

## BOOK REVIEWS

EDITED BY STEPHEN CROAD

**The Archaeology of Somerset**, edited by Chris Webster & Tom Mayberry, Somerset Books, 2007, 108 pp., numerous ills. £12.99. ISBN 978-0-86083-437-2

This third *Archaeology of Somerset* is effectively by the County Council Heritage Service (aided by two local experts, Messrs Norman and Murless, on, respectively the Palaeolithic and Mesolithic, and the Industrial Age). It contains eleven chapters arranged chronologically, with major contributions by Brunning (Neolithic, Bronze Age), Croft (Middle Ages), Minnitt (Iron Age) and Webster (Roman, Early Medieval and Recent); plus a Foreword by Mick Aston and informed advice on 'Places to visit', 'Further information' and 'Further reading'. Overall, it is a thoroughly competent, up-to-date, professional production. The two previous books of the same title, still highly-regarded though published in 1931 and 1982, were authored respectively by a single, remarkable lady and a clutch of 14 prominent, mainly non-Somerset archaeologists. Time, one suspects, will prove both books to have been more influential and distinguished than their sequel.

Each chapter here is of only some six pages of text so cannot do much more than point to the main sites and sources of evidence and briefly interpret some of them. To mention but five chapters, Norman fairly briskly takes us from before 500,000 to c. 5500 BC and would dearly love us to share his personal knowledge of every handaxe and microlith so far found in the future Somerset. After an unexplained gap in the book's coverage between c. 5500–4000 BC (pp. 24–5), Brunning's two chapters authoritatively summarise in business-like prose the period from c. 4000–600 BC. Webster's 'Britons and

Saxons', though usefully including several recent discoveries, is so prosaic as to dilute much of the intrinsic interest of a critical 600 years; but his 'Archaeology of the Recent Past', an innovative and welcome last chapter, will provide a novel perspective to many readers, just as the first chapter, 'The History of Archaeology in Somerset', affords us an interesting perspective on the whole.

One of the consequences of this book being produced by the modern County Council is that whole swathes of what I would not be alone in regarding as 'Somerset archaeology' have of necessity been omitted. Bath, for a start, was in historic Somerset; so too was West Wansdyke (as is incidentally acknowledged, p. 58), the Chew valley, the Vale of Wrington and all of Mendip. This excision also affects individuals: John Skinner, for example, the sad, intemperate rector of Camerton, lived and did most of his work outside the modern Somerset yet he is embraced here (p. 8) as a worthy in the evolution of the county's archaeology. The work of a more recent worthy, Philip Rahtz, is similarly mentioned approvingly – Cheddar, Cannington and the Glastonbury area (p. 14) – yet no appraisal is bureaucratically possible of his 'north Somerset' work at Butcombe, Pagan's Hill, Chew Valley and Cadbury Congresbury (mentioned p. 59 as in North Somerset). The geographically limited scope of this volume cannot be helped, though it might have been explained; but it is perhaps well to remember that Somerset was not only as Somerset is, particularly as when it was newly defined it 'lost' both a great deal of significant archaeology and an area with a strong tradition of archaeological research linked to centres of learning.

The book is well-illustrated, especially in its

photographs e.g. an excellent oblique air photograph of the Priddy Circles; a 'period' black and white photograph of members of the Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society at Glastonbury Abbey in 1902. Even more socially illuminating is the sepia photograph purportedly of an 'Oak log boat found in peat at Shapwick in 1906'; yet the caption makes no mention of the four visually-prominent men, including the discoverer and the landowner, who now proudly stand beside it looking for all the world as if they have just stepped out of it. In contrast the air photograph of Athelney Abbey with geophysical survey results superimposed should have been bigger (p. 72) – the vital bit is the size of a postage stamp. A multi-coloured plan of the results of geophysical surveys in the eastern part of Ham Hill hillfort is one of the more remarkable things in the book. Equally remarkable, but negatively, is the complete absence of a single map and the near-absence of plans: not a distribution map, not a plan of a medieval village. Do such not exist in Somerset archaeology in 2007? They certainly did in the metrically, cartographically explicit version of 1982.

Yet here space is found for half-a-dozen or so 'reconstructions', five by TV artist Victor Ambrus, in characteristically percipient, wishy-washy style, but the cover, in more definitive, figurative mode, by Jane Brayne worries me: it seems so lifelike, as in contemporary, that I keep thinking of such as the Nether Adber mummers trailing across a field in fancy dress towards Porlock pageant. Its actual title is 'Approaching Cadbury Castle in the 5th century AD', but it fails to convince as the best cover for this book.

A final thought is prompted by a whiff of double standards: on p. 8 we are told that 'sadly for modern researchers, in the majority of cases [of 18th–19th century barrow-diggers] the aim was the quick retrieval of objects'. Yet does not that last phrase describe exactly the objective of the metal-detector-using treasure-hunter pandered to by the Portable Antiquities Scheme (p.100) instead of being told to practice archaeology properly or not at all?

P. J. FOWLER

**People and Places: Essays in honour of Mick Aston**, edited by Michael Costen, Oxbow Books, 2007, 216 pp., numerous ills. £50. ISBN 978-1-84217-251-3

This festschrift arises (after a rather long gap) from

the contributions given at a two-day conference in December 2004, held at the Department of Archaeology and Anthropology at the University of Bristol, to mark Mick Aston's retirement and to celebrate his 'energy, commitment, enthusiasm and pioneering spirit as a landscape archaeologist and as a teacher'. This is a view of the man we can all share and support, not least because so much of his work has been done in this County, notably with others in the forensic examination of Shapwick. The bibliography of his work printed here includes over 60 references to projects relating to Somerset, where he was County Archaeologist from 1974 to 1978, having previously been Field Officer at the Oxford City and County Museum.

As a museum person I must note Mick Aston's museum origins. At the beginning of the 1970s two museums were looking closely at how museums should set out to understand and interpret places. The totally new Oxford City and County Museum saw this as an active programme of enquiry into why Oxfordshire now is like it is; their pioneering sites and monuments record played a part. The Museum of London took a similar enquiring approach, but with a different methodology arising from its urban situation; rescue excavation (for early periods) and programmes of urban recording being major generators of raw data. The essence of all these approaches was the involvement of many disciplines in this process of advancing an understanding of place through fieldwork and exhibition.

