

what should happen'. In fact, it is as relevant today as ever.

Chris himself continued to express opinions upon the date of settlement nucleation, at times arguing for little pre-tenth-century village development. This well-produced and wide-ranging book presents many different views on the character of the medieval countryside. Initial arguments for widespread nucleation, associated with open-field planning, as early as the eighth century in the East Midlands were indeed found unconvincing by many, and some settlements near boundaries certainly remained a feature in not a few early medieval West Midland charter-bounds. Nevertheless, a degree of nucleation on royal and ecclesiastical estates in the Roberts and Wrathmell 'Central Province' has not been disproved, its efficiency in centralising and decreasing the number of plough-teams necessary encouraging its adoption elsewhere. Others have been loath to accept that it might be the likelihood of continued settlement dispersion, associated with high plough-team numbers over much of Herefordshire and perhaps in other parts of the Borderland, which influenced the statistics recorded in Domesday Book. In Eastern England, however, where the use of early 'Anglo-Saxon' pottery remained common, the arguments for late nucleation appear to have been corroborated by more recent 'test-pitting' programmes. Thus, discussion of these problems and the evidence in some areas for a degree of settlement mobility or the effects of elite status remain as pertinent as ever and this book – and its publication now in paperback form – offers a timely stimulus to such discussion.

While there have been few opportunities for new, large-scale and extended 'open area' research excavations such as those carried out on a small number of deserted village sites, such as West Stow in Suffolk or West Heslerton in North Yorkshire, techniques have been developed which continue to provide valuable evidence. These include the use of LiDAR, which can reveal sites hidden below woodland, for instance; place-name terms continue to be investigated; air photographic analysis, among other analytical techniques, has continued; the influence of physical setting – recently, again, perhaps over-stated – has also been the basis of further discussion. The use of test-pitting via 1 x 1 metre holes within and around villages (and with some application even in lesser urban contexts) has seen growing application, with an especial effort at community engagement, but the value of such work often depends upon the numbers and spread of test pits and can be, as noted, limited in areas which were largely aceramic in the early medieval period. Evidence of subsequent re-planning, indicated by surviving plot boundaries, or changing road layouts and bridge building, have also seen new investigation.

The book is divided into three parts. The first looks at 'Contexts. Chronologies and Forms' showing how the study of medieval settlements has changed since the nineteenth century (paper by Christopher Dyer and Paul Everson), how new approaches guide in the study of sites and landscapes, plus coverage of, for example, Saxon to Scandinavian rural settlement (Gabor Thomas) and seigneurial and elite sites (Oliver Creighton and Terry Barry). Part II comprises a set of regional and national surveys by experts from across Britain

(including Audrey Horning on Ireland, Mark Gardiner on south-east England, and Edward Martin on 'Greater East Anglia'); papers offer case studies as well as boxed theme overviews (such as on the Raunds project, and on exploiting the Welsh uplands). These chapters form one of the notable strengths of this book, although, even at the time of the initial publication, it might be said that some omitted relevant references. Since then, a number of local and regional projects have been carried out, as in the Welsh Borderland, parts of Northern Ireland, south-western and eastern England, many reported on in the MSRG's annual journal. Part III, 'Research Methods', an Appendix, presents a practical guide to investigating medieval rural settlements. Written by Carenza Lewis, the current President of the Medieval Settlement Research Group, it covers desk-based assessment, including internet and documentary sources, and the use of historic maps and aerial photographs; field investigation involving earthwork and building surveys; and more intrusive field investigation by such means as field-walking and the collection of finds, metal detecting, even molehill surveys, shovel-pitting and garden-soil surveys. As such methods permanently change the sites examined, clearly all results must be fully reported and catalogued.

Work has obviously continued since the first publication of this book. For example, studies of elite and fortified sites of many different periods have included the development and purpose of hillforts, burh-sites, castles and moated sites; the evidence for the establishment and siting of new *burhs*, such as Rye in the late Anglo-Saxon period; and the influence of monasteries and the growth of medieval markets. However, none of these or those employing the new or developing techniques described above invalidate the content of the original edition, which still offers a valuable starting-point for recognising evidence and trends, and for pointing towards further discussion.

DELLA HOOKE
Birmingham

Ruralia XIII: Seasonal Settlement in the Medieval and Early Modern Countryside. Edited by Piers Dixon & Claudia Theune. 21 x 28 cm. 368 pp, 171 colour and b&w pls and figs, 5 tables. Leiden: Sidestone Press, 2021. ISBN 978-94-6427-009-9; epub: 978-94-6427-011-2 (ISSN 2565-8883). Price: £65.00 pb.

This volume collates the proceedings of the thirteenth Ruralia conference, hosted by the University of Stirling in 2019, on the once-neglected but increasingly popular theme of seasonal settlement. In keeping with Ruralia tradition, the contributions span the early medieval to modern periods across much of Europe (plus Qatar, surprisingly), and encompass several related disciplines: ethnography, history, archaeology, geography and palynology. It is commendable that so many of the papers integrate some or all of these different strands of evidence, although a recurring theme is that this is a subject which archaeology has often struggled to elucidate. Piers Dixon's introductory essay suggests, with particular regard to Scotland, that research is now in want of ideas more than evidence: 'The data exist; we now require the awakening of the imagination' – a

challenge to which many of the subsequent papers rise. Others, especially those presenting state-of-the-art reviews, provide a valuable Socratic perspective on the 'known unknowns' of seasonal settlement.

