Reviews

Following the resumption of this feature in the previous issue, we continue to catch up with items of importance to the county and region which future researchers will expect to find in a journal of record. Publishers are invited to send review copies to the Reviews Editor, Dr Graham Jones, at Willowbank, 9a High Street, Great Glen, Leicester LE8 9FJ (telephone 0116 259 1011 or e-mail graham.jones@sjc.ox.ac.uk).

Aileen Connor and Richard Buckley with contributions from 27 others, *Roman and Medieval Occupation in Causeway Lane, Leicester: Excavations 1980 and 1991*, Leicester Archaeology Monographs 5 (Leicester, University of Leicester Archaeological Services [ULAS] and Leicester City Museum Service for the Inland Revenue, 1999). 210 × 297 mm, xiv + 385 pp, 181 figs, 27 plates, 89 tables. ISBN 0-951-0377-81 paperback. Price originally approx. £25, now available from ULAS, £12.50 plus £3 p&p.

There is much to admire in this comprehensive report on the large-scale excavations at Causeway Lane, a site in the north-eastern part of the walled city mainly investigated in 1991. It advances considerably our understanding of both Roman and medieval Leicester (*cf* the account in John Wacher's *The Towns of Roman Britain*, 2nd edition, 1995, for the Roman period) – not so much in the small percentage of topographical detail which has been added, but particularly in the benefits arising from the sophisticated analysis of the stratigraphical data, allied to that of the artefacts and biological evidence. This is demonstrated by the inclusion of pottery data and various environmental samples from the site among the key assemblages cited in Hilary Cool's recent book, *Eating and Drinking in Roman Britain*.

The site was located on a Roman crossroads as well as subsequently on medieval street frontages, but also, importantly, contained the backyards. There was a good series of second-century residential structures, but in the later part of the Roman period the site was much quarried. One bonus was early Anglo-Saxon occupation, but no evidence was found for the elusive later Saxon Leicester: activity resumed in the eleventh century. The contents of the medieval pits allowed socio-economic aspects and industrial processes to be studied.

The volume is organised clearly and logically. The research contexts of the discoveries are discussed, and strategies and methodologies are set out. The site sequences are lucidly presented, with copious illustration and judicious use of tabulation, which allow those who wish to study them critically. The scale of the work has enabled advances to be made in establishing sequences of local pottery and clay tobacco pipes, while the major collection of Roman artefacts, made up largely of personal adornments and dress accessories, makes some social analysis possible. The vast amount of new evidence on diet and related matters and on environmental conditions alone represents a significant addition to knowledge. In short, this report set new standards for the academic reporting of Leicester's archaeology.

As a result, our picture of the city is more rounded and balanced than previous accounts. Things have moved on further since the volume appeared: as I write this review, preliminary reports are appearing on a huge, three-year programme of excavation in the north-western part of the city that only came to an end in 2006 (see, e.g., *Current Archaeology* issue no. 207). With this larger sample, completion of the urban database, and, one would hope, publication of some of the more important earlier excavations, a real synthesis of Leicester's long archaeological sequence should become possible.

The main authors and their many contributors are to be congratulated on their efforts. The Inland Revenue, which funded the project, can certainly boast of having obtained good value for its outlay (and meanwhile let us rejoice that books, for the moment, continue to be exempt from VAT).

Michael J. Jones

Cool, H. E. M., 2006 *Eating and Drinking in Roman Britain* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press).
Wacher, J., 1995 *The Towns of Roman Britain* (2nd edn, London, Routledge).

Patrick Clay, *The Prehistory of the East Midlands Claylands: Aspects of settlement and land-use from the Mesolithic to the Iron Age in central England*, Leicester Archaeology Monograph 9 (Leicester, University of Leicester School of Archaeology and Ancient History, 2002). 210 × 297mm, ix + 154pp, 38 figs, 36 b/w tables. ISBN 0-9538914-3-7 paperback. £17.

The publication of *Claylands* is a product of protracted gestation, arising out of Clay's involvement with fieldwork in Leicestershire, which led to a realisation that synthesis was required, resulting in doctoral research and culminating in this volume. Growing thus out of personal experience, his regional survey is bound to feel more purposeful than so many doctorates in the field of archaeology, where subjects seem often to have been selected arbitrarily by those merely seeking opportunities of advancement through accumulating qualifications, lacking prior engagement with, let alone empathy for, the matter in hand, and often leaving it behind once that qualification has been gained.

Clay's area is 'essentially one of plough-zone archaeology', and a high proportion of the information available to him comes from the recording of artefacts through fieldwalking, much of it conducted by the community archaeology groups that have been promoted so successfully in Leicestershire. Indeed, virtually all of Clay's material for periods preceding the Iron Age was obtained in that way, while the Iron Age alone is believed to have settlement locations (Clay's 'core areas') strongly represented among cropmarks. It should never be forgotten that, being generally two-dimensional in archaeological terms, such superficial information has restricted interpretative potential. It is particularly relevant to accept that there is a limit to what can be learned from fieldwalking – 'translation of surface scatters into different activities remains problematic' – which is at its most useful when complementing results from other

forms of investigation in the field, especially the more penetrating evidence of excavation. However, there is danger lurking here, for productive fieldwalking, like well-defined cropmarks, tends to signify sites that have become damaged by ploughing and which are therefore liable to be less than fully rewarding, or, worse, may seem deceptively informative, upon excavation. It is important somehow to maintain an appropriate balance between these different suites of evidence, and it is clear from this treatise that the East Midlands claylands have so far experienced imbalance in this respect. If it is to be conducted competently and of an extent appropriate to the investigation of prehistoric settlements, excavation will generally lie beyond the resources of community projects (and the little done in that way within Clay's study-area has been of limited utility). In reality, then, it will be necessary to rely largely upon opportunities presented by threats from development of one sort or another if that balance is to be redressed, introducing still more variables into the equation. There has been some progress in this direction (mostly for the later periods of prehistory, especially the Iron Age, when a 'dramatic increase in activity' is anyway said to be apparent from both cropmarks and artefacts), but there will need to be much more excavation of well-preserved sites if the ongoing accumulation of data by fieldwalkers is to realise its potential for contributing to the complex business of unravelling the history of human usage of these landscapes.

