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BOOK REVIEWS

Christopher Budgen, *Cranleigh: a history*, Phillimore, 2008, price £15.99. Hardback, xiii + 130 pp, 127 illus. ISBN 978 1 86077 503 1

Phillimore's *Anytown: a history* series varies widely in quality depending in equal measure upon its authors and its editorial policy. Christopher Budgen is a capable and knowledgeable local historian and *Cranleigh: a history* is well researched and well written, but unfortunately, in my view, the author has not been well served by his publisher. It has long been my contention – and I have corresponded with Phillimore on this issue – that any serious work of local history is incomplete without full references to its source material and a good bibliography or suggestions for further reading. Attentive readers with some knowledge of Surrey local history will no doubt detect where the editor has cut the author's original text. On page 17, for example, the reader is informed that 'English has noted the concentration of -ersc (meaning ploughed or stubble field) elements on the high-grade soils in the valley of the Bramley Wey'. Who, it may well be asked, is English? The only prior reference to English is in the acknowledgements, and it is, of course, Judie English and the work referred to is probably her MA(Hons) dissertation (English 2001, 78–79), an important study on the early settlement of the Wealden clays of the Cranleigh area. Another example occurs on the next page: 'Bray suggested as early as 1802 that the villages of Gomshall, Shere, Albury and Weston had once formed one large estate'. There is no prior reference to Bray either in the text or the acknowledgements although anyone with a nodding acquaintance with Surrey history will recognise William Bray (Manning & Bray 1804–14). But why should the reader, having bought the book, have to engage in a game of hunt the slipper when it is the responsibility of the publisher to provide this information?

Before turning to more positive aspects of Christopher Budgen's book, it might be pointed out that some complete sentences and virtually whole paragraphs of the text have previously appeared word-for-word in the same author's *Cranleigh: a history of Wealden settlement* (Budgen 1998) to which, incidentally, the reader should be referred for many of the sources omitted from the book under review.

Despite these shortcomings (mostly the fault of the publisher I suspect) *Cranleigh: a history* remains a good book. Christopher Budgen always writes with purpose and a determination to explain why and how things happened in the past and the processes of change. Authors of local history have strengths and weaknesses and these become particularly apparent where they attempt to cover the whole span of prehistory, recorded history and living memory. The opening chapter, which covers the period from the Palaeolithic to the Norman conquest in eighteen pages is, understandably, the flimsiest. The Roman and Saxon periods deserve more expansive treatment than they get here, especially as the earliest foundations of permanent settlement on the Wealden clays of Cranleigh appear to have been laid at this time. The discovery of a Roman villa at Rapsley in 1956 was quite unexpected and ran counter to contemporary received wisdom. Settlement in the Weald of this permanence (*c* AD 80–350) and extent was not on the cards. Figure 15 purports to show 'some of the elaborate mosaic floors' uncovered in the course of Rosamond Hanworth's excavations at Rapsley between 1961 and 1968 (Hanworth 1968), but what we get in fact, is the somewhat less photogenic sight of a 'tessellated floor sinking into earlier features' (Bird 2004, caption to pl 4). However, it is becoming increasingly clear, as more sites are found and excavated to modern standards – for example, the Late Iron Age and Roman settlement at Wyphurst (Hayman 2008) – that the Wealden clays of the Cranleigh area were exploited to a previously unsuspected extent.

Of particular interest, at least to this reviewer, is the author's analysis of the origins and development of Cranleigh in relation to its commons, which, even today, in their truncated

and domesticated form, are a defining feature of the village. Under the heading 'Proto-Cranleigh' the reader is informed that the village grew up around a large expanse of common land. But if we attempt to replicate this model on a blank sheet of paper it quickly becomes apparent that it does not work. If the initial area of common waste was as large as we believe it was in the post-Roman period, then the colonisation of its edges would in no way explain the shape of the later village. If, on the other hand, one envisages the creation of a few large enclosures from the waste, perhaps 250–350 acres (100–140ha) each, with typically rounded outlines, placed close together – almost touching, but leaving gaps to allow the movement of livestock between them – we find that we have reproduced the 'bow-tie' village plan with two greens that Christopher Budgen identifies at Cranleigh. It was only after this stage of the process had occurred that further assarting around the outer edges of the large enclosures, facing onto the greens, created the village morphology that we have today.

