BOOK REVIEWS

Links to Late Antiquity: Ceramic exchange and contacts on the Atlantic seaboard in the 5th to 7th centuries AD, by Maria Duggan, British Archaeological Reports: British Series 639, 2018, 222 pp., numerous maps, line drawings, col. photographs, reference list, Pbk. £43, ISBN 978-1-4073-1639-0.

It is now over 60 years since Ralegh Radford announced, in these proceedings (*SANH* 99-100, 1954-5, 106-13), the discovery of pottery imported from the Mediterranean, at Tintagel and South Cadbury. The pottery, storage amphorae and red slipped finewares, had been discovered before the Second World War but interest in them grew in the 1950s, largely due to the work of Charles Thomas. As well as providing the dating evidence for Radford's 'Celtic monastery' at Tintagel, they provided support for Leland's 15th-century identification of South Cadbury as Camelot and led to the excavations there in the late 1960s. More sites in western Britain and Ireland were discovered, and a trade proposed between those areas not taken over by Anglo-Saxons and the late Roman Empire and its successors. Work in the 1970s and 80s identified production sites for the pottery in Turkey and north Africa and provided dating evidence for what appeared to be two phases of importation. An important element of the story of this pottery was that there appeared to be a gap in its distribution along the Atlantic coast of Spain, Portugal and France which led to the suggestion that the trade was directed by the Byzantine Empire specifically at British post-Roman polities, either for the tin trade or as a diplomatic mission.

In this important book, based on her PhD thesis, Maria Duggan challenges many of what have become orthodoxies, specifically the apparent gap in the pottery distribution. Recent excavations, most notably in Vigo and Bordeaux have recovered large quantities of comparable material and re-examination of other reports has shown that much more of this pottery has been discovered on the western seaboard of continental Europe. Duggan reviews the evidence for each of the types of pottery, their origins, date and distribution before turning to the evidence from recent finds in South Devon and other British sites. She then discusses the evidence from France, particularly the import trade evident from excavations in Bordeaux and also discusses the question of 'E-ware', suggesting that the quantities discovered point strongly to a production centre near that city. She then turns to Spain and Portugal and compares the character of the Mediterranean imports there to those from Britain.

Her conclusions provide an important corrective to the interpretation of these imports, parts of which have remained unaltered since the 1950s. She shows that the pottery, which presumably accompanied more important trade goods, is found right up the Atlantic seaboard, probably being shipped to important late-/post-Roman centres and then redistributed more locally. There may have been direct links across the Bay of Biscay from Vigo to Britain but most trade probably came via Bordeaux. The nature of the trade is discussed; tin is probably still the favoured British export but lead may also have been important, perhaps traded as far as northern India. In return the British gained wine, not necessarily principally for ecclesiastical use, olive oil and possibly even grain, which appears to have been part of the export trade from north Africa. Turning to the dating evidence, Duggan suggests that the two separate phases of importation suggested by finds in Britain is a chimera as there seems to be no gap between the Mediterranean imports and E-ware in Bordeaux; the trade was probably continuous, if episodic.

Overall, the picture is one of the continuity of a normal coastal trading system, with Britain at its furthest reaches. Most goods ended their journey at the ports of western France and Iberia but there was still a profit to be made by continuing northwards. Duggan concludes with suggestions for further research to confirm these ideas but this work will hopefully also stimulate a review of the nature of the British evidence. If Britain is no longer the focus of this trade, we need to reconsider the nature of the British societies that received it and what they did with it. New models may need to be developed for the movement of the imported goods within Britain and Ireland and the reasons why the distributions of the Mediterranean imports and E-ware differ may need to be viewed as due to local changes rather than an interruption of supply.

This book is not a light read but it contains a large amount of new information and discussion, particularly of the continental finds, as well as a stimulating set of conclusions that look forward to improving our understanding of these important centuries at the birth of what are now the constituent nations of these islands.

CHRIS WEBSTER

Drawing Somerset's Past: an illustrated journey through history, by Victor G. Ambrus and Steve Minnitt, History Press, 2018, 144 pp., numerous col. and b/w illus., £17.99, ISBN 978-0-7509-6786-0.

Drawing Somerset's Past begins by exploring the evidence we have for Somerset's earliest residents, Early Humans, and follows this with chapters on Roman Somerset, Anglo-Saxons and the Middle Ages. From the 15th century to more modern times the coverage is more thematic, with a chapter entitled 'A Rebellious County' concentrating on Perkin Warbeck in 1497 and the Monmouth Rebellion of 1685. This is followed by the final chapter 'The Modern Era' which looks at such things as changes in transportation and industry and their effects on the county, rounding things off with a colourful visit to the Pyramid Stage at Glastonbury Festival.

For such a huge scope this is a small book, only 144 pages, but while the history is important, and presented in a clear and authoritative way, to focus on the brevity is missing the point of the book, which is to share with the reader the drawings of Victor Ambrus. Victor worked as illustrator for Channel 4's Time Team for 20 years and many of the drawings in the book were made for the television, but Time Team went all over the country so in order to focus on Somerset drawings made for the Museum of Somerset and some specially made for the book have been added.

