

# Book Reviews

*Duncan Sayer*

## Saints in the landscape

*Margaret L Faull*

Jones, G, 2007

Tempus Publishing; Stroud  
ISBN 978 0 7524 4108 5  
Pb; 256pp, 1 colour plate,  
9 figures, 20 colour maps,  
18 maps  
£16.99

IN WALES AND Cornwall there are many cases of saints to whom only a few churches are dedicated, or indeed sometimes only one. In the 1950s, the late EG Bowen put forward the theory that the travels and activities of early Celtic saints and missionaries could be traced using the churches dedicated to those saints. Eventually this idea was rejected by scholars of the period. Unfortunately, so sweeping was this rejection, that study of patterns of church dedications tended to be avoided for rather safer spheres of research (for some discussion of this see p 42).

Now, some 50 years later, Graham Jones has had the courage to return to the subject in this magisterial survey of church dedications throughout the United Kingdom, with a number

of excursions into Continental Europe for comparative purposes. The study has obviously involved extensive research, not only into the dedications of thousands of churches, but also into the history and archaeology of those churches and the surrounding regions. This has enabled the book to be illustrated with both colour and black-and-white maps showing the distribution of various widespread dedications, as well as a number of church plans and maps of the area around certain selected churches. These enable the author to explore in detail the relationship of the dedications to the operation of the medieval landscape, both rural and urban, and then to the changes that occurred after the Reformation and into the modern period.

The book is divided into four major parts – heaven and earth in religious dedications; heaven: saints and the supernatural; earth: saints and civil society; and earth: saints in season and locality. Each section is subdivided into a total of fifteen chapters, describing how the dedications involved divide into divine (the Holy Trinity, Christ and the Holy Spirit), angelic (the archangels Michael and Gabriel) and saintly. There is

acknowledgement that dedications can change through time, but these changes are interesting in themselves, as they would appear to have been led by the clergy, but driven by the needs of the laity, and in particular the local economy. The ways in which dedications spread are discussed on pages 42 to 43.

In this review I will confine myself to identifying three major themes that emerge in reading the book. The first is that church dedications are not haphazard or subject to the vagaries of the individual idiosyncrasies of patrons but, when the overall distribution is considered, they can be shown to be related to the territorial and tenorial patterns. For example, churches dedicated to Peter and Paul were related to royal tenure in England and in Wales the regional subdivisions were echoed in the dedications to Beuno, Cadoc, Deniol and Teilo or to the predominant economy of the area (such as dedications to Helen and Michael in areas of sheep farming or to Mary, whose main festivals occurred during the harvest period, in agrarian areas).

A second theme is how much certain dedications owe to the pre-Christian landscape.

It is already generally accepted that many of the characteristics and symbols of the Irish St Brigid (or a conflation of another or even two other early abbesses of Kildare Abbey with the 7th century-founder) are derived from those of her predecessor, the pagan goddess Brigit or Brighid, whose cult locus was Kildare. Similarly St Helena, the 4th-century mother of the emperor Constantine and supposed finder of the Holy Cross in Jerusalem, came to be conflated with the British Helena, wife of the Emperor Magnus Maximus, and with a Welsh water spirit, Elen, daughter of the goddess Don. Dedications to St Helen (after discounting the rededications made in the High Middle Ages when Helen became popular) are closely linked with pre-Christian sites, in particular holy wells and springs. Such springs were important for watering stock, and St Helen came to be associated with flocks, as also was St Michael, who replaced the Roman god Mercury, who was similarly associated with herds. Indeed the feast of Ellenmass replaced the Celtic summer festival of Beltane on 1st May, when fires were lit to protect the cattle as they went to the summer grazing lands.

The importance of water in the pre-Christian religion of the British Isles is well documented. During the Iron Age weapons such as beautifully decorated swords and shields, as well as other valuable items, were deposited both in flowing water, such as rivers and streams, and in still water, such as springs and lakes. Indeed even today any major rivers still bear the names of the Celtic goddesses to whom they were dedicated, such as the river Severn, named

from the goddess Sabrina (along with *Sabrann*, the old name of the River Lee in Ireland). After the conversion to Christianity, the dedications of the holy wells and springs were transferred from their original divine patron to appropriate saints, in particular St Brigid in Ireland or St Helen in England, as well as those of many unidentified divinities to (Our) Lady or St Mary. The approach of replacing pagan deities with Christian saints can be seen clearly in the tables on pages 86 to 90 of the major Roman and Celtic pagan festivals correlated with the feast days of important Christian saints, together with the archangels Gabriel and Michael, the Holy Cross and All Saints/All Souls.

The third major theme, whether this was the author's intention or not, is how much colour and enjoyment was lost from the lives of the medieval peasantry with the coming of the much more austere services of the Reformation, and, later, those of the Puritans and the Quakers. Throughout the year there were many feast days of saints that had each been celebrated with their own particular colourful ritual, with especial attention to the feast day of the patronal saint of the community's church. These gave some officially sanctioned light relief from the grind of everyday life, while being believed to provide essential protection to the flocks and herds or to the community in general. In parts of Europe not affected by the Reformation something of the old medieval ways still survives today. Even in a major modern city such as Porto in Portugal the feast of the patron, St John the Baptist, is still celebrated by all the younger

members of the community, starting at midnight, and households, hotels and other institutions all put out pots of thyme to catch the early-morning dew. The plant then provides protection to the household for the following 12 months.

