

## BOOK REVIEWS

EDITED BY STEPHEN CROAD

**Beyond the Medieval Village – The Diversification of Landscape Character in Southern Britain**, by Stephen Rippon, Oxford University Press, 2008, 336 pp., 86 figs, £60. ISBN 978-0-920382-6

In this ambitious attempt to explore and describe the very origins of landscape character in Southern Britain, Stephen Rippon, now Professor of Landscape Archaeology at Exeter University, has examined a wide range of topographic, documentary and archaeological information to justify his thesis that there was a profound change in the 8th century AD that affected parts of the South of England.

This is a very thorough and wide ranging survey and Rippon has used a range of case studies from East Anglia and Essex, South Wales, Pembrokeshire and Monmouthshire and across into South West England looking at Cornwall, Devon and Somerset. For the archaeologist and landscape historian interested in the development of the post-Roman landscape of Somerset there is much to discover in this book. Rippon starts with a valuable and authoritative resumé of recent work on medieval settlement studies across the Central Province of England (as defined by Roberts and Wrathmell 2000; 2002) ranging from Wharram Percy in Yorkshire through the East Midlands with the projects at Raunds, Whittlewood and Milton Keynes, and ends up with the Shapwick Project. This resumé of current work on medieval settlement studies pulls together some interesting observations from over 30 years of studies on the subject of the emergence of villages and their field systems. Rippon is however at his best when he is on the familiar territory of the Somerset Levels and Moors and he confirms the importance of Somerset to wider settlement studies

when he states that ‘Somerset straddles the boundary between Roberts and Wrathmell’s ‘central’ and ‘south-western’ provinces, making it an ideal case study within which to explore the origins of this major regional difference in landscape character’. He then proceeds to give a whole range of examples of landscape character types mapped against topography, settlement types, earthwork survival, ridge and furrow maps, areas of common fields, standing late-medieval and post-medieval buildings and some revised maps in the style of H.C. Darby looking at evidence from the Domesday Book. This evidence is collated and presented to ask the questions about the origins of a ‘Champion landscape’ and why it occurs in parts of Somerset. His explanations as to why it happened, who was responsible for it and when it occurred finds him looking at the evidence for such large blocks of land as the estates of Glastonbury Abbey and the Pouelt estate on the Polden Hills. The importance of the landholdings of the Abbot of Glastonbury (notably Dunstan), the Bishop of Wells, the Bishop of Winchester and the thane Aelfgar shows how large parts of the county were divided up by the time of the Domesday Book in 1086. The impact of the Glastonbury estate on the creation of a farmed landscape can be seen across central Somerset and beyond. Rippon argues that it was due to the Glastonbury Abbey connections that the land at Braunton in north Devon was laid out in a distinctive type of open field landscape similar in character to the field systems adopted in central Somerset. Various themes are picked up in the Somerset chapters in this book and the subject of ‘folk territories’ – large blocks of landscape that were subsequently broken up to form smaller estates is

explored with examples such as greater Ilton being subdivided later into smaller estates based on North Curry, Curry Rivel, South Petherton and Crewkerne. This is a particularly interesting area of potential research and one where Rippon has laid down some useful pointers for further work on Somerset's landscape history, and there are several Somerset examples likely to be of particular relevance to readers of this journal. Characterisation work, field boundary analysis and parish boundary studies can go part of the way to get some answers but detailed work linked with archaeological fieldwork and the use of dating techniques is beginning to help to clarify the dates of some of these large landscape building blocks that make up distinctive landscape types.

To his credit Rippon has used a wide range of evidence to support his arguments, and for this reviewer it is most encouraging to see that he has used the results from recent archaeological research contained in county Historic Environment Records (HERs). Many of the recent reports in HERs are generated through the planning process and Rippon has used the results from radiocarbon dating of stratified features from relatively minor projects such as excavation work at Edington in 2006 to help to argue that the village was laid out in the 9th or 10th century AD. Rippon describes Somerset as a 'county of contrasts' and makes numerous references to the importance of the 'remarkably clear division [that] emerges just to the east of the Blackdown and Quantock Hills'. The landscape character types and settlement types of dispersed patterns are distinctive of the western part of the county and extend into Devon and Cornwall. One of the key questions he raises is why did the concept of villages and common fields not spread into and beyond the Blackdown and Quantock Hills? The archaeological evidence he refers to is starting to help to date and identify the origins and development of settlement in the south-west of England and gradually the picture is becoming clearer as more work is done within the historic cores of the rural settlements – both villages and farmsteads across this widely differing region. Rippon uses all available evidence to push the origins of 'medieval' settlement patterns back to the 8th century, but the evidence is still proving elusive in many parts of Southern Britain – a 9th-century date would perhaps be easier to evidence for the Somerset part of the Central Province. An interesting observation is his conclusion that where the former tribal areas of the Durotriges were conquered by the West Saxons is the area in which the concept of