Following recognition that the region's Sites and Monuments Records (now the Historic Environment Record) contain a 'lack of data of sufficient quality to enable detailed questions to be asked' – in fact 'more questions than answers' – and proceeding through some relatively intensive case-studies, the impact of the various shortcomings emerges most forcibly in the final chapter, aimed at pulling together the strands of the information already rehearsed. Such words as 'difficult', 'problematic', and 'elusive' recur frequently as Clay makes an honest attempt to evaluate what has been accomplished so far, doubtless reflecting his frustration at the dearth of reliable, or even tenable, inferences. He dabbles with comparable cases in other parts of England, but this is not entirely fruitful as there are inevitable uncertainties and inconsistencies (not all are even located on clayland). When all is said, his deduction that the claylands were 'neither avoided nor consistently exploited during prehistory' and that this is 'not, in itself, surprising' seems to sum it up.

In a final stab at putting the fieldwalking results into some general context, Clay resorts to notions of 'symbolic significance' and 'ritual practices' – it is seemingly obligatory for any prehistorian nowadays to pay at least lip-service to such speculation – but this sits uncomfortably with much in the mundane remainder of these 153 pages, involving a plethora of 'woulds', 'mays' and 'mights', and these rather give the game away. The local evidence can only be interpreted in this fashionable manner if viewed in the light of ideas formulated, often imaginatively, elsewhere, and it is doubtful that this can yet offer any useful insight into prehistoric life on the East Midlands claylands. Actually, reservations over such interpretations run deeper than that final gloss, for it is necessary even to take issue with some of the more fundamental assumptions made at an earlier

stage in the thesis – for example, it is supposed (at first cautiously, but then with greater abandon in identifying ‘ceremonial areas’) that ring-ditches recorded as cropmarks can be equated with ‘burial mounds of Later Neolithic or Earlier Bronze Age date’, but it is known that such rings can ensue from features created for numerous other reasons at various other times, ranging right through to post-medieval and modern centuries. Such ambiguities can only make the task of interpreting from superficial impressions yet more frustrating, but this is no good reason to ignore viable alternatives.

Notwithstanding the caveats, Clay’s account of the claylands is sure to be welcomed by his fellow fieldworkers, providing them with a thorough rehearsal of knowledge, much of it laced with statistics, and reflecting matters as they stood at about the opening of the present century (the bibliography includes few items dated 2000, none later), so defining a threshold for new approaches and ideas. As with any such work of archaeological synthesis, *Claylands* is destined to be superseded as fieldwork proceeds, for this is certain to point up the frailties of both the data that lay at Clay’s disposal and the deductions that he has ventured. Of course, all such synthesists, or at any rate those who remain motivated by their subject, must live in hope that progress will quickly be achieved, even if this means that their publication will soon become outdated. In this instance, it’s a fair bet that Clay’s ‘eponymous obsession’ will find him deeply involved in that very process of outdating, no doubt also in further updating, as the gestation of his research into prehistoric settlement and land-use of the claylands continues.

Graeme Guilbert

Nicholas J. Cooper, *The Archaeology of Rutland Water: Excavations at Empingham in the Gwash Valley, Rutland, 1967–73 and 1990*, Leicester Archaeology Monographs 6 (Leicester, University of Leicester, 2000). 210 × 293 mm, ix + 162 pp, 66 figs, 11 plates, 41 tables. ISBN-0-953-8914-0-2 paperback. Price £19.50 inc. p&p, or £16.50 if collected.

The primary purpose of this report is to publish six excavations that were carried out around the time of the construction of Rutland Water in the late 1960s and early 1970s. They were relatively small scale and under-resourced and the first director, Malcolm Dean, was tragically killed in 1970. Sam Gorin picked up his mantle but was unable to see the work through to publication, although his help in preparing this report is acknowledged. This has appeared after the reports on the associated major sites of Whitwell (Todd 1981) and Empingham II (Timby 1996). It could therefore be seen merely as a tidying up exercise which ties up the loose ends.

This report is however far more than that. The opportunity is taken to include work carried out at Tickencote in 1990 (Site 7), as well as a programme of fieldwalking at Empingham and Hambleton between 1990 and 1994, designed to place the sites within a wider context. This results in a final chapter setting out the archaeological development of the Gwash Valley up to the Norman Conquest and listing a total of 55 sites. This is bound to be a major resource for anyone studying the archaeology of Rutland in years to come.

The evidence from the sites, often inadequate if judged by modern standards, is thoroughly reviewed to extract the maximum of information. Although there was evidence from more than one period at some of the sites, four (1, 2, 5, and 6) were predominantly Roman and three (3, 4 and 7) Anglo-Saxon. With the exception of Site 3, the Empingham I Anglo-Saxon cemetery and settlement, the finds from the sites are aggregated to provide meaningful bodies of data, although they can be traced back to individual sites and contexts, where known.

