

## REVIEWS

of the site and the non-ceramic finds. However, interpretation is tentative, as if the authors are not too keen commit themselves. This may be due to the apparently unreliable quality of the Early Medieval archaeology of Lincoln. Confident interpretation might come from the examination of further Early Medieval assemblages.

Although these volumes do not complement each other methodologically, they do share an editorial policy that has produced them in a cramped, unjustified two-column format. They are unattractive books, illustrating the modern myth that making publications dull-looking and difficult to read also makes them cheap. Although half the size of "Flaxengate", "Silver Street" still costs twelve pounds, only six pounds less; how genuine is this economy? The actual contents of each, although clearly produced by much thoughtful effort, are in reality nothing more than an uncritical presentation of information. There needs to be more discussion of the meaning of all this data if archaeology, and archaeological publication, is to progress. Neither of these publications is a good advertisement for the quality of archaeological presentation.

These volumes do at least represent successive steps in the development of ceramic studies in Lincoln. The authors demonstrate a genuine concern in consistency and accuracy. A commendable unflinching recognition of the responsibility to develop and improve systems of definition and analysis is apparent in the Silver Street publication. The authors of these books have integrity. That should be recognised and applauded.

Duncan H. Brown

**J. Stopford, *Recording medieval floor tiles*** (Practical Handbook in Archaeology No. 10, C.B.A. 1990), pp. iv + 46, 12 figs, 11 plates. ISBN 1 872414 03 6. Price £4.95.

This is an instruction manual for a recording system devised by Dr Jennie Stopford, the fruit of extensive work on the tiles from Bordesley Abbey and Yorkshire. In particular it is based on the study of over 1000 tiles from Bordesley, and concentrates on

those characteristics that she there found most useful in distinguishing production groups, which she rightly emphasises as the main purpose of such study.

These characteristics (which largely correspond to those listed in the *Guidelines for the recording and publication of medieval tiles* issued by the Census of Medieval Tiles in Britain) she identifies, analysing them into 'descriptive variations' (glaze, fabric, shape, surface treatment, manufacturing faults, keys, decorative treatment), 'quantitative variables' (dimensions, degree of bevel, presence and position of nail holes) and 'qualitative variables' (wear, fragment size). For her primary grouping, however, she follows the familiar division into Plain, Decorated and Mosaic Floor Tiles, for each of which categories she has devised a separate recording form. On the forms the information is entered under the headings Shape & Size, Upper Surface, Sides & Core and Lower Surface 'so that each tile only has to be turned round and over once', which suggests an awesome efficiency of approach that breathes through the whole work.

The system is comprehensive and highly structured, and detailed instructions are given, down to recommended abbreviations to be used when completing the record forms. Full-size samples of these are included, and also templates for systems for recording the approximate size of fragments and measuring the angle of bevel.

The proof of a system such as this must lie largely in its effectiveness in use, so that armchair criticism may not be entirely valid. One cannot help wondering, however, whether three different recording forms (one each for plain, decorated and mosaic tiles), involving in each case a different numbering of the largely common elements each contains (and incidentally necessitating much repetition in the explanatory text), are really necessary. Also, the arrangement of information on the forms, intended, as we have seen, for greater speed in use, seems in places rather eccentric: e.g. where different stamps relating to one design can be identified these are recorded in a different section of the form from that containing the design number, and are apparently to be numbered independently of it.

However, whether or not Dr Stopford's system is adopted in precisely the form in which she offers it, the book contains much sound guidance and sensible advice.

J. M. Lewis

## REVIEWS

of the site and the non-ceramic finds. However, interpretation is tentative, as if the authors are not too keen commit themselves. This may be due to the apparently unreliable quality of the Early Medieval archaeology of Lincoln. Confident interpretation might come from the examination of further Early Medieval assemblages.

Although these volumes do not complement each other methodologically, they do share an editorial policy that has produced them in a cramped, unjustified two-column format. They are unattractive books, illustrating the modern myth that making publications dull-looking and difficult to read also makes them cheap. Although half the size of "Flaxengate", "Silver Street" still costs twelve pounds, only six pounds less; how genuine is this economy? The actual contents of each, although clearly produced by much thoughtful effort, are in reality nothing more than an uncritical presentation of information. There needs to be more discussion of the meaning of all this data if archaeology, and archaeological publication, is to progress. Neither of these publications is a good advertisement for the quality of archaeological presentation.

These volumes do at least represent successive steps in the development of ceramic studies in Lincoln. The authors demonstrate a genuine concern in consistency and accuracy. A commendable unflinching recognition of the responsibility to develop and improve systems of definition and analysis is apparent in the Silver Street publication. The authors of these books have integrity. That should be recognised and applauded.

Duncan H. Brown

**J. Stopford, *Recording medieval floor tiles*** (Practical Handbook in Archaeology No. 10, C.B.A. 1990), pp. iv + 46, 12 figs, 11 plates. ISBN 1 872414 03 6. Price £4.95.

This is an instruction manual for a recording system devised by Dr Jennie Stopford, the fruit of extensive work on the tiles from Bordesley Abbey and Yorkshire. In particular it is based on the study of over 1000 tiles from Bordesley, and concentrates on

those characteristics that she there found most useful in distinguishing production groups, which she rightly emphasises as the main purpose of such study.

These characteristics (which largely correspond to those listed in the *Guidelines for the recording and publication of medieval tiles* issued by the Census of Medieval Tiles in Britain) she identifies, analysing them into 'descriptive variations' (glaze, fabric, shape, surface treatment, manufacturing faults, keys, decorative treatment), 'quantitative variables' (dimensions, degree of bevel, presence and position of nail holes) and 'qualitative variables' (wear, fragment size). For her primary grouping, however, she follows the familiar division into Plain, Decorated and Mosaic Floor Tiles, for each of which categories she has devised a separate recording form. On the forms the information is entered under the headings Shape & Size, Upper Surface, Sides & Core and Lower Surface 'so that each tile only has to be turned round and over once', which suggests an awesome efficiency of approach that breathes through the whole work.

The system is comprehensive and highly structured, and detailed instructions are given, down to recommended abbreviations to be used when completing the record forms. Full-size samples of these are included, and also templates for systems for recording the approximate size of fragments and measuring the angle of bevel.

The proof of a system such as this must lie largely in its effectiveness in use, so that armchair criticism may not be entirely valid. One cannot help wondering, however, whether three different recording forms (one each for plain, decorated and mosaic tiles), involving in each case a different numbering of the largely common elements each contains (and incidentally necessitating much repetition in the explanatory text), are really necessary. Also, the arrangement of information on the forms, intended, as we have seen, for greater speed in use, seems in places rather eccentric: e.g. where different stamps relating to one design can be identified these are recorded in a different section of the form from that containing the design number, and are apparently to be numbered independently of it.

However, whether or not Dr Stopford's system is adopted in precisely the form in which she offers it, the book contains much sound guidance and sensible advice.

J. M. Lewis

