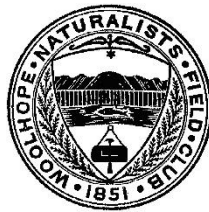


# Book Reviews



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# Book Reviews, 2018

By

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*Clash of Cultures? The Romano-British Period in the West Midlands*, Roger White & Mike Hodder (eds.), (2018, Oxbow Books, 240pp., £30).

Oxbow is one of the few remaining academic publishers who produce reasonably priced books on scholarly subjects and, over the last few years, they have been quietly progressing with their period-based assessments of recent archaeological work in the West Midlands. Volumes on the early pre-historic (Garwood, 2007) and late pre-historic (Hunt, 2017) have been widely praised. Now we have a dense volume on the Roman period, which originated in 'a series of papers presented at a seminar in Shrewsbury in 2002'. Most of the contributors have apparently revisited their Historic Environment Records to catch-up on the development led projects, which have taken place in the intervening period. It is notable that some of the contributors were 'formerly' county archaeologist. Early retirement, it seems, has enabled them to re-visit the 'grey literature' they produced and synthesise their work for this volume.

The main body of the book progresses from county to county across the South Midlands—Warwickshire, Worcestershire and Herefordshire—and then north into Shropshire and east to Staffordshire and the West Midlands County. Gloucestershire is missing; thus, leaving the highly Romanised parts of Warwickshire and Worcestershire disconnected and, similarly, Herefordshire is orphaned from the heartland of the Dobunnic territory in the Severn Valley (and its Dark Age successor Hwiccana). Each author is also guided (constrained?) by a series of topics e.g. Iron Age background, conquest and military occupation, towns, rural settlement etc. Nevertheless, each county has its Roman hot-spot e.g. Worcester and Alcester, both subject to extensive development since the 1960s, and thus, regular archaeological investigation. Wroxeter and Kenchester have not endured the same pressure but every opportunity has been taken to explore their hinterland. The Iron Age background is well covered for Herefordshire and Keith Ray is quoted as saying that 'Herefordshire was neither Roman nor Romano-British but 'Iron Age' in character throughout the Roman period' (p.11). North Herefordshire and South Shropshire are also areas of intensive Roman military activity, which is fully described by its respective county authors. Overall Roman activity diminishes as you penetrate the highland and forest areas of the West Midlands. North Shropshire and Staffordshire are virtually uncharted territories; and similarly the pastoral and wooded regions of the three southern-most counties.

The Herefordshire section is written by Keith Ray and, of course, should be read in conjunction with *The Archaeology of Herefordshire* (2015). Unrestrained by the need to be explicit for the general reader, Professor Ray, as the quote above suggests, is prepared to go that extra mile or two and synthesise his material, providing an epitome of Roman Herefordshire with an analytical eye upon its neighbours, its Iron Age past and its Dark Age future. Each county is provided with a new map, showing the distribution of sites, and Herefordshire is notable for its intensity of 'minor settlements and farmsteads' in all the river valleys, comparable, it seems, to the more familiar intense Roman settlement in the Avon Valley of Warwickshire and

Worcestershire. One of the high-points for Club readers will be the detailed and integrated approach to the Kenchester hinterland with its 'exotic rural residences', where its Roman inhabitants were apparently already appreciating the landscape qualities of the Wye, 1500 years before the Revd. William Gilpin made them explicit in 1782.

Several thematic chapters help the reader distinguish the wood from the trees. This includes the editors' introduction and sections on coins, ceramics, religion and the end of Roman Britain. The last by Roger White is rather specialist and Woolhope readers will find much more stimulation in his *Britannia Prima: Britain's last Roman Province* (2007). *Clash of Cultures* is well illustrated by modern photographs but it is a pity there are no up-to-date maps of the regions around Alcester, Worcester and Kenchester, which figure so prominently in their respective chapters. Moreover, the index eschews place-names, thus rendering much of the text inaccessible to the casual reader and the young person doing a project. Having said that, this is an essential book and it will be many years before it is superseded—if ever.

David Whitehead

***Hereford Cathedral School. A History over 800 Years, Dr Howard Tomlinson, (2018, Logaston Press, xxvii + 642 pp., £25).***

First, I must declare interest. As a local historian I supplied information for the book, and as an Old Boy of the school (OH) naturally take an almost proprietorial interest. But I will do my best to be objective!