Although the lithic evidence extends back to the Mesolithic, the earliest structural evidence is from three Iron Age round houses (Site 4), the only such structures found in the valley. On two of the sites (1 and 2) aisled buildings, usually seen as subsidiary, seem to have been the main dwelling house in the Roman period, supporting the theory that this may be a Corieltauvian feature. One (Site 2) was subsequently the site of a middle Saxon Christian cemetery, which may suggest its re-use as a church or chapel. The Anglo-Saxon evidence is predominently from the Early period and throws interesting light on the interface between this and the Late Roman period and the relationship of Anglo-Saxon cemeteries and settlements, so often investigated separately.

The Roman pottery is the first assemblage from Rutland to have quantitative techniques of analysis applied to it, as none was discarded at the time of excavation. The small finds include some very important items, such as the wooden patten, or sandal, from the Roman well (Site 1), and the unusual quiverful of arrows from an Anglo-Saxon grave (Site 3). It is tragic that the important seventh-century grave group (Site 2) is represented only by a brass pin, set with a cabochon in a silver mount at its head, the only one of its type known from Leicestershire and Rutland. The associated finds disappeared at the time of discovery without having been properly recorded.

The site descriptions and the finds reports have, in general, been well related. However there is a fascinating discussion of the possible ritual nature of the Roman well contents on Site 6 in the animal bone report (pp. 135–6), which is not reflected in the site description and discussion, where the relevant deposits are specifically referred to as ‘domestic rubbish’ (pp. 51–2). There is no index, but because of the structure of the report this is not as much of a problem as it might otherwise be.

There is much of importance in this volume and all those involved in bringing it to publication after such a long interval, particularly Nick Cooper, who both edited it and was the main contributor, deserve our gratitude.

Robert Rutland

Timby, J. R., 1996 — *The Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Empingham II, Rutland,* Oxbow Monograph 70 (Oxford, Oxbow).

Todd, M., 1981 — *The Iron Age and Roman Settlement at Whitwell*, Leicestershire Museums, Art Galleries and Record Services, Archaeological Report 1 (Leicester).

Bowman, Paul, and Liddle, Peter (ed.), *Leicestershire Landscapes*, Leicestershire Museums Archaeological Fieldwork Group Monograph 1 (Leicester, Leicestershire Museums Archaeological Fieldwork Group, 2004). 210 × 297 mm, vii + 171 pp, 114 figs including maps and b/w photographs. ISBN-0-95482-000-2 paperback. Price £25 plus p&p (non-members; LMAFG members enjoy a discount).

Leicestershire Landscapes presents a staging post rather than final destination in the exploration of Leicestershire landscape archaeology. It is an interim report, a statement of the level of archaeological knowledge in the county at the time of its compilation (2001–4), and its contents must be judged accordingly. There are inevitably omissions – for example any consideration of the post-medieval and early modern landscape – and themes which remain underdeveloped – for instance the impact of Scandinavian settlement – but in the context of this volume such lacunae are understandable if still regrettable. Its authors, drawn from a wide range of professional and non-professional backgrounds, are all clearly aware of the shortcomings of their evidence, but to their credit many draw our attention not only to what we do know but what we do not. Concluding sections in many of the chapters which signal possible future avenues of research, designed to flesh out the current skeleton, are extremely useful and clearly begin to set out the framework for any follow-up volume.

Ostensibly, the volume represents the product of twenty-five years of coordinated field survey carried out by local fieldwork groups across the county (supplemented by the growth in developer-funded archaeology). Community archaeology was born in Leicestershire and its achievements and continuing activities remain the envy of all those working in other counties. The results of extensive and systematic fieldwalking campaigns form both the foreground and backdrop to new reconsiderations of the processes of landscape change in the county. If the debt owed to these fieldworkers was ever in doubt, one need only compare the evidence presented in this volume with that which was available for Peter Liddle's 1982 publication *Leicestershire Archaeology – The Present State of Knowledge*. The authors of *Leicestershire Landscapes* include the architects of this approach to landscape archaeology, together with many of those actively involved in its enactment on the ground. It is a volume that could not have been written without their endeavours. Since it is written by those most closely involved in the creation of the new data sets, this provides a certain immediacy often lacking in more scholarly works of synthesis. The text is written in language accessible to a wider audience, the information it contains broken down through the use of subheadings (occasionally irreverent in tone) into digestible chunks. In so doing the book succeeds in that most difficult of tasks, writing for a varied readership including the well informed who have been, or who remain, involved in the project, together with those intrigued by the subject but not yet fully engaged. It is the latter, of course, who form the constituency from which new fieldworkers will be drawn, and who will ultimately ensure the continuation of this kind of research into the future. In the end, the success of this book will

be measured in the number of recruits it brings in rather than the opinions of its reviewers.

