

BOOK NOTICES

Parish Surveys in Somerset. One: Wambrook, by Roger W. Carter, assisted by Mary Parmiter and Peter J. Wood. (Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society, 1977), 19 pp., illustrated, 60p.

The rise in recent years of a network of Government-sponsored (or local-authority-backed) 'Sites and Monuments' survey units has produced an interesting dilemma for the active fieldworker. Should discoveries, old or new, now be recorded on the basis of the O.S. 6-inch sheet? This is, after all, the method employed by the Ordnance Survey for its own cards. Or should the parish, beloved of the local worker since the last century, remain the normal quantum of survey?

The (ecclesiastical) parish has a great deal going for it. City-dwellers do not always appreciate how much the parish can still mean, even in 1978, to its inhabitants; and consequently how much effort, at such invaluable grass-roots levels as those of Women's Institutes, tends to be confined within parochial boundaries. Important, too, is the fact that most of our local records—in particular, that starting-point for all fresh survey, the Tithe Apportionment documents of the 1838–42 era—are related to parishes, and it would be a thankless task to have to convert tithe maps to gridded O.S. sheets.

The Society, which generously acknowledges the precedent of work in Cornwall, is now promoting 'non-excavational surveys, with the ultimate aim of publishing a series of check-lists', such labour to be undertaken (with the support of a central, specialist, team) by 'groups and individuals with an intimate knowledge of their particular parish' (my italics). Not only is this within the finest, historic, tradition of the county archaeological society; it is precisely the kind of thing that can *only* be done in this way. If a friend from rather further to the south-west may add a comment, the time is peculiarly ripe, with the establishment of the Somerset Local History Library: one of the best of its kind that I have seen anywhere, radiating an atmosphere of purpose, helpfulness, expertise, and near-completeness of stock.

I do not myself know Wambrook (a small parish in the Blackdown Hills, in the very south of the county). I can think of no more sincere tribute to the compilers of this carefully-planned, inexpensive and workmanlike preliminary survey than to say that I wish I *did* know it. The topography is described; then the principal tenements are digested, in the 16th and later centuries. A list of features, located by field-work, include roads and lanes—tremendously important, often forgotten. There are many detailed references to primary and secondary sources, and a series of sensible, clear-lined maps, with a page of sketches (and are 'horse-engine houses' not called *whims* (= wind(lasses)) in Somerset, as they are in Devon and Cornwall?). The format is A4, production by lithography.

This is a sensible and attractive start. As the statement inside the front cover implies, such surveys should most certainly be used in planning and developmental control. But the academic purpose has not been overlooked, and a high standard has been set. Warm congratulations to the Wambrook team; and we look forward to more results, inspired by their example.

CHARLES THOMAS
Institute of Cornish Studies,
Redruth, Cornwall.

A History of the County of Somerset, Volume IV, edited by R. W. Dunning (Victoria History of the Counties of England, published for the Institute of Historical Research by Oxford University Press, 1978), xx + 226 pp., 44 illustrations, 18 maps and plans, £40.

This is the second volume of the Victoria History to be produced as a result of the partnership between the Somerset County Council and the University of London. Volume III was published in 1974, and in view of the amount of detailed research involved and the high standard of editing and printing, it reflects great credit on all

concerned that the present volume has been produced so quickly, and that Volume V is now in preparation. Volume IV traces the history of 21 parishes in the hundreds of Crewkerne, Martock and South Petherton. The area is predominantly agricultural, much of it on very rich land, and farming naturally figures largely in its economic history; but several industries have been important including the manufacture of sailcloth, textiles, rope and agricultural implements and accessories. Domestic crafts, especially gloving, have also provided much employment. There are three market towns, and several notable parish churches and houses including Barrington Court and the great mansion of the Pouletts at Hinton St. George. A large map of the whole area covered by the volume showing its division into hundreds would have been a useful addition for those not familiar with south Somerset, although there are maps of each hundred which together with the other maps and the 44 illustrations add greatly to the interest of the reader.