Sometimes one might feel that the arguments are being pushed rather further than the evidence allows (for example, the presence of an Iron Age shrine and the find of a Bronze Age rapier is rather tenuous evidence for Braunstone in Rutland being linked with a ritual site of great antiquity (p 131). There are a number of other contentious issues in the book. For example, Old English *cwen* did not mean both 'woman' and 'queen' (p 186). Old English had two separate words, one with a long *ē*, *cwēn*, meaning 'queen' and that with a short *e*, *cwene*, meaning 'woman'. With the Great Vowel Shift in the Middle Ages, the two terms fell together, with *cwene* surviving in the colloquial *quean*, 'a woman of low morals', leading eventually to the modern usage of 'queen' as slang for 'homosexual'. Both Ekwall and Smith consider that Quinton in Gloucestershire does contain the element *cwēn*, and so could be related to Æthelflæd queen of Mercia, but that Quenington in the same county is derived from *cwene*. Another point is that the 'multiple estate' was much more than just an area of several settlements within which a single lordship predominated and which had a shared set of tenurial customs and a central place (p 52). As defined by Professor Glan Jones, a multiple estate had to have a central place or court (*llys*), a church (*llan*) and a fortified

place (*caer*), all of which had to be located at different places, often widely separated. The tendency for some modern scholars to misunderstand Professor Jones' definition has led to confusion in a number of writings, with many tenurial holdings being identified as 'multiple estates', when they are simply estates containing a number of villas and/or settlements and do not have any evidence of separately located *llys*, *llan* and *caer*. Finally the pattern of parishes can be shown, certainly in Yorkshire, to be pre-Conquest in date, relating to Anglo-Saxon landholding patterns, at least a hundred years earlier than the postulated 1150 (p 142), and probably much earlier even than that.

It is a pity that no allowance was made for some relevant colour plates of churches and their contents, such as the beautifully coloured stained glass, alongside the colour maps. A number of facts are given without any reference; for example, it would

be interesting to know the location of the photograph referred to on page 127 showing a rag well still being decorated in 1906, and the significance of *eccles* place-names (p 129) should have been referenced to the two main works on the subject. These are, however, minor quibbles, and we must welcome this extremely valuable and thought-provoking work on dedications and their relationship to the landscape and its operation.

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## A Concise Guide to the Parish Church

Alex Lang

Hayman, R, 2007  
Tempus, Publishing: Stroud  
ISBN – 9780752440958  
Pb 192 Pages, 150 Illus  
[25 Colour]

£14.99

THE 'CONCISE GUIDE' is a book that offers a crash-course in 'all you need to know' about parish churches in England and Wales. It covers everything from location to style and from decoration to development and from those in the middle of Cities to churches that still exist but no longer serve a community or parish. It is an addition from tempus to the growing number of church studies that have been released in the last decade or so that appeal to a wide public audience. Others in recent years have proved popular ranging from the 'best' Churches (eg Jenkins 1999) to more local histories (Strong 2008). Richard Hayman provides us with a personal perspective on a local building many of us often take for granted and this guide is therefore a timely one.

Following a brief introduction and a background to the development and requirements of a parish church (*Church and Community*) and its position (*The Place*), Hayman offers a simple but effective approach to his study, focusing on different aspects of the church, which he often places in a chronological context. The chapters themselves vary in size with the largest taken up with the architectural development of the

church (*The Architecture*). This is a chapter that covers everything from the actual lay-out to towers and from arches to roofs. It is done relatively comprehensively (especially as it could easily have been a book in itself). It is followed by discussions on decorative aspects both outside (*the Exterior*) and inside (*the Interior*). Further chapters deal with the furnishings, the parish church's role in death (*Death and memory*) which leads into the final chapter on the immediate environs of a church (*The Churchyard*).

It is clear from the descriptions and photographs that the author has travelled widely across England and Wales cataloguing every site that he visits. He can produce vivid details of certain decorative or architectural styles from individual examples. His photographs often provide helpful illustrations for certain discussion topics – I found them particularly useful for complementing discussions of roofs, towers and decorative furnishings. There is no doubt at all that the author is passionate about his subject, is well-read and discusses parish churches in an easy and fluent style.

However, I am not entirely sure that this book works either as a guide or as a discussion of the parish church. To begin with the discussion on the development of the parish church in Chapter 2 never really defines what a parish is, something which is key to the whole book and I think this is a flaw that tends to run through the book: a certain amount of pre-existing knowledge is expected from the author. I certainly feel that this is not what one should expect from a guide of this kind.

Overall, I felt there were three particular aspects that could have been rectified and would have significantly helped achieve this book's aim.

The first is the illustrations. Whilst many of the photographs were helpful, in other cases line drawings would have been far more effective. I am thinking in particular for the chapter on the development of the church where floor plans would have been more accurate and useful. From this we could trace the development not only of the actual lay-out of these churches but also their size, and any alterations that were often made along the way. A further aid would have been the line illustrations outlining the evolution of certain architectural or decorative aspects. I am thinking particularly of window tracery, columns and column capitals. A good example of this can be found on page 54, Figure 30 where the description for the photograph is just confusing. A final if somewhat niggling point is that we are not even told the name of the church on the front cover. It is an excellent photograph but it is frustrating that the publishers have not taken the time to provide us with a description or location – we have to wait for a black and white shot of the same church on page 83 to find out.

