Reviews


This book is based on the author’s Ph.D. thesis at Leicester University. It examines the attempt by the Catholic, James II, to repeal laws which discriminated against his co-religionists by packing Parliament with his supporters. In the winter of 1677–78, James ordered the lords lieutenants to canvas the gentry of their respective counties with three questions: would they consent to the repeal of the Test Act and the penal laws; would they support candidates who wished to abolish them; and would they accept the Declaration of Indulgence which granted general religious toleration. The author analyses the returns in detail and argues that they failed to garner the King any real support, but he also notes that many of those who responded negatively to the first two questions also answered positively to the third. He argues that this indicates more support for general toleration than has previously been allowed. Chapter 8 on the Leicestershire returns will be of most interest to readers of this journal. The county’s lord lieutenant was Theophilus Hastings, earl of Huntingdon, an appointee of James and pro-Crown despite being a Protestant. The returns contain replies from 27 of the counties landed gentry, whose responses roughly correspond to the national pattern. Only a fifth of the Protestant gentry in the county supported the King, even excluding those who failed to respond. The survey was subsequently used by the King to replace officers and members of corporations seen as disloyal. This attempt at subverting democracy merely served to increase opposition to James, culminating in the Glorious Revolution, when William of Orange ascended to the throne.

Paul Courtney


The value of this research report is far greater than its length suggests. Members of the village history and archaeology group set out to transcribe British Library Additional Charter 6108, a survey of Great Bowden’s fields datable by internal evidence to 1331 and 1336. It is believed to be the only survey of its type from Leicestershire, and possibly drawn up as part of the process leading to an exchange of lands between the King and Geoffrey le Scope. Tony Brown drew the group’s attention to the document, and Michael Wood, who encouraged its publication, praises it in his foreword as ‘a model of its kind’ (p. 4).

Not only agrarian historians will find this case study informative. As Wood points out, the local names raise interesting questions, too. He believes the preponderance
of English as opposed to Scandinavian field names ‘might suggest that the important
minster site – an old English village already existing in the ninth century and
probably long before – was not taken over by Vikings. The English... lived alongside
their Danish neighbours, but got on with their own lives’ (p. 4).

Graham Jones

Barrie Cox, The Place-Names of Leicestershire, Part Five, Guthlaxton Hundred,
The Survey of English Place-Names, Vol. 88 for 2011 (Nottingham, English Place-
Name Society, 2011), 224 × 145mm, xxxi + 316pp, 1 fig. (map), hardback, ISBN
13: 978-0-904889-87-1, ISBN 10: 0-904889-87-4, £35 (EPNS members) or £40
(non-members) + £3.50 p&p.

For the historian or archaeologist, especially those waiting for the missing volumes
of Leicestershire’s Victoria County History, Barrie Cox’s survey of the county’s place-
names is, as ever, a considerable evidential resource. The etymologies of towns and
villages are generally well rehearsed. It’s in the marginal detail and fine print that
Professor Cox’s work is crucial. The field-names, lost names, names of streams and
hillocks – these are the weft and warp of ‘the landscape of place-names’, in Margaret
Gelling’s phrase, the material for both micro-histories and regional synthesis. Their
greater inclusion in the third generation of English Place-Names Survey volumes
provides a depth and breadth of evidence which is critical to understanding how our
settlements and countryside came to be.

This is not only the case for those interested in pre-industrial communities.
Sixty years after ‘Beeching’s axe’ (that half-remembered cull of loss-making railway
lines), we have reached the point where Cox’s inclusion of rail-related names is a
self-contained historical resource (e.g. Clankers Close, Cosby, p. 69). The same
is true of pub names, in an age when public houses have vanished by the score,
perhaps by several hundreds in a single county – not to mention their widespread
renaming.

Long gone also is a sense of the circumstance of local naming. While the orality
of rural societies ensured that name spellings reflected pronunciation, capturing in
aspic the long horizons of events, people and activities, it needs the painstaking
dedication of scholars like Cox to unlock the written forms so that their sometimes
exotic origins can be brought back to light. Had an obscure, fourteenth-century
Frolesworth landholder found honour on North African battlefields (p. 93). Did
a Wigston Magna headland belong in the thirteenth century to ‘a Bulgar’, an
Albigensian-like heretic (p. 227).

The richness of Cox’s treasure-store can be gauged by the number of index
entries – about 1,500 for the 40 parishes in this wedge of Leicestershire between the
city and Watling Street, from the Fosse Way on the west to the old A50 to Husbands
Bosworth and the fledgling Avon on the east.