This volume is a notable addition to work on the history of Somerset, and the editor, Dr. R. W. Dunning and the assistant editor, Mr. R. J. E. Bush, have produced a work to which all future local historians of the area will look for authoritative guidance on facts and sources. Here they will find descents of manors explained with care, and the economic, religious, political and social history of each parish described with a mass of detailed references to widely-dispersed documentary sources. The text follows the familiar pattern of the Victoria Histories and deals concisely with each parish in turn. This means that it is necessary to use the very full index in order to follow particular themes or subjects over the whole area. This is essentially a work of reference which is intended to form the basis of serious historical study, and it is not a book for casual reading. The tightly-packed text demands equally close attention from the reader, but the serious student will find much that is new and thought-provoking. For example, the recognition of the earlier pattern of Saxon minsters, each with its church, which underlies the later parochial system; the elucidation of the complicated system of separate manors and estates which together made up the large parish of Martock; the new dating which is suggested for Barrington Court, and the fresh light which is thrown on the complex architectural development of Hinton House and the story of the gradual development of Hinton park. An interesting section deals with the history of the town and parish of Crewkerne. The town has been important since the Saxon period, when it possessed a mint, and besides the market it has had a great variety of trades and industries, especially various textile industries. The long economic and religious history of the town, together with the involved story of its manors, government and society is, for the first time, presented in authentic detail.

The volume is not without its lighter side. We are told of the popularity of beans as a crop on the rich soils of Martock and of the local saying 'take a Martock man by the collar and shake him and you will hear the beans rattle in his belly'; of the feasting and dancing which accompanied the important annual fair at Whitedown in the parish of Cricket St. Thomas; or of the 17th-century church ale at Merriott where, after bull and bear-baiting, the churchwarden used the communion cup to serve beer to the spectators.

Inevitably the price of such a scholarly and carefully researched work as this is very high, but in return we get a well-produced book, packed with information together with a wealth of references to aid further research on every aspect of the history of the area.

J. H. BETTEY
University of Bristol.

A History of the Priory Church of St. Andrew, Stoke Courcy, by Richard Ballard, (Stogursey P.C.C., 1977), 27 pp., illustrated, 50p.

The village of Stogursey (historically a decayed town which retains the earthworks of its castle and the outline of its market-place) lies in what has been described as 'that forgotten land between the A39 and the sea'. Both the village and its church deserve to be better known, for St. Andrew's has not only an interesting history, but also some remarkable Norman architectural features which survived the Per-

pendicular remodelling which affected so many Somerset churches. Excavations earlier this century by the indefatigable Basil Tucker revealed that the original building was tri-apsidal, but the east end was extended and provided with side-aisles after the church was presented by William de Falaise (lord of the manor in 1086) to the abbey of Lonlay in Normandy. The original crossing still survives (with its elaborately-carved capitals), together with the arcades of the added side-aisles, and a remarkable change in floor-levels gives a quite dramatic impact to the view from the east end of the nave through the crossing to the chancel.

As a former rector of Stogursey, Mr. Ballard has a close familiarity with his subject, and he is clearly aware of the architectural problems which the church poses. He places great emphasis, in fact, upon two major periods of alteration to the fabric of the building: the Norman period and the 19th century. Mr. Ballard also provides some interesting information about the history of the priory during the middle ages (it was, for instance, seized by the Crown as an alien priory in the 15th century, and its revenues formed part of the endowment of Eton College in 1440), and he has made use of a set of early 16th-century churchwardens' accounts to provide evidence of church life immediately before the Edwardian Reformation. If a criticism is to be made, it is that the two centuries thereafter are barely mentioned (and this cannot be justified entirely on the grounds that the surviving churchwardens' accounts do not begin again until 1707). Overall, however, Mr. Ballard's *History of Stogursey church* has been carefully researched and prepared, and he writes not only with clarity but with a real respect for both the history and the fabric of the building.

The text of this booklet is supplemented by a plan of the building (in which different periods of construction are identified) and by a series of plates: these include detailed studies of bench-ends and Norman capitals, and a reproduction of a drawing of the interior of the church made by J. Buckler in 1836. In view of the high cost of printing, it would be unfair to criticize the quality of the photographic reproduction or the absence of justified lines in the text, but a feature which does seem unnecessary is the uneven setting of the pages. This is a minor defect, however, in a very worthwhile publication. Any member who did not take part in the Society's recent excursion to Stogursey is recommended to obtain a copy of Mr. Ballard's booklet and visit both the church and the village.

M.B.MCD.

