

nettle of the implications that the archaeology of such sites is essentially a cumulative process. This means, for instance, that even if the Middle Saxon pottery from both sites has been published by the same specialist (in fact, of the 16 contributors listed for each volume six are the same which provides a useful overlap that partially ameliorates the work being undertaken by two separate organisations), one must consult both volumes to discover how much pottery has been recovered in total!

The time lag of over a decade in publication also means that important subsequent fieldwork has taken place, which is not taken into account effectively. This includes a small high status later 7th-century cemetery with two well furnished female graves, potentially linked to the monastery founded by Etheldreda in AD 673, and with major implications for the foundation of the West Fen Road settlement (S. Lucy *et al.*, *The Burial of a Princess? The Later Seventh Century Cemetery at Westfield Farm, Ely*, *Antiquaries Journal* 89, 81–141). Even more directly relevant to this volume, our understanding of the Middle Saxon settlement at West Fen Road has been significantly expanded by an evaluation and excavation further to the east in 2010, which demonstrated that the settlement was significantly more extensive. While these investigations admittedly took place too late to be incorporated into the current volume they nonetheless do emphasise how fleeting and transient any publication on the West Fen Road settlement is likely to be.

Quality, like beauty, is largely in the eye of the beholder. Although this publication more than adequately fulfils its function from a development control perspective, as part of the wider academic discipline it is of much more restricted value.

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The Archaeology of the East Anglian Conversion. (Anglo-Saxon Studies 15). By Richard Hoggett. 18 × 25 cm. xiv + 207 pp, 48 b&w pls and figs. Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2010. ISBN 978-1-84383-595-0 (ISSN 1475-2468). Price: £50.00 hb.

The 7th century AD in Britain is a crucial and fascinating period of change: kingdoms become more firmly fixed, royal names become more than names, continental connections expand, and while Christianity blunders in from the south east there is also a sprinkling of missionaries and monks from Ireland. It is therefore a time when monasteries and royal seats start to gain visibility and when old towns start to think about re-emerging. As importantly, it is a period when burials – the staple fare of early medieval archaeologists – change in intriguing ways: inhumations oust cremations; grave goods perhaps take on new meanings and offer new expressions; there are bursts of special display (e.g. Sutton Hoo, Prittlewell); and then ‘Final Phase’ cemeteries appear as grave goods fade away and burial grounds and even settlements relocate. Too often looked at in isolation, Richard Hoggett here does a grand job in making us look at all of these aspects together, to question how far we can correlate changes in burials, place and expression with conversion. He centres his

exploration on East Anglia and duly draws on a wide range of excavated and surveyed sites to try and track evidence for the conversion of the East Angles. Central questions relate to our ability to ‘read’ the archaeology adequately, whether we are too hesitant to see religious expressions at work, whether royalty can be seen as prime players, and whether we can trace ‘resistance’ on an ordinary level.

Five core chapters are presented. Throughout there is a clear exposition of questions, materials and debates and the whole is well supported by examples, reflecting a strong familiarity with the archaeological data and the region’s landscape as a whole. Chapter 1 considers wider issues of conversion, including processes of missionising and scales of take-up; a second chapter then provides the historical framework for 7th-century East Anglia, detailing royalty, missionaries (chiefly Fursa and Botolph) and the location of the documented sees (*Dommoc* and Elmham). Valuable is the determination of presumed missionary stations in Chapter 3: core was the strategy of reuse of Roman sites, including forts such as Walton Castle (the likely *Dommoc*) and Burgh Castle with ready-made precincts and prominent material ties to the Roman past and being sites seemingly owned by local royalty; but other, earthwork enclosures and natural prominences perhaps also came into play. Slightly problematic here, however, is being able to tie sites and related burials to early missionary and monastic seats; and more is needed to question who the burials might relate to – whether monks, people who bought into the site, local farmers, etc; likewise actual, clear archaeology of any 7th-century buildings is awaited. Presumably such sites acted both as magnets to attract and encourage conversion and then as islands of monastic focus. Chapter 4 focuses on the burial data and a questioning of the progression from cremation to ‘Final Phase’ cemeteries. This covers much ground but could have delved more into the changing types of grave goods in inhumations and discussed particular key cemeteries in more detail. Hoggett then integrates in useful fashion in Chapter 5 the burial sites with their landscapes, attempting to relate graveyards with settlements, although this is countered by a lack of excavated settlement data. He works hard to draw on fieldwalking surveys, such as those centred on the Deben Valley and Launditch Hundred, to seek evidence from villages and from around village churches; however, emphasising pottery scatters as vital and reliable guides to Middle Saxon creations seems incautious – but is something to be followed up!

Hoggett’s conclusions are enjoyably bold, stating that ‘it is safe to say that the surviving documentary sources merely provide an outline of the conversion of East Anglia which the archaeological evidence fleshes out, confirming the details of this sketch and indicating that the true picture of the East Anglian conversion is one of immense scale and variety... the conversion of the wider population was a significant and wide-reaching process which occurred very quickly and was exceedingly successful at grass-roots level... and [all this] precipitated a wide-scale restructuring of the East Anglian landscape’ (172). In part this is a provocative set of statements which the archaeology can help support; but more can and should be done to test and challenge

this model, both in East Anglia and, of course, in other regions and early Anglo-Saxon kingdoms in England.