The second aspect is the choice of examples. When reading this book I continually felt that the examples that were chosen were not those of typical parish churches, instead they were the outstanding or unique ones. Whilst I understand the necessity of picking examples that exaggerate or highlight certain characteristics and features,

sometimes it just doesn't work. I also felt that there was a tendency to concentrate (accidentally or otherwise) on certain counties or regions that meant I tended to lose any overall perspective of parish church development, it often ended up being a focus on the few rather than a discussion of the many.

Finally, I felt that this book – particularly as it is supposed to be a guide – could have done with a gazetteer. The index that is provided is illogical and unhelpful. One such as this should be outlined by city and/or county rather than by name. It is also clear that many of the examples used in the text (even for illustrations) are not included in

the index of churches by place name, which meant that if I ever happened to be in a city or area where I know there are good examples it is very difficult to refer to the text and the (often very good) descriptions that are associated with particular churches.

To sum up, I felt that the ideas behind this book were good ones and this certainly adds much to the discussion of parish churches but I felt it was poorly executed. Just a few changes to the focus of the text, a decent gazetteer and some line drawings would have immeasurably helped what is a fluent and easy discussion of a very large and diverse topic.

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*Inishmurray; Monks and Pilgrims  
in an Atlantic Landscape*  
Volume 1: Archaeological Survey  
and Excavation 1997–2000

Evelyn Baker

O'Sullivan, J, & Ó Carrágain, T,  
2008

ISBN: 13:9781905172474

xxi + 406; 96 plates, 71 figs

Hard cover

£26.40

IT HAS TO be said that this is a fine-looking production. The colour plates are superb, most of the line drawings are of the highest standard, and there are coloured maps of the early 17th century with some remarkable early-20th-century sepia photographs. It is clearly, also, a significant piece of work, much more than a handbook for this most important aspect of the mysterious island of Inishmurray. There is a useful introduction, especially for those not well versed in Irish archaeology, placing the island in its geographical and ecclesiastical contexts. This is followed by chapters on ecclesiastical history, the 1998–1999 archaeological survey, the 1997–2000 archaeological excavations and a fascinating interpretation of the ecclesiastical landscape. This final interpretative chapter is followed by two appendices: a calendar of sources from 751/752 AD to 2004, and a concordance of 16 radio carbon dates. Then there are notes, references and an index.

Importantly, there is a section on the caring for the island and its designation as a Special Amenity Area by Sligo County Council. This volume will be followed by others on early medieval cross-

slabs, vernacular buildings, social history and flora and fauna. It is intended that a Development and Conservation Plan for the island should be developed under the aegis of the Sligo Heritage Forum. All good stuff, as it should be, for what is reputed to be one of the best preserved Early Medieval church sites in Ireland; and timely, since many of these sites are being destroyed by coastal erosion. At least one monument has been carefully dismantled and moved to safety. At Teach Molaise a figure of St Molaise has been transferred to the National Museum of Ireland.

As for the content of the present volume, Figure 2, showing the locations of monastic sites, is indicative of the value of the survey; it shows extensive new evidence in terms of field walls and buildings in 1998 from that known in 1837. Surprisingly, the present evidence for prehistoric evidence is sparse – though to the unwary, some of the religious stations photographed could be taken for such. These stations, *leachta*, at the main church sites, are dotted around the perimeter of Inishmurray. They were part of a circuit of 16 stations for prayer-stops following the sun (*deiseal*) clockwise round the island on 15 August, the Feast of the Assumption. The ritual walk began and ended at the Cashel, where it was completed by three circuits round the top of the Cashel wall; apparently there was a mysterious tradition of moving large pebbles between the *leachta* and the Cashel, many of which remain *in situ* and seem eminently purloinable.

For those new to Irish archaeology it would have been

helpful to have been told what the Cashel is; it is necessary to correlate the numbers on Figure 2 with that on Table 1 in order to find out that the Cashel is the Abbey in 1779, Caiseal Mór in 1813 and the Cashel in 1836, 1886 and 1982. It is also a pity that on Figure 11 the two early plans of the Cashel were not oriented the same way; it looks as though the editor was mistakenly relying upon the general outline shape rather than using internal detail. Thus the 1779 plan is in fact upside-down when compared to the 1886 plan and the summary figure on the facing page.

Volume 1 describes the different types of *leachta* in some detail: circular stone cell, well or spring and the more usual enclosed cairns with cross-slabs. The entries vary in length, some only a paragraph, others several pages long with copious illustrations and tables. The authors have gone to considerable lengths to systematize the evidence, and this largely works. In the Survey Inventory each survey has a Survey Number, an SMR Number, Site Type, Site Name, Location, National Grid Reference, associated Illustration Numbers and References. These are followed by a Description in free text that varies according to the evidence; some of this could perhaps have been standardised also, for example measurements. Each component is given an entry, so that Relickoran 004 has 10 sub-entries for cross-slabs, cross-inscribed pillar, leachts, enclosures and cemetery. For instance Teach Molaise at the Cashel, a tiny shrine chapel for the island's patron saint, comprises 3.5 pages of text, two full pages of line drawings, four full colour plates

and notes which include folk tales; a wall bench in the same monument is given 13 lines with reference to three appropriate illustrations.

Excavation results are systematised in a similar fashion with Site Title, Survey Numbers (the surveys do not cross reference excavation work), Excavation Licence, Site Description, Aims and Methods, Soils, Soil Profile Summaries, Stratigraphic Descriptions and Artefacts. Publication of so much detail is questionable: with Trahanareear 1997 we are assured that a sheep bone was '*certainly not human*'; a single fragment of clay pipe stem was given six lines to itself; a glass vessel that surely should have been identified fairly quickly as a late 17th century apothecary's bottle, even if it had apparently some association with altars, was given the full treatment of semi-quantitative analysis. It did provide a *terminus post quem* for the reconstruction of the enclosure in the late 17th or early 18th century, giving the excuse for a brief potted history of religious tolerance.