The Waters of Exmoor, by N. V. Allen (the Exmoor Press), 64 pp., illustrated, £0.90.

As the author reminds us, water is rather heavy stuff: an inch of rain means 100 tons on an acre of ground of which one half has to be carried off by rivers and streams. Exmoor has 300 miles of major waters with countless tributary streams and these are therefore apt subjects for this new addition to the Microstudy Series.

Apart from a general introduction, there are two chapters on fishing and water power contributed by specialists. The remaining two-thirds of the book consists of a compendium of rivers, waters and streams in which the author displays an intimate knowledge of the countryside through which the waters flow. Mr. Allen introduces the reader to such features as a boggy corner where the marsh violet flourishes or battered pines which provide nesting sites for both the raven and the buzzard. Supplementing this natural detail are brief historical references to man-made structures adjacent to, or spanning, the watercourses. The stone causeway of Tarr Steps probably has its origin in prehistory, whilst many of the mills are on sites recorded in Domesday. Literary evidence is employed to good effect, John Leland and R. D. Blackmore as well as lesser known authorities being cited.

It is to be regretted that the compendium section was printed in compact lines of small type which creates particular reading difficulties for the young and elderly alike. However, the main criticism centres around the location of those very subjects which Mr. Allen describes with such obvious care and devotion. The general map on page 24 is barely adequate for anyone familiar with Exmoor and virtually meaningless to the tourist whose access is by road and not water. Additional route maps would

allow this well-researched work to be used as a handbook permitting the reader to share the pleasure which the author has derived from an acquaintance with the waters of Exmoor and their associated features.

BRIAN J. MURLESS

The Intertidal Invertebrate Fauna of the Severn Estuary, by C. R. Boyden, J. H. Crothers, C. Little, and C. Mettam (reprinted from *Field Studies*, 4, part 4, December 1977), 78 pp., £1.25 (obtainable from the Leonard Wills Field Centre, Nettlecombe Court, Williton, Somerset).

The Severn Estuary is noted for its spectacular tidal range of up to 14.6 m at Severn Bridge. This, and such factors as changes in salinity, variation in the quantity of suspended matter and degree of wave action make the distribution of its fauna of the greatest interest. The authors divide the area covered by the survey into two parts: the Lower Estuary, between Porlock on the English coast and Kenfig on the Welsh to the M4 road bridge at Aust and Beachley, and the Upper Estuary from the M4 to the limits of normal tidal influence near Gloucester. There is an excellent introductory summary of the variation in physical characteristics of the English and Welsh coastlines of the Lower Estuary, and of the banks of the Upper Estuary. This enables the reader to relate the distribution of the fauna to the changes in conditions.

The main body of the paper forms a comprehensive list of species arranged in classificatory order with their distribution separated for convenience into the three main regions, English coast, Welsh coast and Upper Estuary, where applicable. This allows the reader to use the data, as expressed by the authors, 'not just as a simple list of species, but as a summary of invertebrate distribution along a linear sequence of estuarine conditions'. The paper represents a summary of much painstaking research by many workers over a long period, but particularly that of the four authors from 1970-76. It is an essential work of reference for all who are interested in estuarine faunas, but also a quick and easy guide to records of distribution of species to be found in the area.

ERNEST G. NEAL

Historic Towns in Somerset: Archaeology and Planning, by Michael Aston and Roger Leech (CRAAGS, 1977), 176 pp. 72 maps, 10 plates, £6.00.

Interest in historic towns is nothing new: our former president E. A. Freeman's *English Towns and Districts* appeared in 1883; but the present book contains much that is entirely the product of our own decade. The attempt to set alongside each other the archaeological potential of historic towns and the extent to which it is threatened by anticipated development was pioneered by Carolyn Heighway's *The Erosion of History* (1972), and has been taken further by a number of local studies which include the companion CRAAGS volume, Roger Leech's *Small Medieval Towns in Avon* (1975). The topographical approach to the layout of medieval towns, with its appreciation of the significance of street alignment and widths, breaks of slope, and other details, owes much to Michael Aston and James Bond's *The Landscape of Towns* (1976).