The trouble with archaeology is that often the human side of things is lost, leaving metal and stone that decay less quickly. Victor's drawings enabled the programme makers to put finds into context and bring to life the scene that was being uncovered. This he did in his own, very distinctive, sketchy style, using his preferred tool, a pencil. In the note at the end of the book written by British Museum illustrators Kate Morton, Claire Thorne and Craig Williams, entitled 'The Importance and Legacy of the work of Victor Ambrus', Victor is reported as suggesting that pencil drawings "remain an ideal medium for illustrating past events because they are suggestive rather than emphatic; they say about the past, 'This is how it might have been.'" The drawings are beautiful, some are fully finished wide focus landscapes showing what a medieval village or Roman villa might have looked like, carefully and accurately rendered and often exquisitely coloured, but made more immediate by the inclusion of people going about their daily business. Other pictures are closer portrayals of one or two figures and in these human emotions are to the fore. The quality of reproduction is such that in some drawings it is even possible to see the faint remains of earlier lines changed by the artist as he was working, which brings them to life even more.

Based as it is on Time Team archaeological digs, interspersed with a few photographs of objects from the Museum of Somerset to help bridge some gaps and highlight important points in Somerset's history, the narrative is a bit fragmented and perhaps gives unreasonable weight to some things which get a lot of focus because Time Team made a programme there. It cannot therefore be regarded as a serious text book, but as a taster to whet the appetite; it is a good way to start to interest the young, or not so young, reader, and if they then want to delve deeper there is a short list of suggestions for further reading.

Lovers of Time Team will enjoy the fact that throughout the book there are photographs of the team as well as a foreword by Sir Tony Robinson, but this book is not about the television programme but the wonderful drawings of Victor Ambrus. If I have one reservation it is that I would have liked a map to help those who can't immediately place named locations such as Stogursey or Shapwick (or even Somerset!) but the lack of a map should not put anybody off this charming book, which can be enjoyed at so many different levels, equally valuable for school libraries, B&B guest bedrooms, Somerset locals and visitors.

RACHEL BILLINGE

Writing the history of Somerset: essays in honour of Robert Dunning, edited by Adrian J. Webb and Andrew Butcher, Halsgrove, 2018, 208 pp., 49 col. and b/w illus., £16.99, ISBN 978-0-85704-329-0.

If anyone in the local history world deserves the accolade 'county historian' it is Robert Dunning. Somerset is fortunate to have had such a scholar, researching away since the 1960s, and to date – as his bibliography in this 80th-birthday tribute chronicles – the author of some 260 books, papers, magazine articles and reviews. Such is the appreciation of Bob's role in promoting and popularising the county's history, his wisdom and genial personality, that his Somerset friends have queued up to contribute to this festschrift, and it is left to someone from a neighbouring county to review it. From 'outside', as it were, it is worth emphasising the esteem with which he is held also in the wider world of local history, especially by his VCH former colleagues.

So, we have a solid, casebound volume, attractively produced by a Somerset publisher, Halsgrove, and profusely illustrated (including some colour), with a dozen essays sandwiched between an introductory appreciation, by Ralph Griffiths, and a comprehensive Dunning bibliography, by David Bromwich. The book is sub-titled 'Family, Community, and Religion', which neatly sums up the range of the papers, all on Somerset themes of course, and all linked in some way to Dunning's own contributions to their subjects. The arrangement is

broadly chronological, which makes for some intriguing juxtapositions and contrasts.

Nicholas Orme's study of medieval saints in Somerset begins the journey, taking further (as do Anthony Scrase and Mark McDermott later on) work already published in the *Proceedings* and elsewhere. Orme plays down the interchange of saints between Wales and the Southwest, notes how medieval wills can be used to recover church dedications (largely forgotten outside towns between the Reformation and the Oxford Movement), and provides a fascinating league table of saints invoked in pre-1550 dedications. A case study of a particular figure, St Lawrence, comes next, completed by other hands after the death of its author, Barry Lane, in 2017.

Anthony Scrase offers a closely argued study of mismanagement by the vicars of their properties in Wells, concluding that they were singers rather than accountants, but little worse than their neighbours. Steve Hobbs gives us an example of the microtopography over which VCH editors such as Dunning have laboured through the decades, by translating a 1633 survey of Kingston by Yeovil, which (like Steve himself) has found its way to Wiltshire. David Dawson, in a concise but well-crafted paper on a 16th-century potter, Martin Renger, extrapolates from a 1591 Bridgwater lease to reflect Dunning's longstanding emphasis on combining archaeological and historical evidence.

