Book Reviews 2021

By JOHN C. EISEL, DAVID WHITEHEAD AND ROSALIND LOWE

Herefordshire Farming through Time: Fellers, Tillers, & Cider Makers **by Katherine Lack (Logaston Press, 2021) xiv + 249 pp., illustrated, ISBN 978-1-910839-51-5, £15.**

Fortunate indeed are those of us who live in Herefordshire, one of the most rural counties in England. Even for those in most urban centres, the countryside is only a few minutes away. While it is often thought of as a natural environment, the landscape is in fact very closely managed, and has evolved through human activity over millennia. Even the wild-flower meadows, most of which have been lost since the last world war, are a product of the management of those meadows and not a natural phenomenon, and, as soon as those practices change, then so does the flora.

This new book takes us through the history of farming in Herefordshire, the driver of changes in the landscape, and, when evidence is available, relates something about those who worked on the land, rather than landowners whose names are well known. While there is a glut of evidence for more recent times, the further back the narrative goes the less evidence there is.

Essentially the material is dealt with in chronological periods, but as will be seen it also handles some special topics that span a number of centuries. After an opening chapter, entitled 'Where are we going?', which sets out the author's thoughts about who falls under the description of farmer, a term which is used in its widest sense, the next chapter considers the change from foraging and hunting to farming, followed by a chapter on the gradual transition into full-time farming over the period 4,000 to 2,000 BC. This leads into a chapter entitled 'Farmers in Roundhouses: the Bronze and Iron Ages', which discusses the role of the developing hillforts and brings the story into the period just before the Roman interlude in Herefordshire. Because of the importance of salt in the preservation of food, and the long-distance trade in this commodity, there follows an interpolation of some six pages of description of this trade, as a special topic, covering from prehistoric times up to the late-18th century, before the next chapter on Roman Herefordshire. Here the emergence of farming, to produce a surplus to support the minority of the population who were not engaged in such activity, is discussed, and also the taxation imposed by the Roman state which necessitated a large surplus to meet the demands arising. The consequences of the collapse of the Roman occupation in 409-10 AD, and its effect over the next couple of centuries, are discussed in a chapter entitled 'An Archenfield Interlude'. In this the couple of centuries after the end of the Roman occupation are considered, contrasting farming in the part of southern Herefordshire known as Ergyng (Archenfield), formed by the expansion of Gwent into the area, with that of north Herefordshire, which came under the sphere of influence of Powys.

The later part of the so-called 'Dark Ages' is dealt with in the next chapter, entitled 'The Millennium', which takes the story up to, and including, the Domesday Book. A long period from *c.*1100 until the early-17th century is covered in eighteen pages, setting out the changes in farming against such catastrophes as the Black Death and its consequent economic effects. The main thrust of the chapter is encapsulated in the title—'From peasants to yeomen?'—and the valid point is made that only at the end of this period is it possible to identify Herefordshire farmers and their families, as opposed to the landowners. Three more interpolations follow: on droving and markets, on draught animals, and on improving the land. As with the interpolation

on salt, these cover a much longer time span; the one on droving covers up to the demise of the trade in the middle of the 19th century, whilst that on draught animals covers the use of oxen from the time of Domesday, also until the middle of the 19th century, when the use of oxen finally came to an end, in Herefordshire at least. The interpolation on improving the land covers from the 17th century up to about 1800, dealing with such topics as the enclosure of common land, water meadows, the increasing use of manure and clover to fertilise the soil and so on.

In some ways all this leads up to the chapter which follows, for it deals with yeoman farmers, and is an exploration of four farming families, representative of a large class which flourished during a period of great change. This chapter was made possible by a detailed exploration of the increasing amount of available documentation, enabling connected histories to be put together. The families concerned were resident in Ballingham, Almeley and Whitbourne. The fortunes of two families living in the latter are contrasted.

The book is completed by sections on sheep, cider, Hereford cattle and hops, each covering longer time spans and bringing things more-or-less up to date.

Having outlined the structure of the book, I now need to point out a few defects. On p. 2 it is stated that the work is concerned with the years before 1871, when the railway was finally completed across north Herefordshire, linking the county with Worcester and the east, and to south Wales and Merseyside. It is possible, I suppose, that the text was badly phrased, and that such an interpretation is not what was intended, but on the face of it this is an incorrect reference to the branch line from Leominster to Worcester via Bromyard; however, the section from Bromyard to Worcester, was not completed until 1877—a date correctly given elsewhere in the text—and the line was finally completed in 1897.

On p. 5 there is a somewhat supercilious remark about the Woolhope 'Society', which rather downplays the work that the Club has done in all aspects of Herefordshire, this despite the fact that numerous papers from our *Transactions* were used in the compilation of the book. The incorrect name is careless, as at no point in the last 170 years has the Club been called by anything other than its current title.