villages and common fields is to be found. He contrasts this with the people of Dumnonia who chose to manage their landscape in different ways. Following on from this observation he goes on to remark that whilst acknowledging the power and influence of such bodies as the Church and other great landowners it was the different practices of the local farming communities that had the greatest impact upon the historic and contemporary landscape character that we see today.

This is a valuable and thought-provoking volume and it should be of interest to archaeologists, historical geographers, historians and anyone interested in landscape history. For the Somerset researcher Rippon raises many questions and even suggests some answers. The volume is well illustrated with some new and interesting figures, maps and plans that help to explain how landscapes can be characterised and identified. Some of the photographs (all in black and white) are not particularly clear but this deficiency is more than made up for by a very full and up to date bibliography. Priced at £60 it is an expensive volume that will probably be beyond the reach of most students of landscape history but it is a 'must have' book to be on the reading list of all students of landscape history, with Somerset being served exceptionally well. This book makes a bold attempt to describe and explain the statement in the sub-title and it has indeed taken this reviewer well 'Beyond the Medieval Village'.

Roberts, B.K., and Wrathmell, S., 2000. *An Atlas of Rural Settlement in England*, London.

Roberts, B.K., and Wrathmell, S., 2002, *Region and Place*, London.

BOB CROFT

**Cooking and Dining in Medieval England**, by Peter Brears, Prospect Books, Totnes, 2008, 557 pp., 74 figs & 2 annotated sequences, £30. ISBN 978-1-903018-55-2

It may seem strange to wait until chapter ten to read about the kitchen but within the grand recipe that Brears offers, it is entirely logical. The book is reminiscent of Brears' earlier thoughts on the workings of the Tudor kitchens at Hampton Court (Brears 1999). He has taken the same approach, that of a meticulous experimental archaeologist, and applied it to the broader canvas of cooking and dining in medieval England. On one hand it is based on the

simple premise that, 'Anyone with a full command of their senses, especially touch and sight, can learn a great deal just from coming into contact with any artefact, be it an implement or a great building' (Brears 1999, 13). On the other he recognises that a wealth of careful research, whether it be in the architectural and archaeological study of buildings, in documentary sources, in artefact studies or in recipes, must come together to form a coherent organisational and social framework and that practical workable solutions must be presented that can be replicated in a modern environment. These solutions are beautifully illustrated with copious line drawings and accompanied by his interpretation of over 240 recipes which the reader is invited to try out for themselves. Brears goes to great lengths to explain how he has arrived at his interpretations. Certainly his recipe for boar's head is much more seductive than one recently offered on television by one of the many current celebrity cooks. To help us understand this world so different from our own, Brears invites us to strip away our modern preconceptions about the standards of medieval food and table manners which in his view were exemplary. 'Most medieval households were kept exceptionally clean. A medieval peasant would have been shocked by the manners on display today in fast-food restaurants.'

Brears starts with buildings and the thesis that domestic buildings, especially those parts involved in the storage, preparation and serving of food, were designed by administrators who knew precisely how to shape matters to their control and of course to their personal comfort. Hence he starts with considering the counting house, the factors involved in planning for cookery, and fuel and water supplies, taking us through the dairy, the brew-house, the bake-house, pastries and the boiling house before getting to the kitchen. Among the numerous examples of variations on this theme that he offers are the unroofed servery court at Clevedon Court, the external access kitchens at the Treasurer's House, Martock, and the Deanery at Wells, the kitchen wing at Meare Manor House and the kitchen in the service end at Kingston Seymour. A discussion of the physical evidence for the place where food is cooked, the central hearth in a peasant's dwelling up to the mighty kitchen buildings provided in wealthy households, and of the fittings and utensils required for the process of cooking is a necessary introduction to the food itself – pottages, leaches, frying, roasting and confectionary. Far from being the awful grey mess that one finds served in re-enactment camps,

