

## Reviews

*Southern England: An Archaeological Guide* by James Dyer. (Faber and Faber, 1973) 380pp., 10 maps, 28 figs., 76 plates. £1.95 paper, £5.50 cloth.

James Dyer has done it again! He has written a good book of the type he set out to provide but been badly served by his publishers. It seems best to dispose first of the poor quality of the printing for some pages are distinctly grey and not black in the reviewer's copy. One can look too at the poor treatment of the plates. Few have come out well. Some escape. The reviewer particularly liked plate 6 of Lambourn Seven Barrows, Berkshire, and plate 39 of Arbury Banks plateau fort, Hertfordshire.

The grouse is not with the author but with his printers for these. In the text one can find little to fault. The law of trespass is distinctly stated and it is good to have such an unequivocal definition at the beginning. James Dyer has set out to provide a personal selection of the prehistoric and Romano-British sites most worthy of a visit by the casually interested. We are told the national grid reference, the means of access and the opening hours where appropriate to administered sites. Each is given a brief description and with barrow cemeteries a plan. These, hand drawn in the author's style, do though look hurried, in contrast to the more careful drawings of sites such as Lydney temple and Brading villa. Plans are given of the Colchester and St. Albans regions. A major lacuna here would seem to be a plan of London which is given generous textual space, though one is told where to purchase a map.

Maps are given at the front of the book and show the density of sites covered by the text. Personally, the reviewer feels the method chosen is unhelpful. There are five overlapping double spreads covering England south of Birmingham and the Wash: the area within the text. One would perhaps have sufficed and the remaining space better used to provide some really detailed maps of the concentrated areas such as Wiltshire.

Bedfordshire, a much less concentrated area, rates five entries all in the south of the county: Five Knolls barrow cemetery at Dunstable, Galley Hill barrows at Streatley with a mention of Dray's Ditches, Maiden Bower, Sharpenhoe Clapper hillfort and Waulud's Bank Luton. Maiden Bower gets a magnificent air photograph - one of the best

in the book this! Five Knolls is rather less photogenic. From Bedford Museum's collection we have beakers from Kempston and Clifton and a collared urn from Kempston is shown with a pot from Heath and an incense cup from Leighton Buzzard. There are also some neolithic axes from Bedfordshire. Strangely there is no Iron Age pottery nor any metalwork of any date: the Old Warden mirror, for example, would have made a useful addition. One says this because the form of book this is can frequently give the impression that all an archaeologist finds is pottery.

One's final comment is implicit in the subtitle of James Dyer's book: the prehistoric and Roman remains. The land of England is as covered with the earthworks of post-Roman date. These, do not rate more than the mention of the linear dykes of Cambridgeshire. Medieval moated sites - the reviewer can think of at least four in Bolnhurst, alone - and motte-and-bailey castles dot a map of England as thickly as the barrows cluster on Salisbury Plain. The field archaeologist is on Salisbury Plain. The field archaeologist is increasingly in need of the complement to James Dyer's book: a field guide to the medieval archaeology of southern England. Let us hope that when it comes, it will be as good in its text and as succinct in its information as *Southern England: An Archaeological Guide*.

D.H.K.

*Archaeology and the Landscape* ed. P.J. Fowler. Pp 263. Pls.25. Figs. 35. Adam and Charles Black London 1972. (a John Baker book) Price: £3.50.

This book of essays designed to show the value of fieldwork without excavation in British archaeology today is offered as a festschrift to Leslie V. Grinsell in recognition of the tremendous amount of work he has achieved by field survey.

The first part of the volume provides a summary of the development of field archaeology. Nicholas Thomas outlines LVG's contribution, his life and work, the latter reflected in his ample bibliography. Paul Ashbee's paper considers the Antiquarian approach to fieldwork, Thomas' work is concerned specifically with Cornwall and the making of a parochial check-list survey designed to form an accurate record, by fieldwalking of all antiquities in each parish. The material thus

obtained is then available for all forms of analytical study. The establishment of parish correspondents has obviously made this survey viable, and is a method which could well be adopted by other counties.