Any festschrift should do three things: it must put useful essays in the public domain; it must honour the person; and in doing both it must point some ways forward. This is an eclectic mix of contributions on subjects ranging from Jodie Lewis on experiencing the prehistoric landscape of (central) Somerset, where no person is knowable, to Paul Stamper on the very knowable George Durant I, whose taste in rebuilding his country house at Tong in Shropshire was described in 1792 as 'disgusting to every human eye that has not been hardened in Italy'. The sort of theoretical concepts expressed in terms such as 'visual ideologies' (usefully summarised by Jodie Lewis) hardly do justice to this! So there is much of interest. There are four essays dealing specifically with Somerset: Jodie Lewis examines the evidence for how prehistoric people might have respected the landscape and the monuments of earlier people. Paula Gardiner looks at the difficulties of the evidence for the transition from Mesolithic to Neolithic societies. Michael Costen seeks the anonymous thegns in the landscape

of Wessex, mainly in Dorset, but with some reference to the area around South Cadbury. Stuart J. Prior examines the way three Somerset castles (Castle Cary, Downend and Montacute) need to be appreciated for more than their military significance. As other essays on France and Ireland also show (and indeed at Tong), structures and land organisation associated with temporal power or religion are not built solely for practical reasons. The appearance and design, 'packaging' in modern terms, of these structures must have been highly significant when built, even if it is not always easy to read them now.

Two essays at the end of the book honour Mick Aston's wide significance and could be read first with profit. First, Nick Corcos examines archaeology's crisis of communication: the failure to communicate clearly and effectively at both the academic and popular level, often by retreating into obscure archaeological theory largely borrowed from other disciplines – and you could read the other essays in the light of this essay if you are feeling very critical. As Mick Aston is a very able communicator through his books and through *Time Team* on TV Channel 4, it is a pity that the original conference, and thus this book, did not give more space to the public understanding of archaeology. Second, Christopher Taylor, cheerfully discarding archaeology as 'merely a technique' not a discipline, highlights the value of good communication. He writes eloquently that 'landscape history is great fun' and, importantly, vital to counter the way those currently having economic and political power seek to limit the significance of the landscape by confining the evidence of the past behind the walls of listed buildings, scheduled ancient monuments and conservation areas. Their assumption is that 'outside' is available for exploitation, whereas everywhere is 'that wonderful kaleidoscope of the interaction of past peoples with their worlds'.

There are some ways forward from this. *The Making of the English Landscape* by W.G. Hoskins (1955) is referred to at several points by several writers, but Nick Corcos draws attention to a less well known work which influenced me at the outset of my career: *A Land* by Jacquetta Hawkes was published in the context of the 1951 Festival of Britain. In a language which was almost poetic she conveyed what is *now*, including plants and animals, as simply the current state of a continuum which has existed since the earliest geological epochs and will continue. Landscape archaeology should not stop 100 years ago. There are very few 20th-century

references in this book, yet all the same processes are still in play. Jacquetta Hawkes was also important for her role as the adviser to the *People of Britain Pavilion* in the 1951 South Bank Exhibition, the model human figures from which are still in Leicester Museum. This told me about the sense of wonder a museum exhibition can generate, which brings me to the only essay in the festschrift to deal with objects, that by Christopher Gerrard on the life histories of three remarkable objects from Shapwick.

Too often, in order to help the archaeologist interpret the sequence of human interventions in the site, a 'find' is seen only as evidence of date or social status. But museums have to start from the other end, working back from the object to the context from which it came. It is here that Christopher Gerrard's approach is so important. And when the object is transferred to the exhibition gallery, the primary means of discourse for the museum, it is not simply put on show, or placed there as a convenient three-dimensional illustration for a written narrative. It is experienced in a new context and grouping on which we impose a further layer of meaning. Thus we make it act as a primary conveyor of understanding, and use it as a metaphor for wider concepts. There are important lessons here for museums whose role is to interpret place, not least the future Museum of Somerset: clarity of communication; the need to deal with processes shaping us *now* as well as the historical; and the role of objects as the primary conveyers of meaning and experience. There is a great deal of interest in this book: food for thought for field archaeologists, historians and curators.

MAX HEBDITCH

**Roman Mining in Somerset**, by Malcolm Todd and others, The Mint Press, 2007, 88 pp, illus. £10. ISBN 978-1-903356-51-7

This slim volume conveniently brings together the results and significance of Professor Todd's exploratory excavations at Charterhouse on Mendip in the 1990s, summarised in previous volumes of the Society's *Proceedings* and publications elsewhere. Its first three sections provide an introduction and account of excavations at four locations, and of the material recovered. The fourth assesses their significance and its implications for a wider appreciation of mining in Roman Britain and its context within the Empire.

The rectangular enclosure commonly identified as a small Roman fort overlooking the Charterhouse

valley was shown to be of two phases, built and occupied by the army for probably only a few decades from the middle of the 1st century AD, perhaps as a depot rather than a more conventional fort. Important deposits of pottery and animal bone recovered from the first phase ditch, apparently representing clearance of the initial phase of use, graphically reflect the contrast between the local native economy and that of the incoming military. Examination of two nearby mining rakes demonstrated the apparently contemporary working of lead (galena) and iron (haematite) ores. Iron Age pottery from their infill deposits suggest that mining was underway here prior to the Roman takeover. Excavation trenching of another rectangular earthwork across the valley to the east suggested that this may have been primarily medieval in date, with a later addition, and its association with the processing of lead. Incidental to this was the recovery of small but significant Mesolithic flint artefact assemblages beneath the earthwork and in the valley nearby, as well as other occasional Neolithic and Early Bronze Age lithics.

Given its intent, the content and presentation of the evidence recovered in the field in this new publication is at times disappointing. Stricter editorial control would have eliminated wrongly ordered (once twice repeated) text or drawings, incorrect or missing annotations, references, and some absences of material that was included in earlier reports. The site illustrations are of uneven quality, some appear to be absent, while others lack full information or annotation. In places the final reporting of the evidence gives the impression of a stitching together of previously published accounts, with some modification, in favour of a fuller and more seamless re-presentation.

