

## BOOK REVIEWS

*Excavations at Wixoe Roman Small Town, Suffolk.* (East Anglian Archaeology Report No. 164). By Rob Atkins and Rachel Clarke. x + 225pp., figures, tables, plates, bibliography, index. Cambridge: Oxford Archaeology East, 2018. ISBN 978 1 907588 10 5. Price £25 pb.

This monograph records the results of archaeological excavations along a new pipeline scheme for Essex and Suffolk Water, the most southerly section of which ran through the eastern and southern sides of a Roman small town situated at a crossing point of the river Stour, c.500m west of the modern Wixoe village. Wixoe is recorded as being at the junction of two Roman roads, Margary routes 24 and 34a,<sup>1</sup> and is one of eight potential small towns in Suffolk, the others being Icklingham, Pakenham, Long Melford, Coddensham, Wenhaston, Hacheston, and Felixstowe, in addition to the settlement at Scole which spans the Norfolk–Suffolk border. We have seen monograph publications of both Hacheston and Scole in recent years and this latest volume forms a welcome addition to the growing body of published data about these settlements.<sup>2</sup>

It is in the nature of development-led archaeology that the excavated area is determined by the scope of the construction and pipelines pose some of the greatest interpretational challenges; whilst they offer the opportunity to investigate an extended transect across swathes of the county, the view is often very narrow. In this case the work allowed three elongated areas of excavation between 10m and 20m wide within the eastern and southern limits of the Roman town, together with Late Iron Age and Roman settlements in the rural hinterland to the north of the town. Had the report limited itself to the results of the excavations only, it would have been worth publishing as it provides significant information of a cross section through the Roman town, but the authors have opted to include evidence gathered from a range of surveys undertaken in the previous four decades, thus allowing the collected material to be included into a wider contextual discussion of the town, its place in Roman Suffolk and its relationship with the surrounding rural settlements. The inclusion of cropmark and geophysical evidence (this latter undertaken as part of the pipeline scheme), not only adds context to the excavation plan but, correspondingly, the excavation work provides detail for the interpretation of that non-intrusive survey data. Of particular value was the inclusion of 2821 metal-detected coins recovered from the Wixoe fields over many years (although this analysis could not extend to include all the information available within a mass of paper archives in the Suffolk HER which remains available for further research),<sup>3</sup> and it is testament to the longstanding relationship that our regional archaeologists have with metal detecting groups and individuals that the information was available for inclusion. Study of coin loss evidence forms a vital part of the analysis of the chronology and economic development of substantial Roman settlements and this information has been supported by the excavated stratigraphic and artefactual evidence to chart the foundation, growth and decline of Wixoe.

Wixoe appears to have been founded in the Flavian period in the late first century AD after the Boudican revolt of AD 60–61 and, unlike some of its East Anglian counterparts, did not have a Late Iron Age predecessor. The settlement reached its zenith in the mid-second to mid-third centuries with an upsurge in activity including a well-defined road system, fronted by regular plots containing single timber buildings and an industrial zone in the southern area towards the river Stour. A large enclosure ditch, identified in the excavation and traceable beyond in the geophysical survey, formed a settlement boundary (presumably including a

bank) which enclosed the whole of the area east of the river Stour and continued, with modifications, throughout the life of the town. A period of slow decline followed from the mid-third to mid-fourth centuries with the abandonment of some buildings and evidence suggesting that peripheral parts of the town went into agricultural use with the section of the town sampled by excavation abandoned by the late fourth or early fifth century. This latest period was characterised by the 'dark earth' layers typically identified on many of the larger Roman settlements and probably indicative of manuring and middening associated with agricultural activity encroaching into a contracting, but still significant, settlement core. In terms of the pattern of late Roman decline in Suffolk, Wixoe is more reflective of the western towns rather than the eastern settlements, such as Hacheston which saw apparent collapse by the mid-fourth century.

Despite the inevitable spatial limitations of the excavations, the authors have been able to pull together a coherent narrative for this part of the Roman town, enhanced by some fine illustrations throughout. Although unable to enlighten us upon the town's commercial and administrative core, the probable market place lies some 200m north of the excavation area, it certainly offers a valuable view of the suburban roadside settlement and industrial zones. In uniting the excavated, geophysical and cropmark evidence, the work makes some significant discoveries with implications for our wider understanding of Roman Suffolk. The replotting, in particular, of the complex road network within the settlement, including those major roads running through it and linking it with Cambridge, Icklingham, Long Melford, Colchester and Great Chesterford, makes an important contribution. The identification of the settlement boundary is also a significant find, although featuring on the non-intrusive surveys it is only through excavation that its date and purpose was identified, showing that this settlement at least, was not undefended in the later Roman period.