A history of a school is a difficult thing to write. The primary audience is, of course, former pupils of the school, but in order to be relevant to a wider audience it must be set in context. As I write I have in front of me a history entitled *Felsted in Herefordshire*, a record of a school in exile in Herefordshire between May 1940 and March 1945 (there are plenty of worse places to be exiled to!) This has little of wider interest, being a record of the minutiae of the activities of the school in Goodrich Court and elsewhere during that period. A similar statement might be made of Carless's *A Short History of Hereford School*, published in 1914, which gives the outline of the history as known at that time but with little in the way of critical analysis of the evidence, but is a useful secondary source. However, Carless did call attention to the fact that there was no basis for the celebration of the school's quincentenary in 1881, this being a fund-raising wheeze by the then headmaster to build a new block of classrooms and library! Carless's history was updated by Eales-White's *Records of Hereford Cathedral School* (1931), the main body of which was a listing of known past pupils of the school.

It is clear that a new history of Hereford Cathedral School was long overdue, and this has been remedied by the work of Dr Howard Tomlinson, former headmaster (1987-2005) and, I am pleased to say, a member of the Woolhope Club. This clearly has been a labour of love in his retirement which has resulted in a monumental work, which, while readable, is also scholarly: it has proper references and foot notes, which show the range of sources consulted, both primary and secondary. This, of course, brings its own problems, as the material for the early years of the Cathedral School is very limited, with almost exponential growth in the amount of material for recent years. Inevitably, therefore, the early chapters of the book are short, with chapters of increasing length as more recent periods were described.

The first two chapters deal with the period up to the latter part of the seventeenth century, with a discussion of the likely origins of a grammar school connected with the cathedral in the

twelfth century, a forerunner of the present school, although continuity is not claimed, as there are known to be breaks in the succession. Then the history of the school is built around the work of the various headmasters, the chapters of increasing length as more material becomes available. Although the first surviving school register does not begin until 1808, earlier printed material can be found in reports and adverts in the *Hereford Journal*, which began publication in 1770. The earliest surviving printed rules, which make interesting reading, date from c.1818, when 'The Great Dr. Taylor' was headmaster: he died in 1826 as a result of a carriage accident on Wye Bridge. In 1821, in Dr Taylor's time, there was a prolonged dispute about the educational system in use at the school, played out in the pages of the *Hereford Journal*, which makes not very edifying reading!

All this is discussed within the framework of education at the time, and thus the book is not only a history of the school but also of educational history in general. This theme continues right up to the present, including commentary on how such schools as the Cathedral School were at one time grant-aided from the government.

The final chapter of the book deals with the last 30 years, inevitably in not so much detail because it is difficult to get an historical perspective for such recent times, particularly for one who had been so much involved. The book concludes with two appendices, one a list of known headmasters and another listing some notable past Old Herefordians. The final name on the list was Arthur Ulrich Zimmerman, a benefactor of the school, and former president of the Woolhope Club. The connection of the school and the club is perhaps not so close as it might be, most of the former pupils of the school leaving for pastures new, although some do stay in the area and others return. However, from a quick scan through the list of Presidents of the Club I can only identify a few Old Herefordians: these include Colonel Scobie (1926), the much-loved Archdeacon Winnington-Ingram (1947 & 1956), A. U. Zimmerman (1962), and C.E. Attfield (1985), as well as myself. Further study may find a few more.

So while I do have a personal interest in this book, nonetheless I can state that this is not just an exceptionally well-researched and written history of the Cathedral School, but it also puts the school into context within the educational ethos for the various periods, and a careful study gives a good idea of educational developments through the centuries, as well as the relation between the school and the city. In view of the length, a careful study will take some time, but that time will be well rewarded, and the Club has recognised its importance by grant-aiding its publication from the W.H. Smith Fund.

John C. Eisel

***A History of Lyonshall: from Prehistory to 1850*, Sarah and John Zaluckyj (2017, Logaston Press, 320pp., £15)**

Sarah and John Zaluckyjs' latest book on their own parish of Lyonshall is an in-depth historical study of the area. From the moated island with its castle ruin to the former railway station at Titley Junction, the village has a fascinating history.

