

weapon fittings to helmet parts and Christian objects, and their functional and social significance, noting also the variable dates of the finds. The painstaking effort to piece together and reconstruct the (presumed royal) helmet (detailed pp. 70–85; to be read with George Speake's coverage of the ornament, pp. 232–45) from out of nearly 1000 decorated silver sheet fragments (though c. 400 of these were 'unattributed') is a fascinating read, as is Richard Gameson's assessment of the palaeography of the Latin inscriptions on the folded cross/reliquary strip (pp. 102–8). The detailed analyses of the craftsmanship – from metals to manufacturing techniques, including filigree and cloisonné – are hugely informative (Chapter 3), as is discussion of the signs of use, wear and repair (Chapter 4). From Fern's review of ornament and 'styles of display and revelation' (Chapter 5), the four-phase chronology of the hoard materials is tackled, spanning perhaps a century and with a possible deposition by c. 675, although we are told 'the extraordinary character of the majority... means that there are few parallels, including in particular the latest objects of the early Insular style. We are also unable to date with the precision we would wish' (p. 270).

Such object analysis also shows Mercia was not the manufacturing home for the hoard's treasures: 'while the rise of local aristocracies across the greater Mercia region during the seventh century is suggested, the archaeological evidence does not point to the production of prestige gold and garnet metalwork like that in the Hoard, beyond probably local imitations'; indeed, 'the total disregard for the contemporary cultural worth of the Hoard objects and their ornament might be considered further evidence that the dismantling and ultimately the burial of the collection took place far from where the majority of the metalwork was made' (pp. 275–6). And the seemingly 'liminal' or 'marginal' location for the point of deposition is interesting in itself, though Barbara Yorke, in Chapter 7 on 'The Historical Context', postulates that the location, near road junctions, might be 'a de-mustering one where the spoils of war might be shared out'; while nearby Hammerwich 'could be interpreted as a smithying site where the kind of dismantling of metal objects that lies behind the assemblage material could possibly have taken place' (p. 292). Wider archaeologies of the period and of hoarding are tackled in Chapters 8 and 9, while a compact but valuable summing up from the editors comes in Chapter 10's 'What does it Mean?', where a putative biography of the Staffordshire Hoard runs from 'Assembly' to 'A late gathering', to 'Final selection and disassembly' and 'Burial'. But, of course, the hoard's biography runs on and its academic and public impact (see the editors' Afterword), as well as this fine volume, are all part of that.

Finally, we should be grateful for the very high quality production of the publication itself, with its excellent illustrative support (and if one might quibble about some colour plates not being that crisp – as with some of the pommels in Chapter 2 or some finds illustrated in Part Three – then we should recall the online catalogue with its high-definition images). And all this at a very affordable price, which should attract many buyers/

readers who will no doubt return to this volume time and time again.

NEIL CHRISTIE  
School of Archaeology & Ancient History  
University of Leicester

***Early Medieval Settlement in Upland Perthshire: Excavations at Lair, Glen Shee 2012–17.*** By David Strachan, David Sneddon & Richard Tipping. 21 × 30 cm. ix + 182 pp, 85 colour and b&w pls and figs, 17 tables. Oxford: Archaeopress Publishing, 2019. ISBN 978-1-78969-315-7. Price: £29.00 hb.

Devotees of upland field archaeology in Britain will be familiar with some of its eternal problems: inadequate chronological precision, few finds and often poor connectivity between structural data from settlement archaeology and landscape-level palaeoenvironmental studies. This attractively presented and sparingly written monograph shows that these issues can be substantially overcome with well-planned collaboration between field surveyors, excavators and palaeobotanists.

Glen Shee in Perthshire is most famous as one of Scotland's leading skiing locations. Located in the southern Grampian range, east of Loch Tay, it is one of a series of steep glaciated valleys trending south-east, with their watercourses draining towards the coastal lowlands of Angus and Tayside. The Scottish Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments (RCAHMS) spent a number of years in the 1980s and 90s intensively mapping surface field remains in this region, confirming it as one of the most complex and best-preserved upland palimpsests in Britain. Cultivation rigs, infields, cairns and later prehistoric roundhouses abound on the hillslopes and valley bottoms. Among these are found a distinctive type of tapering turf-walled longhouse, termed 'Pitcarmick-related' after a site in neighbouring Strathardle which was excavated by Martin Carver, John Barrett and Jane Downes in the mid-1990s. The results of that excavation resolved the probable broad date of this building-type to the early medieval period, but a more detailed understanding of its role in the landscape was needed.

At Lair, a well-preserved cluster of field remains were surveyed in detail, mapped and part-excavated by a multi-disciplinary team from Northlight Heritage and the universities of Stirling and Aberdeen, coupled with a programme of community volunteering. At the centre of settlement cluster is a well-defined sequence of Pitcarmick-related type buildings, which are connected to associated field features. Radiocarbon dates confirmed a time-frame between the seventh and tenth centuries AD, a period associated with Pictish dominance in this region, for which evidence of undefended rural settlement has been rare. The occupation of the Lair site seems to lie between the onset of improving climatic conditions, as mapped by a range of palaeobotanical studies, and a change away from local cereal farming.