Recent developments have been responsible for the organizational as well as the academic background of the book. Michael Aston's post as field archaeologist in the County Planning Department was created in 1974, and Roger Leech's employer, CRAAGS, the Committee for Rescue Archaeology in Avon, Gloucestershire and Somerset, which has published the book in conjunction with our Society and the County Council, was itself set up in 1973. Both innovations were examples of the great expansion in public sector provision for archaeology which has been a feature of the 1970s.

Thirty-five towns are treated. All are in the new county as constituted by the Local Government Act of 1972, and all have roots in the medieval period or earlier, though some, notably Downend, Newport and Rackley, have declined into total obscurity since. Each town is considered separately, and each receives uniform treat-

ment. First comes a brief statement of the town's history, and of previous archaeological research, if any. Second, the area of potential archaeological interest is plotted on a map of the town's early features, and its significance explained in the text. Finally, this area is marked on a modern map, along with indications of the areas developed since 1945, those likely to be developed in the future, and those protected as ancient monuments, listed historic buildings and conservation areas. This map is similarly complemented by the text. These sections on individual towns nearly fill the book. The few remaining pages carry lists of contents and illustrations, preface, acknowledgements, introduction, a concluding summary of archaeological problems and potential, and an impressively full bibliography. Most of the plates are early maps and views, including a delightful bird's-eye view of Wells, circa 1463, which is reproduced in colour on the front cover. The back cover is used for a map of the county, with the towns plotted on it. Lyng and Athelney have been inadvertently omitted.

Some of the findings are predictable: future excavations of Romano-British Ilchester are 'a high academic priority.' Others come as more of a surprise: 'The surviving pattern of burgage plots is well preserved at Wellington . . . This pattern is an important part of the historic environment of the town and it is essential, since it has survived, that it is maintained intact.' Nobody has thought to look for such features in many of the towns before. A marked feature of the book is the repeated revelation of our ignorance: 'Almost nothing is known of the archaeology or physical appearance of either the Saxon fort or the monastery on Athelney.' A positive tour de force is the list of 34 seasons of excavation at Glastonbury Abbey, each being plotted for the first time on a large scale plan of the site, along with the sobering comment that less than a dozen finds have been published from them all.

The presentation has the flavour of a planning report, with its numbered paragraphs and generous supply of maps, many in three colours, and the introduction specifically indicates that the intended readership is headed by CRAAGS itself, the County and District Councils, and public and private developers. Publication in book form for readers outside this restricted circle is most welcome, both for propagandist reasons, and also because it supplies much the best summary we have of the history and archaeology of the towns in the new county.

DAVID BROMWICH

Exmoor in Wartime 1939-1945, by Jack Hurley (the Exmoor Press, 1978), 116 pp., illustrated, £1.95.

By popular conception, if not by definition, history is the study of people and events of the *distant* past. It may, therefore, come as a surprise to many to find that the years 1939 to 1945 are chronicled in Jack Hurley's latest book. To this reviewer who is, admittedly, a member of the post-war generation, the era portrayed in this entertaining yet workmanlike account seems at times as remote as the Middle Ages with pig keeping and wild herb gathering as recognized activities helping the war effort.

Sub-titled 'The Sweep of Historic Years Across a Quiet Countryside', the contents consist of many hitherto untold anecdotes about the impact of the Second World War in West Somerset. Although direct contact with the enemy was limited to the capture of German air crews who hastily abandoned crippled bombers, the social and economic upheaval which the war caused was all pervading. In order to win a war against a totalitarian system, Britain also had to impose legislation which denied personal liberties. In Minehead blackout offenders were fined particularly heavily by the local magistrates and air raid wardens generally became as unpopular as modern traffic wardens. Other creatures did not escape lightly: the rabbit was saved from extermination by hydro-cyanic gas only to be gunned or trapped and carried away in large numbers by special nightly trains.

Exmoor's landscape and architectural heritage were other casualties: Larkbarrow Farmhouse was destroyed by army shelling practice and Minehead lost its

pier. Tank training on North Hill, Minehead, has left many unnatural features to be recorded by the archaeologist, a map of these appearing elsewhere in this Volume of 'Proceedings'. On the credit side, rich furnishings belonging to the City of London churches were safely stored at West Quantoxhead and the 8th-century Gospel Book of St. Chad was found a temporary home in the crypt of Wiveliscombe parish church.

