

# Reviews

*Edited by Duncan Wright*

*Liturgy, Architecture and Sacred Places in Anglo-Saxon England*

Gittos, H, 2013

Oxford University Press (Medieval History and Archaeology Series)  
ISBN 978 0 19 927090 3

Hb, 372pp, 87 illustrations, £68

*Duncan Wright*

The Medieval History and Archaeology Series of Oxford University Press is a rapidly growing body of scholarship characterised by high-quality publications of leading research in the field. Perhaps partly a consequence of the specialism of the general editors (John Blair and Helena Hamerow), the series includes particularly welcome contributions from studies with an Anglo-Saxon focus, in diverse subjects ranging from settlements to burials, and from artefacts to building materials. In addition to their excellent standard of reproduction, the volumes of the series have quickly made a habit of delivering thorough and often complex academic analysis in an accessible style, enabling them to reach a far broader audience than is typical for the majority of

scholarly output. Thankfully, Helen Gittos' *Liturgy, Architecture and Sacred Places* continues the trend, delivering an engaging insight into the development, utilisation and symbolic significance of Anglo-Saxon churches. The final element of the title – Sacred Places – is especially important, as it indicates an intention to move beyond the immediacy of church buildings and provide a context for early medieval religious behaviour in the wider landscape. The result is a beautifully balanced piece, where liturgical practice is understood at a number of different scales, with an appreciation for both practical and symbolic influences.

The desire of the author to create an ultimately readable narrative is illustrated in the first few pages, where Gittos relates a very personal account of how her interest in early medieval churches first emerged. A clear passion for the subject is subsequently tempered somewhat by an introduction to the key sources, and particularly the challenges of understanding the liturgy. Whilst the text never falls into pessimism, the reader does gain an appreciation of many of the restrictions created by fragmentary documentary and

architectural survival. The first thematic chapter begins with a broad remit, focussing first on the way in which sacred places were created in the landscape. Written sources especially provide an insight into how early medieval clerics perceived their own mission, creating places not only for the asceticism and contemplation often emphasised by scholars but also places that were ripe for the transformation of souls. In this chapter it is immediately apparent that the text is accompanied by a generous quantity of photographs, reconstructions and plans. Key tools that are sometimes lacking or misused in academic archaeology, the illustrations are utilised throughout the volume in order to impart the greatest understanding to the reader of the sites and landscapes discussed.

The following chapter scales down, providing an overview of 'church groups': multiple churches at a single site. There is a detailed discussion of the alignment of churches which includes a welcome overview of structural orientation on apparently non-religious settlement sites. The similarity of contemporary secular practice is increasingly

recognised by academics, and indeed Gittos herself underlined the difficulty of identifying minsters through archaeological methods in her contribution to *The Oxford Handbook of Anglo-Saxon Archaeology*. A further feature of the second chapter is the reference to evidence from the continent. It could be argued that this is merely the result of the slim pickings offered by the English material, but in *Liturgy, Architecture and Sacred Place* it is used to contextualise the picture provided by largely Anglo-Saxon evidence. Indeed, in this instance, the wish to reconstruct liturgical practice makes the analysis of continental traditions most necessary – not subject to the upheaval associated with the English Reformation, the modern use of churches in what was once the Byzantine empire provide an invaluable anthropological perspective. In terms of past practice, Chapter 4 is dedicated to one particular element of the liturgy – open air processions in Anglo-Saxon England. Processions are emphasised as key to unifying the church, with visible displays peaking as a means of creating solidarity within the ecclesiastical community.

It is a both interesting and refreshing feature that the chapter on form and function appears only half-way through the volume. This surely represents a willingness to deconstruct the traditional approach to architectural studies, and conspicuously emphasises that the main purpose of the book is to move beyond the bricks and mortar and understand past people and their behaviour. The penultimate chapter is an apt culmination of everything that has come before, demonstrating how the various strands of archaeological and historical data can be drawn together to reconstruct

ritual and the human experience. The fact that this is achieved in such a readable style is a testament to the skill of the author – the vast body of references that accompany the book throughout are perhaps the only indication of how specialised and dense the various disciplines can often be. Perhaps one of the greatest compliments that can be bestowed upon Gittos' work is the similarity in content and style to John Blair's *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*. Akin to Blair's seminal volume, *Liturgy, Architecture and Sacred Places* will surely develop as a key text for various specialists of early medieval studies, although the author and publisher have also ensured that the importance of the work is appreciated by those beyond academic circles.

