their builders) reflected seignorial divisions and territorial fragmentation, and why the absence of a diocesan centre in Powys should pose 'a problem' for its rulers (page 253)—these are among fascinating themes which are sometimes prefigured in the commanding narrative and deserve the more convergent attention as the book ends.

MARITIME WALES IN THE MIDDLE AGES: 1039–1542. By Ken Lloyd Gruffydd. 175 × 252 mm. xlvii + 309 pp. 45 illustrations. 3 tables. Bridge Books, Wrexham, 2016. ISBN 978 1 844941 06 3. Price £25.00.

In his preface, Ken Lloyd Gruffydd maintains that general histories of Wales often neglect to mention, or attribute sufficient attention to, the significance of the role of coastal and inland water transport. As such a central aim of his book is to address that deficiency for the period from the ascendancy of Gruffudd ap Llywelyn to the ‘Acts of Union’. The author makes it clear that the chapters of the book largely reproduce the contents of articles written by him for the journal *Cymru a'r Môr / Maritime Wales* (ten such articles are listed in the Bibliography, as well as one ‘*Llafur*’ article, from 1985 to 2006 inclusive) with relevant revision where subsequent research has made it necessary. The result is ‘a collection of selected essays’.

The first chapter details the histories of the Welsh kings and princes to 1283, and, whilst far more detailed histories are available, the aim of the author was presumably to give those with little or no knowledge of medieval Wales the context in which to understand his discussion of maritime events. The next two chapters are dedicated to the governance of Wales during the post-Edwardian-Conquest period, and concern, firstly, ‘Defence and settlement’, and secondly, ‘Mobilizing offensives’. The remaining six chapters concentrate on specific elements, including: types of ships employed, their construction and those who sailed in them; the changing economy, and the consequent effects on coastal traffic, with an explanation of Welsh society as pertinent to that discussion; the export trade (in particular wool exports and, later, the trade in cloth made possible by advances in the fulling process); import organisation and practices; commodities imported (especially wine, salt, iron, and interestingly, fish); and finally, pirates, privateers, and shipwreck.

There are copious illustrations, drawings, maps, tables and graphs to which the reader is referred in the narrative. A helpful glossary of relevant terms is also provided. As well as maps detailing successful voyages undertaken by, amongst others, Gruffudd ap Cynan (and his contemporaries), and, later, Jasper Tudor, there is a map showing where ships which were not so fortunate were wrecked on the Welsh coast. Illustrations of vessels are provided, including evidence from Welsh borough seals and, in one instance, an image of a carving from a gravestone now in the porch of Llanfaglan church, thought to represent the type of ship that may have visited the nearby port of Abermenai (page 83). There are charts detailing the Welsh ports where wine was prized, and the frequency of use of Welsh ports in general. The names of vessels (when recorded in the primary sources) and their ports of origin are given, including, for example, *La Damaysel* which brought supplies to the beleaguered English garrison of Deganwy in the winter of 1245/6 (page 13).

There is an interesting discussion (page 143) of the special permission required from the English Crown, in times of conflict, before a ship could proceed overseas for foodstuffs owing to the fear of ‘unprincipled speculators’ working a better deal with the Welsh princes. This could help to explain an incident (that I could not see mentioned in the book) in which a ship laden with corn, at the behest of Cadwgan, bishop of Bangor, for the sustenance of the poor in Wales, was detained in an Irish port in 1234, prompting the bishop to seek Henry III’s help (see *Calendar of Close Rolls*, 1231–1234, p. 417, and *Calendar of Documents relating to Ireland*, 1171–1251, p. 313).

A wide range of secondary material has been consulted, and many well-established printed editions of primary sources (including cartularies, chronicles, Chancery rolls, customs accounts, port books, the Welsh laws, as well as prose and poetry) are employed to good effect. All are referenced in a reader-friendly manner. More recent scholarship, such as J. Bezant’s chapter ‘Travel and Communication’ in *Monastic Wales* (2013), has been utilised. Coverage is, therefore, commendably comprehensive.

However, further evidence worth considering includes the discussion of Gruffudd ap Llywelyn's naval strategy in M. and S. Davies's, *The Last King of Wales* (2012), referencing the additional primary source of Walter Map's, *De Nugis Curialium*. For Gruffudd ap Cynan, another valuable source is P. Russell's edited volume, *Vita Griffini Filii Conani: The Medieval Latin Life of Gruffudd Ap Cynan* (2005), which records that Gruffudd bequeathed the harbour dues of Abermenai to his wife Angharad. Whilst Huw Pryce's *Acts of Welsh Rulers* (2005) is used to cite the clause which granted the Cistercian abbey of Aberconwy valuable rights of shipwreck in Llywelyn ap Iorwerth's charter of 1199 (pages 219–20), the probability that the charter is spurious (albeit still possibly a later product of the same house), as is suggested by Pryce, is worth noting. Further, another charter, given supposedly to the same abbey on the same day by the same prince, granted the right of 'crossing' the river Conwy (Pryce, *Acts of Welsh Rulers*, p. 348).