These reservations aside, Professor Todd presents the first significant reassessment of Roman lead mining on Mendip, since David Elkington's 1976 summary (Elkington, H.D.H., 'The Mendip lead industry', in Branigan, K., & Fowler, P.J. (eds), *The Roman West Country: Classical Culture and Celtic Society* (1976), 183–99). His demonstration of evidence for the very earliest period of Roman mining, processing, and military involvement, corroborating early classical sources as well as surviving processed ore products, is of paramount importance. Of no less significance is support for the hypothesis of prehistoric ore extraction at Charterhouse, as well as concrete evidence for medieval processing activity. Within his discussion of the evidence, an assessment and comparison of

this area with the Roman gold mining complex at Dolau Cothi in Wales is particularly illuminating, as is the suggested link with Mendip silver extraction and a remarkable concentration of later Roman silver coin hoards and counterfeiting in Somerset. This publication lays a new foundation for the admirable current research project focussed through the Charterhouse Environs Research Trust, and for any more extensive surveys of the industry to come.

PETER LEACH

[This review appeared in *SANHS Newsletter*, 76 (Autumn 2007) – Ed.]

**Landscape, Community and Colonisation: The North Somerset Levels during the 1st and 2nd millennia AD**, CBA Research Report 152, by Stephen Rippon, Council for British Archaeology, 2006, 317 pp., 104 figs, CD. £38. ISBN 978-1-873966-14-3

Dr Stephen Rippon is that rare thing, an archaeologist who will question, and if necessary, overturn orthodoxies. After the publication of this book, we should never again trust 'Historic Landscape Characterisation' that is not built on completely thorough understanding of local circumstances and histories. And it makes sense right at the beginning of this review to acknowledge, as Steve himself does, the contributions of any number of contributors and specialists to the success of the North Somerset Levels Project, the results of which form the basis of this book.

It is easy to forget that between the fleshpots of Weston-super-Mare and Bristol, and the high ramparts of Mendip and Broadfield Down, lies the Northmarsh, an area of land, low, marshy and wet, peat and clay, a land of willow and heron, of scattered farms and winding lanes, almost completely previously ignored by academic historians and archaeologists (with a few honourable local exceptions).

The book's subject is the development of a marshland community, focussed on the parish of Puxton in North Somerset, but including detailed studies in the adjacent parishes of Wick St Lawrence, Congresbury and Banwell, and set in a wider context of Steve's researches in other parts of the Northmarsh, such as Kenn, extensively published elsewhere, and is made all the stronger for its setting, not just in the marshland environment of the Severn Valley, but within the whole of north-west Europe.

The book initially sets out the various methods and techniques for studying the evolution of such a marshland community, which is further detailed when discussing the post-Roman period. For these later periods, the length of the project enabled significant quantities of previously unsuspected documentary evidence to be found in other parts of the country, which transformed the understanding of the medieval and post-medieval period. Standing building surveys also played a critical role (including perhaps tempering the enthusiasm for seeing the great flood of 1607 as a tsunami event).

Beginning in the late prehistoric period, where salt making played a large part (confirmed by as yet unpublished work by Cotswold Archaeology at St George's near Weston-super-Mare), the book follows the various stages of the usage, then drainage of the area in the 3rd century AD, with Puxton turning from a brackish water environment to a completely freshwater one. This lasted for not much more than a century: indications are that the area returned, rather suddenly, to salt-marsh before the traditional end of the Roman period *c.* 400 AD. The cleaned slate, in Steve's evocative phrase. So for more or less the first time, we have an unequivocal answer to the question of what happened at the end of the Roman period (and work on many development-led archaeological evaluations in the area only serves to confirm the story: there *is* a Roman landscape in the Northmarsh, but it is generally sealed by around 0.5m of clean post-Roman alluvium, something that has profound implications for the archaeological study of the area).

The next stage of the book covers what happened to that cleaned slate, and the already classic model of initial colonisation of oval infields in the marsh, with the landscapes then filling up in between. We should not forget that although this is already a classic model, Dr Rippon played a very large part in the development of it, using studies published in this volume.

The most important point in this is that if there was no previously existing landscape to form a model for subsequent occupation, then it is the individual decisions of landowners and/or tenants that develop the landscape the way they do. Since all of the area here studied was in the ownership of the bishop of Bath and Wells in the medieval period, and yet there is much difference in the way the landscapes have developed with the area, the conclusion is plain: this marshland community, in a very real way, made itself.

Dr Rippon's interest in Historic Landscape Characterisation is clear in the hugely detailed

sections that follow, working back from the tenurial patterns of farms scattered across the marsh from the Tithe Maps, including coloured plans showing farms' accommodation land, home grounds and total land holdings. He then uses the techniques of documentary history to follow the identified tenements back through time, and then adds evidence from the national archives, from archaeological techniques such as field walking, test-pitting, small-scale excavation and detailed scientific work in the excavated sites, air photographic transcription, standing building fabric analysis, earthwork survey and so on, and finally, and most importantly, integrating these successfully into the full understanding of the way the marshland environment has developed since its re-colonisation in the 10th century AD. Also importantly, the detail of the studies is published in such a way as to be informative without being overwhelming. This is true Historic Landscape Characterisation, as opposed to some of the frankly rather mystical previous works in this field, which often fail to stand up to critical archaeological scrutiny.

The accompanying CD carries a 56-page .pdf file with many tables and diagrams (mainly of palaeoenvironmental studies) that are not included in the book, presumably to reduce the cost of the printing (although the resulting CD does seem curiously empty: I wonder if it might not have been a better idea to have included a digital version of the book, making its academic use far easier).

No publication is without its potential faults. There should perhaps remain some doubt over whether the slate of the Roman occupation was wiped entirely clean across the whole Northmarsh, and we should not interpret Dr Rippon's book as an excuse not to be aware of the potential of sites such as the area around Congresbury to produce evidence of post-Roman and pre-10th-century occupation. My main concern about the book, though, is the rather easy adoption of novel place-names. Nobody except ecologists and archaeologists uses the term 'North Somerset Levels': each parish has its own Moor (such as Puxton and Banwell Moors) and the whole area is 'The Northmarsh' locally. Neither is there such a place as 'Wrighton Down': the upland to the north of the Northmarsh is 'Broadfield Down'. We would not carry out such toponymic colonisation if working in other countries, and we should not do it here. This is, and will be for many decades, an important and academically influential volume, and it is therefore important to point out these novel names.