Next we are treated to two pairs of essays illustrating the varieties of the human condition. Joseph Bettey paints an eloquent portrait of a Somerset gentleman (in both senses), Thomas Smyth of Ashton Court, an attractive character who fell victim to the Civil War. Far less appealing was Edward Curll, the subject of Mary Siraut's study, a zealous Puritan frustrated not only by Royalist sympathisers but also by his own side's perceived shortcomings, who rampaged about Catsash hundred (around Castle Cary) as sequestrator of confiscated estates. Just as illuminating are the next couple of contrasting personalities, whose lifespans overlapped by just three years. Frances Neale's portrayal of John Westover of Wedmore tells us much about the intricate transactions of an improving farmer and landlord on the moors, who doubled as an energetic physician – a life well spent. Sue Berry, by contrast, presents us with Thomas Carew of Crowcombe, a wastrel if ever there was one, chaotic, incompetent and extravagant, who nevertheless left Crowcombe Court as his enduring legacy after his death in 1766.

Two countywide surveys follow, the one literally, the other metaphorically. Adrian Webb describes the troubled gestation of the famous Day and Masters map of 1782 (or perhaps 1783), by uncovering much new material explaining the career of William Day of Blagdon and his unhappy collaboration with John Darch. Mark McDermott uses Edmund Rack's survey of Somerset churches (intended for Collinson's history) to ask whether they were neglected during the 18th century. On balance he concludes that most were not, and that much Victorian restoration was driven by doctrinal rather than structural considerations. Finally Aidan Bellenger, from across the doctrinal divide, takes us through the long and troubled history of Benedictine monasticism under prohibition and emancipation, culminating in the achievement of Downside.

A reviewer generally finds a few things to gripe about. Leaving aside the odd typo, the one significant criticism that may be noted relates to the index. All kings and saints are indexed (the latter occupying almost two columns, although almost all the references are to a single paper), whereas – inexplicably – there are no places indexed whatever. But that apart here is a handsome present for a remarkable man, as Ralph Griffiths dubs him, the 'sage of Somerset'.

JOHN CHANDLER

Medieval pilgrimage, with a survey of Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Somerset and Bristol, by Nicholas Orme, Impress Books, 2018, 191 pp., 46 col. illus., bibliography, index, Pbk. £14.99, ISBN 978-1-911293-35-4, Ebk. £7.59, ISBN 978-1-911293-36-1.

Who better to publish a book on the medieval pilgrimage sites of south-western England than Prof. Nicholas Orme? He succeeds as ever in marrying unmatched local knowledge and deep academic scholarship with a clear and enticing writing style. The result is a book that provides an invaluable reference work for anybody wishing to learn about or visit the many pilgrimage sites that pepper our region. Prof. Orme points out in his preface that the quantity of potential pilgrim sites in this area numbers thousands. The Middle Ages were a time when the devout wished to travel, to see and, where possible, to touch items that brought them in contact with what they perceived as the divine. Through his extensive scholarship, the author has gathered together detailed descriptions and illustrations of all those places where evidence of pilgrimage has been found, as well as others 'where it can be reasonably assumed'.

The book is divided into two parts. The first, entitled 'Pilgrimage in Medieval England', comprises the first quarter of the whole. Here Prof. Orme discusses the nature of medieval pilgrimage. He describes how, when and where it took place. The sub-section entitled 'The Pilgrim's Experience' is especially helpful, with the author drawing us into the world-view and mindset of the pilgrims. He tells us that many pilgrimages were to nearby destinations, possibly taking only a day for

the round-trip. However, longer trips, as we know from the Canterbury Tales, were also undertaken. Prof. Orme describes the pilgrimage undertaken by Thomas Clerk of Ware in Hertfordshire who, in 1476, spent twenty days travelling to St Michael's Mount, stopping at twenty-one named places. The poorer pilgrim might need to beg to sustain themselves on their journey; for the wealthier pilgrim there was quite an infrastructure to provide lodgings, sustenance, stabling etc. The destination that these pilgrims sought was normally some kind of shrine or image, very many of which were lost during or after the Reformation.

The second section of the book, entitled 'Pilgrim Places in the West of England' provides a gazetteer, with detailed descriptions of pilgrim places, county by county. For each of Cornwall and Devon there are just under thirty entries, while Dorset has the shortest list with twelve entries. The nineteen entries for Somerset cover the historic county and therefore include both Bristol and Bath. For each county a map is helpfully provided. The entries for Cornwall provide a fascinating study, showing the broad variety and style of pilgrimage sites. From the distant isle of St Helen or Elide in the Scillies to the grand priory at Bodmin, Cornwall also includes several sites associated with water and healing. The elaborate well house at Dupath near Callington may still be seen, as can the well chapel at St Clether. Wherever possible, Prof. Orme provides detailed background information drawn from a range of primary and secondary sources. Some entries therefore extend over several pages, for example that for Glastonbury Abbey in Somerset which laid claim to a dizzying number of saints, relics and other attractions.

For quite a number of the sites there is understandable uncertainty surrounding them. For example when describing Luccombe in Somerset, the author notes that the location of the chapel dedicated to St Antony of Vienne is unclear. Similarly he points to other items such as the ivory casket at Bodmin that might be the one that was supposed to have contained the relics of St Petroc. If that is a survival from before the Reformation then it is almost unique – Prof. Orme points out that when the monasteries and nunneries in the West were closed, 'their shrines and images were lost'.

