

BOOK REVIEWS

Anglo-Saxon Charters 15: Charters of Glastonbury Abbey, by S.E. Kelly, Oxford University Press, 2012, 624pp., £110. ISBN 978-0-19-726507-9.

This splendid volume by Susan Kelly is the latest in the 'Anglo-Saxon Charters' series, produced by the British Academy and Royal Historical Society. It is substantial, 624 pages, reflecting the size and wealth of the abbey of Glastonbury, and the mass of surviving charters and documentation. The volume divides into two main sections: the introduction, which deals with the history of the abbey and its estates, of its archives and of the manuscripts; and the second section, the charters themselves, which are transcribed (but not translated) and then discussed. Much has been published on the charters, notably by Heather Edwards and Lesley Abrams, and this work builds on, and corrects where appropriate, what has gone before.

The history of the abbey forms a sizeable section of the first half of the volume, running to almost 80 pages, dwelling mainly on the Anglo-Saxon period with brief sections on the possible British foundation, and on the post-Conquest to Dissolution period. The interpretation of the pre-history of the abbey from historical sources alone is always going to be difficult and our understanding of this period awaits the reassessment of the archaeological archive being undertaken by Roberta Gilchrist. This reviewer finds the discontinuity in the early Saxon phase particularly interesting (18-22). The grants of three inconsequential areas of land from bishops Haeddi and Forthhere (*Lantocai*, and the islands

of Bleadney and Marchey) must represent the end of a process of correction of an earlier unorthodox phase following which Ine is seen as the founder of the newly reformed abbey. Bishops are, after all, the guardians of orthodoxy, and the previous Abbot Beorhtwald who 'left the site of his own monastery "without any violence from us and without being driven out"' (p.21) must have accepted that. Kelly's dismissal of the Aston model of one possible type of British monasticism (p.12) (Aston 1993, 25; 2003, 36; Hall 2003; 2007, 57; 2009 162-8) on the basis that hermits still exist in the Anglo-Saxon period, completely misses the point that the type of monasticism practised in this model was transformational asceticism (Dunn 2003, 71-81) whereby the goal of every novice within the monastery would be to become a hermit.

Moving on to the post-Ine history, our understanding of the place of Glastonbury in the political realm in which it would have operated, is extended by Kelly's analysis of the implications of the charters of this period. An incursion of Mercian lordship sees the possibility that Glastonbury was adopted, if only briefly, as a Mercian *Eigenkloster*, before falling into ninth-century obscurity, no doubt as a result of Viking incursions. The abbey re-emerges into the limelight with the ascent to the throne of Athelstan and the involvement of Dunstan on which Kelly sheds new light.

The subject of the Glastonbury endowment, as Kelly herself points out, is too massive for one volume so certain topics are singled out. Much of the discussion of the estates revolves around certain non-royal benefactors (often named as the beneficiary of the charter), teasing out some of the

familial background and estates of these major landowners. The abbey also has a great number of 'alien' charters, those not associated with its own possessions. Kelly puts forward (amongst other explanations) the possibility that this could indicate that the monastery was acting as a kind of safe-deposit box for the documents in the Anglo-Saxon period, which whilst it is unrecorded, makes sense in a society where royalty and its court were peripatetic.

It is fortunate for members of this society that it has received a review copy, as at a cost of £110 few members will be able to afford to buy their own. And this is a volume that really needs to be at your elbow: due to the nature of the sources, it is often a complicated process to untangle fact from the later elaboration and propaganda of the abbey resulting in some of the arguments being complex and spread across more than one section of the volume.

This series of volumes could be accused of being elitist in the sense that they still do not provide an English translation alongside the original Latin and Anglo-Saxon of the charters. And alas, in this volume, there is only one map (showing the immediate environs of Glastonbury) which is of little use in locating any of the estates at a greater distance than 6 miles. (For this we are told we must revisit the maps of Abrams (p132)). These however, are minor faults indeed in the face of such scholarship, and this must be seen as a very welcome addition to the study of Anglo-Saxon Glastonbury.