The strength of this report lies in the way that the full corpus of data has been incorporated into a wide-reaching discussion of Roman Suffolk. The first four chapters make their way through the evidence in a thorough (and perhaps in places overly detailed) fashion but it is in Chapter 5 that the report blossoms. In this chapter it demonstrates what a very significant contribution a relatively small area of excavation can make when it is used to draw together the 'back catalogue' of survey data. It is of great significance that the results of this work, in conjunction with the geophysical and cropmark survey, have fixed the lines of two major Roman roads, Margary 24 and the road to Long Melford, in a different location to that originally thought. This was complemented by discussion of the influence of the river Stour as the other major means of communication and the frequency of Roman settlements along its southern length. Not referenced, but also notable, is the occurrence of Roman building material found reused within later structures along this same length of the Stour, for example in the churches of Stoke by Nayland and Polstead, but also in the recently excavated ecclesiastical building at Court Knoll, Nayland.

I enjoyed the examination of the influence of the Roman town over the surrounding countryside and the expanded discussion reviewing the sphere of influence of all the major Suffolk settlements. Despite the relatively small size of the excavations, useful conclusions can be drawn about town planning and the functional zones of different areas and, of course (probably the most important contribution that excavation makes), the detailed chronological analysis of the development of the town available from the evidence in the stratified deposits.

These narrow elongated sites are always difficult to report on in a synthetic way, it is so easy for it to become a perambulation from one end to the other, but in the main this report has avoided that and presents important new information about the Wixoe Roman town. If I have any minor niggles it is that perhaps not all the detail included in the first four chapters, and particularly Chapter 2 'The Archaeological Sequence', is necessary. In some cases one feels

submerged in feature description that could have been reserved for the archive, however, this does mean that any future researchers will have everything to hand rather than having to delve back into the original records. A more severe edit might have produced a tighter report, addressing both the issues of detail and some repetition, particularly of key phrases and words. Overall however, the reward of the Chapter 5 discussion, which really demonstrates, if we needed it, the importance of good archaeological work and its contribution to a much wider understanding of our past, more than makes up for any minor complaints.

JO CARUTH

*Norfolk and Suffolk Churches: The Domesday Record.* By David Butcher. 369pp., plates, maps, appendices, bibliography, index. Oulton: Poppyland Publishing, 2019. ISBN 978 1 909796 61 4. Price £14.95 pb.

Mediaeval England was a Christian country and certainly by the later Middle Ages every community had its own church, sometimes more than one, where a priest would say Mass every Sunday and on other days too. There were 1000 or so in late mediaeval Norfolk, of which around 659 remain today, with about 500 remaining in Suffolk. It was once said of Norwich that there was a pub for every day of the year and a church for every day of the week (actually around 57, of which 31 still stand). Exactly when this state of affairs became the norm is uncertain. Later reconstruction of churches means that there are only rare examples where the earliest churches on a site can be traced, such as St Martin, Canterbury (Kent) (sixth century or earlier), and Brixworth (Northants), Bradwell (Essex), Jarrow, Escomb and Monkwearmouth (Durham) (all seventh century), all survivors from the early days of evangelisation. So the structure of present-day buildings can rarely be used to indicate when the first building on the site existed. If we go back to 1086 and the records in Domesday Book (DB), the figures are significantly lower. David Butcher's book indicates that around 270 churches are recorded in Norfolk and 450 in Suffolk. So why the discrepancy, especially for the larger county of Norfolk? I've delved into Norfolk in particular, and there a number of reasons for such a shortfall.

Firstly, structural evidence. H.M. and J. Taylor, in their magisterial tome on Anglo-Saxon architecture, listed some 46 Norfolk churches which they considered to contain pre-Conquest work in their fabric.<sup>4</sup> Several more have been added to this list, particularly by Pevsner, and others have suggested examples for consideration. Less than half these buildings get a mention in DB. Even with the known difficulties in dating Romanesque work of this period, this discrepancy is significant. Place-name evidence indicates the presence of certain other churches: two settlements named Eccles (from the British *eglwys*), Colkirk, Kirby Bedon and Kirby Cane, Stow Bedon and Stow Bardolph; of these, neither of the two Eccles settlements nor Stow Bedon have a church mentioned in DB. Quite a few church dedications like 'Edmund' (19), 'Ethelbert' (8), 'Martin' (16) and 'Botolph' (13) feature early saints. None of the churches dedicated to 'Ethelbert' (martyred in AD 794) receive a mention in DB despite the fact that in 1970 a bone plaque of c.800 bearing the 'wolf and twins' motif employed by Ethelbert was found just 100 yards from Larling church.<sup>5</sup> Only one of the 'Botolph' churches is mentioned in DB (Tottenhill), yet priests are recorded at Morley and Hevingham (where the priest sang three masses a week, which rather presumes the existence of a church). The *Inquistio Eliensis* is a slightly later record, and this mentions a few churches not in DB (East Dereham, Bridgham, Northwold, West Walton and two at Pulham), whilst some 32 Norfolk advowsons are known to be of pre-Conquest origin, of which only some 13 churches are in