After a miscellany of short papers which place community archaeology in historical context and showcase some of the more recent work of particular groups, the book follows a chronological structure which leads from the lower Palaeolithic through to the end of the Middle Ages. It is not alone in adopting this approach, which was used in two other East Midland-focused publications which appeared in 2004 – *Trent Valley Landscapes*, which examines the flood plain and valley slopes of this major English river from its source in Staffordshire through to its Lincolnshire mouth via Derbyshire, Leicestershire, and Nottinghamshire, and *The Archaeology of Northamptonshire*, which presents a summary of the archaeological evidence for human activity across that county. All are works of synthesis despite their varied geneses: *Trent Valley Landscapes* was predominantly the work of the Trent and Peak Archaeological Unit and funded by the Aggregate Levy Sustainability Fund; *The Archaeology of Northamptonshire* was a project led by the county archaeological society and prompted by the English Heritage Regional Research Frameworks; and *Leicestershire Landscapes* is a celebration of a quarter of a century of community archaeology fieldwork. Together they reflect the more general moment in landscape studies centred on the millennium which saw the discipline both looking backwards and ordering the evidence that then existed, and into the future to establish the new research agenda.

In all these volumes chronological bracketing becomes both their strength and weakness. A strength since access to information relating to particular timeframes is easily gained, and direct comparison between counties and regions is made possible; a weakness since any division of the developmental continuum of landscapes imposes false and often arbitrary breaks which serve to accentuate discontinuities and revolutionary moments and to diminish evidence for continuities and slow evolutionary processes. In *Leicester Landscapes* this is further exacerbated by the editorial decision to split some of these period studies still further. Thus the Roman urban and rural contexts are treated separately, yet neither could have existed without the other, surely demanding that they should be studied together. That said, Cooper's analysis of Roman ceramics goes a long way towards rectifying this aberration. Equally, Bowman's closely argued observations regarding medieval villages and their territories, presented as 'Part I' and 'Part II', might have been better assimilated and more use might have been made of the field evidence here.

Overall, the chapters relating to landscapes of the first millennium and first half of the second millennium AD are better handled that those which cover the prehistoric period. These tend to be simply reiterations of information gathered for the English Heritage Research Frameworks documents. Consequently we are provided with lists of sites which appear to punctuate an otherwise bland and two-dimensional landscape. There is an obsession with height above Ordnance Datum and distance from water in the analysis of site placement, but no enterprise is shown in extrapolating from this patterning. The prehistoric landscape, it would seem, was physically determined by economic rather than social agents. Why was

the opportunity not taken to look at Leicestershire's prehistoric landscapes in the light of more recent theoretical approaches? People make landscapes, *and* landscapes make people: the relationship is symbiotic, not one way as presented here. These are criticisms which can also be levelled at those chapters dealing with the historic period. Squires' chapter on the parks and woodlands of Leicestershire, to take just one example, is reluctant to explore the social implications of emparkment (landscape as a medium for elite social expression) privileging instead the potential economic value of these preserves to their constructors. This is not to single out *Leicestershire Landscapes* for the narrowness of its approach; *Trent Valley Landscapes* and *The Archaeology of Northamptonshire* offer the same limited perspective. Indeed this might characterise much of the reviewer's own work too!

There are some notable highlights. Cooper's chapter on Roman pottery provides an easy-to-follow methodology which encourages fieldworkers to look beyond the depositional patterns of individual artefacts, to treat assemblages from occupation sites and from the fields as a whole and as carrying meaning. If widely adopted, which must be hoped, such analyses will certainly lead to a deeper understanding of social and economic activities within the landscape. Monckton's chapter on the environmental evidence is also successful in highlighting the importance of sampling and what strategies to adopt. Bowman's fiscal and tenurial model for medieval territorial development in general, and open-field farming in particular, is a particularly useful and provocative addition to the growing number of studies in this field.

Leicestershire is fortunate in the quantity and quality of the archaeological evidence now available and this volume attests to the value of both intensive and extensive survey on a county-wide basis. The collection of empirical, mappable evidence will thankfully continue but this should not be seen as an end in itself. Leicestershire is well-placed to become a test-bed for new ideas: to understand, for example, 'ordinary' Neolithic landscapes beyond Wessex or Orkney monumentality; or to replace its neighbour Northamptonshire as the focus for the study of medieval village origins. Above all, the data is now there to explore landscapes of all periods as theatres of social interaction, not just economic constructs. *Leicestershire Landscapes* stands at this threshold. By providing such a succinct summary of where we stand, it provides the space and impetus to go forward in new directions. It is a book, then, that had to be written, which should be read, and from which readers are urged to build on its foundations.

Richard Jones

Liddle, P., 1982a *Leicestershire Archaeology – The Present State of Knowledge, Vol. 1, To the End of the Roman Period*, Leicestershire Museums, Art Galleries and Records Service Archaeological Report 4 (Leicester, Leicestershire County Council).

Liddle, P., 1982b *Leicestershire Archaeology – The Present State of Knowledge, Vol. 2, Anglo-Saxon and Medieval Periods*, Leicestershire Museums, Art Galleries and Records Service Archaeological Report 5 (Leicester, Leicestershire County Council).

Knight, D. and Howard, A. J., 2004 *Trent Valley Landscapes: The archaeology of 500,000 years of change* (King's Lynn, Heritage Marketing and Publications).

Tingle, M. (ed.), 2004 *The Archaeology of Northamptonshire* (Northampton, Northamptonshire Archaeological Society).

Joanna Story, Jill Bourne, and Richard Buckley (eds), *Leicester Abbey: Medieval History, Archaeology, and Manuscript Studies* (Leicester, The Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society, 2006). 200 × 255 mm, pp. xiii + 314, numerous illustrations, 6 in colour. ISBN 0-9542388-1-8 / 978-0-9542388-1-0 hardback. £25 plus £5 p&p.