As always in these volumes, Cox’s introduction is essential reading, and his
60-page list of elements by parish is magisterial. A delightful essay explores the
Hundred name itself and its relevance, little or large, to the story of St Guthlac,
whose own name attached to the probable milestone on the Fosse Way near
Cosby where the moot of Guthlaxton wapentake assembled. As in the Framland
volume, Leicestershire’s link with Guthlac is a little underplayed: if all devotional locales are included, our own county, not Lincolnshire (p. 3), has the most Guthlac dedications.

Cox’s minor names continue to inform our appreciation of British survival far from the Welsh borderlands, an element in the Guthlac story, as it happens. Cox concludes that Walton and Walcote, Bretterhill (‘Britons’ hill) in Wigston Magna, and two ‘Welsh-moors’, in Cosby and Leire, are ‘sparse’ evidence, but is this too pessimistic? A feature of the Hundred is its long, often meandering lanes and minor routes running north-south onto the upland divide, between the North Sea-bound waters of the Soar and the Irish Sea-bound waters of the Avon. They look strongly like seasonal stock routes, hinting at transhumance (see the following review). The ‘Welsh-moors’ suggest life on pastoral margins. Did the Britons survive primarily as herders? Cox has no fewer than 31 instances of ‘wold’ names here. The richness of the pastures is exemplified in Gilmorton’s name, no longer a clue to gilded treasure. Cox thinks rather of gold-coloured wetland flowers like the marsh-marigold.

This same periphery was notable for its burial mounds: the glossary lists no fewer than 29 names in hlæw (‘tumulus’), including three remembered for wakes, or watchings. The reader is eager to see them mapped, a feature missing from more recent EPNS volumes, though Stenton and Mawer’s contrasted distributions of tün and lēah names in Warwickshire, for example, is still used. Hopefully county distribution maps of selected elements will appear in the sixth and final volume, on Sparkenhoe Hundred. It’s sad that the funding for this volume did not run at least to a plan of the charter bounds of an Anglo-Saxon estate at Claybrooke from Sawyer 833, Leicestershire’s only surviving AS charter with Old English bounds. It is discussed here (pp. 64–6) for the first time since Charles Phythian-Adams’ 1978 commentary, ensuring that for this too the volume will be widely consulted.¹

Graham Jones


This handsome volume describes the developer funded excavations outside Melton Mowbray in advance of building work. It is concerned principally with a Mesolithic and Neolithic flint scatter, some Neolithic and early Bronze Age pits, two Bronze Age ring ditches and associated and later burial evidence, a later Bronze Age settlement and two undated D-shaped enclosures. The report is taken chronologically, and it is to be commended that the specialist reports on artefacts and ecofacts are not relegated to some general finds chapter, environmental section, or indeed a series of appendices as often seems to happen in such monograph reports. The Mesolithic and Neolithic evidence is largely derived from fieldwalking though two pits

produced decorated bowl and Grooved Ware pottery respectively, and a further two produced Neolithic flintwork mainly with microwear evidence for hide working and butchering in keeping with other Grooved Ware assemblages. Strictly speaking, however, this Grooved Ware activity is associated with the upper fills of the pit, and is therefore secondary and may even be redeposited. The pit is interpreted as the base of a sunken-floored structure and certainly bears comparison with other sites elsewhere in southern Britain, though these are usually associated with Beaker.

The Northern ring-ditch was associated with a truncated cremation burial associated with a Food Vessel, whilst the southern, larger ring-ditch was associated with a number of charcoal rich but undated features, some of which also produced calcined bone. A second Food Vessel pit was located outside and to the south west of the northern ring-ditch. The D-shaped enclosures are also discussed in this section, more of which later.

The area in and around the ring-ditches in particular then became the focus for a cremation cemetery associated with pit burial, and in some cases an impressive range of cordonned, barrel and bucket urn forms dating to the seventeenth to fourteenth centuries cal. BC. The scorching of the sides of some pits is interpreted as demonstrating that ‘the cremated bone or pyre debris was still hot when buried’ (p. 65). However, experiments have shown that it takes intense heat to alter pit sides, especially if the soil is iron poor, and it seems more likely that as elsewhere in Britain, we may have the in-situ cremation of bone rather than the distinct cremation of an individual. The lack of oak from many of the charcoal deposits associated with this phase is noteworthy.

Pit alignments and other boundary features, as well as one circular structure and two rectilinear structures, are taken to represent a later Bronze Age settlement associated with a fine range of bowl and jar forms.