In the text there are other things that are wrong; for instance, on p. 156 it is stated that the *Hereford Journal* began publication in 1781, while the correct date is 1770. Possibly this error arises because the digitised version, currently available through the British Newspaper Archive, begins at this date. However, the inference is that relevant material contained in the pre-1781 issues has not been consulted. There is also later newspaper material available which could have sorted out some points on drovers and droving which were raised in the text, a subject on which I have collected a number of contemporary references, some of which are discussed below.

Herefordshire has, of course, been one of the places on the droving roads from Wales into England, either to London or to the Midland conurbation, and the section on droving gives something of this. The discussion on markets, from early charters through to the early-19th century, includes a map showing the location of eight places in Herefordshire where stock fairs took place: whilst it is not specifically stated, it is implied that these were the only such locations. However, a quick look at Cooke's *Topographical and Statistical Description of the County of Herefordshire*—undated, but published in either April or early May 1809—finds a list of fifteen places in the county where fairs were held, all bar one of which included stock fairs; the other, at Orleton, is not specified as a stock fair, but is known to have been one. (There is a story to be told there!) According to Cooke, there were six fairs held in Ledbury, and not seven as stated on p. 124, and the one in December was held on the Monday before St Thomas's Day (21 December). However, Cooke may be inaccurate, as he omits a fair held in Hereford on the first

Wednesday after St Andrew's day (30 November), and thus held in December, the first taking place in 1790.

On p. 127 there is a reference, from a secondary source, to two Welsh drovers being fined in 1817 for driving cattle through Mordiford on a Sunday. Contemporary sources could have been quoted: the Rev. C. J. Bird was the magistrate involved, and a number of such cases where he issued fines were reported in the local press until at least 1845. Such transgressions could easily be seen from his rectory at Mordiford, overlooking the bridge.

In the section on yeoman farmers, the spelling of Linceter Farm, in Whitbourne parish, as 'Lincetter' rather than the current form is rather irritating. The earlier spelling was given in a trade directory of 1858, but by the time the relevant sheet of the 25-inch Ordnance Survey map was surveyed in 1884, to be published the following year, the current spelling had been established. If it was a conscious decision to use an archaic spelling, then this should have been indicated in some way. In Phyllis Williams's excellent book on Whitbourne, the modern form of the spelling is used consistently.

I must also take issue with the blurb on the rear cover of the book, where it poses the question 'Why were oxen and horses used here well into the nineteenth century, long after their replacement by horses in the rest of England?' This is an incorrect assumption by the publicist. For the section on draught oxen, the author has based her account on Collins's paper 'The latter-day history of the draught ox in England 1770-1964', published in the *Agricultural History Review* in 2010, and properly referenced in the text. The fact that draught oxen had almost completely fallen out of use in Herefordshire by the 1860s, as correctly stated in the text, does not mean that the use of draught oxen had lingered on in Herefordshire after it had been abandoned elsewhere. Collins showed that in the middle of the 19th century there was a revival of the use of draught oxen in the south and east of the country, which lingered on into the 20th century, and that the last working team, at Cirencester Park, was disbanded in 1964, by then, I am sure, a conscious anachronism. For anyone interested, a simple Google search will turn up an image of an ox-team hauling a waggon-load of sheaves of corn, taken in Sussex in 1912.

So, what are my feelings about this book? Much use has been made of archaeological and other published material, and, when nothing is available for Herefordshire, parallels have been drawn with other counties, near and further away. Extensive research has been done on wills and inventories, which underpins much of the later text, and this is to be applauded. There are many well-chosen illustrations, and much information in tabular form. Overall, the book is very helpful in bringing together, into a single volume, a great deal of material about farming in the county.

For my part I would take issue with the structure of the book, in that Chapter 9 is mixed in with the various studies on specific topics, and there seems no structural reason why Chapter 9 should not follow Chapter 8, so that all those studies would form a second section. I also think that the text for the 19th century peters out to some extent. So, for instance, the origins of 'drowning' meadows are discussed in detail, but there is no indication to what extent they were operated in Herefordshire, and when they fell out of use. The thrust of my remarks about droving makes a similar point, but in a rather lengthy way! Also, to help clarify matters, there is a need for a closing chapter to take a snapshot of farming in Herefordshire at the end of the period of study, the time which sets the scene for the Great Agricultural Depression which was to come.

Having said all that, this book will be of interest to a wide audience and should be on the shelves of all those who are interested in the background to farming in Herefordshire. Compared with the content of the book, my reservations are of a very minor nature!

