

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.

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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.

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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

also adds to our general knowledge of hamlets which are often cited as significant, but not so often excavated. The hamlet had quite a long chronology, with occupation between the tenth century and the fourteenth. Its sequence of buildings shows the transition from earthfast timber to stone foundations around 1200, and its fourteenth-century house reveals much about the lived experience of medieval peasants.

The tenth- and eleventh-century phases demonstrate the continuity of a hamlet through the period often associated with nucleation and provides a pre-Conquest context for a *wic* place-name. There was no 'Middle Saxon' phase on the excavated site, but a similar settlement in the vicinity at Wellow Lane has produced radiocarbon dates of that period. The site's social affiliations pose a dilemma, and the author proposes that, while the earliest buildings were of low status, in an eleventh-century phase the timbers were substantial enough and the building sufficiently large to link them to a thegnly lord named in Domesday. The argument is not presented dogmatically and doubts are raised by the limited size of the building (14 x 7 m), the rather shallow ditch surrounding it and the scarcity of appropriate finds. The buildings may have belonged to the villans and bordars who appear, unusually, as individual tenants in Eckweek's Domesday entries. If so, Eckweek provides the opportunity to connect Domesday peasants to particular buildings, in a rare convergence of documentary and archaeological evidence. We might add to the rewarding combination of disciplines that faunal and botanical data fill out the agrarian context of both the pre-Conquest and late medieval phases.

Useful chapters deal with reconstructions of the buildings, suggesting the possibilities of crucks forming the timber superstructure of the earthfast buildings, and the near-certainty of cruck construction in the Later Middle Ages. Plotting the findspots of artefacts and pottery in the fourteenth-century house has been especially rewarding, as it suggests the functions of two of the three rooms into which the building was divided. The use of the third room remains problematic: it may have been a store or else housed some industrial process. The numbers of artefacts apparently left *in situ* suggest that the house was abandoned in a hurry at some point in the late fourteenth century. The quality and quantity of the finds show that the last inhabitants were not impoverished: their commercial connections were not, as one might suppose, solely with the large town of Bristol, since their pottery came from the south and east, including from kilns in Wiltshire.

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'Anciently a Manor'. Excavation of a Medieval Site at Lower Putton Lane, Chickerell, Dorset. (Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society Monograph No. 24). By Clare Randall. 21 x 30 cm. xvii + 246 pp, 91 colour and b&w pls and figs, 28 tables. Dorchester: Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society, 2020. ISBN 978-0-900341-61-8. Price: £32.00 pb.

This publication presents the results of excavations in the Dorset town of Chickerell, undertaken by Context One Heritage & Archaeology in advance of residential development. These excavations revealed part of a manorial complex dating from the twelfth to fourteenth centuries, identified with the documented manor of Putton – an important addition to the relatively scant corpus of excavated medieval rural settlements in Dorset. The fieldwork spanned 2016–17, so this monograph reflects a laudably efficient publication schedule, especially given the wealth of evidence it contains. It is clearly printed, amply and colourfully illustrated, pleasing to flick through and easy to navigate via a traditional excavation report structure.

Among an impressive array of small finds, two unstratified brooches stand out: one is of a ninth- to tenth-century type, hinting tantalisingly at a nearby unidentified precursor to the manor; the other is an ornate, gem-set golden plate brooch, of a rare type, which leads Schuster to venture an intriguing if perhaps fanciful context for its deposition at Putton, namely links between the English and German courts around the succession crisis of the early twelfth century.

The only human remains discovered were those of a late-term foetus or newborn, found in a thirteenth-century cooking pot embedded in the floor of one of the buildings. These are the first medieval remains of a perinatal individual discovered in Dorset, and the only medieval vessel-burial in southern England known to the authors. It is a poignant and thought-provoking discovery which gives rise to some fascinating informed speculation by Randall, who favours a ritual, apotropaic interpretation.

The closing chapter provides an excellent synthesis of the evidence, including a charming interpretative painting of the manor, and an exemplary integration of the environmental evidence, which can all too readily fall prey to superficial summary; instead, we are treated to a conjectural resource map of wild and domestic animals and plants on the manor lands, accompanying a comprehensive discussion. All in all, this book presents a very significant and admirably executed contribution to medieval settlement archaeology in Dorset and southern England more generally.

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Secrets from the Soil. University of Leicester Archaeological Services: A Quarter Century of Discoveries from Palaeolithic to Modern Times. Edited by Gavin Speed. 25 x 21 cm. 80 pp, 131 (unnumbered) colour and b&w pls and figs. Leicester: University of Leicester Archaeological Services, 2020. ISBN 978-0-9574792-7-2. Price: £9.95 pb.

This compact but smart publication is a celebration of the work and discoveries of the University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS). It marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of their foundation as a contracting organisation within the School of Archaeology and