pottage, cooked in an iron, bronze or possibly ceramic pot, clearly offered a huge variety of stews and other savoury dishes as well as sweet pottages based largely on eggs and milk. One recipe even employs the petals of hawthorn, primrose, red rose and violet as the main ingredients, reserving a few complete flowers to garnish the dish. Among the leaches, dishes for cutting into slices that are precooked and can either be served warm or cold enlivened with a sauce, recipes for haggis are discussed, a thoroughly English dish later high-jacked as part of the reinvention of Scottishness in the early 19th century. It is this part of the book with its, to us, exotic combinations of ingredients, where anyone seeking to experience the 'taste' of medieval England will have hours of pleasure trying out recipes for new dishes.

Three further parts of a house are considered before getting to the business of eating – the buttery, the store where beer, ale and wine was kept together with the utensils required for serving and drinking; the pantry, for storing other table utensils; and the ewery for keeping silverware and linen. With some of the evidence for ways of eating being tenuous, Brears offers us an honest appraisal of the likely manners and ceremonial surrounding eating. Whether describing the proper way a group of farm-labourers were expected to eat their bread and cheese, or the correct ceremonial surrounding the great enthronement feast of George Neville as Archbishop of York in 1466, we are taken through the process in meticulous detail. As Brears admits, if he had not undertaken the task of supervising a similar feast for one of Neville's successors he would neither have experienced the 'true majesty of medieval formal dining' nor would he have understood the 70 procedures required to serve a great lord in his hall. Fortunately for the reader, Brears hit upon the device of drawing a strip cartoon to illustrate each step of both the ceremony of dining in chamber and the progress of Neville's great feast.

To those of us living in the south west, Brears has already treated us to an outstanding catalogue of a local social history collection – the Laycock collection at Torquay Museum, and to the reconstruction of a 16th-century kitchen at the newly refurbished St Nicholas' Priory in Exeter (Brears 1998). Here he offers new ways of seeing some of the buildings well known to members of the Society and a new light on the social history of medieval England. It is possible to argue over some of the detail that Brears presents but the whole work

stands as a remarkable and entertaining piece of scholarship.

Brears, P., 1998. *The Old Devon Farmhouse*, Tiverton.

Brears, P., 1999. *All the Kings Cooks; the Tudor kitchens of Henry VIII at Hampton Court Palace*, London.

DAVID DAWSON

**Greater Medieval Houses of England and Wales 1300-1500, Volume III, Southern England**, by Anthony Emery, Cambridge University Press, 2006, 727 pp., 305 pls, 179 figs, £195. ISBN 978-0-521-58132-5

With the publication of this third volume, the author's self-imposed task has been brought to a triumphant conclusion. In the introduction to the first volume, Emery set out his reasons for embarking on such a labour. When writing a monograph on Dartington Hall, Devon, published in 1970, he wished to include a chapter placing the house in its 14th-century context, but discovered that there was no single source of reference available. Therefore, what he set out to provide was 'a source book on the greater houses of late-medieval England and Wales, supplemented by a number of thematic sections [...] essentially a stepping stone to help others cross the broad waters of a fascinating subject'. This is a very modest claim for a monumental achievement.

At this point your reviewer should confess that he was extremely dubious that the project could succeed without the resources of an organisation like the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, when it was outlined to him by the author nearly 20 years ago. How wrong one can be. Doubtless it could not have been achieved by anyone other than Anthony Emery. First and foremost he is a businessman, with time spent as chairman or senior director of several publishing companies. But also he was a founding commissioner of English Heritage and for many years chairman of Bath Archaeological Trust. For these volumes he has worked single-handedly to research, visit and record over 1000 houses – apparently he was refused entry to only six. The result, in the words of Martin Cherry in a perceptive review article, is a 'magisterial trilogy [...] the vast corpus of material provided by Emery ... has added enormously to our knowledge of late medieval culture' (*The Antiquaries Journal*, 87 (2007), 411–15).

Volume I covering Northern England was published in 1996 and volume II on East Anglia, Central England and Wales in 2000. Now we have the concluding volume covering our region. The third volume is divided into three parts; the Thames Valley, London and the South-East, and of most interest to us the South West – Dorset and Wiltshire, Somerset, and Devon and Cornwall. Each volume is organised to the same pattern. Major factors, such as historical, geographical and social developments, are dealt with in the introductory sections. Next the region's architectural development is considered, followed by more detailed studies, for example in the south-west on defensible houses and monastic foundations. There is also a section on secular art, decoration and furnishing. Each area has a selective bibliography with further listings under individual buildings. In addition there are appendices on residential additions to castles, licences to crenellate, and the architectural value of John Leland and the Buck brothers.