John Eisel

***Guthlac: Crowland's Saint,* edited by Jane Roberts & Alan Thacker (Shaun Tyas, Donnington, 2020) xlvi + 594 pp., illustrated, ISBN 978-1-907730-83-2, £45**

Most knowledgeable people in Hereford are aware that the Cathedral is dedicated to an Anglo-Saxon saint, Ethelbert, the martyr-king of East Anglia, executed as a traitor by the Mercian super-king, Offa, at Sutton Walls in the parish of Marden, in 793 AD. Perhaps more deserving of our interest is Hereford's 'other saint'—Guthlac of Crowland (672-714), a friend and mentor of an equally unappreciated king, Aethelbald of Mercia, who ruled from 716 to 757. Both these remote figures have a claim to be the founders and architects of English Herefordshire, and the latter went further into Welsh Herefordshire than any previous Mercian king, penetrating deep into Archenfield. It seems it was Aethelbald who brought the body of his friend and mentor, Guthlac (or part of it), to an ancient burial ground on Castle Cliff, Hereford. This was later the site of the royal castle, where the wooden shrine of St Guthlac survived until the late-13th century, when, in this incongruous setting, it was accidentally destroyed in a fire. In the early 1970s Ron Shoesmith excavated the graveyard around St Guthlac's shrine, which was gradually being eroded by the encroaching Wye. The deep cemetery was never bottomed but some of the burials had radiocarbon dates which may have pre-dated the age of Guthlac and Aethebald. The burials were close to a building, which, it has been suggested, may have been an early church, perhaps the one later dedicated to St Guthlac, which existed on Castle Green as a minster establishment, run by secular priests until 1143, when it was moved into the Bye Street suburb of Hereford on the site of the present hospital. Here it was downgraded into a priory—a cell of the great Benedictine abbey at Gloucester.

Prior to the publication of this book of essays, anyone with the faintest interest in St Guthlac would have been drawn to Bertram Colgrave's translation of *Felix's Life of St Guthlac* (Cambridge, 1956), which can be found in a few local collections and is also available in later editions. The *Life* is unique in being nearly contemporary with its subject and, albeit a devotional work, it also contains biographical material on the saint's early career, as a free-booting adventurer in our region in the *c*.680s. In the company of other Mercian adventurers, he 'devastated towns and residences…villages and fortresses with fire and sword…gathering together companions of various races (who) amassed immense booty'. It appears that during this time he fell out with the ruling Mercian dynasty and lived in exile among his enemies; thus, he learnt to understand the Britonic language so that when, in later life as a hermit at Crowland in Cambridgeshire, he was taunted by British demons, he understood their language.

Several of the authors in this book pursue this connexion; e.g., Meredith Bacola (pp. 180-213), who suggests that the Mercian campaigns, which involved Guthlac, were the result of the collapse of an earlier alliance between the Mercians and the Welsh against Northumbria. The focus of the new hostilities was south Herefordshire—the hinterland of the future cathedral city—which he links to the well-acknowledged difficulties experienced by the earliest bishops, from Putta to Walhstod (*c*.676-*c*.736)—whose presence in Hereford was, at best, intermittent. In contrast, north Herefordshire, beyond Dinmore Hill, enjoyed a well-established English presence. Excellent use is made here of finds made under the Portable Antiquities Scheme, some of which confirm the early links between the indigenous population and the Northumbrians, before the Mercian ascendency of Merewalh and the Magonsaete. This helps to explain why the Christian origins of Leominster, in contrast to Hereford, are linked via Eadfrith, a northern Celtic missionary rather than a Roman one (see Hillaby, *TWNFC* (1987), pp. 557-685). The Mercian antagonism, against the Welsh and their archaic and isolated brand of Christianity, commenced with Guthlac's campaigns in the 680s and 690s, was followed up by Aethelbald's campaigns in

the 730s and 740s and completed a few years later with Offa's Dyke.

From a local point of view Julia Barrow's chapter on 'St Guthlac's Minster in Hereford: Domesday and Beyond' (pp. 342-52) is compulsory reading. Dr. Barrow has a long association with Herefordshire and, indeed, contributed an important chapter to *Hereford Cathedral: A History* (2000). She explores the Mercian associations of the early bishops and supports the supposition that Aethelbald established St Guthlac's Minster on Castle Green, albeit sceptical about the idea that Guthlac's body was there at this early date. Eventually, the church on Castle Green served as a royal chapel when Mercian, and later West-Saxon, kings visited the southern Marches. She notices that Domesday Book mentions a royal hall in Hereford but is reluctant to place it next to the minster on Castle Green. However, Domesday Book suggests that the community on Castle Green were also the caretakers of the Mercian royal palace at Sutton Walls, so that they may have played the same role for a royal hall on Castle Green. Much of her article is devoted to the Domesday evidence for St Guthlac's property and the status of two notable civil servants, Spirites before the Conquest and Nigel the Physician after it, who held much of the minster's property before and after 1066. The lack of interest in Old English minsters by the Norman kings led to the acquisition of St Guthlac's by the de Lacy family, sheriffs and custodians of the new castle. Eventually, by a circuitous route, the ancient minster was downgraded to a cell of Gloucester Abbey, becoming in 1143 a Benedictine priory in new buildings situated in the Bye Street suburb of Hereford, where it remained until the dissolution of the monasteries.