DB.<sup>6</sup> Finally, there is the singular Norfolk habit of placing two churches close together in a settlement, often in the same churchyard (even, in the case of Reepham, Hackford and Whitwell, three churches sharing the space). This occurs in nearly 40 settlements, many near Roman roads, and about half of these are recorded in DB.<sup>7</sup> W.G. Hoskins suggested that this might be related to partitioning of the land in the ninth to tenth centuries, with the formation of a separate ‘Danish’ settlement, though it could go back earlier.<sup>8</sup> So there are many reasons to believe that the DB total for Norfolk is very incomplete.

Similarly, Norman Scarfe has examined aspects of Anglo-Saxon churches for Suffolk, pointing out that the Taylors only identify 13 buildings with pre-Conquest evidence in the county (Little Bradley, Bungay Holy Trinity, Claydon, Debenham, Great Fakenham, Gosbeck, Hemingstone, Herringfleet, Little Livermere, Redisham, Syleham, Thorington and Thornham Parva).<sup>9</sup> Falkenham is one of a number of churches not mentioned in DB, despite its dedication to Ethelbert.

David Butcher’s book is a weighty and useful contribution to the debate. He has provided massive tabulations of data, notably those churches which are mentioned in DB, together with their landholdings, in the process identifying the round-tower churches among their number. Maps showing the percentages of churches mentioned in DB for each hundred often show large variations between hundreds, e.g. North Greenhow 5 per cent, Gallow 47 per cent; Forehoe 4 per cent, Humbleyard 65 per cent. He also studies in detail the half hundreds of Lothingland and Mutford, areas lacking in DB churches but which definitely had them a century later. There are several appendices, including ones showing the presence of freewomen as landholders for both counties, which are more significant in Suffolk. One of his intriguing suggestions is that highborn women may have been especially influential in founding churches or encouraging others as founders. He also looks at dedications to St Margaret and St Edmund in the two counties, pointing out the surprising statistic that there are three times as many ‘Edmund’ dedications in Norfolk than in Suffolk, despite the saint’s particular association with the latter county. A similar preponderance occurs for ‘Margaret’ (and indeed for ‘Ethelbert’). He suggests that many dedications to St Margaret may be associated with the influence of Roger Bigod and follow from rededications when the churches were reconstructed. Whilst the author has made notable contributions in his setting out and analysis of the data, he has also provided a great deal of very helpful material for those following in his steps.

SIMON COTTON

*Peasant Perspectives on the Medieval Landscape: A Study of Three Communities.*

By Susan Kilby. 256pp, plates, figures, maps, tables, appendices, bibliography, index.

Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2020. ISBN 978 1 912260 20 1.

Price: £28 hb.

Medieval historians are acutely aware that much of the history of the rural environment during the Middle Ages reflects the views of the upper tiers of society. Most manorial studies, for example, rely almost exclusively on sources which were prepared for the lord of the manor and which consequently focus on his (or, occasionally, her) viewpoint, regardless of the fact that the lord concerned may have rarely, if ever, lived in, or even visited, the manor in question. By contrast, this new study by Susan Kilby considers the rural environment from a different perspective. Although it uses many of the same sources, particularly manorial records, these have been carefully re-evaluated so that the reader is forced to look through the

eyes of the peasantry whose lived experience was intricately and physically involved with the rural environment.

To achieve this, the author focusses on three contrasting English settlements, including Lakenheath in Suffolk (together with Elton in former Huntingdonshire and Castor in Northamptonshire), and explores her overarching theme (how peasants engaged with their rural environment) through approaches adopted by a wide variety of academic disciplines, particularly onomastics, but also anthropology, ethnography, landscape archaeology and historical geography. Her evidence is then set out in a series of chapters which consider the landscape from a range of different aspects. Although the first of these considers the seigneurial approach to the landscape, subsequent chapters are very much considered from the perspective of the peasantry and include how the landscape was ordered, the unseen landscape, how the landscape was named, how it was remembered, the economic landscape and how it was managed.