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*Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture X. The Western Midlands*

Bryant, R, with M Hare, and contributions by 7 others, 2012  
Oxford University Press for The British Academy, London  
ISBN 978 0 19 726515 4  
Hb, 596pp, 795 plates and 48 B&W figs, £95

Jackie Hall

This tenth volume in the CASSS series is as welcome as any of them. Following in the now-established tradition of careful research, high publication values and beautiful, scaled, photographs, this is the first to address the sculpture of Mercia. It covers the modern counties of Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, Shropshire, Warwickshire and Worcestershire.

Starting at the back, the photographs are gathered together on high-quality paper, ordered by county, place-name and monument number, allowing the specialist to browse easily for comparative ornament or form type. In front of that lies the 270 plus pages of the catalogue proper, again ordered by county, with appendices within each county for Saxo-Norman overlap material, previously wrongly assigned material, lost and unillustrated pieces, and sundials. There is a further region-wide appendix for fonts and stoups. This main body of work is preceded by several introductory chapters, including on the history of the region, the distribution of the sculpture, its geology, the monument types, and their ornamental and iconographic repertoire. In addition, there is a short chapter on the pieces recovered from excavations and structural contexts, adding welcome additional dating evidence to the

art historical sequence, and another examining the original polychromy at Deerhurst, illustrated by the single colour plate frontispiece.

Without exception, the sculpture displays Christian imagery or (for architectural pieces) was once part of a church, or was found at, or marks, a Christian site. Michael Hare's historical introduction provides a valuable context looking at, among other things, the post-Roman Christian landscape, the emergence and conversion of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms (including the Mercian sub-kingdoms of Hwicce and Magonsæte), the Mercian supremacy – demonstrated so wonderfully by the artistic quality of the sculpture of the 8th and early 9th centuries – and the revival of urban and religious life in the 10th century in a largely united England, with strong continental links. Unlike the eastern half of Mercia, though, these counties were not subject to the Danelaw and were much less subject to Scandinavian artistic influences, with just two monuments with Ringerike motifs.

The distribution of sculpture across the region shows a marked imbalance compared with the written record, with well over half the pieces and sites located in Gloucestershire, an imbalance difficult to explain but with factors including available stone types, and amount of previous study. Two sites from Gloucestershire are pre-eminent in the discussions of form, ornament and iconography – Deerhurst (mainly first half of the 9th century) and Gloucester St Oswald (late 9th- and early 10th-century), the former with many items still in situ and the latter subject to major excavation. These are joined, though, by significant collections such as the 10th-century collection of capitals and bases

reused in Worcester Cathedral (paralleled at St Albans) and the 'Cropthorne' group, spread across several counties and evidence of an early 9th-century regional craft tradition with lively birds, animals and plant-scrolls. The discussions of both forms and ornament are greatly helped by Richard Bryant's beautiful illustrations, which subtly bring out the designs from sometimes very worn objects, and allow similar types to be viewed together, instead of rustling through often widely spread photographs.

Although gathering the photographs together at the end has its strengths (higher quality reproduction, ease of browsing) this is also a weakness of the series; very often it is arduous for those without an encyclopaedic knowledge of the subject to move from text to illustration, since there are not enough cross-references to do this without going via the catalogue entry first. Alternatively, the headers for the illustrations could usefully be made more informative, naming the county and sub-section (eg Appendix A) to aid finding. This also raises the possibility of using the new CASSS website (WS1) as an illustrative companion while reading the discursive chapters. The catalogues of the first two volumes are already online and the rest are to follow. In fact, for volume 2 (Cumberland, Westmorland and Lancashire-North-of-the-Sands), the discursive chapters are also online. Along with the approaching completion of the Corpus, this raises interesting and exciting questions. On the one hand there is the potential for an explosion of new interpretations and understandings of post-Roman to medieval England as the whole 'collection' becomes accessible to scholars without a deep purse or access to an academic

library. On the other, do moves like this mark the end of the academic printed book, and does it matter? I, for one, hope that the British Academy and others (volume 10 was supported by the Headley Trust) continue to support both research and publication of major series like this.