Finally, local readers might like to pay attention to Graham Jones's contribution to the volume in 'Guthlac and the Landscape' (pp. 353-84) which examines the geographical distributions of Guthlac dedications.

David Whitehead

***Forgotten Castles of Wales and the Marches* by Paul R. Davis (Logaston Press, 2021), vi + 282 pp., illustrated, ISBN 978-1-910839-52-2, £15.99.**

In earlier times the history of Herefordshire has been entwined with that of Wales, with the Marcher lords looking towards Wales to expand their holdings, while the Welsh looked eastwards with some trepidation, wondering when the next incursion would come from that direction. It is therefore appropriate that this newly published volume should take in the Marches as well as Wales. A first edition of the book was published in 2011, but that only covered Wales, whereas the Marches have been added into the present volume, resulting in an increase of some 100 pages.

The author has published a number of books on buildings of Wales, in particular on Welsh castles. These latter have taken different themes, such as castles of the Welsh princes. The particular emphasis of the present volume is on less well-known castles of the area and does not include the larger or better-known castles such as those in the guardianship of Cadw or English Heritage. There is no public access to many of the sites described, but the author has had privileged access during his working life as a surveyor. In view of the hundreds of castles in the area, those described are necessarily a personal selection. There are sixty-five detailed descriptions, each with a short history, as far as it is known. For most there are photographs, a site plan, and excellent reconstruction drawings by the author to show how the castle under consideration might have looked.

The development of castles is, perhaps, a rather specialised interest, and some background is needed to appreciate what is to follow. This is provided in an outline history of Wales, with

panels interpolated about the development of castles at the relevant period, which enables the Welsh examples to be set in a much wider context. As the need for such buildings declined, most such structures decayed and fell out of use, with a brief revival in the Civil Wars in the middle of the 17th century, with consequent destruction. The ruins were subsequently treated as elements of a picturesque landscape, and then there was revivalism in the 19th century, with the rebuilding of such delights as Cardiff Castle and Castell Coch.

The gazetteer divides Wales and the Marches into six regions, which are dealt with in an anticlockwise direction: each section begins with a map marking the various sites discussed, which provides a useful reference. The first section, on West Wales, begins with a discussion on fortified houses, which were generally on a smaller scale than the bastles of the Scottish borders, and then seven castles and tower houses are discussed. The next chapter is on the Vale of Glamorgan and includes the Gower peninsula. Among the seventeen castles described is the enigmatic castle of Morgraig, begun but never completed, the history of which has given rise to much speculation. Monmouthshire follows, where again seven castles are described, mostly in the south of the region. The section on Mid Wales and the Southern Marches is next, describing fourteen castles, one chain of six following the Usk valley, and another of seven from Llancillo and on up the Golden Valley (Newcourt Tump, Urishay, Mynydd-Brith and Clifford, and then over the border to Painscastle—included as an example of earthworks for which no masonry is visible—and Aberedw). The remaining castle is that of Castell Dinas, above Talgarth.

The section on the Middle Marches describes ten castles, four of which are in Herefordshire (Huntington, Lyonshall, Stapleton, and Richard's Castle), and three each in Radnorshire and Shropshire. Finally, there are ten castles in North Wales, and the book concludes with an appendix describing eleven lesser sites. It is pointed out that these lesser sites are ones that might have been included, but are either undergoing restoration work, or are now partly open to the public. For Herefordshire these include Kilpeck and Snodhill, and, just over the border, Hay-on-Wye.

This is a well-researched book, and the outline histories are a good summary of what is known about the sites discussed. The evidence quoted is both archaeological and documentary, and there is good use of plans, photographs, and reconstruction drawings. The latter may perhaps be a little idealised but give a good impression of what could have been there. Use is made of the extensive series of topographical drawings by Samuel and Nathaniel Buck, which record what was existing at some of the sites in the 1740s, often much more than currently survives. These help with any reconstruction drawings.

I have the occasional slight niggle. On p. 28 it states that the last great gatehouse in Wales, in the Edwardian style, was built at Llangybi in 1310. However, modern research indicates that, while there must have been an earlier gatehouse at Kidwelly, the splendid south gate house there, which is in this style, was built in phases between the late-14th and early-15th centuries. Different phases are easily seen in the stonework of the outer elevation. There is also no mention of the castles understood to have been built in Herefordshire just prior to the Norman Conquest.