A feature of Cranleigh parish, which may provide useful clues to its origin, is its division between the two manors of Bramley and Shere Vachary. The western part, including the common to the west of Knowle Lane, belonged to Bramley and that to the east was Shere Vachary's. In chapter 3, 'The Late Middle Ages 1250–1558', the author notes that the oldest surviving properties, dating from the 14th and 15th centuries, are to be found at the east or Shere Vachary end of the common near the church, while at the west end, in Bramley manor, the oldest surviving buildings are 16th century. Whether this corresponds to stages in the development of the village plan or to subsequent rebuilding and socio-economic circumstances is a matter for debate, but the observation is a useful point of departure for further research.

Christopher Budgen explains that unlike the open-field parishes typical of some other parts of Surrey, Cranleigh was never farmed in this way (its ploughlands were enclosed from the beginning) and therefore it did not experience later enclosure and a redistribution of its arable land. As the population recovered in the centuries following the Black Death, the need for additional agricultural land was met by the release of nearly 1800 acres (728ha) when Vachary and New Park were disparked in the 16th century. Although important to the landowners and their tenant farmers, this did not impinge to any great extent upon the lives of the villagers, but it was the enclosure of much of the remaining commons that deprived the cottagers of their rights to pasture, pannage and fuel. New and more plentiful sources of information become available for these centuries and they are used to good effect by the author to explore the lives and experience of the agricultural workers, the village tradespeople and those in receipt of poor-relief.

Finally, it was the advent of the railway, elementary education, the nonconformist church, the welfare state, two world wars and the ubiquitous motorcar (among other influences) that transformed the lives of 'ordinary people' in Cranleigh as in the rest of Britain. As Christopher Budgen puts it at the close of his chapter on the Victorian period: 'changes in the society and demographics of England were in a large part mirrored in the village of Cranleigh'. These changes transformed the village from an agricultural settlement to a middle-class retreat and culminated in the 'fully fledged commuterdom' of the present.

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JOHN PILE

David Taylor, *An Estate for all Seasons: a history of Cobham Park, Surrey and its owners and occupiers*, Phillimore & Co Ltd, 2006, price £17.99. Hardback, xii + 100 pp, 142 illustrations including 30 in colour. ISBN 978 1 86077 431 7

Two facets of this local history lift it well above the run of the mill; David Taylor's meticulous research places the inhabitants of Cobham Park within both their local and national contexts, and he has been provided with a plethora of interesting characters. David starts with a review of the relatively sparse evidence for the period before the middle of the 15th century but then gets into his stride extracting information from the previously unstudied archives of the Cobham Park estate, augmented by documents already in the public domain.

Some of the land which was to become Cobham Park was leased by the abbot and monks of Chertsey to Robert Bardsey, citizen and fishmonger of London, in 1468, and a number of the later owners had origins outside the local area. One, John Carleton, was a lawyer from Oxford who became a receiver of the Court of Augmentations, the mechanism through which monastic property was administered after the Dissolution in the 1530s.

A grand house in the fashionable Palladian style was constructed in the 1720s, but it was John Louis Ligonier, Commander in Chief of the British army and personal friend of George II, who purchased land to increase the size of the estate. A major national scandal enveloped Cobham Park during the ownership of Ligonier's nephew, Edward, when his wife Penelope's affairs became public knowledge. One, with an Italian count, resulted in a duel, but it was an earlier dalliance with a groom in her husband's service, which resulted in a cartoon depicting a number of ladies applying for the crown of the Queen of Hell.

In 1806 the estate was purchased by Harvey Christian Combe, who had made his money in the brewing industry in London, and it was his son, young Harvey, who was responsible for making improvements to the estate and increasing its size; but he also replaced old cottages with better accommodation for workers on his estate at a time of rural poverty, which was to culminate in the Swing Riots of the early 1830s. In his will he remembered the employees at the family brewery and his sister, Mary Ann, who inherited the estate, continued building workers' cottages. She was also responsible for providing the community with a school and insisted, against the wishes of the vicar, that the intake should be interdenominational.

The present house was designed by Edward Barry, son of the architect of the Palace of Westminster, but has passed out of the Combe family. The park remains, however, and is at present undergoing extensive restoration by Dominic Combe. David's book ends with an account of that work, but also with recognition of the threats faced by this historic landscape.

This research is an excellent exemplar of a local study with far wider than local interest and importance.

