

or peasant houses. They seem to avoid the term 'nucleation', and they prefer circumlocutions such as 'the overall form crystallised by the eleventh and twelfth centuries'. Their misunderstanding of the term 'drage' leads them into an unnecessary speculation about the villagers' use of barley.

This report marks a useful interim stage in our understanding of Stratton. Now the accumulated data can be used to devise a clear picture of the settlement's development with plans of each period which select the most important features. Such a study ought to give equal attention to all periods and not focus on the period before 1100.

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***St Gregory's Minster, Kirkdale, North Yorkshire: Archaeological Investigations and Historical Context.***

By Philip Rahtz<sup>†</sup> & Lorna Watts. 21 x 29 cm. x + 327 pp, 33 colour plates, 140 b&w pls and figs, 34 tables. Oxford: Archaeopress, 2021. ISBN 978-1-78969-482-6; epub: 978-1-78969-483-3. Price: £48.00 pb.

The isolated church of Kirkdale, in a stream-valley at the heart of Ryedale, is of national importance as regards two stages in its existence: in the eighth century, and then in the mid-eleventh. A project there during 1994–2014 was the culmination of Philip Rahtz's brilliant career as an excavator and interpreter of early medieval sites. While the excavations were on a small scale, they yielded some very significant results. We owe their publication now to the hard and devoted work of his widow, Lorna Watts, who completed the project in sometimes very difficult circumstances, and has made a splendid job of it.

Kirkdale was clearly an important minster during the Northumbrian golden age. It could be the place that Bede calls *Cornu Vallis*, but is otherwise undocumented before the 1050s, and so assessment of its early status depends on the material evidence. Small trenches in fields north and south of the church offered tantalising hints of a precinct, containing structures, which extended along the stream-valley. Fragments of earlier footings under the standing church walls could represent a seventh- to eighth-century church (with tenuous evidence for some kind of late Roman presence in the background). More conclusive is the spectacular pair of eighth-century carved grave-slabs from shrine-type monuments of outstanding quality and importance. The excavations now add a fragment of a reticella glass rod and a lead plate with an Old English inscription that perhaps includes the word 'bone-box'. These are all very exceptional items, and the authors reasonably argue that eighth-century Kirkdale had a strong role in memorialising the special dead. Whatever it was, it was an international and metropolitan place in the pre-Viking period and anything but 'remote' in a cultural sense. That point bears emphasis, since its location at the interface between the North Yorkshire Moors and the Vale of Pickering is comparable to that of the better-documented minster at Lastingham, whose eremitical remoteness is emphasised by Bede. In that cosmopolitan world, 'seclusion' was more symbolic than literal.

A stone church of the ninth or tenth century, perhaps with an eastern apse, was apparently rebuilt once and then destroyed by fire. It was probably after this disaster that Orm Gamalsson 'had it newly built from the ground for Christ and St Gregory' during 1055–65, as he famously boasts in the sundial inscription over the south door. Orm's church – a key building for immediately pre-Conquest English Romanesque – can now be more confidently defined as the nave with west and south doorways, the chancel arch and chancel, a north-east porticus and (just possibly) a north aisle.

The yield of significant data from this unfunded project, sustained by the enthusiasm of the excavators and local residents, exceeds that from many much larger ones. The report is straightforward, easily used, and provides all the necessary evidence. It passes the acid test for excavation reports in setting out the facts in an objective and non-dogmatic fashion and in suggesting interpretations while leaving the door open for different ones.

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***Garranes. An Early Medieval Royal Site in South-West Ireland.*** By William O'Brien & Nick Hogan. 21 x 30 cm. x + 386 pp, 379 colour and b&w pls, figs and tables. Oxford: Archaeopress Archaeology, 2021. ISBN 978-1-78969-919-7; e-pdf: 978-1-78969-920-3. Price: £45.00 hb. Open Access.

The name Garranes (properly Lisnacaheragh, the place-name of the site itself) will be familiar to every student of early medieval Ireland. Rare among ringforts in possessing a documented history of sorts relating to the period between the sixth and tenth centuries AD, it can be provisionally identified as the *caput* of the Eóganacht Raithlenn, a branch of the Munster Eóganacht dynasty. The large multivallate site was first investigated by Ó'Riordáin in the 1930s, when its 'royal' status was archaeologically affirmed by both the complexity of the defences and the artefacts recovered; these revealed the substantial scale and range of industrial activity, especially skilled bronze-working. This impressive tome combines the results of field research in 1990–92 and 2011–18 with a reappraisal of the earlier work, plus other studies setting the site archaeology in a broader historical and landscape context. The volume includes different types of research outputs, moving from discussions of dynasties to more conventional excavation reports, where the results are published in some detail – rather more than is necessary perhaps, though it was good to see the full colour finds illustrations.

In archaeological terms, the site narrative at Lisnacaheragh is not greatly changed. Ó'Riordáin excavated a fairly narrow N–S transect across the site and the entrance, as well as a substantial part of the north-east quadrant. There was no direct evidence for housing, but part of a roundhouse inside the north-western quadrant was identified in O'Donnell's work in 1990–92, which also produced the first radiocarbon dates, indicating occupancy during the fifth and sixth centuries. The rest of this structure was revealed in 2017