Although evidence from Lakenheath is referred to throughout the book, three chapters in particular are likely to be of significant value to those with an interest in this area of Suffolk. In 'ordering the landscape', for example, the author examines the morphology of the medieval vill and assesses the way in which local people moved through their environment. Although she identifies that the existence of uniform villein plots on the prior's fee in Lakenheath reveals the underlying influence of strong lordship, and probably resulted in greater homogeneity within the manor and less independence for the peasantry, she presents evidence to show that how these people themselves viewed their space might not necessarily conform to this pattern. Trespass on the demesne was common, particularly as people needed to access parcels of land that might be some distance from the main settlement, and peasants were not adverse to creating their own routes. This tendency of the peasantry to overlook rules and regulations which conflicted with their use of their environment is reinforced in the chapter on 'managing the landscape', which considers how use was made of natural resources. The author points out that fen plants in particular were an important resource to Lakenheath peasants, particularly rushes and sedge. Use of these natural resources was managed through a series of bylaws whereby the common fens were accessible in rotation and according to specified time periods. Nonetheless, the court rolls include abundant presentments for bylaw infringements indicating that the manner in which the rule-makers (in this instance the leading residents of the vill) viewed the fenland was somewhat different to the perception of other peasants. Finally, in the chapter on 'the economic landscape', the author considers the rural environment as an economic resource and uses evidence from Lakenheath to support her suppositions. In particular, in considering 'hidden peasant economies', she evaluates the importance of both fishing and sheep farming to the Lakenheath peasantry, and shows how livelihoods were inextricably linked to the rural environment.

Whilst Lakenheath is the focus of much of this study, the book also contains considerable material which will be relevant to those with a more general interest in the rural landscape during the Middle Ages. Much of this material is quite diverse but all related to the engagement of the peasantry with their environment. In 'the unseen landscape', for example, the author considers topographical naming. Whilst various aspects of this topic are considered in some detail, of particular interest is the importance of personal status in topographical naming. Evidence is produced to show that topographical surnames were often associated with servile status and that consequently places characterised by strong lordship exhibited subtly different naming patterns from those associated with weaker manorialism. As cultural ideas concerning status developed, topographical names became a means of expressing belonging and exclusion. A further compelling insight is evidence presented to show that peasants had some understanding of contemporary scientific thought and incorporated this

into their husbandry practices. Not only does the author show that practices associated with humoral theory were used in the treatment of pigs, but that this, and other husbandry regimes, were aligned to the lunar cycle and the contemporary belief that those working the land should understand the lunar calendar and the moon's effect on husbandry.

At times, some of the evidence used to support assertions is limited, whilst some suppositions are a little conjectural. The author herself recognises and acknowledges that this is inevitable given that her sources offer only occasional glimpses of how peasants engaged with the landscape. In this, she recognises the limitations imposed upon her and presents these aspects of her work as speculative rather than firmly substantiated. Taken in its entirety, however, this is a fascinating study which adopts a hugely innovative approach to a familiar topic. It is thoroughly recommended to anyone with an interest in the rural environment of late medieval England.

JOANNE SEAR

*Shaping the Past. Theme, Time and Place in Local History: Essays in honour of David Dymond.* Edited by Evelyn Lord and Nicholas Amor. xviii + 215 pp., plates, maps, figures, tables, index. Hatfield: The University of Hertfordshire Press, 2020. ISBN 978 1 92260 3 22 5. Price £35 hb.

This collection of sixteen essays is published in honour of David Dymond, who is probably the leading English local historian of recent generations. David has been enormously influential through his seminal reflections on both the successes and failures of local history and, as his consolidated list of publications in this collection reveals, an author of important research papers, monographs, editions of significant manuscripts in distinguished national and local series, as well as editor and co-editor of important essay collections. He has held key offices both nationally and regionally, including as editor of *The Local Historian*, vice-president of the British Association for Local History and the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History, and is currently president of the Suffolk Records Society. Perhaps of greatest significance is that over fifty years he taught local history, largely in Cambridge as a course tutor in what is now the Institute of Continuing Education, where almost twenty-five years ago he was instrumental in initiating the still flourishing MSt in Local History. Almost half the contributors to this collection were taught as adults by David on this course and many have gone on to complete significant PhDs. Some contributors are, like David, important teachers of local history through their commitment to adult education and have also served on national bodies in the field and undertaken important editorial work. All of David's many attributes are appreciatively described in a thoughtful introduction by Mark Bailey, who was once David's teaching colleague in Cambridge.