JUDIE ENGLISH

Jacqueline Pearce, *Pots and potters in Tudor Hampshire: excavations at Farnborough Hill Convent, 1968–72*, Guildford Museum, Guildford Borough Council and Museum of London Archaeology Service, 2007, price £19.95. Softback, x +234 pp, 125 figs, 15 tables. ISBN 978 0 9553251 1 3

This is a report on the excavation of a kiln site at Farnborough Convent, Farnborough Hill in Hampshire. The title is more general, but this is a not a study of the 16th century pottery industry in Hampshire, or even the Blackwater Valley, although it is a solid foundation for such.

The excavation ran from 1967 to 1971 and was directed by Felix Holling and John Ashdown. Both are still with us, but there appears to have been no personal input from either of them and the report seems to be based entirely on written evidence, particularly an archive report by Felix, though he certainly attended the meeting about the project that was held in

London. This makes it a more considerable achievement since reconstructing a site one has not seen from other people's notes must be very difficult. Inevitably there are lacunae, especially concerning the earliest kiln, Kiln 5, for which neither a plan nor a location map was found.

The core of the report comprises three chapters of detailed typological study of the material found. The chapter on the Border Ware is the most substantial reflecting the fact that it made up by far the largest quantity of material found. The other two chapters concern the Coarse Border Ware and Early Border Ware (what we used to call 'Tudor Green'), largely from Kiln 5. I particularly liked the association of certain rim forms with the way the potter manipulated the clay and also the consideration of body sherds, usually the commonest form of sherd, but so often ignored in pottery reports.

However, the drawback to this typological structure is that it is difficult to get much idea of the profile of any particular feature on the site, which is important for their relative dating. In some ways this is the most disappointing aspect of the report since the phasing and dating appear to have been adopted wholesale from Holling's preliminary reports and the basis is not discussed very much. Though I would not suggest that this is wrong, the Border Ware does get rather lumped together, even though it may stretch over half a century during which many changes were taking place. The site was very shallow and it is possible that later ploughing may have moved sherds about, but some ditches and drains should have produced uncontaminated groups.

There are a number of chapters of discussion including how the evidence of the pottery can be used to determine the mistakes the potter made that resulted in a pot ending up on the waster heap. Trade patterns and influences on the development of the pottery styles are also discussed. Continental influence on the latter, particularly from the Rhineland, is argued at length as being important in the development of Border Ware, especially in the late 16th century. Some documentary evidence is adduced for this, particularly a potter called Reynold, although a note of caution here is that an alien who may be a potter in Farnborough is not necessarily an alien potter. Christian Wilhelm, for example, a leading potter in the earliest production of delftware in Southwark, was an alien but he was not a potter before he came to England. An additional piece of documentary evidence, which might support this Continental connection, concerns Richard Dee, a Lambeth potter who also worked in Farnborough. Dee had, as the overseer of his will, Henry Cresswell. Peter Wilbert, an alien, who was also a potter in Lambeth and his son, also called Peter, married a Katherine Cresswell. There were also Cresswells in the Farnborough area in the 16th century (Edwards 1974, 119). If nothing else, this shows how close-knit the potting community was – a point made in the report. These influences may, however, be quite complex and adoption of any particular type of pot may have more to do with influences on consumers than on potters. Chamber pots, which are claimed as part of this Continental influence, were adopted by the Border Ware potters in the late 16th century, but not by the delftware potters until the mid–late 17th century. There is no discussion as to whether there is any Continental influence on the technology used, perhaps because there was none, but might one not expect immigrant potters to bring their own techniques with them as well as vessel types (as with delftware kilns and the stoneware kiln at Woolwich)?

I was surprised to see the Warennes invoked to explain the spread of this pottery, since they had long been dead before the earliest of the kilns excavated here and, even when they were around, the centre of their interests in Surrey was at Reigate, a long way from Farnborough. It is also odd that the movement of manorial officials is suggested as the reason for this pottery appearing in Yorkshire, although trade is accepted for its appearance in America. Perhaps there is a tendency in medieval pottery studies to underplay the importance of long-distance trade. People travelled long distances to trade in the market at Southwark, even in bulky commodities such as wheat and malt, and there is no reason why some pottery should not also have been involved. There is also no mention of chapmen who, certainly with other items, were responsible for distant trade.

Some of the typological distinctions fox me: for example, the distinction between flared and straight-sided skillets (p 115) is based on the angle of the side, but as drawn the angle seems to be identical at *c* 75–80° (see fig 67, no 497 compared with 496 etc).

