states, polities and power-zones, namely those by Andrew Reynolds for Anglo-Saxon England generally (modelling three developmental stages), by Christopher Scull for south-east Suffolk, by Patrick Gleeson for the multiple ritual landscapes of Cashel and Munster in Ireland, and by Egge Knol for the extended coastal lands of Frisia, here interpreting a mix of archaeology (e.g. sites, objects, boats).

Perhaps simply a problem with my own review copy (though that seems rather unlikely), the print publication was marred by residual typographical/copy-editing elements or problems with formatting and spacing. For example, on the Contents page the Chapter 5 title has '…Norway̶ Regional…' which is repeated on the title page of the actual paper (p.107); similar issues are evident twice on the facing page 106 (and likewise in the Introduction, with six instances on p.18). Spacing slips occur in various points, such as in footnotes (e.g. p.76 n.49 has 'Eagles pers.c omm.2007') and in captions, for example in Chapter 3 where numbers seem to be 31, 32, 35 instead of 3.1, 3.2, etc. and a space often comes after the first letter of the first word (e.g. p.65 with 'Figure 31 D istribution'). There are also issues with the left-page header for authors' names across Chapter 7. I might further note that various b&w images were not very crisp (Figures 7.1, 13.5 and 17.5 being examples); in some cases the original colour plates were probably much clearer.

These niggling points aside, there is plenty of excellent and stimulating research on show here; the range of papers and approaches certainly makes this a volume worthy of close scrutiny by any scholar engaged with Europe in the Early Middle Ages.

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The Shaping of the English Landscape. An Atlas of Archaeology from the Bronze Age to Domesday Book. (Oxford University School of Archaeology: Monograph 82). By Chris Green & Miranda Creswell. 20 x 28 cm. vi + 123 pp, 136 colour pls and figs. Oxford: Archaeopress, 2021. ISBN 978-1-80327-0060-9; epub: 978-1-80327-061-6. Price: £35.00 pb.

This attractive volume arises from the *English Landscapes and Identities* (EngLaId) project and constitutes a companion to the 2021 monograph of the same name. Two outstanding features of the EngLaId project are, first, its collation and interrogation of several vast national datasets; and, second, its integration of artist Miranda Creswell into a multi-faceted team of archaeologists. Both of these features are at the fore in this book, a collaboration between Creswell and EngLaId's GIS expert Chris Green, which provides a strikingly visual commentary on the project: nearly every page displays one of Green's maps/graphs or Creswell's artworks (and, sometimes, both combined). The result is both thought-provoking and a pleasure to browse – including, notably, the blended methods and philosophies of the closing chapter.

Inevitably, the dataset cannot remain up-to-date (dated on p. iv to 2012), but its staggering size (over 900,000 records) offers reassurance as to its representativeness. By way of context and as a refined measure of this representativeness, Chapter 1 presents a range of views on archaeological 'affordance' – the likelihood of sites of certain types or periods being archaeologically detectable across different regions. Using the distribution of Early Anglo-Saxon cemeteries as a proxy for ceramic usage is rather mysterious, but overall this chapter's findings have important implications for inter-regional archaeological studies.

Most of the rest of the book is arranged into thematic chapters, each examining a different feature, function or activity in the landscape (such as 'settlement' and 'belief'), spanning 1500 BC to AD 1086, within the modern borders of England. Most of the maps in these core chapters plot the presence or density of a particular class of monument, such as roads, metalworking sites or churches. Their clarity, in presentation and exposition, is admirable. There are occasional spelling mistakes and empty cross-references, and the inferences drawn from the multitude of maps are sometimes a little vague, telling (rather than necessarily showing) us that particular patterns are useful or interesting. Some of the observations on distributional patterns (such as the mismatch between the Danelaw and open-field landscapes) are not necessarily surprising, but the sheer breadth and depth of the evidence compiled and analysed in this volume – together with the skilful interleaving of original artwork – make this an essential and characterful atlas for anyone undertaking large-scale archaeological studies of England. The availability of a free digital edition is a welcome bonus.

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Planning in the Early Medieval Landscape. (Exeter Studies in Medieval Europe). By John Blair, Stephen Rippon & Christopher Smart. 16 x 24 cm. xv + 351 pp, 100 b&w pls and figs, 1 table. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020. ISBN 978-1-78962-116-7. Price: £80.00 hb.

This volume explores the medieval use of gridded planning using standardised measurements to lay out rural settlements within the present country of England. It takes as its starting-point Blair's previously published suggestion that in England a number of rural settlements of seventh- to ninth-century date were laid out using precisely measured, planned, regular grids repeating squares of standard dimensions of 15 or 18 perches, in a modular manner analogous to that observed in some medieval buildings. This volume seeks to advance understanding of this type of settlement planning: to establish its chronology and geographical extent, to investigate its tenurial context – i.e. who it was that required settlements to be planned in this way – and, finally, to establish why this was done.