Perhaps more seriously there are flaws in the report on Relickoram (Odrán's cemetery). This description comprised 11 full-colour-plates and 11 figures; it reported on 40 graves, some of which contained no human remains. The evidence had clearly been mauled in antiquity, giving the authors serious problems in reporting it. Yet to make sense of the remaining evidence it is necessary to be able to relate the skeletal evidence to the site plans and the radiocarbon report. However, burials are given only context numbers on plans for figures 59 and 61; the table of

analysis of the burials has phasing but no context numbers; the radiocarbon dating diagram on page 261 has no context numbers but does have burial numbers – but are they the same numbers as on the table? The text does little to elucidate, sometimes using Burial numbers and sometimes context numbers; only on one occasion does it give both. Unfortunately the data on the radiocarbon diagram (no number) have been added mechanically and some are difficult to read. There are no drawings of the remains. Systemisation becomes rather unstuck when it results in the burial record being separated from the relevant table by nearly four pages of artefact catalogue, and then the two seasons' work is not correlated into a single report. Things get better when we reach soil samples where contexts are given and appear to match those on the plans. This is a pity, since the photographs show a meticulously clean excavation carried out to a high standard. This seems to be generally true throughout the volume.

Occasionally the quality of drawings is not to the usual standard of the publication; Figures 45 and 50 stand out in this way, but there are others. It seems that the overall design concept is getting in the way of the archaeology. A full five centimetres is given to a bar of grey tone at the bottom of every page of line drawings without exception, to take the caption. It looks elegant, but has resulted in drawings of indifferent quality being given a whole page, simply to adhere to the set design format; probably Figure 52 on page 248 is the worst example at a scale of 5cms=1m.

It does at least indicate where on the island the excavation (at Fál an Mhulilinn) took place, but there is no north sign. The photography is brilliant; it really urges one to go and see these places; but there are no scales.

The chapter on the ecclesiastical landscape is particularly interesting and informative in getting to the roots of Inishmurray and its relationship with contemporary developments on the European mainland, for instance the L'isle St Honorat in the Bay of Cannes and the Abbey de Lérins where pilgrims made similar circuits from shore-line chapel to shore-line chapel – what was it all about? There is the concept of hierarchical sanctity of '*an island in the western ocean, an abyss which would have been considered an abode of demons*.' There is the walking right-hand-wise around a perimeter punctuated by holy stopping points, possibly to purify it. Is there an Inishmurray purgatory within the Cashel? Liturgical cursing seemed to be particularly prevalent in the 10th and 11th centuries. Why did these rituals persist into the later medieval period and perhaps beyond? The altars are perhaps understandable, but the structures are enigmatic and the decoration of pebbles and carrying them ritually from place to place is more so. Do they indeed have an apotropaic function, the ability to ward off curses or bad luck? What about the cursing rituals at Clocha Breaca, a drystone altar-like *leacht* surmounted by a cross-slab with a detachable 'lid' stone and scores of these pebbles, at least 14 of which were decorated. The names are fascinating: 'Cursing stone'; 'The Priests' Leacht'; 'Breadserve';

'Mary's Altar' (or cairn); 'Ódhran's cemetery'; 'Women's Cemetery'; 'Sweathouse'.

The inherent importance of these monuments, especially given the rate of decay, destruction and alterations, fully justifies the scale of the work behind this report, and the Duchas is to be highly praised for funding it. The publication is, nevertheless, an uneasy cross between a dry academic inventory/excavation report and a coffee table book.

Much of what is printed should perhaps have remained in archive and made available to those who need to know by other means in this digital age. The presentation, while on the whole a joy to behold, is somewhat self-indulgent in the terms of printed detail and number of illustrations. But what illustrations! They, and the occasional apposite piece of prose and poetry, really urge one to go and visit this magical island.

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*The Augustinian Priory of  
St Mary Merton, Surrey  
Excavations 1976–90*

Jackie Hall

Miller, P, & Saxby, D, 2007  
Museum of London Archaeology  
Service, London  
ISBN 978 1 901992 70 0  
Pb, xviii + 296pp, 230 figs,  
71 tables  
£27.95

THE FIRST THING to say about this volume is that it is an excellent write-up of monastic excavations, in the style we have come to associate with MoLAS: well illustrated, well researched and with much of the specialist and documentary research integrated into the main text. Since the excavations themselves were extensive and properly recorded the end result is particularly satisfactory.

Merton Priory was founded in AD 1117 about 11km south-west of London. Before it received the patronage of Henry III in the 13th century, the house was relatively modest; after this it was frequently used for royal visits and the church was rebuilt on a much larger scale. At the dissolution, much of the stonework was used to build Nonsuch Palace, near Ewell. As well as the church, much of the cemetery, the east claustral range and the infirmary complex were excavated, along with a few more distant buildings, including an aisled hall and mill, both to the south-west.