Abrams, L., 1996, *Anglo-Saxon Glastonbury: Church and Endowment*, Woodbridge.

Aston, M., 1993, *Monasteries*, London, Batsford.

Aston, M., 2003, 'Early monasteries in Somerset: models and agendas', in M Ecclestone, K Gardner, N Holbrook and A Smith (eds), *The Land of the Dobunni*, Parchment Ltd, Oxford, 36-48.

Dunn, M., 2003, *The Emergence of Monasticism: From the Early Desert Fathers to the Early Middle Ages*, Blackwell, Oxford.

Edwards, H., 1988, *The Charters of the Early West Saxon Kingdom*, BAR British Series, Oxford.

Hall 2003, 'The reformation of the British church in the west country in the 7th century', in M Ecclestone, K Gardner, N Holbrook and A Smith (eds), *The Land of the Dobunni*, Parchment Ltd, Oxford, 49-55.

Hall 2007, 'Keeping the faith; the physical

expression of differing church customs in early medieval Britain', in M Costen, *People and Places: Essays in Honour of Mick Aston*, Oxbow, Oxford, 53-60.

Hall, T., 2009, 'Identifying British Christian sites in western Wessex', in N Edwards, *The Archaeology of the Early Medieval Celtic Churches*, Society for Medieval Archaeology monograph 29/Society for Church Archaeology monograph 1, Maney, London, 155-171.

TERESA HALL

Making sense of an historic landscape, by Stephen Rippon, Oxford University Press, 2012, 396pp., 98 figures, 10 plates (some colour), 27 tables, £76. ISBN 978-0-19-953378-7.

The author's background for writing this book goes back over 20 years, both from examining paleoenvironmental sequences and in historic landscape characterisation. These two disciplines meet the important function of integrating archaeological and documentary evidence contained within the physical fabric of the historic landscape. We are told that there has been a bias in recent scholarship towards understanding the relationship between village and open field systems (as traditional in the Midlands) with peripheral systems such as found in the South-West. The author's own experience in various parts of the country has reinforced to him the importance of regional variations. In particular, his landscape project for the Blackdown Hills Rural Partnership has led to the realisation that the Blackdowns was an area with its own characteristics and boundaries. Such a statement implies that there are boundaries of other neighbouring areas to be found. For example, in some places in Somerset, local field shapes and village types are observable up to the Devon border while beyond it are scattered irregular fields and farmsteads. He states that the main aim of this book was to expand his Rural Partnership work by comparing landscapes on either side of the Blackdowns in order to investigate why such local and regional marked variations in the nature of the countryside emerge.

In the past, the formation of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) raised the question of what is natural beauty, how can it be defined and what are its characteristics and

limits? Landscape studies are not new and may concentrate on distinctive localised characteristics such as those based on geology, topography and climate. In France, such areas are described as *pays* which is a term adopted in this book. In the Blackdown Hills (Blackdowns), the name Black identifies a characteristic appearance of being dark or featureless (as much of the Downs once were) to describe the area. To include this and to enable the peripheral area of the boundary of the Blackdowns *pay* to be investigated, a rectangular area centred on it and twice its size was selected for further study. Various characteristics of its geology, topography, drainage pattern, soil and climate were then researched. Past observations of these properties were also extracted from literature and considered. A good means of characterizing the cultural landscape with the pattern and language of settlement is by mapping. A prime example of this is the consistent coverage of settlement features and place names on the First Edition Ordnance Survey six inch maps (1880s). In the book, place names are discussed including Hays which is considered to be high to late medieval in date of usage. In this analysis system, all such locations must be accepted at face value. One might consider though that the features recorded actually have a wide variation in age and type. In terms of date for example, Ekwall gives 8/9th. Century examples of Hays field names. River names are another characteristic of the Blackdown *pays* recorded on maps. A deeper significance not mentioned could be the location of alternative names such as the two Blackwater or Dowlish river names recorded in the boundary zone. Despite this, the author's final figure showing plotting the simplified map data to parish boundaries and to the contours of the Blackdowns is impressive and full of valuable interpretations.