One unhealthy aspect of the wartime was the reporting of activities of fellow human beings; the point is graphically made by Mr. Hurley when he says, 'Suspicion was a stoker prodding disturbingly among the ashes of life' (p. 47).

There were inevitable mistakes which resulted from people working under stress: one weekend early in the war, the population of the Rural District of Williton had increased by 1,800 evacuees who were originally intended to go somewhere else.

Mr. Hurley skilfully blends locally associated personalities, such as Vernon Bartlett and Ernest Bevin, who played a national role, with the lesser known war workers in West Somerset. To these unsung heroes and heroines the unreliable gas-converted bus on the hills of West Somerset 'seemed to symbolise the grinding effort of the people's war towards a still distant summit of victory' (p. 87).

One hesitates to criticize such an authoritative work yet it is difficult to see the necessity of fragmenting the narrative into thirty-seven individually numbered and headed sections. Furthermore, given a text containing an abundance of factual material, an index is essential. One would also have liked to have learnt more about the men and women of Exmoor who saw active service in the armed forces, particularly those who served in the lower ranks. Undoubtedly such biographical data could form the basis of another book, perhaps as a sequel to this successfully written and produced work.

BRIAN J. MURLESS

Hardington Bampfylde Church. An Architectural and Historical Guide, by Michael McGarvie (Redundant Churches Fund, 1978), 24 pp., illustrated, 50p.

The problem of redundant churches is a cause of growing concern, but Mr. McGarvie's booklet provides an encouraging account of the way in which one neglected church has been preserved. Hardington church, which contains Norman work, served a community which failed to recover from the Black Death, and the small building has a simple layout of chancel, nave and diminutive west tower. From the 18th century Hardington and neighbouring Hemington were served by one rector, and by 1956 the congregation had dwindled to an elderly couple and the building was structurally unsound: in 1970 the Diocesan Pastoral Committee suggested that it should be sold for use as a barn, or demolished. The church has, nevertheless, been saved. Initial preservation work was carried out in the 1960s through the efforts of the Friends of Friendless Churches (with the aid of a grant from the Historic Churches Preservation Trust), and the Redundant Churches Fund has financed a more thorough restoration in the 1970s.

The earlier sections of Mr. McGarvie's guide (which is clearly written and well illustrated with a plan and several plates) are devoted to a detailed description of the architecture and fittings of the building, and the remainder of the booklet comprises a lengthy 'Historical Sketch' of Hardington Bampfylde, footnotes and a list of rectors. The architectural description, which provides a useful introduction to the building, includes a reference to a 'barrel vault' (sic?), and a statement that the chancel was rebuilt in the early 17th century: the evidence for the date of this rebuilding is later described as 'architectural' (p. 13), but the author does not explain why he apparently regards the surviving features (which seem to be limited to windows which are described as being late-Perpendicular in style) as specifically Jacobean. More generally, the author is perhaps rather too prone to making gratuitous judgements about the things he describes: it is debatable, for instance, whether the photographic evidence in the booklet confirms the description of the two-decker pulpit as 'a veritable fortress of the Faith'. Mr. McGarvie is also very preoccupied with the personalities and relationships of the landed families who have been associated with Hardington

(the Bampfylde connection, for instance, lasted from c.1430 until 1859), and the church itself, which is the stated subject of the guide, sometimes disappears from view in the 'Historical Sketch' which forms the major part of the booklet. There are, admittedly, problems of source-material in compiling a history of Hardington church (the churchwardens' accounts do not seem to have survived, for example), but the author does not seem to have made full use of the sources which *are* available, such as the series of diocesan act books held by the Somerset Record Office. On the other hand, the account of the events leading to the completion of restoration in 1975 is of particular interest. A committee, of which Mr. McGarvie himself is a member, has now been set up to look after the church, which may, moreover, retain a limited religious function.

M. B. MCD.

Excavations at Chew Valley Lake, Somerset, by P. A. Rahtz, E. Greenfield, *et al.* (London, HMSO, 1977), 392 pp., illustrated, £35.00.

