Book Reviews 2022

By ELIZABETH SEMPER-O'KEEFE, JOHN C. EISEL, KEITH RAY, TERRY MORGAN, AND DAVID WHITEHEAD

***Miss Chave's Diary From 1897 to 1898*, edited by Angela Hodges (Angela Hodges. 2022) 116 pp., ISBN 978-1999697822.**

Miss Chave's Diary, edited by Angela Hodges, is a slim volume that, in size, echoes the original exercise book from which it was transcribed. It comprises the contents of a single volume of the diary of Florence Chave, the eldest child of William and Caroline Chave. Her father is perhaps best known in Hereford as the first half of the name of the pharmacy on Broad St—Chave and Jackson. He was also Mayor. The family moved from Broad St to Moor House on Widemarsh Common, next to the Evans cider factory that was owned by the family. Florence lived at Moor House until her death in 1971 at the age of 104. The diary, however, covers a much earlier period in her life, a period of almost a year from 26 July 1897 to 20 July 1898, when Florence was 30-31 years of age. The entries in the published volume start and end as abruptly as in the original, for this is but one volume in a series of diaries that it is presumed that Florence kept, but is one of only two volumes that are known to survive—this one in the Chave collection at Herefordshire Archive Service (ref L77) and the other within the wider Chave family. It would have been helpful to have this information more clearly stated and to have the HAS reference number of the diary itself given, for those who might wish to look at the original (ref L77/IV/22) or other elements within the Chave collection. I believe that it is significant that this particular volume was kept by Miss Chave to the end of her days, rather than any other, but the editor does not speculate about the reasons.

Florence's diary entries contain an overview of her activities each day, mentioning the family members and friends with whom she interacts. They can be as short as one or two lines, but occasionally cover a whole page, when she has something more meaningful to recount to herself. She rarely mentions anything of life beyond the sphere of her family—a notable exception being on 19 May 1898, when, at the end of the very short daily entry, she notes 'Gladstone died.'

Despite having their home base in Hereford, the diary begins with Florence and her family in Devon. Both her parents were born in Devon and the family frequently returned there for holidays and to spend time with their wider family. In fact, at the time of the diary's beginning, Florence and her parents had recently returned from Australia where her father had farming interests, and since Moor House was at this time rented out, throughout the period of the diary they are based elsewhere; in Devon, Malvern, and at her brother's house in Hereford. Florence's day-to-day life as described in the diary entries consists of cycle rides and hobbies, taking tea and shopping, driving out in traps, attending church, and entertainments. She hardly ever mentions any domestic duties or responsibilities beyond cleaning her bicycle. The family employ two young girls on the second trip to Devon that the diary covers, and there is a brief reference to her brother needing to employ a new housekeeper. It will be apparent then, that Florence's life is that from a middle-class business family, where the men work (the two eldest of her brothers, and her father, who suffers from poor health but still has some involvement) and the women, in the main, do not. Her sister, Mabel, is an exception—she is a governess at this time. As such, it is a gloriously breezy account of the life of a semi-independent woman in late Victorian England.

Written as it is for her own pleasure, Florence has no need to be specific in the details of the friends and family that she mentions, some of whom are referenced by family nicknames. Although Hodges does provide explanations of a number of the characters that we meet in Florence's life, these are not consistently formatted, so on p. 8 we have two aunts separately described as 'the younger sister of Flo's mother' and 'Mrs Chave's eldest sister' [my emphases]. Also, the identity and relevance of some of the people is not explained in a footnote when they are first mentioned; e.g., Florence's cousin Willie is encountered on p. 1, but Hodges first describes him on p. 15. There is a family tree, but this only covers the maternal family. It would have been useful to have the paternal tree too, as relatives from both sides are referenced by Florence. In fact, I would have found it most helpful to have had a *dramatis personae* provided of the most frequently encountered characters, as it was difficult to carry all the details of who's who in one's head at once—and this from someone who has a passing familiarity with the wider Chave family after a number of years of research! Similarly, a map of the Devon and Malvern areas, and perhaps Hereford centre would have been helpful as Florence visits so many locations on her, often lengthy, cycle rides.

The main diary is split into three sections as the Chaves move from Devon to Malvern and back to Devon. Each section has a short introduction by Hodges to give some context, but she doesn't explicitly state which members of the family are with Florence, which would have provided extra clarity.

Of 107 pages, only nine are by Hodges, with the bulk of the material, quite rightly, being Florence's own words. Other than a one-page preface, and the family trees of Florence's maternal family and that of Florence's fiancé, Mac, who is introduced in the volume, Hodge's main input is an appendix giving a summary of the story of Florence and her fiancé, and a recounting of how Hodges came across Florence's diary, via the glass-plate negatives of Mac.

The volume contains over fifty illustrations, including locations, family, and third parties mentioned in the book, but they are poorly referenced. Neither those sourced from HAS nor those images originally taken by Mac and now in Somerset Heritage Centre have their reference numbers provided. Surprisingly, there isn't an image of a page from the original diary.

This volume was published alongside Hodges's novel *You and You Only*, set in 1970s Hereford, in which the heroine reads Florence's diary and other Chave papers. Consequently, I feel that the edited diary has been produced more as a companion volume to the novel, rather than a robust, standalone piece with adequate background and referencing. It is perhaps too light-touch in the editing to be of greater value for researchers interested in both the period and specifically in women's lives at that time. That said, frustrating though it is to only have this one year of the diary, something of Florence's personality does shine through, and though it can feel odd at times reading the middle of a story when you already know the ending (spoiler alert—Florence and Mac's romance does not have a happy ending) it is also fascinating to have such a firsthand account of a local life. Overall, Hodges has undertaken a useful task in making this diary, and thus Miss Chave herself, more widely accessible.

