

buildings. This book, concisely and clearly, provides an essential introduction. It describes the main characteristics of warrens, and discusses their date and function. We learn about the banks and walls used to contain rabbits, the traps used to catch them and their predators, the lodges in which warreners lived and kept their equipment, and, above all, the 'buries' or pillow mounds in which the rabbits were encouraged to live and breed.

Suffolk in Anglo-Saxon Times

Steven Plunkett, Tempus, £18.99

As regular readers of *Current Archaeology* will be aware, Suffolk is rich in Anglo-Saxon archaeology: the latest findings from its most famous site, Sutton Hoo, were the cover feature of *CA* 180, and the discovery of a possible Early Anglo-Saxon shrine at Flixton was reported in *CA* 187. Exciting new finds are made in the county on a regular basis, making a book which puts these in their proper context essential reading for the interested amateur.

Combining historical, archaeological and literary sources, in the space of just over 200 pages Steven Plunkett tells the story of Suffolk from the arrival of the Anglo-Saxons in the 5th century through to the onset of the Viking raids in the late 9th. This is no mean task, but Plunkett performs it admirably. Along the way we are presented with discussion of many important and topical issues: the true nature of the Anglo-Saxon migration; the rise to power of the East Anglian Kings; the conversion to Christianity; the growth of the trading port of Ipswich; and the many and bloody battles between the East Anglians and the Mercians, which ultimately resulted in a period of Mercian rule. His story ends with the martyrdom of Eadmund at the hands of the Vikings, one of the most famous episodes of East Anglian history.

Plunkett tells his tale in a relaxed but informative style, and, although his prose is at times a little flowery, he crams an enormous amount of information into this book. Indeed, so good a job does he do that one cannot help feeling what a shame it is that Norfolk (a county equally rich in Anglo-Saxon heritage) was left out. The present division of the counties was a Late Anglo-Saxon creation, and all of the events Plunkett describes equally affected Norfolk. There is clearly scope for a sister-volume.

The book is lavishly illustrated with maps and photos (one of the greatest attractions of

the Anglo-Saxon period is the beauty of even its most mundane artefacts) - though the quality of reproduction is not always as high as it might be.

Perhaps the most frustrating aspect of this book is the general lack of in-text references, a feature of many Tempus books and one which in this instance prevents a good book from becoming a brilliant one. Working within the confines of this house style, Plunkett does at least include a list of historical sources and a brief guide to further reading, which will enable those who wish to develop their interest in this fascinating period to do so.

Rik Hoggett, University of East Anglia

Sceattas: an illustrated guide

Tony Abramson, Heritage, £25

For a non-specialist, the most extraordinary thing revealed by this book is just how many types of sceattas there were. *Sceattas* (pronounced 'shattas' by some, 'skeetas' by others; we await further enlightenment) were the silver pennies of Middle Anglo-Saxon England. At first the Anglo-Saxons did not use coins at all. Then we have very occasional finds of gold *tremisses* imported from the Continent, and later rather larger numbers of home-minted versions, the *thrymsas*. Only in the late 7th century, with the emergence of strong kingdoms, do we have a silver coinage produced in quantity. Even so, of 22,966 coin finds reported to the Portable Antiquities Scheme up to January 2004, only 340 (1.5%) were Anglo-Saxon. The grand total of known *sceattas* in the British archaeological record is only around 3,500. You would have thought identification would be easy.

In fact, Anglo-Saxon coin expert Michael Metcalf has guessed that there may have been as many as 8,000 separate dies from which *sceattas* were struck. Many of these, judging by the wealth of images in this catalogue, must have carried unique designs. For, in this superbly well-illustrated identification guide, we have a plethora of bipeds, quadrupeds, birds, diadems, faces, figures, crosses, saltires, serpents and standards, selected and arranged in all sorts of combinations. It is, Abramson argues, a rich repertoire of motifs that draws on Greek, Roman, Byzantine, Celtic and Germanic artistic influences. As well, therefore, as being a valuable work of reference for numismatists, archaeologists and metal-detectorists, it is also a splendid anthology of Anglo-Saxon art.