Variations in vernacular architecture are considered and properties both within and out of the *pays* are illustrated and discussed. The author then re-considers the character of 19th. Century field systems and seeks to widen and distinguish his landscape study from earlier assessments of historic character. He emphasises that the current English Heritage approach is not invalidated because both are based on the different parameters used in categorisation of the landscape samples. To make the choice easier and more reliable, easy categories such as woodland, floodplains, sloping valley bottoms, unenclosed and late enclosure can be identified first. It is

stated to be essential that description is kept separate from interpretation and so remaining categories are based upon morphology, relation to settlement and place names etc. It was found that this resulted in the means to form the further categories of Intermediate, Irregular and Semi-Irregular Enclosure and finally Enclosed Strip Fields. This analysis method is then able to cover all the area rather than selectively via the traditional platforms of dates and sources. The next discussion deals with land occupancy and morphology. Hedgebanks are described as being of Devon type in one discussion. This may raise doubts since many types can be found within quite small areas and it is quite plain that their purpose is varied according to need and date of construction, however it is upon the shape and size of the fields that enable characterization.

Having shown that the Blackdown *pays* exists it is necessary to consider the nature of early medieval land territories and if and how they evolved from early folk territories. The local estate can be traced back as part of the three greater estates of North Curry, South Petherton and Crewkerne. County Boundaries sometimes follow territorial boundaries and it is from this information that former Folk Territories can be surmised. The possible descent of these through Roman times influencing later administrative factors such as Shires, Hundreds and Parishes makes fascinating reading. Returning to the study of land use, the number of earlier bone and grain assemblages becomes scarcer from earlier times and so it is then necessary to take samples from a larger area. Using type data and comparing results can enable linking with known information about the *pays*. Regional variations in farming practice across the *pays* of SW England are then considered. Retrogression is then discussed starting from the Post Medieval period and working back to the Roman period. In particular, the compared disparities between the areas later called Somerset/Dorset, Devon and Cornwall are fascinating and not what might be expected. In Roman times the E/W *pays* boundary can still be seen as a point, moving westwards, where villas are no longer found. That this coincides with the medieval strip fields limit initially seems unexpected. The retrogression is continued from the Roman period to late Prehistoric times when land organization was not so centralized. In the final chapter there is a return to the Blackdown *pays* where its occupants' attitude to social

stratification and change is considered especially in comparison to *pays* east and west.

A particular value of this book and its new methods is in providing a temporal/geographic framework on which many aspects of historical research can continue to be fitted. The research on which the conclusions are based is formidable and impressive, not least are the 44 pages of valuable source references. Much has been done to remove the identification and characterisation of morphological regions by personal judgement and time will hopefully confirm the success and value of this. In time, information from new coin, bone and grain assemblages, surveys, etc. as exemplified above can be added into frameworks to improve the overall picture. This is an excellent and practical contribution to Historic Landscape studies and all the more worthy for being directed at the Blackdown Hills.

R. W. CARTER

The Buildings of England, Somerset: North and Bristol, by Andrew Foyle and Nikolaus Pevsner, Yale University Press, 2011, 802pp., 10 maps, 65 b/w illus., 124 col. illus. £35. ISBN 978-0-300-12658-7

It is, perhaps, a mark of the respect which this series of books has earned over the years that few people recognise its title, 'The Buildings of England,' though most people would know what you were talking about if you mentioned the 'Pevsner Guides.' Between 1951 and 1974 Penguin Books published the first editions of the county volumes, including the original 'North Somerset and Bristol' edition in 1958. These pocket guides to the architecture of this country were a great achievement; the fact that one man conceived and carried out such an ambitious undertaking was remarkable. As was said by Oliver Goldsmith, of the schoolmaster in 'The Deserted Village', '... and still the wonder grew that one small head could carry all he knew.'