Elizabeth Semper O'Keefe

***Constable John Richardson. Policing in early Victorian Leintwardine*, by Robert Cock (published by the author, 2022), vii + 169 pp., illustrated, ISBN 979871200313. £12.99 paperback, £9.99 Kindle.**

There is an interesting prehistory of policing in Herefordshire before the establishment of the

Herefordshire Constabulary in 1857, following the relevant Act of 1856, which made it compulsory to have a statutory, county-wide police force. The transition from the elected and unpaid parish constable to professional officers over the preceding decades was a piecemeal process, and only now are some of the aspects being thoroughly explored. In this present work the career of John Richardson, who was a paid constable in Leintwardine from *c.*1840 to *c.*1848, is explored in detail, and the cases in which he was involved are discussed. The main information in the book comes from press reports, although other relevant records have also been consulted. Unfortunately, the records of the Wigmore Petty Sessions, which covered the area in which Leintwardine lies, are not known to survive (or at least, if they do, their location is not known), but the gaps can be filled by newspaper reports. The author states quite unequivocally that without these reports the book would not have been possible.

One of the greatest boons to the historian in recent years is the amount of original information that has become available on the internet, in particular from digitised newspapers. Having spent many hundreds, probably thousands, of hours over the years searching through hard copy of newspapers, usually in microfilm, I cannot overstate the benefit for myself. I am sure that others will have found the same experience, certainly in the present case. Digital searches of newspapers are targeted, using appropriate search words, to locate relevant reports, with thousands of pages being searched in an instant, which otherwise might have taken years. All this depends on how good the digitisation is—it is not always perfect—and in case the search word is misread, it is worth trying others, which is generally successful. With his detailed newspaper searches, Robert Cock has produced a mass of evidence, augmented by other original sources, including court rolls, to produce a convincing and detailed picture.

To set the context, the first chapter discusses policing in Herefordshire in the early 19th century and the legislative background, with the gradual transition from parish constable to paid officer in different areas. This includes discussion of how Richardson might have been appointed *c.*1840. His appointment and career in Leintwardine are discussed in the next chapter, followed by a chapter on such details of his life as could be located, before, during, and after his tenure at Leintwardine. It is clear that when he came to Leintwardine he was already an experienced police officer, but where has not been identified. His life after Leintwardine was more easily traced using census records. The main analysis of the book follows, prefaced by a chapter on crime in Leintwardine in the period 1800 to 1840. This is followed by eight chapters analysing events in which he had a professional interest. These mostly relate to crimes, but the last of these chapters deals with his wider responsibilities in keeping order etc.

Richardson left Leintwardine either in late 1848 or early in 1849. The period from then up to 1857 is discussed in the next chapter. Interest now centres on why crime happened. The author discusses crime in Leintwardine and its social context, and then the consequences of crime in the punishments given on conviction. A final chapter gives an overview of Richardson's time in Leintwardine and puts it into context.

Three appendices are provided, the first a very long one, with *verbatim* transcripts of all the newspaper extracts from which the text has been constructed—inevitably almost all are newspaper extracts—and the second a six-page biography of W. H. Cooke Q.C., later Judge Cooke, whose path regularly crossed that of Richardson. The final appendix sets out a timeline of all the events discussed.

Clearly an impressive amount of work has gone into the book. While it is relatively easy to identify newspaper extracts, it is rather more time-consuming to produce the transcripts. Digitised text always has errors in it, a small number if the digitisation is good, with an increasing

number as quality gets poorer, and this text must be edited against the original to produce a 'clean' copy, so that it is not just a 'cut-and-paste' operation. The work done here gives valuable information on the early development of policing, and a very detailed analysis of policing in and around Leintwardine during Richardson's tenure of office.

Inevitably there are niggles. I feel that it would have been better for the text to have been edited to take out the personal element (I don't like the use of the word 'I' in such a text) and at the same time help could have been given with the somewhat idiosyncratic layout and in ruling out some inconsistencies. So, for example, on the same page the title of one newspaper is given in italics, whilst another is not italicised. On p.41 there is a reference to 'Mr. Cooke' which on the face of it must be W. H. Cooke, which should have been mentioned. On p.154 it is said that Cooke was 'reputed to have been author of both Duncombs' "*History of Herefordshire*" and the Murray's Guide to the county'. The latter statement refers to Murray's *Handbook to Gloucestershire, Worcestershire, and Herefordshire*, which at the time of the reference quoted (1866) was in preparation. The true situation about the Duncumb history is that Judge Cooke published several parts as a continuation of Duncumb's history: these are discussed in Philip Riden's introduction to the 1996 reprint of Duncumb's Volume 1 Part 1, which gives details of Cooke's other publications (but doesn't mention Murray's handbook!).

However, these niggles should not obscure the large amount of work and analysis that has gone into this book, which will be of interest to a wide range of local historians, particularly those with an interest in social history, and should be on their shelves—or even on Kindle! It is available through Amazon.

John Eisel

***The First Stones, Penywyrlod, Gwernvale and the Black Mountains Neolithic Long Cairns of South-East Wales,* edited by William Britnell and Alasdair Whittle (Oxbow Books, Oxford) xv + 302 pp., illustrated, ISBN 978-1-78925-739-7, epub: ISBN 978-1-78925-740-3), £38.**

'Cotswold-Severn' long barrows (and cairns) are early Neolithic (4th Millennium BCE) structures that were built in stone and earth in a characteristic style (or, more properly, built by deploying a suite of distinctive construction practices) in a geographically extensive area from west Oxfordshire in the east to north-central Breconshire and the Gower peninsula in the west.