The report itself is conventionally divided, with more than a third given over to introduction and detailed description of the excavations, a similar volume to

specialist reports, with a short chapter on dissolution and post-medieval archaeology and a long one of thematic essays sandwiched in the middle. The thematic essays, of course, are the most fun to read but require the other sections to properly evaluate the evidence. These essays range from the foundation history, to architectural history to studies of the infirmary, the inhabitants, the burials and the wider context. While some of this is rather conventional and non-specific or speculative, such as the descriptions of office-holders in the priory, or the probable water management, it is nearly all useful and peppered with gems. The detailed account of early corrodies at Merton was particularly interesting, with the earliest documented one occurring in 1216; a few years later, another was granted consisting of 10 marks a year, a house and garden with servants, food and stabling. Such detailed accounts, right into the 16th century show that monastic archaeologists should view every suitable building as a potential corrodian's house and not necessarily as a conventual building.

Monastic specialists may differ in their interpretation of some of the evidence – I cannot, for instance, believe that the handful of supposed early architectural fragments are really from the earlier church – but it is a mark of a good report that such differences of interpretation are possible. Readers will find this a mine of new and interesting information, most but not all picked up in the thematic essays. Two rather obscure features that intrigued me were ‘building 10’ and the distribution of animal and

fish bone. ‘Building 10’ was a small (5m x 3.5m internally), apparently well-built structure somewhat to the south of the infirmary, but linked to it by a covered passageway, containing a tank 1.3m square by 0.41m deep. The excavators suggest several possible uses for it, including a wash house. It would, in fact, be extremely tempting to see the tank as a pain-relieving bath (well-attested in medieval medical literature), and perhaps the sort of structure in which Aelred of Rievaulx took his 12 or more baths a day during his final years (Fergusson and Harrison 1999, 127). If so, it would be quite a find. Although there was no evidence of a fireplace, there are other ways of providing heat (braziers, hot stones).

The many groups of fragmented faunal remains are well-reported and, from a biological point of view, well-analysed. One wonders if there is anything more to say. While some of the groups clearly relate to preparation (in the kitchen), there are also groups in the infirmary cloister walk, the infirmary cloister garth, the infirmary hall, the reredorter undercroft, the aisled hall and in two open areas and in both of the two main medieval phases (very little of the main cloister was excavated). What's more, the groups show a high level of faunal similarity. It would be most interesting to see a more detailed spatial and stratigraphic analysis. As the excavators comment, the whole assemblage must represent only a tiny proportion of the bone/shell waste from the life of the priory. It seems highly likely that the material was

collected, allowed to rot/dry and then reused – hence the undifferentiated assemblages – not just on the fields but also, perhaps, used to level floors and walkways prior to resurfacing. It might be a modern perspective that suggests clean buildings and a sophisticated approach to rubbish sorting, but that doesn't necessarily mean that it's not true.

There are, inevitably, some irritations. The use of computer-generated drawings for the architectural fragments works well for the more complete 14th-century material, but the illustrations of much of the earlier material are hard to understand. A fragment of a brass plate is unaccountably transcribed '*puletur*' (p 103) when it is clearly '*picietur d*' (part of the stock phrase '*cuius anime propicietur*

*deus amen*'). Less forgivably, the handful of references to Rievaulx Abbey cite a guide book dating from 1928 (albeit in a 1986 edition) ignoring completely the ground-breaking work of Peter Fergusson and Stuart Harrison (1999), which could have illuminated many aspects of the report. The Lanercost Priory monograph was also not cited during the discussions of comparative Augustinian sites and churches, despite its very apposite chapter on Augustinian church plans (Summerson and Harrison 2000).

Like most excavation reports, it is not for the light-hearted, but for many varieties of specialist it should be essential reading, while the thematic essays are of more general interest as well.

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# Shorter Reviews

## **The Monuments of the Parish Church of St Peter-At-Leeds**

**Pullan, M, 2007**

Maney for the Thoresby Society, the Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society, Volume 17 second series

ISBN: 978 1 905981 52 6

Pb 244 pp, 16 plates

£24.50

*Duncan Sayer*

THIS IS A Folio sized catalogue of the monuments at the Parish Church of St Peter-At-Leeds (also known as Leeds Parish Church); it is 250 pages long but only includes a short 13 page introduction to the church and monuments. This in itself is not a problem given the clear purpose of the volume, but it might have been good to see more background to the medieval, post-medieval and modern contexts within which these monuments were erected, so that the author could have developed a discussion about them later rather than simply reproducing the physical monuments by description and sketch.

The catalogue is organised by the location of the monuments within the church outlined in a

detailed schematic. It starts with the monuments associated with the sanctuary walls and floor, and followed by the aisles, (organ) altar flats nave, lady chapel, tower, City of Leeds room and the gallery. While demonstrating the scope and completeness of the catalogue, this structure makes it extremely hard for the reader to follow and rediscover monuments and truly digest the volume. Again a simple period catalogue cross referenced by name and location within the church would have made this a far more accessible work especially for researchers who, like me, are unfamiliar with it and so do not have a visual-memory of the church to work with.

The volume is well produced and is printed on good quality paper; indeed, there are a number of black and white and colour illustrations at the front of the catalogue illustrating the most notable monuments. The inclusion of these makes it harder to understand why each individual monument entry is included with just a schematic of the monument rather than a more detailed drawing and with the development of inexpensive digital photography this is certainly an area that similar works could develop in the future

providing a true representation of their form. Despite this reviewer's frustration at the organization and the illustrations this is quite an important volume and certainly sets a benchmark that future works will find it hard to follow. Many of the inscriptions are accompanied by a description and background history – when it was erected and a mini-biography of the individuals commemorated. This must have been infuriatingly slow to compile but demonstrates the dedication of the author and an attention to detail which should be noticed. This is not a perfect volume in a recognized format, but it is a move closer to it and really shows up the absence of similar catalogues from other important churches around the country.