This book, the eighth in the series of Department of the Environment Archaeological Reports has at last appeared and at a staggering price. It reports on excavations carried out from 1953-55 on a large area of North Somerset (now in Avon) which was flooded when the Chew Valley reservoir was built. A great variety of sites was located and excavated to what can be seen to be high standards even compared to today. From the 1200 acres examined came a Neolithic house, a cremation grave and other features of the Bronze Age, timber buildings and ditch systems of the Iron Age, a timber farmhouse and many acres of land-drainage ditches of the early Roman period, a lime kiln and other industrial features of the 3rd century AD, a late Roman villa with its well and corn-drying furnace, a medieval village with its chapel, millhouse, manor house and peasant cottages, medieval lime kilns, a medieval nunnery and manor or grange and some post-medieval buildings. An unusual collection of well preserved Roman wooden and leather objects formed the principal finds.

The authors are to be highly commended for completing such a mammoth task for publication. It is clearly not their fault that the Stationery Office have taken almost 20 years to produce this volume and they must not be blamed for any criticism which is the result of this long delay. This reviewer, for example, questions the validity of such detailed, printed, published reports in hard covers, where, although the standards are admirable, the cost puts the volume completely beyond the reach of most students and archaeologists likely to derive benefit from it, including this reviewer! With the recommendations of the Frere Report on Publication in mind it is clearly debatable whether all the data printed here should be published.

On the credit side there is a wealth of new information of very great interest presented here. This was one of the earliest 'rescue excavation' projects in the country and one where the effort put in was entirely commensurate with the results obtained. Here we have presented to us a detailed picture of man's activities in a piece of country and the detailed development of settlement in the area. The book will clearly become a standard text, not only for Somerset archaeology but beyond, and its five pages of finds and lists of objects recovered will form an invaluable corpus for comparison for years to come.

Once again the authors should be praised for their patience with such a recalcitrant publisher and their complete and concise presentation of the results obtained from the work.

M. A. ASTON

Alfred's Kingdom. Wessex and the South 800-1500, by David A. Hinton (Dent, London, 1977), 228 pp., illustrated, £5.95.

This is the first book in a new series called 'History in the Landscape', edited by Professor Dennis Harding. The reviewer must confess to being very put off by the title *Alfred's Kingdom* and, initially, to have judged the book to be about just that. However the subtitle is a truer reflection of the contents, and as part of a series con-

cerned with history in the landscape the book is a success. David Hinton has attempted something new—nothing less than a synopsis of a region based on the wealth of archaeological work which has been carried out in Southern England since the 1960s in the late Saxon and medieval periods. Prehistorians and Romanists have long been able to acquire period accounts of different areas of the country (cf. A. L. F. Rivet (ed.), *The Iron Age in Northern Britain*, 1966; I. L. Foster and G. Daniel (eds.), *Prehistoric and Early Wales*, 1965; K. Branigan and P. J. Fowler (eds.), *The Roman West Country*, 1976), but in the reviewer's experience this is the first attempt to provide a regional medieval archaeology.

As with many first attempts there are problems and faults, however. David Hinton has worked largely in Oxfordshire, Dorset and Hampshire and the book reflects this. The selections referring to Somerset are few and undeveloped and the author is clearly happier marshalling his evidence from the areas of most extensive excavations, Winchester, Hamwic in Southampton and Charlton, and greatest density of universities and archaeologists. Even Glastonbury gets few references (a tribute perhaps to past excavations still largely unpublished), and elsewhere in Somerset only the main sites such as Athelney, Lyng and Langport are mentioned, again a reflection of the lack of archaeological work carried out in the medieval period in the past 20 years.

The author is very interested in excavated evidence and especially small finds and there are long sections on brooches, jewellery, swords and so on. It would have been useful to have had comments on surviving field evidence and in general there is a lack of information (and even plans) of village, farmstead and settlement sites and field systems. The plans in general leave a great deal to be desired. Most have no scale or north points and the graphics are primitive.

These are general points however which should not be allowed to cloud the fact that there is much useful information in the book. A useful bibliography leads the reader to further reports and more detailed accounts. Let us hope that the book provides a stimulus for other authors to attempt synopses of the medieval development of their own areas; if it does, David Hinton and Dents, the publishers (who have a good record of bringing forth landscape history volumes) will have provided a timely catalyst to regional medieval studies.

M. A. ASTON

The Bounds of Selwood, by Michael McGarvie (Frome Historical Research Group, Occasional Papers No. 1, Frome Society for Local Study, 1978), 28 pp. and a map.