Archaeological evidence is discussed. The felled timbers of the wreck discovered at Magor Pill have been dendrochronologically dated to 1239 × 40 (page 114), and geo-chemical analysis of the boat's cargo of iron ore and yellow ochre has pinpointed the site(s) of its extraction, and therefore the overland route by which it was most probably transported to the shore. Indeed, the book considers other matters relating to the coastal hinterland such as the responsibility, often communal, for keeping watch for enemy ships, together with fines imposed for failing to do so, e.g. 10s 0d for one night's missed watch imposed on the Anglesey community of Llifon in 1323 (pages 34–5).

A history covering 500 years is a tremendous undertaking, and K. L. Gruffydd's book is a welcome addition to the historiography of medieval Wales. It will appeal both to professional scholars and to a wider non-academic readership. The author expressed the hope that his study would stimulate an interest in Welsh medieval maritime history. It deserves to do just that.

Bangor University

S. D. MCGUINNESS

PHYSICAL EVIDENCE FOR RITUAL ACTS, SORCERY AND WITCHCRAFT IN CHRISTIAN BRITAIN. A FEELING FOR MAGIC. Edited by Ronald Hutton. 144 × 223mm. xiv + 261 pp. 30 illustrations. 3 tables. Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, Hampshire, 2016. ISBN 978 1 137444 81 3. Price £63.00.

Last Hallowe'en (2016) Historic England called on the public to share photographs and other information about 'witch marks' to help create a record of ritual marks in houses. Historic England was apparently swamped with information; there was no coherent response to the appeal, let alone a useful record. In a Welsh backwash to the appeal, I noted an elaborate series of 'ritual marks' which I recognized as nineteenth-century Baltic shipping marks. The Hallowe'en appeal revealed both the growing popular interest in 'ritual marks' and the confusions surrounding the subject, as well as the tendency to label anything not understood as having ritual significance. The book under review attempts to bring order to a chaotic subject by a series of considered essays on protective marks, concealed domestic articles and hidden animal remains, including dried cats and horses' skulls. The editor, Ronald Hutton, is admirably open-minded but too good a historian not to sprinkle his introduction with some cautionary remarks. He pays tribute to Ralph Merrifield who first discussed some of these topics in *The Archaeology of Ritual and Magic* (1987), and the new book is part of a growing literature on the significance of material culture in the late medieval and early modern periods.

The opening essay by Champion is a valuable scene-setter as he brings out the broad range of graffiti found in East Anglian parish churches, and of course elsewhere. Drawings, signatures, symbols, prayers, musical notation and much else are found on walls, pillars and monuments, all jostling for attention. This

is a valuable reminder of the interrelation between signs and writing and the way in which many different surfaces were appropriated for drawing and writing, carving and scribbling, with pencil, knife and marking stone. Less apparently survives in the domestic context, but the book recovers largely unnoticed graffiti on walls, partitions and even ceilings; the book illustrates some unexpected surviving examples of candle-smoke writing on ceilings. Today, we have a horror of marking walls (let alone ceilings) in our pristine houses, and there is a corresponding tendency to attribute a solemn significance to the ephemeral graffiti of yesteryear.

Wall graffiti (drawings, signs and writing) are messages from the past but what do they say? Historic buildings tend to have many types of imperfectly understood marks, including carpenters' marks for assembly and levelling, and commercial marks relating to shipping and timber merchants. This book is concerned with scratched and drawn marks that do not relate to building materials and construction. The leading commentator is Timothy Eastham, who has made a special study of daisywheels, v-marks, and the like since the 1980s, arguing that they have an 'apotropaic' function. The interpretive vocabulary is borrowed from nineteenth-century anthropology and there is a corresponding tendency to regard our ancestors as mired in superstition. Eastham is fluent and persuasive but ultimately unconvincing because of the problem of lack of proof. Throughout this book there is an unfortunate tendency to put the theoretical cart before the empirical horse.

Daisywheels and the like have as much (or as little) significance as the twentieth-century 'Kilroy was here' slogan. Both have similar problems of origin, authorship and meaning. The compass-drawn graffiti and other marks described in this book often say simply, 'I was here'. In other words, much of the graffiti discussed here seems to be more existential—concerned with the person—than supernatural. Wall graffiti is undoubtedly linked to literacy and some 'ritual' marks have the appearance of surrogate letters. It is noticeable that 'witch marks' are largely absent in the late medieval period, but multiply in the late Tudor/Stuart period as literacy increases and print culture expands. When writing or marking domestic walls was discouraged, there was a corresponding increase in the graffiti exuberantly written on the walls and partitions of outbuildings.