'Field Archaeology in Future' is a paper by P.J. Fowler which hammers home points made in the preceding essays, particularly those concerning the importance of local societies and individuals in carrying out fieldwork in advance of destruction threats, and links all the articles in this volume together. He states that an enormous and varied number of sites are known, accepts that not all can be preserved, thinks that the best examples of each type should be maintained for posterity, and that field survey for the record of sites is the most useful way forward.

The second part of the book is devoted to individual examples of fieldwork in practice. Drinkwater's article shows the importance of re-surveying sites, in this case long and round barrows in Gloucestershire, in order to indicate their rate of destruction in recent years. He has made an up to date parish survey of barrows, published here with maps, and explains future excavation and conservation policy based on this survey.

Isobel Smith's work on ring-ditches in Gloucestershire is a compilation based on the combined use of air-photos and field survey. Her purpose was to record these earthworks (the first time this had been done) and to show, albeit tentatively, how the presence of a ring-ditch may indicate the former site of a round-barrow.

In his paper on early boundaries in Wessex, Bonney stresses the need to consider all possible forms of evidence relating to the question of continuity of settlement in Roman into later times. His paper deals with land units and boundary ditches, some of which are documented, and suggests that they may have played a considerable part in stabilising peoples in Wessex at that time. He uses clearly drawn maps to illustrate this thesis.

Rahtz and Fowler have compiled a comprehensive survey of all evidence relating to settlement in Somerset during the fifth to seventh centuries. This material is presented, very properly, as distinct from the interpretations to be drawn from it. The discussion of the evidence strives to give as positive an account as possible of the period, and this is partly achieved by abandoning the usual and obscuring nomenclature of the period (e.g. Dark Ages) for a more rational

division of each century, thus 'Early V, Va and Vb' (early fifth century, early to mid fifth, mid to late fifth). The authors conclude by emphasizing that their account is very much open to change, and hope that their work will stimulate future research.

Dyer attempts to define as Danish certain earthworks along the Danelaw frontier, particularly in Bedfordshire. He describes some 15 sites, most of which are complex and in need of detailed investigation. His article provokes much thought as to the origin and purpose of the sites, but the necessarily hypothetical nature of his work leads the reader to question the validity of the article's inclusion here, amongst a series of papers devoted to fieldwork surveys in the Grinsell tradition. The article is illustrated with neat though simplified plans, and some airphotos are included.

Taylor's article on moated sites in Cambridgeshire is a succinct and reasoned account of their purpose and distribution. His large scale field survey, coupled with documentary and place-name evidence, demonstrates that moats were built for a variety of reasons (e.g. for fish-ponds, drainage, defence etc.) and were complex, if sometimes short-lived, constructions. Three excellent air-photos are included.

Altogether the papers form a useful and interesting group of fieldwork surveys, with the methods clearly if somewhat repetitiously defined.

JANE HASSALL

*The Iron Age in the Upper Thames Basin* by D.W. Harding (Oxford University Press, 1972, £10.00)

At last Dennis Harding's long awaited doctoral thesis has seen the light of day, although its gestation has been so lengthy that many of Dr Harding's findings have already become known. Briefly, the Upper Thames is well placed to have been influenced both from Wessex and south-eastern England and the Wash, although only on occasions during the Iron Age can it be claimed to have been a complete cultural unit. Harding sees the earliest Iron Age, now extending into the seventh century B.C., characterised in the Upper Thames by cauldron-like pots with heavily-expanded outward-turning rims. There is little Wessex influence discernible, save possibly in wares decorated with punched dots and geometrically incised ornament. His main thesis suggests that the appearance about 400 B.C. of tripartite angular bowls, together with La Tene I