Colleagues and former students writing in this collection offer local studies from eight English counties although Suffolk, given the focus of David's work, looms largest of all. Jacqueline Harmon using the *Liber memorandum de Bernewelle* draws out the problematic relations between Barnwell Priory and various local communities in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Clare Cross looks carefully at donations of glass to a number of York parish churches, many occurring just before the Reformation, and their subsequent removal. Carole Rawcliffe extends our knowledge of the hermits of late medieval Norwich, drawing out in particular their close association with the more affluent areas of the city. Alan Rogers provides an especially innovative study of the surprisingly neglected craftsmen in the building trades located in rural settlements, in this case within Stamford's hinterland in the late fifteenth



and early sixteenth centuries. David Woodward charts the growth of a south London suburb in the nineteenth century and Ken Sneath makes effective use of the manuscript census returns of Godmanchester to unpack the changing character of a small town surrounded in the later nineteenth century by a depressed agrarian economy. Sean O'Dell provides an engaging study of the remarkable clergyman Canon Arthur Pertwee of Brightlingsea, who personally participated in the hazardous offshore oyster fisheries based in that Essex port. Alan Jackson concludes the collection with an essay that captures various aspects of place as revealed in the fictional regional writings of B.S. Gilbert. Each and every one of the aforementioned yields ample testimony to the skills of the local historian at work.

Readers of this journal may be most interested in those essays that have their focus principally directed towards Suffolk and the Norfolk–Suffolk border town of Thetford. Given David's particular interest in parochial religion, Heather Falvey gives us a comparative assessment of the cult of the murdered Henry VI and the devotional images of him and other saints in certain later medieval Suffolk, Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire parish churches. Using information from churchwardens' accounts, wills and inventories of church goods from Walberswick and Long Melford (Suffolk), Bassingbourn (Cambs.) and Eversholt (Beds.) references are found in two parish cases to shrines for Henry VI and also to a remarkably wide array of other saints' images, although only a very small number of those saints were common to all four churches in the sample. Wills did not prove to be particularly forthcoming as a source capturing the very wide spectrum of saints that provided the basis for devotional images in these late medieval settings. In the pursuit of devotional images, Falvey makes very effective use of David Dymond's edition of the Bassingbourn churchwardens' accounts and the remarkable inventory of church goods in Long Melford parish church that David and Clive Paine brought into print.

David Sherlock begins his essay with a full transcript and translation of the will of Robert Scolys, who was both rector of Southwold and Reydon, as well as being a significant Cambridge scholar, professor of theology and fellow of Clare (Hall) College. He brings to light Scolys' substantial gifts to Southwold's church which was experiencing a significant rebuilding during his incumbency in the fifteenth century, as well as his gifts to the wider parish which included some of his scholarly books, although many went to his Cambridge college. Most striking was the large body of military equipment and armour that he bequeathed, reflecting perhaps the key role that the clergy sometimes played in marshalling local community defences, particularly in those places located in coastal areas that, in the fifteenth century, lived with the almost constant threat of invasion.

Joanne Sear's investigation of smaller medieval East Anglian fairs is inspired by David Dymond's observations in his splendid two-volume edition of the *Register of Thetford Priory* regarding the purchases made by the priory at both the great and much studied medieval fairs, as well as at the less well known smaller local fairs. The priory certainly made purchases in smaller fairs located literally on its doorstep both within and immediately outside the town. Such fairs have rarely received the attention of medieval economic historians so this study is a significant addition to our knowledge of these institutions. Sear identifies six sites of fairs held between May and September each year through use of a set of rarely surviving fair rolls listing the names and geographical origins of traders attending them in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. The mapping of these data proves especially revealing. Of particular note is the siting of the more active of those fairs alongside the Little Ouse with its waterway links into the larger Fenland river system with connections, for instance, to St Ives and, particularly, via the Great Ouse leading to Kings Lynn. We gain a clear sense from the excellent cartography accompanying this paper of the geographical distribution of those who participated in the smaller fairs. The predominance in these fairs of trade in agrarian commodities is evident as is

the noteworthy decline in their levels of activity in the early fourteenth century, well before any major drop in aggregate demand associated with the demographic crisis later in that century.

Nicholas Amor, relatively fresh from completing a very important study of the late medieval Suffolk woollen industry, engages in a wider East Anglian overview through a consideration of the factors encouraging the development both of the north-east Norfolk worsted industry in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, and the south Suffolk broadcloth industry of the fifteenth century. David Dymond, through his research and group-based teaching focused on Lavenham, certainly offered inspiration for some of Amor's analysis. Amor makes exemplary use of the statute merchant registries to chart the growth and peaking of the worsted industry, and the common plea rolls to measure the dynamic and internal structure of the broadcloth industry. He considers, in turn, the influence of labour availability, the relatively small size of agricultural holdings, the limited presence of craft guilds, the considerable depth and dense spread of a marketing system, as well as the broader locational factor of proximity to the North Sea coast. All of these facilitated the growth of specific regional economies, both through their engagement in international trading networks, such as the Hanse, and the relative ease of transport to London. Overall this paper, as a contribution to regional economic geography, offers important insights into why these industrial regions should have blossomed, in the one case in a period of demographic growth and buoyancy, and in the other during a period of demographic malaise.