This well-produced book includes an extensive bibliography, discussing the source material used as well as providing a list of secondary works for further study. A bonus feature of this publication is its availability as an e-book. It means that, should the reader arrive by chance near one of these sites, they can quickly look up the location details on their phone or other device. In conclusion, Prof. Orme is to be warmly congratulated for his publication. He has convincingly recreated a landscape and a mindscape for the medieval west of England. Other regions may now want to poach him to enhance the knowledge and understanding of their medieval past.

DES ATKINSON

The Medieval Clothier, by John S. Lee, Boydell Press, 2018, xix, 365 pp., 10 col. pls., 20 b/w pls., 11 figures, 6 maps, 5 tables, Hbk. £25, ISBN 978-1-78327-317-1, Ebk. £19.99, ISBN 978-1-78744-277-1.

This book, intended to be the first in a series covering Working in the Middle Ages, gives a wonderful insight into the leading industry that formed the backbone of medieval England's economy. It is the first recent survey of this hugely important and significant trade and its practitioners across England. The author looks at the medieval clothier, and his (or occasionally her) work in both the making and marketing of cloth, and examines how the cloth trade shaped society and offered employment throughout the country. Clothiers were the entrepreneurs at the heart of the cloth trade which became England's leading industry in the late Middle Ages. No other industry created more employment or generated more wealth.

The author considers the people engaged in the cloth trade, from the poor wool spinner or carder, working as casual wage-earners, to the clothiers, some of whom became wealthy entrepreneurs; and reminds us that such an employment structure is not a modern phenomenon. In the medieval period many people in England earned a living in such a way, as numerous cloth-workers relied on work organised by wealthy clothiers.

The book covers the period 1350 to 1550, spanning two centuries of economic, social and political change. In purely economic terms the period starts with the catastrophic outcome of the Black Death, and ends with the collapse of the international cloth trade in Antwerp. The dramatic expansion of the English cloth industry after 1350 was stimulated by enhanced incomes and increased consumer spending, coupled with an increasing supply of wool resulting from a shift from cereal growing to pastoral farming.

We are taken on a full, but concise, account of the cloth-making processes, commencing with the sourcing of the raw wool, its grading, sorting, scouring, and carding or combing. Spinning of the wool into yarn and its subsequent weaving into cloth on a loom are described. Dyeing could be either 'in the wool', at the yarn stage, or of the woven cloth; and at this stage England was dependant on the import of dyestuffs and mordants. The cloth was then fulled, to cleanse and thicken the fabric, and then dried and stretched on wooden frames before undergoing finishing processes.

All these procedures were increasingly coordinated throughout the later Middle Ages by clothiers. They

put out raw or semi-processed materials to spinners, weavers, fullers and other cloth-workers, who returned them after completing their work. In doing so the clothier acquired a range of technical knowledge, and monitored all the cloth-making stages, and sought to reduce costs but often invested heavily in raw materials and also in fixed capital, such as looms and dye-houses.

The markets where clothiers sold their cloth are explored, with an explanation of the roles of drapers, mercers, grocers and Merchant Adventurers, especially in London as its share of the market increased in the period. Some clothiers developed their own marketing but progressively mostly sold their cloths wholesale to London merchants who then exported to four annual marts in Flanders.

The author examines how clothiers emerged in different regions at different times. Cloth-making was centred on a few major towns in the 1350-1400 period, but during the 15th century, it largely moved into smaller towns and the countryside. The clothier seems to have emerged first in Somerset, and later in Suffolk and Kent.

The families of four famous clothiers are examined, who all operated large-scale production methods, and built up considerable fortunes which often were gifted in their lifetime, or bequeathed, to the local society. The wills of four of these clothiers are appended and a useful gazetteer of surviving buildings associated with clothiers is presented.

From a Somerset perspective we are introduced to John Compton's memorial brass in Beckington church, the rôle of the George Inn at Norton St. Philip in the annual cloth fairs, and the early clothiers of Croscombe, Pensford, Wells and the later involvement of east Somerset in the cloth trade that brought much wealth to the county.

Errors are few; on a map West Harptree is reduced to Harptree, and the river Avon mysteriously ceases to flow in the Bath area; and John Bysse of Stoke St. Michael is rendered John Bysee. Apart from these trivial matters this is a book that brings a wealth of knowledge and research to the general reader and is to be recommended.

COLIN BRETT

The Welbeck Atlas: William Senior's maps of the estates of William Cavendish, Earl of Newcastle, 1629-1640, edited by Stephanos Mastoris, Thoroton Society of Nottinghamshire Record Series 47, 2017, lxiv, 238 pp., 7 figs, 67 col. pls., USB drive inside back cover, £29.50, ISBN 978-0-902719-25-5.

This handsome volume is calculated to elicit jealousy amongst readers of these pages. Its handful of Gloucestershire and Somerset properties is dwarfed by the earl's extensive estates in Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire, Staffordshire and Northumberland, and we have nothing remotely comparable with it in the estate papers of contemporary landowners resident in Somerset.