For readers of *Proceedings* it might be worth listing the Somerset houses included in this volume. There are chapters on the following: Blackmoor Manor, Bratton Court, Brympton D'Evercy, Cleeve Abbey, Clevedon Court, Coker Court, Cothay Manor, Croscombe Hall, Farleigh Hungerford Castle, Gotherney Hall, Gurney Manor, Kingston Seymour Manor House, Lytes Cary, Martock Treasurer's House, Meare Manor (and other houses of the abbots of Glastonbury), Muchelney Abbey, Naish 'Priory', Newton St Loe Manor and Sutton Court, Nunney Castle, Orchard Wyndham, Preston Plucknett Manor, Stoke sub Hamdon Priory, Tickenham Court, Wells Bishop's Palace (and other episcopal houses in Somerset), Wells Deanery, West Bower Manor and the gatehouses of Dunster Castle and Montacute Priory, and West Coker Manor. From this list it can be seen that the author's coverage is comprehensive. Additionally some chapters include wider discussion, for example the entry for Meare Manor includes references to other houses built for the abbots of Glastonbury, even as far afield as Berkshire. And the entry for Sampford Peverell in Devon takes into account houses for parish priests and chantry priests throughout the West Country. The scope of the author's research never ceases to impress.

Those devoting their time to investigating an individual house may quibble with some of his findings and new research will undoubtedly change perceptions. For example at Clevedon Court, recent investigation has shed new light on the early history

of this complex building, but Emery's overall achievement is extraordinary. The text is enhanced by numerous and well-chosen photographs, complemented by maps, diagrams and ground plans of most of the houses, all prepared by the author. Altogether these volumes are unlikely to be surpassed and will for the foreseeable future remain an indispensable source of reference.

Sadly the price will deter many prospective purchasers and it is salutary to note that the first volume cost £80 (still available at £126), the second £125, and the promotional leaflet issued in 2000 anticipated that volume III would cost £80 rather than the actual £195. Fortunately Anthony Emery has produced an extremely informative and well illustrated volume in the Shire series – *Discovering Medieval Houses* (2007) – modestly priced at £10.99. In this he outlines his findings gleaned over the years of researching for the trilogy. As well as summaries of architectural developments, building materials, contents and furnishings, it includes very useful chapters on houses as responses to political circumstances and as expressions of social status.

STEPHEN CROAD

**Traditional Buildings in the Parish of Combe St Nicholas**, by Somerset Vernacular Building Research Group, SVBRG, 2008, 114 pp., 14 maps, 138 figs, 11 tables, £10. ISBN 978-0-9523824-5-4

This book is the latest in a series of books under the general title of 'Somerset Villages'. Earlier titles in the series are not listed, which does seem to be an oversight, for the value of the series undoubtedly increases as it continues. So far ten volumes have been published, covering a wide spectrum of Somerset villages and providing a wealth of material for future architects and local historians.

The study of standing vernacular buildings is a relatively recent discipline. Prior to 1970 there had been no articles on the subject in our *Proceedings* and that decade became largely an age of discovery: finding and classifying. It was not until sufficient detail had been amassed that this could be used to expand our knowledge of the 'economic and social status ... geological resources ... [and] changing patterns of population, wealth, religious belief, farming practice, sources of industrial power, communication networks, architectural fashions, and personal tastes and aspirations', which Mary Siraut notes in her Foreword. Recently the data now available led to the publication of a more generalised

study of Somerset housing (*Traditional Houses of Somerset* by Jane Penoyre, reviewed in volume 149 of *SANH* for 2006).

Much early vernacular research involved individual properties scattered throughout the county, not the more concentrated area studies needed for the study of local history. The original impetus was largely driven by owner interest, rather than by planned research. For the concentrated studies we owe a large debt to the SVBRG who have been gathering invaluable material on traditional buildings, and utilising work from experts in other fields, to provide insights into the way in which traditional buildings can be used to complement other evidence regarding local studies. Mick Aston, in his Foreword to the SVBRG book on Shapwick, stated that 'it has frequently been from the building surveys that ideas about other aspects of the Project have developed'. Personally I believe that one of the most important aspects of the study of traditional buildings is the ideas they promote about the local history of the area in which they are situated, and it has certainly been a constant source of inspiration for me.