But these are trifling matters compared to the magnificent success of this volume, which has raised the academic bar enormously for those wishing to study the history of marshland communities, not just in North Somerset, but elsewhere in north-western Europe. It should be an object lesson to future archaeologists, too, that there is no substitute for the hard slog of data collection and analysis: much academic publication can suffer from ‘theoretical’ cant and dogma, something from which this volume is refreshingly free. It also has many implications for land-use planning and development-led archaeology in the area, and should be on the desk of every commercial archaeologist and planner working in the area. A full 18th century ‘Huzzah!’ Dr Rippon!

VINCE RUSSETT

**A Roman Settlement and Medieval Manor House in South Bristol: Excavations at Inns Court**, by Reg Jackson, Bristol and Region Archaeological Services, 2007, 116 + xii pp., 45 figs. £15. ISBN 978-0-900199-56-1

Inns Court, the medieval mansion house of Sir John Inyn, now only represented by its 15th-century stair turret, lies in the Hartcliffe/Knowle West area of south Bristol. The excavations reported on here took place in 1997 and 1999, revealing the plan of much of the west wing of the house as well as evidence of Romano-British buildings nearby. This was a community project involving local people and it is good to see that much has been made of the results in this well-illustrated report, which includes colour photographs. Thus, as well as full accounts of the excavations and unskipped finds reports, the report contains a detailed summary of all the documentary and historical evidence together with maps and archive photos. In terms of showing a commitment to archaeology in Bristol the report cannot be faulted although it has to be said that its scale is much grander than that of the actual findings.

The excavation brief for the area of the west wing precluded excavation below its floor levels and very little in the way of overlying layers survived recent activity. The outcome of the excavation here was therefore simply the plan. This suggested two medieval phases. The similarity between the mortar bonding of the later phase walls and that of the north wing suggested that the earlier part of the west wing may have been the earliest structure, perhaps 14th-century in date, with the north wing following in the

15th century – a date given by its stair turret. The plan also revealed a post-medieval extension of the wing, internal floors and external courtyard surfaces. Curiously none of this is discussed in terms of function and no architectural parallels are offered.

Only at the north end of the medieval west range was further excavation possible and here a small part of a Roman stone building was found. Some 10m away was another building, Building 2, while a short length of wall 30m to the south suggested further structures. These belonged to the 3rd and 4th centuries. Earlier occupation was attested by late Iron Age/early Roman pottery and by a handful of gullies and postholes. This very slight evidence is compared in the blurb, in the summary, and at length in the discussion, with the Romano-British village at Catsgore near Ilchester. Rather unfortunately, from this reviewer’s point of view, the report is unaware of his 1984 companion report to Roger Leech’s of 1982, but leaving that aside there is little to recommend the comparison. Catsgore can only be understood in relation to its roadside position, presumably the result of an early Roman reorganisation of an existing pattern of dispersed farmsteads to profit from the growing town of Ilchester nearby. On a theoretical level, the Catsgore reports belong to that now far distant period when Roman type sites were being sought on a Province-wide scale, while today the approach is much more in terms of the specific influences of local settings. In these latter terms the slight Roman evidence from south Bristol of which Inns Court is part would suggest a sharp divide between relatively poor, scattered farmsteads and the opulent Avon valley villas. The traditional nature of these farmsteads may be indicated by the layout of the one excavated in 1982 300m away at Filwood Park, the plan of which is reproduced in this report. This view differs from that offered in the report (pp. 102–3) which sees the Filwood Park and Inns Court evidence, together with other small scale results nearby, as representing a single settlement. Across 300m this would be on the scale of a small town for which there must surely by now have been some more definite evidence.

The peculiarity of Building 2, mentioned above, is only briefly addressed in the discussion section. This comprised two stone-built ranges set at right angles to each other of which one was an undivided space of 12m by 1.2m internally, which the report confines itself to describing as ‘unusual’ (p. 100). The purpose of this stable-like building is hard to imagine – it might make sense if seen as accompanied

by a timber structure. A furnace set crossways within it confuses the issue of interpretation further though the colour photo (Fig. 21) seems to indicate that it predated the building. One other odd feature (233) is called a boundary ditch and this interpretation serves to support the Catsgore parallels of buildings separated by ditches. Its description and photograph (Fig. 22), however, do not support this interpretation.

Although it could be said that the Roman evidence has been straitjacketed into a rather unsuitable interpretation, and that the opportunity to discuss the medieval evidence was passed by, nevertheless this is an attractive and lasting record of a thoroughly worthwhile project. It will hopefully lead to a greater focus on south Bristol and feed into the materials for a new archaeological model for the Avon valley in the future.

PETER ELLIS

**Charters of Bath and Wells**, edited by S.E. Kelly, Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 2007, 304 pp., 2 pls, 2 maps. £50. ISBN 978-0-19-726397-6

This volume of the charters of the abbey of Bath and the bishopric of Wells is the thirteenth in a series aimed at editing all known Anglo-Saxon charters in England. Although geographically close, the two religious institutions were completely separate at this period. Their properties, save for a few outlying ones in neighbouring shires, were all in Somerset, those of the abbey concentrated in the north-east, those of the bishopric more widely spread, though there is nothing in the far west of the county. For each of the two institutions there is a general history followed by a history of the archive, details of each of its surviving charters, an analysis of its landed endowment and lists of the abbots of Bath and the bishops of Wells. In addition to the standard index there is a glossary of the Old English words and personal names in boundary clauses.