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Landscapes of Cult and Kingship. Edited by Roseanne Schot, Conor Newman & Edel Bhreathnach. 16 × 24 cm. xviii + 322 pp, 14 colour pls, 33 b&w pls and figs, 1 table. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2011. ISBN 978-1-84682-219-3. Price: £45.00, €50,00 hb.

Medievalists around the world know about the royal sites of Ireland, the most famous of which is Tara. The outery associated with a road-building scheme which runs along the valley floor below the Hill of Tara became one of the most contested cultural heritage planning issues during the recent boom years, and two of the present volume's editors, Newman and Bhreathnach, are closely associated with that campaign. The series of 13 essays that make up *Cult and kingship* demonstrate the importance of landscape when trying to wrestle with the cultural dynamic of our inherited past. It is a truly engaging read to see how archaeologists, ethnographers, historians, and placename specialists position their datasets within the complex web of information that survives for study. Hard factual material such as artefacts and monument types sit alongside early Law Tracts and ancient myths that were recorded across the Middle Ages. One leaves the book with a sense that the concrete knowledge presented by archaeologists and their related scientific specialists is not as certain as it may have appeared to be; in fact, it is always subject to variation. In contrast, the written sources – especially the ancient myths which are so often dismissed by mainstream historians because of their open-ended nature – are of central importance when exploring the importance of Kingship in later prehistoric and medieval Ireland. There is a cultural depth that cannot be reached if one ignores belief and dismisses the seminal importance of land to the peoples of early Ireland. Newman's own maps (pls 1–2) reflect this heightened perception, where he attempts to demonstrate the importance of the relative association of rivers and streams to the sites of known monuments where he choreographs the narrative of sacral kingship across the wider landscape or stage of Tara. Lecomte-Tilouine's companion paper on a sacred landscape in the Himalayas demonstrates the validity of this anthropological approach.

Sites of assembly are a fashionable research topic today and there are at least two major projects looking at the medieval period in England and across Northern Europe. For Ireland, it is clear that continuity with the past was critically important, and the evidence exists to demonstrate the varied manner in which the hills and lakes of ancient sovereignty were reinvested by early medieval kings and again by later medieval Gaelic families. Tara was by no means unique and, in addition to the three other provincial centres, the island is filled with similar sacral places on smaller scales, reflecting the importance of even minor kingship at the local level. The book does assume certain prior reading and affinity with the subject matter. Readers who are not familiar

with Irish sources will find it perhaps a little difficult at first, and would be wise to read a general introduction to medieval Ireland before dipping into this book. But once invested in its reading, it is hard to put the volume down. All the papers are robust and there are some particularly strong archaeological essays, including Ger Dowling's study of closely-spaced multivallate earthworks, where he consciously looks outside Ireland for comparisons and is reengaging with the issues surrounding the role of Ireland in the Roman World. Schot takes the reader through the archaeology of Uisneach; Brian Lacey looks at local sites in Donegal, while a consortium of Elizabeth FitzPatrick, Eileen Murphy, Ronan McHugh, Colm Donnelly and Claire Foley present a most useful study of the *Sgiath Gabhra* landscape – the 'shield of the white mare' in Fermanagh focused on the later medieval period. John Waddell's reflective piece on 'Continuity, cult and contest' is a splendidly composed essay from a prehistorian with long-held interest and research on royal sites, demonstrating the ease with which he brings the reader across time, dematerialising those chronological periods that we seem to otherwise relish. There are lessons in *Landscapes of Cult and Kingship* for us all.

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Settlement and Lordship in Viking and Early Medieval Scandinavia. (The Medieval Countryside, 9). Edited by Bjørn Poulsen & Søren Michael Sindbæk. 16 × 23 cm. xvii + 337 pp, 36 b&w pls and figs, 7 tables. Turnhout: Brepols, 2011. ISBN 978-2-503-53131-1. Price: €95,00 hb.

This important collection of articles by leading scholars analyses the socio-political development of Scandinavian society from the Viking Age to the high medieval period. The volume's aims are ambitious: not only does it seek to bridge the gap between archaeological and historical approaches and between Viking and medieval scholarship respectively, it also promises to relate the Scandinavian research tradition more firmly 'to similar issues elsewhere in European medieval history and archaeology' (p 11). Fitting in with a much broader trend that sees an increasing use of English as the *lingua franca* of European scholarship in the humanities, all papers are in English. In this context, Poulsen and Sindbæk's concise summary of the debate on settlement and lordship from the 18th century onwards deserves special mention, as this provides an invaluable insight into the history of the discipline that is otherwise inaccessible to those who have not mastered any of the Scandinavian languages.

The book has four thematic and multi-disciplinary parts. Part I, focusing on the changing nature of the aristocracy, includes four chapters demonstrating a wide range of disciplinary approaches, written by Jesch (revisiting the linguistic detail of runic inscriptions), Pedersen (funerary deposits), Hermanson (historical analysis of 12th-century documentary sources) and Hansson (a landscape-based investigation of social power). Part II, 'Settlement and Social Differentiation',