This is not to say that buildings didn't have protective marks. People in the past wanted a happy and prosperous house—as we all do. Sometimes the wish took the form of an inscription. More often than not, the humble horseshoe was nailed to a door (open side up so the luck does not fall out) and expressed the wish. One has to be clear that this is more wish or intention than slavish superstition but (unlike 'apotropaic' marks) the practise is well documented. It was well-established in the seventeenth century, according to Aubrey, and remains in use today by people who would be shocked to be labelled as superstitious. The humble but instructive horseshoe is not much discussed by contributors here but there are two illuminating essays on other types of amulet. These were generally personal and portable good-luck 'charms'. Many examples are preserved in museums, and Tabitha Cadbury has interesting observations on the problems of authenticity and the provenance of collected amulets.

If people were really concerned about the ill will of neighbours then they went to a specialist. Owen Davies and Timothy Easton discuss the role of the specialist in producing magical artefacts. These included 'witch bottles', interestingly discussed by Brian Hoggard, which are described in seventeenth-century sources and are occasionally discovered in buildings complete with grisly contents. Of particular interest are the elaborately written protective charms supplied by Welsh 'conjurers', sometimes found in bottles set over lintels or under thresholds. These charms were not medieval survivals but a development of the eighteenth century. As Hutton points out, in some respects cunning folk replaced the protective magic of the medieval church abandoned at the Reformation.

Some architectural embellishments regarded as protective belong to the realm of insult rather than magic. John Billingsley contributes a particularly clear-eyed view on stone heads which are found set in

chimney shafts, under the eaves, and over the doorways of some early modern houses. He dismisses the influential idea that these are reused Celtic heads and demonstrates that many Yorkshire examples have a seventeenth-century context. These watchful heads with their ‘stony gaze’ are related to stone heads found in other architectural contexts, notably church towers, where they take on yah-boo expressions with grimaces and protruding tongues. The church tower like the new house could prompt envy as well as admiration and the grotesque heads seem to be a response to this. Eurwyn Wiliam’s article on the ritual protection of the house (1978, but not cited here) drew attention to the sexual nature of some carved figures on houses. This is particularly true of Sheela-na-gigs which, whatever their origins, offered a frontal sexual insult to potential enemies when fixed to buildings which included churches as well as houses and towers.

Several key contributions are concerned with concealed items, a subject of endless fascination as regards motive and significance. There are websites devoted to recording the discovery of shoes and garments which form a treasure trove of everyday artefacts. June Swann has a reflective essay on shoes concealed in buildings, which she started documenting in 1958. Similarly, Dinah Eastop contributes a nuanced survey of garments concealed within buildings. Eastham’s chapter discusses random collections of objects which accumulate at the sides of chimneys and other spaces. He enticingly calls these ‘spiritual middens’, though without any real evidence of their ritual nature. Again, one may suggest that these hidden objects are largely of existential rather than magical significance with the ephemeral individual marking his or her passage through the house with concealed objects, sometimes left during a phase of alteration. Swann has a telling example of a pair of concealed boots formerly regarded as ritual deposit which has a pencil inscription saying ‘this was don in 1876’ and naming the depositor with his date of birth.

Brian Hoggart tackles concealed animals, especially dried cats and horses’ skulls but much else besides. The practical use of horses’ skulls as bearers for joists or for helping acoustics has been much discussed. Many mummified cats have been found in odd spaces including partitions, some apparently arranged as if they were in the act of mousing. Are these ritual deposits or (more likely) the expression of a robust and sometimes cruel sense of humour?

Ronald Hutton, Timothy Eastham and their fellow contributors are to be congratulated on a book full of interest. Despite the British claims of its title, the book is largely concerned with the English evidence but with a final glance at Australia and United States. Its great merit is that it takes seriously as a subject of study the puzzling graffiti scratched, drawn and painted in buildings. I am not convinced by many of the explanations offered here, but the book is really the beginning of a conversation rather than the last word on the subject.

RCAHMW, Aberystwyth

RICHARD SUGGETT

HISTORIC PARKS AND GARDENS OF CARMARTHENSHIRE. 200 × 255 mm. x + 182 pp. 174 illustrations. Welsh Historic Gardens Trust – Carmarthenshire Branch, 2016. ISBN 978 0 955802 11 9. Price £15.00.