There are some excellent photographs in the first part on Prehistoric and Roman Lyonshall accompanied by Geoff Gwatkin's maps. The flint tools and various excavations bring the text to life. A remembered visit by the Woolhope Club Archaeological Research Section to The Yeld moated site in 1970 is mentioned which is pleasing to those who were there.

The lordship of the castle was granted to Stephen Devereux and he began a major reconstruction of the castle and in 1228 was granted weekly market and fair rights by the King. This was an attempt to develop a borough, enlarge the village and install a garrison to protect it. There was some settlement round the castle site but a new lower area to the south of the road to Kington was created with perhaps 40 burgage plots. This Kington road to the north of the church was diverted to a route south of the castle and church as it is today. Thus the authors answer the question that has always been a puzzle—why are the castle and church cut off from the village? The borough failed by the early 15th century just as other Herefordshire villages declined from the high mortality rates of the Black Death and the threat from the Welsh Revolt of Owain Glyndwr. There are no early houses standing from the earlier centuries. This explanation of apparent migration to a new site for economic gain is evident today in the location of the centre of the present village.

The rise of the Devereux family is charted. Based at Weobley and holding Lyonshall they became very influential, for example playing an important part in the Wars of the Roses when Walter Devereux evicted the Mayor of Hereford from office and hanged 6 citizens in 1456. A later Walter Devereux was created Viscount Hereford by Henry VIII, his son became Earl of Essex and Elizabeth's favourite. Robert was the second Earl. The family played an important part in national events and reached giddy heights. However, according to Blount, little of the castle remained by 1670.

In the sections about Lyonshall people skilful use is made of primary source material. The authors mention Jim Tonkin's impressive and useful work on 3,000 wills. Wills and inventories provide considerable information about the lives and trades of the inhabitants. While the rural poor are under-represented, evidence of peoples' possessions do provide glimpses of how life was lived. Some information is given about the crops grown which were mostly cereals but also hemp and flax; hops were a valuable crop in 1699.

The use of the countryside for economic benefit is illustrated by numerous examples. Early enclosures contributed to the plight of the rural poor; there was not much Parliamentary enclosure but what little land they had in commons and waste was taken by the landowners. The system of enclosure and the open fields is fully explained. The landscape with its watercourses, roads and pathways often needed access by bridges; mills had changing uses and were used for fulling as well as milling grain.

Often local histories omit to give the reader a historical background which would illuminate the local scene. Here, the authors skilfully knit the local sources into the national fabric so that the history of the locality becomes part of the narrative. This gives a particular clarity to the book and makes it more accessible for the general reader. The numerous maps and photographs provide excellent information and add to the book's appeal. Overall, this is a very attractive and well-researched book which offers a model for other village histories.

Jean O'Donnell

*The Houses of Hereford 1200-1700* by Nigel Baker, Pat Hughes and Richard K. Morriss (Oxbow Books, 2018), xvi + 192pp, 29 colour plates, 151 figs. ISBN 978-1-78570-816-9, £25.

This book has been long awaited and should have appeared in late 1990s. It owes its gestation to the work of Ron Shoesmith and the City of Hereford Archaeological Unit, which in the 1980s, with 'urban regeneration' in full spate, broadened the archaeologist's remit and began

to investigate the structure of the many historic buildings that were coming up before the city authorities for planning consent. The present writer, as Hon. Secretary of the local Civic Trust (Society), remembers with dismay some of the damaging alterations proposed such as the removal of the ceiling at 26 High Town (W.H. Smith's), which revealed a number of historic rooms, one with panelling painted in the 17th century with floral patterns. Similarly, at 50a St Owen Street, the Civic Trust was a lone defender of a high status building of c. 1600, recently used as a garage, which was threatened with comprehensive re-development. We won the inquiry but this book reveals how much the survival of the historic fabric of Hereford depended upon the rigorous recording carried out by the Hereford Archaeological Unit, which changed the minds of many 'progressive' councillors who were otherwise determined to drag Hereford into the 20th century. Both these buildings survived and their glories are recorded in this book. Today, as commercial life ebbs from the city centre, the next generation may be more sympathetic and better able to appreciate these fine domestic interiors.