Two of the Breconshire cairns were investigated in the 1970s: Penywyrlod (Talgarth) was discovered embedded within an upland field boundary when a farmer dug into it for building material; a salvage archaeology operation was mounted immediately prior to it becoming Scheduled as an Ancient Monument. The cairn at Gwernvale, in a more lowland situation on a west-facing terrace above the River Usk north of Crickhowell, was threatened by road-widening operations along the A40 main road and was completely excavated by a team from the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust led by Bill Britnell. Some of its chamber stones, left *in situ*, still adorn a verge of that road, following some engineering adjustments made during the widening scheme. Joined by Hubert Savory (the excavator of Penywyrlod), Britnell did a considerable service to British archaeology with the rapid production of a full account of both excavations (with specialist analyses of the material recorded and retrieved) in a volume, published in 1984, in the then newly established Cambrian Archaeological Association's Archaeology Monograph series.

The present 'First Stones' volume is a second monograph devoted to the study of these

two sites, together with an appraisal of the wider context and implications. Although located in south-east Wales, on the north-western and south-western sides of the Black Mountains, neither is far from the Neolithic sites of Dorstone Hill and Arthur's Stone in Herefordshire, which face the north-eastern slopes of the range. As will become apparent later in this review, combining evidence from recent and ongoing excavations at the latter two sites with the extensive data presented here seems likely to add further to understanding of the Neolithic period in the region.

In this volume, Britnell is joined as co-editor by Emeritus Professor Alasdair Whittle of Cardiff University. A whole raft of new specialist studies is included, few of which would have been possible without the veritable explosion witnessed over the past twenty years in the development of scientific and laboratory analyses. A key dimension of these advances has been a more rigorous approach to the selection of samples for radiocarbon dating and the application of Bayesian statistical techniques to the study of related suites of such dates. The result is that close comparison can be made between sites in use across proximal spans of time—many of which sequences featured relatively short-lived bursts of activity. Whittle has been a pioneer and proponent of the practical deployment of such approaches to the dating of a range of Neolithic monuments in Britain.

First Stones encompasses both a re-analysis of the structural forms and sequences of the two cairns (involving limited re-excavation by Bill and Jenny Britnell in 2015-16); and comprehensive re-analysis of sample and artefact distributions from Gwernvale (especially the pre-cairn ground surface there), and a re-study of the artefact groups retrieved (worked flints from Gwernvale by Elizabeth Walker and ceramics from both sites by Alistair Barclay). The importance of the pre-cairn activity at Gwernvale (Mesolithic worked flint scatter; early Neolithic midden and 'house') is reiterated, and the complexity of structural development with multiple chambers and blocking sequences at Penywyrlod is emphasised, although investigations here have been minimal.

The scientific studies include review of the evidence from crop residues, wild plant remains, and charcoal from Gwernvale (by Astrid Caseldine) to consider diet and the origins of agriculture in south-central Wales (it should be noted in parenthesis that this would not have been possible without the careful soil-sampling strategy applied to the site by Britnell and his team almost fifty years ago); and detailed osteological study of human remains from various contexts within Penywyrlod cairn and nearby Pipton and Ty Isaf (Michael Wysocki) to make deductions about the life-courses of the individuals concerned. Further chapters report strontium and oxygen isotope analysis of teeth from Penywyrlod and Ty Isaf, to consider the degree to which the people concerned were 'local' (Samantha Neil); dietary isotope analysis of bone collagen from human remains from Penywyrlod, Tinkinswood, Ty Isaf, Heston Brake, and Parc le Breos Cwm cairns (Michael Richards) to provide a further overview of diet; and organic residue analysis from Gwernvale pots (Isabel Wiltshire and Lucy Cramp).

Drawing all the dating evidence (including new determinations) together, a further key chapter is that by Seren Griffiths who, by using systematic Bayesian analysis, broaches the huge topic of the chronology not only of all the Black Mountains long cairns, but the totality of the current dating evidence for the early Neolithic of south Wales and the Marches. Here there is an important contrast between the two long cairns: Penywyrlod was apparently built very early on (around 3800 BCE) but Gwernvale was constructed much later (around 3500 BCE), in line with Pipton and Ty Isaf.

The results of the scientific analyses are the easiest to summarise here: for example, emmer wheat and barley, as well as certain grasses featured in the pre-cairn deposits at

Gwernvale, and dairy product consumption among the slightly later burial population is attested by both the isotope and the lipid data. The surrounding environment featured mixed woodland with clearings and a local dominance at both sites of oak and hazel. At least one of the individuals from Penywyrlod for which data could be gained (none was feasible from Gwernvale) grew up some distance away from the locality (and could have journeyed there from as far afield as north-east Scotland or Dartmoor). Most of the bones present appear to have been those of young adults, and several had suffered perimortem wounds (including a leaf-shaped arrowhead embedded in a sternal fragment from Penywyrlod Chamber NE III or its passage). A variety of means of de-fleshing corpses and redistribution of their bones was detected, and at Pipton and Ty Isaf as well as Penywyrlod, the 'parcelling up' of groups of bones to re-constitute 'individuals' from several different bodies was evident. Such groups were 'sandwiched' between what had been taken to be flagstone flooring levels and were often found (especially at Ty Isaf) carefully tucked into corners of the chambers lined with upright slabs. Interestingly, both these practices were detected during our recent (2023) excavation of passage-chambers at Arthur's Stone.