Chew Stoke, Keynsham Park and Knighton Sutton in Stowey are fully represented by attractive and informative maps, while small parcels of property in Axbridge, Clandown, High Littleton, Strode and North Widcombe have no maps and merely secure passing mention. Only the Keynsham map appears to have been discovered and utilised before by a local writer, Barbara Lowe (1996).

William Senior also produced a map of Glastonbury which includes the earliest large scale plan of the abbey precincts, but this was for another client, William Cavendish's cousin the Earl of Devonshire, so it does not feature in the present volume. Plans based on extracts from it have however been published by Ian Burrow (1983) and by Adam Stout (2014) in two volumes of our own *Proceedings*.

This edition does the fullest justice to the atlas. A lengthy introduction first explains the origins of the estates, many of them acquired through advantageous marriages, and the Somerset ones in particular after a complicated descent from the earl's grandmother's third husband, Sir William St Loe. It then describes the career of the surveyor, William Senior, his method of working, and what is known of his assistants. It sets out the nature and wealth of topographical evidence that can be derived from the maps, 'the earliest detailed record of these areas by about two centuries'. It explores in depth the cartography of the atlas, the various hands employed in compiling it, and a number of phases which can be detected in the process of its production. Numerous illustrations, principally extracts from the maps, appear throughout.

The bulk of the volume then consists of a catalogue devoting a page or more to each individual map, with a table setting out every conceivable detail about its content and context, and listing every topographical name and feature, and every personal name, which appears on it.

Four appendices and three indexes follow, and then in a pocket inside the back cover is a USB flashcard or memory stick holding superb quality full colour photographic images of every page in the atlas, in a PDF format which allows easy scrolling, rotation and enlargement. This is currently the standard and most readily accessible of formats, but a cynic may ask whether even it is proof against the relentless march of everything digital towards obsolescence.

Burrow, I., 1983. 'Earthworks in the south-eastern part of the abbey precinct, Glastonbury', *SANH* 126, 39-42.
Lowe, B., 1996. 'Keynsham Great Park', *North Wansdyke Past and Present* 8, 23-32.
Stout, A., 2014. 'After the end: Glastonbury Abbey, 1539-1825', *SANH* 157, 72-93.

DAVID BROMWICH

An accurate Mapp of ye mannor of Castle Cary, by Will Vaughan, Cockhill Press, 2017, 127 pp., 36 maps and 51 other col. pls., £28, ISBN 978-1-9997946-0-6.

William Vaughan's exploration of *An Accurate Mapp of ye mannor of Castle Cary* is both informative and insightful, capturing a significant moment in the history of Castle Cary, Ansford and Hadspen, before the breakup of the Manor when it moved from a traditional medieval landscape towards the one we are more familiar with today. Dating from the mid-1680s and now stored at the British Library, the map's remarkable details of roads, fields, buildings, land ownership and land use make it a worthy document of study. Vaughan's introduction sets the map in its historical context, outlining the role of the manor in society. He also draws attention to inconsistencies in the map which hint at the reasons behind its creation. Unlike other estate maps, which were usually created for and dedicated to the Lord of the Manor, the Cary map has no such dedication, leading Vaughan to propose it was created for the prospective purchasers of the Manor in 1684, two London lawyers, Anthony Ettrick and William Player. This, combined with the movements of individuals named on the map, leads to the dating of the map in the mid-1680s.

Deserving credit is given to John Ward, the mathematician who produced the map using the scientific approaches of the 17th century. To emphasize his scientific approach, Ward embellished his map with images of a cross staff, another object which is thought to represent a circumferentor, a divider and globes. Subsequently his accuracy and attention to detail is praised throughout the volume. Additionally, Vaughan describes the process by which surveyors measured distances – a useful aid for those not familiar with early mapmaking.

Vaughan extends his historical enquiry of the map by analysing the land use, land value and tenure. He also uses information in parish records to provide not only an understanding of the lives of the individuals who owned and managed the land, but also to estimate the number of inhabitants in Castle Cary who were landless and therefore not mentioned on the map, giving a much broader view of the community than evidenced by the map alone. There is, perhaps, room here for more in-depth investigation into other contemporary records to provide yet greater understanding of the society in which these individuals lived.

The book is beautifully illustrated to a high standard. Throughout, Vaughan gives great attention to the changes between past and present, comparing roads, rivers, footpaths, buildings and churches with their modern-day counterparts. He reproduces the map in eighteen sections, each of which is accompanied by a guide plan that draws attention to significant elements of the map including buildings and features of the natural landscape. Most importantly the guide plans include details of modern roads, railways and settlements, allowing readers to orientate and immerse themselves in the 17th century map with ease.

Perhaps most intriguing for the historian are the appendices, which contain a wealth of information. Vaughan's superb attention to detail in transcribing the freeholders and tenants of the Manor is invaluable. In all 155 individuals are named on the map. All land on the map is either named or described, and the name of each individual who owned or rented a property is listed. Furthermore, information is recorded on the type of land use, whether arable or pastoral; the tenure of the land, whether copyhold, freehold or leasehold; and the size of each plot. Other appendices facilitate even better access to the information, with alphabetical lists of personal names and field names. Combined with the illustrations, the reader is given a unique insight into how the Castle Cary we know today developed from its medieval past.