So, is it worth it worth buying the book? There are sixty-five main entries in the gazetteer, and another eleven in the appendix. Of these there are eleven in Herefordshire, a relatively small minority, but of course there are others just over the border into Wales. Despite this small proportion, it is worth having on the shelves for the reconstruction drawings alone. Also, it gives a spur, to those of us who are interested in castles, to go on and make a visit that might have been put off. For my part, I want to visit the tower-houses at Angle, Pembrokeshire, and Eastington, Rhoscrowther, also Pembrokeshire. Both were described by H. Thornhill Timmins in his *Nooks*

and Corners of Pembrokeshire (1895), a description which he illustrated by sketches which can be compared to the illustrations in the book under review. In his day Eastington was surrounded by open countryside: now it is dwarfed by the adjoining oil refinery. An interest in the Herefordshire castles might lead the reader to make their own incursions into Wales to view the forgotten castles just over the border, and then further away, and this is an excellent guide.

John Eisel

***Derelict Stone Buildings of the Black Mountains Massif* by Christopher Hodges, (PhD thesis, Archaeopress Archaeology, 2015), 333 pp.**

Dr Chris Hodges has kindly donated a copy of his thesis to the Club's library. It may be described as his life's work, because he worked as a stone wall expert for a number of years in the Black Mountains. Herefordshire's western parishes are included within his scope. Personally, I was pleased to accept his work on behalf of the Club for two reasons: I spent the middle years of my childhood in a Breconshire hill farm directly below *Y Twmpa* and, more recently, I accompanied Jim and Muriel Tonkin's buildings group to the parishes around the Olchon valley. We passed many stone buildings in various states of decay, some having been stripped of their slate- or stone-tiled roofs, perhaps by thieves. The details of the buildings in this book may be soon the only record of them which survives apart from a rectangle on a tithe map. Few came to the notice of the RCHME surveyors.

The book contains numerous maps, plans and photographs of the buildings, with documentary evidence where it survives. There is an analysis of the different building styles giving examples. Most importantly, there is a comprehensive gazetteer of all buildings discovered, with their detailed locations. There is one appendix with details of stone-walling techniques, another considering the sources of the stone used and an analysis of industrial buildings. We are fortunate that Dr Hodges's knowledge of and dedication to his subject has produced this detailed work of reference for future generations.

Rosalind Lowe

***The Scratch of the Hop: Hop Picking in Herefordshire, Worcestershire & Shropshire*, by Marsha O'Mahony (Logaston Press, 2021), i-x, 262 pp., illustrated, ISBN978-1-910839-44-7.**

The website of the American Oral History Association informs us that 'Oral history is a field of study and a method of gathering, preserving and interpreting the voices and memories of people, communities, and participants in past events.' With its origins in the 1940s, oral history is now a major area of study, and its popularity is shown by the organisation Herefordshire Lore, which has been publishing these recollections since 1989, both in a periodical and also in books of the genre.

Another book of this sort has now been published, in this case by Logaston Press, the title indicating that this is essentially about the picking of hops in the area. It is not the first of this type, however. In 1988 the Bromyard and District Local History Society published a well-received book entitled *A Pocketful of Hops*, of which a revised and updated edition was published in 2007. This major book covered a region of about six-miles radius from Bromyard, and included reminiscences of former hop-pickers, growers etc., to illustrate the story of hops and hop-picking through its different phases and to bring the story up to date.

In the present volume the main thrust is the reminiscences of those involved in various parts of the process of growing and marketing hops, used in combination to illustrate the whole

process. The first introductory section sets the scene, with some basic information about the process over the years, followed by a section on literary and artistic connections, including material about Sir Alfred Munnings and photographs of members of the Stevens Romany Gypsy family, some of whose members were painted by Munnings in the hop fields. Towards the end of the chapter is a sequence of photographs showing a vardo (traditional gypsy caravan) being built in Hereford in 1960 by George Cox, the last hand-builder of vardoes in Britain. The reader is then taken through the sequence of production, beginning with the growing of the hops and the various stories of the growers, telling the history of the earlier pole yards, and the introduction of modern wirework, a method first introduced in Kent in 1863, which gradually superseded the old method, although pole yards were still being used in Herefordshire until well into the 20th century. The story is well told by those who worked in the hopyards, including those who erected the wirework in the first place, and those who strung the hopyards in the early spring.

Inevitably the chapter on picking the hops is the longest in the book, occupying more than a quarter of the total pages. The annual migration of pickers to the hopyards from the Midland conurbation, the valleys of South Wales and by the Romany Gypsy community, was a considerable influx, and made its mark. Many years later those involved spoke of the good times that they had, even though in most cases the accommodation that was provided was of poor standard and facilities almost non-existent. Of course, for those who worked in the industrial areas, this was a holiday with pay (for which they had to work hard!).