The research analysed nineteenth-century first-edition Ordnance Survey maps to identify relevant settlements and then consulted archaeological evidence for possible corroborative support for grid planning. Other sites were included to avoid missing those where medieval grid plans might not have survived to be mapped by the early OS surveyors, including deserted

medieval settlements and currently inhabited settlements, where lost gridded plans had been revealed by excavation. The early medieval ownership of settlements with evidence for grid-planning was explored and a selection of early medieval monasteries, *emporia* and *burhs* were also analysed to see if gridded plans can be recognised in these.

The authors list 117 medieval settlements they felt reasonably confident were laid out using a standardised perch-based grid. From excavation data, they conclude that grid-planning originated as a top-down process in the later seventh and early eighth centuries employed by monastic estates keen to emulate Roman practice; it went into abeyance when monasticism declined between *c.* AD 720–940; but saw a resurgence during the monastic revival from the later tenth century, during which time the grid method became more widely applied in non-ecclesiastical estates. A series of distribution maps show how the gridded settlements identified appear mostly restricted to central and eastern England, in an area defined as the Eastern Zone.

Of particular interest to readers of *Medieval Settlement Research* may be the authors' analysis of 'ordinary' (i.e. non-monastic) rural settlements in Chapter 6. This identifies grid-planning in a range of settlement types, including some which have characteristics of linear rows, as well as others where gridded rectilinearity is more persuasively apparent. Illustrations include composite plans showing excavated buildings and boundary ditches, property boundaries and streets within areas of nineteenth-century habitation and beyond these, lanes and field boundaries shown on maps, and aerial imagery (including LIDAR) – all overlain by grids. These allow readers to follow the authors' reasoning and make their own judgements. Some developmental models are offered, with one particularly interesting example (for this reviewer) proposing the way in which a loose cluster of farmsteads laid out using a pre-surveyed grid might develop into a linear row (pp. 175–7). The loosely gridded farmstead cluster arrangement is seen in many medieval village plans, including classic sites such as Gainsthorpe in Lincolnshire.

The appendices are not to be overlooked. They include Claire Barnes and Wilfrid Kendall's statistical analysis of excavated features, carried out to explore the potential of this approach for identifying and analysing regular alignments. This contribution acknowledges – but does not resolve – a key challenge in the volume's thesis: mismatches between mapped/excavated features and superimposed perch-based grids. One hopes, on beginning Barnes and Kendall's text, that it will offer a means to test Blair, Rippon and Smart's hypotheses by determining how close (or far) the correlation between actual features and the ideal model needs to be before use of the model can be accepted (or rejected). But, although they offer hope for the future, Barnes and Kendall do not achieve this here. This is important, because, as this volume's illustrations show, most of the identified matches are indeed partial and/or approximate. This is perhaps inevitable given the constraints of using a metrical model in a real-world situation followed by a millennium or more of adaptation, and Blair *et al*. make precisely this point. However, because their argument hinges on correlating reconstructed settlement layouts with mathematically

precise grids, the issue of mismatches is crucial: what is needed is a means of identifying whether variation from the precisely measured layout occurred because classical planning had to adapt to real-world conditions, or because rectilinearity was due to other factors, such as (for example) use of plots within pre-existing rectangular field systems or successive addition of back lanes onto linear settlements. Put simply, evaluation needs to know the acceptable margin of error beyond which the classical argument cannot be sustained. Probably, this judgement cannot be reduced to a statistical rule-of-thumb, but, in its absence, confirmation bias risks the Blair/Rippon/Smart hypothesis being accepted by those who want to believe in early medieval use of classically informed methods by ecclesiastical planners to lay out settlements, and rejected by those who do not.

Beyond the 'margin of error' question, there are other issues. Circular argument seems present in some instances, such as identifying post-built building alignments; features dating to different phases are rather inconsistently conflated or separated; and many readers will be able to think of settlements which seem to fit the grid pattern but are not listed. Nevertheless, overall, I would strongly recommend this book to everyone interested in medieval settlement: the arguments are clearly presented and generous inclusion of well-illustrated plans means that anyone can enjoy considering whether or not they agree with the inferences made. Grid-plans are an important part of the medieval settlement pattern which have not been well understood: the authors here offer a thesis which many readers may find compelling and will provide widespread inspiration to look at known sites in a new light. Blair, Rippon and Smart's theory is controversial, but, if correct, it will have a considerable impact on our understanding of aspects of medieval society, ranging from mentalities and the exchange of ideas to the processes driving settlement planning.

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Since this book was first published in hardback form in 2012, more has been written on the development of towns and fortifications and about the recognition and development of traditional landscapes, but the study of rural settlement remains controversial and very much to the fore.

After a lifetime surveying and researching rural settlements, with numerous post-retirement awards, Chris Taylor, at the time of publication the Vice-President of the Medieval Settlement Research Group, but who died recently, commented in the Foreword to the original edition that 'it will be out-of-date before it reaches the bookshop. But of course this is precisely