Combe St Nicholas is close to Chard in the south of the county. It was chosen for this survey because it lies on the border territory between nucleated villages in Somerset and dispersed farmsteads and hamlets in Devon, whose boundary is close by. At 114 pages the latest volume is the largest in the series so far. It may well be that the size, and its accompanying printing costs, is the reason why no colour pictures were included, though the previous volume, on Compton Dundon, had set a precedent with four pages of well chosen colour prints. Here there are almost as many, but they are all much smaller and confined to the front cover, re-appearing in black and white throughout the text. In addition, one internal colour picture is a map of the patterns of land ownership. Nevertheless, all but one of the buildings do have a clear black and white picture, accompanying a ground plan, alongside a summary of their details, sometimes with additional drawings of interesting features or sections.

Ignoring the Introduction, Conclusions, Glossary and List of Sources, 42 pages summarise the buildings surveyed and another 14 discuss various technical terms that have relevance to Combe St Nicholas. That means that just over half the book discusses the origins of the various settlements which make up the parish, aspects of land tenure and agricultural practice, some local industries and population and occupations in the 19th century, plus

a fairly brief discussion of the church and a List of Sources. This emphasis on the local environment, as well as the houses, has been a developing benefit of the series; a theme I will return to shortly.

Within the List of Sources it is mentioned that copies of the full reports on each house are in the Somerset Record Office. Perhaps it would have made this more obvious if it had been noted at the head of the chapter containing the summaries as well. However, the exclusion of technical detail from the volume does mean that I have not had sufficient time to analyse the construction phases more thoroughly, so I do not intend to make explicit comments on individual entries, even though there are some which I would like to understand better. In his review of the two previous volumes, J.T. Smith took, as he stated, 'a professional standpoint, because that is what the aims of the SVBRG and its output so far, deserve'. His knowledge of the latest research findings is far greater than mine, so I would not try to emulate his critique, but I do agree with his comments about the output of the SVBRG. However, I have a different approach to the subject, which, I believe, is equally valid. My interest is in the wider issue of how knowledge of the buildings within a community can be used to enhance our understanding of local studies at community and administrative levels.

This is clearly not intended to be a technical manual, stating its target audience to be those who take an informed interest in the history of English buildings and their impact on the development of the English village, plus the residents of Combe St Nicholas. As the technical research has been done and the detail deposited with the Record Office, this seems a reasonable way of ensuring that the information provided reaches as large an audience as possible. It also means that some explanation of classification and terminology is essential, even for some items which more technically minded people may find obvious. In the main this is handled well, excluding items which are not of relevance to the study in hand. The chapter on the nature of vernacular buildings provides explanations of seven main distinctive features of vernacular buildings, having specific relevance to the village, to assist those with limited expertise. I have a few concerns about some of these, such as the comment that 'thatch is made from the stem of a cereal grain plant', when reed and, locally, sedge were also frequently used. Is this intended exclusively as a description of the roofing found in Combe St Nicholas, or is it supposed to be a generalised statement? If the former,

it should be made clear that elsewhere alternatives are available and are often used.

The stated primary purpose of this book is 'to show how an understanding of the vernacular buildings in the parish can complement the documentary and landscape evidence in illuminating the history of the community'. No previous volume had such an explicit primary purpose. Indeed it is a far more ambitious objective than the aim of the Butleigh volume, which was 'to research the houses and farms in the survey area with a view to determining what was the original form of each property in terms of plan and use of rooms, and also, where possible, to try to give an indication when the house was built and how it has developed subsequently'. That aim describes the traditional province of those interested in vernacular architecture as a distinct discipline.

Notably the present volume utilises the term 'traditional buildings' (as did that of Compton Dundon) whereas previous volumes had used the term 'vernacular houses' or 'vernacular buildings'. I suspect the change in terminology reflects the changing emphasis, noted in the aims, from classification to support of local studies. It suggests the coming of age of the discipline, integrating vernacular building studies into a far wider sphere of interest. In particular, the location of settlements, old auster and derelict buildings; the use of land and of land ownership; the development of local industries and the population and occupations sections are integral parts of this publication to a far greater extent than ever before.