There is a comparatively brief section describing the features, which includes a discussion of the capacities of the kilns, that is rather inconclusive. But there is a way of estimating the capacity, which was not used. The pots were stacked upside down and the upper layers were placed on the edges of three pots below them allowing air to circulate inside them to prevent the reduction of the internal surfaces (p 39); however, this is not possible for the lowest layer so their internal surfaces should be reduced and, in a large representative sample, the ratio of those sherds with a reduced or oxidised surface would give a rough estimate of the height of the stacks. The evidence we have in fact suggests that even as late as the early 18th century, pots were only stacked in piles of three to five (Dawson 1979, microfiche 237–8; Dawson in prep). A similar calculation can be made from the rim scars left on the bases of the pots, which do not occur on the bases of the uppermost row, but this may be more problematic since sherds of bases without scars might come from parts that were unscarred. I am doubtful that the pots were stacked on the floor as appeared to be the case with Kiln 4, since this would have blocked the flow of hot air. The presence of pedestals surely indicates some sort of raised floor even if the evidence for this was lacking, for what other function could they have performed? If the pots were stacked on the floor the pedestals would merely have reduced the space available for the pots.

There are a number of minor problems. Reference is made to two potters, one of whom is called 'husbandman' and the other 'yeoman'. These are said to be their trades, but these terms were status indicators (yeoman being the higher of the two) and did not relate to a person's trade; the same individual can be described by these terms or by their trade as were these potters. But there is always a problem with trade descriptions, since people are often recorded as involved in activities that seem to have nothing to do with the trade name by which they are described. There is a certain amount of repetition; for example, two paragraphs on page 7 are repeated, almost word for word, on page 25. Everted rims are said to occur on 'cauldrons' in Coarse Border Ware (p 50), but some seem to be closer to the flat-topped rims of the rounded jars (eg fig 25, no 19, cf fig 24, no 7), which is as one would expect. The two bases of baluster jugs in Coarse Border Ware (p 53) are said to be kicked, but fig 27, no 35, is drawn with a flat base and the same applies to necked jugs where fig 34, no 102, is drawn with a flat base. On page 106, colanders are said to have vertical loop handles, which should surely be horizontal. There are said to be only two sherds from cylindrical mugs, but three are illustrated (p 122); the extra one is a complete profile (fig 72, no 538). There are one or two examples of an '?' appearing in the text probably where a '½' should be.

I am dubious about the idea that the finer EBORD is biscuit fired. If they were wasting three times as much on the glazed firing as on the biscuit, as would be the case at Farnborough, then it would hardly have been worthwhile for the extra costs involved. Where biscuit firing is known to occur, as with delftware, the biscuit is always much more common in the waster dumps than the glazed – usually, in fact, over 90% of the vessel sherds.

Then there is the vexed question of terminology. The report largely follows the guidelines of the Medieval Pottery Research Group, which urges the abandonment of use-names, a policy we adopted in the Norfolk House Report (Bloice 1971). It is difficult, perhaps impossible, to be entirely consistent in this (we were taken to task by John Hurst for retaining the term 'chamber pot' (also retained here) for which we now use the term 'domestic vessel') and here such use-names as 'fuming pot' and 'bed pan' have been retained. The most important change here is the replacement of 'cooking pot by 'jar', but there seems to be a reluctance to accept this (which I share) and 'cooking pot' keeps creeping back in. The problem is that for me, and I suspect others, a jar is a storage vessel, especially one with vertical sides, which a cooking pot certainly is not.

There are one or two surprises. I always thought of Border Ware as being mainly green glazed with yellow glaze being secondary, but here yellow glazed sherds predominate. It is

odd that there is no mention of any other finds than pottery wasters. In most of the waster deposits at Montague Close we also found other types of pottery and domestic refuse such as bones and shells, though in very small quantities, which the Farnborough potter would surely have used, especially if he lived on site. The range of vessel types produced in the late 16th century at Farnborough is amazing, but it is also surprising how small the quantities of some are: types such as stove tiles, bottles, beverage warmers, etc, being represented by only one sherd. It has to be asked whether these can really be called products of the kilns; could they be made merely for the potters' use rather than for sale?

One problem with the publication is that it is rather heavy for its binding and one page had become loose by the time I had reached chapter 3!

I do not want to sound too critical as I think this is a very impressive work that is essential for anyone who comes across Border Ware, which means almost all archaeologists working in Surrey where it is so ubiquitous.