Yet it is over half a century since Pevsner dedicated his work 'To E. and O.E.' and there undoubtedly were errors and omissions, alongside the erudition and occasional teasing comments (Hardington church is 'small and forlorn amongst recent utilitarian farm buildings', for instance). During that time some buildings have been lost, others have been restored and/or renamed, new

intelligence has been forthcoming and interesting discoveries have been made. There were also considerable areas which had scant coverage, such as the suburbs of Bristol. In this new, fully revised survey much of the old Pevsner chemistry is still there, as are many direct quotes, but it now has a more modern feel and a lot more information.

A few statistics will illustrate this. There were 389 pages in the 1958 edition; now there are 658 pages (neither of these include their central gallery of pictures). Each page previously contained 42 lines of text, whilst the new edition has 52 (both have comparable type size and font). That is an expansion of more than double the original text. Much of this additional information occurs in the three main centres covered, Bristol, Bath and Wells, but descriptions of smaller towns and villages have also been expanded and some now have a short introduction, which, though brief, can be useful for those who are strangers to the area. Axbridge, for instance, 'despite its smallness... has all the requisites of a town,' whilst Cheddar, more than twice as large, 'has a village air.'

As in the original, there is still a heavy emphasis on churches, particularly the parish churches. As Pevsner remarked, 'It is easier to achieve an adequate approach to completeness in churches than in houses.' He went on to admit that for secular buildings he depended almost entirely on the compilations of what was then the Ministry of Housing and Local Government, i.e. listed buildings, and that only about 5% of those were examined and mentioned. However, more information is now available in this area, largely due to the work of those involved in researching historical and vernacular buildings, an interest which was in its infancy at the end of the 1950s. This means that a considerable number of additional properties have been included, and the general overview of prehistoric remains and historic monuments has been retained. As someone who is interested in vernacular architecture I would like to see it have an even greater representation here, but realise that the logistics of so doing are complex and that it would require splitting the current number of volumes into many more.

Having said that, it is apparent from the brief entries Pevsner afforded to many small villages, and the expanded versions in Foyle, that there has been much greater effort put into fieldwork assessing the local environment, in addition to the parish churches. Sidcot in Pevsner, for

instance, has three and a half lines on the school and a mention of the Headmaster's House. Foyle gives the school a little more detail and mentions Rose Cottage with the Headmaster's House, but also notes the Friends Meeting House, ignored by Pevsner, and five other 20th century houses, classed as 'pleasing'. Shipham church gets four lines in Pevsner, but eleven in Foyle. Nothing else is deemed worthy of inclusion by Pevsner, but Foyle gives a résumé of the village and its history, whilst referencing four houses and a ruined calamine kiln. Emborough has seven lines in Pevsner, five on St Mary's church and two on the Manor Farm. Foyle gives the church twenty three lines, including his opening description of it as 'a sweet and unassuming country church' and mentions that a faculty exists for restoration in 1885 which, 'if carried out must have been the gentlest of repairs.' The Manor Farm entry is quadrupled and Old Down Inn is now included.

In Portishead Pevsner does not mention St Nicholas Chapel, the United Reformed Church, the Congregational Chapel or the Friends Meeting House, all of which seem to have some merit according to Foyle. Neither does he mention The Grange, which we learn from Foyle has a true-cruck roof and rare evidence in Somerset of gabled smoke louvres. St Peter's church is analysed in much greater depth by Foyle, who also mentions the arch-braced collar-beam roof, in what Pevsner calls The Court and Foyle notes as Court Farm, and he gives much more detail about its structure, including the belvedere used by the Corporation to view its lands and shipping.

For any visitor to these places these extra highlights are of considerable benefit, particularly as it is much easier to find local information about the church, but less easy to lay your hands on descriptions of other local points of interest.