What this effectively means is that the study of the style, structure and materials, leading to a chronological interpretation of the buildings, is now utilised to demonstrate the development of the community in which they stand. For this reason a comprehensive study of the locality is essential. That implies that the use of houses, inaccessible now, but surveyed by others some time ago, is a valuable addition. Also the incorporation of information about changes to the buildings, structurally or decoratively, becomes necessary to establish changing fortunes within the settlements.

One thing I did find a little frustrating, though, was the use of specific dates without explanation. The Weston Farm report, for instance, mentions the 1327 Lay Subsidy and a date stone of 1583, but offers no explanation of the dating of the front range to 1614, with alterations in 1672. Later in the same report it is claimed that 'On the evidence of the beams in the kitchen and the partition against the cross-passage, the main range may have been built, or

rebuilt, in about 1614, with two storeys and attics'. To date beams that closely without additional documentation would require dendrochronology. This is not mentioned, so presumably the date is derived from deeds, or accounts, or estate documents. The comment, in the List of Sources, that it is not a catalogue of scholarly references, suggests that references are intentionally not included. As there is mention there of documents from the Dean and Chapter of Wells, who owned the estate from the Middle Ages, one assumes that they may well be the source, but in what context is not apparent. Presumably some record states that building work took place in that year. I have not checked the Record Office details to ascertain whether references are included there, but feel that, if so, mention should be made in this text so that research does not need to be duplicated.

A limit on the range of houses surveyed is mentioned: 'We have tried to draw a line by limiting the survey to buildings which appear in the tithe review of 1839 and still survive to a recognisable extent'. In some respects this may be a throwback to the study of vernacular buildings, which were being replaced, in respect of new build, by national materials and designs from around that time on. Most of the population and occupational studies represent 19th-century statistics and this is not, therefore, reflected in the changes to settlement patterns during that period. How important that is to Combe St Nicholas I am uncertain, but the fact that the total number of properties mentioned in the tithe review is not included does mean that it is not possible to ascertain the percentage of properties which have been studied. In the census of 1841 262 households are mentioned, which suggests around 20%. Opinion polls regard that as an excellent representation, but how many have been destroyed and not replaced, how many exist but are no longer recognisable as pre-tithe review properties and how many have been completely rebuilt would be interesting to know.

In the Conclusion it is stated that Wells Cathedral sold its last remaining holdings in the 20th century and many of the old houses were extended or modernised. Only a few references to 20th-century changes are mentioned within the surveys, so it is difficult to assess what impact the change to private ownership really had.

These comments are not major concerns, though. Overall the book is well constructed, providing some very useful information both about the houses and the development of the various settlements within the parish. The building chronology summarises the

buildings in a concise fashion and the figures of farmstead layouts from the 1886 Ordnance Survey map offers an interesting way to compare the development of 19th-century farming. I would certainly recommend anyone interested in the way that buildings can be used in local studies not only to buy this book but to look into the complete series. Hopefully the group will continue to provide further valuable surveys in the future.

JOHN PAGE

**Men & Mining on the Quantocks**, by J.R. Hamilton and J.F. Lawrence, Exmoor Mines Research Group, 2008, 171 pp., 16 ills, £15 (from SIAS), no ISBN.

When the first edition of this book appeared in 1970 it was a revelation to be informed that in one of the most beautiful landscapes of the county at the time when it was frequented by Coleridge and the Wordsworths, men were mining for copper beneath its hills. Long since out of print, a bold initiative was undertaken by a small heritage group, assisted by the Somerset Industrial Archaeological Society, to publish a much extended re-issue incorporating additional research by one of the original authors, John Hamilton. A thoroughly modern approach has been taken towards the composition of the book itself: A4 size with a wire-comb binding, generous spacing for text and margins and a targeted use of colour for both figures and plates which makes for an attractive contribution to the growing corpus of literature about the Quantock Hills.

The main narrative describes the somewhat ill-fated attempts to mine copper at various places on the hills during the later 18th and early 19th centuries. The major efforts were at Dodington, between Nether Stowey and Holford, where substantial remains of buildings may be found with other, sometimes less obvious, fieldwork evidence of mining sites elsewhere.