Alan Crosby, in an elegant study, like Joanne Sear, also acknowledges the inspirational work of David Dymond on Thetford as a preface to his study of the town's governmental elite in the period between the restoration of the monarchy in 1660 and the Glorious Revolution. He reveals the alternating fortunes of an Anglican Tory faction, with those constituting an opposing group of dissenters and Whigs through a rivalry that was particularly intensified by the actions of certain key individuals. These rivalries were seen as enacted in ways that barely touched the lives of the majority of the town's population, but their significance translated to the national stage on account of Thetford's corporation having the power to choose the town's two MPs. For that reason Crosby sees the local tensions and discord as a 'microcosm' of the political divisions found at a national level following the Civil War and the Commonwealth.

Lyn Boothman, aware of David Dymond's assessment of the 'business' of the Tudor and Stuart parish, offers us a reconstruction of the local administrative elite in Long Melford by means of a parish register-based family reconstitution enriched by linkage with other contemporary sources. Three periods are analysed; the late seventeenth, the mid-eighteenth and the mid-nineteenth centuries. Focus is given to those families who performed the roles of churchwarden, overseer, constable and ale-taster. Boothman's time-consuming nominative linkage enables her to determine the extent to which the elite families retained a long term presence in the parish or displayed some turnover. In each of the periods a slight majority of office holders came from families who had been present in Long Melford for at least three generations. Office holding, as defined by the roles on which this analysis was focused, declined as an attribute of the local population as a whole, partly as a result of population growth with a tendency over time for local society to fill up from the bottom. While churchwardens tended to come principally from the upper echelons of local society and overseers from among the farmers of the parish, craftsman and artisans increased their presence among office holders, reflecting, perhaps, Long Melford's quasi-industrial character. Nearly eighty per cent of those holding office held just one type only in their lifetime. Care, however, has to be exercised in assessing change over time as the character of office holding did not remain unchanged. For instance, there were no parish-specific overseers of the poor after 1834 with the move to Unions. While there was an identifiable entrenchment of certain offices within a local social elite, because of its diversified economic structure Long Melford spread its office holding



outside of a small group of well-off farming families, many of whom revealed noteworthy turnover as tenant farmers. More work of the kind undertaken by Boothman for this paper is definitely needed to facilitate more effective comparative analysis of these issues.

Evelyn Lord offers some intriguing thoughts on links between coastal Fife in Scotland and Suffolk through a consideration of the market for Suffolk cheese in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The point of departure for her essay is the reference in a customs account of 1757 for the Firth of Forth port of Anstruther which reveals thirteen Suffolk cheeses in the cargo of a ship sailing to undertake whale fishing in the 'Greenland seas'. In fact, Lord finds evidence of 80 to 100 Suffolk cheeses being consumed on Anstruther whaling vessels in the mid-eighteenth century. The role of cheese factors in the marketing of cheese in east Suffolk is well documented by other scholars and it is also known that the British navy was a significant purchaser of those low quality, but highly durable, cheeses. This information sets up for Lord the possibility of substantial trading links along the east coast of Britain, of which Suffolk cheese formed a part. Lord goes further to suggest that this cheese may have been part of a more widespread triangular trade in the North Sea, interconnecting east Suffolk, the Baltic and eastern Scotland. Such linkages were certainly possible although perhaps there is insufficient evidence available to be entirely confident of this fascinating argument.

The final paper in this collection with a Suffolk focus is by Harvey Osborne, who reminds us of the work that David Dymond undertook by mapping the geography of Suffolk workhouses in *An Historical Atlas of Suffolk*. Osborne investigates disorder during the first twenty years of the New Poor Law era in what were newly established Union workhouses. He focuses on the fact that Suffolk produced a far larger proportion of persons sent to prison for such offences than would be predicted by the county's population size alone. He reminds us that, prior to the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834, Suffolk had one of the highest *per capita* expenditures on poor relief in the country. Use is made of judicial evidence from the Petty Session books and gaol delivery books relating to cases emanating from the Plomesgate and Woodbridge Union workhouses. It is clear that male offenders outnumbered females by a ratio of 3 to 1 and most of these were agricultural labourers aged between their late teens and fifty, with the majority under thirty years of age. The young able-bodied unemployed (of both sexes) dominated the offenders whose behaviour gave rise to prosecutions which were concentrated in the winter months, when agricultural work was at an annual low point. Indeed, persons in that age group were untypical of workhouse inmates, who were generally children and the elderly during most other periods of the year. Workhouse disorder peaking in the winter was clearly linked to the residence of this age group, frustrated by the failure of the local labour market to sustain them independently. The decanting of them to the workhouse as a means of providing welfare, and the requirement that they kept to workhouse rules, were evidently serious sources of their irritation. In this paper we have a fine analysis that goes far beyond the published evidence in the printed parliamentary reports, through Osborne's excellent use of manuscript source materials to produce an especially effective local case study.