The only source for pre-conquest charters of Bath, of which there are 26, is a cartulary probably dating from *c.* 1155–6 now in Christ Church College, Cambridge. The texts are very good and cannot be far removed from the originals, none of which have survived. The larger part of the archive consists of royal diplomas, mostly dating from the 10th century. Thirteen concern grants or restorations of land to Bath and its abbots, while six are in favour of lay men and women whose estates later passed to the

abbey. Each charter was translated by the compiler of the cartulary into Latin, usually with the boundaries of the land in question given in the original Old English. There is no modern English translation, but extensive explanatory notes allow the non-Latin scholar to make sense of the essence of each charter. In a few cases where there is no Latin translation, a modern English version is supplied. This is so for an Old English will of the late 10th century, made by Wulfwaru, a widow with four children, who bequeathed land and goods to the abbey, hence the survival of a copy of the will. It gives a rare and vivid insight into the personal possessions of a wealthy Anglo-Saxon woman. There is also a unique record of the customs of the manor of Tidenham in Gloucestershire.

Unlike Bath, the cathedral at Wells retains its records, for the most part in the form of two cartularies. There is a single surviving original among the seven royal diplomas and nine Old English writs. It is not possible to be certain whether the cartularies were compiled directly from the originals or from an intermediate copy, but the editor thinks most likely the former for the royal diplomas. One, King Edward's privilege of 1065, includes the observation that some of the diplomas of earlier kings were already 'almost consumed with age'. It is possible, in the editor's view, that King Edward's confirmation of Wells estates was regarded as superseding older title deeds and that the latter were further neglected. The vernacular writs appear in the earlier of the two cartularies, commenced in *c.* 1240, where the language is partly modernised and provided with Latin translations. The diplomas in the second cartulary, which dates from *c.* 1500, are very good texts and may have been taken from originals; again there are Latin translations. One of the writs appears to be a very rare survival, for it is in the name of an Anglo-Saxon queen. Queen Edith made the grant of land at Milverton to Bishop Giso only a few years before the Conquest, while a second one in her name, dates from her widowhood.

This is the ninth volume in the series that Dr Kelly has edited, and Somerset is fortunate in thus benefiting from her experience as a scholar and editor, for contained in this volume is almost all the written source material for the history of our county before the Norman Conquest. This makes the work a foundation for our understanding of the political, ecclesiastical, social and economic history of the county from the late 7th to the mid-11th century.

ANNE CRAWFORD

**West Country Farms. House-and-Estate Surveys, 1598-1764**, by Nat Alcock and Cary Carson, Oxbow Books, 2007, 232 pp., numerous plates and figs. £35. ISBN 978-1-84217-299-5

This title examines those estates in Somerset, Devon and Cornwall which were the subject of 'house-and-estate' surveys which provide, in addition to the information about holding sizes, tenure and rents, etc usually found in estate surveys, a detailed insight into the houses and farm buildings. Part I consists of an Introduction and chapters discussing communities and social structure, the houses and the farmsteads; and in Part II each chapter is devoted to a particular estate or group of estates and includes an introductory analysis followed by an abstract of the relevant survey. An intended Part III (making comparisons with colonial North America) has been omitted and should perhaps have been replaced by a Conclusion.

Although limited in number, the estates were widely distributed and provide examples of the five different agricultural systems identified by the authors within the region: wood-pasture, fenland, marshland, mixed farming and coastal. (These systems accord broadly with those identified in the South West by Joan Thirsk in *The Agrarian History of England and Wales*, IV (1967), pp. 71–80.) The Somerset properties covered by these records consist of the Crown estates of Norton St Philip, Wellington, East Brent, Kingsbury and West Pennard (all surveyed between 1606–8) and the extensive Trevelyan estate of Nettlecombe (surveyed in 1619).

Chapter 2, on communities and social structure, includes a discussion of the significance of the relative proportions of holdings of various sizes within the different estates. For example, some estates had a relatively large proportion of cottagers, which is variously explained (according to the agricultural system) in terms of the need for arable labour, the existence of alternative livelihoods such as craft work (as at Norton St Philip) or fishing, or the availability of freely accessible summer pasture (as at Kingsbury, where some of the cottages were unusually large).

Chapter 3, on the houses, includes a useful introduction to the vernacular house-types of the region. The surveys name individual rooms (hall, chamber, etc) and make it possible to distinguish between the functions carried out in houses and outbuildings. Thus some long-houses, with an internal shippin, have been identified at East Brent, for example. The authors believe that detached

kitchens were less common as primary features of early houses in the region than has been supposed, and that heated service buildings (termed kitchen, malthouse or bakehouse, although their functions overlapped) were usually 16th-century additions. By the early 17th century, improvements in domestic accommodation enabled the kitchen to be moved into the house, and the detached building might be converted into a malthouse or bakehouse, although bakehouses were later superseded by the domestic bread oven. Wring houses (for cheese presses, previously in the kitchen or milkhouse) also emerged during the 17th century; and malthouses and brewhouses were replaced by poundhouses for cider-making. The house descriptions distinguish between ground and first-floor rooms and confirm the trend for ground-floor chambers to be replaced by parlours as sleeping accommodation was provided increasingly in first-floor chambers.

Few groups of early farm buildings have survived, but house-and-estate surveys provide important information about these buildings (discussed in Chapter 4) and the farming practices associated with them, which varied within the region and within the estates. The names of farm buildings indicated their primary function, but, especially on the smaller farms, they could have secondary uses also. Barns were the most commonly found farm building and in the authors' view 'were to the farmstead what the hall was to the house – the catch-all for whatever objects or activities lack accommodation in special-purpose structures'. Other types of farm buildings and also buildings associated with by-employments are discussed in this informative chapter, but it would appear that in general West Country agriculture required relatively few (and generally small) buildings and the authors conclude that 'there is a paucity of [early] farm buildings throughout Somerset, Devon and Cornwall – and we know that there always was'. They point to the contrast with the great tithe barns found in some other parts of the country but do not mention the substantial monastic barns of Somerset (exceptional though these may be).

In the authors' view, 'Seemingly minor variations among agricultural buildings in the surveyed estates show how finely tuned these West Country farmsteads were to local economic opportunities'. In a closer examination of the five distinct farming economies already referred to, they discuss, for example, marshland grazing at East Brent where ranchers engaged in high-volume, fast-turnover stock raising which sometimes required no outbuildings,



even barns, because stock could be driven to Bristol before the winter floods arrived; and the chapter concludes with a detailed comparison between Kingsbury and West Pennard, both associated with fenland farming, which reveals both similarities and contrasts. In sum, although the South West appeared broadly to be a region of pastoral farming with pockets of mixed farming, house-and-estate surveys provide a close-up view of almost every leaseholder's farmhouse and farm buildings and make it possible to identify the range of agricultural activities in each sub-region and locality.