This last point is germane to this review. Discussion of these two sites in eastern Wales (one in the Usk catchment, the other in the Wye) might have seemed somewhat abstract in the context of these *Transactions*, but for the considerable investment of field research in recent years into the Neolithic of the Dorstone area. We now know that the Dorstone Hill *halls* that pre-date the long cairns there (see Ray and Thomas, pp. 45-63 of this volume), can be dated earlier (*c*. 3850 cal BC) than any of the Black Mountains long cairns, but quite probably were contemporary with the early Neolithic midden and the 'house' structure beneath the Gwernvale cairn. The earliest long cairns in Wales and the Marches now include more certainly both Penywyrlod and the three Dorstone Hill mounds, with the 'Cotswold-Severn' tradition cairns being built a century or more later. It will be interesting to learn where Arthur's Stone fits in this pattern.

The carefully calibrated and compared date sequences in Griffith's study extended to causewayed enclosures and included an important re-assessment of the Hill Croft Field (Bodenham) site dates. She concluded that, like Dorstone Hill, it was among the earliest such sites in west-central Britain, starting at around 3700 cal BC (compare Womaston in the Walton Basin at around century later, and Caerau near Cardiff a century later than that). In their conclusion to this outstanding, if possibly to the non-archaeologist somewhat 'technical' volume, the editors devote much space to the consideration of origins: for the regional Neolithic, for the 'Neolithic' people who built the long cairns, and for the styles of architecture employed and evoked in their construction. The 'first stones' of the title of the volume were, in the editors' view, the first local manifestation of incoming groups of farmers whose origins lay in near-continental Europe.

Meanwhile, there remain significant questions for those interested in the prehistory of Herefordshire—for example, where are the more easterly traces within the county of early Neolithic societies other than the causewayed enclosures, such as those at Bodenham or on Dinedor Hill, and the river-valley traces (mostly of pits) at Wellington? As a result of this fascinating suite of studies of Penywyrlod, Gwernvale and related Breconshire sites, we now have a more detailed and nuanced appreciation of the intricacies, especially of the construction and use of the Neolithic cairns of south-east Wales and the Black Mountains: and a more fine-grained knowledge of the distant lives represented in the bones amid the 'stones.'

Keith Ray

Offa's Dyke Journal, Volume 4, Borders in Early Medieval Britain. **Published online by JAS Arqueologia at http://revistas.jasarqueologia.es/index.php/odjournal/ (pdf downloadable free of charge). Printed version (Archaeopress with JAS Arquelogica 2022) 178 pp., ISBN 978-1-80327-396-9, £35.**

The *Offa's Dyke Journal (ODJ)* is 'a peer-reviewed venue for the publication of high-quality research on the archaeology, history and heritage of frontiers and borderlands focusing on the Anglo-Welsh border'. Submissions that explore Offa's Dyke, Wat's Dyke and the 'short dykes' of western Britain are accepted, along with comparative studies on various aspects of borders and frontier lands elsewhere. Each volume typically contains seven to eight papers.

The editorial board includes impressive representation from leading archaeologists and historians from Wales, England, and further afield, and also from organisations such as the Offa's Dyke Association. Four editions have so far been published, one for each year from 2019 to 2022. Prof. Howard Williams of Chester University has acted as the energetic and ever-present editor, with help from others in different volumes.

For anyone interested in the distinctive history of the Welsh Marches, the content lives up to the billing. This review serves mainly to bring the *ODJ* to the notice of readers of the *Transactions,* since, although well-known to specialists and to local organisations with a strong interest in Offa's Dyke, the *ODJ* can escape the notice of others who would find the content valuable. For your reviewer, the next volume of the *ODJ* has become something important to look forward to!

All four volumes can be downloaded as a pdf free of charge, thus supporting the notion of a 'venue' where research can be shared, freely and frequently. Downloading works well once the prospective reader has located the volumes; they are accessed via the 'Archive' tab on the 'Home' page of the website. Since this doesn't seem obvious or instinctive, perhaps it would be helpful to include a comment on the 'Home' page to indicate that the volumes are found there. The printed editions are well produced and illustrated.

This review focuses mainly on Volume 4 for 2022, because it is the most recent and because several of the papers present research of particular importance to Herefordshire and the surrounding counties. From this perspective, papers in earlier volumes are not to be missed either; for example, Liam Delaney's piece in Volume 3 uses LiDAR and other techniques to demonstrate beyond argument the continuous line of Offa's Dyke in north-west Herefordshire, from Rushock Hill to Bridge Sollers. The maps are particularly good. The conclusions are important and new; until recently many scholars believed that some, or all, of this section might never have been built, and/or doubted that the substantial earthworks at Lyonshall were part of the Dyke.

Volume 4 is a special issue focused on borders in early Medieval Britain. It mainly comprises the proceedings of a conference held digitally (for Covid-related reasons) in 2020. Dr Ben Guy, the conference leader, edited the volume, along with Prof. Williams and Liam Delaney. The intention was to 'study processes of political, cultural, and linguistic interaction in a regional border zone as a cohesive unit, moving beyond consideration of these areas as merely places where the boundaries or 'frontiers' of larger polities or cultural groups collided'. Dr Guy notes that research on these lines led him to 'reconsider the history of the entire Anglo-Welsh border zone in the early Middle Ages, along with the nature of Anglo-Welsh interaction that took place, not so much across it, but within it'. The final phrase acts as a telling reminder; the story of the Marches in this period is not a simple one of clear and decisive divisions.

Three papers of interest in themselves, but less directly relevant to the Marches, comprise:

Rory Naismith's '*Bige Habban: '*An Introduction to Money Trade and Cross-Border Traffic'; Neil McGuigan's piece 'Donation and Conquest: The Formation of Lothian and the Origins of the Anglo-Scottish Border'; and a study by Oliver Padel, 'King Aethelstan and Cornwall'. In general terms, Naismith's paper gives food for thought about the nature of trade and movement in border areas, something fundamental to an understanding of the early Medieval Marches.

