

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.

CHRISTOPHER DYER
Centre for English Local History
University of Leicester

'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.

MARK MCKERRACHER
School of Archaeology
University of Oxford

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