When Margery Kempe, arguably England's most debated medieval mystic, was accused of heresy in Leicester in 1417, it was the Abbot of Leicester who presided at her trial in All Saints Church.[1] With hardly a trace left standing of the once imposing abbey buildings (reconstructed in John Finnie's painting, Colour Plate A, opposite p. 8), it is all the more difficult to appreciate fully the abbey's importance in the town's medieval life and more widely. Its Augustinian canons owned the town's churches, with the exception of St Margaret's, an episcopal prebend. They were therefore both beneficiaries of its religious tourism (including pilgrimage to the miraculous Rood in St Martin's, where Kempe's pious hysteria got her into trouble) and opponents of its vigorous Lollardy. Ironically, the Bishop of Lincoln who acted as Kempe's guarantor, Philip Repyngdon, a former Abbot of Leicester, had been an admirer of John Wyclif when a canon there (Geoffrey Martin, p. 123, Teresa Webber, p. 140). The canons were also significant players in the town's economy, as several contributors make clear. In national affairs the canons, 'one of the wealthiest Augustinian [chapters] in the country' (Richard Buckley, p. 1) 'were in constant touch with a distinguished and busy household [Leicester castle and The Newarke, a favourite residence of earls of Leicester and dukes of Lancaster], always close to the royal court' (Martin, p. 119). Whether for its local or wider importance, no future work on the abbey or its community can be undertaken without reference to this volume, more a collection of research reports than of discursive essays. Individually and together they represent major steps forward.[2]

Some reflect important recent discoveries. David Crouch, for example, in 'Early charters and patrons of Leicester Abbey' (pp. 225–88), provides the Latin texts (with summaries in English) of 94 documents, 80 of them printed for the first

[1] Sanford Brown Meech (ed.), *The Book of Margery Kempe*, Vol. 1, Early English Text Society, Original Series 212 (London, Oxford University Press, 1940), pp. 114–7.

[2] Existing scholarship has been based largely on A. Hamilton Thompson, *The Abbey of St Mary of the Meadows, Leicester* (Leicester, Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society, 1949). For an outline of the administration of the abbey estates, see R. H. Hilton, *The Economic Development of Some Leicestershire Estates in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1949). W. K. Bedington's Presidential Address 1930–1 to the Leicester Literary and Philosophical Society and published in that society's *Transactions*, Vol. 32 (1931), pp. 5–24, summarised his own and others' excavations to that date, described also by Levi Fox, *Leicester Abbey: History and Description* (Leicester, 1938, 2nd edn 1949, 4th edn 1971).

time and most of which have only recently come to light, including rediscovery of the text of the lost foundation charter. As Crouch points out (p. 227), 'we are therefore now in a far better position . . . to assess the politics and patronage behind the foundation', the date of which he has pushed back to 1139/40 (p. 228).[3] His discussion of these issues (pp. 228–33) must now be required reading. Since many of the documents, the latest dated 1265, throw light on people and circumstances in places other than Leicester where the canons had property, this contribution is a goldmine for local and economic historians. Likewise, David Postles, 'On the outside looking in: the Abbey's urban property in Leicester' (pp. 193–217), provides a new resource for students of Leicester's medieval society and economy by transcribing the so-called 'Geryn's Rental' of 1341 with a parallel English translation. His engaging commentary gives valuable insights into important aspects of town and suburbs. Anthony Squires, 'The landscape of Leicester Abbey's home demesne lands to the Dissolution' (pp. 75–94), interprets a recently discovered map of 1613 of the abbey's former demesne estate by William Senior (Colour Plates B, between pp. 8 and 9). An artefact of additional interest to students of early modern cartography, the map provides for the first time the means of exploring the estate's growth, its influence on the northern part of Leicester, and the landscape surrounding the abbey precinct.

Though the site of the abbey's church remains to be properly explored, the conventual context has never been better understood thanks to the archaeology in recent years, particularly as led by Buckley. His report, together with Steve Jones, Peter Liddle, Michael Derrick, and James Meek, 'The archaeology of Leicester Abbey' (pp. 1–67), provides an essential backdrop to specialist medieval studies and a foundation for future work. Among its achievements is a detailed investigation of a Leicester landmark, Abbot Penny's precinct wall, a 'remarkable' late-medieval survival (p. 21). It is matched for the post-medieval period by a second report by Buckley, with Steve Jones, Paul Courtney, and David Smith, 'Leicester Abbey after the Dissolution' (pp. 95–118). This provides for the first time a detailed analysis of Cavendish House, the late sixteenth-century mansion which incorporated the abbey's gatehouse. Examination of the remains of the latter (which perhaps became the abbot's lodgings) tempts Buckley *et al* to date its brickwork to the late fourteenth century, a use of brick 'perhaps a hundred years earlier than elsewhere in the county', notably, of course, Kirby Muxloe Castle (1480–4) (pp. 38–9).