Because hop-picking was so labour intensive, it was inevitable that when viable machines were produced these would be readily taken up by the growers; this led in the 1950s to the demise of the annual migration. All this is covered, including a discussion of the important local firm of Bruff's at Suckley.

Hop-picking is naturally followed by the drying of the hops, an art which could be overlooked, but was highly skilled for all that. The success of the crop depended on how well this was performed, so the kilns needed 24-hour attention, and those who performed this important task would been seen but rarely by their families during this time. The success of the work was tested in the various hop competitions, and then the crop had to be sold. For a very long period, from the 18th century until after the Second World War, The Borough, Southwark, was the major centre of the trade, overlapping with the Hop Marketing Board, which came into existence in 1932 and closed in 1982, since it operated in contradiction to EU regulations. There were, of course, hop markets locally, and the hops were also traded at the Corn Exchange in Broad Street, Hereford, which was built in 1857 and much later became the Kemble Theatre.

A section on 'Hops to Hostelry: pubs and brewing' follows—after all this is what it is all about—and the book concludes with one on hop research and development.

All sections are developed around personal testimonies, and while there are many stories of the earlier days of hop-picking, more recent years are not neglected, and so the book is up to date. Farms that are still growing hops are inevitably prominent; much information is found relating to Instone Court, near Bromyard, and Ankerdine Farm, Knightwick, which also figure prominently in *A Pocketful of Hops*. Similarly, there is much relating to the late Peter Davies and Claston, Dormington. In 2007 Mr Davies published his book, *A Herefordshire Tale. Claston, Hops and the Davies Family*, which gives a very detailed and personal view of the hop-growing industry over a long period.

The book is particularly well illustrated, and inevitably uses the 1581 woodcut of a hop plant which, curiously, shows that plant climbing anti-clockwise when it should be clockwise. There are many excellent photographs, from well-known collections as well as from private

archives. There are quite a number of earlier ones from the Derek Foxton Collection, and others from the mid-20th century, taken by Tony Williams and Derek Evans. The digitisation of those taken by Tony Williams was a labour of love by Dr Derek Foxton, while the work of Derek Evans was the subject of a three-year research project which concluded in 2020, the results of which (including the photographs used here and many more) are available on the Herefordshire History website. The Watkins collection is, of course, represented, and there is a splendid photograph of gypsy vardoes in the Southend at Ledbury, reproduced elsewhere previously but an absolutely super image. These are well-known names, but I noted a number of excellent quality, credited to a Miss White, with no clue as to who that was, and I could not find any mention of her in the text: I wondered if the one credited to Miss 'Wight' on p.70 was a phonetic misspelling of the same name? While the earlier photographs are in black and white, there are a number of modern photographs in colour, which give a recent feel to the relevant part of the text, even though it refers to the last century!

Such a book as this is all about the reminiscences, which should be collected before it is too late. My wife's grandfather, Jim Hamer, was a hop grower, and he occasionally mentioned various things about this to me, but I never followed it up systematically, much to my regret. In 1921 he moved from Grendon Court, Grendon Bishop, to Lower Court, Ullingswick, because he wanted to grow hops, which he did until he retired in 1955, at which point he sold his hop quota. Photographs illustrating hop-picking at Lower Court were used in *A Pocketful of Hops*, including a photograph of a hopyard taken from above by one of my wife's uncles, standing on top of a hop pole. In my collection I have a hop-picker's account book, printed in Bromyard and used by my mother-in-law to keep a record of her hop-picking in the yards at Lower Court in 1941. In the text of the book under review there is mention of hop-pickers going on strike for more pay, and this may have been a problem, as the last of seven rules printed on the back of this account book states: 'Any person known to be agitating for a strike of pickers will receive instant dismissal.' This may not have been a problem at Lower Court, as the same pickers came back each year; after the last war a number of them pencilled their names on the sliding door that led into the base of the hop kiln at Lower Court and which controlled the draft for the furnace. At that period Tom Hamer was experimenting with a hop-picking machine, which got to prototype stage, and in which Bruff's had expressed an interest, but it did not come to fruition.

And now for a few niggles. Although the book is about hop-picking in Herefordshire, Worcestershire and Shropshire, the greatest acreage is in Herefordshire, and a quick look at the index of farms mentioned shows that the majority are also in Herefordshire. There is little in the way of facts and figures, apart from the number of farms still growing hops, and it would be helpful to quote acreages of hops grown now, and acreages grown in earlier periods, which would illustrate the relative acreages and the drastic decline in modern times. Also, there is no indication of the methodology used to collect the reminiscences. Were the recent ones collected in person, and how was the subject identified in the first place? In collecting material for *A Pocketful of Hops* the Bromyard Local History Society advertised in the Midland newspapers and received many written responses. Was something similar done in this case?