Somerset is currently represented by two volumes, with this being 'Somerset: North', rather than the original 'North Somerset', which could now be confused with the Unitary Authority of that name. Bristol, a county in its own right, is included with the northern part of Somerset, rather than having its own volume, even though it takes up over two hundred pages to cover both the inner suburbs and Outer Bristol, and that excludes the colour photographs relating to the city. Andrew Foyle admits that much of what is included on Bristol and Bath is based on the *City Guides* published in 2003 and 2004, which were themselves derived from the original work

of Pevsner. Including them with the remainder of north Somerset does mean this can no longer be truly described as a pocket guide, but the better quality of the paper and the inclusion of maps and more black and white drawings in the text improve its appearance considerably. The *City Guides* were, in fact, the only revisions to Pevsner's original text to be published until now (though some reprints were published), which is remarkable in view of its popularity, but highlights the formidable task involved.

One notable addition to the range of buildings covered by Pevsner, is the inclusion in Foyle of some modern architecture. Pevsner commented that 'it would be gratifying if this survey could be ended by a list of buildings erected in the last twenty years in the architectural idiom of today. But they are all but absent, or least on an aesthetic level worth study.' Foyle does include a selection of buildings from the second half of the twentieth century. He is disparaging about the expansion of Yatton – 'little of architectural merit resulted anywhere', and put this in context by adding later that most modern houses worth mentioning 'faced significant local planning objections...while the majority, the ersatz vernacular or the plain dull, go unremarked'. Of those which were 'worth mentioning' not all meet with approval, however. Some do – The Pavilions by Arup Associates are 'so well landscaped that offices for 1,200 people facing open countryside all but disappear' – some most decidedly do not – The Bristol Medical School by Ralph Brentnall is in 'dull brown brick, swamping St Michael's Hill when seen from the city.' The latter has a wonderful footnote stating that students staged the 'Funeral of British Architecture' in protest at its ugliness and that Brentnall attended incognito as an undertaker, saying that, as the murderer, he felt obliged to see her decently buried. You could almost forgive him for that!

An example of recent architecture that was included by Pevsner, the Caveman Restaurant in Cheddar, was described as 'remarkable in England for its date'. Unfortunately Foyle has to report that 'little is left of this brave modernist venture', demonstrating the need for an update to some of the original comments. He is also able to name the Chapel of St Columbanus, which Pevsner had noted as 'Chapel belonging to Manor Farm', which itself has been renamed as Hanam Manor.

An entry which caused me some confusion

is that for Lawrence Weston, in which Pevsner mentions the new housing estate as having a 1950s Church of Christ the King, by T. H. B. Burrough, which he describes as ‘original and remarkably daring, if rather forbidding.’ Foyle does not mention that church, but has St Peter, Long Cross, by J Ralph Edwards, in the same area, which is a ‘thorough-going Modernist design’ created in 1961, i.e. after the original Pevsner was published. No explanation is given for the change, nor can I find any clue on the web to where the Pevsner church could be.

Both editions have an introduction consisting of seventy-five pages, though the page size means the Foyle introduction is about twenty five percent larger. Both include a section on prehistoric Somerset, which appeared to me a little irrelevant, though, in the Foyle edition it is written by Stephen Bird, Head of Heritage Services at B&NES, who also discusses the Roman period and wrote some relevant gazetteer entries. It then goes on to describe the development of architecture in general, from Early Medieval onwards, and outlines various individual features, such as timber framing, plasterwork, etc., providing a useful comparative assessment of the county. Pevsner used the same introduction for both Somerset volumes, but Foyle is more specific to his area, though he does mention other parts of the county where there is a clear need. He also includes a section by Eric Robinson on Geology and Building Stones which provides a useful background.

Concluding his Introduction, Pevsner remarks that he is including ‘a survey of what the following pages have been compiled from, or, from the user’s point of view, what qualifies as ‘Further Reading’’. Both authors note that Somerset is ‘uncommonly well provided for’ and quote the Proceedings of this Society as being ‘amongst the best of the archaeological journals in the country’ – something not always recognised by those members who have not sampled other societies’ journals, but which should give us great pride.

Pevsner always included a useful glossary, whose illustrations, where they exist, were embedded with the appropriate descriptions. The revised edition has placed all the illustrations (by John Sambrook) together in eight central pages, extended the range, improved the quality appreciably and permitted an easy comparison to be made between varying styles, listing them under medieval, classical, construction and roofs

and timber framing. The glossary, which is not unique to this volume, appears to have been completely re-written since Pevsner and is now available, in an enlarged version with colour illustrations, as a stand-alone book and app as well (check on-line). A most useful compendium.