The other papers will all grip anyone interested in that period in the Marches. Lindy Brady deals with two case studies, one of which seeks to clarify the context and implications of the *Ordinance concerning the Dunsaete.* Usually dated to the early 10th century, but by some more recently to the late 10th or early 11th century, this short document, originally written in Old English, seems largely to be a working agreement about addressing cattle theft. Brady sees it as drawn up within an ethnically mixed community of Welsh and Anglo-Saxon people—the *Dunsaete*—likely to have lived west of the Wye, roughly between Hereford and Monmouth. She calls the document an 'agreement', a 'memorandum of understanding', rather than an ordinance, the usual term applied to it. The last clause suggests that the *Wentsaete*, generally taken to be the people of Gwent, had once 'belonged' to the *Dunsaete*, but now belonged more rightly to the West Saxons. The geographical territory and identity of the *Wentsaete* had remained unchanged, but their wider political allegiance had changed. In Brady's view this represents 'a perfect illustration of a borderland that shifts not geographically, but politically'.

Dr Guy's piece ('The Changing Approaches of English Kings to Wales in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries') also refers to the *Dunsaete* text. He suggests that the *Wentsaete's* payment of tribute and hostages to the West Saxons, which it mentions, might have originated in the 880s, when Gwent submitted to Alfred; nonetheless, the *Wentsaete* seemed to have retained some independence of action, since at one point the *Dunsaete* are seeking 'at least peace-hostages' from them. The bulk of Dr Guy's paper explores, via three case studies, the relationship between English and Welsh kings from the late 10th century to 1064, concluding that 'During the first half of the 10th century, English Kings deemed it important to maintain direct domination over the greater kings of Wales. The impetus for this may have been eroded thereafter…<and> in its place a more granular and regional approach to Wales, focused on the borderlands, emerges into view.' Interestingly, he also suggests that the annexation of the Welsh area of Englefield (near Rhuddlan) to Cheshire has parallels with the annexation of Archenfield to Herefordshire. Despite annexation, as late as 1086 Archenfield remained administratively separate.

The study of place-names in Herefordshire is problematic. The very title of David N. Parsons's paper—'Place-Names and Offa's Dyke: the Limits of Inference'—suggests the nature of the difficulty, on this occasion in the context of Offa's border zone, especially from south Shropshire northwards. Whilst exploring 'the potential of place-names and the unique insights into language and society across the border that such evidence can offer', he concedes that the place-name evidence is challenging for the historian 'particularly in that it resists close dating'. He feels that 'previous conclusions about Offa's Dyke and certain place names have…been expressed too optimistically'. This is necessarily a detailed paper, but one that repays attention. Figure 2, a map showing English place-names to the west of Offa's Dyke, including some just over the Herefordshire border into Radnorshire, is fascinating; predictably however, interpretation is not straightforward!

Prof. Keith Ray, so well-known to the Woolhope Club as its Archaeology Recorder, contributes a fine piece about the organisation of the mid-late Anglo-Saxon borderland with Wales. Even though almost no written material survives that relates directly to Offa's Dyke and the communities affected by it, he demonstrates that important suggestions can be made by

combining a range of archaeological sources with careful use of Anglo-Saxon charters, the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, and the Domesday Book. The Anglo-Saxon fortification discovered at Breinton, above the Wye, in 2018 (*TWNFC* (69) 2021, pp. 85-106) is seen as 'potentially transformative of our understanding of how the Anglo-Welsh frontier may have operated', whilst the suggestion from archaeology of the 1990s , that 'Leintwardine may have been incorporated into the system of border control accompanying the construction of Offa's Dyke' is reinforced. The suggestion emerges that an organised border zone of some depth existed, one that played a key role in trade as well as military activity, and where former Roman roads seem likely to have acted as 'rearward communicative' arteries. The careful use of later documentary evidence is important, not least with reference to the *radmanni* or *radchenistri,* 'riding men', mentioned in the Domesday Book in Cheshire, Shropshire, Herefordshire, and Gloucestershire. Prof. Ray notes that these men seem inescapably associated with places relevant to the border zone; that they are likely to have had some role as fighting men or messengers; and that their Anglo-Saxon origins may relate to a network associated with a frontier zone much earlier than the 11th century.

Finally, with reference to Dodleston Castle in Cheshire, Rachel E. Swallow argues that, in siting castles, the Normans deliberately re-used pre-existing monuments from prehistory and the Romano-British period, and that continuity associated with important sites could be lengthy; for example, the earthworks at Dodleston probably represented an Anglo-Saxon meeting place and perhaps 'a meeting point of significance over millennia'.

Hopefully, despite the limitations of a review, enough has been said to show that the papers in *ODJ 4* will stimulate those interested in the period and in culture, politics, identity, and life in the Anglo-Welsh borderlands. The bibliographies provide a rich source of further reading, including much recent work; thinking and scholarship in this area is developing quickly, fuelled by fresh archaeology and by re-evaluation of a wide range of other evidence.

Terry Morgan

***Downton Gorge: the matchless valley. Landscape and industry, nature and culture*, edited by Tom and Gisèle Wall (Tom Wall, 2022), vi +502 pp., illustrated, ISBN 978-1-9160436-2-6.**

Downton Gorge, named the 'matchless valley' by Ann Seward, an 18th-century poet and literary figure, is well known to the Woolhope Club. The Club has visited many times, to appraise, record, and enjoy everything it offers. However, never before has such a wealth of research been gathered into a book so sumptuous and beautifully illustrated, designed to celebrate the Gorge and to inform and captivate readers, whether or not they know it already. It is good to think that Charles Darwin, who first visited in 1822 at the age of thirteen, was influenced by a rich formative experience. The work of painters inspired by the Gorge features in the book. The Club was delighted to help support publication with a grant from the G. W. Smith Fund.