The breadth of scholarship in the Middle Ages is now better understood than in the past, and from it a better appreciation of lay as well as clerical literacy and learning. Religious houses played a crucial role in education and intellectual enquiry, so that the central part of the volume, devoted to the abbey's library, alone guarantees an international readership. Webber describes 'The books of Leicester Abbey' (pp. 127–46), of which there were by the late fifteenth century

[3] David Crouch, 'The foundation of Leicester Abbey, and other problems', *Midland History* 12 (1987), pp. 1–13.

about 940 for study and devotion, and some 170 liturgical books (p. 127). Its holdings were unusual in the large number of medical books, and, 'perhaps most striking' for Webber, the quantity of sermons, penitentials and other pastoral handbooks (p. 131). On this evidence, here was a group of clerics who took seriously their preaching and care of the laity. As Joanna Story remarks in her Introduction (pp. ix-xiii), the abbey's record of its books is nationally important because unparalleled among British medieval library catalogues (p. x). For example, Michael Gullick reports, in 'The binding descriptions in the library catalogue from Leicester Abbey' (pp. 147–72), that it contains a good number of such descriptions of more than local significance (p. 147). Only sixteen of the abbey's books are known to survive (Webber, p. 127) and twenty-four manuscripts. As a valuable guide to the latter, Gullick and Webber have compiled a 'Summary catalogue of surviving manuscripts from Leicester Abbey' (pp. 173–92).

Though not noted for actors on the national stage (an exception was Repyngdon, friend and chaplain to Henry IV), the abbey nevertheless produced some erudite and engaging characters. Martin's 'Henry Knighton and Leicester Abbey' (pp. 119–26) places an important English chronicler of the fourteenth century in his home environment (Knighton was a canon *circa* 1370 to *circa* 1396, an acquaintance of John of Gaunt and senior members of his household, p. 123), while Anthony Roe explores 'Abbot Sadyngton of Leicester Abbey and onychomancy: an episode of clerical divination in the fifteenth century' (pp. 217–24). Onychomancy employs finger-nails, in this case smeared with holy oil, as a form of scrying, the resolution of doubtful cases through a seer's discernment of images in polished surfaces.

Roe's placing of Sadyngton's use of magic in a long and widespread tradition is among many excursions into fascinating areas which emphasise the volume's value and wide potential readership. Another is David Dawson's investigation of a material gem, 'An incense-boat cover from Leicester Abbey' (pp. 69–74, and Colour Plate D, between pp. 8 and 9). This is the hinged lid of a Limoges enamel incense-boat, found in the sacristy and dating to the thirteenth century.

There is not space to mention all the arresting items of information which struck the reviewer. Learning from Postles of the 'clustered spinsters' who were tenants of the abbey in the Northgate suburb, he now wants to learn more of the phenomenon on the outskirts of other medieval towns. Postles' contribution also prompts the desire to learn more about suburban rents of cocks, hens and capons, since wood-hen rents were common in medieval English forests. The canons' rights in Leicester forest, including firewood and pig pasture, are itemised here in a previously unprinted charter (Crouch, No. 24, 1192 ×1204, p. 249) and it is often overlooked that the forest bounds once extended almost to the town itself. The townsfolk certainly had rights there. In another document (Crouch, No. 58, 1255, p. 269), 'the earl reserves the right to hunt over the land he has granted' – woodland and open country between Leicester and Anstey. Incidentally, these charter references provide further confirmation that forests were not exclusively royal.

Another nugget of more than local significance is the tantalising reference in the foundation charter (p. 234) to the earl's gift of a carucate 'at the North Bridge' '*which once lay at the mint*'. This will be of considerable interest to numismatists because it may indicate a moneyer of the earl, if so further eroding previous assumptions that such moneyers were normally housed within castle complexes, and casting additional light on moneyers' urban locations generally (Timothy Crafter, *pers. comm.*). Whether or not this was a mint shared by more than one moneyer as sometimes was the case, its location is additional evidence for the northern suburb's economic vitality at this period.

As to the book's production, the print quality is excellent. One might quibble over the choice of brown as the monochrome colour for the cover illustration (taken from a gloomy engraving of a watercolour of the abbey by J. M. W. Turner) or details of the arrangement of contents. More unfortunate is the lack of a list of illustrations, some of which, such as the recently discovered map of 1613 of the former demesne estate, are published for the first time and deserve notice. The outline map of medieval Leicester and the Abbey of St Mary of the Meadows (p. xii, fig. 1), and that of the abbey's urban tenements (p. 194, fig. 1) are among several to which students of Leicester will often want to refer. Also on the plus side, Rory Naismith deserves credit for his excellent indices of people and places.

Crucially, this volume takes forward existing scholarship and signposts areas for further research and publication. These should surely include consideration for inclusion in the society's new Record Series of a modern edition of Prior William Charyte's Rental of 1477, last printed in John Nichols' *History and Antiquities of the County of Leicester*, completed in 1815. Then there is the matter of the conventual church. Its site was stripped in the 1929–32 excavations without detailed recording and the general assumption has been that the archaeological layers were destroyed (p. 65). However, a main purpose then was to recover the plan of the church, and some underlying layers may survive. Major outstanding puzzles include the origins of the church of St Mary de Castro, whose college of canons provided the initial staffing of the abbey, and the character of its five carucates north of the town on which the abbey was built. Was the choice of the abbey site no more than an 'invasion' of the Bishop's Fee, the lands of the Bishop of Lincoln which included St Margaret's church and Leicester's East Field as well as meadows (Postles, p. 195), or was it part of a reconciliation between earl and bishop (Crouch, p. 230)? Since carucates were normally bundled in duodecimal units and fractions, the reference to the earl's gift of a carucate 'at the North Bridge' raises the possibility that the abbey lands derived from an earlier single six-carucate unit.

The character of the abbey site before the period of the abbey's foundation remains a mystery. What was the nature of the *biggin* or 'building' whose memory was preserved in the name of lands called *Bigins* recorded in 1323 and shown as two closes west of the abbey on Senior's map? Squires points out that they lay on the 'very ancient line' of the post-Roman Fosse Way (p. 83). Did this structure predate the abbey? What was the context of the 'curious Roman ampullae' found in the abbey grounds and exhibited to the society's members in 1855 (p. 4)?