The Suffolk-focused essays in this collection, highlighted in this review, exemplify the very considerable influence that David Dymond has brought to bear on most of the authors, many of whom began their researches under the influence of David as their teacher within the MSt course that he implemented in Cambridge. All of them meet key criteria in David's frequently voiced requirements for the writing of successful local history; their essays are largely founded on the careful dissection of relevant primary sources, and they all bring to light information and develop arguments that relate to larger questions which extend the significance of their findings beyond the immediate locality in which they are grounded.

*Experiencing Famine in Fourteenth-Century England.* By Philip Slavin. xx + 440pp., figures, maps, bibliography, appendices, index. Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2019. ISBN 978 2 50354780 0. Price €100.00 hb.

The year 1300 was not a happy one in which to be born. Over the course of the following fifty years the demographic and economic expansion of the High Middle Ages was brought to a shuddering halt by three disasters, the Great Famine, the Great Cattle Pestilence and the Black Death. This volume is an important study of the first of those disasters, the younger European famine of the second millennium, by one of the brightest and best of the younger generation of medievalists. Philip Slavin explains how two years of torrential rainfall led to three back-to-back harvest failures between 1315 and 1317 that killed more than a million English men and women, between 15 and 20 per cent of the total population. The contemporary chronicler John Trokelowe has left us some vivid and harrowing accounts of life in Suffolk at that time. Slavin adds to our knowledge by including in his study a number of the county's better documented manors.

In East Anglia the medieval peasantry drew about 70 per cent of their calories from cereal crops, with barley being the staple grain for both bread and ale. Although the spring barley harvest was not as badly hit as that of wheat and oats, its price was dragged up to unprecedented levels by the general shortage of cereals. Between September 1315 and August 1316 the price of a quarter of barley rose from about 4s 10d to about 18s. With some 40 per cent of the population already living below the poverty line, on very small landholdings, this was a price they simply could not afford. Furthermore, during the famine, barley was diverted from the malting of ale to the baking of bread which forced people to drink far from fresh water. Thus the risk of starvation was augmented by the risk of disease.

Slavin argues persuasively that many of the million deaths could have been avoided. A 'food availability decline' need not have become a 'food entitlement decline'. A crisis, initially caused by bad weather and overpopulation, was exacerbated by human agency. Historians debate whether or not an open market in grain continued to operate during the Great Famine in order to supply the land-hungry masses with food, but Slavin is very much on the side of those who believe it did not. Hoarding and speculation pushed up prices. Much of the grain that was held back, in the hope of maximizing its price, was spoiled due to inadequate warehousing. Cereals were not distributed from the better-provisioned regions to those most severely affected. Too much grain was used as seed corn for next year's harvest at a time when, for many, the next harvest would never come.

Neither the Crown, nor religious institutions, nor local communities took effective action to help the worst hit. In the first year of the famine the peasantry were still able to borrow, from their relatives or neighbours, grain or the cash to buy it. In the second year a credit crunch meant that their only way to raise money was to sell off their land. Some, such as Henry Breton of Hinderclay, did well by acquiring property, others lost the little they had once held. The ongoing war with Scotland imposed an added burden on a struggling people. Those living in the war zone of northern England were most directly affected, but even in Suffolk they had to cope with demands for food to feed royal armies and taxes to pay them.

Among the most cutting edge research reported in Slavin's volume is that on the skeletal and dental remains found in fourteenth-century burial sites. These reveal the frail health of many famine survivors and their offspring. Had you been born in 1300 and, as a teenager, survived the famine, your long-term health might well have been so weakened by malnourishment that you would have succumbed in later life to the Black Death. That would help explain why the mortality rate of the 1348–49 plague was so extraordinarily high.

Slavin's breadth and depth of research is truly impressive. If one is looking for a criticism it

can be found in his own words. Some of his arguments are ‘based on clearly under-recorded and fragmented evidence’. Sometimes, he tries too hard to make a point when it would be better to admit, seven hundred years after the event, what we simply do not and cannot know.

NICHOLAS R. AMOR

*Suffolk Scene: A Book of Description and Adventure.* By Julian Tennyson with commentary by Elaine Murphy. vi + 256pp., plates, introduction, index. Oulton: Poppyland Publishing, 2019. ISBN 978 1 909796 65 2. Price £19.95 pb.