The discovery at Longleat House of an unknown and slightly fuller perambulation of Selwood Forest than had hitherto been known, has prompted this admirable study which succeeds in identifying on the ground the course of the forest boundary in 1300. The survival of earthworks and field-names has made the task in many places an exact one, and emphasizes the continuity of our landscape in a remarkable way, for instance with long stretches of earth bank between Witham Friary and Cloford.

A map shows not only the bounds and the parks and woods within, emphasizing the fact that a forest was by no means wholly wooded, but also villages and farms. The development of these settlements will be a story much easier to tell, now that the basic work has been so accurately done. We must hope that Mr. McGarvie will continue the history of encroachment and disafforestation in Selwood, so clearly an important feature of East Somerset which his Society in its publications has been so successfully tracing.

ROBERT DUNNING.

Medieval Floor Tiles of Keynsham Abbey, by Barbara J. Lowe (published by the author), 151 pp., illustrated, £2.25.

The destruction by road works of the greater part of the foundations of the conventual buildings and of the west end of the nave of Keynsham Abbey led to a rescue excavation. It is in connection with this that Mrs. Barbara Lowe has produced a most

valuable inventory of medieval decorated paving tiles, compiled mainly from fragments thrown up by earth-moving machinery, but also from recent excavations of other parts of the site, together with a few specimens in museums and elsewhere which survive from the indifferently recorded excavations of the last century. The book is illustrated with tracings of 100 designs, as well as photographs of a few fragments of pavement *in situ*. Each design is accompanied by a full description, which includes fabric (also treated more fully in a separate section) and notes on its distribution on the site and elsewhere.

The earliest tiles described belong to a series best known from a mid-13th-century pavement at Clarendon Palace, a series widely distributed throughout the south and south-west of England. Kiln-wasters of these tiles have been found on the site of Keynsham Abbey, but so far no remains of the kiln itself. Copies also occur, dated by the author to the last quarter of the 13th century.

I think that Mrs. Lowe's first impression that the armorial designs 40-42, which are not enclosed in shields, should be assigned to the 14th century, rather than to the early 15th, was correct. When placed together, as in the illustration on p. 112, they form a diaper pattern characteristic of the 14th century and much used in illuminations of that period. She altered her opinion when she found them *in situ*, associated with her design 61. Judging by the photograph (Pl. VIIa), this single row of tiles has all the appearance of having been reset at a later date; designs 40-42 are not orientated consistently and 61, also armorial, but with the arms enclosed in a shield, is stylistically much later and is unlikely to have been made before the last quarter of the 15th century.

Turning to the late medieval tiles (none, unfortunately, *in situ*) Mrs. Lowe illustrates a splendid series of heraldic designs. She has been able to show, on armorial grounds, that the majority relate to the ancestors and family of the Beauchamps, Earls of Warwick. The Beauchamps inherited the patronage of Keynsham Abbey from the Despencers, who inherited it from the Clares. The latter are commemorated by one of a set of four earlier tiles which the author assigns to the turn of the 12-13th centuries—I am inclined to date them somewhat later. Taken as a group these late medieval tiles must almost certainly, as Mrs. Lowe suggests, have been ordered by Richard Beauchamp, Duke of Warwick, the last male representative of his line, who died in 1446. His vast estates were inherited in 1449 by Richard Neville, whose arms are not included in this series.

It will be essential for anyone who is working on the decorated tiles of the Midlands and the South of England to consult this book, so that it is unfortunate that the publisher's name and address, the date and the price have been omitted. How can this volume be cited in a list of references, and how, when it has somehow been obtained, can it be found on the shelf if there is no title on the spine?

A. D. HALLAM

A History of Montacute, by R. W. Dunning (Somerset County Council, 1978), 15 pp., illustrated, 60p.

This is a reprint, in reduced format, of the section on Montacute in Volume III of the Victoria History of Somerset (published by O.U.P. for the University of London in 1974). The County Council is to be congratulated on this innovation which is of great benefit to those who are daunted by the price of the full volume and/or may wish for a booklet which can be carried during visits. The illustration of Montacute House on the cover may be a little misleading, for this is a History of the whole parish of Montacute, including, for instance, the priory, the castle and the borough.

M.B.MCD.