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WS1 *The Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture*, [www.ascorpus.ac.uk/](http://www.ascorpus.ac.uk/) (last viewed 27/03/2014)

*Architecture and Interpretation:  
Essays for Eric Fernie*

Franklin, JA, Heslop, T A, and  
Stevenson, C, 2012  
The Boydell Press  
ISBN 978 184383 781 7  
Hb 410 pp, 172 illustrations, £60

Michael Shapland

This festschrift volume is a testament to the esteem in which Eric Fernie continues to be held by his colleagues and former students, twenty-one of whom have contributed chapters, many of which have considerable relevance to the study of historic church architecture. I do not say church archaeology, because despite Eric's enormous contributions in that field, including as past President of the Society of Antiquaries of London, this volume is written and presented from an art-historical perspective, which provided this reviewer with a useful opportunity to engage with a closely related but distinctly parallel discipline. Despite the best kind of introductory essay by the volume's editors, one which attempts to knit together a terminally disparate array of contributions from an intelligently theoretical perspective, it remains something of a rattle-bag (as suggested by the vagueness of the title) unified principally by its art-historical approach whose merits and weaknesses in comparison to archaeology made for compelling study. In generalised and simplistic terms, the authors of this volume are preoccupied with a building's appearance over its use, its influences over its meanings, its original form over changes through time, and the personality of its architect over the popular experience of everyday life.

The volume is divided into three loose sections, whose titles pay homage to the vagueness of the collection's title: *'Incitements to Interpret in Late Antique and Medieval Architecture'*, *'Authors and Intentions'* and *'Architecture Beyond Building'*. In the first, John Mitchell argues that natural patterns in marble gained iconographic significance through their deliberate deployment in early churches, for example the prominent use of patterns resembling human figures knelt in prayer, in an early version of the modern obsession with finding the face of Jesus on the surface of Mars or in the froth of a cappuccino. Malcolm Thurlby's chapter elaborates on a vitally important point: the need for us to assume that apparent compromises or 'mistakes' in a church's construction were in fact deliberate aspects of its design, so a break in symmetry may be less due to the ineptitude of medieval masons than a desire to emphasise a liturgically significant aspect of a church's fabric. This is a closely-argued piece, but in common with several other contributions to the volume, implies that battles long-won in archaeology are alive and well in art history. Roger Stalley, for example, draws on Romanesque beakhead ornament to posit that we should be wary of seeking single origins for complex ornament, and Jill Franklin suggests that the simplicity of Augustinian cruciform churches in the 12th century was not due to a lack of imagination or money, but an attempt by the Order to associate itself with early Christian ideals. Her desire not to make anachronistic interpretations is echoed by Jenifer Ní Ghrádaigh's (*'Why Medieval Ireland Failed to Edify'*) belief that we should question modern distinctions between architecture

and mere building, especially when it comes to a corpus of ostensibly drab, small, simple Irish churches which pale in comparison to the splendour of contemporary Continental practice. *'By adopting a more open theoretic model, which abandons the equation of structural simplicity with technological ignorance and lack of meaning, the story of medieval architecture becomes a more inclusive, richer and far more interesting one'* (p 304). I couldn't agree more.

Elsewhere in Section 1, Richard Fawcett contends that the Scottish Church turned away from English influences in the 14th and 15th centuries (for political reasons not dissimilar from those presently being rehearsed by the SNP) in favour of architecture from their allies in Europe. Stephen Heywood suggests that turiform side-chapels to major East Anglian churches had considerable iconographic significance and influenced that region's famous round-towered churches, and Veronica Sekules discusses aspects of the use of surface pattern in English architecture during the Romanesque and Gothic periods. We see in these chapters a common concern with art, style and influence: threads running through Sections 2 and 3 are a concern with art historical frameworks and the close description of individual structures. Francis Woodman surveys the neglected subject of medieval masons' tombs, Richard Plant synthesises the documentary evidence for contemporary opinions of English Romanesque building, Kerry Downes tackles the *'façade problem'* of articulating the principal elevation of Renaissance churches with their naves, and Lindy Grant describes the chapel of the Hospital of Saint Jean at Angers.

