

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

Medieval Village Research Group and articles published in *Current Archaeology*. Chapter 6, covering the final season in 1968, is largely in Butler's own words, this site being the only one on which he had completed a report. Without doubt, the excavations were pioneering efforts, contending with a difficult clay soil, very shallow and disturbed stratigraphy, and fragmentary and vestigial remains of buildings. Despite the many limitations enforced by such factors, these chapters are valuable records of the layout, development and decline of a group of medieval peasant crofts, made all the more useful by a generous supply of good quality plans and section drawings and photographs (Note that in an unfortunate error, one photograph with an annotated version of the same is repeated over three full pages).

Butler's report on the large assemblage of pottery written in the 1980s is presented in full, along with further comments by Paul Blinkhorn who has also analysed the hitherto unstudied post-medieval material. Butler claimed that the start of occupation on all three sites 'need not be earlier than the mid-twelfth century'; Blinkhorn, however, though able to examine only the type series, concluded that 'there *was* activity at Faxton that pre-dates the twelfth century, and some of it appears very likely to be pre-Conquest'. This is a notable change in interpretation which helps to reconcile the archaeological evidence with that of the Domesday Book.

After descriptions of the artefacts (some of which are illustrated with incorrect bar-scales), building materials and environmental and metallurgical evidence, a highly significant chapter radically reviews and reinterprets Butler's views on the construction, function and longevity of the domestic and ancillary buildings, yet all the while his presuppositions, based on opinions current in the mid-1960s, are sympathetically considered. The major themes thrown up by the excavations are successfully brought into focus in the concluding chapter, which ends with an optimistic view of Faxton present and future.

ANDREW ROGERSON
Great Fransham,
Norfolk

The Later Saxon and Early Norman Manorial Settlement at Guiting Power, Gloucestershire: Archaeological Investigation of a Domesday Book Entry. (Archaeopress Archaeology). By Alistair Marshall. 21 × 29 cm. ii + 116 pp, 60 b&w pls and figs, 6 tables. Oxford: Archaeopress, 2020. ISBN 978-1-78969-365-2. Price: £29.00 pb.

This is a curious hybrid report, somewhere between grey literature and a formal publication, good in parts but elsewhere needing attention. The arrangement is grey-literature style, with the figures placed at the end of the text rather than integrated with it, and while there is a lengthy Bibliography normal conventions (such as the use of italics for book or journal titles) are erratically applied. It also takes some work to find out why and by whom the excavation was carried out (or indeed when; internally it is recorded the church discussed below was excavated in the early 1990s). It appears to have been an

amateur research project focussed on the Guiting Power area on the north-west edge of the Cotswolds, looking at its long-term settlement history, including the factors which led villages to emerge from the earlier dispersed settlement pattern. Two other publications by the same author treat the excavation hereabouts of Early Bronze Age barrows, and an Iron Age and Roman site.

Editorial shortcomings aside, there is much of interest here, and aspects are very well done indeed, such as the drawings and plates (those of the excavations suggest high standards of work). A ditched enclosure, 200 m across and possibly 6 hectares in extent, is suggested to have defined the compound of Alwin the Sheriff, the Saxon *thegn* in 1066; pottery indicates occupation began here c. AD 900. So far the principal late Saxon buildings have escaped detection. Domesday Book indicates the manor's transfer to Norman ownership, and in the late eleventh or early twelfth century a small, single-cell, apsidal-ended church was constructed; a few architectural fragments suggest a Saxon predecessor. Stone-built (or at least with stone foundations), the early Norman church was poorly laid out, but with distinctive features including paired corner benches at the east end of the nave and perhaps a support for a vessel for holy water by the door, midway along the south wall. Almost certainly this was a proprietary manorial church. It was short-lived, abandoned when the present parish church (which Pevsner reckons as 'late Norman') was established 100 m away. This is an extremely valuable addition to the canon of first-period local churches (the report includes a useful discussion of what the structure may suggest about liturgical and other functions) and deserves to become a well-known exemplar.

Work in and around Guiting Power apparently continues, and Alastair Marshall is to be congratulated on his enterprise and energy.

PAUL STAMPER
Centre for English Local History
University of Leicester

Eckweek, Peasedown St John, Somerset. Survey and Excavations at a Shrunk Medieval Hamlet 1988–90. (The Society for Medieval Archaeology Monograph 40). By Andrew Young. 21 × 30 cm. xii + 312 pp, 245 b&w pls figs and table. London & New York: Routledge & The Society for Medieval Archaeology, 2020. ISBN 978-0-367-8631-8 (ISSN 0583-9106). Price: £27.99 pb.

Eckweek, a hamlet near Bath in Somerset, was excavated in 1988–90, when the government provided money for 'manpower' (as workers were then called) to carry out excavations. Then followed a dogged and heroic gathering of funding – and much voluntary effort – resulting in this monograph. The many participants deserve our gratitude, in particular Andrew Young who pulled it together, and English Heritage and Historic England who gave their support; the Society for Medieval Archaeology have rightly included it in their monograph series.

The site is regionally important because it highlights aspects of the settlement pattern in the north-east of Somerset, near to the edge of the Cotswolds. Eckweek