'Tanks' uncovered in the Outer Court in 1923–5 were then identified as 'Late Roman' from coins found in the vicinity in the 1860s (pp. 4–5, 64–5), and interpreted as including a dyeing tank with a concrete floor. How do they relate to the Roman box flue tiles found in 1923 (p. 8)? W. K. Bedingfield felt the latter lent weight to theories of a Roman site within the precinct. A tank with a concrete floor suggests an industrial process to Buckley *et al* (p. 65), but they point out that dating is difficult, and a structure designed to hold water could be adapted to other uses. What became known as the St John's Stone lay only a short distance from the abbey. It and other shreds of evidence hint at a ritualised landscape. Is it possible that St Mary de Castro came into possession of the abbey site in part at least because of earlier religious associations?

Graham Jones

John Langton and Graham Jones (eds), *Forest and Chases of England and Wales c.1500 – c.1850: Towards a Survey and Analysis* (Oxford, St John's College Research Centre, 2005). 210 × 260 mm, xviii + 118 pp, 25 figs including maps. ISBN 0-9544975-2-X paperback. Distributed by Oxbow Books. £25.

This volume brings to print papers delivered at a forum held at St John's College, Oxford in April 2005. The meeting followed a submission to the Economic and Social Research Council for funding for a five-year programme and the papers (several by Leicestershire and Leicestershire-related scholars) are more proposals for lines of investigation rather than items of completed research.

The basic premise behind the study is that chases and royal forests of England and Wales in early modern times are little known yet their legacy still exerts a strong influence on the modern landscape. Even the precise number of forests and chases is unknown – indeed, the supposed total rose by one during the course of the forum – and there is still no clear definition for each of the terms. Our knowledge of royal forests, at least, is inclined to be trapped with narrow legal and economic academic studies on the one hand and the 'Norman Yoke' and 'Robin Hood' versions of history on the other.

The seventeen short papers, only some of which are highlighted below, clearly indicate the wide interdisciplinary approach adopted. At the outset, Graham Jones outlined problems by pointing out, for example, that the poor level of present knowledge means that the extent of forests and chases across England and Wales has never accurately been determined; this is because the boundaries in very many areas are unknown. An extensive trawl through a very wide range of potential sources was required. Elizabeth Baigent explained the background to maps of forests and chases and pointed to the inadequacies – at least for present purposes – of early forest surveys. The value of the details of the eighteenth-century Parliamentary Surveys of Forests – a rich and little-used source – was explained by David Fletcher. Similarly neglected are the records of the swanimotes, woodmotes and courts of 'free miners'.

Of the social aspects of the study, there was an investigation by Ruth Paley into the role of the peers of the realm during the eighteenth century, the sunset years of

many royal forests. Sylvia Pinches considered the effects of disafforestation on the customary rights of the more humble members of society and on the creation of forest-based charities. In turn, David Smith looked at the place of the forest in the lives of 'those outlandish persons calling themselves Egiptians'. A study of Cranborne Chase by Caroline Cheeseman showed that forests also became associated with 'thieves, poachers, vagabonds and coppice spoilers'. Moreover, the remoteness of forests and chases, their extra parochial status and/or position in an ecclesiastical 'peculiar', made them a focus of dissent towards the established church.

On more physical matters, an outline of ecological change as seen against ownership at Cranborne Chase was outlined by Caroline Cheeseman. The supply of and demand for woodland fuel before and during the rise of coal was discussed by Paul Warde. The same writer ventured and discussed some statistics regarding the changing price of fuel wood, its thermal energy content and the supposed levels of consumption of people at different levels of society in Prussia between 1799 and 1800. His treatment of the supposed calorific content and consumption of fuel wood did not impress your reviewer. The move from woodmandship to forestry in the forest of Dean, where woodlands were planted towards a specific purpose, was reviewed by Judith Tsouvalis. Finally, aspects of the current state of the landscape were brought up to date with special reference to Bringewood Chase near Ludlow, part of the Forestry Commision's 'Mortimer's Forest' (David Lovelace), and the much studied Rockingham Forest in Northamptonshire (Glenn Foard, David Hall and Tracey Britnell).

The papers were followed by a round table discussion which produced some additional interesting and important observations. There was a recognition that the broad interdisciplinary approach had spread the net too widely and that there was a need to focus on a limited number of carefully selected topics. Not all forests could be looked at in detail. Also, there was a danger in considering too lightly what had gone before the start date of *circa* 1500, even though too many of these early forest studies had been drawn tightly along legal and/or economic lines. Conservation measures of various kinds, for example, could only be effective if one drew on knowledge of how a situation had come about. In addition, there was a need to emphasise that the present project was not confined to musings of Oxford-related academics; work with other parties would produce a body of data which would be available to many bodies, including planners who would welcome the use of it (one hopes).

Seventeen papers are surely sufficient for a weekend conference but one is left wondering why so little mention was made of medieval deer parks. Large numbers were closely linked to forests and chases and so many physical remains – some major – survive on the modern landscape. Also, there was very little consideration of the physical presence of woodland which, after deer, is probably the second most important feature of the forest. So many of our present Sites of Special Scientific Interest and other areas rich in wildlife are linked to the woodlands which were, and in some cases are, part of a royal forest.