The justification offered for this reissue of Julian Tennyson’s well-known and respected *Suffolk Scene* is twofold; access to Tennyson’s family papers, and the passage of time which renders the text ‘pure history’ according to Elaine Murphy who provides a commentary. I offer another reason, that, until asked to review it, I am ashamed to say I had never heard of it although I have lived in Suffolk for over twenty years and it has been reissued numerous times since its 1939 publication. It is a great delight to come to Tennyson’s text and difficult to find fresh words to describe it.

In many ways it is easier to write about what it is not than what it is. It is not a ‘guide’ in the modern sense with ‘things to do’ and directions. There must, in fact, have been few people who could give better information to a traveller searching for a specific Suffolk spot, especially around Aldeburgh or in the marshes. I suspect though, that every enquirer was subject to an intuitive test of trustworthiness, not certainly with regard to the law of the state, but to the law of the land. The author’s respect for, even admiration of, the petty ‘criminals’ of the countryside, the poachers, the wildfowlers, and the tales he tells of them and his own participation in their endeavours justifies this edition’s subtitle as ‘*A Book of Description and Adventure*’. The adventures invoke admiration for his courage and determination which he went on to display in World War Two. His tale of the ‘wild man of Suffolk’ (pp. 167–73) when, night after night and not yet aged 11, he stood alongside a deranged man waiting to welcome his lost son from the sea, is moving and compelling evidence of his compassion, curiosity and courage.

It is a guide in the tradition of Robert Reyce’s 1618 manuscript ‘A breviary of Suffolk or a plaine and familer description of the country, the fruits, the buildings, the people and inhabitants’, full of facts and information but, in Tennyson’s case, also of love and understanding of the county. It is not ‘pure history’, but is, nevertheless, a wonderful source for historians, especially about life at the edges of society in 1930s Suffolk and about young men of a certain class and time. Indeed it is when he is writing avowedly about the past that Tennyson is at his most laboured and least entrancing, unless it is about a man or a place he loves. There is little which reflects the overwhelming impact on all of the Great War, the horrific loss of life and of the continuing pain of wounds, both physical and psychological, and nothing which evokes the grinding poverty and desperate lives of most Suffolk people in his time. When he is truly engaged though, as with the Bigods (pp. 104–105), his writing resumes its tone of passionate commitment. His final two chapters are a disappointing end to the book, they have the tone of a school essay, written because someone said they had to be. It is not the *Zeitgeist*, the spirit of the time, that captivates Tennyson but the *genius loci*, the spirit of place.

In his introduction to the 1973 edition, Ronald Blythe came closer to defining the book when he referred to it as ‘the account of an endeavour by a young writer to interpret both the strength and the isolation of a county which understood him’. The reciprocity is significant.

In reality the county is not a sentient being; it was individuals who understood him, from his parents who let him roam, to the wildfowling who shared their adventures with him, but not, one imagines, his fellow pupils at Eton or young army officers. But such is the depth of Tennyson's commitment and his ability to communicate it that the reader suspends disbelief and accepts the 'county' as half of the relationship.

Elaine Murphy provides a well-written, soundly researched biography of Tennyson to open the volume. We get a good sense of Julian's parents and the affluent, liberal, literary world in which they and their children moved. The quoted comments about Julian from his brothers are particularly illuminating. It is interesting that Murphy locates the origin of his appreciation of country life to Henley-on-Thames where the Tennysons lived for two years (1922–24); even then, Henley-on-Thames must have been far less wild than the county he eulogised. I would have liked more quotes from his letters since it seems inconceivable that he did not write about Suffolk and his life there.

The rest of Murphy's text is largely aimed at bringing that of Tennyson up to date by recording the many changes in Suffolk over the last eighty years; a gargantuan task which is bravely undertaken and spiced with the odd disparaging (but usually deserved) comment. Her text is divided into the same seven sections as his with each of her sections preceding his. To my mind, this makes for a very bumpy and confusing journey for readers who are not as immersed in the county as she has become. It would have done more justice to her work to have presented it after Tennyson's text since the format chosen reinforces modern impressions before expecting the reader to forget them. Better and more apposite photos would also have been helpful, although it is appreciated that the publisher was dependent upon free release (p. 6) and constrained by the economics of printing.

What none of the past reviews or the present commentary have come anywhere near explaining to me is 'however did a 23 year old write this book?'.  
WENDY BARNES

#### NOTES

- 1 Margary 1973.
- 2 Blagg *et al.*, 2004; Ashwin and Tester, 2014.
- 3 Jude Plouviez, pers. comm.
- 4 Taylor and Taylor 1965 and 1978.
- 5 Green 1971.
- 6 Hart 1966.
- 7 A full list is given in Cotton, 1980, where the preceding arguments are also set out in detail.
- 8 Hoskins 1981, 74.
- 9 Scarfe 2002, 76, 102–103.

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