The purpose and scope of this attractively produced soft-bound book is outlined by Elizabeth Whittle, President of the Welsh Historic Gardens Trust (WHGT) in her Foreword. Unless information on historic parks and gardens is available to a wide audience, there can be no general public support for their preservation. In recent years some county branches of the Welsh Historic Gardens Trust have produced comparable volumes such as *Historic Parks and Gardens in Ceredigion*, and the more recently formed

Carmarthenshire Branch is to be congratulated in making the production of this book one of their first objectives. As in other counties in Wales, Carmarthenshire possesses some historic parks and gardens of national importance such as Plas Dinefwr, Aberglasney and, within the National Botanic Garden, the remains of Paxton's string of lakes and walks around his now demolished Middleton Hall. Others, less well known, make up the nineteen listed in the detailed Carmarthenshire entries of Cadw's *Register of Landscapes, Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in Wales* (2002). Undoubtedly there remain traces of other important parks and gardens in the county to be discovered through detailed local research.

A good case can thus be made for revisiting all of the Carmarthenshire entries in a popular publication, with shorter illustrated histories and descriptions of their defining features. This publication, however, does more than that in updating present conditions and uses and in some entries providing the current owners and managers with an opportunity to express their management practices and vision for their properties. It goes without saying that of all historic assets parks and gardens need proactive management within the broad WHGT objectives of combating 'neglect, indifference and insensitive planning and planting'. Yes, but how and who pays and how should they change and develop? It is valuable therefore to have voices like Aberglasney's accolade—winning young Head Gardener, Joseph Atkin, explaining the landscaping and planting programmes to link the historic core of his gardens with newer areas such as the woodland bog garden and how the Home Farm buildings have been adapted to new uses.

Aiming to reach a wider audience than the Carmarthenshire Branch's membership, Brian Dix provides an Introduction which places Carmarthenshire's parks and gardens within broader historical contexts. Ken Murphy provides a useful and concise introductory essay on the techniques and results of garden archaeology in Carmarthenshire. A short 'Conservation and Management' section explains the purpose and operation of Cadw's *Register* and where owners and managers can seek help and advice. Ken Murphy's essay on 'Early deer parks', suggests that future documentary research and fieldwork may find more examples in the county. There are also essays on ice-houses, walled kitchen gardens and the uses of water in park and garden landscaping and design that save a degree of repetition in the individual entries.

It seems that the original intention was to use some of the funding obtained to recruit a team of volunteers who would be given training in methods of historical and field research into the county's historic parks and gardens and make contact with owners. This must be regarded as 'work in progress' since only a small selection of gardens not already on the *Register* has been made. New material includes lost gardens such as the small topiary cottage garden, Glyn Aur ('The Garden of Eden'), fondly remembered by older residents in Abergwili and depicted on numerous postcards. Another discovery is the Messenger glasshouse at Broadway, Laugharne described by Judith Holland, the secretary of the Carmarthenshire Branch of the WHGT, and author of several of the entries in the book. Many other entries have been compiled by staff of the Dyfed Archaeological Trust, who co-ordinated the production of the book.

A welcome feature of this book in extending the definitions of what constitute 'historic parks and gardens' is the inclusion of creations, not only of the landed gentry but also of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century municipalities of the county. Judith Holland's essay on 'Allotments' gives a succinct overview of the origins and history of the movement. She concludes with a list of the nine allotment sites in the county and a support statement from the town's mayor of the value of the allotments in Carmarthen which lie within the mostly buried precinct of the medieval priory. Also very topical in the current climate of cut-backs in local authority funding is the inclusion of urban parks. The creation of Ammanford Park out of fields used at times for horse racing was a lengthy process, and a loan from central government and a special extra rate had to be levied to buy the land from Lord Dynevor. A public subscription in the mid-1930s helped pay for the bandstand, miniature golf course and childrens' playground to add to existing sports facilities and landscaping. A set of monumental gates completed the plan and definition of the Park as elsewhere. The short entry by K. Arblaster on Ammanford Park will hopefully stimulate

further research on the civic environment and town planning of the closely studied political and industrial history of Carmarthenshire's 'Little Moscow'. Equally topical are the brief references to Carmarthen Park's 'velodrome'—an early and celebrated venue for sport cyclists.

The carefully chosen colour illustrations are an informative as well as an attractive feature of the book with a mix of historic photographs, prints, watercolours and estate maps with views of the present condition of the parks and gardens, both showing their overall setting and some key details. The Carmarthenshire branch is to be congratulated in finally bringing the publication to completion in rather difficult circumstances, and it succeeds both as an introduction to the subject as a whole and a stimulus to conservation.

Carmarthen

HEATHER JAMES

THE MAN WHO DROWNED THE MEADOWS. ROWLAND VAUGHAN, 1558–1627. By The Golden Valley Study Group. 171 × 242 mm. xi + 148 pp. 89 illustrations. Logaston Press, Almeley, Herefordshire, 2016. ISBN 978 1 910839 00 3. Price £12.95.