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GRAHAM DAWSON

Phil Jones, *A Neolithic Ring Ditch and later prehistoric features at Staines Road Farm, Shepperton*, SpoilHeap Publications monograph 1, 2008, price £10. Softback, x + 84 pp, 37 figures, 15 plates and 32 tables. ISBN 978 0 9558846 0 3 (available by post from Surrey County Archaeological Unit, Surrey History Centre, 130 Goldsworth Road, Woking GU21 6ND – £10 + £2.50 p&p)

The report on the excavations at Staines Road Farm, Shepperton is the first to appear in SpoilHeap Publications, a new joint venture series by the Surrey County Archaeological Unit and Archaeology South-East. It provides a detailed account of what is surely one of the most interesting middle Neolithic ring ditches to be found in Britain – important in that it falls between earlier causewayed enclosures and classic henges. The report also covers a double pit alignment or 'avenue', a waterhole or 'ritual shaft' and other features of prehistoric date.

The report is traditional in its approach and, therefore, easy to use for researchers who will no doubt want to unpick the detail and put their own spin on the interpretation. The report is broken down by headings into eleven sections: the first two give the introduction and background; the third details the excavation; the fourth to tenth are devoted to specialist reporting and the final section covers the discussion. There are ample plans, sections and plates. The artefact illustration is of high quality with a particularly good range of pottery sherds and vessels depicted.

At the time of discovery in 1989 little was known of the site other than the existence of a possible ring ditch recorded as a crop mark in 1975 and 1977. With the benefit of hindsight, this was the first of a series of nationally important middle Neolithic ring ditches to be found in the middle Thames valley in recent times. However, at the time nothing would have prepared the excavator for what we now know. As the complexity and importance of the site became apparent at an early stage a decision was made to totally excavate the ring ditch. Had this decision not been made then undoubtedly much important information would have been lost. The excavator should be commended for choosing to totally excavate the ditch.

Excavation revealed a slightly oval ditch with a single north-east-facing entrance – a characteristic that it shares with the Stonehenge enclosure with its important solar alignments. The ditch circuit consisted of a series of hollows and longer stretches of continuous ditch.

Significantly, a number of placed deposits including a crouched inhumation, the remains of a human torso, red deer antler picks, remains of a dog/wolf, a piece of red ochre, an inverted Mortlake Ware bowl and other large fragments of pottery were recovered. As well as these deliberate placements the ditch fill was generally rich in cultural material some, if not most, of which is of a slightly earlier date and, as the excavator concludes, could derive from an adjacent occupation horizon. One intriguing observation was that the primary ditch cut was lined with white clay; this is an architectural detail that it shares with other contemporaneous monuments constructed of chalk and other white materials.

Of the later prehistoric features the most interesting are pit H3, the waterhole/ritual shaft, and the pit avenue. The former feature was waterlogged and produced good environmental evidence and the remains of a wooden ard-tip. It is disappointing that there is no detailed report on this object, which is a significant find considering its apparent Early Bronze Age date and the fact that a number of other finds of Bronze Age date have been found in the Thames Valley. However, it is possible that the ard-tip radiocarbon date has an old wood age offset of up to 200 years.

The overall pottery assemblage includes material of early and middle Neolithic, and later prehistoric date. The Neolithic pottery is considered to be of greater importance as it includes assemblages of Plain Bowl and Peterborough (Impressed) Ware. The former includes an element of Carinated Bowl, which may be more dominant than is actually acknowledged in the specialist report, an observation that explains why the assemblage is different from the one recovered from the Staines (Yeoveney Lodge) causewayed enclosure. Such an assemblage is almost certainly going to be earlier than the primary use of the ring ditch and, indeed, the Staines causewayed enclosure. It is therefore likely, as suggested by the author, that this material derives from an occupation deposit that was cut through by the ditch. The other important group of pottery, mostly from the main or secondary fill, belongs with the Peterborough Ware tradition and includes twenty or more vessels, most of which have Mortlake affinities.

The flint assemblage mirrors that of the pottery in that material from the primary fill is diagnostically early, while that from the main/secondary fill is of middle Neolithic date and, therefore, belongs with the Mortlake Ware. There is an adequate report on the human bone in which an argument is presented for the likely post-depositional disturbance of the supine burial. No wider discussion of Neolithic burials or burial practice is given despite a wealth of evidence from the early Neolithic and causewayed enclosures in particular. The animal bone report is concise and informative. There is a useful discussion of the taphonomy of the bone assemblage from the ring ditch in which Smith and Clarke favour a combination of domestic waste and the placing of selected remains. The most interesting of these are the remains, including a skull, of a small wolf/dog that had sustained a non-fatal head injury. Bones from at least two foxes were also recovered.