In a welcome attempt to place buildings in their social and political contexts, TA Heslop makes the compelling argument that Colchester Castle and Lincoln Cathedral, as major architectural statements of the Norman occupation, made very deliberate political statements about Constantine, Helen and the Roman empire. In this approach he is seconded by Robert Hillenbrand's discussion of how the ways in which the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem has been depicted by Jews, Christians and Muslims through time can be ascribed to the conflicting political agendas of these groups, from its position at the centre of the earth on Christian *mappa mundi* to an Iranian government poster depicting the church behind a barred gate locked whose padlock bears the Star of David.

This is a wide-ranging and superbly-edited volume whose great strength lies in its variety. Moving away from churches, other excellent chapters range from Palaeolithic structures of mammoth bone to ephemeral modern surfers' memorials, and a particularly fine contribution by Elisabeth de Bièvre suggests that the buildings chosen as emblems by medieval Dutch cities reflected the character of that city's foundation and citizenry, such as the willingness of the people of Dordrecht to passively accumulate unearned wealth (a toll tower) and the necessity for Delfters to control their environment (a straight canal). Nevertheless, this is explicitly a volume of art history which may not appeal to those with a more archaeological mind-set, or at least those archaeologists who have not managed to get past its dreadful front cover. This is particularly true when it comes to claims such as '*why artefacts, in this case canons*'

*churches, took the form they did*' is '*one which only art historians seriously address*' (p 78), which made this particular reviewer raise his eyes heavenwards.

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*The Augustinian Nunnery of  
St Mary Clerkenwell, London.  
Excavations 1974–96*

Sloane, B, 2013

Museum of London Archaeology  
Monograph 57  
ISBN 978 1 901992 04 5  
Hb, 300pp, 149 illustrations, 47  
tables & CD, £24.00

*Oliver Creighton*

Founded in 1144, during the turbulence of King Stephen's reign, the Augustinian nunnery of St Mary Clerkenwell lay on the north-western edge of the city of London. This was a prime location that the community was able to capitalise on, which largely explains the institution's comparative wealth and success, certainly relative to other nunneries. Amounting to much more than an exercise in monastic archaeology, this handsome new MOLA monograph charts the long-term development of this area of London's city fringe from Iron-Age occupation, through the various phases of the developing nunnery, into the post-Dissolution period, when the area was occupied by a close of mansions, and ending with the final demolition of the nunnery church in the late 18th century.

Focusing on a series of excavations conducted between the mid-1970s and late 1990s, but always striving to contextualise these results within current debates and to situate the nunnery within its urban context, the volume is divided into six chapters. An introduction (Chapter 1) incorporates a short but valuable historiographical review of the archaeological study of medieval nunneries, which represents a notorious lacuna relative to the state of knowledge on male establishments. Chapter 2 covers

the pre-medieval sequence on the site, including firm and important evidence of Iron Age activity. Chapter 3, forming the bulk of the volume, addresses the principal medieval phases, from the Saxo-Norman pre-nunnery land surface through to the early 16th century. A major achievement is the tracing of the earliest (12th-century) monastic complex of timber, including a domestic building and two possible kitchens within a probable earthwork precinct enclosure, all redeveloped later in that century as a suite of masonry structures formed around a north-facing cloister. An outer court developed in the 13th century, although this was a period of relative poverty for the house, before more buoyant times in the 15th and 16th centuries. Chapter 4 is constructed thematically, to address the nunnery's design, planning and architecture; the social lives of its inhabitants; evidence of industry within the precinct; and the institution's wider landscape and urban context. Kitchen deposits provide broad insight into diet on the site, although consumption by the nuns themselves cannot be adequately differentiated from intake by other individuals living and moving in and around the precincts. The impact of the Dissolution is the subject of Chapter 5, while Chapter 6 summarises how the report contributes to knowledge and highlights areas of further research potential. Detailed appendices catalogue the architectural fragments, environmental evidence, pottery and artefacts, as well as archaeomagnetic dating evidence. An accompanying CD Rom contains 50 supporting tables.