The surveys are confined to certain, unevenly distributed, years within the period 1598–1764, but a cluster of surveys between 1598–1619 enables comparisons to be made between different communities at that time, and all the surveys provide remarkably detailed snapshots of particular communities at specific points in time. The authors also invoke other sources, both primary and secondary, to build a fuller picture of the region in the period, although only the latest title (on Compton Dundon) in the 'Somerset Villages' series published by the Somerset Vernacular Building Research Group is included in the bibliography. Some building surveys by John Dallimore and E.H.D. Williams have been utilised, but not, apparently, the extensive archive of vernacular architecture reports in the Somerset Record Office.

The book is attractively presented and includes colour plates, black-and-white photographs, maps, and plans and elevations of houses and outbuildings. In addition to the analytical discussion provided by the authors, numerous figures, tables and graphs summarise much of the information in the surveys, but the abstracts of the entries in these remarkably informative surveys also make it possible for readers to draw their own conclusions. The entries have been coded, which simplifies the cross-references in the analytical parts of the text. There are occasional discrepancies (on p. 128 there is a reference to a non-existent entry SA36; in a few cases the description in the analysis does not tally with the details in the entry, as, for instance, in the reference to SA27 on p. 128; there is an incorrect reference on p.127 to map 8; and in Fig. 4 on p. 26 either the plan or the elevation of the house has been reversed), but these are minor glitches in a book which is a mine of fascinating information about vernacular architecture, farm buildings and variations in farming practices, by-employment and social structure within the region during the period in question..

MARK McDERMOTT

**Religion and the Enlightenment, 1600-1800: Conflict and the Rise of Civic Humanism in Taunton**, by William Gibson, Peter Lang, 2007, 385 pp. £42. ISBN 978-3-03910-922-7

The England of the last years of Elizabeth was turbulent and rebellious, not so much in political but in religious affairs, but when James I declared that without bishops – the fond hope of many extreme puritans – there could be no king, the theological stance of so many became, in theory at any rate, political. The people of Taunton, or at least the majority of them living in St Mary's parish, had already demonstrated their dissatisfaction in the 1590s, well over 200 of them being reported to the bishop's court, many for refusing to take communion at Easter as the law required. Significantly, only two people failed to do so in St James's church. Was the vicar of St Mary's the cause of such attitudes?

It is clear that Taunton's political opposition arose in the years running up to the Civil War from personalities – a high church bishop, William Piers, implacably against George Newton, the vicar of St Mary's, and his hugely loyal congregation. Those same men, of course, were also members of the town's corporation (the foundation of which in 1627 gets, curiously, no mention, though its support of a weekday lectureship providing Newton with a much-needed boost to his meagre income, is referred to in passing without reference in the index).

Strong personalities continued when Taunton, like many another puritan town, found itself in 1660 under a king again. A report of seditious behaviour there in 1661 found almost all the members of the corporation unwilling to take the loyal oath and it was dissolved. Neither George Newton nor his equally significant curate Joseph Alleine were able to accept the restored ecclesiastical regime and, so far as persecuting legislation allowed, they continued to preach to growing congregations in the near neighbourhood. They and other ministers expelled from elsewhere led their hearers into churches variously of Baptist, Presbyterian or Congregationalist persuasion.

Political alarms and excursions were by no means over – witness the popular support for the duke of Monmouth. The town's charter of 1677 had given the Crown significant control, but when James II attempted to disturb the balance of power between Anglican and Nonconformist in favour of his own brand of toleration in 1688 by replacing a third of the members of the corporation to secure an approved election result he was met with complete

failure. But the years immediately after the Revolution of 1688 that brought religious toleration to the whole country showed Tauntonians in their true colours. The Huguenot Jacques Fontaine, an ordained Presbyterian minister, was hounded out of the town by a group of small-minded men jealous of his commercial success.

In the years that followed, the urbane and personable Nonconformist divines such as Henry Grove and Matthew Warren, preaching reason and harmony, were set aside when parliamentary elections came around. Dissenters were clearly in the thick of the electoral bribery that characterised the town's reputation for much of the 18th century. Professor Gibson's attempt to see Taunton as an elegant Georgian town with its 'moral space' and 'civic humanism' does not succeed: perhaps he looks back through the hopeful eyes of his youth there. It was, and long remained, a small market town with small leaders, none of whom had the inspiration or energy to be revolutionaries. Even Sir Benjamin Hammet had limited success. The devastation of the Civil War siege and the loss of many young men after Monmouth's failure had proved too much to bear. There was no longer any taste for revolution, not because of the preachers but because making a living was difficult and the occasional election riot was quite enough to satisfy any lingering longings for past glory.

ROBERT DUNNING

**Somerset Churches and Chapels: building, repair and restoration**, edited by Robert Dunning, Halsgrove, 2007, 144 pp., numerous ill. £14.99. ISBN 978-1-84114-592-1

This excellent book is a collection of essays to commemorate the achievements of the Friends of Somerset Churches and Chapels on the occasion of their 10th anniversary and the glorious county heritage to whose conservation they continue to make such a valuable contribution. Six of the essays are devoted to aspects of the history of church and chapel building; two to different ways of looking at the church fabric and two more to the history of the Trust itself and the practical experience meeting the challenges of trusteeship of buildings so complex and emotionally significant as an ancient parish church.