As an Herefordian there are a couple of irritating typos. So, for instance, on p. 82 there is a reference to 'Hampton Dean Road', rather than the correct 'Hampton Dene Road.' Also, on p. 173 I was surprised to see in one of the reminiscences the pub at Upper Sapey being referred to as the 'Baiting Inn', rather than the correct 'Baiting House'. In preparation for a book on pubs in the area, in discussions of local pubs with members of my wife's family, who lived in the locality, I never heard the suggested form.

There is little exploration of how the hop-pickers were received in the local community. There is a description of policing by the local bobbies (pp. 138–140), but there were other issues. So, for instance, hop-pickers were not allowed inside the Burley Gate Inn, and had to use a corrugated iron building which was used as a changing room for a local youth football team. The door of the pub was kept locked, and locals had to knock to be let in.

There are one or two inconsistencies relating to the Hop Marketing Board (HMB). On p. 215 the first sentence reads 'In 1982, as the UK entered the Common Market, the HMB was wound up because its monolithic structure was seen to violate EU rules.' Of course, the UK entered the Common Market on 1 January 1973. Also, on p. 221 there is a mention of a Hop Marketing Board Magazine from March 1983, by which time the Board was, presumably, defunct.

On p. 140 there is a reference to an Education Act of 1948, which ended the practice of parents taking children out of school to take them hop picking. This provided that children should be registered at their school at the start of the school year and was implemented more or less straight away in Dudley, where many of the hop-pickers came from. My family moved from Bromley, Kent, to Dudley in 1948 and one of my earliest memories is my first attendance at a primary school in Dudley in September 1948, when many of the pupils were away hop-picking. My recollection is that this annual exodus seems to have tailed off rapidly, due to action being taken by the Dudley Education committee. This could be checked using suitable attendance registers. In 1949 that local authority allowed a two-week extension in the school holidays, to allow for children to be taken hop-picking in September, and sent a letter to the parents of all schoolchildren in the borough, warning that if children were absent beyond that extension without reasonable cause, then the parents would be prosecuted. In view of the general nature of the letter, it would have been sent out over the name of the director of education, who at that time was my father. The problem of subsequent fines was discussed in Christine Faulkner's charming *Hops and Hop-pickers* (undated, but stated in the bibliography to have been published in 1992), which looks at hop-picking from a Dudley-based perspective. Mr. Packer, the school attendance officer at that time, must have been quite busy! This was, of course, one factor, but the major factor was the introduction of hop-picking machines, and the consequent very-much-reduced demand for labour at hop-picking time. This is illustrated by an example quoted in the text.

So, what are my views on this book? A considerable amount of work has gone into collecting and linking together the various reminiscences which are the point of the book, the collection of photographs is outstanding and there are some tremendously evocative images. Although the brief is hop-picking, this is placed in a much wider context of growing, picking and marketing hops, and is the modern history of hop-growing in the area, within living memory, although there are earlier reminiscences included. The book should be on the shelves of anyone interested in aspects of social history of Herefordshire. It has awakened my dormant interest in the subject, and a quick check indicates that there is much interesting earlier material that is well worth detailed investigation**.** Watch this space!

John Eisel

Hereford in 50 Buildings **by Derek Foxton & Ron Shoesmith (Amberley, Stroud, 2019), 96 pp., ISBN 98 1 4456 8704 9, £14.99**

This is a collaborative undertaking by two well-known Hereford antiquarians: Derek Foxton, who, in addition to his photographic skills, exploits his large collection of Hereford documentary

material, whilst Ron Shoesmith, until recently, Director of Archaeology for Hereford, reveals his comprehensive knowledge of the buildings of the city. Both authors have an eye for the curious and unrevealed past. All the principal photographs appear to be recent and taken, it seems, on an unremittingly sunny day. Occasionally a sketch or a vintage photograph is included; for example, a striking postcard view of the Castle Pool Hotel, dated 1922, shows the burgeoning gardens of St Ethelbert's Almshouses, with a glimpse in the background of the glasshouses of the council nursery that used to be in Cantilupe Street.