## **The Medieval Cloister in England and Wales**

**Henig, M, & McNeill, J, (eds)**

2006

Journal of the British Archaeological Association Vol 159

ISSN 0068-1288

333 pp

*David Baker*

SEVEN OF TEN papers given at a 2004 Rewley House conference are published with three further offerings. The British Archaeological Association is to be congratulated on producing such an interesting and varied special thematic volume. Together, they avoid the often bitty product of a conference and provide a useful mix of general studies, more selective surveys and specific case studies. It is not so much a definitive overview as a welcome refocusing of interest in a long-standing topic of monastic archaeology, architecture and art, to complement more recent attention given to spatial and functional analysis.

John McNeil scene-sets with a discussion of the Continental context in terms of origins, uses, architecture and imagery of the Latin medieval cloister. This serves to emphasise our dependence in Britain on later medieval evidence, mostly from greater houses. The point is underlined by three studies of 12th and 13th century cloister arcades: Tim Tatton-Brown considers the rare mid 12th-century examples from Canterbury Cathedral Priory; Stuart Harrison uses meagre excavated material for a survey of Benedictine and Augustinian reconstructions; Jeremy Ashbee discusses the form in the secular context of royal palaces, where different functions might be adduced and parallels in Islamic architecture have been suggested.

A variant ecclesiastical context, the secular cathedral, is John Montague's subject, primarily at Old Sarum, but also dealing with planning arrangements at other sites before cloisters were added, with special reference to bishops'

palaces. Jennifer Alexander's history of the cloister at Lincoln Cathedral right up to Pearson's restoration also considers its relationship to the deanery courtyard and the evidence for an earlier antecedent.

Two papers deal with the Cistercians. A useful survey of cloisters in England and Wales by David Robinson and Stuart Harrison comprises an essay firmly rooted in continental parallels supported by an invaluable gazetteer. More specifically, Jackie Hall delves into the meanings of space and layout in Cistercian east ranges and their adjacent cloister walks.

Two papers concerned with vaulting conclude the volume. Linda Monckton's study of late medieval cloisters in the West Country argues for an experimental approach to the use of the lierne and fan vaulting that was to become fundamental to the Perpendicular cloister. Veronica Sekules brings out the significance of the imagery on the cloister bosses at Norwich for a learned community, with design and subject matter reflecting changes over the century of construction up to the 1430s.

#### **The Guide to Norfolk Churches,**

**Mortlock, DP, & Roberts, CV,**  
2007

The Lutterworth Press, Cambridge  
ISBN 978 07188 3064 9

Pb, 392pp  
£25.75

*Mike Davis*<sup>†</sup>

THIS BOOK, A re-publication into one volume of two produced in

the 1980s, is a labour of love. Packed into a 24cm x 16 cm format and 390 pages are the highlights of over 600 Norfolk churches. It also contains a useful and comprehensive Glossary of Terms, an annexe with outlines on all the saints to whom the churches are dedicated and a short, very basic, illustrated piece on medieval architectural styles.

The book covers all serving medieval parish churches and those in 'occasional use' (ie vested in the Churches Conservation Trust). A few notable early post-medieval churches are also included. Unfortunately, those medieval churches that are ruined or converted have been deliberately omitted. This is a pity because some of them are buildings of considerable interest and, together with the surviving churches, form an important element in the overall history of the county. However, in fairness to the authors, the inclusion of all Norfolk churches would have increased the book's size quite considerably.

The authors' helpful *Introduction* touches on the dense concentration of medieval churches (graphically illustrated on a simple reference map) and a short piece to explain the phenomenon in terms of the county's political, social and economic history would have been very helpful while adding little to the volume of the text.

Mind-numbing and archaic text bedevils some church guides, but not this one. The book is packed with good, solid information and the prose style lifts the text above bald architectural description. Gayton, for instance is described as having '*..a very leggy tower*'.

The description of St Andrew's, Thorpe Episcopi should encourage visits to this eccentric product of the no-less eccentric 19th century architect, Thomas Jekyll. The authors were clearly enjoying themselves when they wrote of Morley St Botolph's roof: '*Not the best of aesthetic taste, perhaps, but very agreeable and fun*'. Clearly, it is a book that is designed to both inform and enthuse its readers. This more than makes up for the very small print and the lack of paragraphing in the larger items, both of which could be a problem for some readers.

Where appropriate, snapshots of local lives are included, and not just those of the local elites. There is a memorial brass at Heacham to a Coldstream Guardsman killed in 1916. At Mattishall Burgh praise is given to local people for the care they have taken for the care of the church. Within, curiously, the Glossary of Terms, there are more details of individuals of note that are highlighted in italics within the main text (as are technical terms explained in the glossary). There, for instance, we have a small piece on Nurse Edith Cavell by virtue of her close connection with her father's parish of Swardeston. Technical terms in the glossary are explained fully and comprehensively.

There is a generous range of black-&-white photographs showing examples of all kinds of items that may be expected in or on churches and one or two that may come as a surprise, such as the 17th century baby cradle at Walpole St. Peter. Some have a greyness and lack of sharpness that is common when ordinary text paper is used also for images, but they are informative and as good imaging should, lead browsers

to explore the appropriate texts more deeply.

This book is not just for the serious 'church-crawler'; architectural/ archaeological specialists also may find it a handy initial reference. In the words of its authors, it is '*.....not written by specialists, but by enthusiasts, whose declared object is to share, as widely as possible, their own lively pleasure and fascination with the subject in hand*'. For me, they have succeeded well and their book is therefore highly recommended.