In a book like this, some reference has to be made to the buildings themselves. The essay approach works well in that it sidesteps the incubus of the

comprehensive architectural history which has yet to be written, and in its stead provides illumination through well-chosen example to a particular theme. For the Church of England, Robert Dunning examines medieval church-building through documented contributions by individual people, John Bucknall and Robert Dunning take examples of particular churches to show how parish churches were refitted and modified to meet the demand of a reformed church between 1540 and 1820, and Alan Rome is a shrewd and sympathetic commentator on the contribution individual architects made to the repair, rebuilding and new building of churches between 1820 and 1900. The built response to the post-Reformation revival of Roman Catholicism up to 1900 is described by Dom Aidan Bellinger, and Mary Ede demonstrates again through example how polite architecture served a bewildering range of Nonconformist churches between 1640 and 1900. To bring the history up to the present day, Hugh Playfair provides a thoughtful chapter on how PCCs and individual churches have responded to the need to have buildings which are 'fit for purpose'.

The style and subject matter of each chapter reflects the personality and expertise of its author. There is much of value here which is not found in print elsewhere. Inevitably with such an approach there are gaps, in the historical narrative for example. Perhaps the most surprising, possibly a deliberate editorial decision, is the lack of discussion of the philosophical issues which have arisen from conserving such important historical structures. To some extent, the same could be said of the practical issues involved. Hugh Prudden observes that the choice of stone available for repair and new work now is much more limited than in the past where there was greater scope for weighing issues of suitability and accessibility against cost. Bob Croft is mainly concerned to establish the credentials of archaeology and how its use has been built into the planning processes. One would have liked to have seen a more detailed discussion of the issues arising in archaeological and conservation work such as at Thurlbear St Thomas or more recently at Isle Abbots where Jerry Sampson's detailed archaeological survey has led to a firmer understanding of the date at which this, one of the classic Somerset towers, was built.

The considerable achievements of the Fund and the background to its establishment are summarised by Gerard Leighton who has appended the Fund's grants policy and procedure to his succinct essay. The final contribution by Fay Wilson-Rudd and

Hilary Binding addresses the practical issue: what a Parochial Church Council should do when faced with major works and how it, in this case Carhampton PCC, can go about raising the funds.

The photographic illustrations are copious but of good quality, appropriate and thoughtfully captioned throughout. This reviewer would recommend this book to all who have an interest in the heritage of Somerset, noting that all profits from sales will benefit the grant fund of the Friends of Somerset Churches and Chapels.

DAVID DAWSON

**A Glimpse of Heaven, Catholic Churches of England and Wales**, by Christopher Martin, English Heritage, 2006, 224 pp., 254 pls. £25. ISBN 978-1-85074-970-7

Christopher Martin's *A Glimpse of Heaven* is a spectacularly illustrated gazetteer of over 100 Catholic churches in England and Wales, photographed in colour by Alex Ramsey. Aimed at the 'non specialist' (p. 8), it was published by English Heritage in collaboration with the Patrimony Committee of the Catholic Bishops' Conference to widespread acclaim in 2006.

The canvas is very broad, from the Middle Ages to the 1990s (the then chairman of English Heritage states that 'the ancient churches' (p. 7) were all once Catholic) with a preference for the broadly Classical and for the hegemony of the 20th-century Modern Movement. The South-West and Wales figure prominently, as does the role of the religious orders, represented in Somerset by Downside Abbey. Amongst 19th-century architects C.F. Hansom of Bristol is prominent. Catholic worship was illegal from 1559 to 1791, when the Second Catholic Relief Act allowed church building; there is an emphasis on a 'long eighteenth century' and on pre-Pugin churches. The lavish neo-classical private chapels of Wardour New Castle (1769–76) and Lulworth Castle (1786–7), both technically illegal, were provided for Catholic aristocratic households and their tenantry. The free-standing private chapel at Llanarth Court, Monmouthshire, for the Jones (later Herbert) family is the oldest Catholic church in Wales (although the date of 1750 given in the *Catholic Directory* cannot refer to the present building, here given as 1790). Our Lady of the Martyrs, Chideock, Dorset, is a barn converted to a church (1870–2 and 1884), providing a living link to the Catholic martyrs, of whom this village produced no less than five and

it is tragic that the bishop has recently withdrawn the priest.

Exiled English Benedictines, who had congregated at Douai in Flanders in 1607, were then twice exiled by the French Revolution. Their decision to settle at the Somerset manor of Downside in 1814 has given us one of the most romantic sites of the Catholic Revival in England. The vaulted aisle of Giles Scott's nave (1924–5) is on the cover and Thomas Garner's choir (1902–5) is also shown, but really a plan is needed to explain the building. Surprisingly the Lady Chapel (part of the Dunn and Hansom scheme of 1873, built 1881–3) as furnished (1898) by the young Sebastian Comper, a brilliant Anglo-Catholic designer, is not illustrated. It was paid for by an Anglican clergyman, Stapleton-Barnes (who later became a Catholic priest), who had already employed him. The beauty and scholarship of Comper's stained glass, altar and reredos, make this a most learned and arcane of liturgical settings, rivalling even Pugin at his best. Its reliquaries also provide another link with martyrs, like those at Chideock. The church enshrines the body of St Oliver Plunket, Archbishop of Armagh, the last Catholic priest (and bishop) to suffer death for his faith in these islands (1679). Hereford Catholic church also boasts the hand of the local martyr St John Kemble, another victim of the 'Popish Plot'. The author, an Anglican, makes the passing claim that Hereford Cathedral 'preserved' St Thomas of Cantilupe's shrine (p. 155). In fact, it is merely his tomb that survives, in a setting of 1999, not his destroyed shrine. Some of his relics have been documented in Catholic hands since the reign of Mary Tudor, and are now housed variously at nearby Belmont, in a Comper reliquary at Downside, and at Stonyhurst (in a setting first designed by Pugin); it is probably some of these which Catholics carried round the walls of Hereford in 1610 to avert the plague. (Hereford Cathedral authorities have been asking some Catholic institutions for the return of some of the relics, without success, and it's Dean has appeared on television.) An example of the tendency to slip into Anglican categories is the statement 'from 1800 ... an education modelled on the traditional English public school' was imitated at Downside (p. 150) – a situation reached only from 1902 under the convert former Vice-Principal of Wells Theological College Dom Leander Ramsey (headmaster 1902–18, Abbot 1922–9).