If the building under discussion has an interesting interior, a photograph is provided. For many purchasers of the book this will be a revelation. For instance, few people who regularly pass the Cathedral Barn in the NE corner of the Close will appreciate that it has a fine first-floor space, with a very robust, cambered tie-beam. A radiocarbon date suggests that it was probably built in the late-13th century. Equally surprising for many readers will be the Norman roof of the Bishop's Palace, built, it seems, in the late-12th century. Illustrated in this book is one of the Norman arches with dog-tooth ornament—now supported with a steel frame—which sits above the bishop's bedroom. Other interesting interiors include that of the Catholic Church of St Francis Xavier, recently re-decorated in bright colours, after an attempt was made in the 1980s to close the church and to use the shell as a supermarket! Among my other favourite interiors, which will be a surprise for many readers, is the wonderfully dusty, late-17th-century staircase, with fine twisted balusters, found in the 'lost merchant's house', locked and forgotten in the elbow of Widemarsh Street and High Town and still, apparently, for sale. What a wonderful 'pad' this would make for a young bachelor with a collection of 17th-century curiosities. Equally hidden today is the 15th-century interior of the Booth Hall, illustrated by a fine wide-angle photograph. In the year that we are celebrating the centenary of the publication of the *Old Straight Track* it would have been good to see an acknowledgement to Alfred Watkins, who saved this building from demolition. The same wide-angled approach was needed for the Commandment Room at the Black Lion Inn in Bridge Street. This went virtually unrecorded by the Royal Commission on Historic Buildings in the early 1930s. Albeit the wall paintings are naïve and incomplete, a full view of them should have been taken rather than of just the plaster ceiling, which is fairly conventional work. It is good to see the local, late-16th-century artist, John Gildon, credited with the work.

Alfred Watkins was commemorated, so we are informed, by the passageway leading under the middle of the Mansion House in Widemarsh Street towards Tesco. It was named 'Alfred Watkins Way'—he was born nearly next door at The Imperial—but his family protested that this was a rather mean memorial for a great man, so the name was replaced with 'Mansion House Way'.

Ron and Derek's familiarity with the nooks and crannies of Hereford, built-up over many years, gives the reader several unique insights. For example, restoration work on The Grapes in Church Street in 1988 revealed that this was originally three separate buildings, creating a fatal flaw in its structure, so that it nearly collapsed. A particularly good text is provided for the Bingo Hall in Berrington Street. Erected as a chapel for the Countess of Huntington's Connexion in 1787, it was closed in 1885 and since then has had a very chequered history, which is all carefully recorded in this book. Another of Ron's discoveries, whose explanation may have gone with him to France where he has retired**,** involves a hole in the courtyard of the Shirehall, which revealed several subterranean rooms between the portico and the statue of George Lewis Cornewall (d.1863). Their purpose is unknown but since the site was originally occupied by the county gaol, they may have been dungeons.

As this review has tried to show, even for someone well acquainted with the city, there is much to be learnt from this survey of Hereford's prominent buildings. If I were showing people around the city, I would carry this book in my pocket, as it would provide answers for many of those quizzical visitors who might test one's patience.

David Whitehead

The Medieval Floortiles of Herefordshire **by Julie Bowen (Access Archaeology, 2022) ii + 141 pp., illustrated, ISBN 978-1-78969-513-7, £34.**

In Herefordshire we have so many fine examples of 19th-century encaustic tiles from the Godwin factory, that less notice may be taken of the relatively few surviving mediaeval examples, the largest collection of which is in St. Katherine's Chapel, Ledbury. This new book is a gazetteer of all examples said by the compiler to have been visible in Herefordshire in 2013. These are listed alphabetically by parish and illustrated either by coloured photographs or drawings of the designs; plain tiles are excluded as being impossible to date except by analysis of the fabric. Drawings of tiles that have been found in the past, but which cannot now be located, are included, as are those from the papers of that noted antiquarian, Thomas Bird.

However, this not just a gazetteer. When a tile is described, any other known examples are quoted, as is the source, if known or deduced. Thus, for instance, there are many examples found locally that derive from the Malvern factory, and also from Bristol and Worcester. This approach helps to put Herefordshire in a wider context, something that is also helpful because the book offers purely a survey, with no overall summary of the findings, being intended initially as part of some wider research which has not come to fruition.

In its present form, therefore, the book is very useful for those who need such reference material when analysing the results of excavations but is not designed for the general reader.

In the introduction the author makes it clear that the research on which the book is based is incomplete but hopes that it will be a useful basis for further research. It is not clear how the survey was carried out, and whether it was complete. Was every church and other possible location visited? Were the different sites identified from secondary sources and then visited? How much scope is there for further research? Without answers to some of these questions it makes the work of those who come after that much more difficult.

This then is a useful reference book, but the price of £34 for a printed copy will put many buyers off. However, the publishing model is such that it is also available free to a personal user as a downloadable pdf from the publisher's website; this is intended as the main means of distribution, thus making it available to a much wider public. More a case of try before you buy! (To find the website, just Google 'Access archaeology'. Curiously enough, the ISBN as given on the website does not agree with that printed in the front of the book, which is what I have quoted.)

John Eisel