Not only is this book a great resource for the social, agricultural and family historian, but also for those with a local interest in the rich history of Castle Cary and its surrounding area, and no doubt it will remain so for many years to come.

EMMA DOWN

Thomas Chidgey, 1845-1926: marine artist of Watchet, Somerset, England, by Paul Upton, Author, 2018, 64 pp., 23 col. pls., £6, ISBN 978-0-9930414-1-9.

Paul Upton has written a well-illustrated book - 'by a layman for the lay-person'. We learn of the people and their ships, the various types of cargo which provided a living for hundreds of mariners up and down our coast: grain from Devon, coal from Wales, bricks from Bridgwater, livestock - all carried to and from Bristol Channel and Irish ports. If you don't know a 'brig' from a 'ketch', worry not; simply check with a glossary of sailing terms provided. Plain sailing ensues! Each painting sits opposite an account of the vessel's provenance, its trade routes and eventual fate.

Thomas Chidgey (1845-1926) was Watchet born and bred. He married into the talented Wedlake family, who later provided SANHS with a distinguished President and fossil collector, Mr Lesley Wedlake. Captain Chidgey was a mariner by profession who became an accomplished self-taught painter. Pierhead painters such as Thomas often worked on commission and against the clock. A deal would be struck with the boat owner or skipper. In the case of the latter, the finished canvas had to be delivered before the client left port. Paul Upton states canvases were half-finished in advance; the actual vessel was added last of all. Buyers would expect an accurate representation of sail layout, rigging and points of sailing (normally close hauled,

as this showed off the sails to full effect). This striving for exactness can lead, in our eyes, to a certain stiffness, which gives way to a more relaxed, yet still accurately observed style in later pictures. In the book the illustration of a late work -*Appledore* - estuary, esplanade and vessels at anchor, as well as figures, are confidently realised. The book describes more than twenty sailing vessels which worked the Bristol Channel from the mid-19th century to the 1930s. Take the ketch 'Louisa' as an example; by 1910 Thomas had retired to spend his time painting and she was skippered by his son Robert. That year the 'Louisa' was on her way from Barry to Cork with a cargo of coal when a gale blew up and the vessel was driven onto rocks in southern Ireland. The crew signalled their distress with clothing soaked in paraffin and were eventually rescued by the Youghal lifeboat.

Or 'Irene'. Built in Bridgwater in 1907, she worked through WW1, survived U-Boats and traded far and wide up to 1961. She was sold off and sailed across the Atlantic, sank in a hurricane in the Caribbean, was salvaged by a consortium operating as a charitable trust and is still sailing today!

Paul states that many of Thomas's pictures have remained undiscovered and are increasingly valued once found. Our thanks should go to private owners and local museums in Watchet and Bridgwater for allowing their canvases to be seen in this book by a wider public. As John Gilman wrote in his foreword, 'Very soon all that will be left are the pictures by Thomas Chidgey and some faded photographs in which even the vessels' names will be forgotten'.

This slim volume, with Bob Cramp's first-class photography, should serve as a springboard to further research and ensure these attractive vessels and their crews are remembered.

ROBERT HUTCHINGS

Secure the shadow: Somerset photographers 1839-1939, by Robin Ansell, Allan Collier and Phil Nichols, Somerset & Dorset Family History Society, viii, 97 pp., sepia photographs, DVD inside back cover, £12, ISBN 978-1-905639-34-2.

Although this book contains a short introduction on the beginnings of photography referencing Daguerre and Fox Talbot there is no explanation of the processes behind these two early methods of producing images. This is not intended to be a book on the history and development of photography but one on the early history and growth of the professional photographer in Somerset. For anyone with an interest in this topic it will prove an essential work and is an important addition to the general history of the county.

The volume is divided into several parts. The first is a history of the establishment of the photographer and the photographic studio in the county beginning with Frederick Orchard Lake's daguerreotype of the tower of St Mary Magdalene church in Taunton made in October 1839, and now unfortunately lost, and Thomas Sharp's studio in the Royal Victoria Park, Bath, in November 1841. Sharp's successor at this studio was advertising as early as 1846 that 'Amateurs, Tourists, etc' could be instructed in the 'Art' and could also be supplied with the necessary equipment, thus showing that photography had become not just a profession but also a hobby in only seven years since Lake's Taunton image.

Brief sections follow on visiting or itinerant photographers and travelling exhibitions such as the one of Crimean War photographs which came to Bath, Taunton and Yeovil in 1856. Exhibitions such as these may well have spurred the growth of interest in photography leading naturally to an increase in the number of professional photographers catering for the majority who wished to see themselves and their families immortalised but who did not feel capable of doing so personally. There is a short section on Somerset pioneering photographers including William Friese Green who claimed to have invented Kinematography or moving pictures, although this is now thought to be inaccurate[1], and one on men who added photography to their other occupations or interests of whom perhaps the most well-known to the non-photographic expert is John Stringfellow of Chard. The growth of the professional photographer follows and this part of the book ends with the men whose photographic skills played a part in WWI.