What Pevsner did in his ‘Buildings of England’ transformed our appreciation of architecture and triggered a greater awareness of the amazing heritage of buildings we so often took for granted. What has happened since has been a remarkable flowering of interest in all aspects of the art (and science) of architecture, from monumental to vernacular. This major revision of the original volume has incorporated the spirit of the earlier work, the benefits of contemporary research and a style which builds on the best of its predecessor, with an added clarity and character of its own. If, like me, you like to sit in a church, or wander through the streets of a village or town, and assess the history and style of the building(s) before turning to an authoritative source to check your feelings and extend your knowledge, this is the work for you. It is not a book to read from cover to cover. It is a book to sample and to use when choosing where to visit or to educate yourself when there. It achieves that purpose admirably.

JOHN PAGE

The seventeenth century customs service surveyed: William Culliford’s investigation of the western ports 1682-84, by W.B. Stephens, Ashgate, Farnham, 2012; xx, 233pp., £65. ISBN 978-1-4094-3837-3.

The number of useful books shedding detailed light on the maritime history of South-West England is expanding. For years Williams’ tome regarding the English coasting trade stood alone. Now, an increasing number which synthesise academic theses, the work of academic journal contributors and record society publications as well as introducing new material into the mix have found publication. W.B Stephens’ book must rightly take its place next to the *New maritime history of Devon’s* two volumes, Adrian Webb’s *A maritime history of Somerset* vol.1 and David Hussey’s *Coastal and river trade in pre-industrial England*.

Stephens, who has long contributed to an understanding of the South-West of England,

often writing about the exciting seventeenth century, has produced a volume with an implicit spatial perspective (even though the majority of the few illustrations are maps which do not come up to the standard of the text) as well as a masterly understanding of the mercantile links and power broking that took place around our South-Western coasts in the 1670s and early 1680s. He clearly shows that an understanding of maritime history, in an age where telephone, texting and social networking can minimise the effect of distance, must not make the mistake of considering trade in an isolated or local context. Stephens shows that what went on in Bridgwater, whether legal or illegal in terms of trade was as much to do with familial and mercantile trade links with people in Lyme Regis or St Ives as any co-operation with merchants in the same borough.

The book relates, perhaps in the fullest way yet, the clash between a Government official, William Culliford, with the corrupt organisation of the customs officials who ran the customs service in the region, mainly to their own advantage. Stephens clearly states that this is not a book about smuggling, but about the customs service. To an extent, this is true, but one will not find a more detailed account of smuggling in the South-West in the early 1680s anywhere else except in this volume. What Stephens appears to do well is to combine the use of other sources to give a context to some of the main merchants and landed interests that were behind the smuggling, such as Hoare of Bridgwater and Wyndham of Orchard Windham.

However, even though Stephens states that the book is about the customs service, in most cases one is not able to learn much about the corrupt officials except their names. It would have been instructive, if it proved possible to research, to know about their length of service (appointments of customs officials were usually recorded in the state papers of the time even down to lowly tidewaiters), and from other sources, their origin, education (though this is mentioned in general terms) politics, family status and where they fitted into the religious and political foment of their period to corroborate the limited information on dissent amongst the group which was gathered by Culliford himself during his investigative interviews. There appear to be only two officials whose political or religious dissent Stephens has corroborated. This point is especially pertinent as Stephens states, in his conclusion, that 'the eradication of political and religious dissidence

from the service was a duty imposed on Culliford which he assiduously performed'.

Stephens does well to contextualise Culliford's work in rooting out corruption in the western ports with regard to leniency to officers who had supported the crown during the civil wars and being harder on alleged dissenters a few years before the storm of the Monmouth Rebellion.