***Tomb Destruction and Scholarship Medieval Monuments in Early Modern England***

Lindley, P, 2007

Shaun Tyas, Donington  
ISBN 978 1 900289 870  
Pb, x + 257pp, 2 figs, 80 plates  
£35

Jackie Hall

THIS EXCELLENT BOOK falls naturally into two halves. The first half is an analysis of the destruction of tombs, religious imagery and religious practices in the 16th century (Chapter 1), and in the Commonwealth period (Chapter 3), with a study of the early antiquarianism surrounding monuments from the 16th century (Chapter 2). These chapters are interwoven with a detailed account of the related and varied political, social and religious attitudes that made iconoclastic destruction possible, and the different contemporary responses to that.

The second half comprises three case studies, which pick up on the themes of destruction and

antiquarianism, but focus on the original appearance and functions of lost, damaged or misunderstood medieval monuments. The first case study (Chapter 4) concerns the monument to King Arthur and Queen Guinevere at Glastonbury and is an enthralling and entertaining account of the invention and embellishment of a tradition (including actual remains) in the 12th century and later. Following this is a careful analysis of Leland's description of the tomb, followed by a conjectural reconstruction. Chapter 5 concerns the equally famous Percy tomb at Beverley. Once again, antiquarian evidence is adduced – this time it is the monument's good survival that demands explanation. Lindley argues that the very plain tomb chest shown in late 18th-century drawings was original to the monument, with a brass on its top. The indents suggest a figure below a canopy with flanking angels and heraldic shields. This tomb chest is key to Lindley's interpretation of the Percy tomb as forming not just a magnificent memorial to Lady Eleanor Percy (d 1328, the tomb itself finished by 1335/40), but also the home, once a year to a temporary Easter Sepulchre.

The last chapter looks at the tombs of the Herbert family at Abergavenny – a group damaged by iconoclasts, but restored as soon as possible after the restoration, demonstrating the close relationship between scholarly antiquarianism and physical reconstruction. Dr Lindley's careful reassessment of the antiquarian evidence has consequences for how we should view the original appearance of these medieval monuments.

In a rather old-fashioned way, the plates are gathered together at the end of the volume but this has the positive pay-off that they are glossy and high quality (not true of many recent publications with embedded plates on poor quality paper). A genuine negative is the lack of a bibliography – although there are copious notes at the end of each chapter, only those already knowledgeable in the subject will be able to identify the references beyond their first citation.

This book is not only essential reading for students of iconoclasm (demonstrating, among other things, that much more destruction took place at the suppression than is usually credited), and students of antiquarianism, but also for students of medieval and early modern monuments. It shows how closely these fields are, or should be, bound up and how our interpretations of one can radically alter our understanding of the others.

### **The Medieval Chantry Chapel. An Archaeology**

**Roffey, S, 2007**

Studies in the History of Medieval Religion Volume XXXIV; Boydell Press, Woodbridge

Hb, 189 pp, 1 Table, 76 figures  
£40

*David Stocker*

THIS SHORT BOOK proposes adding an archaeological perspective to the numerous studies of chantry chapels derived from documents (specifically those established in parochial churches). A worthwhile proposition, and the central part of the book (Chapter 6, 46 pages) offers a thorough

study of some of the more superficial archaeological indicators of ritual practises in a sample of 80 examples from 63 parish churches in Somerset, Hampshire and Wiltshire. This is good stuff, demonstrating not only the validity of some of the assumptions made on the basis of documents, but also making a number of new points. For example, the orientations of squints within the study sample shows that, at least in some cases, elevations of the host at Mass at subsidiary (often chantry) altars was not intended to be synchronous with the high altar (as is often said), but instead followed in sequence. Priests at the subsidiary altars, then, elevated the host one after the other, in a prescribed order, following the lead of the celebrant at the high altar. Thus the altars themselves stand in a carefully considered hierarchical relationship one to another; not just in terms of their proximity to the high altar also but relative to the chantries of other individuals and families represented in the church. It seems that the social hierarchies, so carefully judged during medieval life, were scrupulously preserved during the journey through purgatory. What clearer demonstration could one ask for of the presence of the community of the dead within that of the living?

The remainder of the book is less original, consisting of recitations of the opinions of earlier authorities (the book originates in a PhD thesis). But it is, nevertheless, helpful and provides a conspectus of recent writing on several cognate topics. But Dr Roffey is no literary stylist himself and the book is

not an easy read. Tautology, periphrasis, and hyperbole are well represented, and the volume could have done with some red pen (even though that would have made it shorter still!). As it is, 16 pages are usefully devoted to three more detailed case-studies (of Stoke Charity, Bridgewater and Mere) and a rather mysterious gazetteer occupies another 11, describing 39 chantry locations (including seven from the study area). But I could detect no logic in their selection. Typically they are examples where surviving documents have been linked with surviving fabric, but many such examples exist, and few of those chosen investigate the fabric more deeply than a 'Pevsner'. An opportunity to organise examples by theme or by date has been lost. The gazetteer bolsters the book's claim to provide comprehensive coverage of England, but that was not really necessary: although the main text is weighted towards the three sample counties, it successfully integrates examples from elsewhere.