It must be stated from the outset that this is not a reworking of the Hereford section of *RCHME Herefordshire I* (1931) but a sample of 24 major buildings; perhaps, less than 20% of the listed buildings in the Central Conservation Area. Many of the buildings were selected because of the planning process described above but to provide a continuous story from the late 12th century to the late 17th the authors included the Bishop's Palace and end the book with the Mansion House in Widemarsh Street, one of the earliest brick buildings in the City. In many respects, the extended birth-pangs of the book have been beneficial. For example, many of the buildings discussed have dendrological dating, which in some cases, such as the Cathedral Barn, is crucial in confirming that this modest building dates from the late 13th century and is thus, probably the oldest standing building in the Close. Time has also allowed many expert hands to work upon the drawings, which greatly enrich the volume. They were finally polished by Bryan Byron. Equally impressive (and time consuming) is the research by the Worcester historian, Pat Hughes, who rarely fails to find that pertinent document in the most intractable collection. The book takes pride in being able to name the tenant or owner of each building at the time of its creation. Taken on their own, the historical sections add several new chapters to the story of Hereford. Richard K. Morriss is also no stranger to Hereford and provides a master-class in the description of each building. The specialist language of vernacular architecture is deployed with sensitivity and there is a long glossary if you need help with your 'struts' and 'stubs'. Finally, Nigel Baker, another familiar name in West Midland urban archaeology, brings it all together, providing the introductions and discussions, for each building. His work elsewhere—in Shrewsbury, Gloucester and Worcester—helps broaden the picture, which could so easily have become parochial. However, it is noticeable that few parallels are drawn with buildings in the Herefordshire countryside, notwithstanding the good coverage in the RCHME volumes and the more recent work by Duncan James and the late Jim Tonkin, much of which over the last half century has appeared in these *Transactions*.

After an interesting and pioneering chapter on the city's cellars, the main part of the book is organised chronologically with two long chapters on 'medieval houses c.1200-c.1500' and 'post-medieval houses c.1500-c.1700'. The former naturally concentrates on the buildings of the Cathedral Close, which, apart from the Bishop's Palace, also contains the old Vicars Choral building at 29 Castle Street, Harley Court and the remarkable 20 Church Street—probably the best preserved medieval domestic building in the city. Here excavations in the garden of

the house also add significantly to speculations on the original character of the building. The post-medieval chapter moves decisively into the commercial heartland of the city and includes significant, but hitherto unexplored buildings like the Black Lion in Bridge Street; the recently restored and almost perfect late 16th-century jettied house at 14 Church Street and more minor buildings like the Essex Arms in Widemarsh Street Without, now perched incongruously on Dinmore Hill. Fortunately, the fad for moving framed buildings into a 'safe' environment (viz. Avoncroft) was short lived and consequently, as Nigel Baker reminds us, Hereford retains one of the best preserved historic townscapes in the West Midlands. The book ends with all the authors contributing to a final synthesis, deploying the samples to consider house-plans, plot management, structural issues and original usage. Here we meet the Old Market Hall and Booth Hall and further topics such as floor and roof covering, internal decoration and the advent of bricks. The book is reasonably priced and yet beautifully produced by Oxbow. It is probably the most significant book produced on the history of Hereford in the last half century.

David Whitehead

***Three centuries of East Herefordshire farms and families, Jean Ila Currie (2018, Owlstone Press, £24).***

East Herefordshire lies within the fruitful Lower Frome and Teme valleys, noted for hop growing and for cider production and covering parishes from Felton southward to Woolhope.

The farming countryside and the families whose work created it form the focus of the book. More than an historical survey, it places landowners, farming families and farm workers, their lifestyles and activities, within their social and economic context. This book is well illustrated with maps and photographs; a list of illustrations would be useful.

Thoroughly researched and logically organised, Part I is an historical survey of changes affecting Herefordshire farming from 1700 to date, recounting the fluctuating fortunes of hops and cider. From the 1980s, increasing acreages have been devoted to soft fruit such as blackcurrants and strawberries; a more recent innovation is the production of vodka from potatoes, which has received international awards. The development of Hereford cattle from draught oxen to beef animals spread the breed far outside its origins. Recent changes in farming policies are covered and the changes threatened by Brexit are considered.

Many readers will find Part II of great interest for its focus on farming families with long-standing links to particular holdings, some for over 200 years. Part III explores the farms themselves with well researched, detailed notes for guidance. Notable examples are Pixley Court, famed for blackcurrants, and Freetown, internationally known for its herd of pedigree Hereford cattle.

Joan Grundy