With regard to local history, Stephens does not try to give details of all the alleged illegal activities of the merchants and shippers in each town. With regard to Minehead, for example, no merchants are named and it is only with reference to Chadwyck-Healey's *History of part of west Somerset* (1901) that the alleged contraband running activities of merchants Crockford, Davies Start and Wilson are found. Equally the names of vessels that ran goods into the south-western ports and had their cargos incorrectly recorded by the custom's officials are not always detailed. Thus, the local historian will still need to refer to the original documents to acquire a full picture of activities in a particular location.

The volume ends with statistical data on customs receipts prior to and after Culliford's investigation and an analysis of the likely effects of the whole crackdown exercise. Navigation through the volume is helped by a detailed index which also includes useful references to footnotes.

PHILIP ASHFORD

The Quantocks, by Peter Haggett, The Point Walter Press, 2012, 211pp., 45 col. photos, numerous b/w photos, maps, diagrams, index, £20. ISBN 978-0-9573352-0-2.

The book is subtitled 'Biography of an English region'; the author is a Somerset man, raised on the Polden Hills, and who has had a life-long love of the Quantocks. As a Cambridge undergraduate, where he read geography, he wrote a prize-winning dissertation on 'Historical changes in land use in the Quantock parishes', thus indicating at least one of his early academic interests. Later he became a Cambridge college don and, subsequently, Professor at Bristol University. His schooling was at Dr Morgan's at Bridgwater, while spending as much leisure time as possible in exploring the Quantock Hills and villages: it seems that the author was influenced by Berta Lawrence's book *Quantock Country*, published

in 1952. Interestingly, Berta Lawrence's husband was the author's history teacher; maybe there was encouragement here which led to the study of local history and historic buildings. Anyway, in retirement, and living at present close to the Mendip Hills, the author was written what he terms a historical geography, discussing the changes in one region of land, and with special reference to the Quantocks, both geographical and historical.

Perhaps as expected from a geographer, the text is illustrated by numbers of helpful line drawings and maps, as well as several well-chosen black-and-white photographs; however, there is also an excellent selection of colour photographs, all inserted at the centre of the volume. These colour plates, many of which have real artistic value, show various Quantock historic buildings, as well as landscapes and geological features. My two favourites are of a dragon-killing benchend scene from Crowcombe Church and a well-lit picture of Bishops Lydeard's sandstone church of St Mary. The colour photographs are the work of the author's daughter, and greatly enhance the book's appeal.

The first chapter gives an outline of Quantock geography, with details of ridges, hills, combs and lowland settlements; also, there are suggestions as to why the landscape was so attractive to the poets Coleridge and Wordsworth, or was laudanum the main influence? Legends relating to the area are well described, including stories of bewitched toads at Broomfield and a magical mug at Stogursey: all quite new to me. Then the history of the development of the name 'Quantock' is discussed; the word does appear in John Speed's county map of 1610 but probably goes back well before that date. The boundaries of the Quantocks are also discussed, including their relationship to the modern 'Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty' comprising 38 square miles; even so, all depends on which parishes are considered to be true Quantock land. As I expected, the geology of the Quantocks is described in some detail, including mineral deposits, rock composition and water resources. It appears, geologically, that at different times the Quantocks have resembled desert, tundra and even a warm ocean shelf.

I liked the chapter on prehistoric monuments, associated with the presence of nomadic bands of hunter-gatherers. This phase eventually merges into settling and farming, with Neolithic, Bronze Age and Iron Age sections to follow; relicts are mapped in many cases, and there is emphasis on

climate change where known. Roman occupation is discussed, including the significance of different coin hoards; this section is followed by the history of Saxon settlements in certain locations. The importance of Watchet as a Saxon port, and also its mint, is described.

The relationship of the Domesday survey to the Quantocks is clearly important too; apparently 92 places were listed as being within the Quantock area. I found this an interesting section, mentioning human populations, woodland, meadows, mills and plough teams. Norman architecture is described although, unfortunately, there is little remaining in the Quantock area; there is a full account of the distribution of parish churches and of old religious buildings, while medieval markets and fairs are detailed where possible.