Particularly striking are the subtly changing lines of interaction between the community of nuns

and the world beyond the cloister. The founder, Jordan de Bricet, was also responsible for establishing the almost adjacent Hospitaller priory of St John Clerkenwell. Planned in unison but also re-built in tandem on at least two occasions, the two institutions shared aspects of their record keeping and, in the later medieval period, co-operated in the planning of their water supply, while male chaplains and brethren from the Hospitaller priory served the nunnery in various capacities. The institution was porous rather than hermetically sealed: the nunnery church was also a parish church; the community interacted with the London land market to good effect, with tenements within the precincts let out to wealthy Londoners well before the suppression in 1539; and industry within the precincts is evidenced through archaeological evidence of tile kilns that seem to have supplied more than the nunnery itself.

With its high-quality presentation, easily navigable structure and welcome emphasis on context and the lifespan of the total monastic institution rather than its component parts, this is a highly recommended volume that is guaranteed to have a profound impact on our understanding of medieval nunneries.

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*St George's Chapel, Windsor:  
History and Heritage*

Edited by Saul, N, and Tatton-  
Brown, T, 2010

The Dovecote Press, Wimborne  
Minster

ISBN 978 19 0 434983 9

Pb, 264pp, 64 illustrations, £14.95

Emma J Wells

The 'Adopt a Book' scheme, to which the proceeds of this publication are donated, was the brainchild of College of St George archivist Dr Eileen Scarff, who retired in 2008. This collection of 25 essays on the chapel's use and development by a rostrum of distinguished scholars was published as a *festschrift* in Dr Scarff's honour. The chapel of St George, a site that has seen royal benefaction, worship and public pilgrimage, dominates the Lower Ward of Windsor Castle. Yet the chapel has been through several stages of remodelling under the auspices of Henry VIII, James II and Queen Victoria among others, in order to develop it into the building we see today. Although the essays in this volume do not conform to a continuous theme, and are rather a conglomeration of topics related to the specialism of the authors, they do run roughly chronologically pertaining to a broad history of the chapel and its surrounding locale.

Steve Brindle's chapter concentrates on an analysis of Henry III's original chapel, completed in 1248. Alongside numerous other ancillary buildings, including the Great Hall, the chapel was most extensively transformed in Edward III's reign when Windsor became to him, at least, the new Camelot. The refurbishment work, which culminated in the foundation of

the chapel in 1347-8, included the addition of painted glass in 1353. Following this, with the demolition of the 12th-century hall in 1477, the significance of the Perpendicular chapel began its journey under the master and surveyor of works, Richard Beauchamp, Bishop of Salisbury, who was appointed by his cousin King Edward IV in 1473. The new chapel was some 100 feet wide and 230-40 feet long. Tim Tatton-Brown describes the proposed arrangements for the burial of Edward inside the chapel, most of which was completed, save the 'Tumbe' in his chantry chapel. Tatton-Brown ends his chapter with a discussion of the position of the Tudor burial vault in the chapel's choir in which Henry VIII, his third wife Jane Seymour, Charles I and a child of Queen Anne lie (ten monarchs have been buried in the chapel to date). In addition to Edward IV's impact, another of the most drastic stages in construction came in 1494-8, when Henry VII made the decision to rebuild the chapel in order to provide a fitting dynastic mausoleum. Unfortunately, the king abandoned it for such a purpose in favour of his chapel at Westminster, leading the chapel to be adapted for use as the Lady Chapel to St George's.

Thus, the book is made up of an array of topics covering periods of the chapel's history from its medieval foundation to the present day. They include: the foundation of the Order of the Garter by Edward III in the late 1340s; the Bishop of Winchester as Prelate of the Order (the chapel provided the setting for the feast of the Order – this also occupies a later chapter); the reception of the college's foundation (and its associated chapel) by the townspeople of Windsor; and various chapters covering

the decorative and architectural developments in the chapel's and associated buildings' fabric. The latter group includes analyses of the damage and subsequent restoration during the Commonwealth period; the influence of King George III; the chapel's stained glass; and the work undertaken by Sir George Gilbert Scott in the later 19th century. The final two chapters are given over to the subject of Dr Scarff's work in the accumulation of knowledge and the rehousing of the library and archives in the undercroft of the Vicars' Hall, which was adapted as a repository when space ran out in the 1990s.