Rowland Vaughan will not be a name familiar to many readers of this journal, other than those, perhaps, with a specific interest in agrarian progress during the Tudor era. A landed gentleman born in the year that Elizabeth I ascended the throne and dying sixty-nine years later in 1627, his entire life centred on the Golden Valley, one of those deep natural cuttings through the eastern Black Mountains that lie just into Herefordshire, a few miles only from the Welsh border. Notwithstanding he appears to have spent considerable periods of time in London.

In 1610 Vaughan published a didactic tract entitled *The Most Approved and Longe Experienced Water Workes* in which he advised his readers on the construction of water meadows as a means of irrigating the land and with which he had been experimenting on his estate since the 1580s. On the basis of that publication, Vaughan's reputation as the inventor of water meadows was founded in the nineteenth century, something that the man himself hinted at, claiming 'that he had never seen waterworks such as those he started on the river Dore at Bacton soon after his marriage in 1582' (page 126). In recent years an upsurge in academic interest in the history and technology of water meadows led by Hadrian Cook and Tom Williamson has provided a broader perspective on their emergence, particularly on the chalklands of southern England at much the same time that Vaughan was at work; while there can be no doubt that his *Water Workes* was the first published work in English to promote their construction, his primacy in undertaking such works remains unresolved.

The discovery of a 1943 university undergraduate dissertation on Vaughan's water meadows led, more than fifty years later, to the creation of the Golden Valley Study Group. Determined to learn more about their Vaughan inheritance, they conducted detailed archival research and fieldwork, coupled with the analysis of aerial photography and lidar to produce this assessment of Rowland Vaughan, his works and his life. Theirs is a significant achievement: well-written, superbly illustrated with numerous maps, lidar images, aerial shots, almost all in colour, and covering not just Vaughan's engineering feats, but also his social background and personal life, and his seemingly never-ending problems with family, neighbours and money.

There is a rich cache of documentary material that relates to Rowland Vaughan. As the authors so adeptly put it 'few members of the minor gentry of that period in a place so remote would leave such a vivid trail of their life' (page 125). Significantly, and in contrast of his son and two daughters, virtually nothing is known once they reached adulthood. Though the authors try hard not to be overtly critical,



Vaughan comes across as energetic and ambitious, but also self-centred, arrogant and something of a visionary. Some of these characteristics have probably resulted in the details that are available to us today: law suits seem to have been a way of life for him, he was in debt to London moneylenders for years, and his properties were regularly mortgaged.

Three chapters of this book are devoted to his attempts to irrigate his meadows. The first, having raised but failed to confirm the spectre of pre-Reformation water management by the Cistercian monks of Dore Abbey, a short distance further down the Golden Valley, describes the theoretical framework underlying Vaughan's experiments and views his work in the landscape around his Newcourt estate in Bacton. A later chapter returns to the details of his waterworks in the valley, and the third describes the field surveys undertaken by the group and what survives of his creations in the modern landscape. There may be good underlying reasons why these chapters are distributed through the book, separated by sections on other aspects of Vaughan's life, but they are not immediately apparent, and the water-meadow story, surely the central element of the book, is presented in fragmentary fashion.

Greater clarity regarding the bibliographic base might also have been helpful, for the text tends to pass over its sources rapidly. Vaughan's original publication of 1610, unsurprisingly, is stated to be very rare, and the authors have relied on an 1897 reprint which altered the title of Vaughan's work and also excluded the illustrations in the original. Of these two are included, superbly reproduced here, courtesy of the Huntington Library in California and acknowledged in the captions, though, remissly, not in the general acknowledgements. Indeed, though there are several copies of the 1610 original in the British Library, it is the Huntington that appears to own the only known illustrated copy. This should have been explored in the text, as well as acknowledging the existence of a facsimile published in the Netherlands in 1977.

These minor reservations apart, this is a commendable piece of work, the product of sustained and focused research by local enthusiasts. The Golden Valley Study Group and their publishers, Logaston Press, must be congratulated.

University of Chester

BOB SILVESTER

BLAENAVON FROM IRON TOWN TO WORLD HERITAGE SITE. By Jeremy Knight. 171 × 243 mm. xvi + 191 pp. 95 illustrations. Logaston Press, Almeley, Herefordshire, 2016. ISBN 978 1 910839 01 0. Price £12.95.