Surprisingly, no charcoal, and, it is assumed, no plant remains were recovered from the ring ditch. In contrast, the waterhole produced assemblages of plant remains and insects from which Robinson reconstructs a Bronze Age landscape of local scrub and grassland. Of particular note is the now-extinct dung beetle *Onthophagus taurus*.

The pollen report by Patricia Wiltshire includes two important sequences, one from deposits associated with an earlier course of the river Ash and the other from a peat layer within the Bronze Age waterhole. No radiocarbon dates were obtained for these sequences, although a reasonable argument is presented for their likely relative dates. The deposits from the river Ash are considered to belong to the Late Glacial or early Holocene and they contained important finds of rock rose and a club moss. It is concluded from the pollen analysis that the peat in the waterhole is likely to be of Late Bronze Age date. Within the sequence there is evidence for a cleared landscape, for the existence of pasture and for the cultivation of cereals.

Some readers may expect more from the radiocarbon section and it is a shame that the dates have not been (Bayesian) modelled to give a tighter date range. This section is difficult

to read; for example, it is not always clear what material provided samples for the radiocarbon dates without checking back through the descriptive text. No delta 13 measurements are listed and no critique of the results is given.

The discussion considers what the monument represents, the nature of the placed deposits and the wider landscape context. As the author concludes, the ring ditch has little in common with classic henges and he alludes to its stronger affinities with causewayed enclosures. Perhaps more could have been made of its similarity to other circular enclosures of later 4th millennium date. A useful and concise discussion of the local Neolithic is given and the other significant features are considered. The pit avenue could be dated only from scraps of pottery which indicate that it may best belong with the other Bronze Age features, although the author also floats the possibility of an earlier Neolithic date.

On balance this is a good report that contains the right level of detail and at £10 is good value for money. Perhaps some of the specialist reporting could have been more extensive. However, this was mostly as a consequence of circumstance and the author should be congratulated for bringing this important site to publication.

ALISTAIR BARCLAY

Pat Miller and David Saxby, *The Augustinian Priory of St Mary Merton: excavations 1976–90*, Museum of London Archaeology Service Monograph 34, 2007, price £27.95. Softback, xviii + 296 pp, numerous plans, sections, line drawings, and photographs. ISBN 1 901992 70 5

This impressive volume, the latest of the MoLAS Monastic Houses series, is not just the report of lengthy excavations at an important site, but it also constitutes part of a most welcome study of the Augustinians in the London area. Other key elements are the publication of two urban foundations – the priory and hospital of St Mary Spital (Thomas *et al* 1997) and Holy Trinity Priory, Aldgate (Schofield & Lea 2005) – plus a suburban foundation, the nunnery of St Mary Clerkenwell (Sloane in prep). Subsequent excavations at Merton, mainly of the medieval and post-medieval industrial areas, are also to be the subject of a further report.

It is a feature of a 'good' archaeological report that the reader is supplied clearly and unambiguously with as much data as is practicable from the excavation. Certainly with sufficient data that he can test, and from time to time disagree with, the author's interpretation of that data. Judged by this (or virtually any other) criterion, this is an excellent report: inevitably there is a certain amount to argue with, but that does not detract from the quality of the report. We must all be grateful to the bodies that have funded this valuable publication and for the devotion and patience of the editors, authors and specialists who have brought it to fruition.

The Augustinian priory of St Mary Merton was founded in the second decade of the 12th century by Gilbert, Sheriff of Surrey with a short-lived false start on a different, unknown, site within the same manor. The opening lines of the summary to the volume under review state the foundation date firmly as 1117, following the Waverley Annals and Matthew Paris, but elsewhere '*c* 1117' is used more circumspectly for the start of medieval occupation of the present site. A discussion in Chapter 4 sets out the uncertainties and opts believably, and with understandable scholarly caution, for 'probably *c* 1115'. Quite so.

Extensive excavations under different funding regimes were led by a series of directors and site supervisors between 1976 and 1990, often in the face of acute difficulties. Surrey Archaeological Society was deeply involved in the early stages of this and I cannot but recall, with this substantial volume in front of me, that, at a still earlier date, the then Excavation Committee of the Society were minded to sponsor the excavation of Merton Priory themselves on a volunteer basis and tentatively invited me to direct. An offer that I had no problem in resisting at the time.