The copious number of topics in this volume actually allows each chapter to be a clear, concise contribution to the overall theme of the publication. It would, however, have benefitted from the inclusion of a greater number of illustrations, particularly in chapters concerning the architectural development of the site, as this would have allowed a fuller appreciation of its beauty. As the illustrations are also in black and white only, some of the minute details in the numerous line drawings, for example, do tend to suffer. Nonetheless, the volume acts as a living testimonial of the career of Dr Scarff whose work offered so much to the reorganisation of the records and their accessibility to a wider audience. In fact, in 1990, after Dr Scarff had held the position of Archivist for only one year, she reported to Chapter that '*the number of historical searches and enquiries had increased four-fold, the number of researchers had doubled and the number of group visits from local and national societies had increased considerably*'. Such observations, in addition to this publication, bear testament to Dr Scarff's legacy.

*The Archaeology of Churches*

Rodwell, W, 2012

Amberley Publishing, Stroud  
 ISBN 978 1 848689 43 5  
 Pb, 384pp, col illus throughout,  
 £25.00

Emma J Wells

The past few decades have witnessed a considerable amount of research on the subject of church archaeology, yet Warwick Rodwell still opens the second chapter of the fifth edition of his guidebook on the subject with the following statement: *'seldom can all the fundamental questions be answered authoritatively, however significant the place'*. While Rodwell is keen to emphasise the ambiguities that still remain in regards to understanding church fabric, this significantly revised, restructured and supplemented 2012 edition of his book (which has passed through several title formations since its first appearance in 1981) is a holistic triumph for anyone interested in learning more about the complex social, historical, legal, administrative, ethical and analytical context of a church building. With the view that the fabric of each building is a conduit of its own story, Rodwell takes the reader through the investigative process, highlighting the issues encountered with uncovering such narratives and the subsequent roles that archaeologists assume as they undertake the process.

*The Archaeology of Churches* is thus ultimately an aim to furnish people with greater understanding when visiting a church. It follows the premise that many individuals are no longer content with wandering aimlessly through these magnificent structures and merely

viewing the art and architecture as 'art for art's sake'. Instead, they are taking a vested interest in the history, use and context of churches. The informative guide begins with a historiography of the archaeological study of churches. Setting the story by detailing the influence of antiquarians such as John Leland and William Camden right through to the grandfather of architectural history, Sir Nikolaus Pevsner, the book then steers the reader through the analytical process of understanding ecclesiastical archaeology and proposes where one may get answers to questions when faced with the metaphorical evidentiary brick wall.

Focus is largely upon stone buildings dating from around the Anglo-Saxon period right up to the modern day, with references to timber buildings where appropriate. Every component part of the church building is explained in meticulous detail, from the ground plan to the fixtures and fittings – the entirety of the building is presented in layman's terms. Following the first half of the book on getting to know a church building, Rodwell then moves on to discuss how to analyse the fabric (Chapter 8), both above and below ground. He prefaces the section with a most important statement for anyone wishing to uncover the secrets of a church's construction: *'However carefully one scrutinizes a church, there is a limit to what can be seen, even with the experienced eye'*. In turn, the following chapters *'Investigations into the Fabric'* and *'Church Excavations'* attempt to outline the appropriate outcome of evidence, rather than taking a complex look at each type of archaeological survey technique. Subsequently, the next chapter puts the first half of the book into practice through detailed analyses

of various churches' evolution to show just how the range of evidence types may be used to understand the development of the structures over time, culminating in two case studies: Dorchester Abbey and St Peter's church, Barton-upon-Humber. To say Rodwell firmly cements the church building in its context is not an overstatement, as the final few chapters bring the investigation out into the churchyard and surrounding landscape, which includes an overview of the numerous ancillary buildings, monuments and burials.