The volume's 32 papers are organised across six sections, focusing on, for instance, 'Southern Europe', 'Herding and nomadism' and 'Woodlands'. The co-existence of both geographical and thematic sections is a mixed blessing, sundering some related papers: Scandinavian studies, for example, occur in three different sections, shieling-related studies in two. On the other hand, this mixed structure highlights the collection as more than the sum of its parts; the overall emerging picture is extremely useful, not least for illustrating the broad scope of the subject and some of the tensions and conundrums which it presents.

One such issue is the fascinating contrast between the often impermanent or ephemeral nature of seasonal settlements (and hence their archaeological elusiveness) on the one hand, and the mutable longevity of the underlying practices on the other. So, for example, Pia Šmalcelj Novaković and Anita Rapan Papeša's survey of the evidence from Croatia ranges from the Roman period to the nineteenth century, Anna Maria Stagno's Basque and Ligurian case studies span the fifteenth to twenty-first centuries, and Oula Seitsonen's study of the Sámi herders in Finland covers c. AD 700–1950. In the face of sometimes patchy archaeological evidence, such long chronologies can make it all the more tempting to invoke more recent, better-documented practices in our interpretations of the shadier medieval past. The caution and sensitivity required by such an approach are highlighted by these papers.

Elsewhere, considering the emergence of overarching themes (such as the slippery concept of 'marginal' areas), there is a certain tension between the international scope of seasonal settlement as a field of enquiry and the geographically prescribed remit of most individual contributions. Although by no means exclusive to this subject area, such a tension might usefully spark some international syntheses of seasonal settlement patterns – for example, comparing montane patterns across the Alps, Pyrenees and Cantabrian mountains.

Perhaps the best-known context for seasonal settlement is transhumance and the need for shelter for those people accompanying livestock to summer pastures. Even a cursory look through this collection, however, reminds us of the sheer variety of activities that might accompany seasonal settlement. 'Few areas of human life in medieval rural society were not seasonal in character,' write Tomáš Klír and Martin Janovský in their review of Czech medieval archaeology, citing charcoal and potash production among other examples. A more surprising possibility raised by Elisabeth Waldhart and Harald Stadler's enlightening case study from the Austrian Tyrol is the gathering of wild Alpine flora for medicinal and perhaps apicultural use. Nonetheless, alongside discussions of these other seasonal activities, transhumance and transterminance – its lesser-known short-distance counterpart – are well-represented throughout the collection and provide the particular focus of some papers: from Serbia (Uglješa Vojvodić) and Wales (Rhianon Comeau and Bob Silvester), to Ireland

(Eugene Costello) and the Iberian Peninsula (Mireia Celma Martínez and Elena Muntán Bordas).

It is significant that the title of these proceedings refers to 'seasonal settlement', rather than 'settlements', thus implying a focus on the *phenomenon* rather than individual sites. This focus is perhaps necessary, given that the physical evidence for specifically seasonally occupied sites tends to be scant and not easily dated, and the focus of modern development (and thus development-led excavation) is biased away from upland pasture and wooded areas. Costello, taking a critical look at the evidence of seasonal land-use in Ireland, queries whether there are in fact any accurately dated medieval upland booley sites (i.e. those associated with transhumance) in the archaeological record. To address this paucity of archaeological evidence, Costello proposes not only a series of targeted research excavations but also an ambitiously large-scale remote sensing survey using satellite and LiDAR data. One might wonder, given the particular transferability of the latter strategy, whether it might support future international comparisons.

This is a pleasingly chunky and well-produced volume, clearly printed, with a wealth of high-quality colour images, including some evocative photographs and invaluable maps. The editors have done an excellent job at weaving a coherent and engaging volume out of a heterogeneous collection of papers. An index would have been a helpful addition, to help the reader navigate the large and varied set of proceedings; but there is, commendably, a free and searchable online edition. Overall, this is a landmark book and a springboard for further research into seasonal settlement – perhaps transcending national borders.

MARK MCKERRACHER
*School of Archaeology
University of Oxford*

St Osyth to the Naze: North-East Essex Coastal Parishes. The Victoria History of the Counties of England. A History of the County of Essex, Volume XII, Part 2: The Soken: Kirby-le Soken, Thorpe-le-Soken and Walton-le-Soken. (The Victoria History of the Counties of England, Volume XII). Edited by Christopher C. Thornton, assisted by Herbert Eiden. 21 x 31 cm. xxi + 239 pp, 25 colour pls, 54 b&w pls, figs and tables. Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer for the Institute of Historical Research, 2022. ISBN 978-1-904356-55-4 (ISSN 1477-0709). Price: £95.00 hb.

Essex is not a county that lends itself to medieval settlement studies. It is Oliver Rackham's ancient countryside, with enclosure mostly occurring at an uncertain time in the Middle Ages; settlement thus is dispersed rather than nucleated. A great feature of the landscape are secondary settlements, tyes, ends and greens, again of uncertain origin, with the old buildings around them mostly sixteenth- to eighteenth-century in date. Anglo-Saxon sites do not figure prominently in archaeological fieldwork and pottery for that period is often scarce. It is assumed that early settlement underlies most of the village and market-town centres, now well protected by listed buildings, meaning that excavation is often confined to the less informative