The excavations reported here successfully uncovered much of the medieval priory and allowed many elements of its layout and development to be traced from the 12th century to the Dissolution (Chs 2 and 3). The remains of a stone church, probably begun *c* 1170 and possibly completed by *c*1200, were revealed 'on a platform' above the flood plain and marsh. The similarity between this church and a number of contemporary Austin and Cistercian houses further confirms that differences between the 'reformed' orders and the Benedictine and Cluniac churches at this date was far greater than any architectural differences between the individual reformed orders.

The designation of periods and phases in the report is a mite confusing. Fully reported *ex-situ* architectural fragments, together with some stratigraphic and documentary evidence, suggest that a short-lived earlier stone church existed in the vicinity, one constructed in the mid-12th century. Nevertheless, the whole of the period *c* 1117–1222 is designated 'Period M1' in the report: 'M' standing for medieval, not for Merton. The fugitive mid-12th century masonry church is allocated to 'construction phase 1', or CP1, and the late 12th/early 13th century church is CP2. However, the mid-12th century masonry church must itself have been preceded by a timber church on site, which the documents suggest had been moved from the previous, different site. Thus, by the convention increasingly being used to describe monastic churches, the late 12th/early 13th century church was really 'Merton IV' and the 'Period M1' of the report covers Merton I, II, III and IV. In what is designated as Period M2 in the report (1222–*c* 1300), the identification of construction phases would seem to be dropped: the church produced by almost total rebuilding on more generous lines during this period would be 'Merton V' and 'Merton V' remained (with extensions) until the Dissolution. There is, of course, no means of changing the nomenclature in the report, but the point would seem to be worth making.

The rebuilding of the late 12th/early 13th century church was arguably undertaken following the documented fall of the tower in 1222. Buildings identified as constructed to the south of the new church in the 13th century included parts of the cloister and east and south ranges, including a large square-ended chapter house (with mosaic paving formed of large, plain-glazed and decorated tiles), separated from the south transept by a slype or, perhaps more likely, a *vestiarum* or sacristy.

The main cloister to the south of the church was apparently separated from the nave by an open space, 'an unusual feature in an Augustinian house' (summary). The authors discuss the dimensions of the cloister at some length but not its location and fail to comment on or illustrate parallels. The best monastic parallel known to this reviewer is the obvious one at the great Burgundian Benedictine house of Cluny III (1088–1130), but that may be evidence of the patchy nature of my knowledge of monastic plans across Europe rather than anything else. At Cluny the unusual cloister location gave rise to a processional way (Galilee passage) across the 'gap' from the north-west corner of the cloister to the outer aisle of the nave. There would seem to be no evidence for a comparable feature at Merton.

The reredorter undercroft was identified, lying at right angles to the dorter wing like the reredorter at Battle Abbey. To the south-east, there was a large infirmary which was extensively excavated and is of particular interest. The infirmary's own hall, chapel, cloister and ancillary buildings formed a self-contained complex where servants, corrodians and other laity might be admitted, as well as sick or aged canons, and whose buildings paralleled the functions of the main claustral complex. The infirmary (together with evidence for medical care and treatment, including a possible hernia belt and medicinal plants) is discussed in detail (Ch 4). The Augustinians had a high reputation for their care of the sick and their infirmaries were not just intended for the monastic personnel, as claimed by the authors of this report.

In the 14th century (counted as Period M3), a new presbytery and Lady Chapel extended the church to *c* 110m long, while the chapter house was rebuilt with an apsidal end. The infirmary hall was subdivided at that time, to provide private accommodation. Subsidiary buildings close to the infirmary could have fulfilled related domestic and medical functions.

Some of the priory buildings, particularly the church, were extensively demolished and robbed following the Dissolution in 1538 and large quantities of salvaged stone were used to provide wall core and foundation material for Henry VIII's palace at Nonsuch. Building materials – notably architectural mouldings, window glass and tiles – recovered from the demolition deposits in particular enable a more detailed reconstruction of the appearance of the priory buildings. While the report is not crystal clear on this point, it would seem that re-used stone recovered from Nonsuch was not incorporated in this enquiry.

The report contains a number of thematic essays (Ch 4) addressing key research topics. The foundation and early history of the priory and the developed monastic layout are described. A reconstruction is attempted of the changing form of the chapter house and of the priory church which culminated in the 14th century eastern extension, a major lost work of the Decorated period in south-east England. Carelessly, the first excavator (Col Bidder) is not given due credit for having noticed the similarity to St Augustine's, Bristol.