Roffey's conclusion stresses his principal contribution to the interdisciplinary debate. Although chantries in general, and their chapels in particular, are frequently seen as evidence for the privatisation of religion, or of its appropriation by the upper classes in the late middle ages, this archaeological study shows that the lower orders were certainly not excluded from the principal elements of the Mass. They were, instead, involved in it and, at the same time, put in their social place by it. The performance of parochial rites, including chantries themselves, dictated the organisation of space within the medieval parish church, then, and the rite itself, as well as the layout

of space, reflected the organisation of medieval society. Furthermore, that space was not simply one of inclusive and exclusive zones, but it was a more complex 'spiritual network' (p118) with subtle gradations of rank. Despite its stratification, therefore, medieval society remained a single community.

### Scottish Monastic Landscapes

Hall, D, 2006

Tempus, Publishing: Stroud  
ISBN – 978 0 7524 4012 5  
Pb, 222pp, 98 Illus (28 in colour)  
£19.99

Alex Lang

THIS STUDY PROVIDES a welcome perspective on the establishment, growth and development of medieval religious landscapes and industries in Scotland. This work is the culmination of surveys completed on behalf of Historic Scotland by SUAT and has been borne out of a need to outline Scotland's medieval heritage and provide an equivalent study to James Bond's work on Monastic landscapes in England and Wales (Bond 2004).

The Author provides us with a brief introduction and a background to the development of Monasticism in Scotland with an outline of Monastic orders that established themselves. This is followed by chapters on how these orders helped to significantly alter the direction of, first, agriculture and industry (*the Monastic Revolution*) and second, healthcare (*Care of the Sick*). Finally, there is a further discussion of industry by the

elusive Knights of St John (*God's Bankers*). There is a brief conclusion (*A future for the past?*) before we are thrust into an extensive and detailed gazetteer of the Scottish monastic sites arranged by regions and counties.

The size of the gazetteer actually somewhat dwarfs the text itself, which is nonetheless fluent and well illustrated. The development of industries is well addressed and the distribution maps add much both when looking at each type of industry and comparing the location and 'hubs' of others. This is complemented by numerous photographs of remnant buildings or evidence of industrial activity, the frontispiece and figure 1 show particularly well the beauty of many of these buildings and thus the importance of their preservation.

However, despite the discussions which take place in each chapter I was left with a feeling of inconsistency and the book does suffer from a lack of continuity. Whether this relates to the chapters themselves (with the introduction before the acknowledgments) or the topics discussed I am not sure but there are a few points that troubled me. A good example of this is the way in which Monasteries and Monastic Landscapes are only discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, whereas Chapter 4 is not really written in the same vein. It is actually more of a report of the excavated kilns from the site at Stenhouse, which felt to me like it had been stapled onto the end. This should not detract from its significance, as it is clearly an important site that requires publications somewhere; I was

just wasn't convinced that the space taken up here could not have been used for slightly different purposes.

Nevertheless, there is no doubt that the work that has gone into the survey is extensive. The discussions that Hall raises at the end in terms of the actions required and the activities pertaining to the preservation of these landscapes are significant in progressing of our understanding of them. The survey work commissioned by Historic Scotland and completed by the author has also been justified through this book. It is, overall, an excellent discussion, argued with clarity and referenced with an extensive dataset.

Bond, J, 2004, *Monastic Landscapes*, Stroud

### Faith Pride & Works

McNeil, T, 2006

Tempus, Publishing: Stroud  
ISBN 978 0 7524 3643 2  
Pb, 256pp, 103 B & W  
illustrations  
£19.99

Duncan Sayer

THE BLURB ON the back of this book tells us that:

*Traditionally, medieval architecture has been studied using a simple typological approach. However, churches, as major medieval monuments, are crucial to our understanding of the period and so research into these magnificent buildings must go beyond architectural description. Only once a commentary on the social, political and economic aspects*

*of church building is provided can we fully appreciate the explanations behind church building in the Middle Ages.*

As a result the reader may be forgiven for believing that this may not be a traditional book. However, like many traditional architecturally derived works it is arranged around major structural and stylistic developments, for example the chapter headings are: 1 Introduction; 2 The First Romanesque; 3 Second Romanesque; 4 Excursus; 5 The Development of the Gothic Style: the French kingdoms 1125–1225; 6 The Early Spread of Gothic Style; 7 Classic Gothic: 1200–1330; 8 Late Gothic; and 9 The End of the Medieval Church Building.

This is not a weakness, since it places what is intended as an introductory volume targeted at undergraduates and students of

church archaeology, into a familiar framework which is both easily understood and very well illustrated with photographs and examples from England and across Europe. As a result I felt myself being drawn into the simple writing style and easily transferred enthusiasm of the author in a way that I had not been by similar works. Certainly in this case the social political and economic context felt every bit as important as the churches themselves. I will certainly be recommending this book to my students, and putting it on reading lists although I may not recommend they spend money on it.

There is one major failing, and that seems to be something consistent with the *Tempus* books reviewed in this volume of Church Archaeology. If this is indeed aimed at students, as the author clearly outlines in the introduction, then it is perhaps inappropriate

that the bibliography is just three pages; Chapter 7 has just two books listed. This simple fact does a disservice to the work McNeill has put into the volume and devalues it. Readers wishing for academic contexts or simply to follow up chapters with fully developed reading lists and references will be sorely disappointed. Alex Lang has flagged up elsewhere in this reviews section that *A Concise Guide to the Parish Churches* also published by Tempus did not satisfy its mission statement because of some small details which should have been picked up by the publishers. In this at least *Tempus* are arguably doing church archaeology a disservice and need to decide what they want to publish, guides, introductions, student textbooks or monographs, all of which require a different format and have different target audiences.