Downton embraces river, woodland, pasture, and some arable land, extending to around 750 acres, of which 725 were designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in 1952. Sadly by 1988, only 165 acres were still designated. Within the SSSI, 118 acres were leased to Natural England (as it is now called) as a National Nature Reserve, while in 1996 the whole of the River Teme was notified as an SSSI.

The first section of the book covers landscape and industry, with chapters by Michael Rosenbaum on geology and landform; by David Lovelace on land use in Bringewood Chase and Mocktree Forest; and by Laurence Ince on the ironworks at Bringewood Forge and industrial use of local materials.

Rosenbaum gives an excellent description of Downton Gorge's position at the edge of an ancient ocean (Iapetus), which ceased to exist soon after the Silurian era had ended. He explains the characteristic fossils, the long and complex processes that have contributed to today's landforms, and the latest theories for the development of the watercourse and drainage patterns.

David Lovelace's insights deal with the balance between the ancient, complex system of grazing and other rights exercised by the peasantry versus their manorial lords, and transition into a Royal Forest in the 15th century and a private estate in Elizabethan times. The latter jeopardised the multipurpose use of Bringewood Chase and Mocktree Forest, which had served medieval communities for generations. He also documents the destruction of the deciduous woodland in the 20th century and its replacement with conifer plantations; now only fragments of the Chase and the Forest remain in a near-natural condition.

Laurence Ince describes the history of the iron industry in Bringewood Chase. The industry probably originated in the 16th century when the Earl of Essex leased the Chase and built iron mills and forges along the Teme. The river's reliable flow, and locally sourced charcoal, limestone, and ironstone (later brought from the Clee Hills), enabled the industry to flourish. Its history here is tied up with that of the Knight family over several generations until the early 19th century.

The second section of the book is a *potpourri* of the historical figures who lived in Downton, an account of the castle itself and of the landscape when viewed as a garden, and the literature associated with the Gorge. Barney Rolfe-Smith and Tom Wall bring us an engaging overview of 300 years of the Knight family, and their influence on art and on the agricultural heritage of Herefordshire. The link between the Knights and Downton was finally ended in 1986.

The story of Richard Payne Knight (1751-1824) is taken up in lavish detail by David Whitehead, who highlights Knight's cultural contributions, and describes the design and construction of Downton Castle, documenting contemporary reactions to this extraordinary dwelling and the debate as to whether it was a mansion with battlements or a castle; it was never Knight's intention that it should be considered the latter.

Barney Rolfe-Smith and Tom Wall provide a rich account of Knight's landscape garden, created, with 'art clandestine', 'conceal'd design', and 'secret skill' to display the landscape of the Gorge to dramatic effect through a network of paths. Key aspects of the landscape garden are described, together with the paintings of Thomas Hearne which relate to them. Rolfe-Smith continues the story, describing the later removal of the forges and furnace, the creation of a waterfall, the construction and loss of various bridges, and the disastrous replacement of the deciduous woods by conifer plantations.

Mark O'Hanlon gives a lively account of the literature—both poetry and prose— inspired by the Gorge, as well as the more academic and sometimes contentious output of Richard Payne Knight. Richard's brother, Thomas Andrew, contributed books and papers on Herefordshire's apple and pear varieties, of which the best known is the illustrated *Pomona Herefordiensis*. Sir Humphry Davy, famous for the Davy lamp, came to fish the Teme at Downton and wrote *Salmonia: or Days of Fly Fishing*, O'Hanlon also summarises the many scholarly accounts dealing with Richard Payne Knight, Downton Castle, and the story of the local community.

The third section is a tribute to the astonishing biodiversity of the Gorge. After a detailed account of the Teme, its bridges, mills, and forge, Tom Wall's overview of that biodiversity ranges from fish, plant life, and invertebrates to birds and mammals. There is an important discussion of growing pollution from agricultural run-off and sewage effluent and its impact.

Stuart Hedley then takes up the baton with a rich account of woods, trees, ferns, and

flowers. He explores the Oak, Ash, and Beech woods, their preferred soils and their related plant species, and gives a wonderfully detailed exposition of Small- and Large-leaved Lime, their concentration in the Gorge, and their very limited distribution outside the West Midlands. Lichens, mosses, and liverworts are described by Ray Woods and Mark Lawley, with a glimpse of the Victorian botanists, whose work forms a baseline from which to compare today's records. They raise examples of lichens sensitive to atmospheric pollution; intriguingly, *Lecanora conizaeoides* is tolerant, even demanding, of sulphur dioxide, but, with the loss of sulphur dioxide as a pollutant in the early 1990s, has become very rare and has now been replaced by *Physcia tenella* and *P. adscendens,* which have benefitted from reduction in acidic pollutants.

Jo Weightman takes us on 'a foray amongst the funguses', a phrase introduced by Dr Henry Graves Bull, who held the first foray at Downton in 1872. In the Gorge, mycorrhizal fungi, which live in a symbiotic association with living plants, are associated with Oak, Beech, Lime, Wych Elm, Alder, and Hazel, but interestingly not with Ash. Saprophytic fungi and parasitic species are very well represented too.