The monastic economy is also separately and usefully considered, as are food and diet, material culture and daily life. The identity of the priory's inhabitants and of those buried within different parts of the precinct, are also discussed. The large number of burials excavated and analysed make this a collection of national significance. A variety of burial customs, together with evidence for the demographic profile, health and disease, are analysed. 'The priory in its wider context' looks at Merton's role in the community and its place in the Augustinian Order.

Politically speaking, Merton was one of the most influential of all the English houses of regular canons. During the 13th century it was favoured by Henry III who visited frequently and the significance of royal patronage is discussed succinctly, also in Chapter 4. It is a subject that may keep several future post-graduate students fully occupied, as could the question of its possible architectural influence.

The impact of the Dissolution and the subsequent history of the site down to the 19th century are summarised (Ch 5). The leasing of surviving buildings, the garrisoning of troops there in the Civil War and the development from the 1660s of 'Merton Abbey' as a manufacturing centre, especially for textiles, are discussed. Conclusions are drawn and lines for future research sketched (Ch 6) while supporting data and finds catalogues are included (Ch 7).

The remains of the stone church, 'Merton IV', begun *c*1170 and possibly completed by *c* 1200, are said to have been revealed 'on a [natural] platform' above the flood plain and marsh. However, the published evidence for the platform is sketchy, and is linked to the, equally sketchy, discussion of the potentially important history of the river channels around the site. The reader is unhelpfully referred (p 9) to an unpublished MoLAS report on a nearby site ('Furnitureland') (not located on the map Fig 5). A long section through the site might have helped, or the stating of levels OD from time to time. Related to this is an error in the line of the 'supposed water course to feed Amery mills' on Figure 144. One would have hoped that these weaknesses would have been spotted during peer review.

The work at 'Furnitureland' could have been given a 'forthcoming' or even an 'in the press' citation, for it has now been published (Saxby 2008a). Unfortunately, it does not clarify the problem of river courses and ground levels. The matter is also apposite to the disappearing Stane Street (p 11). Clear evidence for Stane Street as it approached Merton Priory 200m away to the north-east has also now been published (Saxby 2008b) and this makes it clear that there must have been several changes in the course or courses of the Wandle between early Roman times and the construction of the priory. It is possible that one of these changes forced the early diversion of Stane Street into the 'dog leg' that today takes traffic along Merton High Street before turning south to Morden at South Wimbledon Underground Station.

The question of river channels and ground levels is only one more of several left in the mind by this stimulating report. One additional question of particular local interest is the problem of why no substantial settlement grew up outside the priory gate? Where, in

fact, was the priory gate? We are told that a gatehouse, a mill and, possibly, a long aisled guest hall were also identified within the precinct but the position of the gatehouse is not clearly identified. Unhappily, the details of the aisled hall are poorly reported and its odd alignment is allowed to pass without comment. The medieval mill and its successors were largely the subject of post-1990 excavation.

The report follows the 'integrated' style set out and explained in the account of St Mary Spital, the first of the MoLAS Medieval Monasteries Series (Thomas *et al* 1997). Thus, the pottery is reported and illustrated (if illustrated) along with contexts and the pottery sequence itself is only summarily discussed, not illustrated together. There was, it appears, insufficient pottery to require the detailed tabulation given to that from St Mary Spital (*ibid*, 184–6). An exceptional and arguably important slip-decorated jar – claimed to be of Earlswood ware, but not resembling anything found at the kiln site – is not even drawn, just shown as an 'as found' photograph (Fig 214). It is to be hoped that this most interesting vessel will get the separate publication it deserves and will be placed on museum display.

Several of the plans in the volume suffer greatly from being 'bled through the gutter', as I believe the technical term to be. It is possible that this was imposed by financial constraints but it is difficult to sympathise with this particular economy. Such plans should always be 'fold-outs', the advantages of which can readily be seen by opening the report on Acton Court published a year or two earlier by English Heritage (Rodwell & Bell 2004). More understandable are the many places where the hint is given that the authors would have dearly liked to discuss matters in greater detail – who better, one might ask – had time and print been available, but at least future students may return to the problems.

This reviewer looks forward to the publication of the work that has taken place on the site since 1990 and to the continuation of the estimable MoLAS monograph series in similar detail.

DENNIS TURNER

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