The Monmouth rebellion and its impact in Somerset are not overlooked; these events are followed by the story of the development of Quantock estates and country houses, also the varying importance of agriculture, clothmaking, tanning, lime production and copper mining at different periods of history. Then the significance of Watchet as a port for the transport of iron ore from the Brendon Hills is stressed, especially following the construction of the West Somerset Mineral Railway; also stressed is the large amount of Victorian building and rebuilding which occurred, together with consideration of the economic changes of those times. One topic which is missing in the book is that of natural history; maybe the author, as a geographer, did not consider that he was qualified to write on this. Of course, had this been included, the book would have been much longer. Each chapter is allocated 'end notes', placed at the end of the volume; really these notes act as a bibliography, while the useful index is mainly a place index. The general history of the area is continued up to modern times, even to discussion of Hinkley Point C.

I can recommend this book: a lot of hard work and literature searching was clearly involved, often linked with personal anecdotes where relevant. One reason why I think Society members will like this book is that there are a lot of references to people they know, or have known, and who have contributed to the Quantock story, especially in archaeology, history and the Quantock poets. The work will be good reading for anyone who feels attracted to the Quantock scene.

PHILIP RADFORD

The Thistle clockmakers of Somerset, 1765-1899, including James Cole of Stowey, John Millard of Stogursey, and the dial makers Pyke of Bridgwater and Cox of Taunton, by N. & D. Woodford, Stoke Courci Clocks, 2012, 448pp., numerous colour illustrations, £60. ISBN 978-0-0571773-0-7.

This handsome volume invites comparison with *Bilbie and the Chew Valley clockmakers*, by A.J. Moore, R.W. Rice and E. Hucker (1995) and with *The clockmakers of Somerset, 1650-1900*, by James Moore (1998). All three books are labours of love written by enthusiasts. All three go into meticulous detail, all include extracts from churchwardens' accounts of payments for maintenance and (rarely) construction of church clocks, and all provide descriptions and illustrations of surviving, mainly long-case, domestic clocks. *The Thistle clockmakers*, unexpectedly, omits formal lists of the surviving and other known examples of each maker's output, but it stands out from the other two books by the number and quality of its colour illustrations. Not only are complete clocks, dials and movements shown, but maps, street scenes, portraits, documents, newspaper advertisements and even five pages of photographs of John Thistle's surviving lathe. Such lavish use of short-run colour printing was clearly unaffordable in the 1990s.

There is a memorable passage in *Bilbie* which says that 'in 1700 country clockmaking was about at the same level of development as the motor car in 1900. There would have been as much scorn directed at anyone who suggested that by the end of the century it would be normal for Somerset people to buy clocks made in Birmingham, as there would have been in 1900 to the suggestion

that by the year 2000 most of the population would routinely be using cars that had been made in Japan.' The Bilbies made few clocks after 1800, but the Thistles continued in business till the very end of the 19th century, evolving from real clockmakers into assemblers and eventually retailers and repairers. Some of their components bear Birmingham manufacturers' names, but other components continued to be produced locally long after the practice came to be considered old-fashioned elsewhere. Dials displaying the times of high water at 'Combewitch Passage,' 'Lilstock Bay' and 'Shurton Bars' were clearly never intended for the mass production market.

As the title states, the book is mainly concerned with the output of four generations of the Thistle family, including James Leversha, whose mother was a Thistle, but also includes chapters on two other clockmakers, and on the Bridgwater and Taunton family firms which supplied painted white dials for the clocks. Most of the families' connections and their activities outside the trade are exhaustively explored, but it has escaped notice that Edward William Cox (1809-1879), shown on page 406 as the eldest child of William Charles and Harriet Cox, was a prominent lawyer, first editor of the *Somerset County Gazette*, proprietor of *Law Times* and *The Field*, and founder of *Exchange and Mart*.

Even today £60 is a lot to pay for a book, but the authors have identified at least a hundred domestic Thistle clocks, and believe that as many more have survived. So there should be a couple of hundred proud clock owners out there who will not begrudge such a sum for their copies.

DAVID BROMWICH