Throughout the study a range of evidence types are consulted, from documentation and archival sources to the fundamental archaeological investigations and excavation reports, the former of which comprises one of the new chapters in this revised edition; the other being an exploration of the archaeology of the construction process. In addition to updated case-studies and newly recovered evidence, this edition also features a consideration of the advances in techniques of recording and analysis which have so revolutionized the field of study, such as photogrammetry and dendrochronology.

Supplementing the meticulous research and effortless writing style, the crowning glory of the book is the series of 346 illustrations (particularly the 284 colour images), which include stone-by-stone elevations, superb plans and measured drawings to suitably accompany the analysis. Nonetheless, after such extensive revisions, the book would perhaps benefit from a small glossary or gazetteer of architectural styles to help the reader along their journey – the book is, after all, clearly aimed at a more general audience and, as such, some readers may

not be as familiar with some of the technological terms and so such a list may act as a useful ‘go-to’ when needed. Yet, this is a minor criticism of what is perhaps the greatest and most fertile source of knowledge and educational resource published, to date, on this topic.

The substantial contribution that such a book has made to the growing body of church archaeology research is without question, and now serves as essential reading for anyone – academic or independent researcher – wishing to uncover the history of our ecclesiastical institutions. The final word shall be given to Rodwell himself who, in his preface, proclaims ‘*somewhat to my surprise, [the book] has stood unchallenged as the only general textbook on church archaeology*’. Due to Rodwell’s popularity as the foremost expert in this topic as well as the accessibility of his commendable research, this book will likely remain a crowning achievement for many years to come, as it has throughout the majority of his career.

*Emma recently received her PhD from the Department of Archaeology at Durham University. She is a committee member of the Ecclesiastical History Society and currently pursuing postdoctoral research in the dispersal of medieval stained glass following the Reformation.*

*The Archaeology of Post-Medieval Religion*

Edited by King, C and Sayer, D, 2011

Woodbridge, The Boydell Press  
ISBN 978 1 84383 693 3  
Hb, 288pp, £30

Scott Chaussee

The stated aim of the volume is to take '*the reformation as the starting point and explore the development of religious ideologies and practices across the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries...*' bringing together scholars who '*share an interest in the changing spatial and material context of religious belief and identity in the post-medieval world*'. The volume is in fact the product of a conference held by both the Society for Post-Medieval Archaeology and the Society for Church Archaeology in Norwich during 2008. It brings together new research on post-medieval religious buildings, landscapes, cemeteries and burials, and thus provides a forum where the diversity and richness of this material could be explored in a cross-disciplinary context. *The Archaeology of Post-Medieval Religion* represents a valuable contribution to the understanding of religious life and sites in the post-Reformation centuries. The case studies, presented at varying scales, take into account differing but complementary strands of evidence to produce a cohesive picture of religious practice and identity in a dynamic period.

The book is presented in three broad themes. The first is the situation of the post-Reformation church in early modern society. The papers under this banner begin with a case study of church-building and

re-drawing of parish boundaries in post-Reformation Bassendean, Berwickshire. Crossing the channel, the next two chapters address aspects of church interiors: Philippa Woodcock examines the refitting of churches in the Diocese of Le Mans, France following a period of iconoclasm AD 1562–1598, and Matthias Range explores the 'architecture of confession' in Lutheran Shleswig, Germany. Simon Roffey maintains the focus on interior aspects of church architecture in his study of 19th-century chantry chapels. Chris King and Greig Parker bring the first theme to a close with a look at the impact of the religious beliefs of immigrants on the townscapes of Norwich and London.

The second theme comprises a collection of essays exploring nonconformity in the landscape and within communities. Jeremy Lake, Eric Berry and Peter Herring attempt to go beyond architectural approaches to analyse chapel buildings in their own landscape context and in relationship to contemporary settlement. Similarly, Harold Mytum examines the development and change of focal points in the landscapes of Wales and the Isle of Man. Claire Strachan presents an interesting facet of religious identity – that of dissent – based on analysis of nonconformist chapels. Unique to the period of history addressed by the volume, Peter Benes examines the European architectural heritage of meeting houses in Puritan New England, 1630–1800.