Histories of working communities are nothing new, either in Wales or the rest of the world. Many, like this one, begin by providing the reader with some context for the early history of the economic activity in question and why it then came to depend on a set of circumstances that were to be found in this particular location—mineral resources, topography or water-power. Another chapter will set out what is known of the area before it became industrialised in any way. We then learn about its heroic age of inauguration and invention, before reading of the challenges of new techniques or of foreign competition. Entrepreneurs and managers may be enlightened or oppressive; workers may be forced to fight for their rights. Housing, religion and entertainment will all add to the mix. The exigencies of warfare may bring respite from terminal decline, and the changed political landscape after 1945 heralds an apparent new dawn, until 1970s stagnation or the violent economic re-ordering of the following decade spells the end.

Where the story of Blaenavon is different is, of course, that its post-industrial evolution has placed it firmly back on the global stage, as a UNESCO World Heritage site. This might easily not have happened; Mr Knight describes how he and Jeremy Lowe realised the significance of the early housing stock in the town and began recording, with a grant from the Royal Institution of British Architects, but found that the

Urban District Council had already begun demolition, under the impression that the survey had already happened. The ironworks itself was to be pulled down, and was only saved because of a proposal to film Alexander Cordell's 1958 novel, *Rape of the Fair Country* on the site; it was never made but the delay meant that this important early site survived long enough for attitudes to industrial monuments to change.

Jeremy Knight offers a very readable and informed narrative. There is plenty of detail, though not so much as to bog the reader down. Explanations are clear and the right amount of context is offered. Technologies are explained, and the timelines and the brief summary of other Monmouthshire ironworks are useful. Mr Knight does not gloss over the challenges of revitalising the local economy after inscription as a World Heritage site. James Hanna's 'Blaenavon Booktown' project did not flourish, and Hanna himself ended up in prison. The town's recovery is still fragile and underlies the fact that World Heritage status is only beneficial when effectively harnessed, and integrated with other initiatives.

Certainly, this is an interesting story about a significant place, and it is one that is well told. I have to say that the production of the book does not quite do the text justice. More and better maps would have helped, particularly in understanding how the community developed. Its small format means that photographs do not show up to best advantage. Neither Latin nor Welsh has come off well in the editing process—the town's motto *at spes non fracta* is mis-rendered, as is the text of Daniel Morgan's banner at the 1868 election. It is nevertheless a useful and informed account of a place that has made the change from heavy industry to the heritage industry. At £12.95 it is very reasonably priced.

Caernarfon

DAVID GWYN

IN PLACES WHERE THEY SIT. A SOCIAL HISTORY OF THE CHURCH PEW IN WALES. By Roger L. Brown. 148 × 210 mm. 177 pp. 16 illustrations. Published by the author, Welshpool, Powys, 2016. ISBN 978 0 995619 00 5. Price £12.00.

Pews are again a controversial subject, not perhaps across the nation, but amongst those who use and visit churches, as their replacement by chairs is advocated for more flexible use of space—with which come nave altars, performance platforms, play areas, kitchens, toilets and tables for tea. There are aesthetic arguments, on the one hand that clearance reveals the structure of the church building as it was in medieval times, on the other that Victorian neatness is replaced by modern clutter.

Aesthetics are not the matter of this book. Roger Brown, long the vicar of Welshpool, takes a deeper look to show how those Victorian pews were the result of long and hard struggle for the soul of the church. The Reformation settlement left the question of financing the upkeep of churches to the churchwardens, who solved it by renting pews, inevitably to the richer parishioners. Other factors such as the maintenance of the chancel being the responsibility of the rector or the 'lay impropiator', and the owners of private pews having responsibility for building repair all pushed towards privatising, as we would recognise it today.

There was also social status. When a great man died in medieval times, he bequeathed money and property to maintain an altar or chantry. In post-medieval times, he placed in the church a memorial to himself, and expected that his descendants would follow suit, appropriating that part of the building to his house and family. Great men did not expect to sit with middling men and middling men with poor men, and the tenants and servants of the great and the middling needed to be accommodated above the poor. By and large the rectors, vicars and churchwardens acquiesced in this. The pews closest to the pulpit were in Georgian times those of the squire and the parson.

The other side of this of course was that those who had not, those whom the church was supposed to serve, were pushed, literally, to the edges and even from the building itself. At Swansea in 1851, with 120

sittings in the north aisle held by one man, 424 seats were not available to the visitor or the poor. These seats were not necessarily occupied, merely locked. There was a fight over a pew in Monmouth as late as 1869, and the owner hired men to sit in it thereafter to keep the interloper out. Also in Monmouth, a visiting family was ordered out of a whole pew by an owner who sat in it alone for the service. When the Revd G. A. Evors of Newtown Hall offered £400 towards the new church in Newtown, he wanted for himself the freehold of eight aisle pews and a gallery above them, seating in all 104 people.

