

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.

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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

backland areas. Few deserted medieval villages have been identified and none excavated, in contrast with neighbouring counties. In the absence of any concerted research on medieval settlement, much useful information can nonetheless be found in the Victoria County History, which with the staunch support of a Committee and volunteers continues to produce regular red books.

This volume should be considered with *Part 1: St. Osyth, Great and Little Clacton, Frinton, Great and Little Holland*, published in 2020. Together they cover the southern half of the Tendring Hundred in the north-east of the county. In landscape terms, this is the Tendring Plain, a London Clay plateau overlain with fertile loams, and a long seaboard characterised by extensive marshland and creeks and low cliffs, much subject to coastal erosion. This was the part of the county most subject to Viking control and influence, as evidenced by place-names such as Kirby and Thorpe. From some remote time before 1066, these parishes had been vested in the Bishop of London and the Dean and Chapter of St. Paul's. The Bishop held the St. Osyth and the Clacton area where he made his mark by re-founding a Saxon religious house as an Augustinian priory at St. Osyth. He also built a distinctive Norman church at Clacton, and in an area once very wooded in contrast with today, he held extensive parkland. The priory, later abbey, became one of the wealthiest houses in the county and led to the establishment of a small market town and port. The marshlands supported extensive grazing, for the management of which there exists documentary evidence.

This *Part 2* publication covers the area known as the Sokens, originally the estate of *Eadulvesness*, run from a manorial centre at Walton Hall on the Naze, described in surveys of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in the *Domesday of St. Paul's*. This centre was run by an unfree labour force, an inland, with outlying areas where there were freer peasantry known as hidesmen. These may originally have held farms of one hide in extent; landholdings of fractions of a hide recur consistently in later documents. As is not infrequent in the county, there is evidence for the early existence of a common field system. The early organisation of Kirby and Thorpe into hides for tax and landholding could be seen as supporting this. From the one estate in 1086 there developed the three discrete vills and parishes. The hidesmen eventually became copyholders, a process impossible to trace because of the loss of manorial records. What remained unchanged were the remarkable jurisdictional privileges with many legal and ecclesiastical rights which made the Sokens a distinctive area until as late as the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Sections for each parish carefully and expertly describe settlement, landholding and the agricultural economy. Combined, the books present a valuable picture of an area which John Hunter, the county's well-known landscape historian, described as 'virtually unstudied'.

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Stratton, Biggleswade: 1,300 Years of Village Life in Eastern Bedfordshire from the 5th Century AD. By Drew Shotliff & David Ingham. 21 x 29 cm. xiv + 234 pp, 91 colour and b&w pls and figs, 85 tables. Oxford: Archaeopress Publishing, 2022. ISBN 978-1-80327-074-6; epub: 978-1-80327-075-3. Price: £45.00 pb.

We must be grateful to Drew Shotliff and David Ingham, with support from English Heritage/Historic England, for the publication of this major report after a long delay. It appears in print (with digital appendices) thirty years after the excavation. Stratton became a housing estate on the edge of Biggleswade in the 1990s, but, according to documents, it had been a settlement of at least 30 households in the High Middle Ages. The excavation was remarkable because it managed to explore a high proportion of the settlement, revealing that the site was continuously occupied from the fifth until the eighteenth century.

The long story begins with a small group of sunken-featured buildings in the fifth and sixth centuries AD. The settlement gained in size and coherence in the Middle Anglo-Saxon period, with a regular rectilinear layout of small fields and some post-hole buildings alongside sunken-featured buildings. A small cemetery was also in use. Around AD 800 the field boundaries were remodelled, and at a period not closely defined, but probably in the eleventh or twelfth century, more boundary adjustments and house building changed 'a loose network of small farmsteads to a more recognisable village'. The settlement seems to have continued after 1349 unscathed, and buildings which had previously remained in the post-hole tradition were increasingly being given stone foundations. The excavated settlement seems to have been reduced in size later in the Middle Ages, and became depopulated in the eighteenth century.

A consistent theme throughout was the low level of Stratton's material culture and apparent standard of living, with the persistence of earth-fast timber houses, and small finds of low quality and small quantity. The botanical evidence shows that local woodland was not plentiful, with fuel coming from hedgerows and small copses, while the agrarian economy predictably depended on wheat, barley and oats, and with a preponderance of cattle among the livestock.

Readers cannot complain of a lack of information, but the mass of details seems only partly digested, and its presentation lacks clarity. For example, a single map of the village and its locality has no key, and does not locate the town of Biggleswade nor identify the Roman road which gave Stratton its name. The numerous detailed maps of the site depicting different phases show every ditch, pit and post-hole, but readers would have been much helped by a few interpretative plans. Such a plan of a late Saxon phase of Stratton was published in 1993, showing buildings and significant boundaries, but such illustrations to make the data more easily intelligible are not included here. Every building is catalogued in detail, but no reconstruction has been attempted; and we are not directly told how many houses were built and occupied in successive periods.

The authors have chosen an unusual vocabulary, so that 'longhouse' means a building c. 20 m long, not a structure housing people and animals under the same roof; 'farmstead' is frequently used to describe village