But the book is more than a history of mining. The first chapter, by the late Jack Lawrence, entitled 'Social and Economic Conditions in the Neighbourhood of Dodington' investigates the economics of survival for the working man around the 1800s: this chapter is unchanged from the previous edition. It is shown that without the subsidy financed by the Poor Rate, there was insufficient income from agricultural work to pay for the basic necessities. The social deprivations were not always accepted peaceably with an event described as a Hunger March taking place in 1801. It is unfortunate

that few records of the wages of the miners have survived, but by comparison to other regions it is seen that pay was higher than for agricultural work, and needed to be sufficient to attract experienced miners from Cornwall, and some from the Somerset Coalfield. A contemporary report says that the local Somerset men were not attracted to mining, and that a degree of suspicion existed between the two communities.

The mining chapters begin with a discussion of the influence on mining of the emerging science of geology, and how much of that knowledge was based on the practical experience of miners. The geology of the Quantocks is described, including the distribution of the lime-based strata where most of the copper was found. Maps are included marking the main sites of mining, and also a fully detailed plan of the Dodington area, showing both surface and underground features. This is then followed by an analysis of mining dating from the later 17th century from documentary sources deposited at the Somerset Records Office. It is shown that despite a lack of precise locations there was mining activity at a number of Quantock sites, but that no working developed to any great extent. Many original documents are quoted at length both within the text and in the appendices which includes a later account of the mines written in 1816 by a former mine captain.

The first major effort of mining at Dodington dating from 1785 to 1801 is the subject of the next chapter enhanced by especially informative evidence from an archive held in an American library. From these and from other sources practical details of the mine work and an indication of the problems of management are described. The letters show the difficulties of running a mine in Somerset with the main directing management being in Cornwall (where the ore deposits are of a totally different nature), whilst retaining the necessary financial support of the titled landowner, Richard Earl Temple, the Marquis of Buckingham, and other commercial interests. Closure in 1801 was unavoidable as the value of ores raised was less than the cost of working, and the only means of increasing the yield would have been to install a steam-powered pumping engine for which there were no funds.

But mines are slow to die, and copper prices remained high in the early 1800s such that a further attempt was made, driven chiefly by the exertions of the well-known Tom Poole of Nether Stowey. An engine was installed, and the principal remaining buildings at Dodington are the two sites of that engine at Beech Grove and Glebe or Sump Shaft. A report by English Heritage in 2003 by Phil Newman,

*Dodington Mines, Holford, Somerset*, highlighted these remains as significant monuments in a regional and national context. Not only did they house the same engine at different periods but also they may be 'the only surviving structures built for Boulton and Watt engines in southern England'. It is to be hoped that the further publicity generated by *Men and Mining* will stimulate a comprehensive conservation plan to ensure that the fabric of these engine houses, at present in a parlous state, receives care and attention.

Expenditure at Dodington was high, and insufficient ore was found to cover the costs, resulting in final abandonment in 1821 but the reader is reminded in the final two chapters that there were other mines, mostly for copper, at various places around the Quantock foothills. Locations are given where these are known. Archaeologists will be intrigued by all this activity – the documentary and site evidence is from the post-medieval and industrial periods but was the mineral wealth of Quantock known and exploited at earlier times?

The book has a glossary of mining and geological terms which a non-specialist reader will value and a useful index. The lack of an ISBN could present difficulties for potential purchasers but tracking down a copy will be well worth the effort.

G. FITTON

**Perfectly Pure – A Directory of Somerset Brewers excluding old North Somerset**, by Mary Miles, Brewery History Society and Somerset Industrial Archaeology Society, 2006, 138 pp., numerous ills, £10.95 (from SIAS). ISBN 1-873966-1-48.

This is the first substantial study of one of Somerset's major industries between 1638 and 1966. It concentrates on the main period of expansion in the 19th century and the relentless decline after the war of 1914–18, when small breweries were closed or taken over by larger and more efficient producers, until the mid 1960s when the survivors were swallowed up by a few national amalgamations. This process was dominated by great improvements in the technology of brewing and the establishment of a railway network and a truly national market.

Mary Miles is to be congratulated on producing a reference work which will be invaluable to the historians of Somerset, whether at county or parish level. Although the study may well have been a labour of love it is certainly based on thorough



research in local archives and newspapers, together with sustained fieldwork to record structures under threat and memories fast disappearing. Although termed 'a directory' this volume is far more in that it provides evidence of the rise and fall of a ubiquitous industry in the new county of Somerset during the period described. This is particularly useful for two reasons. Not only does it provide references to small breweries long since gone, such as the Pedwell brewery in Ashcott, but even more significantly it records the great monuments of the industry just before their final destruction.