Bringing the volume to a close, the third and final theme approaches varying aspects of cemeteries and the activities therein, with papers discussing funerary custom, burial rites and communal identities. Duncan Sayer addresses

the theme by discussing religious identity through Protestant burial provision from the 17th to the 19th centuries. Diana Mahoney-Swales, Richard O'Neill and Hugh Willmott are more specific in their analysis, assessing coffins, coffin furnishings and grave goods in late 18th- to 19th-century Sheffield. Natasha Powers and Adrian Miles address the osteological evidence for religious identity through the examination of over 1,000 burials, coffin furniture, clothing, artefacts and accompanying documentary data from the cemeteries of Bow Baptist Chapel and the Catholic Mission of St Mary and St Michael, Tower Hamlets, London. Anwen Cedifor Caffell and Rachel Clarke examine the osteological data from a specific nonconformist population that had '*extraordinary levels of pathological conditions*': the Baptists of Priory Yard, Norwich. The burials section of the volume is closed by an exploration of the manufacture, popularity and various geographical and theological contexts of the phenomenon of mortuary garlanding, in particular the concept and practice of the maiden's garland.

This volume, through the variety of topics and capability of the contributors, also identifies several fruitful avenues for future research. The intellectual rigour from all the contributors is noteworthy, but as such, the volume is firmly aimed at academic audiences rather than armchair historians/archaeologists. At a recommended retail price of £30, it is on the least expensive end of the scale of specialised volumes and is a useful addition to a landscape archaeologist's library. As an early medievalist, this book is enormously helpful for understanding the development and change of ecclesiastical sites which

may, or may not, relate to previous foundations; this knowledge is vital for understanding the spiritual landscape of earlier periods by exploring the ways sites and their religious practice have changed up to recent times. Additionally, this volume provides excellent case-studies for lecturers to inform their teaching as well as useful material for seminar discussion. For students, the clarity of the contributors in describing and applying their method is such that similar work could be applied elsewhere. All of the contributions to this volume further the stated goal of the editors and illustrate the depth and complexity of post-medieval religious belief.

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*Oxfordshire's Best Churches***Wheeler, R, 2013**

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Hb, 280 pp, 340 colour pls, 1 map  
and 17 line drawings, £25.00*Letty ten Harkel*

The most striking aspect of Richard Wheeler's *Oxfordshire's Best Churches* at first glance are the beautiful colour photographs with which it is illustrated, amounting to no less than 340 spread across 280 pages. What is perhaps even more notable is that they are all except one taken by the author himself, whose professional interests include conservation as well as photography. But this volume is more than merely a glossy coffee table book or well-illustrated field guide. It provides a concise introduction to medieval church architecture for those less familiar with the main architectural styles of that period (Anglo-Saxon, Norman, Early English Gothic, Decorated Gothic and Perpendicular Gothic), whose main characteristics are excellently summarised in the introductory chapter. Wheeler's writing style is well suited to the purpose, as it is clear and always engaging, the beauty of Oxfordshire's churches never obscured through unintelligible jargon. This is followed by an account of the impact of the Reformation and Civil War, and ends with the 19<sup>th</sup>-century revival in neo-Gothic church architecture spearheaded by the English architect Augustus Welby Pugin. A glossary of architectural terminology and several indices of churches, places and people, as well as suggested further reading furthermore turn this book into a useful work of reference. What

is particularly laudable about the introduction is the fact that Wheeler does not limit himself to discussions of architectural developments alone, but places these firmly in their historical contexts. This interest in wider context reappears in some of the 116 entries discussing individual churches; for example, the entry for St Helen's, Abingdon is introduced with a brief comment on the town's history, whilst the church's architectural development is linked to its landscape location. The author's comments on landscape context are sometimes more concerned with their current than with their historic setting, however. For example, the location of St Mary's, Iffley may have once been a more secluded location than its proximity to Oxford's southern bypass now suggests. Nevertheless, this is first and foremost a book about church architecture and not about landscape archaeology, and as such one would expect the emphasis to remain on the buildings and their interiors. Furthermore, if the volume were to be furnished with too much detail it would run the risk of becoming unwieldy, and thus lose its appeal as a field-guide. *Oxfordshire's Best Churches* therefore meets its remit capably and represents a must-have for anyone with an interest in the religious architecture of the region.

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