Tom Wall's chapter on woodland wildlife and management concludes the third section. After a chequered history, today's deer population comprises Roe, Fallow, and Mutnjac, the latter first recorded at Downton in 2019. Especially in deciduous woods, overgrazing by deer reduces wildflower numbers and biodiversity, and hampers natural regeneration of trees. Their exclusion results in rapid regeneration. The varying fortunes of birds in the Gorge are outlined: Wood Warbler and Redstart are in decline; the Pied Flycatcher population seems to be holding its own; and the Garden Warbler is affected by reliance on undergrowth such as Bramble, a favoured food of deer and also important to butterflies, of which twenty-one species have been recorded here. Ravens, exterminated as a breeding species in Herefordshire in the 19th century, have returned and become common; similarly, raptors such as Buzzard, Red Kite, Goshawk, and Peregrine Falcon nest locally. The woodland was surveyed by Roger Taverner for Elizabeth I and the individual trees by George Peterken in 1987 and 2008. In 2008, Peterken noted a major increase in Elder, and declines in Birch, Oak, Lime, Ash, and Sycamore, the latter due to management. Wall also discusses the pros and cons of Pheasant and Partridge shooting and concomitant control by gamekeepers of predators, noting the need for biodiversity audits to achieve net gain. He details threats to biodiversity from the Grey Squirrel and the likely impact of Ash dieback; around 118 species have been assessed as vulnerable should the Ash be lost.

The fourth section of the book examines key buildings, Knight's view of the Picturesque and the impact of other members of the family and their descendants on agriculture and forestry elsewhere, for example at Hafod in Mid Wales and on Exmoor.

Barney Rolfe-Smith describes Stonebrook Cottage and Dingle, where Richard Payne Knight lived for sixteen years after spending twenty-five years in Downton Castle. He had a Greek motto carved outside the sitting-room window, probably best translated as 'May leisure here prove the finest of possessions.' Rolfe-Smith argues that by living there, Knight could think, read, and write as an Athenian philosopher, surrounded by nature and views.

David Whitehead's detailed and nuanced account of Knight's involvement in the Picturesque movement brings alive controversy with landscape designers, such as Capability Brown and Repton, and Knight's involvement in the political and intellectual élite of Herefordshire. The Victorians considered that one of Knight's greatest achievements was to draw attention to the relics of Britain's past, such as mills, cottages, and bridges, mellowed by nature in the landscape of the British countryside, as a substitute for classical antiquities on the Continent; they had become inaccessible to British tourists during the French Revolution.

The book's final chapter summarises the recent history of the Gorge and considers the future challenges of balancing shooting, landscape, forestry, industrial heritage, and nature conservation, including river management. The extensive appendices, including lists of plants, lichen, and fungi, are important and will be of great interest to those in need of detail.

The book is beautifully illustrated and well laid out, with high-quality maps. It offers a splendid archive of information about the many facets of Downton Gorge. It should serve as an inspiration to the next generation, whether historians, archaeologists, geologists, or nature conservationists, to continue the study and preservation of this 'matchless valley'.

Rachel Jenkins

***Downton Postcards: Deltiology of the Downton Castle Estate, Herefordshire* by Mark O' Hanlan (Published by the author and available from 5 Cangeford Drive, Ludlow SY8 1X1) v + 64 pp., illustrated ISBN 978-0-9528059-7-7, £9.99.**

It is perhaps, unfortunate that the author of this excellent booklet chose 2022 to publish his work, the year in which Tom and Gisèle Wall produced their weighty monograph on Downton (see review immediately above). However, in many respects these books are complementary. My 1990 Collins *Dictionary* is silent on 'deltiology', but my spell checker is better informed, and it soon becomes apparent from reading the booklet that this is a serious study of postcards depicting the Downton estate. The fact that there were so many produced (*c.*25-27) in a relatively short period of time, is a measure of the significance of this relatively small part of Herefordshire in the late 19th and early 20th century. The producers of the postcards were generally fairly local but national printers quickly got in on the act. The highpoint, as the author points out, came between 1902 and 1918, when a postcard cost a halfpenny to send, and was delivered within 24 hours; thus, before the age of the email, they were the means of communication favoured by the population at large.

The story begins with some detective work, which identifies the earliest postcard of Downton which shows the new Nesfield terraces and was issued as a *carte de visite* in the late 1860s. It also provided Thomas Wright with a print in *Ludlow Sketches* (1867). Subsequent chapters in the book are devoted to local photographers and printers who maintained a steady flow of Downton views until the mid-20th century. This sort of approach is very revealing since it provides fairly accurate dates for the images used, which often circulated for many years after their creation. For example, the single-span iron structure across the Teme—'the Pony Bridge'—was unknown to me, but the serial number of the postcard indicates to the author that it was photographed in 1906. Equally interesting is the waxing and waning of the vegetation in the Gorge, e.g. the view of the Downton Rocks (p. 26), which reminds the observer that the cycle of growth and decay makes it very difficult to make judgments about 'picturesque' scenery as it was first celebrated by Richard Payne Knight in the 1790s, albeit we have the flattering watercolours of Thomas Hearne to help.

Perhaps the most photographed object used on the postcards was the Haymill (not to be confused with the later mill at the Castle Bridge). As time passed in the 19th century, the Haymill crumbled and became encrusted with moss and ivy, thus becoming more picturesque. However occasionally human intervention occurred, and on at least one occasion the ivy was cut back. Clearly, the mill was more than a picturesque prop. Since ivy was the most potent symbol of the picturesque, artists were quite likely to put it back. Photographers were less likely to lie.

The book is brought to a close with a chapter on the more recent rediscovery of Downton,

with the Whitworth Art Gallery exhibition and its influential catalogue in 1982, followed a decade later by the Hereford Art Gallery exhibition in 1994—the bi-centenary of the publication of *The Landscape* by Payne Knight. This brought to public attention the twelve watercolours produced by Thomas Hearne in 1784-6. The work is completed with an appendix charting the later history of the walks. This is a very good buy for just under £10, well-illustrated, with informative text, footnotes, and a bibliography.