Today it is fashionable to write about the 'man-made landscape' and Mary Miles' study provides both pictorial and verbal evidence of that landscape in Somerset, in the not-too-distant past. Think of Wiveliscombe, where the tower of Hancock's great brewery still dominates the urban landscape as proudly as a Norman castle does in settlements like Dunster. Somerset Industrial Archaeology Society was established in 1972 to draw attention to buildings such as those described in this study. Although we may have been too late to record important sites before that date, this book demonstrates that we were able to survey and record many buildings and processes which have now gone for ever. I remember a ramble I went on some years ago round the village of Stogumber. We had our alfresco lunch near the site of the old brewery but nothing seemed to have survived of the enormous array of buildings which we had visited in the early 1970s, when they were empty and almost too dangerous to crawl inside. What an impact this building must have had on the local landscape and how important it must have been for the workforce and its customers – both the ordained and the commonplace!

But this book provides another aspect on the brewing trade with reference to the many people who not only manufactured the various brews but were happy to sample the end products. No wonder there appears to be a dearth of business records in Somerset if the example of Thomas Ford is typical. When he met 'Colonel' Bill Whitbread on the steps of his Northgate Brewery in Bridgwater, which was up for sale at the time, he said, 'I have no office. I do all my business on these steps. Always have done. Now, how much?!' An appreciation of Somerset's own dialect helps to understand how that brewery's own workforce came to call the special Old Vatted Ale – 'Old Fathead'! The book is full of such items which really bring the subject to life.

My only regret is that the photographic evidence is not as clear and sharp as it might have been if a

higher grade of paper had been used for printing. It is a problem publishers face in keeping prices at a competitive level and is only a minor consideration for such an interesting and important subject. The whole work is clearly and logically set out with many references and a useful Index. I strongly recommend this reasonably priced book to both a general readership as well as to those more particularly interested in the history and archaeology of brewing in Somerset.

C.A. BUCHANAN

**From Field to Factory: Flax and Hemp in Somerset's History after 1750**, by C.A. Buchanan, SIAS Survey No. 18, 2008, 80 pp., 59 ill. £10.00 (from SIAS). ISBN 978-0-95587-42-0-8.

The Somerset Industrial Archaeology Society is to be congratulated on its 18th survey, now in a new attractive format. This most readable book opens up a whole new aspect of south Somerset's industrial past. The soils here were suited to growing flax and hemp, which were processed from the 14th century, but most activity belongs to the 19th century. The author provides a useful summary of all the processes from harvesting through preparation, spinning, bleaching and weaving to finishing. Flax and hemp products included ropes, twine, line, canvas, sailcloth, webbing and sacking. Firms increasingly relied on imported raw materials but governments encouraged local production during wartime.

Documentary evidence is used to trace the story of local entrepreneurs such as Richard Hayward who specialised in sailcloth at Tail Mill, Merriott and then North Street Mill, Crewkerne, or George Parsons, a gentleman farmer and engineer, who built the superb Parrett Works at Martock to include the latest fire-proof technology. Thomas Salisbury Donne's business at Higher Flax Mills, Castle Cary, was bought out by John Boyde, a firm still weaving horse hair at the site. Interestingly, the application of water and then steam power to the industry was generally slow; indeed, in one instance hand-loom weavers continued as late as the 1920s.

Demand for sailcloth and Coker Canvas declined around the 1870s with the advent of steamships, but a shrinking industry survived by using lighter cotton. Some businesses turned to twine, cordage and webbing, or jute for sacking, like Felix Drake at East Coker. Cotton was a main rival and man-made fibres gradually took over after the Second World War. Flax was encouraged during both world wars to provide

essentials for the armed forces, including hose pipes, parachute harnesses, etc.

We are shown the rich industrial archaeology that gives character to many places around south Somerset, notably the Parrett Works with its two huge waterwheels and Italianate chimney for the steam engine that worked power looms. Tail Mill is also discussed. Crewkerne's heritage includes shirt factories, Robert Bird's webbing factory and Viney

Bridge Mills. West Coker's twine walks are presented, notably that of William Dawe now being preserved by the Coker Rope and Sail Trust.

This small book is fully referenced and indexed, and is generously illustrated with historic and modern photographs and plans. Packed with information, the author also highlights research problems and suggests future lines of investigation.

PETER STANIER