The concluding chapter rightly emphasises the importance not so much of the site but of the various specialists’ analyses to the prehistory of the East Midlands, but at only three pages long, it left the present reviewer wanting more. The D-shaped enclosures, for example, produced little in the way of finds, but the radiocarbon date is not just a TPQ, but very much a TPQ dating to not just the complete silting of the ditch, but also the silting of a recut. The amount of Neolithic flint from the area and the buried axe fragment from low in the ditch silts of the Western enclosure entrance may be more telling as to date, and the possible Neolithic parallels are not really considered. The Raunds and North Stoke enclosures are mentioned, but such ‘not-really-D-shaped’ enclosures with slightly curving sides and curved entrances are also published in the Northamptonshire NMP survey, and an excavated example with secure early Neolithic dates has been published in the Severn Valley. This monument type is clearly an avenue for future research at least in central England if not further afield.

I also wonder about Structure 1. Again there is no dating evidence, but, for understandable reasons, the circular structure is assumed to be LBA. It may well be, but the size, combination of bedding trench and postholes, and lack of internal postholes and presence of off-centre pits, might again suggest an earlier date with parallels amongst Beaker and EBA structures. Admittedly this matter will remain
unresolved, but given that it lies within a potentially Neolithic enclosure this raises tantalising possibilities.

Despite these quibbles, the volume presents the important results of the excavation of a site important to Midlands Prehistory and yet again demonstrates the potential importance of the East Midlands, an area that was, at one time, regarded as somewhat of an archaeological desert.

Alex Gibson

Mathew Morris, Richard Buckley and Mike Codd, *Visions of Ancient Leicester: Reconstructing Life in the Roman and Medieval Town from the Archaeology of the Highcross Leicester Excavations* (University of Leicester Archaeological Services, 2011), 210 × 250mm, 64pp, c.100 col. illus., ISBN 978-0-9560179-7-0 (pbk), £8.95.

This publication of Leicester’s largest ever archaeological investigation is welcome for several reasons. Although it gives a very clear account of what was discovered during this project, it extends its remit far beyond this. It therefore provides an excellent up-to-date guide to what we know about Leicester’s development, from its establishment in the pre-Roman Iron Age through to the sixteenth century.

After setting the scene there is a series of mini essays, each occupying a double-page spread with two or three colour illustrations. They cover a variety of topics, including period studies, aspects of life in the past, and specific sites or districts of the town. One of the most attractive aspects is the series of colour paintings by Mike Codd. As well as the sites excavated during the development, they also include other sites such as the Jewry Wall and the Roman Forum, as well as various bird’s-eye views, either of the whole town or of various districts.

It summarises what we already know about the Iron Age settlement, the suspected early Roman military phase and the initial urban development later in the first century AD. However, from the early second century the evidence becomes much clearer as a result of the new excavations. It has been possible to produce a detailed sequence of reconstructions of the Vine Street site, extending through to the late fourth century and including a detailed cutaway view of the splendid courtyard house in the late third century.

The excavations have also enhanced our understanding of what happened after the end of the Roman period. One spectacular discovery was the collapsed east wall of the Roman macellum, which lay on the street where it had fallen during the fifth century and could be reconstructed to a height of 16m. There was also further evidence for early Anglo-Saxon occupation, as well as the first evidence for structures from the late ninth to eleventh century.

The excavations have also transformed our understanding of the medieval period, with the ‘lost’ churches of St Michael and St Peter having been located and investigated, their graveyards yielding 1,590 skeletons. The relationship between St Peter’s and the Free Grammar School was further explored, and stone recovered from the excavation was able to be used in restoration work on the school. As well as the structures there has been a remarkable series of finds, some of international importance, including Leicester’s first Roman lead curse tablets, which
record thefts and name the suspects. There are also exotic items from as far away as Egypt.

The authors and all involved in producing this publication are to be congratulated on bringing the results of these excavations to the public in such an attractive and readable format. By setting the results within the overall story of Leicester they have provided us with an up-to-date and authoritative account, which can be recommended to anyone who wants to know how this city has developed over the last two millennia.

Robert Rutland


This monograph brings to publication one of the most important and exciting discoveries made in the Midland counties in recent times. The site at Hallaton was a focus for ritual activity, particularly around the late Iron Age and Roman conquest period when it seems an open-air setting, with spatial markers (perhaps a shrine), was the locus for feasting, ritual and hoard deposition including over 5,000 coins. Vicki Score and her team have assembled an impressive report on the archaeological study of the site, achieved with comparative swiftness, from field and lab to page. The appearance of the volume also owes much to successful collaboration between many parties.