Some reference to the religious orders are confused: the Jesuits were not suppressed by the Pope in 1761 (but 1773) (p. 16); the Redemptorists are priests not monks (p. 80); John Milner, a crucial

figure, was not bishop of the Western (p. 17) but the Midland District; Canon A.J.C. Scoles, prolific architect in the south-west (p. 147), was not a Jesuit (although his brother Alexander was). It is Dom Augustine Baker (not Gabb) (p. 85); in '1862 [the] Dominicans back in England first time since Reformation' (p. 114), were here from 1747; the Ampleforth Benedictines were never at Douai (p. 149) and their Hansom Brothers' church survived (without an intervening building) until its two-stage replacement by Giles Scott (p. 164). And did 'all these communities start in cramped quarters?' (p. 150), Downside perhaps, but certainly not the Carthusians who at St Hugh Charterhouse (1877–83), Parkminster, Sussex, built a complete French-designed monastery before their actual exile from France. Unlike the hand-to-mouth efforts of the bishops and their clergy, the religious orders were able to plan strategically their building programmes, as their impressive town churches, rural retreats and schools show. Joseph Aloysius Hansom's and his son Joseph Stanislaus' (later as Hansom and Son) St Mary Church, Torquay (1865–81) for Dominican nuns is an example, but otherwise the striking architectural contribution of the women's orders is not noticed. The author alas has still not sorted out all these fathers, brothers and sons: it was Edward Joseph Hansom, the son of Charles Francis Hansom, who joined A.M. Dunn as Dunn and Hansom (p. 89) not Joseph Aloysius's younger son Henry John. Charles Francis Hansom, whose St Aloysius, Hanley Swan (1844–8) is copied from Pugin, was much employed by the Benedictines, culminating in his High Victorian St John the Evangelist, Bath (1861–3) for Downside, but thereafter he fell away from Catholic practice. As a successful Bristol architect he was responsible for *inter alia* Clifton College (1860), Malvern College (1863), Kelly College, Tavistock (1872).

Downside's daughter house, Worth Abbey, Sussex, has a church by Francis Pollen, architect, now acknowledged as one of the few lasting memorials to reforms of the Second Vatican Council (1962–5) and the ferment of liturgical change which followed. Its long building campaign (1964–89) is significant and contrasts with most other Modern Movement churches – Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral by Gibberd is described as built in just five years. Generally, the author remains in thrall to broadly Pevsnerian opinion and the canonisation of the Modern Movement. Pollen is certainly not defined as a Modern Movement architect by his biographer, Alan Powers, and there is no church noted by the

anti-modernist H.S. Goodhart-Rendell, a Catholic convert. He was the architect and a generous benefactor of Prinknash Abbey, but his grandiose design of 1939 was built (1962–6) to a lesser scheme by F.G. Broadbent – declining numbers and their great age forced the monks moved out in 2007.

Although C.F. Hansom's Clifton Cathedral was disgracefully left derelict after its function was replaced by the new cathedral (1969–73) by the Percy Thomas Partnership of Cardiff, and other churches have been witlessly allowed to fall into ruin as modern churches replaced them (shocking local examples are Shepton Mallet, Somerset and Barnstaple, Devon). The 'redundancy' of Catholic churches in the South-west is a new phenomenon. This book bravely highlights churches under threat, such as Chideock and Amwlch (1933–7) in Anglesey. A former Archbishop of Cardiff wanted to close and sell St Francis Xavier, Hereford (1838), its Greek-Revival style and situation in relation to Hereford Cathedral like a caricature in Pugin's *Contrasts*. But a brilliant local campaign, fund-raising, an English Heritage and Heritage Lottery Fund grant, a very successful Parish priest, Dom Michael Evans OSB, together with dynamic interaction with the Historic Churches Committee for Wales and Herefordshire during the planning process, have turned this round. Although the consideration of such Catholic 'redundancy' is not well managed, since 1994 works to listed churches and cathedrals in use must be authorised by the Historic Churches Committees, which have gained wide respect; one of the best covers the south-west dioceses.

RODERICK O'DONNELL

**Somerset Follies**, by Jonathan Holt, Akerman Press, 2007, 129 pp., numerous b/w ill. £10. ISBN 978-0-9546138-7-7

In her ground-breaking book *Follies and Grottoes* first published in 1953, the artist Barbara Jones writes '...Follies are built for pleasure, and pleasure is personal, difficult to define. Follies are fashionable or frantic, built to keep up with the neighbours, or built from obsession. They are at once cheerful and morbid, both an ornament for a gentleman's grounds and a mirror for his mind... Follies are personal in a way that great architecture never is. Their amateur quality makes them our own: never expect too much from other people's favourite follies... This uncertainty ... makes the recording of follies difficult.'

*Somerset Follies* is the latest addition to a growing list of publications on this popular genre and draws heavily upon its predecessors but still manages to add to the collective body of knowledge and discoveries. Whilst Barbara Jones's pioneering work and that of her successors, Gwyn Headley and Wim Meulenkamp (*Follies, Grottoes and Garden Buildings*, 1999) are UK wide gazetteers and are as such weighty tomes unsuited to a coat pocket or backpack, Jonathan Holt's guidebook on the other hand is a slim paperback ideally suited for use in the field. The historic County of Somerset is set out in alphabetical parish order and with the only map provided the reader is easily able to group follies for visiting purposes. The descriptions are succinct and the anecdotal stories entertaining. Each monument is illustrated but the use of national grid references is not consistent making the discovery of some follies an additional pleasure or an unnecessary frustration. The search for these architectural frivolities can on occasions be more than just a fascinating hobby.

The lack of colour photographs, illustrative plans or sketches are regrettable omissions but they should not put off folly hunters from buying this informative book and using it to explore the rich and varied landscapes of Somerset and the hidden secrets they conceal. Personal pleasure is undoubtedly difficult to define, but very few readers will be disappointed by the sheer enjoyment of coming across an eye catcher, classical temple, grotto or obelisk. Readers are rightly cautioned however, that many follies are to be found on private property, so despite the rights to roam the countryside, prior permission should be sought from the landowner.

A useful bibliography is included with further reading suggested from both local and national publications. Also, for the real enthusiast, details are given of the Folly Fellowship, the pressure group founded 20 years ago to protect, preserve and promote follies, grottoes and garden buildings.

RUSSELL LILLFORD