There are then 40 pages listing alphabetically the names of the professional photographers in Somerset with their dates of birth and death where known, the address of their studio and the date(s) for which there is evidence that they were there.

The last part of the work consists of five appendices: an index to the photographers by location; a list of the woman photographers discovered during research, again with their dates of birth and death where known and the address of their studio [these are also listed in the main index]; a list of other photographers either professionals non-resident in Somerset but known for having taken Somerset images, and amateur photographers; itinerant or travelling photographers and finally Somerset photographers whose studios have not been identified.

At the rear of the book is a CD containing the 'timelines' or extended stories of some of the photographers listed. As the authors rightly say, this could not be done for all of the names listed in the book so they have chosen some of those whose stories seem of the most interest in one way or another. The CD also contains very many more images than it was possible to put into the printed work; if I have any grumble about this book it is that I would have liked more illustrations of the work of the photographers in the body of the text.

Finally, it must be said that the authors are meticulous in citing their sources whether in print or on-line so that any reader wishing to follow up an individual photographer listed in the work should have no trouble in doing so.

[1] See http://www.screenonline.org.uk/people/id/508948/index.html for an article on Friese-Green which refutes this claim.

SUE BERRY

The Wren, by Stephen Moss, Square Peg, 2018, 187 pp. + xxx, 35 col. illus., numerous b/w illus., bibliography, no index, Hbk. £12.99, ISBN 978-1-91-093193-6.

In the introduction, local author Stephen Moss pays tribute to the Rev. Edward Armstrong's Collins New Naturalist *The Wren* (1955). Indeed, whenever I have wanted information about the Wren I have turned to Armstrong's excellent monograph, usually without disappointment, so I wondered if there was really a place for a new book on this species. I soon found, however, that Moss's book (like the one he wrote on the Robin a year earlier) approaches its subject from a very different angle, and is written in an easy-to-read lyrical style, interspersed with literary quotes and poems, as well as with colour and black-and-white illustrations, many of these of historical interest.

The diminutive, tail-cocked, bustling Wren, searching busily for food in hollows and crevices while we work in the garden nearby, is clearly a favourite with most of us. But this is also a bird we come across in woods, along coasts and on remote Atlantic islands. It is a bird that very readily adapts to a wide range of habitats. The author approaches his subject by discussing the Wren's way of life within the framework of a calendar year, a month for each chapter. The book starts by describing the bird's evolution from the New World to that of the Old; while wren species exist in other parts of the world, it is only our own Wren, *Troglodytes troglodytes*, that has managed to colonise the Old World. The Wren's scientific name, incidentally, reflects its habit of investigating holes and crevices, a 'troglodyte' being a cave-dweller.

Wrens are tiny birds; amongst British species, only the Firecrest and Goldcrest are smaller. Being so small, Wrens rapidly lose heat. In really cold weather Wrens will crowd together for roosting in order to conserve body heat. Nevertheless, following prolonged severe wintry weather, particularly with snow cover, Wren populations may be greatly reduced.

Much of the 'February' chapter is taken up with a detailed consideration of the Wren's powerful song which consists of a series of shrill, ringing notes, together with trills. The song of the Wren has featured in a host of literary works, and the author includes quotes from numerous authors from Shakespeare onwards. It is probable that the song of the male Wren varies somewhat according to its purpose – whether warning rivals not to stray into his territory, or aiming to impress females and lure a possible mate.

The male Wren often begins to nest-build in March, constructing four or five domed, cave-like, nests for his mate to inspect. The female eventually chooses the most suitable nest, in her view, and lines it, always including large numbers of feathers. Male Wrens lead remarkably busy lives; they are frequently polygamous, which means yet more nest-building, while most pairs usually have second broods – and second broods usually involve the construction of further nests. There is also the need to maintain territorial boundaries and see off rival males. Unsurprisingly, most females get no help with feeding the chicks. Food consists of spiders, various insects, small worms and caterpillars; one unusual item of food noted was that of trout fry!

Female Wrens usually lay their first clutch of five or six eggs in April, with the combined weight of the eggs being nearly the same as the body weight of the bird. With eggs laid, such is the urge to incubate that, even if all the eggs have been predated, the birds may sit in an empty nest for several days. The story of the Wren as depicted on British coinage is also included in the 'April' chapter.

Both the 'May' and 'June' chapters are concerned with the rearing of chicks. The subject of the 'July' chapter deals with Wren folklore, leading to the question of who is the real 'king of the birds'. In 'August', the author describes a visit to St Kilda, where he had the opportunity to observe the slightly larger-sized Wren found there. Has this island race yet evolved to the point where we should consider it a distinct species?

The 'September' chapter is devoted to a broad survey of the Wren in literature. But in 'October' some Wrens are on the move. While most British Wrens are sedentary, or almost so, those from northern Europe fly south in autumn, with many migrating to Britain across the North Sea. At one time these autumn-arriving Wrens (and Goldcrests too) were known as 'Woodcock pilots', as they often made landfall on the east coast of England around the same time as migrating Woodcocks.