Around a decade ago news of a major find of Iron Age coins in a hoard or hoards in East Leicestershire circulated with a stir. The rumours and facts were especially spiced with the detail that this included the largest number of Iron Age coins recovered from the soils of the East Midlands, that there were other striking finds including an elaborate, perhaps pre-conquest, Roman helmet, and that the find-site was new, unanticipated, and in a part of the county hitherto not well known for Later Prehistoric and Roman finds. Given the added necessary ingredient of find-site secrecy, as further systematic recovery work progressed, and the prospect of further discovery and a fine plot for quite an intriguing story was complete, what was actually found and what did it mean? Now, in the pages of the report, we have the answers, with the finds well presented and discussed by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) staff, and members of the Leicester University Department of Archaeology and Ancient History, together with input from the British Museum. Leicestershire is fortunate in possessing such a strong body of top archaeological specialists with the drive to see projects such as this through to completion; this has been the case now for some three decades and one hopes that this centre of expertise will continue given the quality of work as apparent on the pages of this volume. Other counties and regions are less well blessed with such human resources, and had the Hallaton find been forthcoming from another county or region it is doubtful it would have been subject to such a configuration of professional care and attentiveness through to full reporting. This needs some qualification though, in so far as the Roman helmet find has to await separate full
publication as at the time of the finalisation of this volume it was still being worked on by the conservation team. Its fragments have recently been reassembled. This alone is a headlining find: evidently an elite equestrian helmet, of silver-gilt over iron, with ornate figuring; it is said that it was the life-size human ear of this helmet emerging from surrounding soil that confirmed to the original finders and full-time archaeologists that here was something really extraordinary.

Yet in a way it is no chance a coincidence that the find was made in Leicestershire, for it was made through the vehicle of piecemeal survey work by a dedicated local community study group. As is well known, the county has been a leader in community archaeology and local surveys such as that which brought about the Hallaton Group’s discovery and subsequent diligent treatment of the find-site. It is due to this responsible approach, by Ken Wallace and others, that the study of the site and its finds developed in a manner that has enabled the immediate landscape to be thoroughly surveyed, and the site ‘placed and understood’ by means of the collection and study of various types of information gained through state-of-the-art techniques. The report documents the extensive fieldwalking and geophysical surveying around the original find-spot that established its archaeological setting, and made possible the targeted excavations that provide much of the body of the present volume.

A major component of the volume is Leins’ report on the coins (Ch. 3 and App. I). This will be a pivotal listing and regional discussion for future researchers. It is regrettable that so many sites and hoards from the East Midlands are not rigorously published, nor their specific site provenances secure or understood: but then such an observation goes to emphasise the significance of the present study. Leins’ work provides a model and control for interpreting coin groups from the region collected by less systematic means. The treatment of the assemblage gives rise to potential insight into the socio-political dynamics of the people of the region who we know as the Corieltavi. How much more will we know in years to come when other coin assemblages from the region come to be studied, as they surely will, with contextual information and such scrutiny?

Studies by Browning (Ch. 7 and App. II) and Monkton (Ch. 8) point up the non-domestic nature of the site based on the environmental remains, together with the rich presence of animal bone, conspicuously dominated by pig (probably domestically raised rather than hunted animals, with as many as perhaps 300 individuals present in the core area, despite the fact that they typically represent only small percentages of normal domestic samples from this era). Browning sets herself several key research questions in assessing the faunal assemblage, and the discussion is nuanced and absorbing, particularly around the question of whether these remains represent sacrifice, feasting or both; her conclusion points to feasting events together with at least some level of offerings (pp. 128–35). This detailed analysis of the faunal assemblage receives space in the publication that is fully warranted, given what it tells us; one suspects that this primary data and quantification will be frequently referred to in the future by specialists studying bone groups of this date across Iron Age and early Roman Europe. To this reviewer it is essential that basic catalogues are made available as the primary source data and listings are sensibly included here as Appendices, something not always seen in other monographs. The ‘Small Finds’
200 reviews

(Ch. 5), by Cooper and Score include some remarkable items; their material analysis
(Ch. 6), by Farley and others, is an instructive contribution.