David Whitehead

The Making of England from Rome to the Reformation **by Toby Purser, (Amberley, 2022), 319pp, illustrated, ISBN 978 1 3981 0506 5, £22.99.**

Dr Toby Purser spoke to the club in February 2022 on the Holme Lacy Charter, one of the earliest surviving feudal documents, relating to an estate at Holme Lacy, issued by Bishop Robert of Hereford in 1085, in favour of Robert de Lacy. Dr Purser is no stranger to Hereford; he was brought up here and was taught the rudiments of his medieval history at Hereford Sixth Form College. Although the scope of the book is national, a review is included here because much of the content, especially up to and including the Norman Conquest, informs themes about the development of the Welsh Marches, the borderlands, and Herefordshire, explored elsewhere in this edition of the *Transactions*.

The book begins with the closing phase of Roman Britain in the late 4th century, when Christianity arrived, and ends in the 16th century with Reformation, when it was transformed. It is a brave historian who takes on the whole of this period, but Dr Purser produces many insights within a framework which is basically political, with frequent excursions into cultural, economic, and social history.

One of the key features of this book is that it embraces a revisionist position at every opportunity. For example, in the early chapters of the book Rome's influence had been diminished; city culture was superficial; villas were places of retreat and self-sufficiency; and, by continental standards, Britain was a failed state. It was left unproductive and de-skilled, and the Germanic settlers brought a better technology and real artistic ability. However, since they comprised no more that 10% of the population of Britain they were quickly integrated. In western Britain, like Herefordshire, they made no impression until the late 7th century and then their mark was political rather than social or cultural. Western and northern Britain was already Christian when St Augustine arrived in the late 6th century. His objective was to save the naïve Anglo-Saxons from being absorbed into the flourishing, schismatic British church. There are many refreshing insights such as these, which quietly undermine many of the key assumptions of our time and lazy teaching in our schools.

From here there is plain sailing via Alfred and the Vikings to the Norman Conquest. Alfred's heroic struggle is written from the perspective of Churchill's war-room in 1940 but, incidentally, illuminates very clearly the context for the Leominster Hoard. Special attention is paid to the wealth of England, which not only attracted the Vikings but underpinned Alfred's success in defeating them. His successors, the West Saxon kings, centralised England but tensions within the dynasty—and, again, the country's wealth—attracted another Scandinavian 'freebooter', Cnut. The political system failed, but there was no new migration of Danes and the Anglo-Danish aristocracy invited Edward the Confessor to return from exile in Normandy to take the crown and rule via Cnut's laws. Remarkably, the author believes that on Edward's death in 1066 England was one of most well-run states in Western Europe.

The story of the Norman Conquest is well told, employing much recent research explaining the motives of the key players. Basically, the author believes that English mistakes permitted the Conquest, and that in a sense the Vikings, in the guise of the Normans, finally defeated Alfred, played by Harold Godwinson. This is controversial stuff but produces a very interesting slant on a well-rehearsed event. The pace of the story continues after the Conquest where institutional changes are discussed via building of castles and churches. Latin culture, brought by the Angevin kings, was not strong enough to eclipse English culture, which went underground but soon re-emerged. However, Domesday Book, 'a wondrous achievement', records on every page the humiliation of the Anglo-Saxon élite. Once again, the conquerors, the Norman and Angevin nobles, benefitted from the wealth and general stability of England and were conspicuous by their absence, concentrating on their continental empire, which stretched from Normandy to the Pyrenees.

At this stage we are well over halfway through the book, but it would be wrong to assume that the author had passed the climax of his story. The pace perhaps quickens a little, but revelations and new insights continue to tumble from the passing pages. England is ruled by well-chosen administrators and continental links encourage trade. Moreover, the country was well-placed to play its part in the revival of classical learning. There was also a rediscovery of England's rich history by a number of talented chroniclers, many of whom had English ancestry. Significant landmarks, like Magna Carta and the emergence of 'parliament', are brought into focus, whilst Edward I conquers Wales but makes less headway into Scotland. All this 'progress' is brought to a sudden end in the early 14th century. The king, Edward II, is removed and murdered, and the usurpers pretend to rule through Parliament. Defeat in Scotland, famine, and plague wipes-out half the population.

The 'crisis of the 14th century' is heralded with the heading 'Apocalypse Now—Plague, Revolt and Usurpation', the last referring to the removal of Richard II by Henry IV in 1399. As the author perceptively notes, the 14th century ended where it had begun, with the removal of a monarch. The concentration on domestic issues provided an era of peace for England's nearest neighbours. Wales never recovered its sovereignty but was left in peace; Scotland remained stubbornly independent and, albeit new opportunities were opened-up in France by Edward III and Henry IV, by the late 15th century the English territories there had disappeared.

Since this book is concerned with social as well as political history, the end comes not with a change of dynasty in 1485 but, a little later with the Reformation. 'The Wars of the Roses' undermined both the later medieval kings and the early Tudors. To rectify this Henry VII was the first king for over a century to review the system of government. His son Henry VIII completed the process and also destroyed the last vestiges of foreign control over Britain by dismissing the papacy. At the same time, he enhanced the wealth of the monarchy by dissolving the monasteries. The book ends with a celebration of Shakespeare who, via his history plays, helped to demonstrate how badly England was governed before the Tudors.

For anyone interested in the early history of England this is a racy, revisionist view of the millennium from *c.*500 to 1500AD. Throughout there is a good balance between narrative and interpretation; the loose ends will undoubtedly lead the inquisitive reader elsewhere via the generous fifty pages of notes and bibliography.

David Whitehead