A great deal of this was illegal under church law but tolerated because churchwardens were themselves part of the parish hierarchy, the money was not just useful but essential, and the alternatives took time to develop. If a large number of seats were to be free, as the Incorporated Church Building Society required when it gave grants, these could not be the foremost, at the risk of driving out the prominent families. But if they were the hindmost and labelled 'Free Seating' the poor might prefer to go elsewhere rather than be so grouped and identified. That the poor would move to the Nonconformist denominations underlay all efforts to remedy the pew-rent system.

Roger Brown's book is full of entertaining stories, such as the Mrs Crawshay who brought her dog to church and had tea served in her pew, and the pews reserved in St John's, Cardiff, by the best hotels for their guests, but the purpose is serious, chronicling the efforts made by dedicated churchmen and laymen through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to return the churches to the people. Isaac Williams insisted that all the seatings in the church he built at Llangorwen should be free. The startling point that the author makes is that so much of Victorian church enlargement and building of new churches was not required because of growing congregations but because so many parishioners were excluded by private pews. So medieval churches were given aisles that spoilt the original building to accommodate parishioners easily fitted within the original, and these aisles have become a maintenance burden for present-day congregations. Whole new 'second' churches in towns prove to have been unnecessary or only barely required. St Mary's, Bute Town, and the outer aisles at St John's, Cardiff, are responses to empty, locked pews not to overcrowded ones.

This well-written and well-researched book roams wide from what may seem a narrow interest to encompass the society and mores of Wales. It includes a list of churches where pre-Victorian seating, box-pews, benches and the like may still be found.

Bradford on Avon

JULIAN ORBACH

THE HISTORY AND ARCHITECTURE OF CARDIFF CIVIC CENTRE. By John B. Hilling. 193 × 252 mm. xx + 215 pp. 112 illustrations. University of Wales Press, Cardiff, 2016. ISBN 978 1 783168 42 2. Price £24.99.

A new series promoted by the Royal Society of Architects in Wales is to explore the architecture of Wales. The first volume looks at Cathays Park in Cardiff, an apt choice because more than anywhere else, this small area expressed in architecture the aspirations of Welsh nationhood.

In the Borough Engineer's plan of 1899, the park was to be for buildings appropriate to Cardiff and the County of Glamorgan. Along the principal southern end were to be the Law Courts, Town Hall, and Museum with Art Gallery. The long eastern side was reserved for the University College of South Wales and the opposite western side was to be filled with the Glamorgan County offices, the School Board office, the Technical School and the Drill Hall, while at the northern end, overlooking pleasure gardens, was to be the Boys' Intermediate School. The list indicates how much Cardiff needed to catch up with other industrial towns that had been acquiring such buildings piecemeal. Comparable towns grew civic

centres by accretion and Cardiff might well have followed the same path, a Town Hall here, a Library there, except that the town was constricted by the Bute estate. The park of Cardiff Castle ran clean across the northern edge, Bute land encompassed the river bank on both sides, and Bute Town ran southward from the railway to the docks.

John Hilling has spent a lifetime unfolding the architecture and history of Cardiff and South Wales. He is an ideal guide to the development of the city, patiently revealing the process that led to the Civic Centre. The early stages are fascinating. Cathays Park contained briefly a mansion built by the 1st Marquess as an alternative residence to Cardiff Castle. No illustration appears to survive of Cathays House of 1812–14 by William Mylne. It had thirty-one rooms, coach-house and stables. The 2nd Marquess sold it for demolition in 1824 and the materials were reused in the manager's house of the Rhymney Ironworks. The burgeoning town, of 6,000 in 1831 and 42,000 by 1861, was knocking at the Marquess's door over land, for recreation, in 1858. The council was rebuffed because if any part of the Park were sold there would be no place for Lord Bute 'to take a gallop in'. By 1874 relations had soured to bitterness—the Marquess 'has not given the slightest help . . . towards improving the streets or squares or public buildings of Cardiff'. But by 1892 the Marquess was willing, and in 1897 the Park was sold.

Hilling uncovers skilfully the motives of the different parties, sometimes enlightened, sometimes mean, that gave Cardiff a Town Hall and Law Courts of the highest architectural quality. By the time that the young 4th Marquess laid the foundation stone in 1900, Cardiff's population was over 164,000, and aspirations had gone beyond the town to the city and indeed the nation. Wales had no capital, but was to have a National Library and a National Museum, and in 1905 Aberystwyth was awarded the one and Cardiff the other. Cardiff's proposed municipal museum was now to be the national repository. By that time the University was already under way and the Park itself was being discussed as a Welsh Valhalla, for memorials to great Welshmen and for national memorials such as to the Boer War.