This is a handsome volume, pleasant to use and easy to read, yet it shows signs of having been produced in haste. The illustrations vary very much in quality and

those between pages 90 and 91 are poorly produced and perhaps ought not to have been included. The reference numbers in the text to figures too often do not match those beneath the item themselves. Finally, why was the coverage of Wales so meagre?

Unfortunately, the submission for funding to the ESRC was unsuccessful and one is left wondering whether the individual contributors will be able to continue their work. One hopes they will because there is an enormous amount of interest in many of the subjects, whether or not they remain linked to the original goals of the topic.

Drawbacks apart, this project is a very worthwhile venture and one hopes that perhaps an alternative source of funding may still be found. In the meantime a reading of this volume is strongly recommended.

Anthony Squires

SHORTER NOTICES

David Stocker and Paul Everson, *Summoning St Michael: Early Romanesque Towers in Lincolnshire* (Oxford, Oxbow Books, 2006). 227 × 350 mm, x + 316 pp, 314 figs. ISBN 978-184217-123-1 / 184217-123-1. £60 hardback.

Nikolaus Pevsner's comment that in Leicestershire 'Norman W[est] towers are, on the whole, of less interest' may technically be true in terms of their numbers and, as Pevsner intended, in strict comparison with the county's Norman central towers, though these, too, are occasional.[4] Stocker and Everson's conclusions about the distinctive early Romanesque west towers in one of our neighbouring counties should convince their Leicestershire readers that architecturally and historically the towers at Belgrave and Tugby, pre-eminently, are potentially full of interest and that they should look again at their own parish churches for clues to dating which Pevsner may have missed. The authors' 'Lincolnshire tower' is square in plan, and in elevation has a lower stage taller than, and typically separated by a pronounced string from, that of the bell-chamber. The latter has a twin-arched window opening, with a central dividing shaft topped with a capital, often elaborated. The authors believe these openings had a clear symbolism to do with the liturgical and ritual reception of the dead, probably brought into the space below the tower. 'Bells represented an invocation to heaven . . . visible and audible symbols of prayers for the dead' (p. 86) whose protector and conductor was the archangel Michael, as depicted in an early twelfth-century sculpted shaft at Stoke Dry, Rutland (frontispiece) and, as the authors might have added, in the tympanum at Hallaton. This beautifully produced volume not only develops this original theme and excites local investigation. It is also, in its central gazetteer of

[4] Nikolaus Pevsner, rev. Elizabeth Williamson, *The Buildings of England, Leicestershire and Rutland* (2nd edn reprinted with corrections, 1998, republished New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2003), p. 18.

60 case studies, a model in detecting and mapping probable manorial cores and greens in the plans of medieval villages, as well as identifying architectural clues in minute detail.

Roy Palmer, *Folklore of Leicestershire and Rutland* (revised edn, Stroud, Tempus, 2002). 157 × 234 mm, 288 pp, many illustrations. ISBN 0-7524-2468-8, paperback. £14.99.
[R. N. Trubshaw], *Leicestershire Legends retold by Black Annis* (Wymeswold, Heart of Albion Press, 2004). 140 × 216 mm, xiv + 99 pp. ISBN 1-872883-77 X paperback. £6.95.

First published in 1988 by Sycamore Press, Wymondham, Roy Palmer's overview of custom and legend remains an informative appetiser for more detailed reading and hopefully more investigation of the type exemplified by Bob Trubshaw's study of 'Black Annis and her bower: the making of a legend' in Volume 80 of these *Transactions* (2006, pp. 43–60) (*cf*. the account here on pp. 247–9). The contents are organised thematically in twelve sections including 'work', 'sports and pastimes', 'fairs and markets', 'calendar customs', and 'haunting and witchcraft'. As with many other Tempus titles, references are either few or absent but the author's knowledge is encyclopaedic and his style engaging.

Much fuller source and bibliographic references for many of the legends mentioned by Palmer appear in Trubshaw's short but expert introduction to this field. The accounts are written for the non-specialist, crafted in Leicestershire dialect (a guide to which appears on pp. viii-xii) and vigorously illustrated by Jenny Clarke.

Mary Essinger, *In My Fashion: Starting work in the heyday of Leicester's knitwear factories* (Wymeswold, Heart of Albion Press, 2005). 211 × 211 mm, vii + 79 pp, line and half-tone illustrations. ISBN 1-872883-79-6 paperback. £7.95.

Short personal memoirs have become a stock-in-trade for local publishers, a companion in print for the growing body of oral history archives. This account by a school-leaver who started work in 1949 cutting cotton vests for the Cherub factory, Leicester, then went on to work in a dress factory and progressed to the design office, is among the better written examples published locally. Such social perspectives, when taken together, will make an important contribution to the materials for a definitive history of the town's hosiery and knitwear industry. Next year sees the fiftieth anniversary of the closely researched but periodically disjointed articles in the Victoria County History.[5]

GRJ

[5] C. Ashworth, 'Hosiery manufacture', in R. A. McKinley (ed.), *A History of the County of Leicester, 4, The City of Leicester*, the Victoria History of the Counties of England (London, Oxford University Press, 1958), pp. 303–14, takes the story from 1835. Previous periods are dealt with by E. W. J. Kerridge, pp. 90–2 (1509–1660), and by W. A. Jenkins and C. T. Smith, pp. 168–79 (1660–1835).

Correction

A mishap at the proof-reading stage obscured the price of Ian Forrest's *The Detection of Heresy in Late Medieval England* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 2005), reviewed in the volume for 2006. It is, in fact, £50.