The volume is notable for not simply reporting on the results of fieldwork and leaving it at that; rather, it contains a significant amount of interpretive and

comparative comment, looking to Europe, Scandinavia and Iceland for parallels for the buildings and structures excavated. This includes a fascinating study of turf wall construction, which is extensively illustrated with plans, cross-sections and photographs of comparanda. The book is therefore essential reading for those interested not just in the field archaeology of upland landscapes, but also in early medieval rural building techniques and the uses of interior space.

DAVID GRIFFITHS  
*ODCE*  
 Wellington Square  
 University of Oxford

***Peasant Perspectives on the Medieval Landscape. A Study of Three Communities.*** (Studies in Regional and Local History, Volume 17). By Susan Kilby. 17 × 25 cm. xvii + 238 pp, 40 b&w pls and figs, 34 tables. Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2020. ISBN 9781-912260-21-8. Price: £18.99 pb.

Identifying and analysing evidence for peasant perspectives must be one of the most problematic endeavours in medieval settlement studies. This is not only because most of the data which can be brought to bear on this topic are indirect and ambiguous, but also because of the ever-present danger that our own perspectives will significantly distort our account of theirs. This latter pitfall is one which Susan Kilby skilfully avoids, as she explores the available data relating to three communities in the historic counties of Huntingdonshire, Northamptonshire and Suffolk: Elton, Castor and Lakenheath.

Kilby combines documentary sources relating to these communities – sources dating mainly to the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries – with readings of the landscapes inhabited by them which draw not only on socio-economic data but also on a wide range of other evidence, notably topographical and onomastic analysis. She explores the social construction of settlements including, for example, apparent variations in the extent to which particular peasant households would have been visible from public spaces; she contrasts the officially approved routeways through the surrounding landscape with unapproved routes (ones that the peasants persisted in recreating), and she assembles evidence for the ‘hidden economies’ of the peasantry, notably fishing and sheep-farming.

Analysis of the ‘minor names’ in these manors, the topographically and culturally derived field-names, indicates variations among the three communities which may be associated with relative strengths of lordship. Indeed, a theme which runs through this study is the different experiences of various groups within the peasantry – free and unfree; communities under strong or weak lordship – which suggest not an all-embracing, single peasant perspective but a range of perspectives among groups that were differentiated socially and economically. At the same time, Kilby demonstrates that communities as a whole might preserve cultural memories in the names which they gave to specific elements in the landscapes they occupied.

A short review such as this cannot do justice to all the themes covered in this book, but two strands which stand out for this reviewer are the significance of the names that the peasants applied to the fields they worked and the ‘bynames’ by which peasants were themselves known (at least in documents). The names given to many fields not only demonstrate their character – stony, clayey and so on – but also, Kilby argues, subtly convey information about their requirements: how they should be treated in order to be managed successfully. The peasants’ bynames show marked differences between those of the servile and the free peasantry in places where lordship was strong. In those particular communities (though not necessarily in others under weaker lordship), servile tenants tended to be distinguished by topographical bynames (‘at the Green’, ‘in the Lane’ and so on), which, she argues, were used as much to imply status as for the purpose of identifying individuals. The free peasantry, on the other hand, often bore toponymic bynames which emphasised their spatial separation from the core of the settlement – ‘Aboveton’, for example.

Kilby’s aspiration for this book is set out in the introductory chapter: ‘to demonstrate that the recovery of peasant perspectives on the environments in which they lived and worked is a realistic and attainable goal’ (p. 6). It is one which she had unquestionably achieved.

STUART WRATHMELL  
*Fishergate*  
 York

***Faxton. Excavations in a Deserted Northamptonshire Village 1966–68.*** (The Society for Medieval Archaeology Monograph 42). By Lawrence Butler & Christopher Gerrard. 21 × 30 cm. xiii + 283 pp, 5 colour pls and figs. 196 b&w pls, figs and tables. London & New York: Routledge & The Society for Medieval Archaeology, 2021. ISBN 978-0-367-51771-7 (ISSN 0583-9106). Price: £34.99 pb.

Very much more than a ‘backlog’ report on a field project completed more than half a century ago, here is a milestone volume destined to find its place in the vanguard of medieval rural settlement studies. Backed by several scholarly contributors, Christopher Gerrard has brought to publication an important work which skilfully weaves his own substantial contributions with various drafts left by the excavator, the late Lawrence Butler.

Chapter 1 explains the circumstances in which Faxton was chosen for study and sets the excavation in the context of the then prevailing widespread destruction of earthwork monuments in the name of agricultural efficiency. The landscape context and the medieval, post-medieval and modern history are presented in Chapter 2, while Chapter 3 examines the village earthworks and the few standing buildings, including the twelfth-century church which was completely demolished in 1958–59. The three chapters in the volume’s central part each describe an area excavated in one of the three summer seasons. Unfortunately, the archive is incomplete and to plug gaps in the 1966 and 1967 records Gerrard had to rely on Butler’s interim reports to the Deserted