Winter survival, roosting sites, and the possible effects of climate change are the main topics covered in the 'November' chapter, while in 'December' the author discusses the old custom of hunting the Wren on St Stephen's Day, as carried out by the 'Wren boys'.

I can recommend this little book to ornithologists and general naturalists alike, and even to those wren lovers who already have Edward Armstrong's valuable and classic work on their shelves.

PHILIP RADFORD

The Seabird's Cry, by Adam Nicolson, William Collins, 2017, 400 pp., b/w illus., maps, notes, index, Pbk. £9.99, ISBN 978-0-00-816570-3.

The story begins in the Hebridean Shiant Isles which were bought by the author's father in 1937. The three small uninhabited islands, one infested with rats, were remote, wild and havens for seabirds. Eventually, the author became the new owner of these islands that offered a 'vision of another world'. Seabirds stimulate human imagination; the species are varied in form, colour and ways of life, often travelling great distances over the seas. Many seabirds spend much of the year over the oceans, but they must come to land to lay their eggs and raise their chicks.

Seabird colonies are impressive because of their clamour and constant activity. Nicolson describes the habits of ten seabird groups, indicating how their lifestyles are linked to body shape and structure. Moreover, modern and historic seabird research is not overlooked, with full literature searches being carried out; the author also draws attention to classical and poetic references where relevant.

The first chapter is devoted to the Fulmar, a tubenose and master of flight, even in the most turbulent of conditions. Scientists have been able to follow some of their remarkable flights by fitting global positioning loggers to the birds' backs, as well as by attaching geo-locators to leg rings. As these devices become smaller and smaller, so the prospects of following epic seabird journeys will increase. Fulmars have certainly played their part in these pioneering studies. Nicolson has studied Fulmars on North Rona, sleeping near nesting birds in the ruined buildings there, and close enough to hear the rustling of air in their wing feathers as they flew. Of course, the inhabitants of St Kilda relied on Fulmars as a major source of food, especially the chicks.

The Puffin is the next bird to be considered. Puffins spend most of the year at sea, but return to land in late April to breed. The author has watched the birds as they returned to the Shiants, their appearances having altered in the previous few weeks, for both sexual and social reasons. The Puffin's face is its 'display-board', being used in pair-bonding and courtship displays, but is also highly effective in collecting nesting materials and in catching and holding prey fish. The Puffin is a bird which swims underwater, seizing fish down to a depth of at least 70 metres with ease. Puffins nest in burrows and lay only one egg. In recent years chick numbers have been poor, this being linked to a shortage of sandeels, their favoured prey item. But the reasons for these shortages are complex and uncertain.

Nicolson compares the Kittiwake with seabirds mentioned by Homer. The Kittiwake is a beautiful, mainly white oceanic gull, and one which has been much studied by seabird researchers. The Kittiwake was a favoured target of Victorians, and the birds were prized for their feathers that were used to adorn women's hats. More recently, as with Puffins, Kittiwake populations are suffering due to the shortage of sandeels. When there is a food shortage, the stronger, larger chicks just push the weaker ones out of the nest.

There is a good section on the larger gulls, which includes an appraisal of recent changes in their habits – and habitats. Many Herring Gulls, for instance, have deserted their coastal breeding areas and moved inland to feed on town rubbish dumps and nest on urban rooftops. Lesser Black-backed Gulls are now behaving in the same way. Will the Great Black-backed Gulls follow?

I found the chapter on Guillemots particularly interesting. These birds are specialist divers, and able to take fish at considerable depths. They lay their eggs on remarkably narrow cliff ledges and have an intriguing social and family life. Should there be food shortages, however, parent birds become very aggressive, especially towards any wandering chick.

Cormorants and Shags also have an excellent chapter, as have Shearwaters. Gannets, with their immense breeding colonies, are discussed in detail. It appears that the Gannet is actually increasing in numbers, in contrast to so many other species that are evidently in decline. The Great Auk, of course, is extinct, but in this book its history is well covered.

Moving to southern waters, the many species of albatross are greatly endangered because birds get hooked on long squid-baited fishing lines. The author, an admirer of the poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge, relates that much of what is now happening to our seabirds is suggested by lines in the Ancient Mariner story.

I found the final chapter depressing. Back on the Shiants, it appears that Kittiwake numbers are 80% down on those in the 1960s, while Fulmars have largely disappeared. It has been estimated that over the last 60 years the world population of seabirds has dropped by more than two-thirds. As on many other islands, rats have had quite an impact on breeding seabirds, but it is good to know that the Shiants have now been cleared of rats; will the seabirds return, I wonder?

To a large extent this book is an account of the impact that humans have had on the marine environment and its associated species – this includes pollution and over-fishing, of course, but also the less obvious effects of global warming and changing sea currents. This is a timely and well-written book, clear and concise throughout, and certainly one that I would recommend to anyone with a love of our oceans and their iconic seabirds.

PHILIP RADFORD