daggers, safety-pin brooches, rectangular houses and timber-laced hillforts of Blewburton type, represents a strong and probably intrusive continental influence, heralding the start of the middle Iron Age. The later La Tene pottery (Harding retains the Iron B nomenclature) varies throughout the region in its decorative styles and shapes. Coarse wares include barrel and globular types; and 'smooth dark ware' emerges during the second half of the third century B.C. as the dominant fabric, often with simple curvilinear ornament. Occupation sites are almost invariably ditched enclosures around small round huts. There is no evidence for Belgic penetration into the Upper Thames before the first century B.C. When it does arrive, its pottery is characterised by necked bowls with high, rounded shoulders. It is suggested that the North Oxfordshire Grim's Ditch and the fort at Cassington Mill were erected in an effort to resist further Catuvellaunian expansion.

Bedfordshire is well outside the scope of this book, although as one reads it, local parallels frequently spring to mind and it is clear that much of the Iron Age material of the Chilterns is strongly related to the Upper Thames. At present the question of which was the primary area to influence the other must remain open. Part of the answer lies with the mass of unpublished material from Puddle Hill (Dunstable) and the current excavations at Ravensburgh Castle (Hexton, Herts). At the latter site the cauldron-like pots of the earliest Iron Age and the decorated bowls of Harding's angular horizon are well represented. In 1964 the reviewer postulated a hiatus in the Chiltern hillforts (particularly between Dunstable and Cambridge) around 350 B.C. marked by refortification and frequent massacre. It is clear from the work at Ravensburgh that this date was too late, and that it must surely correspond with the introduction of the angular bowls.

At £10.00 *The Iron Age in the Upper Thames Basin* is an extremely expensive book, containing only 178 pages of text. There are 81 pages of plates all on glossy art paper, and of these 53 are line illustrations which could easily have been reproduced on ordinary paper, and might have reduced the cost to one within the range of the many people who could profit by studying this work.

JAMES DYER

Harry Forrester, *Medieval Gothic Mouldings*, (Phillimore 1972), 75p.

When, as often, documentary evidence is lack-

ing, mouldings still seem to offer the best criteria for dating buildings, and in this small book Mr Forrester has assembled over four hundred examples from the eleventh to the sixteenth centuries. The pages of line drawings of mouldings of various categories are supported by a text describing the general developments in moulding forms. The book will be of especial interest, and relevance to Bedfordshire researchers since many of the examples are taken from neighbouring Hertfordshire. But it will need to be used with some caution. Sources for the given dates are not mentioned and in many cases, it seems, are derived from the typology of the mouldings themselves, so that those who scan the book for parallels will have to take care to avoid circular argument. Moreover, examples are illustrated from buildings of very different social status, ranging from the cathedrals to very humble parish churches, and the user of the book will need to bear in mind the time-lapse involved in the process of a moulding-types's 'filtering-down' from higher to lower social levels; this will apply particularly when the buildings being studied are of a vernacular type.

These observations are not intended to be merely carping, but to point to the care with which dating by reference to the illustrated examples should be done. This does not detract from the value of Mr. Forrester's work considered as a catalogue of examples.

What is needed now is a series of similar catalogues of those mouldings which *are* (more or less) precisely dated from documentary sources. Such work could be done on a county or part-county basis, and might well form the supervised work of students. It would be good to see the Bedfordshire material covered in this way in the not too distant future.

T.P.S.

Jane A. Wight, *Brick Building in England from the Middle Ages to 1550* (John Baker 1972, £7.50)

In this survey-based mainly, it would seem, on secondary sources though with insufficient perusal of the journal literature – Miss Wight discusses several aspects of early English brickwork and various types of early brick buildings. Although the plates are excellent the maps are incomplete and the line drawings grossly executed; Fig. 3 is also seriously inaccurate. The work will form a useful first-source book and, one may hope, a spur to the work which needs to be done in this field.

T.P.S.