But the reason for a book on Cathays Park is that it represents one of the grandest architectural ensembles in Britain. Classicism and Portland stone unite, but within that unity there is great diversity. Lanchester and Rickard's City Hall and Law Courts represent perhaps a golden moment in British architecture when the willingness to embrace design in the grand manner was allied with a boldness in subverting classical symmetries and a freedom in the use of sculpture. The façades of both buildings are symmetrical, but the dome and the three towers shift their relationship with every step. Henry Fehr's great dragon roars free on top of the dome, and on the lower heights monumental groups represent national more than civic aspirations. Cardiff was already thinking itself the nation's capital and the sculptural language was to hand to express it.

A more severe classicism is the language of the National Museum and the Glamorgan County Hall, while the University adopted a strange hybrid, classical in everything but detail, which comes from the seventeenth century. Hilling patiently unpicks the designs, and if he is more enthusiastic about the Museum and County Hall, so have been most other observers. The interwar period begins with an undoubted masterpiece, the National War Memorial of 1926–28, an enormous piece and yet transparent and lightweight. Interwar classicism otherwise is the province of Percy Thomas who arrived with the Technical College of 1914, severe but rather dull. His extension to the County Hall in 1931–32 is much better, avoiding columns in favour of the Italian palazzo. His Temple of Peace and Health of 1937–38 resembles an Osbert Lancaster cartoon of identical Stalinist and Fascist public buildings in stripped classical style. Hilling, scrupulously fair, points out that stripped classicism was in Thomas's vocabulary at the Swansea Guildhall before 1930. Sadly it fell to Thomas's firm to water down and finally throw away the unifying elements of the Park in the development of the north-east corner for the University.

Hilling is a patient guide, giving time to each building in the park, analysing the qualities of the Alex Gordon Welsh Office building of 1976–80 as carefully as the earlier ones. One might wish him more expressive of anger, but it is there. Modern monuments are 'scattered across the gardens in an

ill-considered and uncoordinated way'. He neatly identifies the tedious Welsh 'standing stone' solution to all manner of commemoration.

Production and layout are good, though the photography is not to Royal Commission standards, and the eight colour plates include three that should have jettisoned. Altogether though a book full of insights and unexpected detail.

Bradford on Avon

JULIAN ORBACH

### **Other books received**

PEMBROKESHIRE STANDING STONES. By Jill Young. 209 × 210 mm. 144 pp. 59 illustrations. Gwasg Carreg Gwalch, Llanrwst, 2015. ISBN 978 1 845242 05 3. Price £18.00.

Colour reproductions of fifty-three atmospheric paintings of standing stones by the late Jill Young, now in the National Library of Wales, together with somewhat romanticised descriptions, form the core of this small book. An introduction ranges widely across the settings of such stones, folkloric aspects and ley lines, largely ignoring modern academic research in favour of their mystical dimensions. The study's integrity is enhanced by a foreword from the former head of the Welsh Royal Commission, Peter Wakelin.

CELTIC WALES. By Miranda Aldhouse-Green and Ray Howell. 128 × 198 mm. xiv + 174 pp. 10 illustrations. University of Wales Press, Cardiff, 2016. ISBN 978 1 786830 42 5. Price £11.99.

THE CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS OF WALES. By Trefor M. Owen. 129 × 197 mm. xxvi + 188 pp. 25 illustrations. University of Wales Press, Cardiff, 2016. ISBN 978 1 783168 25 5. Price £10.99.

The University of Wales Press continues its policy of re-issuing its past publications in new editions with these two pocket books. Trefor Owen's fascinating guide to Welsh customs and traditions, first published in 1991, is supplemented by a new introduction by Emma Lile which integrates a brief resumé of Owen's life with an equally terse comment on folk traditions in modern Welsh society. The original text remains unchanged (as far as I can judge), but the selected reading list has been updated, and the index reconfigured, though this appears to be largely a response to the reformatting of the book with the larger font size employed expanding it from 136 to 188 pages.

*Celtic Wales* first appeared in 2000 and this edition appears to be little more than a reformatted version of the original. The only alterations are to the 'further reading' section, and these half-heartedly: one might have expected to see a mention of the monumental three-volume corpus of early medieval inscribed stones, not least because it is published by UWP themselves.

HUMPHREY LLWYD'S CRONICA WALLIAE. Edited by Ieuan M. Williams and J. Beverley Smith. 137 × 216 mm. xii + 290 pp. University of Wales Press, Cardiff, 2016. ISBN 978 1 783169 48 1. Price £17.99.

This edition of *Cronica Walliae* was first published as a hardback in 2002, very largely the work of Professor Ieuan Williams. After his death in 2000, it was prepared for publication by Professor Beverley Smith. Both the preface and the introduction from that original have been retained without any obvious updates, and the only change appears to be its transition into paperback format.