The volume contains an extensive array of different types of helpful
information: maps and plans, tables and graphs, drawings and photographs. This
of course reflects the nature of archaeological studies and contemporary methods
of conveying information. The variety of illustrative types and formats here is also
a function of the range of types of data recovered, and the different number of
specialists contributing to the volume, each with their own means of displaying
their research findings. This aspect of the volume, therefore, is a reminder of how
sophisticated archaeological work and reporting is these days. This being so, given
the diversity of such illustrative forms it is worth pointing out something often
overlooked: the vital role of the copy editors and page setters: they have an often
unsung role, yet in a report such as the present volume a great deal of work must
have been undertaken to arrange materials suitably on pages and within the set
format for the volume. They have performed an excellent job here. Staying with
the illustrative formats, it is worth noting the integration of photographs; ULAS
has a tradition of including ‘working on-site’ photos which trump the tradition of
staged photos often seen in older reports. As might be expected, Iron Age coins
are prominent amongst the object photos, which are helpful and now standard.
Many of these object photos are very good. That said, the value of conventional
archaeological illustration, is well exemplified with a series of exquisite drawings
conveying form, condition and character of the ‘Small Finds’; as ever there is interest
in comparing the photos of an object with a drawing. It is therefore poignant to
learn that the finds illustrator, Dave Hopkins, has died prematurely; he clearly had
much talent.

One tricky area these days is that of colour illustration; in this volume some
of the maps and histograms employ colour. Colour can be eye-catching and used
to emphasise, but importantly too can add dimensions of differentiation (quite
important in archaeology when one is dealing with many variables). Presently the
employment of colour is not a straightforward asset in so far as colour choices are
determined by the package software, while on-screen and draft printing does not
necessarily relate to the final tone of the printed version, so it is difficult for editors
to perfectly control. The cover (back and front) deserves praise as attractive, with
well selected and arranged images.

The volume concludes with two discussion chapters. Score (Ch. 11) is thorough
and informed in discussing the finds and their context, with wide referencing
at hand. This is recommended reading for anyone studying society at this time.
Though considered over three specific paragraphs and generally, I did feel there
was more that could be deduced from the landscape setting. Score considers what
brought people to create this site and undertake practices, resulting in such marked
and striking remains. Dimensions of community and politics, internal change and
external forces are considered, which leads well into Haselgrove’s cogent essay
(Ch. 12) considering the implications of the discovery. Haselgrove shows us why
the Hallaton project and finds rank high by outlining what they tell us via several
illuminating perspectives. His discussion confirms that this volume will need to be
consulted by all those working on this period in the region in years to come. It will
be advised reading too for scholars of Later Prehistory and the Roman transition more broadly. In *Hoard, Hounds and Helmets*, Score and her team provide us with a valuable monograph, which gives new means for comprehending society at this time and fresh grounds to question established thinking.

One of the pleasing outcomes of the discovery has been the display of many of the finds at Harborough Museum, so near to the find-spot. The finds and this report will be of great interest both to the local community and the wide body of people who study this dynamic period of politics, ritual practice and social change.

Steven Willis


Key themes in the economic and social history of the medieval landscape are explored by colleagues, friends and former students of Professor Harold Fox, in a tribute which reflects his research interests during three decades in the Department, now the Centre for English Local History in the University of Leicester.

The first part explores the nature of landscape regions in Britain and Ireland. Chapters explore the use and experience of different types of landscapes, including marshlands, uplands, woodland and woodpasture. The papers analyse a wide variety of sources from detailed archival work on medieval records to place-names, archaeological survey and the study of veteran trees. A particular theme in several papers is the exploration of social, economic and spatial marginality.

The second part presents new studies of labour and lordship. The contributions focus on medieval England, including aspects of the land market before the Black Death, the organisation of village communities, and how changing settlements related to demography and occupations. There is a particular focus on understanding the lives of peasants and labourers.

It is a fitting tribute to Harold Fox’s originality that these papers showcase some of the best recent and current research in the fields of medieval landscape and social history. Leicestershire readers will be engaged by the evidence for cultural frontiers shadowing its eastern and southern boundaries as proposed by Alan Fox, ‘Regional differentiation in farming terminology, 1500–1720’. This is an important development from Fox’s previously published work on regional separation.²

They will also want to explore the papers related to Fox’s interest in seasonal settlement and stock movements, given his fascination with wolds, and his demonstration of wold economies and infrastructure in his adopted county – as noted by Della Hooke, “*Wealdbæra & swina maest*: Wood pasture in early medieval England” (p. 39). Useful material on the theme is also provided by Peter Herring, ‘Shadows of ghosts: Early medieval transhumants in Cornwall’; Mark

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Other contributors include Bruce Campbell, Chris Dyer (‘Harold Fox: his contribution to our understanding of the past’), Ros Faith, Andrew Fleming, Jem Harrison, Andrew Jackson, Richard Jones, Mark Page, Mike Thompson, Mike Thornton, Matt Tompkins and Penelope Upton.

Graham Jones